

## **Chapter I**

### **The Arrival of Islam and the Establishment of Islamic Institutions in India**

The present chapter will deal with the feature of geography, the Muslim society in general, the arrival and spreading of Islam in India in particular. Apart of this, it will also consider and analyze the significant roles played by the Muslim scholars and Islamic Institutions during the period of Muslim rulers. In order to achieve the objectives of the present research work, some statistical data will be added to supplement the theoretical base of the study.

#### **I Geographical Location of India**

The Indian subcontinent is a part of the continent of Asia. It extends from 8 N to 37 N latitude and lies entirely in the north of the Equator. The Tropic of Cancer (23.5 N) cuts it roughly into two halves. West to east, it stretches from 62 E to 97 E longitude. Longitude 80 E passes through the center of the subcontinent.

The subcontinent is a peninsula, more or less triangular in shape, just southward from the main lands of Asia. The lofty mountain ranges of the Himalayas in north form the base of the triangle while the apex runs far out into the Indian Ocean in the south. It deserves to be called a subcontinent because of its large area (4,230,860sq km) and its huge population (about one billion at present).

The subcontinent is isolated in a remarkable way from the rest of Asia, making it a distinct geographical unit. Barring the plateau of Baluchistan (which forms part of Pakistan), the two great ranges of Sulaiman and Kirthar cut it off from the west. Along north, the great mountain wall formed by the Hindukush, Karakoram and the Himalayas, which is difficult to cross, cuts it off from the rest of the continent. Similarly, the southwards off shoots of the Himalayas separate it from Russia. In the south, the subcontinent is surrounded by water- the Arabian Sea in the west, the Indian Ocean in the south and the Bay of Bengal in the east. Another important factor that lends unity to the subcontinent is the fact of the monsoons. The subcontinent has a favourable geographical position for international trade and commerce, being at the center of the Eastern Hemisphere and at the head of the Indian Ocean. The trade routes run in all directions towards the east (China, Japan), towards the west (to Europe via the Suez Canal and East Africa, southwest (Arabia, Iraq, Iran) and southeast (Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia).

In 1947, the subcontinent was partitioned into two countries, India and Pakistan, the former with a predominantly Hindu population and the later with a predominantly Muslim population. Another upheaval in 1971 broke off the eastern wing of Pakistan, then known as East Pakistan, which is now called Bangladesh. So three independent sovereign republics of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh now form the Indian subcontinent. <sup>1</sup>

## **II. Population, language and religions**

The name India has been derived from a Sanskrit word 'Sindhu', the name of the river in Sind (at present, an integral territory of Pakistan). The word 'Hind' is a free variation of the word 'Sind' that later changed into 'Indus' and 'India'. Philologically, the word India means 'the land of the river Indus'. The words 'Sind' and 'Hind' were used synonymously in the past but gradually they became two distinct words having different meanings<sup>2</sup>. India is a multilingual country that has about 179 languages and 544 dialects. These are like the Assamese, Hindi, Urdu, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Konkani, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Sanskrit, Nepali, Manipuri, Kashmiri, Oriya, Bengali, Punjabi, etc<sup>3</sup>.

Islam is followed by 11.6 per cent people of the total Indian population. This has made Islam as the second largest religion followed by the Indians after Hinduism and has put India as the second largest Muslim populated country in the world. Before independence, Muslims constituted 24 per cent of the population, but partition gave all the Muslim majority areas except Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan. Since the establishment of Bangladesh in 1971, South Asian Muslims have been divided almost equally among the three successor states: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Of 356 districts of India into which the country is divided for administrative purposes, only two (one each in West Bengal and in Kerala) have Muslim majorities, outside of Jammu and Kashmir. In only thirty districts do Muslims constitute more than 30 per cent of the total population. A little over half of the Muslim population lives in the three large States of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Bihar.<sup>4</sup> The majority of Muslims

in India are Sunnis and the followers of Hanafi School. Only a few in south India are the followers of Shafi'i School. About 10 percent of the total Muslim population are Shi'i of Ithna 'Ashari sect and a few but significant number of Ismai'ili.<sup>5</sup> The influence of the Hanafi School is apparently clear and strong among the Indian Muslims. This is because of the fact that the Muslim missionaries were mostly the followers of the School. Besides, the Muslim rulers in India mostly came from the same School, though in the beginning there were the Gaznavi who came in the northwest India, and also the Ghauri, who were the followers of Shafi'i School. But after the rule of Sultan Mas'ud (1030-40 AD), the influence of the Hanafi School became predominant one.

Although Muslims are united by a common faith, they are quite legitimately divided into several ethno-linguistic groups. More than half the Muslim population speaks Urdu as their mother tongue. The rest speak Assamese, Bengali, Malayalam, Gujarati, or Tamil among others.

In addition, during the rule of Muhammad ibn-Tughlug, the Hanafi Jurisprudence was used as the reference for the law of the kingdom and the Kazi (the Supreme Judge). The School was strongly followed by the Muslim elite and dominated the majority of the Muslim populations in India under the Mughal period till the arrival of the Britishers in India in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, there were also Muslims who were the followers of Ahl al-Hadith<sup>6</sup>. Since the Indian population came from different ethnicities, the Indian Muslim population is also comprised of different ethnicities and cultures. There are Arabs, Afghans, Turks, Persians and many others who are mostly the Indians themselves, mainly from the lower castes and quite a

number from the upper castes, who have converted to Islam by the influence of the Sufis<sup>7</sup>.

