

Colonial Engagement with Indigenous Islamic Scholarship and the Establishment of Hooghly Mohsin College

Amit K. Suman

Abstract

The Hooghly Mohsin College (madrasa) is one of the many institutions which have seen recurrent attempts at reform in Muslim societies during the late eighteenth and nineteenth century colonial Bengal. Since the late medieval period, when it first emerged as the principal institution of higher Islamic learning, the madrasa has undergone many changes, adapting in varying degrees to local cultures and changing times. Given the centrality of this institution in the preservation and production of knowledge as well as in the formation of the religious elite, the madrasa is crucial to the construction of religious authority. The paper also investigates the colonial policy of madrasa reform, and its impact on Muslim society in Bengal in general and north India in particular. It reviews how the colonial government initiated various plans on the 'modernisation' of madrasa education from eighteenth to the late nineteenth century through adaptation of the modern education system based on the theory of incorporating English as one of the core subjects, though the colonial ambition of modernisation of madrasa education achieved limited success. A variety of efforts towards reforming the madrasa were, in fact, undertaken during the same period, both by British administrators and by Muslim reformers and attempts have likewise been made to reform madrasas in India. This study draws attention to the importance of these initiatives and of the reactions they have called forth in shaping not only competing visions of the madrasa itself but also some of the ways in which Islam has come to be viewed and located in society and the position and authority of the religious leaders are visualized.

Keywords: Hooghly Mohsin College, Madrasa, Colonialism, Maulvis

Introduction

This paper concentrates on the process of transitioning from informal to institutionalized or different forms of instruction within traditional Islamic learning centres. It also delves into the modifications introduced during the colonial period, especially in regions where prior forms of instruction were an integral part of the Indian education system. Before colonial intervention, the primary objective of indigenous Islamic learning centres was to nurture scholars and leaders who were not only well-versed in India's history and culture but also developed commendable life habits, powers of observation, meditation, and creative thinking, particularly in matters of religion and philosophy. Special emphasis was placed on instilling certain perspectives and attitudes towards life, nature, and religion. The goal was to encourage students in these learning centres to devote time and thought to matters related to religion and the profound questions concerning existence, salvation, and the universe. These attitudes and habits were to be cultivated through the teacher's example and the reverent, contemplative atmosphere of these learning centres. Another objective was to foster attitudes of obedience, patience, and a willingness to work. From the outset, a student's

eagerness and sincerity in pursuing education were assessed by their faithfulness and perseverance in performing even ordinary and sometimes menial tasks. A third aim was to teach self-control and promote a lifestyle that abstained from luxury. The student's life was intentionally kept simple, and over time, they were expected to gain control not only over physical desires but also over mental and emotional excesses. The fourth objective was to instil reverence for established customs and respect for constituted authorities like gurus or maulvis. The fifth aim was to achieve a deeper understanding of God, considered the "only reality with everything else viewed as an illusion. Lastly, the emphasis was placed on developing self-reliance and a sense of responsibility [Muhammad Qasim Zaman (1999) (Commentaries, Print and Patronage: Hadith and the Madrasas in Modern South Asia) Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 62:1, p. 61].

The paper delves into the colonial policy of reforming madrasas and its repercussions on Muslim society in Bengal, particularly in northern India. It examines the various plans initiated by the colonial government for madrasa education from the 18th to the late 19th century, aiming to integrate it with the "modern education system that included English as one of the core subjects. However, the colonial aspiration for modernizing madrasa education achieved limited success. During the late 18th and 19th centuries, colonial India experienced a significant period of religious transformation. One outcome of this transformation was the resurgence of Islamic knowledge within several madrasas in northern India, emphasizing the study of the Quran, Hadith, and other vital religious subjects, and advocating for adherence to Islam as understood through such study. While these movements exhibited certain continuities with developments in the 18th century, scholars widely concur that British colonialism played a fundamental role in their emergence. This impact is particularly significant for India's Muslim community, who were formerly the ruling elite. On one hand, the loss of Muslim political authority and the rise of a powerful European power presented substantial challenges to the Muslim community and their identity. On the other hand, exposure to new ideas, institutions, and technologies posed a threat to established structures of authority and even to the practice and understanding of Islam, particularly as it had been lived and interpreted by the religious elite. It's important to note that the religious elite was not a monolithic group, and the disagreements regarding how to respond to the challenges they faced further deepened divisions within the community [Muhammad Qasim Zaman (1999) (Commentaries, Print and Patronage) A significant debate within the field of British India's history revolves around the extent of colonial rule's impact on the transformation of Indian society. On one side of this debate, there exists a historical perspective that does not view colonial rule as a mere imposition but rather as an Indian project or a form of dialogue between Indians and the British]. C. A. Bayly (1988) (Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire, Origins of nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the making of North India) (Cambridge).

