Chapter 3
The syllabus or curriculum has always occupied an important position in the arrangement of teaching at maktabs and madrasahs and other centres of learning. The curriculum in fact plays an effective role in attaining the objective of education and for the development of the educational life of the students and for the embellishment of their aptitude. Secondly on behalf of the curriculum we can derive at the inclination of the Muslims, their contemplative attitude and ruminative leanings towards education. That is why if the syllabus of the educational institution is presumed to be a barometer to measure the deep regard and educational preferences, it won’t be wrong. Education has always been an important source for the efflorescence and progress of the culture and civilization of communities. In order to attain this objective, the curriculum has to be effective and advantageous. It is generally presumed that the curriculum of the education of the Muslim period was a collaboration of the rational (Ma’qulat) and traditional (Manqulat) sciences and it included subjects of both the field of study. In this context
it will be appropriate to investigate and study, whether was there a fixed syllabus? Were there stages of study? Was there any time bound considerations and was a particular subject studied at one particular time? Some modern scholars have discussed about the stages of education. Let us first examine these.

STAGES OF EDUCATION:

While discussing the syllabus the first question that comes to one’s mind is whether there were stages of education and what were they and what was the basis of this division or bifurcation? From the material available in the contemporary sources we can infer that like nowadays during the Sultanate period there was no division or fixation of groups and there was no limitation or building of standards (Darjat). During that period the teaching and learning depended upon the books of study and if at all a division of various stages of education is possible then it can be done on the basis of teaching of subjects alone. Many modern scholars like Rafiq Saeed Ahmad, have according to present system divided the stages of education into three i.e. primary, secondary and higher learning. But there is no evidence of these stages of education in the contemporary sources, for instance, Barani in his Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi has not mentioned a word about these stages of education.

1 For details of education during the Islamic period refer to, Rafiq, Saeed Ahmad, Islami Nizam Ta‘alim Idarah-i-Tasnif wa Talif n.d., pp.55-56 and pp.264-74.
When the Muslims arrived in India the method they adopted for the provision of education is that according to the custom the reading of the Quran was taught first. The teacher who taught to read the Quran was generally called a 'Muqri'. The Fawaid-u’l-Fu’ad testifies that the person from whom Shaikh Nizam-u’d-din studied reading the Quran in his childhood was a Hindu slave called Shadi Muqri. He was an experienced and able teacher who knew how to teach the Quran and develop in boys a liking for memorizing it.\(^2\) Shaikh Nizamuddin studied one verse from him and due to that barqat remembered the whole Quran. Shadi himself knew the Quran by heart and could recite it according to it's seven methods of recitation.\(^3\) His life represented a strange pattern of living in those days, Shadi was originally the slave of a Hindu. Perhaps he secured emancipation in later life and became the pupil of a great scholar of Lahore, Khwaja Muqri. It was generally believed that whosoever received elementary instructions in the Quran from him eventually succeeded in committing the Holy Book to memory.

After the Quran it is obvious that some Persian books were taught, for instance. Mir Khurd writes about Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya:

“His mother sent him to the maktab where he read and completed the Quran and learnt to read books.”

‘Kitabaha’ means the Persian books which were generally taught in the maktabs of that period since that was the language of administration and had become the language of the Muslims.

It is evident that an elementary knowledge of Arabic was also imparted so that an individual could understand the meaning of the verses of the holy Quran and was in a position to translate the famous Hadith (traditions). That’s why the writers of that period made considerable use of Arabic also in their compilations and compositions. Perhaps this is the stage which the modern scholars call primary stage.

