CHAPTER V

UTILITY IN RELATION TO PRESENT MUSLIM SOCIETY IN INDIA
When the English got mastery over India in the middle of the 19th century, the whole set-up was changed. The new situation created many problems for the Muslims. The British Government introduced its own system of education and had little sympathy with the traditional institutions which were left on their own resources. The political and economic changes in British India very much affected the pattern of traditional life. The superstitious beliefs and practices were out of place in the new system of education. The teachers and the taught had no influence on the society; on the contrary, the society and the environment of the community exercised its influence upon them. The new secular education became the means of relationship between the various communities in the country. Gradually Indians became indifferent to their indigenous schools and were so much enamoured of English education that they paid little attention to their past civilization and culture.

In the present century, however, Western influence has increased manifold. The greatest tragedy of the traditional schools has that they refused to recognize the impact of the modern world on the eastern society. They resisted very strongly any move that would expose them to the scientific achievements and social developments of the modern age. Their refusal to see the new developments resulted in their isolation from the present day world.

It is an undeniable fact that the traditional education is disowned even by the poor classes in the Muslim community which were always eager to send their children to Maktabs and
Madrasaha. The result is that these classes who liberally donated to these institutions are now reluctant to give any kind of financial support. Since the Government is indifferent towards them and the support that they got from a particular section of the society is not forthcoming, most of them are languishing for want of resources. Now the question is how to infuse a new life into them and how to make them useful to the society so as to attract Muslims towards them. When we speak of infusion of new life we do not mean that they may be completely changed. They may be reoriented, but this reorientation should be done in a manner in which the fundamentals of Islam are also incorporated into it. These institutions can play an effective role in the life of the Muslims today if they keep in view the three objectives which education seeks to achieve: Firstly, to secure a balanced development of personality; Secondly, to train the individual in such a manner that he may fully identify himself with the social life of his community. Thirdly, the inculcation of religious and moral outlook. These institutions can realize these objectives only by organizing their syllabii on modern lines.

We would now like to specify the areas which require the attention of Muslim educationists. First of all, we take up the teaching of Arabic in the traditional institutions which requires a thorough examination and assessment. There is no doubt that the classical language of Islam is Arabic which belongs to the family of Semitic languages.

We find that in India undue emphasis is laid on the teaching of classical Arabic in most of the traditional schools.
As against this, the arrangement for the teaching of modern Arabic in these schools is inadequate and unsatisfactory. Students of these institutions are very proficient in classical Arabic and some of them can even compete with students of the Arabic-speaking countries. But generally speaking they are poor in modern Arabic with the result that they betray utter ignorance of the modern Arab world as well. It was Mawlawi Shibli Nu'mani who first raised his voice against this over-emphasis on the teaching of classical Arabic at the expense of modern Arabic. "It is a deplorable fact," he says "that this one-sided concentration (upon the classical form of the language) has kept us ignorant of the modern language...." For five centuries Arabs have been writing their poetry in this new language. Their (standard) prose-writings too are in this very language. People would be surprised to know that if these modern qasidas are recited without vowels they would be lacking in rhythm. It was for this reason that Mawlawi Shibli was very particular that the Nadwa should not be deficient in this respect. Consequently the Nadwa made adequate provision for the teaching of modern Arabic to its students. It is gratifying to note that products of Nadwa today are well versed both in writing and speaking the modern language. Since they know modern Arabic well they can keep pace with the new thinking and recent trends in the Arab world.

In the teaching of Arabic there is a great defect, namely, that no adequate attention is paid to its linguistic side. It is necessary that provision should be made for the teaching of

comparative grammar of the Semitic languages, for any person who
wants to acquire a competent knowledge of Arabic linguistic study
of Semitic languages is indispensable. Moreover, modern Arabic
should be taught through the direct method. Proper study of the
language is not possible through the translation method which
most of the Madrasahs adopt in teaching Arabic. It is good that
it is now being increasingly realized that undue emphasis upon
grammar is not conducive to the learning of this language. As a
matter of fact now some of the institutions are not so dogmatic
as they used to be in the past. Secondly, in the past the
traditional schools did not give any importance to the teaching
of history, although historiography was a developed science in
Muslim countries in the Middle Ages. A few books on Islamic
history are prescribed and these too do not conform to the
principles of historical writing. According to Mawlana Shibli
books of history were prescribed in the syllabus of the traditional
schools not there because of their historical importance but
because of the fact that they were considered as models of prose.
Moreover, most of the histories of Islam written in India lacked
a critical analysis. There is, therefore, an urgent need for
reorientation of the textbooks of history in the context of the
modern world. We should lay more stress on the social and
cultural history of Islam rather than merely its political
history. Moreover, it would be beneficial if arrangement is
made for the teaching of comparative study of various religions
existing in India. Besides giving them a knowledge of Islamic

2. Ibid., p. 89.
history, students of these institutions should be taught the history of India from the ancient to the modern period in a general way. In view of the fact that social and national integration of different communities is crucial to the creation of a united India these institutions, while teaching this subject, should make efforts to inculcate in their students the concept of national solidarity and unity. Hence, it is essential that they should be well informed with the history of every community, its cultural attainments and contribution to Indian civilization. There is little doubt that students of the traditional schools are kept in the dark about the achievements of cultural groups and communities other than Muslim.