[A Marxist variation of this perspective, with a stronger emphasis on historical logic rather than agency, is represented by scholars like David Washbrook. Washbrook argues that "colonialism was the logical outcome of South Asia's own history of capitalist development [David Washbrook (1988) (Progress and Problems: South Asian Economic and Social History c.1720-1860) Modern Asian Studies, vol. 22] (pp. 749-6).

[On the other side of the debate, there is a school of thought that places a strong emphasis on colonial knowledge and power. It views colonialism as a cultural project of control, as articulated by scholars like Bernard Cohn, who stated that

"the conquest of India was the conquest of knowledge]." Bernard S. Cohn (1996) *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton) p. 16.

[The central argument here is that a distinct entity known as colonial rule existed, and technologies of knowledge, often referred to as "orientalist empiricism" as labelled by David Ludden, played a crucial role in shaping the cultural categories used to comprehend Indian realities. This process influenced the perceptions and understanding of Indian realities by both the native population and the British authorities]. David Ludden (1993) 'Orientalist Empiricism and Transformations of Colonial Knowledge' in C. A. Breckenridge, P. Van der Veer (ed.) (*Orientalism and The Post-Colonial Predicament*), Pennsylvania (pp. 250-78).

From the inception of East India Company rule in 1765, the colonial government largely neglected the education of the people in Bengal for an extended period. Furthermore, it was considered detrimental to the empire's interests and contrary to the company's agenda to provide any form of education to the populace of this region. Given that the Persian language remained in use in the Law Court until March 7, 1835, serving as the state language and the medium of instruction in Bengal, the colonial government recognized the importance of producing intellectuals proficient in Persian. Some colonial administrators personally supported Arabic and Sanskrit learning to win favor with the local population. Arabic was also incorporated into higher education, and the teaching of Urdu was introduced into the education system for Muslims after the 17th century. Additionally, Bengali, the language of Bengal, was taught at the primary level. The Muslims of Bengal and the broader Indian subcontinent adopted the Dars-i-Nizamiyya, which followed the curriculum of the Nizamiyya University in Baghdad, continuing the educational tradition of the earlier period during the reign of the Caliphs of Baghdad (750-1258). (The Muslims of Bengal and India in general were following the pattern of Dars-i-Nizamiyya of Baghdad, but in the 18th Century, the Dars-i-Nizamiyya introduced by Mullah Nizamuddin Sihalawi (1677-1748) (of Lucknow, started to replace the former syllabi. This system of education became popular from Bengal to Peshawar). Mahmud Husain et al (ed.) (1960) *A History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. II, 1831-1905, part 1, Karachi (p. 177).

[In the 18th century, the Dars-i-Nizamiyya, introduced by Maulana Nizamuddin (1677-1749) (of Lucknow, began to replace the previous Dars curriculum based on the Baghdad model. General Sleiman, a well-known English scholar of the time, also commended the progress of Muslims in India in terms of higher education, noting that the advancement they achieved in this regard was seldom paralleled by other communities around the world]. M. Fazlur Rab, *Madrasah Muslim Education*, 1941 (p. 28).

Madrasahs were at times established with state support, often in the form of land grants, Madad-i-Ma'ash (financial assistance) or Jagirs (land revenue assignments). (Initially, these madrasahs did not follow a standardized curriculum. However, in the 18th century, Maulana Abdul'Ali Bahru'Ulum, the son of Maulana Nizamuddin (d. 1748) (of Farangi Mahall in Lucknow, was invited by a Zamindar (landowner) in Burdwan district, Bihar, to establish a madrasah. He introduced the Nizamiyya system, named after his father, which became the foundation for the curriculum in these madrasahs]. Barbara D. Metcalf, (1982) *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900*, Princeton (pp. 198-215) Muhsin Mahdi, 'From the manuscript age to the age of printed books' in George N. Atiyeh (ed.) (*The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and the Written Communication in the Middle East*, State University of New York Press), NY, 1995 (p. 6): The state and the mystical fraternities seem to have been the initial sponsors of the printed book in secular

