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### **Educational progress of Muslim Society: A case study of Bankura District**

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#### **Abstract:**

Bankura district is one of the districts of West Bengal. This district was formed on 14th April in 1881. The talent, financial development, natural resources and social progress of this district are not much less than other districts. However, the position of the Muslim community in Bankura district is a little different. The overall progress of the Muslim community is far behind that of other districts. Why did they not have an overall development like the Muslim community of other districts? In this case, it seems that backwardness in education was one of the reasons for their deterioration. But Hazrat Muhammad (SA:) gave more importance to education. The first sentence of the Quran, the holy book of Islam, is: "Ikra bismi rabbi kallaji khalaq" means read in the name of your Lord who created. The journey of the mission of the friend of humanity, the beloved Prophet Muhammad (SA:) began with reading. Therefore, the education of the Muslim community of Bankura district began. The main content of this chapter is the search for form. The arrival of Muslims in Bankura district was during the Sultanate period. Although they lived permanently in Bankura district for a long period of time, they are far behind the Hindus in education. Therefore, I have discussed how much progress has been made in the modern education and religious education of the Muslims of the district.

**Keywords: Hazrat Muhammad, Bankura, Muslim, ikra, community, education, Hindu.**

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Bankura district is one of the districts of West Bengal. This district was formed in April 1881 through various setbacks. The talent, financial development, natural resources and social progress of this district are not much less than other districts. However, the position of the Muslim community in Bankura district is a little different. The overall progress of the Muslim community is far behind other districts. Other districts like Muslim dominated Burdwan, Hooghly, Howrah, Murshidabad, Malda, Twenty Four Parganas etc. As in other parts of Bengal during the long Sultanate rule or Mughal rule, Muslim domination - settlement, landlord agriculture, trade, art, architecture, sculpture, development of education and religious development took place. That is, the picture of overall development was not observed in the case of the Muslim society of Bankura district. Moreover, the prominent

leadership of the Muslims of Bankura district in the resistance movement against the British during the colonial period is not visible. Above all, even in independent India, financial development, progress in education, religious spirit, development of trade, success in agriculture did not bring success criteria in the Muslim society of Bankura district. So I want to inquire as a student of history, exactly how was the position of Muslim society in Bankura district? What was their obstacle in the way of progress? Why did they not have overall development like the Muslim society of other districts? In this case, it seems that backwardness in education was the main reason for their deterioration. Moreover, not much has been written about the Muslim society of Bankura district. There don't seem to be any books specifically about education. But there is a lot of basic information about Muslim society in Bankura district. So, by combining those data, it is my topic to present a clear picture about the progress of education of Muslims in Bankura district. But before discussing education we will see how the arrival of Musalmans in this district took place.

A special historical political situation provided an opportunity for the establishment of Islam in this district. The primary reason for the arrival of Islam in Bankura district was an indirect result of the expansion of the kingdoms of the rulers of Delhi and Lucknow during the Turko-Afghan, Mughal period. (1351-1388) Shikharbhum or Samantabhum or North-West Bankura, due to the invasion of the Shekhar or Panchkot kingdom by the Turkish forces during the Jaznagar or Orissa campaign during the reign of Feroze Shah Tughlaq,<sup>1</sup> Sultan Barbak Shah of Bengal (1459-74) AD: Commander Ismail Ghazi's Garamandran Vijay and his According to the incident of his burial at Lokpur in Jaipur Thana after his death, Mallabhum or East Bankura<sup>2</sup>, during the rule of the Karrani Afghans over Orissa in the third quarter of the sixteenth century, Tungabhum or the region south of the Kansavati River in the district<sup>3</sup> came into contact with Islam. The culture of Pir Fakir also played an important role in propagating Islam in the district. The conversion of lower caste Hindus to Islam increased the Muslim population in the district. During the breakup of the Mughal Empire, many Pathan-Iranian troops arrived in Bengal from North India in the early eighteenth century. Their livelihood was working as mercenaries. When the Bargi riots subsided, these mercenaries were again dismissed and forced to accept the services of Lathial Lagdi, gatekeepers of small zamindars and mahajans. And they used to marry lower caste girls too. In this way they are connected to the local environment and occupation. <sup>4</sup> So from the beginning of the arrival of Muslims in Bankura district, their economic prospects were very weak. And despite the expansion of the culture of Pir-fakirs, there was no financial development. Therefore, the impact of the weak economy has also affected the education sector.

