



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

History

CONTRIBUTION OF MUSLIM EDUCATION IN ISLAMIAH COLLEGE, VANIYAMBADI.

KEY WORDS:

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Man is a social being. Education alone gives this sociableness to man. This quality prompts them to come in union and establish associations for their common good. The bodies established by them stand as testimonies to their collective work and concerted effort. They bear the stamp of civilisation each and every civilized society is moving towards this goal. A popular Sanskrit maxim emphasises this idea as Kaliyuge Sange Sankthihi Which means association is strength in the modern world.

Muslims in India, as in Tamilnadu, had been always backward in educational matters. They lacked the spirit, dedication and proper direction. Besides, they lacked leadership to lead them light. However, awakening happened among them in the last century. This awakening made them take stock of the situation and react in the most positive way by founding associations.

In Tamilnadu, among Muslims, some efforts were taken in the last quarter of the 19th century to establish association for spreading Western education among Muslims. One such association was Anjuman – i – Islamiah. It seems to be the oldest organized body of the Muslims of Madras. It was established in 1876¹. Following this the Central Muhammadan Association, Madras, came into existence in 1887 with the objective of spreading education among Muslims and to secure their due share in public service. The Muhammadan Literary Society of Madras and Salem Muhammadam Educational Association were established in 1896 in order to promote education among Muslims. In 1899 the Muslims of North Arcot established the Anjuman-i-Ahle-Islam with the objective of physical and intellectual advancement of its members². Although these associations functioned independently in different parts of the Presidency they had one common objective that the Muslims should be promoted in the field of education.

This kind of corporate activity among Muslims led to the establishment of Madrasa-i-Azam at Madras in 1849 by the Carnatic Nawab Gulam Mohamad Gouse Khan to impart Western education to Muslim boys along with the traditional religious education. This institution produced educated youths to meet the challenges of the society. Those who came out of the portals of this pioneer institutions took active part in public life.

Muslims thenceforth understood the importance of united action. This consolidation was manifest in the presidency of Madras when the 15th Annual session of the All India Muhammadan Educational conference was held at Madras in 1901. This conference confirmed the then existing Madras Executive Committee of the Muhammadan Educational Conference as the Muhammadan Educational Association of Southern India (MEASI)³. At this hour Moudu Mohammad Ibrahim of Vaniyambadi a leading personality took active part in the historical decisions taken in this conference. This was a turning point in the history of Muslim education at Vaniyambadi.

Coming under the spell of modern education the educated Muslims of Vaniyambadi swung into action. The then prominent persons of Vaniyambadi like Pallan Abdul Razaak, Latif Sahib, Malayalam Ameenuddin and Vavanghani Mohammed Ibrahim in their zeal to translate the message of this conference into action established the Vaniyambadi Muslim Educational Society (VMES) in 1903. This society ventured into starting the Madrasa – i – Islamiah School on the 26th August 1903 with three pupils on the rolls⁴. This school in spite of the "orthodox opposition and unthinking conservatism" grew from strength to strength under the delicate leadership of T.Hajee Badruddin, Malang Hayath

Batcha and T.Aminuddin⁵. Their trials and tribulations did not go to waste. In 1906 the school got the official recognition as "the best equipped and best-endowed school in the Presidency"⁶.

It was fortunate in having followed Western curriculum, for the first time, in the entire Presidency of Madras. It was a great achievement indeed. The following statement adds:

At a time when there was not a single school in the whole of the South India managed and maintained by Muslims in accordance with their tradition and culture and imparting secular education, the Muslims of Vaniyambadi fired by the inspiring lead given by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan of blessed memory, the pioneer of Muslim education and renaissance in India, rose as torch-bearers of learning and found (sic) the school which attracted hundreds of young men from all over South India. Thus Vaniyambadi came to be called "The Aligarh of the South"⁷