and religious fields, respectively. Mahdi offers no evidence for this assertion, however. Muhammad Qasim Zaman (1999) (Commentaries, Print and Patronage' pp. 61-62 [Under the Nizamiyya system, books and commentaries authored by Maulvi Nizamuddin and his son Maulvi Qutbuddin were integrated into the curriculum. However, this curriculum faced criticism for its emphasis on grammar and logic, which some argued detracted from more practical and secular subjects such as history and natural sciences, as well as important religious subjects like Tafsir and Hadith. Maulana Ubaidullah (1830-85 (the first Superintendent of the Dacca madrasa, expressed his reservations about the system, stating "We have seen in many works of modern logicians of Lucknow that they have been led into a most ridiculous system of indulging in vain subtleties and captious contests. The excessive pursuit of it in our schools has been productive of fruitless quibbling and cavilling. It is indeed deplorable that this vein of pedantic knowledge has so much absorbed the attention of the learned Muslims of India in later days that it has almost prevented them from pursuing other useful branches of learning." Nevertheless, the Nizamiyya syllabus remained popular in Bengal]. Francis Robinson (1993) (Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print' Modern Asian Studies, 27, p. 233) By the 1870s, editions of the Quran and other religious books were selling in large quantities. In the last three decades of the 19th century, over seven hundred newspapers and magazines in Urdu were launched. Observers noted how Muslims recognized the influence of the press. In Upper India at the beginning of the 20th century, 4,000-5,000 books were published in Urdu every decade, and there were tens of thousands of newspaper r e a d e r s . For further insights, you can refer to Barbara D .

1982 and Francis Robinson's work on the cultural significance of Persian in India before its decline in the 19th century' in Robert L. Canfield (ed) (1991) Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective) Cambridge (pp. 104-31[.

Within this vibrant milieu, religious controversies thrived, giving rise to various sects, religious associations, and the proliferation of madrasas. The printed religious texts of the time encompassed a diverse spectrum of content. These included polemical tracts, engaging in theological and doctrinal debates, while seeking to defend or promote religious viewpoints while critiquing others. Additionally, they featured juristic opinions, or fatwas, addressing a wide range of topics, including matters of doctrine, ritual practices, Islamic norms governing social interactions, and more. The classical Islamic works found in print were highly influential, with a focus on foundational texts such as the Quran, collections of hadith (the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad) and writings on Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam. This rich tapestry of printed religious texts contributed to a diverse religious landscape and theological discourse during this period]. Muhammad Qasim Zaman (1999) (Commentaries, Print and Patronage' pp. 61-62 [A significant portion of these publications were written in the Urdu language, which had emerged as the lingua franca for Muslims in North India. Until the latter half of the nineteenth century, Persian had served as the language of the Mughal court and was integral to Muslim culture. It was also the language employed by the British administration until 1835 when it was superseded by English, followed by provincial vernaculars two years later in the provinces, particularly Urdu in northern India. Among educated Muslims, particularly in the northern regions, the decline of Persian coincided with the growing prominence of Urdu throughout the nineteenth century. Urdu became the primary language for literary and religious expression, supplanting Persian. As a result, most madrasas adopted Urdu as the medium of instruction, and it was in this language that Muslim scholars engaged in debates, authored their works, and

disseminated their publications].Abdul Barkat et al op. cit p. 63 [Numerous translations of the Quran and other significant religious texts were published in Urdu. This not only fostered the growth of the Urdu language but also played a crucial role in fortifying the religious identity of the Muslim community.