The creation of Pakistan left India's Muslims in state of confusion. A large number of the educated middle class from northern India and the entrepreneurial class from Bombay, Gujarat, and Calcutta migrated to Pakistan, as did the politically conscious Muslim elites, leaving behind millions of their poor co-religionists, without either leaders or a well-knit political organization.<sup>8</sup>

Here, it will be worthwhile to explore the impact of the arrival of Islam in India and its influence on the caste system and the recognition of women's rights with special reference to *Sati Pratha* (self-immolation into the pyre of husband)<sup>9</sup>

Among the many important contributions of Muslim rulers, the writing of history was one of them. In fact the systematic writing of history was introduced by the Muslim rulers in India. Before that, there were only stories and legends that were written in the books like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Muslims started to write and develop the system of history writing in India<sup>10</sup>. Thus, we can say had the Muslims paid no attention towards this field, it would be impossible for India to be known as it is known today. Muslims also contributed a lot to the development of other branches of knowledge in India such as arts and architecture.

Besides, Muslims also introduced the medical science in India and elsewhere. The medical science developed by the Muslims spread not only in India but also in other Muslim countries. They called this medical science 'the Unani Medicine', or 'the

Arabian Medicine'. It is called so because of the fact that this science was developed and learned by the Muslims in Iraq, Iran and Turkistan. This science had become the centre of attention in the world since the 7<sup>th</sup> century AH until 12<sup>th</sup> century AH. It developed rapidly in India in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AH with Lucknow and Delhi as the centers of learning. At present, the Unani medicine is an alternative of getting medical treatment for some people due to its cheapness as compared to modern medical science<sup>11</sup>.

Islam in India has a very long and complicated history since its arrival in the northern part of India in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AH. Many different Muslim dynasties ruled India for a long period. This has made Islam in India to have a distinct character of its own. This has also made Islam the centre of criticism by some writers who said that Islam was only a means to legitimize the rule of some Muslim rulers in India.

### **III. The Arrival of Islam in India**

Geographically, India and Arab region are close neighbors and separated only by a sheet of water – the Arabian Sea. Their coastal regions almost face each other. It was easy for the Arab merchants to visit the northern, southern, and western coastal Indian regions frequently such as Malabar, Coromandel, Gujarat, Kathiwar and the island of Ceylon through the Indian Ocean. This geographic location of Arabia and India has played an important part in establishing and developing a close commercial relation between these two countries. It was snapped by the European merchants and

sailors in the Indian Ocean in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, the northwestern parts of India are connected by land with central Asia, eastern Iran, Baluchistan and Mukran.

The Arabs entered India through two routes, i.e. by land in north-western India through Baluchistan by way of Mukran, and by sea through the south-western peninsular India – areas which are now included in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The Arab settlement in India before Islam was the result of their geographical proximity and commercial relations<sup>12</sup>.

Islam in India is having a distinct character of its own. This is because of the fact that Islam came to India through a long process brought by different people from different places and ethnicity. History tells us that Islam came to India through different stages over a long period of time. In general, these stages may be separated into six different phases:

1. The period of Indo-Arab trade relation
2. The period of direct military contact with the center of Islam
3. The period of Ghaznavid dynasty when Islam had spread throughout India<sup>13</sup>
4. The period of Ghaurid dynasty
5. The period of Delhi Sultanate<sup>14</sup>
6. The period of Mongol rulers started by Emperor Babur<sup>15</sup>

The first contact between Islam and India occurred in the western and southern coasts of India. The Arab traders had a very long tradition of trade relations with their

Indian counterparts even before the advent of Islam. It was only after their conversion to Islam that they started a new role to be the Islamic missionaries for their Indian counterparts. They started to introduce the new belief to the people in a peaceful manner. This, as a result, made Islam to be recognized by the Indian people in Kerala and Konkan and many people in the area converted to Islam. Some scholars have said that Islam that came to the area had a distinct character of its own that made it possible to be accepted by the Hindu people there. The peaceful penetration of Islam by the Arab Muslim traders and the Muslim missionaries in the Indian soil resulted in the conversion of some 22 per cent population in Kerala<sup>16</sup>.

The trade relations with the silk manufacturing centre of China and the spice-rich islands of South East Asia made the Indian coast a strategic point in the Indo-Arab trade relations. This also became a place of transit for Arab traders and the Arabs gave an Arab name to the Coromandel Coast of South India with 'Ma'bar', which means a 'crossing'<sup>17</sup>. It is this place that the trade routes to the coasts of Bengal and Burma, the islands of South-East Asia and the lands of Indo-China and China on the one side, and the west coast of India, Sind, the Persian Gulf, Arabia and Africa on the other, converged. This strategic position of India for the trade route to the east in the first three centuries of the Islamic calendar was an obvious reason for the Arab settlements in the southern coast of India, presently known as Malabar.

The good nature of the relation between the Arabs and the native people proved to be another significant factor that had made the settlements grow smoothly and made it possible for Islam to be accepted in the area. This made the people to regard Muslims



as their friends, and not as invaders. Further, these Arab settlers married the local girls from the upper caste and converted them through this bondage. This indicated that the Arabs were regarded as the people who had a high social status according to the perception of the locals of that time.

Another indication that showed the status of the Arab settlers was shown by the name given to the children born out of the inter-marriage between the Arabs and the local girls. The locals called the children by the name *Moplahs*, from the word *mappila*, which means 'a great child'<sup>18</sup>. This was because of the perception among the people that these children belonged to the upper class. Besides these, Arab settlers also adopted the local children. This was one of the methods to teach Islam to the people and young generation and hoped that these children would, some day, grow up as good Muslims. Every year, the number of adopted children was increasing. This made Islam rooted in the hearts of the people and the settlers were no longer regarded as foreigners. Hence, it was not a matter of surprise for not facing the hindrance and obstacle from the locals in the process of building places of worship in the region.