Thirdly, philosophy and logic are the two subjects to which our traditional schools seemed to be very much attached. In Dars-i-Nizāmiyah we find that there were more books prescribed on this subject than on Hadith or Qurān. There is little doubt that these two subjects are very relevant in this age of experimentation. The need for the pursuit of wisdom which the philosophy seeks to aim at is still felt. But it is also a fact that the philosophy as taught in these schools is the ancient Greek philosophy as interpreted by Muslim philosophers; it simply ignores the modern developments in the subject which cannot be dismissed as of no significance. In this connection it may also be pointed out that in these schools traditional logic is given greater importance than philosophy. But like philosophy modern developments in logic find no place in the curricula. It may be suggested that it would be quite appropriate if Indian system of
logic (Pracina-nyaya) is also included in the syllabus.

Again, Fiqh or Islamic jurisprudence is taught rather unimaginatively in these schools. Students are never informed of the recent trends in Islam and their impact upon the Islamic legal literature. Hence, there is a need to completely overhaul the teaching of Fiqh so that the students may become aware of the recent thinking on the subject.

Hadith is the next important subject taught in traditional schools. It is a well known fact that the Traditions (Hadith) played a vital role in the early history of Islam and their influence on Muslim thought has been very deep. Thus, Traditions formed the main source for the study of the development of doctrines during the first few centuries of Islam. Hadith was undoubtedly a very important source of Muslim law. But its importance in the development of other subjects like literature and social sciences in the Muslim world was comparatively more important. It has decidedly played a vital role in the growth and development of Arabic literature.

In the Indian Madrasahs Hadith did not get the recognition which it got in other Muslim countries. In Dars-i Nizamiyah we find only a few books on the subject. The students never learn to make a critical analysis of the Traditions. Generally, they are not well informed about the history of growth of the Traditions and development of the science. Hence, they are unable to meet the objections and doubts raised by the European orientalists against the genuineness of the Traditions, etc.

"As a matter of fact, the whole system of teaching particularly
of Hadith, in India and (so far I know) in the whole Islamic world has been reduced to mere formality. Very few of the teachers possess any knowledge of 'Asma' al-Rijal, a subject so essential for a study of Hadith.3

Thus, the present syllabus as it exists in these traditional schools and as it is called the Dars-i Nizāmiyah is inadequate and outmoded and requires a drastic change. It is unrelated to the realities of modern life and has kept itself unconcerned with the tremendous explosion of knowledge which has changed the entire human society. It is encouraging to find that Muslim educationists have raised their voice against the inadequacies of Dars-i Nizāmiyah and have urged for its improvement and reorientation in order to make it more useful to the students in the context of the present day world.

There is no doubt that Dars-i Nizāmiyah in the Middle Ages when it was introduced was in keeping with the needs of the time and met adequately the demands of that period. Moreover, there was, at that time, no distinction between spiritual and secular education. Administrators of the state, businessmen, poets and writers were all suitably equipped for their respective fields through this system of education.

Today, the political and social structure, economic and monetary conditions, trade and industry, national and international situation as everything else has undergone a revolutionary change. Innumerable new problems have arisen. The life has become more complicated than it was in the past. It is therefore necessary that this syllabus should also be so reoriented. Thus, with a view to improve the teaching in the traditional schools the

following points may be considered:

(1) In view of the present-day needs and problems of human society, it is desirable to include subjects like Economics, Political Science, Psychology, etc., in the syllabus.

(2) Some books taught in the traditional schools have become outdated and are not of much use. Since these books depict a picture of the old world which has changed beyond recognition, students studying them can never feel that they live in the new age. This is particularly true of the books on philosophy and logic. Such books should be replaced by latest ones.

(3) Students of the traditional institutions display a lack of general knowledge. To understand the present movements and to find solutions to the problems of modern life, subjects like geography, current history, general knowledge, etc., should be included in the syllabus.

(4) The following subjects should be made compulsory and should be taught gradually from the lower to the higher classes.