The decline of Muslim landowners and aristocrats was largely attributed to various policies introduced by the British East India Company, notably the Permanent Settlement and the declaration of forfeiture of tax-free properties (Lakheraj) by Lord Cornwallis in 1793. These policies led to the closure of countless maktabas and madrasas. When the British government converted lakheraj lands into state property in 1793, approximately 100,000 primary madrasas were compelled to shut down. Many of these educational institutions had relied on the income generated from these tax-free lands, which was typically managed by affluent Muslims. William Hunter (1840-1900) (a British civil servant, aptly described the consequences, stating that "Hundreds of ancient families were ruined, and the education system of the Muslims, which was almost entirely maintained by rent-free grants, received its death-blow." W. W. Hunter (1964) (The Indian Muslims), Lahore (p. 139 [Under such circumstances, it became exceedingly difficult for Muslims to sustain higher education institutions like madrasas, although they made efforts to keep primary maktabas operational for some time. The economic hardships faced by Muslims significantly contributed to their educational backwardness. Pursuit of knowledge holds a special place in Islam as a religious obligation mandated by the Quran and the Sunnah. Historically, Muslim rulers in India considered it a virtuous act to establish and endow madrasas with land grants, while also providing stipends and subsistence allowances to scholars. Muslim nobles and landed aristocracy followed suit. However, with the loss of political power and wealth, many madrasas fell into decline and were gradually abandoned. Even the institutions mentioned by Francis Buchanan and William Adam towards the late 18th or early 19th centuries had vanished by the mid-19th century. During the early days of Muslim conquest in Bengal, Muslim saints and preachers established mosques that served as both maktabas and madrasas. These mosques were instrumental in teaching the necessary rituals of Islam, including Quranic recitation for prayer and other religious observances. The mosque's Imam often provided free instruction to boys and girls. Furthermore, some Arabic scholars volunteered to teach higher Islamic studies either in mosques or at their homes without any remuneration. Wealthy individuals would frequently engage these scholars to educate their sons, as well as local students.

HOOGHLY MOHSIN COLLEGE

The early history of the Hooghly madrasa reveals several significant historical themes, including a notable trend toward the formal bureaucratization of the ulama and other institutions under colonial rule. This paper delves into the organization, structure, curriculum, patronage, syllabi, and different aspects of knowledge transmission at the madrasa during the 19th century. The aim here is to reimagine the history of madrasa traditions, offering a theoretical overview of the field of knowledge transfer and educational change. It also involves a discussion of various issues, such as the exchange of ideas between British and Indian educationalists, debates concerning literacy standards, the use of indigenous and Western curriculum materials in the transfer of knowledge across time, space, culture, disciplines, and networks. The paper further explores how constructions of identity within intellectual traditions at the madrasa were influenced by knowledge processes that transcended existing paradigms. In essence, this article addresses questions related to the movement of knowledge across social and cultural boundaries. It examines the key challenges in the

transmission of intellectual and knowledge traditions within a wide range of contexts, spanning the pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods.

The Mohammad Mohsin College, also known as the Hooghly Mohsin College, has a rich and enduring history. It was established on August 1, 1836, within the premises of Perron House. This institution holds immense significance, particularly for scholars researching the educational and social history of Bengal during the 19th century. Originally named the New Hooghly College, it later became the Hooghly Mohsin College during its centenary celebration. The college has been affiliated with the University of Calcutta since the inception of the university system in India in 1857. Subsequently, it became a constituent college of the University of Burdwan in 1960 and remains operational with great vitality. The college's inception was associated with prominent figures like Haji Mohammad Mohsin and Thomas B. Macaulay. Throughout its history, the institution has produced numerous distinguished individuals who made significant contributions to the socio-cultural development of Bengal. Eminent scholars and intellectuals, such as Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Dwijendralal Roy, Sanjib Chandra Chattopadhyay, and Ranglal Bandyopadhyay, were notable alumni of the college. Furthermore, figures like Biplabacharya Jyotis Chandra Ghosh, Mujaffar Ahmed, Kanailal Dutta, Bhupati Majumdar, Charu Chandra Roy, and Debendra Nath Mondal, whether as students or teachers, dedicated their lives to the Indian National Movement. Situated in proximity to the banks of the Hooghly River, the college's architecture is characterized by its harmonious design, contributing to the institution's strong sense of affection and pride.

Hooghly was an important port in the 17th and 18th centuries, and many Muslims, even from as far as Persia, had settled down and prospered in this region two of them were Agha Motaher and Agha Fazlullah, who had been granted Jagirs in Jessore and elsewhere, by the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb. Agha Motaher had built the Imambarah on the banks of the river and bequeathed all his properties to his only child Manu Jan Khanum, while his widow married the son of Agha Fazlullah and had a son from this marriage called Mohammad Mohsin in 1730. Haji Mohammad Mohsin was born in 1730, and he was eight years younger than his half-sister Manu Jan Khanum. Manu Jan Khanum was the unsung hero of Muslim education, as it was her property that Haji Mohsin later creates as a trust to assist Muslim students. He was one of the greatest Muslims of 18th and 19th century Bengal, and was well known for his learning, piety, and philanthropy and especially for the one hundred years trust that he left behind. His contributions kept his memory alive and conferring immense benefits on the succeeding generations.