It was believed that the last king of Cheer empire traveled by ship to Arabia and landed at '*Shahr*'. From there he went to Jeddah and visited Prophet Muhammad, then in his 57<sup>th</sup> year, embraced Islam and accepted the name Tajuddin. He married the sister of the Arabian King Habibuddin and stayed there for five years. Afterwards, along with his wife and father in-law, he left for Kerala to spread the message of Islam, but he died on the way at "*Shurhr*".

According to some books like *Rihlatul Muluk* and *Tuhfatul Mujahidin*, Islam spread in Kerala in the eighth and ninth centuries respectively, it was recorded that Malik bin Dinar along with his friends established eighteen mosques in different places and made arrangements for their smooth functioning. He died there in AH. 127<sup>19</sup>.

The penetration of Islam to the Indian soil is a logical impact of the spread of Islam in the period of the *Abbasid* dynasty. It was in the period of the dynasty that Islam reached to the western region of India and spread throughout the neighbouring areas like Khurasan and Afghanistan. In fact, the efforts made by Muslims to reach the Indian soil was started in the period of second Caliph 'Umar ibn-al-Khattab. He sent an army to the Sind region but this invasion did not give good results. This was followed by an expedition by fourth Caliph 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, who sent a group of strong army under the command of Kharis ibn Murrah al-'Abdi to the Sind region in the 34<sup>th</sup> year of the Islamic calendar. Though the Muslim army won the battle, this expedition was not for the purpose of invasion but merely for security purpose in the border area that was prone to be attacked by enemy<sup>20</sup>

The expedition to Sind continued in the period of the Umayyads, especially under the rule of Caliph al-Walid. Hajjaj bin Yusuf was then the governor of Iraq, Persia and Khurasan. There was a conflict between the Muslims and the ruler of Sind king Dahir which led to the invasion by the Muslims on the Sind region. The reason of the conflict between the two was that the pirates in waters of king Dahir pirated one of the Muslim trader's ships. This ship contained merchandises and the widows of the Muslim traders in Sri Lanka. The ship was pirated and the widows were taken as

hostages by the pirates. Hajjaj bin Yusuf asked the king of Sind, Dahir, to release the hostages but he refused, saying that it was out of his authority to do so. This led to the sending of Muslim army to the region to get the hostages released and this led to the conflict between the Muslims and the King of Sind.

In this expedition, Muslim army was under the command of Muhammad bin Qasim who came to the region with a large army both from the sea and the land routes. This invasion was meant for the release of the hostages held by the pirates and also to punish the King of Sind for his refusal to the Muslim ruler. Fierce war took place that eventually led to the defeat of king Dahir's side. And from that time onward, Sind region, for the first time, came under the control of Muslim rulers.

The success of Muslim expedition to Sind region led by Muhammad bin Qasim was the turning point in the history of Muslim occupation of India. This was followed by the *Ghaznavids* and ended with the Mughal dynasty.<sup>21</sup>

#### **IV. Spread of Islamic science in early Muslim Rule in India**

If we look at the history of the development of Islamic sciences, we will find that the Prophet himself was the pioneer of the movement. He said, "Go and seek knowledge as far as China". On another occasion, he said, "The ink of the scholars is holier than the blood of the martyrs". This shows the importance of seeking knowledge for men and the importance of imparting it to others. Further, he said, "Tell them everything even though it is only a word". Another example can be seen from his

decision on the future of the prisoners of the Badar War. He said that he would release those prisoners who could teach reading and writing to the children of Madinah. This decision taken by the Prophet showed his great interest in the spread and the imparting of knowledge.

During the Caliphate period, the teaching of Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet to the Arabs and the non Arab Muslims were given by the Qur'an readers (*Qurra*). Unlike the present day *Qurra*, they were not simply the reciters of the Qur'anic verses but also interpreted them and commented upon them. It was their responsibility to tell the people about Islam and Islamic knowledge.<sup>22</sup>

In the following periods, the *Ummayyads*, besides concentrating themselves in the territorial expansion of the Muslim Empire, also paid great attention to the development and teaching of Islam and Islamic sciences. It was in this period that the first Islamic system of education was introduced. Besides, establishing mosques as the places of worship, they also used it for elementary education. They also built *maktabs* (traditional Islamic schools) for higher education. The curriculum taught in these schools included the teaching of reading the holy Qur'an and the teaching of Islamic knowledge, especially the basic principles of Islam. It was only in the period of the *Abbasids* that the Muslims attained the highest position in the world civilization. It was in that period that the Muslims enjoyed socio-economic prosperity and the advanced development of Islamic and non-Islamic sciences like Mathematics, Medicine, Philosophy and Astronomy after their successful interaction with the other civilizations like the Greek, the Persian and the Indian.

The interest among the Muslim rulers and the Muslims themselves made al-Ma'mun, one of the Abbasids Caliphs, to establish 'Bayt al-Hikmah', a centre for Islamic learning, in 830 AD. This was followed by the establishment of al-Azhar university in Cairo, Egypt, in the period of al-Muizz (925-975 AD), one of the Fatimids rulers. This institution was meant for the teaching of Shi'ite doctrines to Sunni Muslims in Egypt. But when the Fatimids were ousted from power by Saladin, a Sunni Muslim ruler, the institution was transformed into a Sunni oriented institution that prevails until the present time<sup>23</sup>.

