



# Madrasah education under muslim rulers in India: A study of mughal emperor

Syed Mahbubul Alam Al Hasani

Deputy Director, Public Relation Department, Darul Ihsan University, Dhaka Bangladesh

Correspondence Author: Syed Mahbubul Alam Al Hasani

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## Abstract

This paper discovers some of the contributions of Muslim rulers to grow Madrasah in ancient India. The paper aims to bring into light the important involvement of the Muslim rulers from the early 7th century up to the great Mughal Empire of Delhi. Muslim rulers were seen as great sponsors for Islamic learning and education. In the medieval period, Islamic learning and education were practiced and imparted in the Madrasah. Muslim rulers patronized education wholeheartedly. Indian Muslim rulers were enough cordial to establish Madrasah for knowledge and education. The current paper suggested that Madrasah education in India was flourished under the patron of Mughal rules with great enthusiasm.

**Keywords:** madrasah, muslim rulers, mughal emperor, muhammad babur and bengal

## Introduction

Muslim educational systems have been developed by Medieval Arab and Iranian scholars and saints influenced on Muslims elsewhere they went to India. In West Asia, the enlargement of traditional scholarship and classical Madrasah had commenced while Iran took place and Turkish ruled the power in India jointly. Therefore, Madrasah in India was seen as a leading center of Islamic learning. Most of the Madrasahs were built and supported by Muslim rulers, Sufis, and Merchants (Sikand, 2005) [27].

Educationists and scholars greatly appreciate the Muslim rulers due to their sincerity to the Education and learning. The Muslim rulers in India took initiatives for the advancement of Islamic learning. Rulers were very much cordial to build new Madrasah and were complete sincere and committed to the Muslim Education. In the medieval period, Islamic learning and education were practiced and imparted in the Madrasah. Madrasah was considered the only and unique traditional Islamic religious institution where each and every one can get their education irrespective of color and religious background. Madrasah played a significant role to protect the young Muslim, the culture of Muslim society, and norms of Islam from the challenges of western secular propagation (Kuldip, 2013) [19]. Particularly, the establishment of education institutes and preservation of Muslim Education was a long-running tradition of Indian Muslim rulers.

## Origin of Madrasah in India

The Madrasah system was first introduced and founded by the Muslim Sufis, merchants, and saints who came to India for preaching Islam and trade (Mahfouz, 2006). Madrasah first started from Khanqa (a place for spiritual worship) and then Maktab (a place for teaching basic Quran recitation and Islamic rituals). Maktab was the only school used to teach basic

religious knowledge among the Muslim society within that time (Adams, 1970) [3].

In those times, the Muslim Saints usually built Mosques for performing prayer. The Mosque was not only used for worship for the Muslims, but it was also the center for teaching and learning for children and the adult public of all classes. They founded Maktab and Madrasah adjacent to the Mosques for teaching religion and science. Maktab was built to give primary education, while Madrasah was known as a higher learning institution that was built to provide higher education. They believed that it is a religious duty and a social and charitable service for the community (Mahfouz, 2006). Madrasah was known as a higher institute that offered Islamic theological education, and Maktab was known as a primary school for teaching basic knowledge about Quran. There were also another two types of special Madrasah for teaching recitation and memorization of the Holy Qur'an. Those were known as Furqaniyah and Hafeziah Madrasah (Ayub, 1983) [8]. After completion from Maktab, students took admission into Madrasah (a place for Islamic theological education), where Islamic subjects were taught (Talib, 2017) [30].

## Madrasah before Mughal Empire

The Foundation of Madrasah was also grounded by Muslim rulers, who arrived in India through conquering the many places of the Indian sub-continent beside Muslim Sufis, merchants, and saints. They established Madrasah for Islamic and scientific learning. This period started from the beginning of ancient India up to the end of the 6th century before the Muslim rules were established in the Indian sub-continent. (Hartmut, 2018) [14]. Indian sub-continent was full of natural wealth and resources. Muslims from various classes and casts from various parts of the world came to the Indian sub-continent for trade and commerce. They established their

colony in various places: Bengal, Gujrat, Agra, Shine, Ajmer, Gaur, Pandua, and Delhi (Annemarie, 2006) [6].

The first Muslim kingdom was established in Bengal by Muhammad bin Qasim, an Umayyad general who came to India in 711 and captured a big part of the Indian sub-continent. He built mosques and established Maktabs and Madrasah in every place where he conquered during his time (Iqbal, 1981) [15].