After this, in the next stage Arabic and Islamic sciences were taught which consisted of two stages. Mir Khurd writes that Nizam-u’d-din Auliya after completing Ilm Fiqh, Usul-i-Fiqh started with the books of the stage of Fazl which testifies that there was a stage of ‘Fazl’. In the different books of that period and the tazkiras of the Ulama and Sufis we find the usage of the term ‘Ilm Fazl’. In other books another word

6 Ibid, p.111.
used for *Fazl* is ‘Muntahiyan’\(^7\) and this is the stage which is interpreted as the stage of higher learning. Of the stage prior to this stage we do not find specific information in the books but in view of the term ‘*Fazl*’ modern scholars have given the name ‘*Ilm Zaroori* or ‘Compulsory Education’ to the previous stage because whatever was studied before ‘*Ilm Fazl*’ is presumed to be compulsory stage of education and who completed this stage was called a *Danishmand* (scholar)\(^8\) that means any individual who did not go through this stage could not be called a ‘*Danishmand*’\(^9\) or ‘*Maulvi*’. Maulana Siraj-u’d-din Uthman (Akhi Siraj) came from Bengal with just a book and paper and no other things to Delhi and after entering into the *Khanqah* of Nizam-u’d-din Auliya he became busy serving the people and hence did not get an opportunity to educate himself. When Shaikh Nizam-u’d-din desired to send his disciples to Bengal naturally he thought of Maulana Sirajuddin Uthman, also he desired to give the *Khilafatnama* to him since he belonged to this place but when he realized that the Maulana had not even completed the stage of ‘*Danishmandi*’ he said:

\(^9\) For details see Latif ‘Muslim Intelligentsia (*Danishmand*) As Portrayed in the Sufic Literature of the 14\(^{th}\) Century.
Maulana Fakhruddin Zarradi was present in the majlis and he said that within six months he will make him (the Maulana) a ‘Danishmand’ or (Maulvi).

Thus the study of this important stage of ‘Danishmandi’ of Siraj Uthman was initiated. He started with the study of Sarf (Etymology) and it seems with ‘Mizan’ the initial Arabic study was initiated, infact whatever is taught in Sarf i.e. the benefits of gardan (conjugation), Ta’alil (changing one of the weak letters to another) qawa’id (rules or principles of grammar) etc. were memorized by him. Maulana Fakhruddin Zarradi wrote a book for Maulana Sirajuddin and called it ‘Tasrif-i-Uthmani’.

Other than Sarf and Nahv (syntax) he studied ‘Kafya’ and ‘Mufussal’ and in Fiqh, Quduri and ‘Majma-u’l-Bahrain’ from Maulana Ruknuddin Inderpati. Thus in the compulsory stage i.e. danishmandi we can presume that Sarf, Nahv and Fiqh were taught.

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid, p.299
Mir Khurd informs us that Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya studied *Hidayat, Bazdawi, Kashshaf, Mashariq* and *Masabih* from Maulana Jamaluddin.¹³ Probably these were the subjects taught in the ‘*Ilm Fazl*’ stage. The *Tafsir ‘Kashshaf’*¹⁴ and the ‘*Tafsir Madarak’*¹⁵ *Mashariq-ul-Anwar, Masabih* were commonly used books on religious sciences. Other than *Nahv* (Etymology) and *Sarf* (syntax), *Adab* (Literature) *Maani-o-Bayan* (Rhetoric and figures of speech) etc were also taught. In *M’aqulat* the study was limited to ‘*Qutbi*’ ‘*Sharh Sahaif’*¹⁶ Here it is important to mention that amongst the modern scholars the first person to discuss the syllabus in detail was Maulana Manazir Husain Gilani.

Making a survey of the prevalent syllabus of education in Medieval India, it also seems appropriate to explain that the fixation of subjects and the limitation of the discussion related to these subjects is an important element of the syllabus and in order to bring them into practice the clear division of different stages of education and fixation of classes and period of education are required. And all these things are missing in the medieval educational system. In this context for the arrangement and organization of education the usage of the term ‘*Nisab-T’alim*’ or ‘*syllabus of education*’ perhaps is not very appropriate because there is no

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¹³ Ibid, p.207.
proper evidence to prove that there ever existed any committee or administrative body or any meeting of the ‘ulama’ who decided and fixed the course of studies (curriculum or syllabus) for each stage of education and based on this syllabus the process of imparting education functioned in the madrasahs or other individual centres of education.

The ‘Khanqah’ as an institution was different from a madrasah in many ways. The Khanqah unlike the Madrasah was a mystic organization. It was always a residential institution the aim of which was to inculcate the spirit of community living among the mystics and learning about their moral and spiritual upliftment. The inimates followed strict discipline and believed in simple living. It was sometimes run by futuh (gift) and sometimes waqf (endowment).