In 1065-67 AD, the Seljuq introduced a new system of education known as Nizamiyah college. The focus of education in this college was the teaching of 'Ash'ari theology and Shafi'i jurisprudence. But the domination of Persians in government made the study of religious and non-religious sciences equally important, even there was a time when the religious sciences were regarded as less important as compared to the non-religious sciences, especially philosophy. The Muslim scholars reacted to the situation, led by al-Ghazali, by attacking the Neo-Platonic philosophy following the footsteps of al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd in their effort to protect the original religious norms from destruction. The Nizamiyah College also provided scholarships to the students. The Europeans, in the beginning of the Renaissance movement copied this system of education<sup>24</sup>. When India was under the Muslim rules, the system of Nizamiyah College also became the role model for the system of education in Islamic institutions in India. But with the passage of time, there were gradual changes in the system by the introduction of new syllabus and curriculum, however, these changes did not spoil the original color of the system.

It was in the period of Qutubuddin Aibek (1203-1210) that the establishment of Islamic institutions in India was started by the establishment of more than 100 mosques that played double role as the places of worship and as the places of religious learning. In the period of Iltumish (1211-1236), there were two colleges built in Delhi, the Nasiria College, and the other in Multan, the Firozi Madrasah.

This was followed by the period of Muhammad Bakhtiar Khilji (1290-1320), one of the rulers of the Khilji dynasty, who also paid great attention to the establishment of Islamic institutions in India. The establishment of many *madrasahs* in Bengal was indicated his deep interest in the education of the people.

After the Khilji dynasty, the Tughlugs were also known as a dynasty that was fond of learning. Muhammad Tughlug (1325-1351) as a king who was fond of knowledge, especially logic and philosophy. In his time, Muslim scholars were invited to his court to discuss religion. In the period of Feroz Shah, there were more than 30 *madrasahs*. Besides many other Islamic centres were renovated. There were also many great Muslim scholars and thinkers who were born during his period like Maulana Jalaluddin Dawwani, a disciple of Qutubuddin Razi, who was well known for his mastery of *Tafseer* and *Hadith*.

These Muslim rulers except the Mughals had a great interest in imparting Islamic teachings. They had deep interest in the education of the people. For Mughal rulers Islamic brotherhood had no meaning except that the Muslims should stand by them in case their authority was challenged by the non-Muslims. This was the reason

that Mughal rulers, with the exception of Akbar, did not show any interest in the education of the Muslim masses.<sup>25</sup> Each of them contributed in the establishment of the centres of religious learning, either in the form of college or *madrasah*. But it is a sad reality that their contributions have only become a sweet memory for the Muslims because, at present, we find only the ruins of these great institutions.

In short the role of Muslim rulers can be summarized in the following ways :

1. Providing aids in the form of land and buildings for the institutions.
2. Providing the teachers to the students.
3. Renovating the old institutional buildings and other supportive means for the education.
4. Inviting teachers from foreign countries to teach in India and paying their wages.
5. Paying the wages of the *qadi* (judges), *imam* and *muezzin* of the main mosques.
6. Providing boarding facilities for the teachers and the students free of cost.
7. Providing scholarships to the students.

## **V. Some important Madrasahs or Islamic Educational Institution in Medieval India**

The followings are some well-known madrasahs in the medieval India:

1. Madrasahs of Sind

- Madrasah Firuziah. Founded by Nasiruddin Qabacha when he was governor of Multan and Udh.
- Madrasah Multan. Located in the monastery of Sheikhul-Islam Bahauddin Zakariya, the renowned mystic of Multan.
- Madrasah Siwistan. It was the largest educational institution at that time.
- Madrasah Bhukkar. Founded by Najmuddin Muhammad Raf'i of Sind in 1747 while Sheikh Muhammad Mo'in bin Muhammad Amin was still alive.

## 2. Madrasahs of Kashmir

- Madrasah Qutbuddin Purah. This institution was founded by Sultan Qutbuddin of Kashmir (d. 1393).
- Madrasah of Sultan Zain-ul-'Abidin. This madrasah was founded by another sultan of Kashmir, Sultan Zain-al-'Abidin.
- Madrasah Srinagar. Mirza Burhanuddin Tuni, also known as Fadil Khan, built the madrasah at Srinagar while he was governor of Kashmir during the time of Aurangzeb.

## 3. Madrasahs of the Punjab

- Madrasahs of Lahore. Muhammad Fadil of Badakhshan, the Superintendent of Justice in the military cantonment during the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan, established this institution in the year 1634. Another madrasah was founded by the governor of the province Nawab Qilich Khan Indjani to teach law, exegesis and Traditions. Yet in Lahore, another big madrasah was established by Wazir Khan nearby his famous mosque.
- Madrasah Sialkot. The madrasah was founded by an eminent scholar, 'Abul Hakim bin Shamsuddin.



- **Madrasah Thanesar.** The madrasah was located near the tomb of Sheikh Abdur Rahim (popularly known as Sheikh Chilli). The building of this madrasah was reported to have been built by Dara Shikoh in 1650.
- **Madrasah Narnaul.** This was a big institution founded in Narnaul that was attached to the monastery of Sheikh Nizamuddin of Narnaul. The madrasah produced a number of literary scholars.