.[The history of Mohammad Mohsin and the estate involves a complex legal and inheritance dispute. Initially, Manu Jan Khanum's marriage was childless, and she sought the assistance of her stepbrother, Mohammad Mohsin, in managing her estate. After Manu Jan's death in 1803, she left her entire wealth to Mohammad Mohsin. In 1806, Mohammad Mohsin established a deed of trust, dividing the trust into nine shares and appointing two Mutawallis to administer the income generated from the property. Tragically, Mohammad Mohsin passed away in 1812, and the appointed Mutawallis, whom he had trusted, proved to be untrustworthy. They forged a perpetual lease in their favour, leading the Board of Revenue of Bengal to intervene under Regulation XIX of 1810. This regulation granted the Board supervision over all trusts of a public nature. Syed Akbar Ali Khan was appointed as the Visitor to oversee the situation. However, this intervention did not lead to a resolution. In 1818, the Mutawallis were dismissed, and Akbar Ali Khan was appointed as the new Mutawallis. Concurrently, legal disputes and litigations had already begun. There was a rival claimant for the property, and this individual pursued the case through various courts. Ultimately, the case was

dismissed by the Privy Council in 1830. On the other hand, Wasik Ali Khan, the son and nominee of one of the original Mutawallis, initiated a suit in 1826, seeking reinstatement as Co-Mutawallis. However, his claims were rejected in a series of legal proceedings, including the Hooghly Zila (district) Court, the Court of Appeal in Calcutta, and finally the Sadar Diwani Adalat in 1835. The estate's legal battles and multiple claimants made it a complex and protracted affair.

Haji Muhammad Mohsin left a substantial property for religious and educational purposes through a trust in 1817. The government assumed trusteeship of this endowment. As the funds accumulated significantly, the government decided to utilize the money both to honor the founder's name and to promote valuable knowledge. After careful consideration, the government proposed the establishment of a college in Hooghly with two departments: English and Oriental. The college officially opened on August 1, 1836. Remarkably, within three days of its opening, 1,200 students enrolled in the English department, while 300 enrolled in the Oriental department. During the annual examination, the English department had 1,013 students, with only 31 being Muslims, 34 Christians, and 948 Hindus. In the Oriental department, there were 219 students during the annual examination, with 138 being Muslims and 81 being Hindus. A.R. Mallick points out that the endowment, which was originally intended for the education of Muslims, ended up benefiting institutions open to all classes. The government did not seem concerned that funds meant for one community's education were predominantly benefiting another. No efforts were made to attract Muslim students to the English department of the College. Furthermore, the course of studies, limited to English and Bengali, was not designed to cater to Muslim preferences. There was also no provision for offering financial assistance to underprivileged Muslim boys. As a result, given the rush for admission, they had to either comply with depositing money for books and agreeing to pay fees or forgo admission altogether. Considering this context, the colonial government would have understood the significance of the appeal made by Nawab Abdul Latif] Nawab Abdul Latif, a prominent Muslim intellectual of 19th century Bengal who was devoted to the cause of Muslim consciousness, was born in 1828 to a respectable Muslim family of Eastern Bengal. He believed that modern education was a pre-condition to the growth of Muslim consciousness, and he tried his best to create facilities for the Muslims of Bengal to equip themselves with modern education introduced by the British Government [to liberate Mohsin Endowment Fund for the education of the Muslims.

In his minute, Nawab Abdul Latif begins by discussing the purpose of the Mohsin endowment. He highlights that the endower, a Muslim, established the endowment "with the evident intention of benefitting his soul, and a portion of these funds was to be devoted to the education of Muslims." While there were no specific instructions regarding the type of education to be provided, it can be assumed that the endower's intention was to offer education to his fellow Muslims. Nawab Abdul Latif then briefly delves into the history of the Hooghly Madrasah, which was founded based on Haji Mohsin's bequest. He particularly sheds light on the mismanagement of the madrasa and the discontinuation of the system of providing free boarding and lodging for students. Next, Nawab Abdul Latif addresses the nature of education to be imparted, contemplating whether it should be entirely in Persian and Arabic, entirely in English, or a combination of both. He extensively discusses the advantages of Muslims receiving English education and advocates for providing education in both Arabic-Persian and English. He writes, "But the Mahomedan religion and Mahomedan society expect from the followers of the one, and members of the other, the study, above all others, of the Persian and the Arabic languages and scarcely any worldly

