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Concept of Education in Islam and the role of Madrassah: Short History of Madrassah and Militancy in Pakistan

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Abstract. Islam has given especial emphases on religious and rational education, it is obligatory to every Muslim to get education. The place where education is given to Muslims has given very especial status and respect. The Islamic education center called Madrassah; its history is as old as the Islam. Madrassah provides free education, boarding and lodging to the poor students. South Asian Madrassah traditions go back to the Muslim Rule in India, there were two famous traditions of Islamic education system in India Frangi Mahall tradition and Deobandi tradition respectively. After partition of India, Pakistan inherited both the traditions but the Deoband Tradition is stronger in theory and practice in present day Pakistan. After 9/11 attacks on United States of America, the world has become interested to know about Madrassahs in Pakistan and its connections with militancy. Suddenly, the media and governments have also given attention to understand the Madrassah. Several studies have been conducted by journalists, NGO's and academia on Madrassah curriculum, policy, ideology, student-teacher relationship and connection to militancy. The main purpose of this article is to discuss the Islamic concept of education and the role of Madrassah in Islamic and rational education and to analyze the Madrassah connections with jihad and militancy. It also discusses the short history of Madrassah in India and Pakistan. In the light of the following questions what is an Islamic concept of education and the role of Madrassah? And, to analyze If there is any connection of Madrassah and militancy?

Keywords. Islam, Education, Madrassah, Militancy and Pakistan

Introduction/Review of Literature

In this article the review of literature is divided into two categories; (a) literature on Islamic education and Madrassah and (b) literature on Pakistani Madrassah and militancy. The term 'education,' in its literal meaning is derived from two Latin words, 'educare' which means to rear, to bring up or to nourish a child and 'educere' which means to bring forth, to lead, to draw out or to train.¹

In Islam, the term knowledge and education are both derived from Arabic word '*ilm*' and '*ta'alim*' respectively. The word *ilm* is a verbal noun of the root verb *alima*. Literally, '*alima* means he knew and he was acquainted with'. The active participle *aalim* (pl. '*ulamaa*, *aalimum*') means someone who knows and the past participle, '*ma'lum* (pl. *ma'lumaat*) denotes an object known (or an object of knowledge). The English equivalent of '*ilm* is knowledge'.

In first category, literature on education in Islam, the most important source of Islamic education is Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), hence, the importance of

education in Islam can be seen in Quran and the saying of Prophet (PBUH). The Quran explicitly encourages the gaining of knowledge and education as well as the value of learning from experience. The first revelation calls upon the Prophet, (PBUH) to seek knowledge in accordance with the divine guidance.² Thus, the Quran and *Hadith* are the roots or foundation of knowledge and education in Islam.

Education from Islamic perspective is classified into two broad categories. There is the knowledge of the religious obligations—the fundamentals known as *fardh 'ayn*. Every Muslim, male and female must strive to acquaint himself or herself with the knowledge of the religion (Islam). This is in order to understand, appreciate and improve his or her relationship with the creator (Allah) fellow creatures and oneself. Revealed knowledge or religious sciences fall under this category. The second category is knowledge of the world or universal- *fardh kifayah* (communal obligation).³ In other words, a Muslim should strive to acquaint himself or herself with knowledge that embraces his or her political, social, economic development by earning of living. Acquired knowledge falls in this category. In essence, the main objective of education in Islam is to produce a believing community where every one of its members would be working towards achieving the goals of the divine Quranic discourse, that is, a Muslim's commitment to observe his or her duties towards Allah, self and the community.⁴

To study the Islamic education and culture and institution (Madrassah) one of the most important works is *Ibn 'Aqil Religion and Culture in Classical Islam* (1997), and *Rise of the colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (1981) by George Makdisi. Makdisi's work on *The Rise of Colleges...and the West*, is a substantial and precise study of the origin, growth, development and organizational structure of Islamic education institutions (Madrassahs), especially as it was practiced during the fourth and fifth century in *hijrah* in Baghdad.

