CHAPTER IX

SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN THE 18TH CENTURY

The historians of medieval India were interested only in their patron kings and nobles, and their doings. Consequently they have ignored matters relating to the social and cultural life of Muslim society. The references to such topics are meagre and inadequate. It is very difficult, therefore, to reconstruct the working of the educational institution on the basis of such accounts.

The Muslim always treated teaching and learning as a part of their religion, and an act of piety. Helping students, spreading education, providing books and rendering financial assistance to individual students, founding madrasahs and patronizing the ulama was considered as means of salvation. As a result education became a private concern though considerable assistance was rendered by the state.

In the middle ages there were no separate buildings for educational purposes. The mosques and the khanqahs served the purpose. The small rooms around the courtyard were meant for the residence of the students and teachers both. Many of those mosques are still used for educational purposes.

In medieval India, the khanqahs were centres of learning both spiritual and material. They served the most important purpose of imparting religious education. The mystics of that period did not appreciate the life of the recluses. It is due to
this reason that every saint of that period was engaged in educational work. They had fixed times for this purpose. A large number of students gathered in their khangahs. The author of *Magamat-i-Mazhari* writes about Shaikh-ul-Shaykh Muhammad Abid who died in the year 1161/1751 A.D. "About two hundred ulema and pious men studied under him and a large number of students completed their studies under him."

With the establishment of Mughal rule in India, education received great patronage and encouragement. Akbar took keen interest in the educational activities. He made an attempt to introduce reforms in the curriculum of the primary schools then in vogue. At his suggestions some important subjects, for example logic, arithmetic, mensuration, geometry, astronomy, accountancy, public administration and agriculture were included in the course. This scheme gave a secular bias to the entire educational system of the country.

The interest of the rulers in education continued during the reign of Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

Aurangzeb, founded numerous madrasahs all over his dominion. The teachers and students received monthly stipends. A considerable amount of money was spent in subsidies. The author of

2. Vide, Dr. Yusuf Husain Khan, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*, p. 77.
Alamgir Nama writes that the students were given stipends according to their abilities. Both teachers and students free from the worries of subsistence were engaged in educational activities. The assistance given to the students was in proportion to their proficiency. The students who studied Mizan received one anna daily; and those who studied Munshaib two annas, and up to the study of Sharhe Waqaya eight annas only.

After Aurangzeb, the political anarchy and confusion that followed, was not favourable for literary activities. The author of Tarikh-i-Muhammad Shahi writes:

"نه مدرس را انشل كتاب ونه در مدرسه صلب علم" 3

But even then we find reference to a few madrasahs attached to the khangahs, mosques and others, depending on private support. In addition to this in every city of northern India there were madrasahs.

Madrasah Rahimia.

Shah Abdul Rahim, the father of Shah Wali Ullah, was the founder of this madrasah. It was situated near the Mohalla of 'Mehdiyan.' He started the work of teaching of hadis and students began to assemble there in great numbers.

1. Muhammad Kazim, Alamgir Nama (Calcutta, 1868), p. 1085
2. Tarikh-i-Farah Baksh of Muhammad Faiyaz quoted by Dr. Yusuf Hussain Khan, Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture, pp. 84-85.
3. Tarikh-i-Muhammad Shahi (M3), f. 158a.
4. Hayat-i-Wali, p. 229
After his return from Madina, Shah Wali Ullah started the work of teaching hadis in the madrasah of his father. In a short time the name of Shah Sahib spread far and wide and students flocked there in great numbers. The place could not accommodate such a large number of students. The emperor Muhammad Shah offered a haveli to Shah Sahib for this purpose inside the city. At that time the madrasah was most magnificent and beautiful and an important academic centre. 

Upto the Mutiny of 1857, the madrasah was in its original condition but it was pillaged during the Mutiny and destroyed. The Mohalla is still known by the name of Madrasah of Shah Abdul Aziz.

Shah Wali Ullah treated his students with kindness and without any discrimination and taught them with great interest. He himself financed some intelligent students. It may be presumed that when the emperor Muhammad Shah on his own initiative had given Shah Sahib place for a madrasah, he might have fixed necessary allowances for the students who came from distant place to this madrasah. There was a general practice among the umeras of that time to award stipends to students from their own resources. Hundreds of students received financial aid from the state of

5. Hayat-wali, p. 231.
Hafiz-ul-Alam Rahmat Khan, the ruler of Barielly. Najib-ud-daula was a great patron of learning. Shah Abdul Aziz writes that there were nine hundred ulema in the court of Najib-ud-daula. The stipends of the ulema varied from five rupees to five hundred rupees.

Madrasa of Bazar Khanum.