temptations will yet persuade them to give the sole or chief place in their studies to the English or any other language. If therefore the Government desires to receive for itself, and give to the Muslims, the benefits of the study of English by the Muslims, it must introduce in its plans of Mahomedan education, the English equally with the Persian and Arabic. Finally, the Nawab suggests two key initiatives. He proposes the establishment of a purely Arabic institution or the improvement of the existing one at Hugh, exclusively meant for Muslim boys. Additionally, he recommends the establishment of an Anglo-Persian School designed for Muslim boys. The Nawab further provides a detailed plan outlining the classes to be offered in each institution, the number of students to be enrolled, the recruitment of teachers, the institution of scholarships and fellowships, and the financial requirements for operating these two educational institutions.

The re-evaluation of Muslim education in Bengal was carried out in accordance with Lord Mayo's Resolution. The Government of Bengal, as it contemplated a scheme to promote Muslim education, believed that it would be challenging to allocate Provincial Funds specifically for Muslim education. They considered that Mohsin's Endowment provided a legitimate means and aligned better with the declared intentions of the endower. Therefore, the Government of Bengal proposed to bear the expenses of the Hooghly Madrasa (Mohammad Mohsin's College) with a reasonable contribution from the Mohsin Endowment for the madrasa, particularly for the benefit of Muslim students in that institution. The government's objective, as outlined in the seventh paragraph of an extract from a letter to the Sadar Board of Revenue, was to establish a madrasa in Hooghly. Initially, the intention was to teach Islamic learning in this institution. However, it was also emphasized that the local population should willingly avail themselves of the substantial advantages of European Sciences. The government aimed to facilitate this process, ensuring that the natives had the opportunity to access European scientific knowledge.

The Mohsin Endowment Fund was considered a legitimate source to cover the expenses for the special benefits of Muslim education. In a letter to the Government of India, the Government of Bengal presented several suggestions: They proposed the withdrawal of the Mohammad Mohsin Educational Endowment from General Hooghly College. With this Endowment and the existing grant to the Calcutta Madrasa, they recommended the maintenance of three madrasas: a small one at Hooghly, a large one at Calcutta, and a moderate-sized one at Chittagong or Dacca. They further recommended the appointment of a European principal with knowledge of Arabic to oversee the Calcutta and Hooghly institutions. Additionally, they suggested appointing another European, albeit with a smaller salary, to manage the Eastern District madrasas. For the allocation of funds, amounting to Rs. 1,09,500, the following distribution was proposed: Rs. 50,000 for the Calcutta madrasa and its Principal, Rs. 11,500 for the Hooghly madrasa, Rs. 7,000 for scholarships, Rs. 5,000 for contingencies, Rs. 4,000 for the Arabic Department at the Dacca College, and Rs. 27,000 for the Chittagong madrasa. An additional Rs. 5,000 was suggested for a subscription to the Hooghly madrasa. The educational department was urged to gradually increase the proportion of Muslims admitted at all levels of the Educational Department, particularly at the lower ranks, including the Deputy Inspectorship and normal scholarships. Furthermore, it was proposed that the accumulated surplus of the Mohsin Endowment be dedicated to expanding boarding house facilities in Calcutta and establishing a madrasa building along with boarding houses in Chittagong. The Government of Bengal, recognizing the need for Muslim representation in the educational staff, was even willing to accept a somewhat lower standard of

excellence in Muslim masters compared to their Hindu counterparts.

In the case of the Hooghly madrasa, the colonial state solidified its authority through a series of actions. Initially, it removed the two mutawallis under the pretext of 'misappropriation of funds' asserting its right to appoint mutawallis for the Mohsin Fund. Subsequently, it partially allocated these funds to establish institutions that conformed to its own preferences or served its administrative needs. The colonial government proceeded with caution, hesitant to maintain the existing educational structures for fear of inciting political unrest. Simultaneously, it introduced changes such as English departments in the madrasas, aligning them with the 'enlightened character of the colonial state. This combination of asserting control over financial resources and shaping educational institutions to suit colonial objectives further established its sovereignty in the region.

