

Fazlur Rahman's Educational Ideas

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Abstract

Fazlur Rahman has advanced the foresight of Sir Sayyid and Iqbal, so he considers the reformation of Islamic intellectualism with amending the core curriculum of religious education is essential. Since, the deficiency of insight and the sterility of intellectual aptitude are vital to eradicate from Muslims. For avoiding the melancholy of imitating the west blindly he search in the exceptional history of Muslims' great contributions in their respective fields of knowledge, these historical facts compelled contemporary Muslims to take their part in the moral progress of humanity. He believes that the deterioration of Muslims in education is the crucial cause of their decline. The solution for him is the proficient teachers with carefully planned syllabus are decisive for the development of society.

Crucial Cause of Decline of Muslim Ummah:

As an exception to his predecessors Dr. Fazhur Rahman performs unmatched scrutiny and presents his unbiased result of the Islamic history and the main cause of present decline of Muslim Ummah. He performed profound research and he totally confines himself to conservative traditional education.

And yet, strange though it may seem, it is precisely this systematic working-out of Islam for the modern context that has not been forthcoming. In classical Islam, it had taken Muslims about two and a half to three centuries to accomplish a theological system, a legal-moral system, and a political system and then to administer them through a titanically controlled educational system to mold the orientation and ethos of the Muslim community. Indeed, this systematic structure and its educational administration were so powerful and effective that, as an established tradition, they successfully obscured even the Quran and the real performance of the Prophet from the learned Muslims (the ulema) themselves.¹

Certainly the light of Quran and Sunnah had shown them the way towards the magnificent development they accomplished. At the same time, this also proves that when the Ulema restrict themselves to the literal interpretation of Quran and Sunnah, the deterioration begins. Since, it is difficult to identify the exact moment of decline in the life of any nation, the ulemas confining

themselves to the literal interpretation to the fundamental of religion was in fact the beginning of the deterioration witnessed later.

Besides, the inclination of literal interpretation of the fundamentals, is a bequest of the Middle Ages, certainly is not a latest incident. The liability for such an attitude additionally remains with the ancient structure of education known as *Darase Nizami* in the sub-continent of Indo-Pakistan. The ultimate consequence of this method is that the automated education generally came to bypass creative considerations and intellectual inventiveness vanished from the educational sphere.

Overall, he was convinced that the disarray of the modern Muslim world was caused by inadequate understanding of Quranic teachings. This he attributed to stagnation in Islamic education, beginning in the early Middle Ages and incorporated into traditional formulations, including Islamic law.²

Fazhur Rahman has advanced the insight of Sir Sayyid and Iqbal, thus he believes that the restructuring of religious educational systems is indispensable, together with revising the curriculum of religious academies. In the religious madrasas, the common practice is learning only a single school of interpretation, which should be abandoned and all school of thoughts should be analyzed with the fundamental sources, as a substitute of learning only the verdicts and interpretations of these schools. In addition students ought to study the facts utilizing to the principles of interpretations, and other ways of interpretation.

Students should learn comparative religion as well, modern logic, philosophy, psychology, and history, and economics and political theory as backdrop to enhance their capability of interpretation of the fundamentals in the modern period.

Thus as a result of these thoughts Fazhur Rahman was regarded as a freethinking modernist by traditionalists. He strived to carry out some significant educational reforms. Like his predecessors he asserts that the 'Ulema' and all Muslims must upgrade their education. In fact, Islamic education was most important theme in all his work. All through his career he condemned those who undertook upon themselves to guide the society yet, who were not well-informed and competent enough to do so productively. He was deeply conscious of the dissatisfaction of the Islamic educational system which had become inflexible. And he persistently was carried out research independently for the formation of a new Islamic Methodology.

Yet the crucial question to which we must eventually seek an answer here is whether there is an awareness among Muslims—and if so how much and how adequate—that an Islamic world view does need to be worked out today and that this is an immediate imperative; for unless such a system is attempted, there is little that can be ministered through education. But here precisely we come up against the most vicious of all circles of contemporary Islam—that necessary and far reaching adjustments are made in the present system of education, it is not even conceivable that creative

minds will arise that will work out the desired

systematic interpretation of Islam.³

The remedy for the intense barrenness of originality lies in the fundamental amendments of the existing educational system. It is not that the sterility in thoughts we have, is innate and something that cannot be change. Fazhur Rahman considers that it was born out of the attitude of confinement to the past work and lingers even now because of the prevailing approach of orthodoxy.