The khanqah of Hazrat Shah Kalim Ullah Jahanabadi was a centre of learning and students from far and wide began to resort to his madrasa. We do not find detailed information about this madrasa. According to Shijrat-ul-Anwar, "A great number of students came there and reside there. They studied books prescribed and received food and clothing from the Sarkar."

Madrasa of Ghazi-ud-din Khan.

This madrasa was constructed by Ghazi-ud-din Khan Firoz Jang. It was situated outside Ajmeri Darwaza. When Shah Fakhr-ud-din came over to Dehli from Aurangabad Deccan, he started the

2. Hakim Abul Qasim Mir Qudrat Ullah Qasim who had received financial assistance from the state of Najib-ud-daula, praises his patronage of learning in the following verses:

4. Vide Tarikh-i-Washtik-i-Chisht, p. 306.
laid the foundation of a madrasah in the Mughalpura Mohalla of Dehli. The said Amir died in 1148/1749 A.D. The madrasah founded by Haushan-ud-daula was the centre of learning in Dehli. Maulawi Kehmat Ullah, Maulavi Abdullah, a resident of Kashmir, and Maulavi Muhammad Siddiqi were teachers in this madrasah. Maulavi Siddiqi was a great scholar of Muslim jurisprudence. From one remark of the author of the Tarikh-i-Hindi it appears that there was a Badshahi madrasah in Shahjahanabad and Sheikh Nasir-ul-Haq was one of the teachers. But details are not available about this madrasah.

We have so far spoken about the madrasas of the capital town. The fact remains that in every town and city of northern India, there were madrasas of same type.

The Purab (East) was the mine of learning says Mir Azad Bilgrami:

"Since the very old days, the East has been the seat of the ulama, though all the Provinces of Hind boast for their educational centres; specially the capital towns, to which all sorts of eminent people resort. But the Province of Oudh and Allahabad possess a peculiarity which can hardly be found in other provinces (of India). In the entire province of Oudh and Allahabad, there is a population of nobles and grandees at a distance of five or ten kos; who had received from the Sultan and (their) officials stipends and lands as a maddad-i-Ma'ash (subsistence). (They) founded mosques, madrasahs and khanqahs and eminent scholars and literatis of the times opened the doors of knowledge and learning everywhere.

2. Tarikh-i-Hindi (MS), p. 630.
3. ibid, pp. 629-30.
4. ibid, p. 630.
5. ibid, p. 630.
6. ibid, p. 629.
and a general invitation was extended to the students. The students visited city after city and wherever they got favourable opportunities they got themselves admitted to the madrasah, and began their studies. They well-to-do people of every city, took care of these students and service of a student was considered as a great blessing. The emperor Shahjahan once boasted 'East is the Shiraz of my country.' Upto 1130 A.H. that area continued to be the centre of learning and learned and education was the order of the day."

In the early period of the reign of the emperor Muhammad Shah, Burhan-ul-Mulk Saadat Khan Nishapuri was appointed Governor of the Subah of Oudh. Side by side, the great cities of Subah of Allahabad, Jaunpure, Banares, Ghazipur, Karawa-Manikpur and Kora Jehanabad came under his control. He resumed all the old stipends and siyari-shals. This deprived the people of facilities of education and people adopted the profession of a soldier and consequently it lost its importance as the centre of education and old institutions were deserted and literati scattered. But in spite of all these vicissitudes the East continued to serve the cause of education. Azad Bilgrami writes:

"In spite of this the tradition of learning are wide spread in this part of the country, particularly of logic. It is difficult to find its another example anywhere else in the country. The ulema are still engaged in spreading knowledge and they occupy prominent position for their learning."

1. **Maasir-ul-Kiram**, pp. 221-222.
2. ibid, p. 222.
3. ibid, p. 223.
Similar madrasahs existed in Sialkot, Agra, Badaun, Daranagar, Shah Jahanpur, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Fatehpur, Farrukhabad, Rampur, Bilgram, Lucknow, Jaunpur, Patna Aurshidabad, Allahabad, Sambhal etc.

Curriculum.

During the later Mughal period the courses of study with the bias towards 'maqulat' continued to be the order of the day, with slight modifications from time to time. In Dehli and Punjab, the subject bearing on 'maqulat' were optional while in the eastern districts of Oudh and Bihar they were compulsory for all students.

In the middle of the 18th century, Mulla Nizam Uddin, drew up a syllabus which is known as 'Dars-e-Nizami' which was similar to the previous syllabi with some modification. It was adopted all over the country. The following eleven subjects and books relating to each subject were prescribed.