Thus, Muslim philosophers like Bu Ali Sina, Ibn Miskawaiyah, Al Ghazali, Ibn Khaldun and Shah Waliullah presented their views about aims, objectives and importance of education in Islam. Shah Waliullah was one of the most influential figures among the reformers who were born in Indian subcontinent. Shah Waliullah (d.1762), for example, not only argued against the prominence of *ma'qulat* but strove to establish coherence between both (*manqul* and *ma'qul*), in order to strengthen faith through rational proofs and to call for unity among Muslims against the *Maratha assaults*. According to him, rational sciences were merely a means to establish the authenticity and inimitability of *Sharia*, which was more complete than (temporally limited) human rational deductions because of divine inspiration. Hence, he drew a distinction between revelation and reason, and at the same time related and harmonized them to each other.⁵

The works of Professor F. Robinson, *The Ulama of Farangi Mahal and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (2001), *Islam, South Asia and The West* (2007), *Islam and Muslim history in South Asia* (2000), are also a substantial contributions to the available literature on Education, Islamic history and Madrassah in Islam with especial focus on South Asia.

Babara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900*, is very important book first published in (1984). Metcalf book is known as best book on the history of Muslim revival in India, Ulama place and relationship with society and Muslim elite, and also the history of origin and development of Deoband movement. Her book does not cover the post partition period and the origin and development of Deoband Madrassah in Pakistan. As rightly pointed out by Zaman that Metcalf account of Deobandi reformism hardly prepares one for the radical sectarianism in Pakistan in the last quarter of the twentieth century—a development in which the Deobandi Ulama have been central players; nor does it contribute anything to our understanding of the Taliban of Afghanistan in the last years of the century, many of whom

were the products of Deobandi Madrassahs in Pakistan and remained closely allied to the Deobandi orientation.⁶

Mohammad Qasim Zaman book *The Ulema Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (2002), the central focus of Zaman's book is the Deobandi Ulema in India and Pakistan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Zaman presents his work rightly, as complementing that of Barbara Metcalf, who focused on the Deobandis of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He distinguishes his work from hers by concentrating on the content of their thought, as opposed to her focus on their history and institutional structure, and by contesting her key thesis, that the colonial encounter prompted an inward turning among the scholarly class. I would add that Metcalf's work pays far more attention to the Sufi element of Deobandi thought and practice than to the legal, while Zaman virtually ignores the Sufi dimension of the Deobandis in favour of the juridico-political.⁷ However, if we review the current literature on Pakistani Madrassah, there is not a single work in English language which gives a detail account of or covers the history and development of Deobandi Madrassah in Pakistan, Ulema in Pakistan mostly write in Urdu and they present and defend the Madrassah case and refuse to accept the reforms in Madrassah. The following are the good books on Madrassah and its connection with militancy. However, there are few good works on Pakistani Madrassah and militancy.

The works of Pakistani Scholar Traiq Rahman, *Denizens of Alien Worlds A study of education, inequality and polarization in Pakistan* (2004), *Language, Education and Culture in Pakistan* (2011) *Language, Ideology and Power Language-learning among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India* (2002) presents the well researched and balanced view about the education, language and Madrassah in Pakistan. Professor Rahman works link education policies and practices in Pakistan with social-economic status in Pakistani society and educational institutions link with religious radicalization and militancy.

Saleem Ali's book *Islam and Education: Conflict and Conformity in Pakistan's Madrassahs*; is a helpful reading for those who want to understand the current debate about Pakistani Madrassah and its connection with conflict, militancy and the sects lines, education, policy, curriculum. The study is based on survey conducted in Madrassah in South Punjab and Capital Territory Islamabad and the linkage between Islamic education and conflict from theological and historical perspectives. Author seeks to explore how Madrassahs are involved in promoting terrorism? Saleem Ali has also discussed the US support for reforms in Pakistani Madrassahs, he is known as very close to American establishment. However, this book does not present a comprehensive account of Islamic education, curriculum, policy and its linkage with terrorism from theological and historical perspective.