Hence, the primary interest of the ulema was not to educate the youngsters to counter challenges rather only to maintain religious beliefs defend them. For this reason, their attitude towards education was to teach subjects which reinforced the faith and expelled all those worldly subjects which led to inquiries and analysis. All the fields of study which could analyze the traditional view were completely forbidden. Consequently students lingered entirely ignorant of the contemporary world and have no comprehension regarding essential skills. In discussing the dilemma of present educational system prevailing in Muslim countries generally, like his predecessors, he believes that the chief reason of the deterioration in education is that the Muslims themselves inadequately contemplated it.

It is ironical, indeed, that a people whose religious teaching takes it stand squarely on the platform of knowledge and whose predecessors have accomplishments to show to the world which are truly

dazzling in all the branches of knowledge, should care so little for the acquisition of learning and set so little value on it.⁴

The main reason of their and any other nation's progress, at all times, depends on its advancement in education. Similarly the main cause of decline is also their decline in the same field that is education. Fazhur Rahman maintains that as a nation Muslims have lost the objective of education and as a result eventually they have lost their aspiration in life as well. He further scrutinizes the multifaceted features of this issue:

First of all, we have the ideological problem. We have not effectively been able to relate the importance of knowledge with our ideological orientation. The result is that our people are not *inspired* to learn. They seem to have no goal in life. In general, there has been a failure to link our national achievements, economic as well as educational, with our ideological imperatives....

Secondly, and closely related with the above, is our basic calamity that there exists a dualism—indeed, a dichotomy in our systems of learning. On the one hand is the so-called 'Ulama's system, vigorously pursued in Madrasahs, which is so outmoded that it is to-day positively harmful in its results... Their curricula and syllabi have to be radically and suitably modified to bring them in line with the requirements of modern times.... But equally important is the fact that our modern educational system, imparted in the universities, has developed out of touch with our

ideology and the cultural and social values inculcated by this ideology. ... The tragic result is that our educational standards are deteriorating and, under the sudden impact of economic development, even the basic minimal sense of honesty and responsibility threatens to disappear. Thus, both these systems of education are afflicted with the worst possible form of fragmentation. This calls for immediate attention.⁵

Since Iqbal had warned that mere materialistic modern education is critically dangerous for any community especially for Muslims because they are in a stage of development. So, consequently the gulf developed between modern education and conventional trends, and in view of that, particularly, the degree of corruption both of these have, are the domineering factors of educational deterioration.

As Fazhur Rahman was the next generation Iqbal he not only in fact employs Iqbal's spirit of neutral thinking and analysis towards Western education, but also criticizes the mistakenly taken Iqbal's ideology in existing trend of current thinking.

Muslim thinkers like Iqbal have severely criticized Western education ... as dehumanizing and numbing to the human spirit. But the current strategy..., is not so much aimed at a positive goal; it seems rather to be a very defensive one: to save the minds of the Muslims from being spoiled or even destroyed under the impact of Western ideas coming through various disciplines, particularly ideas that threaten to undermine the traditional standards of Islamic morality. Under these

conditions of spiritual panic, the strategy universally evolved in the Muslim world is mechanical: in what proportion to combine certain "new" subjects with certain "old" ones so that the potion resulting from this chemistry will be "healthful"—that is, conducive to the technological benefits of modern civilization while avoiding the poison that threatens the moral fiber of Western society.⁶

So, the ideology of Iqbal run through and makes its place in the modern thinking, however its inclination is on exceptionally self-protective aspect. What's more that this modern education and its upshot institutions are undermining the orthodox's outdated educational system and their ostensible solutions for the issues that the Muslims confront.