The ‘Khanqah’ organization differed from silsilah to silsilah. The chishti silsilah for instance was against having any relation or involvement with the government. It believed in a simple and humble living and close contact with common man but the suhrawardi silsilah did not eschew politics and possessed an aristocratic atmosphere.

The Qut al-Qulub, the Ihya-ul-‘ulum and its’ translation, the ‘Awarif, the Kashf al-Mahjub, the Sharh-i-Ta’arruf, the Risalah-i-

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17 For details see: Nizami, K.A. Studies in Medieval Indian History and Culture, Op.cit, pp.80-96
Qushairi, the Mirshad al-‘Ibad, the Maktubat-i-‘Ain-al-Qudat and the Lawa’ih and the Lawami of Qazi Hamid al-Din Nagauri, and Fawa’id u’d-Fu’ad of Amir Hasan had gained great popularity among mystic circles. People inquired from booksellers about books of devotion and mysticism.\(^1^8\)

It is also apparent that inspite of the presence of several Madrasahs and Khanqahs for imparting higher learning there also existed the private or individual centres of education where the teachers of a particular subject of their interest and choice gave lectures and students and seekers of knowledge according to their liking and leaning would attend these classes. In this way there is no evidence of any division of education into stages and no specific time table as such, no limitation of fixation of specific period of time, no limitation of the duration of study or the limitation of learning in a madrasah only or any geographical limitation as such. It is but obvious that under such circumstances it was not possible to fix a particular curriculum of studies but instead for the purpose of teaching and learning, certain books were selected related to each subject of study. Thus in the discussion of the medieval age it would be more appropriate to use the term “instruction of subjects or books” rather than curriculum or syllabus of education.

\(^1^8\) Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi, Op.cit, pp.343-345.
REVIEW OF SUBJECTS TAUGHT IN THE MADRASAHS

INDIVIDUAL AND PRIVATE CENTRES OF EDUCATION:

While studying the educational system or the teaching process of the period under review one is confronted with an important question i.e. which were the subjects taught in the madrasahs and the individual centres of learning of the Sultanate period? There is no doubt that in the contemporary sources there are several evidences to show the construction and renovation of the madrasahs, the people responsible for building the madrasahs, for the arrangement, management and administration of these madrasahs, the Sultanat’s gifts, donations and provision of scholarships and stipends to the teachers and students, lot of information related to this is available. But there is less information available on the teaching and instruction during various stages and it’s curriculum, that too the material is available in a dispersed form, in the tazkiras of the ulama, Fuzala, sufis, poets and not in a proper form.

By analyzing this material, the picture that emerges from it we can surmise that in the traditional sciences (Manqulat) the subjects taught in stages of higher learning were Tafsir (Exegesis), Hadith (Traditions of the Prophet), Fiqh (Muslim Jurisprudence), Usul-i-Fiqh (Principles of Jurisprudence), Adab (Literature), Ulum-i-Ma’ani (Rhetoric) and Tasawwuf (Sufism) and the subjects of rational sciences (Ma’qulat) were
Mantiq (Logic) Phalsafa (Philosophy), Hayat (Astronomy), Ilm-i-Kalaam (Scholasticism), Riyazi (Mathematics), Kimiya (Chemistry), Tibb (Medicine).

But due to the shortage of availability of material it is difficult to claim that all the above subjects were taught in all the madrasahs and private educational institutions of that period. However, it can be claimed about the Firoz Shahi Madrasah, that in it following subjects were taught:

(1). *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence)
(2). *Qir’at* (method of recitation of the Qur’an)
(3). *Usul-i-Kalam* (Principles of scholasticism)
(4). *Usul-i-Fiqh* (Principles of Jurisprudence)
(5). *Tafsir* (Exegesis)
(6). *Ahadis* (Traditions of the Prophet)
(7). *Ma’ani-o-Bayan* (Rhetoric)
(8). *Nahv-o-Sarf* (Syntax)
(9). *Ilm-i-Nazar* (Science of observation)
(10). *Ilm-i-Riyaazi* (Mathematics)
(11). *Tabi’i* (Physical sciences)
(12). *Illahi* (Theology)
(13). *Ilm-i-Tibb* (Medicine)
From the contemporary sources of the Sultanate period, it is evident that an individual scholar did not study at a time all the subjects and would attain specialization in all of them at one instance. There are only few subjects (such as Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh, Nahv-o-Sarf, Language and Literature etc.) or books related to them were generally studied and commonly used by the ulama, Fuzala in the teaching process. While the studying of other subjects and to attain specialization in them depended upon the personal interest and individual efforts of the scholars and intellectuals.

