

REFORM WITHIN THE TRADITIONAL SYSTEM OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION:

The History and a Critical Study of Jamia Uloom-ul-Islamia, Karachi

Islam emerged on the scene as a great blessing. It was a dynamic and progressive movement which reshaped the entire pattern of life and gave a new meaning and purpose to man's endeavours. So long as the movement remained part and parcel of life itself, the followers of Islam continued to perform such memorable deeds in the world of science and practical knowledge as had no parallel in history.

Unfortunately, with the passage of time, the Muslims at large sought to concentrate more on the dogmatic aspects of Islam and less on its inherent greatness as a movement. This resulted inevitably in a widening gap between life and religion which continues to effect our lives today. Islam came into being essentially to reduce this gap but it is an irony of fate that its followers themselves were caught in the yawning gap.

When the link between life and religion is snapped life decides its own direction, while the religion is reduced to a lifeless object, incapable of resilience or progress. It is then confined to the precincts of mosques and mausoleums. Islam seems to have suffered this fate, while mankind has made great advances in science and philosophy, religion has remained static for centuries.

The miracle of Islam was that it destroyed idolatry, but the tragedy of the Muslims has been that they turned the religion into an idol.

Effects of Orthodoxy. One dangerous result which it produced in our national outlook and culture was that those who advanced in the light of modern developments were dubbed as worldly-wise Muslims and those who clung to mere formalism and dogma and remained static, claimed to be true Muslims. Gradually those who looked forward to progress and advancement came to be regarded as disbelievers and those who looked backward were considered devout Muslims. Every fresh

advancement, every invention and every new educational system was suspected as a movement against Islam and that is why Fatwas were pronounced against the leaders of revolutionary movements among Muslims in almost every period of History.

It is a great disservice to Islam, that such a dynamic religion should be represented as inimical to progress. Besides, this is most unfair to youth who do wish to be faithful Muslims in a modern world. The Madrassah Arabic Islamia is an Institute for religion, learning and is by virtue of its courses of studies and advanced programmes, unique among all other Islamic Madrassahs in Pakistan.

The Madrassah was founded by Sheikh Mohammed Yusuf al-Banuri on the 3rd of Muharram 1374. A. H., at the Jami Masjid of New Town, Karachi, without any class rooms or living quarters for the students. Now it is twenty-six years old and enjoys splendid buildings and dormitories. The prevalent atmosphere at the Madrassah is one of industrious tranquillity conducive both to worship and studies. This is partly due to the physical layout of the Madrassah with the large and gleaming white courtyard of the Jami Masjid at its heart. The Masjid Madrassah complex with three adjacent dormitories, and class room buildings, two small gardens, and modest guest facilities, have been compacted nicely into one city block. There is an unmistakeable calm within the gates of Madrassah and a light refreshing breeze runs through at even the hottest times of the year.

An Islamic University. The Madrassah has become, in every sense of the word, a true Islamic University. A number of different courses of study are offered. There are secondary studies, advanced studies, and a number of graduate specialized studies. In addition there is a highly successful programme for the memorization of the Holy Quran.

Library. A grand Library has been established. The Library maintains a valuable Arabic, Urdu and English collection of more than 38 thousand books. There are books of Quranic exegesis (Tafseer, all the major Tafseers are on the shelves), Hadis Literature, Islamic Law, (representing all the different schools of thought) the liberal Arts and Science, Literature and reference books.

The Faculty. The teachers and instructors in the various programmes at the Madrassah number a total of fifty. Among them are specialists in the science of tradition (Ilm-ul-Hadith), Islamic Law, and every branch of Islamic and Arabic learning. The majority of them hold degrees of higher learning and all of them are experts in the reading, writing and

teaching of the Arabic language. Three of them are holding the degree of Ph. D and another three are Egyptians teaching there on a basis of an exchange programme with Al-Azhar University, Cairo.

The Students. There are more than eight hundred students enrolled in the study programme of the Madrassah, and more than two hundred and fifty of them have come from abroad. They come from nearly twenty-two countries, from all parts of the world, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Somalia, Uganda, Mozambique, South Africa, the United States, South America, England, France, West Germany, Holland, Newzealand, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, and Singapore.

Finances. The Madrassah has no endowment (Waqf), nor does it engage in any of the customary methods of raising funds by soliciting and seeking subscriptions. The money comes from the contributions of well-wishers and people of means. The salaries paid to the teachers and other employees, in addition to the student scholarships, comes to a total of nearly 400 thousand rupees annually.