Modern education brought ulama of their centuries-old monopoly of the educational process. At the same time, it produced new types of professionals and intellectuals, for whom the traditional Islamic knowledge of the ulama was becoming increasingly irrelevant. Similarly, modern court systems based on foreign legal procedures and laws, and the appropriation of the legislation process itself by the centralized state, undermined the foundation of the social identification between the ulama and the law.⁷

Thus, the Ulama demoralized and resisted the rational approach which has instigated pure sciences and scientific inventions, even though they take full advantage of them. They subverted its significance and regarded them merely as Fard-e-Kifaya, that is

an obligation not necessary for everyone but even if some of the citizens performs, it becomes completed from each person in society. They alleged that the rational thinking would persuade towards secularism and consequently undermine religious beliefs. Besides, as these ulema were the outcome of an obsolete and retrograded structure of education, they fell short to realize the importance and the effects of science and technology in the progression of society. Also the changes brought in with each latest invention emerged and became accepted in society, the Ulema took these changes as a peril to religion, even though most of them were only needed to be channelized and are not in conflict with the basics of Islam. Hence, they became used to long-standing traditions that everything which triggered a transformation is a cause for fear. In the same way, considering the status quo, they resisted every change in society.

...it appears that the increasing resistance of the ulema to change was most probably linked with the pressures felt by the muslim world from the colonial or quasi-colonial experiences. The more the threat of the Western powers and their "advisers" resulted in their inheritance from the latter Middle Ages and its sterile commentatorial literature.⁸

Fazhur Rahman brought to light that the cause of the inertness lies under the limited and inflexible methodology of education which ulema developed in reaction to the Mutaziala's rationalism, thus he specifically regards it as the root cause of the decline of Islamic education.

The orthodox system of education became so effective that the movement of religious rationalism lost all its strength and its organic entity, although it bloomed still further during the 4th-6th/10th-12th centuries in the works of outstanding individual philosophers whose thought, in turn, reacted on orthodox tradition... This relative narrowness and rigidity of education in the *madrasas* (theological schools) was, indeed, mainly responsible for the subsequent intellectual stagnation of Islam. Particularly unfortunate was the attitude of the 'Ulama' towards 'secular sciences', which seemed to stifle the very spirit of enquiry and with it all growth of positive knowledge.⁹

On the other hand, the Islamists under the guidance of Maulana Mawdudi, who dominated the Muslim world extensively for quite a long time and it was claimed that his philosophy was forward-looking and having a better view of the prevailing world than the typical orthodox Ulema. However, for this contention of having a distinct place from the orthodox ulema was also incapable to provide the desirable intellectual revival as needed. In fact the Islamists find it hard to escape absolutely from the present and obtain shelter in the past. The consequence is uncertainty in stipulations of a hypothetical 'change' necessary for cultural modifications, thus to negotiate an attitude between the orthodoxy's modern education which would not be completely opposite in temperament. Fazhur Rahman profoundly

probed and elucidated their superficial comprehension of Islamic literature and its consequences in community.

...the Revivalists, by simplifying the curriculum (i.e. by 'purifying' it from the intellectual disciplines developed over the medieval period, and retaining for the most part only the Quran and the Hadith, without developing any methodology of how, for example, the Quran was to be taught and understood) represented a terrible retrogression from the medieval madrasas. And because the new Revivalist orientation was unable to develop any substitute for the traditional mode of education, what resulted was a much greater intellectual starvation than that of the conservative medieval ulama. The Revivalist emphasis on the Quran and the Sunna did make its followers more sober, and amenable to common-sense than the minds of the traditional ulama which, although intellectually richer, had been long bogged down by the cloudy mists of unoriginal medieval commentaries.¹⁰

He considered that traditional education in Muslims was terribly restricted and concentrated excessively to a great extent on commentaries on earlier work, in contrast to originality. He was a more serious insightful student of medieval Islamic intellectual history than his predecessors, although he frequently mourns the 'sterile commentarial literature' of the latter Middle Ages, he also acknowledges that,

... a great deal of ingenuity lies buried in these generally ponderous and repetitive works.¹¹

While the literature of commentaries is recognized as a conservatism of regional social customs and likings, yet at the same time, medieval commentaries are frequently considered as void and barren expressions of intellectual virtuosity. However as a cultural production they also served the useful purpose of inferring their values and customs does not mean that as a discursive form, the commentary itself is necessarily lost its literal value. Thus, in evaluating the medieval Islamic conception of knowledge, the methodology of describing knowledge for the serenity of human life and its harmonization of the different illustrations between study for living and study for authority. Fazhur Rahman declares:

The latter-day medieval Muslim scholar I am talking about "studied" all the fields of knowledge available, but he did this mainly through commentaries and was himself a commentator and a compiler. This type of scholar is, of course, not confined to the Muslim world but is also representative of many medieval European savants. One important but implicit assumption of this type is that scholarship is not regarded as an active pursuit, a creative "teaching out" of the mind to the unknown—as is the case today—but rather as the more or less passive acquisition of already established knowledge.¹²

The orthodox Ulama's approach of maintaining a respectful attitude confined their potentials to mere writing margins and notes over past written commentaries. Hence in later medieval ages, the Muslims abandoned almost absolutely scientific and inventive knowledge obtained by experience and observation and have been indulging in sheer speculation. This mind-set also restricted them from producing a system, to instigate original thought, thus, they confined themselves to the simple acquisition and replication of earlier work. Substantial innovative thinking vanished and superficial efforts took place.

Argument became more important than content, he says and winning a point a substitute for genuine intellectual effort. For example, a sixteenth-century scholar challenged himself by writing a Quranic commentary using only those letters of the alphabet that have diacritical marks—reducing the number of letters he allowed himself to use by nearly half. A Turkish work of similar vintage was created in which “by reading words horizontally or vertically or in some cases diagonally, in each case successively or alternatively, (or by reading lines and not words alternatively) on each page, one simultaneously obtains readable texts of as many as five disciplines...in as many as three languages—Arabic, Turkish (Ottoman), and Persian!”¹³

So, when the need of time to think dynamically and stimulate creativity, they occupied themselves in simply playing with words and verbatim activities.

Fazhur Rahman decries these as examples of "a preoccupation with hair-splitting, 'fruitless ingenuity,'" a "waste of valuable intellectual energies," "mental gymnastics," and "misguided intelligence." He concludes, "And so it came to pass that a vibrant and revolutionary religious document like the Quran was buried under the debris of grammar and rhetoric."¹⁴

Deficiencies of Traditional and Modern Educational System:

Like Iqbal, Fazhur Rahman justly points out that the disintegration of educational system into the orthodox and Modern methods are also one of the prime factors of the decline and the low standard of education. Unrestrained excess in sheer disintegrated knowledge turns a man in to an absolutely robotic personality. Thus the eventual consequence of the disintegration of knowledge into a nasty disintegration of the individual character and makes him unaware of the actual individual requirements. Moreover in accordance with Iqbal, he also thinks that the fusion of both of traditional and Modern methods is certainly a supreme requirement for the real progress of Islamic education.

Indeed, this fragmentation of knowledge has fallen upon us with a redoubled force because of the dichotomy of the modern lay education system and the old, out-worn and static educational system still pursued in the Madrasahs of the 'Ulama'. We have to integrate this dichotomy into a whole and an *organic*

whole. If we do not do this soon enough, even our industrial and scientific progress is not going to strike deep roots, become fertile and lead us to make original contributions in these fields themselves. We must undertake the unification of the educational system.¹⁵

On another place he laments the outcome of the double system of education, the two classes of thinkers, and also indicates the insufficiencies of both the modern highly educated intellectual and the conventional madrasas' ulema have.

On the one hand are the traditional madrasas, which are incapable of even conceiving what scientific scholarship is like and what its criteria are. On the other hand, there has been a constant flow of those scholars who have earned their PhDs from Western Universities—but in the process have become "Orientalists." That is to say, they know enough of what sound scholarship is like, but their work is not Islamically purposeful or creative. They might write good enough on Islamic history or literature, philosophy or art, but to think Islamically and to rethink Islam has not been one of their concerns. Obviously, in order to carry out Islamic purposes on the plane of thought, a purposeful, creative-interpretative study is a *sine qua non*, and this is precisely what is lacking.¹⁶

Besides depicting deficiencies of both systems, he also asserts that not only the traditional Madrasas, but our modern education also bears the same trends of repetition and unproductive approach. He effectively scrutinizes the modern education and

indicates its insufficiency in original thinking. In addition he also brilliantly specifies that the social sciences are crucially important for the development of pure sciences. Indeed the benefit of pure sciences cannot be achieved completely without ethical values, thus in a way they are profoundly interconnected to each other, otherwise mere acquiring of knowledge for the sake of knowledge, will not only create a deficit for individuals but will also be injurious for society. In the same way as Iqbal asserts that this shallow knowledge will not attain intellectual maturity and sobriety to be beneficial for the ethical evaluation and the betterment of civilization of society and therefore, in the end will become destructive.