**STUDY OF THE RATIONAL SCIENCES:**

During the thirteenth century A.D. we can deduce from the contemporary sources there were innumerable scholars who were experts or specialized in the different branches of rational (Ma’qulat) sciences. According to Barani during the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji there were distinguished scholars of rational sciences along with scholars of traditional sciences and they were such experts and par excellence in their field that it was difficult to find their equivalent in other countries of the world. During the period amongst the scholars who specialized in

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Astronomy, Logic, Philosophy and Medicine, Sharif-u’d-din Badr-u’d-din Damishqi, Sadruddin Dehlavi, Alim-u’d-din, Ziauddin Nakshabi, Aziz-u’d-din Badayuni were present. During the period of Sultan Jalal-u’d-din Khalji Sad-u’d-din Dehlavi was such an expert of Logic and Hikmat that he became very famous and was given the title of ‘Mantaqi’.

In the Delhi Sultanate, Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq was famous for his deep interest and popularization of the rational sciences. Amongst the famous scholars of the rational sciences during this Sultan’s reign were Alim-u’d-din Izzuddin and Muin-u’d-din Imrani are worth mentioning. Both made significant contributions by delivering instruction in the books of these subjects and Izz-u’d-din himself was one of the teachers of the Sultan. During the same period in the field of medicine the degree of activity was such that the author of Masalik-ul-Absar fi-Mumalik-ul-Amsar states that 12,000 physicians were related to the Sultan’s darbar. Moreover the reign of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq was generally famous for the domination of the sciences of ‘Fiqh’ but as regard the interest of the rational sciences and the instruction in these sciences and it’s

compositions were also actively carried out. In some of the madrasahs of
this period, logic, philosophy, scholasticism were included in the course,
the evidence of which is available. During this time Jalal-u’d-din Rumi,
Jalal-u’d-din Kirmani, Azduddin Khalid Khani, Abdul Aziz Dehlavi etc.
and several other scholars were present who had a deep knowledge and
understanding in subjects such as Philosophy Hikmat, and Physical
sciences. Jalaluddin Rumi was the pupil of Shaikh Qutbuddin Razi, the
interpreter of Shamsiyah. Teaching was his special profession. The last
mentioned two ulama translated some Sanskrit works of astronomy in to
Persian. It is the best proof of their depth in this field. Moreover there
was no shortage of scholars of medicine. The appearance of many
hospitals during this period testifies to the keen interest of the Sultan in
this field. As already mentioned in the previous chapter these hospitals
not only provided remedy and treatment of diseases but also functioned
as institutions where lectures were imparted on medicine. That period
about which it is thought that the study of rational sciences was limited to
certain books only (i.e. Qutbi and Sharh-Sahaif) instead the experts of
this science were engrossed in imparting instruction in these subjects and
those scholars who were interested in specializing in the rational sciences
they would turn towards them for personal study and would conduct

27 Tughlaq, Firoz Shah, Futuhat-i-Firoz Shahi, Aligarh, Department of History, 1954,
research also. Shedding some light on this trend of the period under review Maulana Manazir Husain Gilani writes:

“Sometimes during the course and generally after studying the subjects which were necessary for ‘danishmandi’ or mullahyat, they, according to their learning and interest, studied science, arts, language, whatever was necessary, under the experts of these sciences. People were also engaged in getting knowledge which required exercise, reading and practice.”