#### 4. Madrasahs of Delhi

- **Madrasah Mu'izziah.** It was reported to have been built by Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak and named after his master Shahabuddin Ghouri whose title was Mu'izzuddin.
- **Madrasah Nasiriyah.** It is believed that Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish established the institution and named after his father Nasiruddin Mahmud.
- **Madrasah Firuz Shah.** The institution was located near Hauz Khaz and built by Firuz Shah for higher studies. All secular and religious sciences were taught in this madrasah.
- **Madrasah Tulanabbi.** The madrasah was established by Sikandar Lodhi for Maulana 'Abdullah Tulanabbi, a scholar and a man of letters, who emigrated to Delhi.
- **Madrasah of Maulana Sama'uddin.** Maulana Sama'uddin (d. 1495) had also set up a madrasah at Delhi in which he taught for a long time.
- **Madrasah Sheikh Farid.** It was a big institution established by sheikh 'Alauddin during the reign of Humayun in 1534 and named after the well-known mystic Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj Shakar whose shrine is at Ajodhan.

- **Madrasah Maham Begum.** Maham, the wet nurse of Emperor Akbar, had built a mosque and a madrasah in 1561 near Humayun's fort known as Dinpanah.
- **Madrasah Sheikh 'Abdul Haq Muhaddith, Jhangir** Founded this institution of higher learning, along with a supporting trust, for Sheikh Abdul Haq bin Saifuddin, the well known scholar of Traditions belonging to Delhi. After the death of the Sheikh, his descendants Mufti Nurul Haq, Shaikh Ali Muhammad, Sheikh Muhammad Hashim and Sheikh Abu Raza devoted their lives to the teaching and preaching of Traditions in this institution. To this madrasah goes the credit of introduction, growth and popularization of the science of Traditions in India, for, it had been the Almamater of many eminent scholars from the day it was established.
- **Madrasah Shahjahani.** Known by the name of Darul-Baqa, this madrasah was founded by Shahjahan some time between 1649 and 1658, not far from the Jami Masjid. Maulana Yaqub of Bayanah was appointed as the head of the institution by the Emperor. After the madrasah fell into ruins, Mufti Sadaruddin Azurda (d.1842) had it rebuilt and appointed teachers for the instruction of the students. The madrasah was, however, completely demolished during the first war of independence in 1857.
- **Madrasah Fatehpuri Begum.** One of the queens of Shah Jahan, Nawab Fatehpuri Begum, who built the delightful Fatehpuri mosque, constructed a madrasah also near it in 1649. The building of the madrasah had been made of marble and red stone. The mosque contained lodges for the teachers and students while some shops, which had been constructed facing the market, had been rented out to

meet the recurring expenses of the madrasah. The income then fetched from the shops was rupees six hundred per menses.

- **Madrasah Akbrabadi Begum.** Another queen of Shah Jahan Akbarabadi Begum, built a mosque and a madrasah at Delhi in 1630. It was a splendid masonry structure with lodges for the teachers and the taught, and had shops around it to meet the expenses of the madrasah. In this institution the noted Traditionist and commentator of Quran, Shah Abdul Qadir of Delhi, taught the students for a long time. It continued to function till the last days of Moghul rule but in the upheaval of 1857 the Britishers completely demolished the madrasah leaving no trace of it.
- **Madrasah Shah Wali Ullah.** This was the fortunate institution where the great savant, thinker and reformer Shah Wali Ullah of Delhi taught the students. Shah Abdur Rahim, father of Shah Wali Ullah used to put up at Mehdiyan, outside Delhi, near his ancestral cemetery. After his father's death, Shah Wali Ullah moved within the city where Muhammad Shah made over a big mansion to him for starting a madrasah.

This institution was known as the old madrasah where Shah Wali Ullah delivered lectures to his students throughout his life. After his death, a new madrasah was constructed on the site of the older one, where Sha Abdul Aziz taught until he lost his eyesight. Shah Rafiuddin and Shah Abdul Qadir, the two brothers of Shah Abdul Aziz continued to teach in the madrasah and, after their death, the responsibility was taken up by Shah Muhammad Ishaq, Shah Muhammad Yaqub and Sheikh Makhrus Ullah, the descendant of Shah Abdul

Aziz. This was one of the central seats of learning in India, which popularized religious sciences in India.

## 5 Madrasahs of Agra

- Madrasah Sheikh Raf iuddin. The institution, located within the city of Agra, was named after Sheikh Rafi'uddin Husaini of Shiraz (d.1538), a scholar who had specialized in the science of Traditions. He migrated to India during the reign of Sikanadar Lodhi and was acknowledged as the foremost Savant of his time.
- Madrasah Zainiyah. The Madrasah together with a mosque was built by Sheikh Zainuddin Khawwafi in 1534 He was buried within the quadrangle of the mosque.
- Madrasah of Mufti Abdul Fatah. This was the premier educational institution of Agra presided over by Mufti Abul Fath bin Abdul Ghafoor of Thanesar (d. 1578), where he lectured for fifty years. He was also responsible for directing the educational activities at the capital of the empire.
- Madrasah Akbarabad. The madrasah was founded by Akbar. The ruins of its main building were traceable before the holocaust of 1857. The mosque attached to madrasah still remains and the locality is known by the name of the Madrasah.
- Madrasah Khas was so named because its attached roofing and walls were made of reeds straw. The madrasah was established by Maulana Alauddin Lari in 1561 during reign of Akbar.
- Madrasah Jami Masjid. Jahanara, the daughter of Shah Jahan built this madrasah opposite the fort at Agra and created a trust for its maintenance.

- Madrasah Akbar. Akbar had built this madrasah on the top of the hillock at Fatehpur Sikri at the instance of Sheikh Salim bin Bahauddin Chishti. The emperor also appointed several theologians as teachers of this institution.
- Madrasatul Banat was also at Fatehpur Sikri. Its building was a masonry structure, ornately carved and erected near noble in the court of Babur.