That the Madrasah system is unoriginal and uncreative is, of course, patent and generally recognized. But unfortunately, even our modern educational system is largely so. We have now had approximately a century of modern education among us and yet our seats of modern learning have been able to add precious little of real originality and worth to the fund of human knowledge. Particularly in humanities and social sciences the quality of our scholarship is extremely low. But it should be borne in mind that unless we produce thinking men of good quality in humanities and social sciences, we cannot hope to make much worthwhile contribution even in pure sciences. Pure science cannot be cultivated in a vacuum and in isolation from the rest of knowledge. The main cause, no doubt, is just this form of fragmentation we have pointed out and the lack

of inspiration which has its necessary consequences.

The result is that our knowledge remains, by and large, static and is robbed of the dynamic quality which the Quran is so insistent upon. We are essentially imitators, good imitators at best, not original contributors.¹⁷

Fazhur Rahman further criticizes severely the current system of education present in the Modern academics, that is not only characterless in nature but also contain lacking of compatibility with the alteration of time and the need of society.

Our existing educational system, as originally conceived by Macaulay, was intended to serve a narrow, utilitarian purpose, and its growth has been largely a matter of artificial improvisation. It has been rightly condemned for a lack of realism and inability to adjust itself to the needs of a rapidly changing society, for its over-literary bias and for its utterly soulless character. It is inspired by no lofty idealism. It has no common faith; not it is governed by sound ethical principles of high intellectual standards. It has, therefore, conspicuously failed to inculcate and maintain the stern moral and intellectual discipline which is the hall-mark of true culture.¹⁸

He believes that for the objective of Muslims' rebuilding, education is capable of performing a crucial role. But for this precise motive, education ought to be enthused by Islamic principles. Or in other words, he pragmatically advocates the integration of both traditional and modern systems of education.

If *religion* is to be brought into and integrated with the national education, then this implies an interpretive, creative effort on the part of committed intellectuals so that religion not only is rescued from obscurantism and apologetics but helps make national life meaningful by giving it a new moral orientation. Certainly the actual developments appear to be going this way.¹⁹

Indeed he believes that the real progress means the progress of pure sciences with the progress of ethical values. Knowledge ought to have an innate inclination to be utilized for the objective of the constructive benefit and improvement of humanity. And this cannot be attained devoid of the amalgamation and development of both traditional and modern education. Complete progress cannot be attained without developing spiritual element of an individual as well as whole community. In the same way as Quran also asserts : 'Verily, We created man in the best stature (mould). Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low. (95:4&5)

According to Rahman the obvious solution for reconciling tradition with modernity would result in the reformation of traditional educational practices that in turn becomes the reformation of the "traditional" Islamic intellectual into the "organic" intellectual. In his analysis, Rahman distinguishes between two directions of orientation for reform: (1) Islamizing modern secular education, and (2) modernizing Islamic education. The first movement he describes as "classical modernism," which can be viewed as a "defense of Islam" against

Western ideas, and the second movement he characterizes as "contemporary modernism" which is the rise of secular thought within Islam. Rahman favors the second orientation of the "organic" intellectual, as a vehicle for meeting the changing needs of Islamic societies (i.e., impact of globalization, modernization, secularization, industrialization, and cultivation of science and technology.)²⁰

Yet, he is not in favor of the outward Islamisation of knowledge. In fact, he believes that only on school level of Islamizing the syllabus can not diminish the rising secular viewpoint in the Muslim youth.

Rahman, like Nasr, rejects the revivalist tendency to superficially and selectively "Islamize" externally derived knowledge systems.²¹

Fazhur Rahman also point towards the excessive hazard of becoming the later generations profoundly secularized if not given true interpretation of religion or if religion is not inferred to be compatible with their achievements and everyday life they would naturally give it superficial value in their life.