However, the last prophet of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad (SA:) gave more importance to education. The first sentence of the Quran, the holy book of Islam, is: "Iqra bismi rabbi kallaji khalaq"<sup>5</sup> means read in the name of your Lord who created. The journey of the mission of the beloved Prophet Muhammad (SA:), the friend of humanity, began with "reading". Allah says, O Prophet, I have taught you knowledge that you did not know and your forefathers did not know.<sup>6</sup> The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace,

became so proficient in the knowledge given by Allah that he emerged as a great teacher of mankind in the expansion of education. That is why Rasool (SA:) himself did not identify himself as a head of state or general on earth. Rather, he took pride in identifying himself as a teacher. The Prophet (SA:) said 'Buyistu Moaliman' 'I have been sent as a teacher for humanity.' The Qur'an talks about reading or gaining knowledge through which we will know the identity of the Creator, the secret of creation. Gaining knowledge will advance human society towards welfare. Needless to say, the main pillar of Islam is the Qur'an and the hadith, every event for the purpose of gaining human knowledge. It is mentioned in the hadith that Allah created the pen before the creation of the world. The creation of the pen is very significant in the hadith. Besides, a verse called "The Pen " has been revealed in the Qur'an.

Islam gave more importance to education and there was no special change in the case of the Muslims of Bankura. However, discussing the nature of education in Bankura district, it can be seen that the Muslims of Bankura were illiterate and economically weak during the colonial period. Not only that, the overall picture of education in Bankura district was very poor. In favor of this J .E. Gastrell can highlight the information. J.E.Gastrell quoted "Education is very little attended to. Few indeed can do more than write their names even in towns. In the villages education may be said to be entirely neglected. In the towns children of trades-people attend the Gooroo Muhasoy (pundit's school) until they understand common accounts."Speaking about his own times Gastrell added "such being the case, education as might be expected is neither sought after nor thought of by the lower classes; few can read, still fewer write ."<sup>7</sup>

During the Nababi period, there was no system of education for Hindus or Muslims as advanced as it is today. Education in both societies was limited to the upper classes. In Tol Chatuspathi or Maktab-Madrassa, both the societies were educated in their respective ideologies. The state of education in the wider society was very miserable. The British to build a well-organized education system. Originally to run the administration and create educated servants. The knowledge we gain through this system is an indirect consequence. It was not possible for the backward population of Muslims to associate themselves with the English-introduced education system for economic reasons. Those who had financial means were also turned away from the education of the masters. They were embracing Islamic teachings instead of those introduced by the British. As a result, the Muslim society was confined within its own boundaries. However, the education system introduced by the English was completely contrary to the thinking and consciousness of the Muslims in terms of tradition and purpose.<sup>8</sup>

However, through Syed Ahmed's Aligarh movement, the Muslim society's attitude towards English education changed. This change was also noticed in Bengal. The tendency of the Muslim community towards English education increased. However, in the case of the Muslims of Bankura district, it happened very slowly. The first mention of modern education in the case of Muslims in Bankura district is found in Hunter's book. He wrote that in 1871, the number of Muslim students studying in Bankura zilla school was 5 and the

number of Muslim students in 57 private primary schools was 6. In these two cases, the number of Hindu students was 181 and 1585 respectively. From this it may seem that the Muslim community of the district was lagging behind the Hindus in modern education. But in reality it was not. Judging by the statistics given in the census report of 1891, it was seen that Muslims were ahead of Hindus in terms of education. Because in terms of population 90 percent were Hindus and 5 percent were Muslims.<sup>9</sup>