The other important book on subject is by Sana Haroon, *Frontier of faith: Islam in Indo-Afghan Borderland*, is an ambitious study of the Tribal Area of Pakistan. The focus of book is on the tribal area and how Islamic religious leaders have for decades maintained the essential autonomy of the area. Haroon traces the emergence of their turbulent region from British colonial rule, followed by the rise to power of the Muslim clerics and their support of armed mobilizations resulting in the rise of contradictory "jihad" in support of Pakhtun ethnicism anti-colonial nationalism, Pakistani territorialism, religious revivalism, Afghan anti-Soviet resistance and anti-Americanism. Sana's book is presenting a good historical contest of FATA and its resistance and the policy from colonial period to present day Pakistan.

Masooda Bano's book *The Rational Believer: Choices and Decisions of Pakistan* is one of the good books on Madrassah and Militancy in Pakistan. Bano's this work based on various interviews, ethnographic survey data and the filed work conducted in Madrassahs throughout

the Pakistan. She argues that religious actors, whether founders, teachers, students or parents should be seen as acting rationally.

Ali Raiz's book, *Faithful Education Madrassahs in South Asia*, and C. Christine Fair's book *The Madrassah Challenge Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan* are also good books on subject and work of Pakistani journalist Saleem Shazad book (2011), Olivier Roy (2000), Fariba Adelkhah and Sakurai, and the study of Curriculum of Madrassahs by Dr. A.H Nanyar, Jamal Malik's edit work *Madrassahs in South Asia: Teaching Terror* (2008) and Hussain Haqqani's book *Pakistan Between Mosque and Military* (2005). While a depth review of literature suggest there is not a single work which covers the growth, policy, and link of Pakistani Madrassah with militancy, especially the link of Deoband Madrassah with militancy, sources of its training and funds. Present study is an attempt to explore the link of Madrassah with militancy and to analyze how these educational institutions once were the centers for rational and religious education become the centers of policy, ideology and man power for sectarian and militant organizations in Pakistan and elsewhere?

In short, the review of literature reveals the contribution of the Madrassahs since its origin is very important; historically speaking, Madrassah produced many scholars and learned men in Islamic theology, culture, literature, medicine, languages, physics, mathematics, history and music. Basically, Madrassahs impart theological studies and classical languages like Arabic and Persian. In India, during medieval period, Madrassahs produced and supplied candidates to the state for posts of *Sadrs*, *Qazis*, Muftis and other ecclesiastical administrators.⁸ After Soviet invasion in Afghanistan the same centuries old traditional educational centers were used and are being used for jihad, sectarianism, conflict, militancy and terrorism.

Research Methodology

This article is part of my post doctorate research, the research conducted according to historical and descriptive method, primacy and secondary sources are used, the validity of historical and descriptive method is already established in social sciences.

Concept of Education in Islam

The educational process in all its forms has generally been regarded as a means of human development from a primitive self-serving existence to one that is focused on collective achievement and the betterment of society. However, this positive assumption about education has been challenged time and again through history as well as through empirical analysis of societal behavior.⁹

Learning the sciences and disseminating knowledge are important duties for Muslims, and this is why places of teaching have been given a special status in Islam. Irrespective of the name given (such as *madrassah*, *hawza*, *maktab*, *kuttab* and *jamia*) the places where knowledge is imparted are highly regarded by Muslim communities around the world.¹⁰

The Islamic concept of education also has a holistic vision that is termed *Tarbiya* in Arabic and encompasses both substantive learning (*ta'lim*) and also ethical conduct that leads to piety (*ta'lib*). There is an implicit goal of *Tarbiya* to achieve success in this world as well as the hereafter. Traditional notions of Islamic education have made a distinction between knowledge of faith and knowledge of the world which has also been institutionalized in different educational aims.¹¹ Islamic education was seen as not merely the transmission of knowledge but, above all, as aimed at the molding of the character of the student, who was expected to follow as closely as possible the pattern of the Prophet and his companions.¹²

