

Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed a philanthropist in education for Muslim women

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Abstract:

As one of the earliest concerns of mankind education is an essential feature of humanity Education means transmission of knowledge, education is the key factor for development, prosperity and welfare of a society. Muslims are educationally backward in India. It is due to many factors one of them is their aversion to wards western education in the past. In TamilNadu Muslims established a number of educational institutions for the benefit of their community of them the higher educational institution are proportionately greater in number than the primary and secondary institutions. Muslims took greater efforts to establish these educational institutions for women. One among the philanthropists of education for the Muslim women efforts of Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed was known as “Sir Syed of the South”.

Keywords : Education. Islam , Muslim women, Institutions , Quran, Ilm, Knowledge, Community.

Introduction:-

Education is the key to progress. It is for enriching knowledge developing man’s character perfecting and equipping him for living collectively in the society. Education helps man develop human ability and behaviour. Education is the birthright of every Muslim and Muslimah . Islam puts considerable emphasis on its followers to acquire knowledge. “Educate a man and you educate an individual, educate a woman and you educate a family “applies very well in the Indian context of Muslim women, a large section of whom have been denied education for a variety of reasons, each rooted in either government or poor understanding of the religion. Despite pressures of religious Orthodoxies social prejudice and class gender bias. Muslim women at the start of the twentieth century successfully emerged from the isolation of traditional roles as self-aware individual, determined to claim a greater role in public affairs.

Methodology:

This paper comprehensive literature survey was secondary sources to observe the present education status of Muslim women in TamilNadu and correlate the data available in

order to reveal the findings. The paper analyses the historical research and data from the institution.

Islam and Education

As one of the earliest concerns of mankind education concerns of mankind education is an essential feature of humanity. Islam stresses the need of education and makes it every Muslim's obligation to seek knowledge. Islam says that seeking knowledge is the duty of every man. The basic sources of Islam viz., The Quran and Hadith (traditions of Prophet Muhammed) attach much importance to education. The very first revelation to Prophet Muhammed was "Real in the name of thy Lord". The word 'Ilm' (knowledge) is mentioned more than 700 times in the Holy Quran in 87 different forms.ⁱ The liberal meaning of the word Quran itself is 'Read' or 'Recitation'. Imagine 1400 years ago, when the women were ill treated and were only used as chattels – leave aside being educated, we have examples of several Muslim women who were scholars, and the best example is of Bibi Ayesha (may Allah be pleased with her) who was the daughter of Hazrat Abu Bakr, the first Khalifa of Islam and the wife of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

Muslim Education up to 1857

Muslims received primary education from Maktahs and higher education from Madaris grew up even before the beginning of the 12th century A.D. Iltutmish (1211-1236 A.D) one of the efficient rulers of Delhi Sultanate established the first madrasa of Delhi. Babur established the Mughal rule in India, It was the first time in India a Muslim Government had such a separate department for imparting education to the people.

During the British period, Macaulay, the legal member of then Governor General's council felt that the oriental education was retrograde. Hence he wanted to replace it with Western knowledge. Thus Macaulay's system of education aimed at creating a class of people who would be Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, and intellect. Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor- General approved of the minute of Lord Macaulayⁱⁱ.

The Court of Directors of the East India Company sent a Despatch in 1854 to the Governor General of India in Council. This Despatch was known as Wood's Despatch named after Charles Wood, President of the Board of control of the companies. It has been described as "the Magna Carta of English Education in India." An immediate outcome of this Despatch was the passing of the three University Acts of 1857. In the same year Universities were established at Calcutta, Bombay and Madrasⁱⁱⁱ.

Efforts of Sir Syed (1817-1898)

This educationally important year (1857) witnessed the outbreak of the Great Revolt against the British Raj. Muslims debacle in the revolt brought untold misery to them. During this period of crisis one Good Samaritan appeared before them and awoke them from their deep slumber. That great personality was none other than Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. He diagnosed their disease clearly and began to administer the right medicine to them. He took his community from the road of politics to education. Because he fully realized the fact that the root cause of all the ills of the Muslim Community was ignorance and that their aversion to Western education^{iv}.

In order to translate his dreams in to reality, Sir Syed established a school on 24th May 1857. After this endeavor he founded the Mohammedan Anglo- Oriental College (M.A.O) at Aligarh on 8th January 1877.