Bankura District Board documents show that there was an upper primary school for Muslim students at Chabra village and a lower primary school at Raiprasadpur in Gangajalghati police station. Besides, there were lower primary level Urdu schools in Ramnagar of Bishnupur police station, Narkeldanga of Kotulpur police station, Naruwala of Sonamukhi police station and Kumrul village of Indus police station<sup>10</sup>. Although a good outline of education was seen at the primary level, it was not as expected in the case of higher education. However, we get to know a number of educated people, which is very low in terms of population. In 1925, Ramanuja Kar mentioned the names of Abdul Jabbar, Abdul Razzak Khan, Abdul Gafur, Maulubi Abdus Samad among the many eminent persons of Bankura<sup>11</sup>.

The Muslims of Bankura had no special interest in religious education. Official documents testify that there was no madrasa education system in the district from 1892-93 to 1931-32 AD. It is known that in 1903-04 there was only one school for teaching the Quran which was dependent on private initiative and financial aid. However, no information was available about the location and management of the school<sup>12</sup>. According to O'Malley, there were 11 maktab in the district in 1908. Arabic and Persian were taught at the primary level in the maktab 16. The first maktab was established in the city of Bankura in 1907 AD. In 1925, there were three maktab for Muslim girls in the district, with 111 students. There was a maktab in the town of Bishnupur during the colonial period. Abdul Gafur Akhaunji was one of the teachers of this maktab<sup>13</sup>. The picture of modern and religious education in the Muslim society of Bankura was not at all satisfactory. The famous Maulana Abul Qasim Kasemi of Burdwan district has highlighted the weakness of religious education in the Muslim community of Bankura<sup>14</sup>.

But the significant milestone of modern education was a high English school named "Chaudhury Mohammad Toyeb Institution" founded by Chaudhuri Mohammad Toyeb, a member of the zamindar family of Roll. This school was established in Rolle in 1892 AD. Toyeb Sahib was the founder, director and designer of the school. All expenses of the school were met from his zamindari Seresta.

Toyeb Sahib's modern approach was introduced in his efforts to establish high English schools. Being a Muslim landlord, he did not take initiative to establish a madrasa. From the very beginning he kept the doors of his school open to all communities. He left a mark of secular modern mentality by not sanctioning the practice of performing Saraswati Puja in schools, as well as celebrating Prophet's Day<sup>15</sup>.

Weaknesses in the education sector have been gradually cut. Set a precedent of brilliance in both modern education and religious education. Modern education has seen steady progress in the decades since independence. Although the number is less, from the beginning of the left period, the working people of various sectors can be found. During this time several new high schools and high madrasas were established in different parts of the district. Till date 11 High Madrasahs have been established in Bankura district. Those are 1. Rasulpur High Madrasah 1920, 2. Bagdahra High Madrasah 1972, 3. Chandai baro Hazari sommelloni High Madrasah 1977, 4. Natungram High Madrasah 1978, 5. Kether Danga High Madrasa 1979, 6. Lalband Hussainia Senior Madrasah 1980, 7. Badullara High Madrasah 1985, 8. Jinkara High Madrasa 1998, 9 .Kamargariya High Madrasah 2006, 10. Mrar High Madrasa 2007, 11. Fakirdanga Kavi Nazrul Junior Girls Madrasah 2008. Mainly Muslim students studied in these high Madrasah. As a result, education spread rapidly in underdeveloped Muslim societies. In addition, many Muslim boys and girls studied in high schools. At present, many Muslim students are studying in various colleges or universities of the district or state. Overall, there has been a good response to the education of Muslim women. In this case, many women have taken higher education by keeping themselves bound by the ritual of veiling. Veil system has not created any barrier in higher education. However, various government scholarships have helped in the .overall participation of women in education. Above all, economic progress has helped to improve the quality of education.