1. The author of Siyar speaks about the teachers who conducted teaching on private basis.
2. Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture, p. 87.
3. Mulla Nizamuddin was the eldest son of Mulla Qutb-ud-din Suhalvi. In his early period he studied under the guidance of the ulema of the East and finally he studied under Shaikh Ghulam Naqshband Lucknowi and completed his education there. He passed his life as a teacher. He was a disciple of Shaikh Abdur Razzaq Banswi. He wrote Hashiyah on Shareh Hadya ki Hikma of Hakim Sadrae Shirazi and Shareh Muslim-al-Sabut. He died in 1161 A.H./1748 and was buried in Lucknow, massir-ul-kiram, p. 220.
5. Kiazi (mathematics): Khulasatul Hasib, Tahrire Uqledas
   Maqalai ulu, Tashrihul Aflak, Risalai Qaushajia, Sharhe,
   Chaghmani babe awwal.
6. Balaghat (rhetoric): Mukhtasar Maani, Mutawwal up to ma'ana
   qultu.
8. Usule Fiqh (principles of jurisprudence): Nurul Anwar,
   Taudihe Talvih, Musallimas Subut (mabadie Kalam).
   Mir Zahid, Sharhe Mawaqif.

A few decades later the following four subjects were added to
the above syllabus:
1. Adab (literature): Nafhatul Yaman, Sab'a Mu'allaq, Diwane
   Suntannabbi, Maqamate Hariri and Hamasa.
3. Tanazara (disputation).
4. Usule Hadis (principles of Hadis).

Dr. Yusuf Hussain Khan writes:

"The chief merit of the Darse Nizami is that it did
not lay emphasis so much on the prescribed books as
on mastering the subject under study. In this system
the teacher had to supply all the relevant information
available regarding a particular topic which happened
to be the subject of study. In spite of its emphasis
on logical study, it was certainly a more flexible
and useful system then the previous one."2

   Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture, pp. 87-88.
From the various references of the contemporary Tazkiras it appears that no uniform syllabus was followed in the 18th century in northern India. According to Qiyam-ud-din Hairat, Fiqah, Hadis, Hikmat, Tasawwaf, Jafar (art of writing amulets or charms) Ramal (geomancy), Arithemetic, Siyaq (accountancy), Music and thirteen styles of writings were the prescribed subjects taught to the students.

**Shah Wali Ullah and His contribution to the education system.**

From the accounts of Mulla Nizam-ud-din and his contemporaries it is clear that in that period much emphasis was laid upon the subjects like Sarf-wa-Nehv, Muntiq (logic) and Fiqh (Jurisprudence). There were many causes which led to the popularity of those subjects.

The teaching of Hadis had never been popular in India, nor was a complete set of books on Hadis available. Shaikh Abdul Haq was the first scholar who made an attempt to popularize the teaching of Hadis. It was his greatest achievement. But his disciples failed to continue the programme of their master with the same zeal and enthusiasm. Secondly, the popularity of Fiqah and Muntiq threw it in the background. After the death of Aurangzeb the muftis and qazis lost their old position and Fiqah lost its attraction. Shah Wali Ullah laboured hard to popularize the teaching of Hadis. He disregarded the importance of other subjects. Shah Abdul Aziz writes: "that when Shah Wali Ullah started for India from Madina, he said to his teacher which highly pleased the latter. "I have forgotten whatever I had learnt except the knowledge of religion, i.e., Hadis."

Shah Wali Ullah concentrated himself on religious teachings. He taught first the Quran and after it the Hadis. Shah Abdul Aziz observes: "Generally my father taught Hadis after Quran had been taught." Shah Wali Ullah laid down the method of religious education. He writes:

"It has been proved by experience that the following method is to be followed in religious teaching. First of all the student is to be taught, according to his standard, three or four short prescribed Rasa'il on Sarf and Nahw. After it books on history and political science, are to be taught in the Arabic language. While teaching the teacher should go on informing the student of the method of consulting Lughat and the way to solve the complicated problem of finding roots of any word. When a student becomes conversant with the Arabic language, then he is to be engaged in the study of Muwatta, as conveyed by Yahya bin Yahya Jamhudi; in no case is this book to be ignored, because it is the root and basis for the study of Hadis. There are many benefits in its study. After it only the translation of the Quran is to be taught without going into Tafsir. But wherever any difficult point occurs in connection with the shan-i-Nazul (the occasion for the revelation of a passage of Quran) or in the matter of Nahw, (the teacher) should pause and discuss those points in details. If need arises, after it, Tafsir Jalalain is to be taught. After it in one shift the books on Hadis, for example, Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim and other books on Fiqh, Aqid and Sualik (mysticism) and in the second shift books on Danishmandi, for instance, Sharah Mullah Jami and Qutbi are to be taught. It is desirable that the student should read one day Mishkat and its translation and Sharah Tai-Taivabi on the other day." 2

Allama Rasnid Misri has remarked:

"If the ulama of Hindustan would have not been interested with the science of Hadis, then it would have disappeared from the Eastern Countries. Because since the beginning of the 10th century A.H, this science has been degenerating in Misr (Egypt), Syria, Iraq and Hijaj and by the

end of the 14th century A.D. it had reached the lowest point of degeneration. When I migrated to Egypt in 1315 A.D. then I saw in every mosque the preachers quoting Hadises which were false..."