However, if nothing is done to imbue fields of higher learning with an Islamic orientation, or if attempts to do so are unsuccessful when young boys and girls reach the higher stages of education their outlook is bound to be secularized, or they are very likely to shed whatever Islamic orientation they have had—which has been happening on a large scale.²²

For preventing this malaise he seeks in the outstanding past of Muslims and through this he wants to present a way to inspire the coming generations to exit from western materialistic ideology which put a great influence on their thinking.

Fazhur Rahman acknowledges the great contributions of Muslims in their respective fields of knowledge, and argues that these historical facts obligated contemporary Muslims to take their part in the betterment of humanity. Thus he supports a regeneration of Islamic intellectualism as it associates to the ethical development of mankind. He quoted significant past Muslims participations in mathematics, algebra, geometry, medicine, and the sciences to demonstrate that Islam was a religion of logic and advancement.

The contribution made by the Muslims of the medieval ages to the growth and development of civilization has been simply remarkable. A modern writer, G. Sarton, admits that "the main task of mankind was accomplished by Muslims. The greatest philosopher, Al-Farabi, was a Muslim; the greatest mathematicians, Abu Kamil and Ibrahim ibn Sina, were Muslims; the geographer and encyclopedist, Al Masudi, was a Muslim; the greatest historian, Al Tabari, was a Muslim." With this enviable heritage we must pause and think for a moment what we owe to ourselves and to the world. It is, therefore, with a sense of urgency that the historian should apply themselves to the task.²¹

He wants to apply the objective and unbiased methodology to scrutinize history. That is necessary for the future development and the evolution of intellectuality in society. As Quran states: 'There are many examples (of communities) that have passed away before you: travel through the land, and see what was the end of those who rejected the truth' (3.137). So this method does not conflict with the fundamentals of Islam. Since Quran guides itself towards impartial attitude in every aspect of life.

The Quran is equally emphatic ...on the historical study of societies. A correct appreciation of other cultures, societies and religions must yield positive results in several directions. It will broaden the horizon of the human mind and remove bigotry and narrow-mindedness. It will enable us not only to judge others in terms of success and failures but also to see our own virtues as virtues and our vices as vices. History, if genuinely and seriously pursued, necessarily leads to a comparative study of one's own society with that of others, and is necessary instrument of self-criticism and self-assessment.²⁴

Nevertheless it is evident that, if whichever development was to be desired on the way to the Islamic objective, exploration of the history is crucial and it is also certainly essential that the history will be completely beneficial only if it is genuinely and impartially researched with the implementation of modern methods of investigation.

. it is historic Islam which gives continuity to the intellectual and spiritual being of the community. No community can annul its past and hope to create a future being for itself—as that community.²⁵

Here again Rahman reminds Iqbal as he asserts:

No people, he said, can afford to reject their past that has made their personal identity.²⁶

In addition he also believes that a better knowledge of a people's history, of their historical accomplishments, disappointments and particularly of their communal ordeals and problems in the history facilitates a bargain in generating a national attitude and a consciousness of communal nationhood between them. Besides, the stress of moral values in Islam predisposed Muslim towards the sound historical interpretation.

From my point of view, which is confessedly and necessarily normative, therefore, the best of social sciences is history—if done well and objectively. This is because history, being long range, contains lessons.... Microhistory, if done really well, is the best service a social scientist can do for mankind. This is the reason the Quran invites us again and again 'to travel on the earth and see the end of nations.'²⁷

Unfortunately, regardless of the teachings of high ethics of the Quran, instead of investigating on impartial terms, our history is influentially fashioned. Like the unjust approach of Muslims towards Hindus justified and as a result, the real facts are distorted and thus revealed the other story, which eventually

fallouts in the dilemma of intellectual void and idealistic tactics subsequently.

The result of such history writing is that we condemn Ram Raj or the revivalist Hindu movements in India, but support all attempts at Islamic revivalism in Pakistan. This not only reflects the immaturity of our historical consciousness but our prejudice and narrow mindedness. Our textbooks, containing these views, contribute towards making the minds of the young generation narrow and orthodox. Having no knowledge of facts, they believe what is written in these books. The result is that history fails to teach them anything which is positive, enlightened and progressive; and without historical knowledge, we fail to understand present problems.²⁸

Consequently, in the end there is an enormous failure in developing an independent atmosphere to delve into the depths of knowledge. Likewise, Fazhur Rahman points to the actual aspect of the predicament of intellectualism in Pakistan.