#### 6 Madrasahs of Jaunpur, Bihar and Bengal

- Madrasah Qazi Shahabuddin. Sultan Ibrahim Sharqi, the great patron of learning, had built this madrasah for Qazi Shahbuddin of Daulatabad. It played an important part in popularizing science and learning. The madrasah also had lodges for the students.
- Madrasah Taji Begum. The school was founded by Raji Begum, queen of Mahmud Shah Sharqi (1436-58) along with a mosque in 1442. She also granted stipends to the teachers and the students of the madrasah which continued to function until Sikandar Shah bin Bahlol Lodi captured Jaunpur and the madrasah was razed to ground like numerous other monuments and castles of the Sharqi dynasty.
- Madrasah Aziz Ullah. This was a big institution established in the locality called Aziz Ullah at Jaunpur by Junaid Barlas, the governor of the place in the reign of Babur. Sheikh Aziz Ullah bin Sheikh Naim Ullah, from whom the madrasah and the locality took their names, was appointed as its first Principal. Sheikh Aziz Ullah was a progeny of Sheikh Muhammad bin Isa who was a noted mystic of the place. The madrasah fell into ruins in due course of time and was gradually turned in to a cemetery.

- Madrasah Sheikh Muhammad Afzal. The madrasah was founded by the reputed scholar Sheikh Muhammad Afzal Uthmani (d. 1650). Savants like Mullah Mahmud Jaunpuri and Sheikh Muhammad Rashid, the authors of the *Shams Bazgha* and *Rashidiya*, respectively, graduated from this seminary.
- Madrasah Banaras. This madrasah was established by Sheikh Nizamuddin of Banaras. One of the scholars who received his education in this school was Sheikh Tayyab bin Moin (d.1632)<sup>26</sup>

There are many more madrasahs that can be mentioned here. The aim to name the madrasahs above is to show the role they played in the development of Islamic sciences and what the ulemas and the government of the time contributed in developing these institutions.

## **VI. System of Education**

It is necessary to describe here that the process of teaching and learning Islamic sciences in India at that time occurred not only between the teachers and the students, but the ulemas also joined in the religious discussions and debates. These discussions and debates were not held only between the teachers and the students but also among the ulemas themselves. The objective of these debates and discussions was to remove the doubt on the certain religious issues. Besides, these debates and discussions also improved the understanding of the participants on the issues. Some times the teachers were criticized by the students for their views on certain issues.

This kind of method was definitely beneficial for the students, especially for improving their knowledge and understanding of some difficult issues that were found during their study. This method also helped the students in improving their mental prowess and capability in acquiring knowledge. Here, there were a free and frank academic atmosphere when teachers and students could make a healthy academic encounter and it was not a matter of insult to the teacher rather such meet yielded fruitful result in growing a perfect knowledge.

The teachers provided materials according to their personal capability and reference, and were not bound to the textbooks that were being used. This method of teaching helped the students in improving their knowledge by receiving information from reliable sources and not merely from the textbooks. It also gave certain additional values to the teacher due to his wide knowledge. Sometimes, the teachers also gave name of the books that were relevant to the subject of discussion, so that the students would have their own time to read those books by themselves.

Contemporary ulemas did not hesitate in asking students for discussions on any problems and issues. It is said that once Sheikh Abdul Hamid visited Sheikh Jan Muhammad of Jaunpur (d. 1120 AH) along with his teacher, Shaikh Ismail of Lahore. In the meeting, Shaikh Ismail was asked to have a discussion on hadith after the completion of his study. But Shaikh Jan Muhammad Jaunpuri felt shy. However, Shaikh Ismail of Lahore insisted on having a discussion with him. In the end, the discussion on hadith was held regularly even after Shaikh Jan Muhammad of Jaunpur completed his study.<sup>27</sup>

In general, students who even completed their study kept them though their involvement in discussions held in the centres of learning. Such involvement held regularly in order to keep the students at a pace with the development in the field of study, so that they may be able to understand the new problems that might arise in the future. Sometimes, they invited one of the ulemas who was a master on certain branch of science and ask him to deliver a lecture on certain interesting topic, which was relevant to the contemporary situation.

During the Moghul period in India, a method of learning called self- study was an important method of learning. Usually, the teacher would directly monitor the learning activities of students outside the class. Shah Waliullah usually gave some home work to his students in the form of some new and difficult vocabularies and helped the students in preparing the notes taken from the books of reference.<sup>28</sup>

Generally, the *Imams* or the *Muezzins* in mosques were the teachers of young learners. The teachers who gave private tuition in the houses of ministers were known as *Munshi* or *Mulwi*. Whereas, the teachers of *maktab* were known as *Adib* or *Mu'allim*.<sup>29</sup>

A distend feature had also been witnessed at that time that students had a voluntary choice to have their teacher for study or learning. It was also found that those students had completed their study on a particular subject under the guidance or supervision by a particular teacher, had a freedom to seek academic help or suggestion from anybody, whoever may be a factor for his additional knowledge. Occasionally, it



had also been experienced that some teachers themselves used to recommended their own students to some their teachers who can teach them better and make them more successful in their specific field of knowledge. An unprecedented example may cited as; (Once Shaikh Muhammad Jan of Lahore was, in the beginning, studying with Shaikh Abdul Hamid, but because of his cleverness and his ability to master the materials easily, Shaikh Abdul Hamid took him to a more capable teacher, Shaikh Taimur of Lahore).<sup>30</sup>

During these periods, discipline was the backbone of teaching. There were some strict rules that were to be followed by the students in those madrasahs. Some of these rules were as the following:

- The students must arrive earlier than the teacher
- They must show respect and good attitude in the classroom
- The students must dress properly as recommended by the rule and they must not dress, as they liked.
- They must respect the books they studied and put them back in the place they belonged to.