Islam as *Din* covers all aspects of life, religious and temporal and discovers every secret of life and universe. This approach towards life and universe can be justified and satisfied only

through a certain level of knowledge. And, this level can be achieved only through education. In Islam great emphasis has been laid upon getting education.¹³ Even the revelation from the God started in a pattern of educational lesson as is manifested from this verse: *Read in the name of your God Who created...*¹⁴

However, this insight is evident in the Arabic words *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib*, all of which refer to different aspects of the process of the education. They are interrelated in their concern for humans, society and the environment, which, in turn, are all related to the God and represent the scope of education in Islam, both formal and informal.¹⁵

In two Arabic popular dictionaries, *lisan al-Arab* and *Al-qamus al-muhit*, these three terms basically mean increasing, growing, reforming, cultivating, or purifying one's knowledge so that one is well-balanced person, inculcated with *t'addab* (morality).¹⁶

In the view of Franz Rosenthal the English term 'knowledge', does not fully convey the 'factual and emotional' weight of the Arabic *ilm*. *Ilm*, 'is one of those concepts that have dominated Islam and given Muslim civilization its distinctive shape and complexion.'¹⁷

According to early historical accounts, the first formal educational sessions in Islam started at the house of Zaid-bin-Arqam in the valley of the Safa Hills, where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself worked as a teacher and some of his early followers became his students. After the Prophet's migration to Medina (*hijrah*), Madrassah, namely the Madrassah *Ahle-e-Suffa* was established on a site adjacent to the east of the Prophet's mosque al Madina. Ubada-ibn-e-Samit was the primary instructor there. Abu Huraira Mu'az-ibn Jabal and Abu Zar Ghifari, two well-known companions (*sahaba*) of the Prophet, were among the students. As Islam expanded to other regions of the world (non-Arabic), it became necessary to create uniformity in the teachings of Islam to preserve religious conformity. Henceforth began the tradition of Madrassahs world wide, in order to develop writings and text books on *Fiqah Hadith* (Prophet's sayings) and *Tafseer* (the interpretation of the Quran).¹⁸

The basic duty of the Prophet (PBUH) is to educate the people and make clear the difference between good and bad things in the universe. As regards importance of knowledge and education, the Muslim philosophers presented their views towards the education, its purpose, nature, teaching, methodology, etc—Bu Ali Sina among them is the first and then, respectively Ibn Miskawaiyh, Al Ghazali, Ibn Khaldun and Shah Wali Allah.¹⁹ The Holy prophet said, "I have been sent only for the purpose of perfecting good morals."²⁰

According to the Syed Abdullah, Bu Ali Sina's importance is due to the reason that he presented the discipline of education as a science and questioned the abilities of a teacher and a student. He called it a game of pondering and experience. Ibne Miskawaiyh's emphasis remained over the external and spiritual basis of education. Al-Ghazali presented the idea that the purpose of knowledge is the achievement of knowledge through revelation. Ibne Khaldun gave importance to external and physical elements and environment in education. But Shah Wali Allah's importance lies in the way that he harmonized temporal and religious life and declared both necessary for the totality of life. He tried to present the same in his educational theory. His educational theory represents both *Din* and *Duniya*.²¹ Since knowledge is considered a religious duty, mosques (*masjids*, literally, places of worship) were the first institution of learning in Islam.²² However, the use of educational institutions for political-ends is a well-established tradition across cultures and societies.²³

Madrassah as an Islamic Educational Institution in Subcontinent

The word Madrassah is an Arabic word whose literal meaning is "School". The word comes from the same Arabic root as *dars*, which means a lesson or an instruction. In Arabic-

speaking regions, it does not specially refer to a religious seminary; instead schools of various levels are referred to as Madrassahs.²⁴

In the South Asian context, Madrassah means an educational institution that offers instruction about the Quran, the sayings (*Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad), jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and law. In another words, schools that promote Islamic curricula are called Madrassahs.²⁵