(a) Tafsir or Exegesis:

Under the present system, it is generally at the last stage of education that a little of Tafsir is included in the syllabus, or else it is on the completion of the course that it is taught in a period of one-and-half to two months in a very casual manner. It is essential to devote more time to the study of the Qur’an and Tafsir.

(b) Hadith and Usul-Hadith, including history of Hadith:

In order to fully appreciate the significance of Hadith, it is essential not only to study the Hadith proper but also
Usūl al-Hadîth and the history of development and codification of Hadîth.

(c) Fiqh and Usūl-al-Fiqh;

(d) (i) History of Islam (Political as well as cultural).

(ii) History of India (political as well as cultural).

(e) Arabic Literature (both classical and modern).

(5) A comparative study of the different faiths of India.

(6) One European language - e.g., German, French or English - should be included as an optional subject.

Vocational and Technical Education: We are not in favour that every student should be given vocational and technical education. This will not only inevitably lead them away from their real goal during learning period, but also they would not be able, on completing their education, to dedicate their lives to religion.

It would be a better proposal that only those students should receive vocational training who are not going to specialize in religious affairs. Those who propose to take up research and writing religious articles as life long works should not be distracted from this and should be kept away from vocational training.

For ordinary students it would be good that they should receive some technical training in one or the other vocation. In this way they would be able to be self-dependent and not be merely confined within Mosque and Madrasah. Whichever field they enter, they will always carry their point of views with them there.
What should precisely this technical and vocational education be? Each institution can select any art or occupational training keeping in view its own convenience and resources, students' ability and conditions under which they are working.

**Reformation of Institutions**

**Management of the Institutions**

In order to make the system useful and effective, it is essential to bring about some uniformity in respect of syllabii, examinations, and degrees, at least in institutions which belong to same school of thought. There should also be some rules and restrictions on the time of admissions and exit of students. If this preliminary work is not settled properly, then these classes will be just formal and no desirable results could be achieved.

**Students and Teachers**

Teachers in Arabic institutions enjoy full respect and dignity vis-a-vis their students, the managing committees and their environments. But economically their conditions are far from satisfactory. It is very important to see that their remuneration and honorarium are properly improved.

Various teachers' organizations and societies should be established to keep mutual contact. In order to check destructive and undesirable tendencies in students, to remove the deterioration in the standards of education, it is necessary to take the following important steps:

(1) Rules regarding admission and exit of students should be made more strict, and admissions should be closed after a
definite period of time from the start of academic session.

(2) Classification principle should be followed strictly.

(3) A certificate attesting success in previous class (or last institution attended) should be demanded whenever a new candidate seeks admission.

(4) Various societies should be established for students and they should also be organized in inter-class levels.

(5) Arrangements should be made to hold educational competitions - written and oral - for the students. These healthy competitions will inculcate and develop the competitive spirit and desire for improvement.

Library

Most of the libraries of Arabic institutions are very rich in their collections. At most of the places, there are collections of rare books and precious manuscripts. But they are in deplorable conditions. They are not manned by properly trained librarians who could maintain them on modern library techniques. Most of them do not have catalogues with the result that the books which are of immense value are lying there unutilized. Following measures are suggested to improve the situation.

(1) Lists of printed and hand-written books should be prepared so that research scholars within the country and without could make use of them.

(2) If it is not possible to print and publish these lists, then at least handwritten lists should be prepared for teachers and students. (These are not available at most of the places.)
(3) They should be properly classified and catalogued and made available to the students and research scholars.

(4) Maintenance of these books requires special attention.

(5) Attention should also be given to the possibility of getting second prints of manuscripts and rare books.

Darulagamah

The darulagamahs of Arabic institutions deserve special mention. They are quite good and in many respects they are better than their counterparts in non-traditional schools. However, at some places their hygienic conditions is not satisfactory and they require special attention in this regard. Moreover, there are other aspects such as food distribution and fixation of study hours which require some improvement. There is also scope for improvement in matters of physical exercise, excursion and sports and games. Improvements in this direction will help students achieve co-ordination between their body and brain.

Reports

It is suggested that all matters pertaining to administration, teachers, students, hostels, libraries, history, old students and other relevant aspects should be included in the annual reports of the institutions. These reports should be supplied not only to the donors and munificent contributors to the institutions' fund but also to the old students, so that the institutions could maintain a permanent contact with them.
Statistics and Records

In the end we would like to draw the attention of authorities - that be of these institutions to the fact that they should take special care of their statistics and preserve their important records for future use of scholars. The list of their students along with their past history should readily be available. Moreover, there is a need to keep records of their income and expenditure.