It is appropriate to mention here that the money from Zakat are spent on the students exclusively. The salaries of the teachers and employees, and the expenditure of the library and monthly magazine is meted out from donation other than Zakat. Furthermore the Madrassah accepts no aid whatsoever from the Government or any of its agencies.

Student Affairs. The Jamia looks very carefully to the upbringing of its students. It feels that there is no real need for it to draw up a complicated set of rules for the regulation of student behaviour as the student of shariat is one who has to practice whatever he learns.

Salat. Purity of heart is the concern of salat and special attention is given to performing all their farz Salats in Jamaat. Students who are continually slack in attending Jamaat, or who always lag behind, may be subjected to reprimand from the office and even expulsion. They are also urged to form the habit of performing Tahajjud Salat and Tilawat before and after Salat-ul-Fajr.

Politics. The Madrassah itself has no affiliations whatsoever and is engaged solely in the education of men to serve the Shariat and the Deen-ul-Islam. The Madrassah asks its students to dedicate themselves entirely to the task of learning while they are here at the Madrassah and to forget about all other external activities and affiliation.

Smoking. Smoking is strictly prohibited and no one is allowed to smoke in or out of the Madrassah.

Arabic Language. The Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet

Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) are the greatest literary works of the language. It is, therefore, necessary that the students have a background in the classics so that they may fully appreciate the beauty of the holy texts. Accordingly the Jamia offer a very comprehensive programme for the study of Arabic grammar (Sarf and Nahw) and the study of the classical Arabic Literature.

Beginners are taught through "direct method" of teaching Arabic by the Egyptian teachers who have been specially trained in the application of that method. A number of books are taught with the sole aim to develop a good vocabulary. The study of grammar continues on to the advanced level when the students read the commentary of Ibn Aqeel on the "Alfiya" of Ibn Malik.

"Maqaamat of Hariri", the Diwan of Al-Mutanubbi and the "Hammasa" of Abu Tammam are taught at the Jamia for a study of the classic language. Indeed the motivated student will find every opportunity to excel in the Arabic Language.

Examinations. There are yearly three Examinations:

1. First Semester Examinations are held in the first week of Safar.
2. Second Semester Examinations, in the first week of Jamaadi-uloola.
3. Third Semester Examinations, in the first week of Shabaan.

Because of the importance of these Examinations students are urged to begin reviewing their books long in advance of the actual examinations. Failure to pass the final examination may result in the students being asked to repeat the course in the following year; or even to his expulsion if it is evident that his failure was due to a lack of effort on his part.

Dar al-Tansif. (the Research and Publication office).

A section has been established for Research and Publications by the Jamia and a special room was built to house its collection of source books and reference works. Learned writers engaged in research and writing scholarly treatises on the many important topics of interest to the Islamic Community in the present age. Here also the academic works of the Great Ulema are translated from Urdu and Persian into Arabic and from Arabic to Urdu.

The Monthly Magazine "Al-Bayyinaat". The Jamia publishes a monthly Urdu magazine called *Al-Bayyinaat* for the propagation of Islamic Culture and thought among the Muslims. Among the many services performed by the scholarly journal in its dealing with the challenges to Islam, presented by atheists, orientalists, and heretics of every

hue and colour, is the work of skilfully exposing the faulty arguments upon which their propaganda is based. *Al-Bayyinaat* has become a magazine of some standing in its continuing service to the religion of Truth.

The Graduate Specialised Programmes: Takhassus. The programme of graduate studies came about as a result of the Jamia's recognition of the need to provide guidance and advanced instruction necessary to the further development of gifted scholar graduate who has demonstrated his ability to excel in a certain field and who is interested in specializing in that field. This is a two-year programme and it is open only to students who score the highest division in the final examination at the end of the year of "Dauratul Hadith". The programme itself consists of critical study of nearly 30,000 pages of material in the first year, and part of the second, and finally, research and collection of material for the graduate thesis. During these four years the students are examined regularly by their advisors, and under their guidance they choose the topics for their final dissertations in their respective fields.

The graduate programme is divided in the following three departments:

- (1) Takhassus Fil Hadith.
- (2) Takhassus Fil Fiqh.
- (3) Takhassus Fid Da'wa wal Irshad (Propagation and Guidance).

