

Our madressas and our dar-ul-ulooms are doing very good work by making available religious education to our village based Surti Sunni Vohra boys and girls and to all Muslim children. We hope and pray that they continue to provide their services to help our boys and girls acquire a good level of religious education. We feel we always needed religious education to keep us near to our religion and we now need more religious education to help us face the many challenges brought about by urbanisation, industrialisation, modernisation, westernisation we need to learn to live with.

A gradually increasing number of our Vohra children, both boys and girls or more girls than boys are also seeking secular education, and some are succeeding in acquiring degrees in different subjects and a few are succeeding in acquiring professional qualifications. We feel there is a great need for more secular education among our village based Vohras and among all Muslims. We feel there is need for us Vohras and for all Muslims to study the various subjects taught by colleges and universities. The subjects taught by these institutions, we feel, will help us as Muslims to know about the contents of these subjects and in turn help us become more informed.

We feel and our readers will agree with us that we Muslims, Surti Sunni Vohras and others need to move more towards using our religious and secular education to live as practising Muslims.

For most of us the emphasis has been on “KNOWING” about our religion. This is good but for most of us our interest in our religious education has been to “KNOW” and not to move to the next step to use our religious learning in our everyday lives. There is an urgent need, we feel, to draw the attention of all Muslims towards remedying this historical weakness.

Those with some levels of secular education attainments too behaved like those who attended dar-ul-ulooms to acquire religious education. Such persons too in most cases failed to use their education to improve their understanding of the subjects they studied, and they failed to understand the happenings taking place around them or armed with their education help bring about awareness of issues affecting our people.

We feel we Surti Sunni Vohras and all Muslims must try to bring changes to our use of religious and secular learning. We must continue to acquire religious and secular education but with it we must make serious efforts to use these in our everyday lives. Our knowledge of all the do's and do nots of our religion will not help us. Our religious knowledge will only help us if we use it in everything we do. Similarly, our high school or college education and the degrees we acquire will not help us or help our fellow Muslims if we fail to use our education to help us understand better the worldly life we are entangled with.

As we mentioned there is need for us Vohras as well as all Muslims to acquire both religious as well as secular education. Whilst we know and accept that for us

Muslims religious education is very important and must receive priority over secular education, we feel we also need secular education to help us know and understand the happenings around us so that we can live as practising Muslims. Our religious education will provide us with all the information we need to have to keep us within the boundaries set for us by our religion. Similarly, our secular education will help us understand better the world we live in and in turn, ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY willing will help us understand better the importance of our religion and the importance of adhering to what is expected of us.

As we have no other institutions or organisations to help us understand our present day needs and the know-how to meet these needs we feel our dar-ul-ulooms should play a prominent role in helping their students to become better prepared for serving the present-day religious and worldly needs of all Muslims. Many of our dar-ul-ulooms realised some years ago the changes that were taking place among Muslims, especially those who had settled in English speaking countries. To help their students to serve those who spoke English some of our dar-ul-ulooms employed teachers to teach their students to speak the English language. This helped those students who joined the English language teaching classes to learn to speak some English and in turn their language skills benefited those they started serving as imams or as teachers.

We feel we Muslims need much more than knowing some English or

some English words. What our students need is more general knowledge to prepare them to help address the new and emerging needs of those they will serve as imams or as madressa or dar-ul-uloom teachers. Whilst our dar-ul-ulooms can continue employing English language speaking teachers to teach their students to speak the English language we feel our dar-ul-uloom students will benefit more if they were provided with opportunities to learn about subjects with which we come into contact with on a daily basis. There is need we feel to help our male as well as female dar-ul-uloom students to have basic awareness of subjects taught by high schools and colleges like history, geography, politics, mathematics, science subjects, finance, commerce and other issues like climate change.

On graduating from dar-ul-ulooms the graduates, both males and females will be serving many of those with some levels of secular education attainments and many more with a lot of "OUTSIDE" influences brought about by television programmes and mobile phones as imams and madressa or dar-ul-uloom teachers. Awareness of such subjects we feel will help our imams, madressa and dar-ul-uloom teachers convey what our religion says about these subjects. We feel knowing of the subjects we have mentioned will not harm the thinking and beliefs of dar-ul-uloom students but will help them understand better the religious education they have or are acquiring and in turn they will be in a much better position to pass on their religious education to their students and to all those they serve or come into contact with. ■