After that, Muhammad bin Ghuri came to India in 1175 through Multan and settled down in North West part of India. Muhammad Ghuri laid the Foundation of Muslim rule in India (1191-1192). He was the first Muslim king who upheld Muslim Education in India. He established schools and Madrasah to focus on Islamic knowledge and cultures at Ajmer. He made an effort to build Muslim Education, promote education, and establish Madrasah in India (Ray, 1984) [25].

Then, Mahmud of Ghazni, prominent ruler of the Ghaznavid Empire, occupied Afghanistan and India sub-continent in 1001 (Iqbal, 1981) [15]. He conquered Gujrat in 416 AH and establishes his kingdom, and became the center of Education and Ulama. Gujrat was a state of blessings as it enjoyed the contact of Ta'ab'een (those who met and learned from Sahaba) and Tab- e-Ta'ab'een (those who met the Ta'ab'een) after Sindh state. Gujrat state was complete with the light of Islamic knowledge and sciences. Thus, it was known as Islamic Gujrat. During the Muslim ruling period, this State had a large number of educational institutes. According to Abdullah (1984) [1], around thirty-two excellent institutes have existed in Gujrat alone.

A Military general, Ikhtiaruddin Mohammad Bin Bakhtiar Khilji, approached India in about 1193, then subjugated Bihar and Bengal in 1203 and ruled successfully. This glorious age of Muslim roles in Bengal continued around 568 years from 1203 to 1765 A.D. During this time, around 76 Muslim governors, kings, and emperors ruled over the Bengal and others states of India successfully under different dynasties. Ikhtiaruddin Mohammad Bin Bakhtiar Khilj established a large numbers of new Maktabs and repaired many old Madrasa and Maktabs. During the reign of the Muslims (1201-1857), Madras education was the only institutional education system in Bengal.

Qutub ud-Din Aibak was a freed slave of Sultan Muhammad Ghauri. In 1206, they took over as a ruler of the Delhi Sultanate and ruled Delhi only for four years from 1206 to 1210. He founded Qutub Complex, which comprised Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, the Alai Minar, Qutub Minar, Alai Darwaza, and Madrasa. He was the founder of the Mamluk dynasty.

Sultan Iltutmish was a successor of Qutub ud-Din Aybak and the third ruler of the Delhi Sultanate. He was enthroned in Delhi Sultanate by 1211 AD and continued up to 1236. He reconstructed a lot of leaving things from Qutub ud-Din Aybak. During Sultan Iltutmish, many Madrasahs were founded in Delhi, while Mu'izzi Madrasah after the late sultan Mu'izzud Din Muhammad in Budaun Madrasa-e-Bidar (Ram and Rajendra, 2004) [24] in Delhi were very famous. Madrasa-e-Bidar comprises a three-story building including a Mosque, a library, lecture rooms, and lodging quarters for lecturers and

students.

Madrasah Firozi in Multan was the first Madrasah in South Asia built by Muslim ruler Nasir-ud-deen Qubacha around 1226 A.D. There were another two Madrasahs named Madrasa Ma'zia and Madrasah Nasiriya (Ali, 2009) [4]. According to Ray (1984) [25], Madrasah-i-Nasiriya was one of the best Madrasah, established by chief minister Balban at Badaun in Delhi during sultan Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud (1246-60). He also paid special attention out of Delhi for Education. Accordingly, at Bohras of Gujrat, he appointed some teachers to follow up the monthly examinations. In Gujrat, he reconstructed many old and broken Maktabs and Madrasahs and granted a significant amount of money to support those institutions.

Sultan Alauddin Khilji, the second ruler of the Khilji dynasty, ruled Delhi Sultanate from 1296 to 1316. He established a college for religious studies named Ala-ud-din's Madrasa at the southwest of Qutub Minar of south Delhi.

The development of Muslim Education in India during monarchs Ghiyas Uddin Tughlak, Muhammad Tughlak (725/1324—752/1351), and Firoz Shah Tughlak (752/1351—790/1388) was remarkable. During the time of Muhammad Tughlak, there were around a thousand Schools and Madrasah in Delhi alone. Most of the Madrasahs arranged the lodge and food for the students. He offered free education for the slaves and provided teachers' salaries from the royal treasury. In his time, education was given related to religious sciences and rational sciences (Zakaria, 2019) [33].