Conclusion

The dispute that unfolded throughout the nineteenth century regarding the fate and nature of educational institutions held significant implications for the type of future Indian subjects with whom colonial rulers would interact. The fate of Indian colleges was no exception in this context. While the educational reforms in the 18th and 19th centuries were shaped by specific Muslim concerns, it is evident that the colonizers had intentions to create a complex situation during the management of funds, fostering an environment of ambiguity that they could later exploit to their advantage. This situation raised the fundamental question of how to reconcile one's identity as a Muslim in a world governed by a non-Islamic power. However, it is important to recognize the capacity of the educational system, particularly when knowledge is disseminated widely, to foster intellectual development and enhance human understanding. Such intellectual growth has historically supported the administration of vast bureaucratic empires, the organization of formidable armies, the design of some of the world's most magnificent architectural structures, the creation of beloved poetry, and the development of highly regarded legal systems that have influenced numerous human societies.

The colonial administrators, whether Hindu or Muslim, viewed the Indian education system with reservations. Formal education in India had its origins prior to the advent of Islam in the region. The establishment of the Sultanate in India can be traced back to the Muslim tradition of memorizing the Quran and other Islamic texts by rote. In this system, the pupil had the option to pursue further knowledge as per their choice, and the addition of subjects did not alter the existing set of texts. For Muslims, proficiency in Arabic and Persian was essential for a well-rounded education. A superficial examination of institutions like the Hooghly madrasa may suggest a genuine commitment to educating Indians. However, a deeper analysis reveals a significant transformation within these institutions, particularly in the shift from Persian and Arabic to English as the medium of instruction. The attempt to maintain these colleges while introducing some changes reflects the dual nature of these institutions combining Islamic and contemporary education which made them appealing to the Indian population. This transformation in educational priorities reflects not only the colonial administration's self-interest but also the evolving dynamics of these institutions. They were simultaneously places of traditional Islamic learning and centers for modern education, which resonated with the diverse educational needs of the Indian population.

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Abdul Karim (1970'(Nawab Abdul Latif and Modern Education of the Muslims of Bengal, Islamic Studies, 9:4),December(p. 283.

The mutawallis were neither priests, nor did they concern themselves with the performance of religious ceremonies. They were the guardian of all matters appertaining to the Waqf (religious endowments(and were the general Superintendent to protect the interests of the trust and to look after the affairs connected with that .

A. R. Mallick(1961(British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal),Dacca(p. 22.

After the decline of the Mughal Empire, the coming of British rule led to the significant transformation in the traditional Muslim education system. The

scholars Mir Fatih Allah Shirazi (d. 1588) and Mulla Muhammad Nizam al-Din (d. 1748) played a pivotal role in institutionalizing the study of the rational sciences in northern India's famed centres of learning, notwithstanding opposition from conservative 'ulama' who saw the disciplines as a threat to Islam. Established in the eighteenth century to train qazis (judges) and muftis (a juriconsult qualified to issue legal opinions) and government bureaucrats, the famous Firangi Mahall School in Lucknow, India, also developed a curriculum dedicated to the rational as well as religious sciences. See, Francis Robinson (2001) (The 'Ulama' of Firangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia), London (p. 2) and Yoginder Sikand, *Bastions of the Believers*, p. 46.

Barbara Metcalf (1978) (The Madrasa at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India' Source: *Modern Asian Studies*, 12:1, p. 112.

The Muslim population of Bengal during the mid 19th Century exceeded 21 and ½ millions and apart from Calcutta madrasa which was maintained from provincial revenues, other five important madrasas or the centers of Islamic learning of colonial Bengal were supported from the income of the Mohsin Endowment Fund. William Hunter, Report of the Indian Education Commission, 1882-83, Calcutta, 1883.

Cf. M. Azizul Huque (1917) (History and Problems of Moslem Education in Bengal, Thacker (p. 36.

The Resolution of the Bengal Government no. 4147 dated 16 November 1915, where the government province realized the cost of all government madrasas and the charges for grants-in-aid to a non-government madrasa. See Huque, *History and Problems*, 1917, p. 96.

For the correspondence relating to the administration of the Hooghly Imambara and the rights of the government over it, see *Collection of Papers: The Hooghly Imambara, 1815-1910*, Calcutta, 1914.

Huque, *History and Problems*, Thacker (pp. 42-43.

The sum also includes the Calcutta Madrasa grant of Rs. 46,000, probable fee realization of Rs. 1500 and the scholarship grant of Rs. 7,000.

Huque (1917) (History and Problems), Thacker (pp. 44-45.

Francis Robinson (2010) (Education' in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, Cambridge pp. 529-31.