Apart from the personal courage and steadfastness of an individual, the basic question is that of the general intellectual climate prevailing in the society. Pakistani society has not been able to evolve a solid, substantial intellectual climate.²⁹ In any case, no scholarly preparation had been made for the purposeful pursuit of Islamic studies in Pakistan.³⁰

Remedy for Educational dilemma:

Islamic society is based on Quranic teachings which have to be interpreted according to the needs of time and societal circumstances. Fazhur Rahman gives a distinctive and comprehensive methodology to infer Quran and formulate its teachings in harmony with the modern society and its contemporary crisis.

Fazhur Rahman was primarily concerned with the creation of an educational system which will be both genuinely Islamic and also appropriate to the world of today. In his programme for achieving this he assigned a central place to a new exegesis of the Quran. Such an exegesis must regard the teaching of the Quran as a whole, and not take particular verses in isolation. It must be based on a study of the historical situation in which a specific rule was formulated, and then move from this to a statement of 'general moral-social objectives' to be derived from it. It is these general objectives which will give guidance in dealing with present-day problems.³¹

For him the solution for the educational decline of Muslim community is to reform it completely. Besides, he gives more recommendations and methods for the reformation. For instance Fazhur Rahman believes that the need of competent teachers with well thought out course outline is crucial for the absolute advancement of society.

...unless adequate teachers are available with minds already integrated and creative, instruction will remain sterile even given good will and talent on the part of students, while on the other, such teachers cannot be produced on a sufficient scale; unless, substantively speaking, an integrated curriculum is made available.³²

Getting out of this stagnant and barren circumstance of education is the most necessary task of Muslim society to perform. Furthermore he significantly suggests the way out of this situation is in fact is the fundamental need of time and obligation of religion.

A fundamental reconstruction of our educational system in Pakistan is absolutely imperative. Our first and foremost problem is that our masses are by and large illiterate and ignorant. Since the Quran is so emphatic on the acquisition of knowledge that even its first revelation was about "reading" and "writing" and it even forbids to pursue a course of action without having proper knowledge of it (XVI36), it is the fundamental duty of both the Government and the society to introduce a system of total education in the country. It may almost be said that an uneducated man can hardly be properly a Muslim because he cannot really know what is demanded of him in the world today.³³

Thus it is crucial to widespread education in the masses, since due to the deficiency of ignorance and illiteracy the status of one's being Muslim could be vulnerable in the eyes of Allah.

Hence the reform in education is important since it will be accomplishing the need of society, consequently its acceptability and integration would be intensified. However it is quite disastrous that for every endeavor to reform education, a severe obstruction by the orthodoxy, their persistence of sticking to the past has caused them to drift away from reality. Fazhur Rahman elucidates the methodology to eliminate these predicaments to amalgamate the modern education with religion and further investigate its limitations.

This vicious circle can be broken only at the first point—if there come into being some first-class minds who can interpret the old in terms of the new as regards substance and turn the new into the service of the old as regards ideals. This, then, must be followed by the writing of new textbooks on theology, ethics, and so forth. Such minds cannot be produced at will, but something can certainly be done in this respect—namely to recruit from the best talent available and to provide the necessary incentives for a committed intellectual career in this field. Today, most of the students who are attracted to this field are those who have failed to gain entrance to more lucrative careers. This shows how little awareness there is that creating minds is both more difficult and, in the last analysis, more urgent than constructing bridges.¹⁴

The lack of perception and the barrenness of intellectual faculty are the curse of our society that is most important to remove, but unfortunately these are the issues about which we are least

bothered or perhaps we do not even recognize them. He thus calculated that the reform in education is not only fundamental for both modernity and religion to prevail in our society, but also for individual person to be saved from his own evilness that is in the end unavoidably harmful even for himself.