Muslim Response to Modern Education in South India

Muslims to take to modern Education infact made them withdrew from wider Public life, insearch of a certain inward consolidation on a Community and religious basis the immediate effect of this search for consolidation was the establishment of several Arabic Madrasas in the decades that followed the conversion of the Madrasa- e Azam in to a English scholar. Some of the important Tamil speaking Muslim are Syed Mohammad Mapillay Labbai Alim Sahib founded the Al Madrasat al- Aroosia at Kilakarai. In 1864 Madaras-i-Manbaul Anwar was established at Lalpettai. ^vIn 1871 the Rivaz-al Jinanfiuloom al Adyan was established by Peer Mohammad Ravattar at pettai in Tirunelvali district.

In fact it was a migrant by the name of Jamal Mohideen Ravattar, a leading hides and skins merchant, who founded the Madrasa Jamalia in 1900 at Perambur in Madras. Sir Ahmad Thambi Marakkayar of Nagapattinam. The former was land holder established the Islamiah School to impart both secular and religious instructor. In fact just two year after the foundation of Madrasa Jamalia, the MEASI was established in Madras. It is significant to note that Tamil Muslims had no role to play in the establishment of this association^{vi}.

As far as Muslim educational activity the most significant was the establishment of the Mohammedan Educational Society at Vaniyambadi in 1903. In 1921 the Islamiah College was established another Muslim Educational association was started in 1926 order the Presidentship of Nawab C. Abdul Hakim a great Philanthropist.

In the Post Independent period there was a spurt in establishing and administrating educational institutions by the minorities in TamilNadu. In this process many great personalities who contributed their money and mite or both for the education at progress of Muslim women come to fall light. One of the great dynamic personality was Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed dreamt of starting a college exclusively for Muslim women.

Early Life : (1900- 1984)

Justice Basheer belong to the Nawaith community.His father Qafir Hussain Sayeed Saheb and he was born on the 20th February 1900 at madras. He finished his primary education at the age of Eight and elementary school in the Tindivanam panchayat. He join the American Arcot mission High School passed in 1916, then he admitted in the Madras Christain college of madras. He studied Tamil with great interest and had mastered the language and passed the Madura Tamil sangam examination gained a first class^{vii}.

His Political Career:

On behalf of the Khilafat and congress in 1921, Basheer decided to boycott the College and give up his studies and join the Non – co operation Movement. But his father did not allow him to do this. Hence he was able to complete the Honors degree course in 1921. Rajaji was an eminent lawyer by profession and was an intellectual giant and was “ The Gandhi of the South “. He was very much interested in Basheer and his family from the year 1921 onwards. In 1940, the All India Muslim League session was held at Madras, Justice Basheer Sayeed pointed out to him that position of India was not solution to any of the minority problems in India Basheer was differed from him and worked for Communal relationship between the Muslims and Hindus^{viii}.

His Judicial Career

Basheer Ahmed enrolled him as an advocate of the Madras High court in 1925, he was appointed to the High court bench on 16th July 1949, when Rajaji was the Governor General of India the first and the last Indian to hold that office. When he was in a position as a judge to collect donations for the S.I.E.Trust which he had promoted for the founding of the Women’s College in madras in 1951. Nor a single members of the judiciary of the State of TamilNadu had contributed anything to the cause of the S.I.E.Trust directly or indirectly. He retired from the bench on the 20th February 1960 after attaining the age of 60^{ix}.

His Service to Educational and Cultural activities :

The Music Academy (1927)

In 1927 that the Madras Music Academy was organized by Dr. V. Rama Rao, a famous physician with our Co- operation and it was latter taken over by the late Mr. K.V. Krishnaswamy Iyer, a leading Advocate of madras. The object of the Academy was to promote carnatic music and other fine arts. He was at first an elected members of the Executive committee of this Academy.^x He was mainly responsible to enthuse the members of the Academy to go about collecting funds for the completion of its building operations. In 1980 the Academy honored him as of its oldest living founder members at its Annual celebrations.

(b) Madraas University :

He was the first Muslim to be elected to the syndicate of the madras university in its long history.He was a patron member of the Anjuman – e - Himayath – e- Islam, a very old muslim institution of madras and was elected as its president in 1965. In1925. In 1925 he had joined the Anjuman –e – Himayath –e – Islam which runs two Muslim orphanages at madras, one for boys and the other for girls. He become its legal adviser and took a very active part in collect ing funds for the orphanages from year to year. He was elected president of the Red Crescent hospital, Triplicane, which was establishment to render medical assistance to the poor Muslims of the area in Mirsahibpet, madras at a nominal cost^{xi}.