To encourage literacy, Firoz Shah Tughlak started to open new madrasahs, repaired the old ones, and gave salaries for the teachers, stipends for the students, and provided big funds for the Madrasah. Thus, there were three main Madrasa's in Delhi while, Madrasah-i-Firuzshahi at Hauz Khas of south Delhi (Sufi, 1981) [28] was one of the famous Madrasahs established by Firoz Shah Tughlak. Later on, this Madrasah became a model for other people to establish other Madrasahs in medieval India (Ray, 1984) [25]. Accordingly, several later Muslim rulers and their aristocrat successors, dynasties, and some other renowned Muslim rulers of the Mughal Empire came to the various parts of the Indian sub-continent and ruled there (Ghazanfar, 2004) [13].

Thus, around the 13th century, Muslim rulers built Madrasah beside the Mosque to teach the people. These madrasahs offered knowledge related to ulum-al-Naqliyah (religious science) and ulum-al-Aqliyah (modern science). Madrasah became the principal institution during that time and for which Muslim rulers became well known in the whole of India (Ellis, 2007) [12]. To Ayub (1983) [8], ancient Muslim society would not have seen the light of knowledge and education unless there were no institutions like Madrasah.

### **Mughal Empire**

Mughal Empire was founded by Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur, a Central Asian ruler, who came to power of Delhi in 1526 by defeated Ibrahim Lodi at the First Battle of Panipat (Ram, 2020) [23]. Muhammad Babur was descended from Mongol ruler Genghis Khan from his mother's side and the Timurid dynasty from his father's side. The Empire grew

considerably and sustained to expand until Aurangzeb's rule in 1707 (William, 2006) <sup>[31]</sup>. It was an extensive, developed, and organized Empire in history, the longest and last powerful Muslim rule over India (John, 1983) <sup>[18]</sup>. Mughal was the only Islamic civilization in India. The presence of the Mughal empire glorified the Indian Islamic civilization, and the beauty of India reappeared while Hindu civilization was about to grow up and developing. Mughal Empire paid extensive attention to education irrespective of race and color. Mughal introduced two types of education: Traditional Islamic Education and half modern, and half of the traditional Indian Islamic Education (Suyanta & Ikhlas, 2016) <sup>[29]</sup>.

### Madrasah by Mughal Emperors

After establishing the Delhi Sultanate at the beginning of the 16th century, the Mughal Empire paid significant attention to Muslim Education in the Indian sub-continent. With state support, he established different educational institutes in Mughal India (Anwar & Mazher, 2017) <sup>[7]</sup>. According to 'Tuzuk-i-Babari' (Royal records) of Zahir-U-Din Babur, the education of subjects was the duty of the State in his time. The structure of Education in Mughal India mostly focused upon Islamic by him. Bookish and lover of education as he was, he created a society of literary men. Babur looked after Ghazi Khan's library. Babur's Shurhrat-am (Public works Department) was founded to build Islamic colleges, Madrasahs, and publish a state Gazette. The reality is that the foundation of educational institutions made up a significant entry of Babur's administrative agenda addresses greatly for his attention in the porch of education in his Indian Empire (Nusrat & Obaydullah, 2019) <sup>[21]</sup>. Mughal Empire developed Madrasah education massively and expanded it through all the states they confirmed victory. The Mughal Empire's noble tradition was to build mosques and religious education centers like Maktabas and Madrasahs in nearly all states under their rule (Beata, 2015) <sup>[9]</sup>. Most of the Mughal rulers were great patrons of knowledge and gave significant motivation to scholarship development. They practiced knowledge, loved knowledge, and financed to develop Muslim Education in nearly all places of India they occupied (Ram, 2020) <sup>[23]</sup>.

There are some examples of those rulers who contributed to the field of education and knowledge in the history of Indian. Accordingly, Sultan Humayun, a second emperor of the Mughal Empire of Delhi, ruled from 1530–1540. He established certain schools and Madrasahs in Delhi and Agra. In his time, he established a Madrasah in Delhi on the banks of the Jumna River to study astronomy and Geography, but the name of the Madrasah is unknown (Dunny, 2016). He tried to uphold the position of Delhi as an important place for Muslim Education. He paid favor to Jaunpur city and tried to maintain this as a center of learning. During his time, this city was renowned for handicrafts and fine arts (Maheshwari, 2012) <sup>[20]</sup>. In 1540 another ruler came to power named Sher Shah and continued to 1545. He controlled Mughal Empire for five years, from 1540 to 1545. He received his education from one of the famous schools of Jaunpur city of Uttar Pradesh. At the time of Sher Shah, around 20 institutions were established

(Maheshwari, 2012) <sup>[20]</sup>. He found the famous Qila-i-Kuhna mosque at Purana Qila, Delhi, and Sher Shah Suri Masjid, in Patna from 1540 to 1545 for religious purposes and Islamic education. He was fond of biography, history, philosophy, and also fond of learned men. At Natural, he found a big and famous Madrasah, which is known as Madrasah Sher Shahi. This Madrasah offered both social and Islamic religious education. Islamic Education focused on Quran, Hadith, and how to read and write, and Social Education included basic arithmetic (Dunny, 2016).