It was thus the Madrasa-i-Islamiah carved a niche for itself in the educational edifice of Muslim India. Its services to the society received great appreciation from great persons like Lord Pentland, the then Governor of Madras. While laying the foundation for the school hostel in 1915 he remarked that it was a "monument to the liberality and educational enthusiasm of Vaniyambadi Muslims"⁸

Enthused by the success of their new venture the Vaniyambadians were prepared to host the Annual Meeting of the MEASI. In this connection A Hammed Hasan Sait, Joint Secretary of the MEASI visited the VMES in its executive committee meeting held on 23rd September 1915 resolved to hold the 5th Annual Session of the MEASI at Vaniyambadi. It was also resolved to invite Akbar Hydari, the then Home Secretary to the Nizam's Government, Hyderabad, on that occasion⁹.

Consequently, the Annual Session of the MEASI was held on the 28th, 29th and 30th October 1916 at Vaniyambadi under the presidentship of Hydari. Various resolutions were passed in this conference regarding Muslim education. At the end of the proceedings Syed rose Masud, the then Director of Education, Hyderabad, proposed that the Madrasa-i-Islamiah, Vaniyambadi be raised to the status of a college. In response to which Rs.55,000/- was subscribed on the spot, of which Rs.50,000/- was subscribed by the generous and philanthropic minded Muslims of Vaniyambadi¹⁰. This progress they could make amidst the scourges of World War I and pestering political turning points. Men of letters and the Press congratulated the efforts taken-up by the Vaniyambadi Muslims to start a college in their town. The Non-Brahmin news paper reported that "there is no precedent in India to the enthusiasm for English education which the Vaniyambadi merchants show. They subscribed lakhs of rupees and Lord Pentland was pleased and surprised"¹¹

This euphoria did not last long. The naming of the college became an matter of discord. One faction of the VMES wanted the college to be named as Usmania after the name of the then Nizam of Hyderabad. Another faction opposed it and wanted that it should be called in the present name – Islamiah. In fact, a handsome donation of Rs.25,000/- and a monthly grant of Rs.1000/- for a period of 5 years offered by the Nizam towards the college prompted the Pro Usmania faction to take such a decision¹².

This factional feud continued over a period of two years. The division in the VMES stalled temporarily the opening of the college. In the meantime the government started the Government

Muhammadan College, Madras, in 1918. However, the Vaniyambadians did not lose their heart and efforts were taken to start a college of their own. At last, it materialised in the name of Islamiah College, Vaniyambadi. On 21st July 1919 the intermediate class under group (III) was opened with 5 students¹³. Khader Mohamed Nainar was appointed the first principal and history lecturer of the college¹⁴. The college was not affiliated to the University then. But it was done only in 1921¹⁵. With this a new era dawned in the educational history of the Muslims of the Madras Presidency. It gave the distinction to the VMES as pioneer Muslim organization in the entire Presidency to start a college under private effort. This progress gave a new impetus to the Muslim education in the Southern part of India.

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3. Diamond Jubilee Souvenir of the Muslim Educational Association of southern India (1902 – 1962), Madras, no page.
4. Islamiah College Calendar for the year 1996-97. The VMES was registered in 1905 with Reg.No.1 of 1905 -06.
5. Islamiah Boy's Higher Secondary School's Calendar for the year 1994-95.
6. Islamiah College Calendar for the year 1970-71.
7. Ibid.
8. Islamiah Boy's Higher Secondary School's Calendar for the year 1994-95.
9. G.O.No. 1019, Home (Education), 6, August 1917.
10. G.O.No. 1019, Home (Education), 6 August 1917.
11. Non-Brahmin, Madras, 4 February 1917.
12. Letter No. 1416, Home (Education), 22 December 1916.
13. Annual Report of the VMES for the year 1919-1920, pp.9-10.
14. Khadar Mohammed Nainar, a native of Palani, graduated from the Madras Christian College, served this institution from 1920. After quitting this post he became a busy advocate in the Madura Bar and subsequently rose to the position of public prosecutor.
15. G.O.No.1111 Law (Education), 29 June 1925.