(1) *Takhassus Fil Hadith.* This is headed by a senior member of the faculty (Maulana Muhammad Idris). During the course of this programme students are assigned to read works on the Usul ul Hadith, Asmaa-ur-Rijaal, al-Jar Wat T'adeel, Shara-ul-Hadith.

(2) *Takhassus Fil Fiqh.* The Graduate Programme in Fiqh is handed by a senior Faculty member and director of Dar-ul-Iftaa (Mufti Wali Hassan Tonki). The subjects, the students in this course are expected to read, include the History of Fiqh and the Fuqahaa, Al-Iftaa, Al-Qazaa. The Principles of Jurisprudence and other related subjects.

3. *Takhassus Fi Da'wa wal-Irshad* (Propagation and Guidance).

This is designed especially for the propagation and defence of Islam in non-Islamic countries. Emphasis is placed on the study and methods of countering the various social and doctrinal obstacles that lie in the way of the spread of this religion of Truth.

There is no set curriculum in this programme as the need of each student varies with the conditions obtaining in the countries in which they plan to work. However, the outline of the programme is similar to that of the other two, in that the student will be required to do

extensive study and research, and to, finally, prepare a graduate thesis on a topic, he and his adviser has chosen.

The Programme of Studies. The subjects taught at Madrassah are designed to bring the students to the highest level of competence in each field of Islamic learning. The Shariat of Islam demands that those who would properly serve it be fully versed in the knowledge passed down by the great scholars of the Ummah. Naturally to acquire this knowledge takes a great deal of hard work and sacrifice. The student is to approach his lessons, his teachers and his books with the utmost of humility and sincerity. Particularly, the Jamia urges its foreign students to make utmost efforts to benefit from their education in a way that they imbibe it into their personal daily lives. Each student should be aware of the importance of the role he is to play in these days of laxity and neglect in the Muslim society. He must be resolute in his personal practice of Islam and aware of the responsibilities he must shoulder when he returns home to his people.

The Jamia's Study Programme:

First Year:

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| (i) Seerat-e-Khatim-ul-Ambia & Seerat-ur-Rasool | in Urdu | (iii) Urdu
(2nd, 3rd, and 4th standard books). |
| (Basic works on the life of the Prophet (Peace be upon Him)). | | (iv) Maths
(2nd, 3rd and 4th standard Math). |
| (ii) (a) Rahbur-e-Farsi. | | (v) Geography.
(2nd, 3rd and 4th standard) |
| (b) Gulzar-e-Dabistan. | | (vi) Taleem-ul-Islam. |
| (c) Gulistan. | | |
| (d) Bustan. | | |

Second Year:

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| (i) Nahw-e-Meer
(Arabic Grammar).
Sharha Maiat-e-Amil
(Arabic Grammar). | (iv) Rahmat-e-Alam
(Basic work on life of the Prophet, Peace be Upon Him). |
| (ii) Sarf-e-Meer
(Arabic Grammar).
Ilm-ul-Seegha
(Arabic Grammar). | (v) Malabuda Minho. |
| (iii) Meezan-e-Munshaib
(Arabic Grammar),
Tamreen-ul-Abwaab
(Arabic Grammar). | (vi) Jamal-al-Qur'an. |
| | (vii) Altariqa-Tul-Jadidah
(Direct method Arabic). |

Third Year:

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| (i) Fusul-e-Akbari.
(Advance Morphology). | (iv) Taisir-ul-Mantiq.
Essa Ghoomojee.
Mirqaat
(Logic). |
| (ii) Hidaaya Tun Nahw
(Grammar).
Al Durus-un-Nahwia. | (v) Fawaid-al-Makkiya.
Seerat-e-Khulfa-i-Rashideen. |
| (iii) Quduri (Fiqh).
Noor-ul-edha. | |

Fourth Year:

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| (i) Sharh-e-Ibn-e-Aqeel, Vol I
(Arabic Grammar), | (v) Usul-ush-Shashi
(Principles of Jurisprudence),
Sharh-e-Tahzeeb. |
| (ii) Noor-ul-Yaqeen
(An Arabic work on the
life of Prophet—Peace be
Upon Him). | (vi) Muqaddama Jazria. |
| (iii) Al Manshoorat. | (vii) Al-Quran : Translation and
Tafseer
(from Sura Fatiha to Surah Al-
Anfaal). |
| (iv) Kunz-ud-Daqaaiq (Fiqh). | |

Fifth Year:

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| (i) Al-Quran : Translation
and Tafseer
(From Sura Al-Anfaal to
Al-Ankabut). | (iv) Maqamat
(Arabic Literature).
At-Waseet. |
| (ii) Al-Ikhtiaar
(Fiqh). | (v) Sharh-e-jami
(Advanced Arabic Grammar).
Talkhess-ul-Miftah. |
| (iii) Noorul Anwar-Complete
(Usul-ul-Fiqh). | (vi) Qutbi
(Logic).
History of Banu Ummayya. |

Sixth Year:

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| (i) Al-Quran : Translation
and Tafseer
(from Sura Al-Ankabut to
Sura An-Naas). | (iv) Diwan of Al-Mutanubbi
(Classic Poetry). |
| (ii) Al-Hidaya-Vol. I
Advance Fiqh). | (v) Sullam-ul-Ulum
(Logic).
History of Banu Abas. |
| (iii) Hussaami
(Usul-ul-Fiqh).
Tasheel-ul-Husul
(Usul-ul-Fiqh). | (vi) Mukhtasar-ul-Ma'aani
(Arabic Rhetoric). |

Note: For outside reading :—Seerat Ibn Hisham (The standard work on the life of the Prophet Muhammad—Peace be Upon Him).

Seventh Year:

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| (i) Tafseer-e-Jalalain—Part I | (iv) Tauzeeh-ul-Afkaar. |
| (ii) Tafseer-e-Jalalain—Part II | Al-Siraaje |
| (iii) Al-Hidaya—Vol. II | (Law of Inheritance). |
| (Advance Fiqh). | (v) Al-Hamaasa |
| | (Arabic Literature). |

Note: For outside reading:—

- (1) Hidayatul Mumtari an Ghoayatul Muftari.
- (2) Muhammadi Pocket Book (two works on the heretical doctrines of the Qadianis).

Eighth Year:

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| (i) Tafseer-e-Baidawi | (iv) Sharh-e-Nukhbatul-Fikr |
| (Tafseer-e-Quran). | (The Principles of Narration of |
| Al-Fauz-ul-Kabir-Fi-Usul- | Hadith). |
| i-Tafseer | Sharh-ul-Aqaid |
| (The Principles of Tafseer). | (Theology). |
| (ii) Al Hidaya—Vol. III | (v) Al-Hidaya—Vol. IV |
| (Fiqh). | (Advance Fiqh). |
| (iii) Mishkat-ul-Masabih— | (vi) Mishkat-ul-Masabih—Vol. II. |
| Vol. I | |

Ninth Year:

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| (i) Sahih-al-Bukhari—Complete. | (vii) Sharh-e-Maaniul Athar |
| (ii) Jami-ul-Tirmizi—Complete. | (Imam Tahaawi). |
| (iii) Abu Daud's Kitabus- | (viii) Al-Muwatta |
| sunan. | (Imam Malik). |
| (iv) Sahih Muslim—Complete. | (ix) Al-Muwatta |
| (v) Sunan-al-Nisaai—Complete. | (Imam Muhammad). |
| | (x) Al-Ma'arif |
| (vi) Sunan Ibn-e-Maja. | (Ibn-Qutaiba). |

Muslim system of education, called Dars-e-Nizami; was a liberal system, but if the present syllabus is studied in depth it will force one to conclude that it does not purport anything but to produce a group to perform paid religious rituals. Pakistan is an ideological state: we demanded Pakistan in order to save our religion and culture. Allah, in His infinite mercy, has bestowed upon us a blessing like Pakistan and it is now the moral rather religious duty of ulema to invite people to the highest principles of Islam and solve the ticklish problems of today with the help of the fundamentals of Islam. In the progressive world of today

it is essential for the Ulema of Jamia specially and the Ulema of other madrassahs generally to acquaint themselves with the advancement of science, philosophy, economics, sociology and contemporary history. It is equally incumbent upon those who are receiving modern education that they are conversant with the fundamentals of religion and its tenets. If they are able to present Islam in a light and in a language that can be seen and understood by the research student working in a laboratory, the professor teaching at a university, as much as by the farmer ploughing his field and the worker employed in a factory, each according to his capacity. They will be able to convey the warmth and inspiration of Islam.

The world of Islam is not immune from communist danger. To meet the challenge of communism, it is essential that Islam should be retrieved from the recesses of the past and presented to the world in the light and language of today. It should not be presented merely as an ideology, but as a complete social, political economic and spiritual code which is the quintessence of Islam. In this vital task only these madrasahs can offer some help and guidance.