Another greatest patron of Education was Jalal-ud-din Akbar, who ruled Delhi from 1556 to 1605. During the period of Akbar, the standard of Mughal education was at an advanced level. He did a great deal to assist the cause of Muslim Education in his time. He took the initiative to establish Madrasah schools and colleges at Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Gujarat, and other provinces of India (Radhey, 2002) <sup>[22]</sup>. Akbar took the initiative to reform education in the Indian Sub-Continent. He founded a state department to provide support to establish educational institutes for Muslims and Hindus as well. In his time, education was considered a basic right for each individual. His educational strategy was to teach subjects of State irrespective of their background.

Consequently, such Madrasahs were introduced where Hindu and Muslim children learned modern subjects together in the same class (Anwar and Mazher, 2017) <sup>[7]</sup>. He established some particular institutions to study Philosophy, Grammar, Arabic, Persian, and astronomy. He introduced Agra as a center of Muslim traditional education and hub of fine arts, crafts, and culture (Maheshwari, 2012) <sup>[20]</sup>. Thus, he established a Madrasah after his foster mother name Moham Auaga and found a school named School of Historiography to record all Indian histories. He emphasized increasing the number of intellectual people. Educationists and researchers were influenced to produce scientific research and knowledge in a variety of subjects. Akbar's court was an important place where knowledge and education were practiced. Education, arts, and culture were propagated from that court. To better understand Hindu and Muslim religion, Akbar established a Translation Department to translate Sanskrit, Arabic, and Turki's outstanding works into the Persian language (Yadav, 2013) <sup>[32]</sup>. For establishing educational institutes, credit must go to Akbar the Great.

Jahangir, the fourth Mughal Emperor of Delhi. He ruled Delhi for 22 years, from 1605 until he died in 1627. He was charmed with painting, design, arts, and science. From a young age, he was very much interested in learning painting. Photography, painting, and arts of Mughal were reached at the pick under Jahangir's authority. Thus, Jahangir continued to keep the prestige of Delhi and paid attention the way he could. He established some new Madrasahs schools, renovated existing institutions, and financed them (Zakaria, 2019) <sup>[33]</sup>.

Another great patron of education and music was Shah Jahan, a king of Delhi from 1627-1659. He established many schools, colleges, and Madrasahs during his time. The ruling period of Shah Jahan was considered the most flourishing time of Muslim rule in India. At his time, the Muslim civilization in

India reached the top point (Anjum, 2018) <sup>[5]</sup>. According to Radhey (2002) <sup>[22]</sup>, Imperial College near Delhi Jam-i-Masjid was one of his famous institutes. He also built a wonderful famous Madrasah Named 'Dar-Ul-Baqa' (abode of eternity) and appointed Kazi Sadar-ud-din Khan as an executive. He also paid attention out of Delhi like Lahore, Sialkot, Ahmedabad, and Jaunpur, where famous two Madrasahs also were built attached to Akbarabadi mosque and Fatehpuri Mosque. The Madrasa close to Fatehpuri mosque was a noble artifact of his time that managed to bring students from outside of India.

The Emperor of Delhi, Sultan Aurangzeb, came to power in 1658 and made a significant contribution to Muslim Education. He found many new schools, Madrasahs and gave huge funds for the existing institutions in Delhi. Delhi was transformed into a city of traditional Muslim education (Maheshwari, 2012) <sup>[20]</sup>. He built several Madrasah schools and colleges in Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Agra, and Sialkot. Many old Maktabas and Madrasahs of Gujrat were renovated and reconstructed by him (Dunny, 2016). In Lucknow, he occupied some Dutch historical buildings and changed them into institutions for Muslim Education. During his reign, two famous Madrasah named Madrasa-i-Farangi Mahal at Lucknow founded by Mulla Nizam al-Din Sihal in 1693, and Madrasa-i-Rahimia at Delhi itself has been built. Later on, he was also appointed as director, and he sacrificed his life to study and to teach in that Madrasah. The main importance of this Madrasa was to teach the students Hadith and Islamic religious science. At the same time, Madrasa-i-Farangi Mahal was famous for teaching Qadi (judge), Mufti (Islamic religious lawyer), and producing other legal officials according to the requirements of those days Muslim Courts. This institute is directly linked to the Moghul court in Delhi (Ram and Rajendra, 2004) <sup>[24]</sup>. Another famous Madrasah 'Madras-e-Nizamia' of Farangi Mahal at Lucknow was a shine during his time. He not only focused on the city but also built many Madrasahs in towns and villages outside. For his endless effort, every city, town, and village were shined with the blessings of knowledge. Consequently, during his time, Sialkot, Ahmedabad, and Lucknow were recognized for Muslim learning, and Agra alone itself was assumed as a unique center of Islamic Education.