The All India Muslim Educational Society:

The All India Muslim Educational conference which came in to existence during the latter half of the last century had functioned successfully for several decades after it was founded by the late Sir Syed Ahmed khan and his co- workers. The members of this conference were mostly responsible for the coming in to existence of the Aligarh Muslim College which later became the Muslim University in 1920.In south the Muhammadan Educational Association of Southern India started in 1902, Justice Basheer taken efforts from 1923 to 1945 to give a new orientation to the activities of the Muhammadan Educational Association of Southern India did not succeed very much, but when he was elected as the Honorary Secretary of the Association, there after he had collegiate education of the boys and girls of the Muslim minority community and other facilities. Later, he taken advantage of the fundamental rights guaranteed to the minorities by the Constitution of India.

As a result of this scheme , a great fillip was given to educational activities among the Muslim community in TamilNadu and about 13 colleges were established in TamilNadu by

the Muslim minority community, of which the S.I.E.T Women's collrge was the only one for women students, founded by him under the auspices of the Southern India Education Trust which was founded by Justice Basheer in 1951.

His Contribution for Muslim Women Education :

The new organisation viz., The southern India education trust which was founded by him in 1951 . The trust is only a registered society , registered under the central Act 21 of 1860 to carry out the aims and object laid down in the preamble of the Act. It was registered in October 1951 as an education institution in the eservice of the right guaranteed to the Muslim religions minority under Articles 25 to 30 of the constitution of India^{xii}.

Founding and raising of funds for the women's college:-

Mrs .Fathima Akhtar his wife had been insisting upon him that he should have first established a college for Muslim women and then the college for Muslim Boys. When it was found that the Muslim educational Association had not taken any steps for the purpose of establishing a women's college. He had to found the S.I.E. Trust in October 1951 with the help of seven prominent Muslim citizens of Madras and had the organisation registered under Act XXI of 1860. ^{xiii}After establishing the trust and after having framed its constitution he set out for collection of funds in India and abroad with the help of his wife Fathima Akhtar in particular and his brother Mr.Rasheed Ahmed sayeed. Mr.Ubaidulla, Mr.C.A.Mohammed Ibrahim, Mr.Syed Abdul Wahab Bukhari, Mr.A.Allahpitchai and a few other trusted friends for this purpose, herself and his team of co-workers had to travel through the length and breadth of India to enrol patron and life members. He travelled to the countries of south East Asia and to the countries East African and Middle East. He had been appointed judge of the Madras High court in July 1949. In effect, he had to travel to almost all the countries in the your continents except Australia, South Africa and south America.

In his biography , he has said ,” I spent all my earned leave for the cause of S.I.E.Trust only and served the Trust at the cost of my health ,time,energy and my resources in terms of money and talents. When my wife and I travelled by air to Rangoon, I suffered from a serious type of air-sickness which paralyzed me. I was to have been taken in stretcher from the aircraft to the air port where about a thousand people had gathered to welcome me. In Rangoon , myself and my wife were the only two persons and none else accompanied us “After purchasing the land in the Teynampet, Madras – 600 018, for purposes of establishing a women college, He invited

the then prime minister of India Mr.PanditJawaharlal Nehru to lay the foundation for the college and MoulanaAbul kalam Azad to lay the foundation for the fast hall of residancenamed after him on January 22th 1955.At the ceremony the prime minister made an eloquent speech appreciating the of effort of our trust for the promotion of women's education. ^{xiv}Moulana Abul kalam Azad made a powerful appeal praising the effort of our trust for the promotion of education of all women irrespective of caste, creed for race. He held up our effort as an example to others to do like will.^{xv}

Conclusion:-

The question women's education is the most serious and pressing problems that has to be tackled by the Muslim community with zeal and earnestness. The one half of the Muslim community cinsists of women and that they have rights against men, even as men have rights against them, has not been fully realized by us, even at this late hour. The general apathy the higher education of women and the appalling poverty of the vast masses of the community are the greatest stumbling blocks and the sooner they are removed the better it will be for the general progress of our community. We have therefore , to set apart a good portion of our resources for the cause of women's education, if we are to survive the struggle for existence . It was the aim and object of Basheer Ahmad Sayeed to develop the S.I.E.T College as the first women's university in south India. Had he lived longer this dream of this would have been fulfilled Alas .He passed away on the 7th February 1984.May his soul rest in peace amen. That was the founder Mr.Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed ,other wise known as he "Sir Syed of the South".The name of the SIET women's college was changed to Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed women's college from April 1984 to perpetuate. The memory of the Justice Basheer Ahmed College for women.

In the year 1984 ,in his memory, the Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed memorial Matriculation Higher Secondary Boys School was Started by the southern India education Trust.The doors of the college are open to all without distinction of caste creed or color. The college is sincerely engaged in spreading the light of knowledge and edifying young women who will be the pride of this great country. More than 90,000 women students were benefitted from this esteemed Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed College for Women.



End Notes

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