The author of Hiyat-i-Wali remarks:

"There is no doubt that Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis was an eminent scholar. His literary achievements and the teaching of Hadis and Tafsir made him famous in the world. But the fact remains that Maulana Shah Wali Ullah deserves that credit which the historians of that time gave to Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlivi. Because although Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlivi was the founder of the structure of the science of Hadis but Shah Wali Ullah decorated the walls of that structure by the propagation and popularisation of the Hadis."

At the age of five, a child was admitted to the maktab, a primary school. It was an eventful occasion. In the upper class families this ceremony was performed with pomp and show and the amaraa rewarded their servants.

In this stage the students were made to do writing exercises on wooden slates. Mukhlas under the heading of seem-i-gul refers to this: "It is a clay which is white and buildings were whitened by it and in Hindustan the students in primary class write with it (on wooden plates)." As in our times, the students used ink and qalam (red pen) for writing purposes.

1. Vide Al-Furqan, Shah Wali Ullah Number, p. 238.
3. Storia Do Mogor, II, p. 348. Bagaila (MS), f. 3b, 4a. NEDrat-i-Shahi, pp. 105, 110. Noor-ul-Qulub. The age for Bismilla Khawani was four years, four months and four days. f. 167. According to the author of Nala-i-Andalib, the ceremony of Bismullah Khawani was performed at the age of four, p. 24.
6. niaratul Istelah, f. 139b.
7. Fakhr-ut-Talibin (MS), p. 77
In the next stage, the students were admitted to madrasahs, which corresponded with our present day secondary school. In the madrasahs, advanced books were taught. As the madrasahs were residential, the students all the time remained with their teachers and got their lessons whenever they got an opportunity.

Qudrat Ullah Qasim was a student of the madrasah of Shah Pakhr-ud-din. He used to follow his teacher wherever he went and used to take his lesson when he got a chance. No uniform system of holidays was followed. It may be presumed that on Fridays, a holiday was observed. Every week, Monday and Friday were observed as holidays in the madrasah of Shah Pakhr-ud-din. During the month of Ramazan the madrasah remained closed.

The simple life of the students.

The students led a very simple life and remained all the time busy in their studies from morning till evening. Qudrat Ullah Qasim gives us detailed information about his own student life.

It was the common practice of the 13th century, for the students to present some eatables to their teacher on Thursday. Each seat of higher learning specialized in one particular branch.

1. For details see: Majma-i-Negah (Introduction), p. 65.
2. Tazkira-i-Hindi, p. 78.
4. For details see: Majma-i-Negah (Introduction), p. 65.
For instance, the Dehli school of Shah Wali Ullah specialized in the study of Hadis and the Tafsir (Exegesis), the Farangimahli school of Lucknow specialized in grammar. This accounts for the fact that the scholars constantly migrated from one place to another in search of a suitable teacher. There was a constant and intimate relationship between the teacher and the taught, which should be considered the chief feature of the educational system of the times.

Students were promoted from a lower to a higher class according to the opinion of the teachers concerned who took into account the academic career of the students, whom they knew intimately. There was no regular system of annual examinations as today. Academic distinctions were awarded in accordance with the aptitude of the candidate in a particular branch of knowledge. For instance, one who had excelled in logic and philosophy was awarded the degree of Fazil, one who specialized in theology was awarded the degree of 'Alim, and the expert in literature was entitled to the degree of Qabil.

**Dastar Bandi.**

When the students were awarded degrees a regular ceremony, like our modern convocations, was organised known as **Dastar-Bandi.**

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1. For details see: *Maasir-ul-Kiram*, pp. 222
2. *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*, p. 89.
   Azad Bilgrami refers to the above fact.
   *Maasir-ul-Kiram*, p. 222
   *Glimpses of Medieval India Culture*, p. 89.
When Shah Wali Ullah had completed his studies, his father had organized a great feast and the masheikh, Zazia, and Fasiba of the city were invited and they were served with sumptuous meals. In their presence, Shah Abdur Rahim performed the ceremony of Dastar Bandi for his son, Wali Ullah and in the end all participants prayed for his success. In the madrasah of Farangimandia the ceremony of Dastar Bandi was performed on the day of Ura of Shah Pir Muhammad. All the eminent ulema participated in that Ura and in their presence the Dastar Bandi was performed.

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