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THE 10TH AIMES CONFERENCE IN HYDERABAD

The Muslim Educational Society based in Calicut Kerala is an organization which has transformed the lives of the Muslim community in the last fifty years . MES has a membership of 20,000 and manages a massive network of 150 institutions in the country (mainly in Kerala and neighboring states) as well as in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia . With more than 85000 students and 15000 teachers across a vast network of educational institutions comprising more than 50 schools, 10 Professional colleges, 21 Arts and Science Colleges,7 women's colleges, a large number of hostels (men as well as women) , hospitals, vocational institutes, cultural complexes and units in every district of the state, its impact on the educational, social and cultural life of Kerala is impressive.

The MES and its branches in various states of the country have been organizing All India Conferences in various cities of India in accordance with its vision to work for the educational, social and economic advancement of people in India . Its 10th Conference took place in Hyderabad on 4&5 November. I learnt about it in the first week of October, when Mr. Khawaja Shahid Vice President of the Society who was conversant with my interaction with various NGO's working in the education and welfare of Muslim girls and women in Maharashtra invited me to share my experience at the Conference. I readily agreed since my late mother Razia Nizamuddin a principal of a teachers training college had been Vice President of the Muslim wing of the Society, when an all India conference of the society took place in Hyderabad about 40years ago. That Conference had been widely attended by Muslim Women from various states, who considered it the largest event in years. I remember my mother had addressed a huge gathering of women. However on entering the Civil Service, I was unable to attend the later conferences and after her demise in 1994,I completely lost touch with the organization with which she had been so closely associated. I was therefore keen to renew my association with it as also and to learn about their progress in the ensuing years.

The Muslim Educational Society (MES) was established in 1964 by Dr PK Ghafoor with like minded individuals intellectuals, educationists and support of Business men to aid and work for the education of Muslims in India especially in Kerala.

Kerala Muslims, at the time of independence were mainly relying on the Madrassa system which unlike the Madrassa in other parts of India did also have secular subjects but didn't prepare the students for employment .So most of the population remained traders and agrarians living in villages and a strong need was felt for starting an organization to educate them so as to grapple with the demands of a modern ,swift changing world .From these strivings and efforts there emerged in 1964the organization called the Muslim Educational Society at Calicut. The primary objective of the Society is to establish colleges, schools, technical and commercial institutes, kindergartens, , medical and dental Colleges, paramedical, food craft and computer institutes, adult education, community development vocation training and counseling centers, tailoring schools. It is also envisaged setting up establishments to promote moral and spiritual values among the public, work for the welfare of women and children and establish and maintain old age homes and rehabilitate destitute women.

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Under Dr Ghafoor's leadership, the organization grew steadily and after his premature demise, aged 54 in May 1984 the baton was taken up by his wife Mrs. Fatima Abdul Ghafoor's and his team. And after her death, their son Dr Fazal Abdul Ghafoor, who is President of the Kerala Unit, is continuing the work with other dedicated Members of the organization. MES celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 2014. The present President of the AIMES is Dr U. Mohammed Khalilullah and the Secretary General T.P Imbichammad.

The Conference with the motto Educate 2 Elevate was hosted at the Metro Classic Gardens Hyderabad and was attended by nearly 2000 delegates..Mr. Asif Pasha, former Law Minister of Andhra Pradesh was the chairman of the conference committee with MS Farooq its General Convener. The conference was addressed by a galaxy of speakers: Ministers, MP's, Educationist, Jurist, Trainers, Social Activist, Corporate honchos'. They discussed the Communities financial educational and social problems. A few speakers provided examples of initiatives in education and empowerment of the marginalized and economically backward sections which were being successfully implemented. I found two schemes had made remarkable difference. One initiated by the Telangana Government and the other by Shaheen Educational Society Bidar.

The Telangana Government scheme is being overseen by Mr.AK Khan ex IPS and Advisor to the State Government and President of the Telangana Minorities Residential Educational Society (TMREIS) and is funded by the State Government. Mr. Khan made a presentation of the aims

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and objectives of setting up the society, and functioning of the schools set up, till date

The aim of the society is to set up, organize and manage high quality and free education for talented children of economically backward minorities of the State of Telangana minorities, through pacesetting residential schools; to give them access to the best opportunities in education on par with other communities and enable them to avail professional educational courses and jobs in the government and private sector

The scheme envisioned that there would be one school in each constituency of state i.e. 120 schools of which 71 residential schools (39 BOYS and 32 GIRLS) would be established in the

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first phase. And remaining schools are to be set up in the second phase. The total Strength of each School is to be 640 with 16 sections .The schools will be from V to XII standard, in English medium with Urdu ,Telugu and Hindi as compulsory subjects and will follow the Telangana State Syllabus. The functioning of the schools is monitored by the Deputy Chief Minister Telangana.



A file photo of girl students of Telangana Minorities Residential school

The photographs of the smiling fresh faced children in smart neat uniforms were very encouraging, as also the information that many children from Muslims ghettos were joining it. Mr. Asaduddin Owaisi MP AMIM Supremo was confident that in ten years it will revolutionize the community.

The Shaheen Education Society of Bidar which was set up in 1989 from a one room tenement, presently has 11 thousand students and a strength 100 teachers spread out in a number of schools(a few of them residential) and colleges in Bidar ,Bangalore, Gulbarga ,Raichur and Mysore. The Society has boys and girls hostels and are now launching a residential school in Moinabad near Hyderabad. The Society has focused on setting up and managing PU Colleges which are equivalent to Junior colleges. Here the students are supported and prepared for competitive exams and have been getting excellent results .Another very innovative scheme is setting up of 'Intense Care Units' in Schools for dropout students or those needing extra coaching in Math's, English and Science. The Society in a survey conducted concluded that there was a high dropout rate in students from economically backward sections especially between 8th and 10th standard. The reasons given by the family of the dropouts were lack of finances, social backwardness and inaccessibility to Quality Education .The factors which the Society considered relevant was dearth of quality education and timely coaching to educationally weak students

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who found it burdensome to cope in the higher classes and therefore ended in seeking friendship and enjoyment outside school generally getting in bad company and becoming a menace to society. Shaheen therefore set up a special programme for screening, testing and having separate intense coaching classes for dropouts or potential dropout students where the teacher ratio was 1 to 6; subjects taught were English Math's and local language for 6 hours (one and half hour for each subject) for a period of 35 to 40 days. The programme was so successful that the Society now plans to have ten such centers- across the country.



Shaheen Education Society students at a free coaching course

Both schemes seem to be real winners and would result in a transformation of children if carried out with zeal and dedication. It will result in our youth becoming competitive and achieving success on merit and not on reservations which generally invite a back lash from the majority community

The Conference was therefore a success as it provided a number of achievable models and success stories. It also threw up some new ideas such as better utilization of Madrassa space for skill development courses and building synergy by providing a common platform to various institutions working for the education and empowerment of the community. However one disappointment was that the number of women in the audience was much less than in the earlier

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Conference held in Hyderabad. The ladies Wing of AIMES needs to analyze the reasons for it and take steps to engage and encourage more women to participate.