And yet the most important single channel of both these latter reforms—the correct envisioning of priorities and the saving of religion from the vagaries of day-to-day politics—is education itself. I must therefore turn to a consideration of the possible solution to the problems I have raised in the field of reform of Islamic education itself: how it can become meaningful in the modern intellectual and spiritual setting, not so much to save religion from modernity—which is, after all, only a partisan interest—but to save modern man from himself through religion.³⁵

His thoughts on Women's Education:

For women's education Fazhur Rahman has a more developed and pragmatic view as compared to his predecessors. Therefore, he criticized their ideas and points out towards the need for improvement in this regard.

Neither Muhammad Abduh nor Sayyid Ahmad Khan, nor yet the classical Turkish Muslim modernists (like Cevdet Pasa and Namik Kemal) seem to have been in favor of giving a *modern* education to women, although they were all in favor of women's education on traditional and domestic lines.³⁶

He believes that the subjections from which Muslim women have undergone conventionally, and the majority even go through at present, are first and foremost because of the communal background that has progressed in Muslim civilization. This is the background which is in fact an outcome from the inference of several different cultural customs. The truth is before industrial revolution there was not any kind of restrictions on women. Women used to work with their male counterparts in the fields as even now it is evident in the agricultural regions of our country. So, their traditional education and training was enough for their upcoming future. However, after industrial revolution the question of women's training and education arises. But unfortunately in most of the Islamic reformers' thought this important aspect of modernity remained subsidiary. Perhaps they were perplexed and failed to comprehend that how to integrate the western total independence of women and the traditional subjections which are lofty boundaries mainly raised by the orthodoxies in medieval Islam. These are therefore generally due to the social nature not because of the ethical principles of the Quran.

Hence, for women in Islam Fazhur Rahman has a total different approach relatively to his predecessors. He solidifies his arguments through plain Quranic verses and its rationales. This is also a great blow to the orthodoxies' prescribed theology. In addition he does not believe that only making new laws could cure all the ailments that Muslim society has for women, since

there is a great need of complete transition in the settled thoughts and attitudes of society. Besides, legal restructuring for the prominence of women has to be a task of much greater and extensive social transformation. Plus it also indicates that the need of empowering woman is vital.

Modernizing legislation, without an adequate basis in social change can succeed only to a limited extent in producing that social change.....

This is not to say that legislation should stop, particularly for the eradication of heinous abuses toward women. But certainly for such legislation to be *bona fide* and effective, rather than a mere fiat of a Westernized ruling elite that seems to move like quicksand, it is far more important to strengthen the basic forces of social change. The most basic of these forces are education and employment opportunities for women.³⁷

Additionally, He also elaborates that the existing customs in Muslim societies ought to change, not only to meet the current economic challenges, but also to have the desired justice of Quran in society.

.... traditional customs, usages, and attitudes in Muslim societies have to change. They have to change and change imperatively in the first place because the women's dependence upon men has often been grossly abused, and it is the most fundamental and urgent requirement of the Quran in the social sector that abuses and injustices be removed. Secondly, the

woman has to be allowed to work and become an effective economic entity through sheer economic necessity.¹⁸

Conclusion:

In contradiction of the customary notion that the Modernists or reformists only point out the deficiencies in existing thought and customs but do not give solutions for the improvement, Fazhur Rahman gives remedies for the ailments of Islamic education. He suggests a carefully planned curriculum with good incentive for the teachers in order to attract the original and dynamic minds of society. This could bring the needed reform. Moreover, in exception to his predecessors Fazhur Rahman confines himself to the traditional education so he delved and discovered that the greatness of the edifice of Muslim civilization was because of education. Thus he believes that the decline of Muslims in education is the crucial cause of their decline in other aspects of life. And like Iqbal he also criticize both Modern and traditional systems and distinctively he points out that the modern system has also bears a tendency of repetition and does not possess a capability to accomplish the modern need of society.

He considers that the study of history is necessary for the development of intellectuality in society and the adoption of modern methods is essential as well. Thus the approach towards the study of history is ought to be impartial and unbiased.

For women's education he has an outstandingly have a better solution in the reconciliation of Modernity and traditional views, so with scrutinizing the roots of traditional approach he believes the extensive change in the attitude of society towards women is far more imperative than mere legal restructuring for the eminence of women.

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