From all this, we can derive at the conclusion whether it was the rational (Ma’qulat) science or the traditional (Manqulat) sciences, in every field taking benefit from the teachers of specific subjects in the higher learning was the prevalent trend and these teachers had their specific groups of students. Infact in any subject after attaining elementary knowledge of it, for the specialization in one particular subject or subjects the personal effort and hard work played a more effective role. Maulana Shibli describes this method of study in the following words:

In old terminology the college was supposed to be an existence of an individual; wherever he sat, the seekers of knowledge gathered around him. He inspired everyone anytime. Whatever he spoke, during day and night, was his lecture. The number of teachers and students continuously increased, and after sometime this individual scholar became an University in himself. Nowadays people are ascribed to colleges but in those days they were ascribed to individuals. The college and Universities in modern times are established only in big cities but at that time these individual scholars were available in every town and village.

TRENDS AND OBJECTIVES OF LEARNING:

Another significant aspect of the learning process during the period under discussion is that it was generally simple and practical. It appears that its object was not only just to provide the treasure of knowledge regarding different arts and sciences but also to create in them a sense to reach that treasure. Thus for teaching and learning such books were selected by which the scholars could get a practice of thinking, by mentally exercising their faculties of thinking and an opportunity to enhance their power of understanding. The objective was to develop such skills and capabilities that after completing the study of elementary subject, if a student desired to require expertise or specialization in a particular subject then he does not face any difficulty in carrying out further study and research and accomplish his goal. Thus much attention was paid to gain knowledge in subjects such as etymology, syntax, language and literature, rhetoric etc. and in these subjects abridged and abstruse books were liked and preferred by scholars. For Tafsir, Fiqh, Usul-i-Fiqh and Adab, systematically arranged books like Kashshaf, Hidaya, Bazdawi, Maqamat-i-Hariri kind of books were preferred. From these the students developed the capability of thinking and understanding and the skill of grasping the subject matter reached a

high scale. Moreover here, one must remember that during that period in the teaching process there was large scale increase in the books on *mantiq* (logic) and *Phalsafa* (Philosophy), one of the reasons for this perhaps was to attain the above mentioned objective of embellishing the skill of thinking and understanding, similarly in the case of *Usul-i-Fiqh* (Principles of Jurisprudence) the way in which the legal problems were discussed, to derive at a proper conclusion and emphasizing on the use of reasons and evidences, from this we can deduce that in this subject also we find the capability to enhance the power of understanding.

During the teaching and learning process of the Sultanate period we find evidence that some books which were complicated and difficult were read again and again which we come across while studying about the details of educational lives of several scholars and sufis, who went to the extent of studying some books forty times. For instance Mufti Jamal-u’d-din Dehlavi studied the ‘Azadi’ (books on *Ilm Kalaam*) forty times. Some times the complete books were memorized but there is no evidence available to understand whether the objective was to strengthen the power of memorization or any other reason. Shaikh Nizam-u’d-din Auliya had memorized forty chapters of the *Maqamat-i-*

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Muhammad bin Tughlaq had memorized the *Hidaya* and according to *Akhbar-u’l-Akhyar* and *Siyar-ul-Auliya* amongst the contemporary scholars of his reign, Maulana Husam-u’d-din Multani also remembered the *Hidaya* completely.  

**SELECTION OF BOOKS FOR STUDY:**

The selection of books played an important role in the acquisition of knowledge. Generally it is known that during that period for the purpose of teaching and learning instead of fixing debates and discussion on the prevalent subjects of study, books related to them were selected for study. This selection of books for teaching infact was in accordance with the personal leanings of the ulama, Fuzala and teachers of that period and depended upon their approval. That is the reason in the selection of books we find differences based on time and place. Moreover in some circles of scholars and teachers many books were prescribed for one particular subject according to their personal interest and likings. We can infer that during the Sultanate period for the teaching of Tafsir, Zamakhshari’s *Tafsir, (KashshaJ)* was the most popularly used *Tafsir* but in the Sufi circles the teachers used another *Tafsir ‘Madarik-ul-Tanzil’* (author: Abul Barkat Abdullah Bin Ahmad-ul-Nafsi) we also find evidence that they referred to *KashshaJ* also. It has already been discussed that the

