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Role of madarsa in promoting education and socio-economic development in Mewat district, state of Haryana, India

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Abstract

Madarsa education is very common among the Muslims in India. Hundreds of thousand Muslim children acquire their primary, and perhaps the only formal education in these madarsas. As a result they are quite backward in science education. A section of scholars held madarsa education responsible for the poor socio-economic conditions of Indian Muslims. Due to the absence of modern education the madarsa trained persons are unable to improve their own material prosperity or to provide proper leadership to their Muslim community.

Mewat District about a hundred kilometers away from the National Capital Territory of Delhi, is the most backward both educationally and economically and falling at the abysmal level of the development. Besides other socio-economic reasons, lack of scientific education and rigid traditional culture are held important reasons of backwardness.

The purpose of the present study is to analyze whether madarsa education becomes a barrier in promoting modern education or whether institutions did help improve socio-economic conditions of madarsa trained persons.

In the absence of secondary data, the present study is based on the primary data collected through both extensive and intensive field work at the household level covering 2350 households.

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1. Introduction

Educational institutions of various nature are available in our country imparting education that varies from information technology, basic sciences, medicines, humanities and languages to social science. But there are institutions which are meant primarily to impart religious education. Among such institutions madarsa and maktab are found across the country in which religious teaching is the main focus. The madarsa system is a very old institution and carries the weight of several centuries (Jhingra, 2005). These institutions are established and maintained by the Muslims either privately or through trust/registered societies. The *ulema* run a vast network of maktabas, mosque-schools and madarsas or higher Islamic seminaries across the country. Most charitable funds generated within the community are spent on maktabas and madarsas (Sikand, 2008). Except few, most of these institutions do not have adequate infrastructural facilities, competent teaching staff and modern curriculum. Mode of teaching is as old as fifteenth century when such institutions were started to educate the children of nobles/royals of the Mughal Darbar. But a large number of the madarsa had come into existence during freedom movement started (Engineer, 2001).

Besides Arabic and Persian, these Madarsa also impart courses like Hindi, Urdu, Basic Science, and Social Studies at the primary level. Whatever reasons may be there, but it is fact that a large sections of Muslim population sends their children to madarsa and do not prefer to school education especially for girls (Jhingra, 2005). Such a perennial flow of students both girls and boys from Muslim communities to madarsa has been an important reason for the growth of madarsa and promoting education and knowledge among the Muslim country. No doubt madarsas have been playing a major role in promoting education among the muslims but it must kept in mind that the madrasa system of education is an independent system which has hardly any common points with the modern system of education and scientific approach (Jhingra, 2010a; Sikand, 2001).

2. The study Area

Mewat a newly created district of Haryana carved out from erstwhile Gurgaon and Faridabad Districts. The district comprises five Blocks namely Nuh, Punhana, Tauru, Nagina and Ferozpur Jhirka with a total area of about 1500 sq. km. The geographical extent of the district ranges from 26° north to 30° north latitudes and 76° E to 78° East longitudes. The district lies on the Indo-Gangatic divide to the west of the River Yamuna (fig.1). Physiographically the district comprises Aravalli hills and low plains.

The district belongs to a distinct ethnic and socio-cultural region inhabited with mostly Meo tribes who trace their roots to the early Aryan immigration into northern India. The district has about a million population mostly residing in rural areas; only about 11 percent of them were found living in towns. The district with the lowest literacy (56%) in the state also falls among the districts ranking the least female literacy in the country (37.60%).

The people of Mewat mainly engaged in agriculture and allied agro-based activities. Only a very small pockets has got canal irrigation facility otherwise the entire agriculture is rain fed. Thus per hectare agriculture production is low. Although animal husbandry is the secondary sources of income, it has not been carried out at the commercial level due to lack of capital. As a result, the region remained backward and lags behind the rest of the districts of the state. The purpose of the present study is to analyze the role of Madarsa in promoting education and socio-economic development in Mewat district.

3. Databases and Methodology

The present research is based entirely on the primary data collected through both extensive and intensive field work at the two rounds. At the first round, all the madarsas of the district were visited to collect the preliminary information on the questions related to the nature of madarsa, its management, teacher-students ratio, courses taught, etc.

The second round of the field survey was more selective as we concentrated to the single madarsa from each Tehsil. In order to meet out the required number of sampled households, it was decided to select the largest madarsa from each Tehsil. As such five madarsas were selected. The data on socio-economic and environmental conditions were collected from those households whose family heads received education from any of these five madarsas.

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