The Muslim rulers of Bangle were notable patrons of knowledge and education. Several rulers ruled Bengal for over a long time, from the 7th to 17th century. During that time groundwork of Muslim Education in Bengal was laid successfully. Numerous Maktabas and Madrasah were established within that time. They not only focused on founding new Madrasah and giving donation but they also used to teach in the Madrasah. Many famous Maktabas, Madrasah, and educational institutions for higher studies were established at Gaur, Pandua, Darsbari, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Sylhet, Sonargaon, and many other places of Bengal.

According to Ali (2009) <sup>[4]</sup>, Madrasah was considered an elite and prestigious educational organization during that time. Birth certificates, family backgrounds, and training were important requirements to get admission to the Madrasah. To Kuldip (2013) <sup>[19]</sup>, those days Madrasah could be likened to the modern time colleges.

## Girls Madrasah and Schools

Females also enjoyed education during the Mughal period. They got their education either at home or teacher's house nearby. Girls from royal families and princesses received their education in special arrangements. However, besides these, some rulers have paid attention to female education in general. Sultan of Hinwar, Sultan Jalal ud-Din, paid his attention to girls' education (Jafri, 2021) <sup>[16]</sup>. Ibn Batuta mentioned that there were more than 13 girls' schools in his capital made by various notable rulers. One of them, Ghiyas ud-Din Khilji (1463-1500), was very enthusiastic about girls' education. For educating the female, he established a Madrasah at Sarangpur of Malva. Akbar founded another girls' school in Fatehpur Sikri to educate the ladies of his province. Some schools used to offer vocational education. Females also received vocational education. Systematic training in school or Karkhana (Factory) was given for the successful completion of vocational education. At those times, working for female education was considered an act of piety and divine blessings (Ghazanfar, 2004) <sup>[13]</sup>. According to Ayub (1983) <sup>[8]</sup>, there was no separate Madrasah for female education during that time; Makhtab and Madrasah were open for both males and females. Females from royal families received their education only from private tutors. In sum, during the reign of the Mughal Empire, Education got an excellent interaction between the Islamic religion and the Indian modern tradition of knowledge. Mughal administration developed education with a new aspect in medieval India from 1526 until the end of Mughal administrative existence in the 18th century. Founding the new Madrasah and renovating the old one were the traditions of the Delhi Sultanate. Madrasa became one of the Islamic leading centers due to offer blended education of ulum-al-Naqliyah related to religious science and ulum-al-Aqliyah related to modern science and consequently, Madrasah was regarded one of the best-furnished Islamic institutions anywhere in the world. To Dunny (2016), for imparting blended education Madrasah is comparable to a modern-day college.

However, the glorious age of Muslim rules and the stream of Muslim Education in India was stopped by the fall of the last Nawab (King) of Bengal, Nawab Sirajud Dawla, at the battle of Palashy with a handful of English army of the British East India Company in 1757 A.D. Thus, later half of the 18th century, while the British came to power over the Indian sub-continent, there was 800 Madrasah where everyone Madrasah for four hundred students. Lands of One-fourth land of the Bengal were free of charge, and income of the lands was used to manage the Mosque, Maktabas, Madrasah, and other religious organizations (Ayub, 1983) <sup>[8]</sup>.

## Conclusion

An educational contribution by Muslim rulers did not shine and rich the Indian culture alone but the other Muslim globe of education. The Muslims of India expanded their religious spirit, the influence of education and knowledge by funding and establishing Mosque, Maktab, and Madrasah. To gratify not only religious, moral, ethical, spiritual but also the civic needs of the whole society, Madrasah education was the only

education system all over India. Collective effort for spreading Islam and enthusiastic look forward to the getting knowledge was an evaluative mission for putting a unique comment in medieval India. Madrasah education opposed the only Education right for the elite society. Instead of that, Madrasah opened its door for the people of different races and classes on the land of India. Madrasah education contributed through build a solid cultural background, create an intellectual capacity, form a social unity, purify the spiritual aspect, observe religious practice and empower the political life.

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