

Uttar Pradesh mosques double up as primary schools-Abu Zafar

Azamgarh: Amid the mushrooming convent schools, mosques still continue to be popular centres of learning at least up to the primary class level in Uttar Pradesh's Azamgarh district. The trend is more common in cities and towns where Islamic primary schools are rare.

There are more than 100 mosques in Azamgarh city and around 40 per cent offer primary education. A majority of students in mosques come from the Muslim community but there are no restrictions on non-Muslim students taking admission.

The educational system run by mosques provides free education in subjects like the Quran, Urdu, elementary mathematics, Hindi and basic English. There are special classes for students of other schools who want to learn the Quran and religious morality.

"Our doors are open for every human being but, in practice, only Muslim kids come here to study," says Maulana Intekhab Alam Qasimi, the Imam of Jama Masjid in Azamgarh city.

"Sometimes Hindu students also come to study in mosques, but they are more interested in the Urdu language and not primary education," said Alam Qasimi, who was appointed as Imam here in 1988.

"Mostly, poor students come here to study as we provide free education," he said.

"We have taken the initiative to educate every child. Everyone has to learn how to recognise what is right and what is wrong," he added.

"Here people are more interested in education in mosques because they think that reading the Quran is necessary with modern education," he said.

Another cleric in the district, Maulana Javed Ahmad Qasimi, has introduced a new trend in the mosque educational system.

He started a madrassa, a special class for learning the Quran for kids enrolled in other modern schools and an English medium Abu Bakar Islamic Nursery School - all under one roof.

The Abu Bakar Islamic Nursery School, housed in the basement of the mosque, was started in March last year. It prepares kids for higher classes' curriculum based on the Central Board of Secondary Education syllabus.

According to Ahmad Qasimi, mosques were centres of learning and spirituality.

"Mosques are a centre of spirituality and learning both. We can't limit it," said Ahmad Qasimi.

Qasimi completed his education from Darul Uloom, Deoband, in 1975 and has been serving as the Imam of Islampura Jama Masjid in the Dalal Ghat area of Azamgarh for the last 20 years.

Ahmad has also initiated a campaign to spread awareness among the backward Muslims of the area,

among whom the education ratio is very low.

"These people were out of touch with the mainstream. We provide them reading material and dress, with education," he said.

But he didn't agree with the free educational system. "We charge Rs.30 per student and don't offer free education because people don't give importance to anything that is free. But if someone is not able to pay, then we never ask."

"Earlier there was no fee, but students didn't attend school regularly," he said, adding that class attendance improved after imposing a fee.

Nausheen Rizwan, a housewife in Azamgarh, sends her two children, a son and a daughter, to the mosque school.

"I like to send them to the mosque where they can learn both divine and modern education," she said.

Laraib, an upper kindergarten student of St. Xaviers High School of Azamgarh, comes to the mosque every afternoon to learn the Quran. "My mom sends me daily to this mosque and I like to come here," he said.

Links:

English

<http://www.asianage.com/india/uttar-pradesh-mosques-double-primary-schools-649>

<http://ibnlive.in.com/news/azamgarh-mosques-double-up-as-primary-schools/227925-3.html>

http://twocircles.net/2012feb07/uttar_pradesh_mosques_double_primary_schools.html

http://www.ummid.com/news/2012/February/07.02.2012/up_mosques_as_prim_schools.htm

<http://en-maktoob.news.yahoo.com/uttar-pradesh-mosques-double-primary-schools-054418908.html>

Hindi

<http://www.livehindustan.com/news/location/rajwarkhabre/article1-story-248-0-216384.html&locatiopnvalue=9>

<http://www.amarujala.com/national/nat-Azamgarh-mosques-primary-education-up-22681.html>

<http://www.pravasiduniya.com/for-holistic-growth-of-students-azamgarh-mosques-double-up-as-primary-schools>