These were the rules that were to be followed by the students. These rules show that the discipline must be maintained by the students.

The system of teaching in the classes and the system of education had some rules, but there were no rules that the students would come regularly or the attendance would be taken or would be kept in records. Such attempt was to verify the students voluntary seriousness and to make them self help in the study.

The teachers were very disciplined in performing their duties and they actively attended the classes. The parents would always monitor their children so that it would be difficult for the kids to skip the classes. Besides, the teachers were dedicated to their profession as educators. The seriousness shown by the teachers resulted in making the students serious to attend the classes and they felt shamed to skip it. As an example of the sincerity and denotion of the teacher of those days are such as, Shaikh Abdul Haq of Delhi, a teacher in a madrasah, would regularly come to teach his students twice a day, walking a distance of 2 miles between his house and the madrasah under the burning sun in summer or the biting cold in winter.<sup>31</sup>

Although there was no regular system of examination as in the present time, but the method of learning used at that time was enough to compel the students to study hard and seriously. Every time the students attended the classes, the teacher would ask the students to repeat the lesson they had studied the previous day. At the higher level, the teacher would give some questions related to the subject of study to be answered by the students. To some occasions that discussions and debates also held to short the appropriate answer of the given questions.

Though there was no formal examination in the madrasahs at the time, but it did not mean that the quality of students was poor. The regular questions given by the teachers and discussions held among the students and between the teacher and the students, led to the mastery of materials by the students and made them more confident to face the actual problems of the society. The system created a competitive environment for the students. The regular debates had also been held among the

students to compare themselves with other fellow students. This kind of environment was very supportive in the process of learning and producing great personalities.

The system of education in those days may be termed as open system, since there were no imposition of choice of subjects on the students. Apart of this, education was free to all the age groups and no bar was formed for the place of education. However, according to a written record, the students completed their study at the age of 20 to 23. They received a certificate after the completion of study to mark the success in their study.

In the declining period of the Moghul dynasty, after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, when the condition of the Indian Muslims was on the brink of destruction, there arose a very important personality, a mujaddid (reformer) called Shah Waliullah (1703-1763) who, along with his charisma and great personality, was able to re-ignite the dying flame.

Shah Waliullah's real name was Qutb al-Din Ahmad bin Abd al-Rahim. Born in 1703. Shah Waliullah received the most abiding influence on his intellectual and spiritual orientation from his illustrious father, Shyeikh Abd. Rahim. In keeping with the tradition followed among the Muslim families in India, Shah Waliullah started his education by committing Al-Qur'an to memory at the age of seven. After that he was admitted to Madrasah *Rahimiyyah*, an institution of Islamic education, moral and spiritual training, established by his father. After graduating from the madrasah, Shah Waliullah took up the position of a teacher at the same madrasah along with his

involvement in a thorough programme of spiritual reform under the guidance of his father.

In 1143 A.H. he traveled to Hijaz where he performed Hajj and stayed for two years. During his sojourn there, he found an opportunity to benefit immensely from a galaxy of luminaries of Islamic scholarship who had been drawn to the house of Allah from the entire Muslim world. In particular Shah Wali Allah was fascinated by Shaikh Abu Tahir Kurdi Madani ( d. 1145 A.H ), a great jurist of the Shafi'i school who was also initiated in the esoteric tradition of outstanding sufi-philosopher of Spain Muhyi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi<sup>32</sup>

He was able to bring the Muslims back to schools to study the Islamic sciences. He had very great influence on Indian Muslims who were in the state of conflict at the time. His idea to return back to Qur'an and Sunnah received a tremendous welcome. This zeal of bringing back the glory led the Muslims to learn again the lost knowledge. This same zeal has become the inspiration for the establishment of many Islamic institutions in India.

The generation of Indian Muslims succeeding Shah Waliullah were greatly influenced by his teachings and reforms. The Intellectual, cultural and spiritual history of the Muslims of the sub-continent shows the impact of his revivalist ideas. Many educational, intellectual, and spiritual reform movements that emerged in India since 18<sup>th</sup> century and which made any worthwhile contribution to their environment and ethos acknowledge their indebtedness to Shah Waliullah. Moreover, the substantial

contribution made by him in the crystallization of Islamic thought in general, and in the development of various Islamic sciences such as *tafseer*, *hadith*, *fiqh*, *ushul fiqh* and *kalam* in particular had been acknowledged by many leading scholars of Islam outside the sub-continent of South Asia. Shah Waliullah stands in the recent history of Islam as a bridge between classical and contemporary streams of scholarship. He delved deep in the treasure of knowledge scattered in the vast literature of traditional Islamic sciences. At the same time, he keenly studied his own environment and ethos, and attempted a re-statement of Islam with a futuristic vision.<sup>33</sup>

For the revival of Islam, Shah Waliullah desired to present Islam in its true form which does not admit extreme rigidity and reserve as depicted by the theologians and the misguided mystics, and to break away from the old order, replacing it by the new to meet the requirements of the time.

Shah Waliullah starts with the Holy Quran as the basis. By understanding the need to render the word of God into the language of the masses, he translated Holy Quran into simple Persian with the name *Fathu-r-Rahman*. Thus he brought out a revolutionary change into the practice of the sheer conventional reading of Quran, without knowing its meaning.