Tafsir Madarik was the favourite Tafsir of Chishti Sufis, Shaikh Husamuddin Manikpuri always kept it with him and whenever he found any difficulty in understanding any verse then he would consult it. The Tazkiras and other contemporary sources do not give any reason for the popularity of the 'Tafsir Madarik' as compared to other Tafsirs but from the other Tafsirs that were prevalent in Sufi circles during that period we can infer that they were written from Sufi point of view. In this context the Tafsir 'Arais-ul-Abyan fi Haqaiq ul Quran' (author Shaikh Abu Muhammad Riz Bahan bin Abi-ul-Nasr) was also included. From the above examples we can understand the role of the individual leanings and thoughtful inclinations for the selection of books.

During the first phase of the Islamic period due to emigration of central Asian ulama and jurists and the governmental administrative needs the 'Fiqh literature' was patronized to a great extent Maulana Shibli is of the opinion that in the teaching process of that period, books authored by foreign scholars were only prescribed and used and after the initiation of the syllabus of 'Dars Nizami' the books authored by Indian scholars became prevalent. This claim of Maulana Shibli is not correct because we find evidence in the sources that before the appearance of

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many books authored by Indian writers were included and used in the teaching process. For instance in the teaching of Hadith.

*Mashariq-ul-Anwar.*[^36] (author: Hasan bin Muhammad Sughani Lahori) (ob.1252 A.D.), in *Nahv, Irshad*[^37] (author: Qazi Shihabuddin Daulatabadi) (ob.1225 A.D.) in *Sarf, Risala Asmania* (author Fakhruddin Zarradi (ob.1347 A.D.)[^38] and in *Hikmat, Shamsi Bazigha*[^39] (author: Mullah Muhammad Jaunpuri (ob.1652 A.D.) can be presented. Other than this the Indian scholars have also written commentaries and marginal notes on different sciences and arts. In the above context *Bazdawi, Madarik, Mashariq-ul-Anwar, Hidaya, and Waqaya, Fusul-ul-Hikam, Awarif-ul-Ma’arif, Aqaid Nasafi, Aqaid Azadiya, Mawaqif, Shamsiya, Tehzib-ul-Mantiq, Salam-ul-ulum, Shamsi Bazigha, and Hikmiya-ul-Aa’in*, many commentaries and marginal notes were formulated.[^40] And these books had become an important aspect of the teaching process under review.

Maulana Abdul Haiy has given the following syllabus for primary stage in which he has mentioned the names of reference books for each subject.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Reference Books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nahv</td>
<td>Kafiya, Lub-al-Albaf of Qazi Nasiruddin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baizawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiqh</td>
<td>Hidayah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usul-i-Fiqh</td>
<td>Manar, Usul-i-Bazdawi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tafsir</td>
<td>Madarik, Baizawi, Kashshaf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasawwuf</td>
<td>Awarif, Fusus-ul-Hikam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadith</td>
<td>Mashariq-ul-Anwar and Misabih-Al-Sanch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adab</td>
<td>Maqamat-i-Hariri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mantiq</td>
<td>Shah-i-Shamimah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalam</td>
<td>Sharh-i-Sahaif, Tamhid Abu Shakur Salimi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But according to K.A. Nizami this list is not complete and he has presented on the basis of the contemporary Tazkiras and Malfuzat, the following list of books which were included in the study of the period so that the general religious and academic leanings of that age may be understood correctly.

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(1). Qut-ul-Qulub
(2). Risalah Qushairi
(3). Ihya-ul-Ulum
(5). Mirsad-ul-Ibad
(6). Tafsir of Imam Nasiri
(7). Nawadir-ul-Usul of Maulana Alauddin Tirmizi.
(8). Ruh-ul-Arwa""
From the above detailed discussion we can conclude that whatever was the course of study it depended upon the selection of books. The selection of books in the process of teaching was such that after their completion a student would develop the quality of grasping the meaning of the subject and the power of understanding the different sciences and arts enhanced. The subject of study included both the traditional sciences as well as the rational sciences. Due to the efforts of the scholars and teachers towards personal study and research there was massive growth and development in the field of education which played a crucial role in the cultural efflorescence of the Delhi Sultanate.