The residential mission education system has played a leading role in modern education in the district. In this regard, "Alamin Mission" has brought the poor, talented, backward minority students of the state to the pinnacle of development. Following the Alamein Mission, the education system underwent radical changes with the establishment of district-by-district missions. "Siddikia Akbar Mission" was established in 2006 AD at Kantadighi of Patrasair Police Station in Bankura District. In addition, in 2012 AD, a branch of Alamin Mission was established in Badullara. In 2019 Barajora 'Kishalaya Mission' was established at Katabandh more of Barajo block. In 2022, at Biur established a 'Global Mission'. As a result, there is a wave of agitation in the field of education. In fact, there was not a shortage of talent, but the shortage was in the infrastructure. Gradually, the residential mission system created that infrastructure in the field of education. Therefore, the number of medical students in the district has increased significantly in the last few years. Which can be called the measure of success in Muslim society. We will highlight the names of several doctors. Such as Yusuf, Amir Hossain, Abdul Majeed, Rabiul, Asma Khatun of Bagdhra village, Sadiqur of Marar village <sup>16</sup> Sekh Hasan of Jinkara village, <sup>17</sup> Roshan Alam Sekh of Mandarbani village, Aqib Mallik and Sabana Mallik (Dentist) of Chandai village<sup>18</sup>, Sams Musafir of Badullara, Kamal Khan of Vikudi village <sup>19</sup>, Hafiz Uddin Sheikh of Dubrajpur<sup>20</sup> are like bright stars in Muslim society. In addition, the number of Muslim employees in the field of masters, engineers and employees of various government offices, courts etc. was significant. As a result, it can easily be assumed that the awareness of Muslims has

increased in the field of education. And this awareness raising has been considered as one of the tools to move the society forward.

In the field of religious education, gradual progress can be seen in the district. A number of Khariji Madrasahs were established with the aim of religious education and implementation of Sharia law in their lives. Notable among these are, Hazrat Maulana Muslim Sahib established Khaliliya Madrasah in 1976 AD at Kantadighi village of Patrasayer police station, later his son-in-law Hazrat Maulana Zakaria Sahib took charge. Madanibagh Islamia Arabia Madrasah was founded by Pir Abdul Khalek Hossaini of Burdwan in 1977 AD at Bandalhati village of Sonamukhi police station. Hazrat Maulana Yahya Hossaini spent his entire life as the head teacher of this madrasah. Maulana, who then did Chemistry Honors from Christian College in Bankura district, later Moulana passed from Deoband University in Uttar Pradesh. Besides, Nabinagar Madrasa at Katabandh more of Barajor police station, Madrasah Sirajul Ulum at Dubrajpur of Sonamukhi police station, Dhabjanaranpur Madrasah of Kotulpur police station, Beliard Madrasah of Bishnupur police station, Kaphishtha Madrasa of West Bankura, Shyamnagar Madrasah, Rasulpur Madrasah, Kumno Palashdanga Madrasah of Indas police station etc. Hazrat Maulana Zakaria Sahib established the first Women's Madrasah "Jamiya Umme Kulsoom Lil Banat" at Kantadighi in 2009 AD for the separate education of women. As a result, women are no longer lagging behind in women's education. In addition to madrasa education, modern education has also progressed in teaching according to the syllabus of the 'Rabeta Board'. So it goes without saying that madrasah education means religious education, but practical life management education.

Although the pattern of education observed at the beginning of the formation of Bankura district, it has gradually changed from being confined to one place. In that case, as many high schools and high madrasahs have been established in the field of modern education, the number of students has also increased successively. Above all, the number of medical students has increased, which was previously a pipe dream. Religious education has also progressed socially by following the ritual of veiling and Shariah law. Overall, the progress of education in the Muslim community of Bankura district has been observed.

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