The tradition, i.e., the Hadith, being the second source of Islamic Shari'ah, caught utmost attention of Shah Waliullah. He firmly believed that, for the restoration of a decadent community to its original state of dignity and honour, it was necessary to revive the science of tradition and dispel confusion from it wherever it occurs. With

this object in view, he instituted an academy, *Darul Hadits*, the first of its kind in the Indian subcontinent.<sup>34</sup>

The movement initiated by Shah Waliullah for the reconstruction of Muslim religious thought and revival of Muslim religious sciences and the social and moral uplift of Muslim society did not die with him. His successors - Shah Abdul aziz, Shah Abdul Qadir, Shah Rafiuddin, Maulana Ismail, Sayyid Ahmad Shahid, Haji Imadadullah and others worked zealously to propagate the ideas of their master and bring about an intellectual Renaissance of the Muslims. It is significant that there is hardly any Muslim institution of religious learning in India which does not owe its existence, directly or indirectly, to Shah Waliullah. He was a seminal personality, which gave birth to a number of movements for the reconstruction of religious thought and revitalization of Muslim society. His impact was felt in the religious, social, and political spheres<sup>35</sup>.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Kishore Nawal, General Studies, Indian Economy and Geography of India, (Jawahar Publisher & Distributors, New Delhi), p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Qureshi Ishtiaq Hussain, The Muslim Community of Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Renaissance Publishing House, Delhi, 1998), pp. 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> Grierson George, Linguistic Survey of India, (Report of the Official Language Commission, Bombay, 1956), p. 28

<sup>4</sup> Khalidi Omar, Indian Muslims Since Independence, (Vikas Publishing House PVT LTD, New Delhi 1996) 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Esposito John L, The Oxford Encyclopedia of Modern Islamic World, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1995), Vol. II, p. 188

<sup>6</sup> Aziz Ahmad, An Intellectual History of Islam in India, (Edinburg University Press, Edinburg, 1969), p. 1-3

<sup>7</sup> Faridi FR and M.M. Siddique, The Social Structure of Indian Muslim, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Qazi Publisher & Distributor, New Delhi, 1992), p. 40

<sup>8</sup> Khalidi Omar, *op. cit.* p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Nadvi Abul Hasan, Al-Muslimuna fi-al-Hind, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Academy of Research and Publications Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow, 1983), p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 20.

<sup>12</sup> Hamadryad Islamic, (Quarterly Journal of Studies and Research in Islam, Vol. XV, 1992), p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> The Guznavid dynasty was founded by Alptigin in 961, he the commander- in chief at samanid force under Samanid ruler. Abdul Malik on the death Abdul Malik, Alptigin favored the succession of the son of Abdul Malik. Power was however captured by Mansur bin Nuh, a brother of Abdul Malik. Who was not on good term with Alptigin. On the accession of Mansur Alptigin withdrew from the Samanid court, and moving southward succeeded in wresting the principality of Gaznavi from its ruler Anuk, see: Hasan Masudul, Prof., History of Islam Vol: I (Adam Publishers & distributors, New Delhi, 1995), p. 277.

<sup>14</sup> This dynasty was established by Qutbuddin Aibak in 11206 - 1526. The Delhi sultanate was ruled successively by five dynasties: The Slave Dynasty at Turkey military dominated by the figure of Alauddin Khalji (q.v.) from 1290-1320, The Tuglaq

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Dynasty.(q.v.) from 1320-1388, The undistinguished Sayyid Dynasty from 1414-1450; and The Lodi (q.v.) to Dynasty at Afghan antecedent from 1450-1526.) (See, Surjit mansingh, Historical Dictionary of India), p.120.

<sup>15</sup> Babur complete name was Zahirudin Muhammad Babur (1483-1530), the founder of Mughal empire is one of it's most fascinates and attractive personalities. In 1504 Babur control at Kabul in Afghanistan. From here his fortunes prospered and he was able to carve out a New Kingdom for himself. In Afghanistan having established himself he began to turn his attentions elsewhere in 1517 he made his first rid to India. (see, Denis Judd, A Traveler's history at India, 2<sup>nd</sup>, ( Srihti Publisher & Distributors, New Delhi 1998)

<sup>16</sup> Grade G.D, The Role of Islam in South Asia, (Al Fatiha Fondation, Pune 1990), p. 35.

<sup>17</sup> Qureshi Ishtiaq, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Qureshi Ishtiaq, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Samad Abdul.M. DR, Islam in Kerala 1<sup>st</sup> (Laurel Publications, Kollam, Kerala, 1998), pp. 2-3.

<sup>20</sup> Shalaby Ahmad, DR., Tarikh al Ialam wa al-Hadharah al-Islami, (Cairo, 1996), vol. VII, pp. 262-63.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 264.

<sup>22</sup> Ahmad Muhammad Akhlaq , Traditional Education Among Muslims, (BR. Publication Corporation, New Delhi, 1985), pp. 1-3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>26</sup> Abdul Hai S, India during Muslim Rule, 1<sup>st</sup> ed (Academy of Islamic Research & Publications, Lucknow, 1977) pp. 166-188.

<sup>27</sup> Ahmad Ashfaque MD. System of Education in Medieval India. (Panchashell Publishers, New Delhi, 1979), p. 39.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-67

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105



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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>32</sup> Hamdard Islamicus, quartely Journal of Studies and Research in Islam ( winter 1995, vol. XVIII), P. 42.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 43

<sup>34</sup> Samad Abdul, *op. cit.* p. 31.

<sup>35</sup> Nizami Khaliq Ahmad, State and Culture in Medieval India. (Adam Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 1985) p. 394.