Until the rise of the Mughal Empire in 1528, Islamic educational institutions including Madrassahs were founded in India without any discernable pattern. The nature, scope and role of the Madrassahs varied according to region and depended on the mode of interactions between the Muslims and the local community, for Islam reached India through a variety of ways—trade, migration, preaching and military invasions.²⁶

Many of the rulers belonging to the Delhi sultanate, which existed between 1201 and 1528 under various dynasties, displayed admiration for education and religious learning. A number of them built mosques and religious learning centres, and some built Madrassahs in the areas they ruled including the capital, Delhi. The first Madrassah in Delhi was founded by Shams-ud-Din Iltutmish (or Altamash), (1211-1236) in the early years of his reign and was named Madrassah-i-Muizzi. Among the rulers of the Tughluq Dynasty (1290-1302), Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325-1351) was the most enthusiastic founder of Madrassahs, there were nearly one thousand Madrassahs in Delhi during his rule.²⁷

However, educational institution called Madrassahs has been a feature of Muslim Societies for centuries. Historically, once religious education in India was seen as a route to prestige and Ulema had hold important positions in the courts of Muslim rulers of India. For example Farangi Mahall Family during the eighteen century had long association with Mughal court.²⁸ The institution of the officially sponsored Madrassah was seen as serving as an arm of the state, and over time the Ulema attached to the royal courts were to be used to legitimize state authority.²⁹ However, Ulema had very close connection with Muslim ruling elite; and in the context of Ulema relationship with Muslim rulers and Farangi Mahal family is the best example in Indian Muslim history.

Farangi Mahal Tradition

Farangi Mahal Tradition is one of the most influential educational traditions in subcontinent since the beginning of Muslim rule in India. The Farangi Mahal family earned great respect by the Muslim rulers and the public because of its contribution in Islamic education.

The most important work in english language on Farangi Mahall is by Professor F. Robinson, *The Ulama of Farangi Mahal and Islamic Culture in South Asia*. At the turn of the eighteenth century a family of men famed for their religious learning and long supported by the Mughal court, settled in Lucknow. Its patriarch, Mulla Qutb-ud-Din (d.1691/2) had retained close ties with the Delhi court and, with his sons, had participated in the collection of the *Fataw-yi-Alamgiri*. When Qutb-ud-Din was killed in a land dispute with a family of rival sheikhs, the emperor punished his opponents and generously compensated his sons, two of whom had accompanied him on his campaign to the Deccan. His award included land in Bahraich district of Oudh, given as *jagir* and the quarter of Lucknow where a French adventurer had once built a mansion known as Farangi Mahall, given in revenue-free tenure. It was to be by the name of Farangi Mahall that the family was subsequently known.³⁰

The most important measure of the intellectual contribution of the Farangi Mahalli Ulama was their systematization of a new curriculum which, with modifications, has dominated religious teaching in South Asia to the present. The Farangi Mahallis, under the direction of a

son of Qutb Sahib, Mulla Nizam-ud-Din (d.1748), expanded the existing corpus of works typically studied to include a number of books on each of the various subjects of *ma'qulat*: Arabic grammar, logic, philosophy, mathematics, rhetoric, *fiqh*, and theology. Quran and *Hadith* were only marginally studied, the former through to commentaries, the latter through one abridgment.³¹

The Farangi Mahallis were respected for their desire to guard and foster the intellectual tradition in a period of political instability. This concern was widely shared by the 'Ulama, as evidenced by the extent to which the new syllabus, subsequently known as the *Dars-i-Nizami*, was adopted.³²

The curriculum of all the Deeni Madrassahs in the Indian subcontinent comprising of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, is known as *Dars-e-Nizaami*. The initiator of the *Dars-e-Nizaami* syllabus was Mullah Nizaamuddeen Muhammad Sahaalwi who was born in 1088 *Hijri*, and died in 1161 *Hijri*.

The syllabus employed at the *Nizamia* Madrassah, which served as a model for Madrassahs elsewhere, represented a blend of *naqli 'ulum* (revealed sciences), including the Quran, the *Hadith*, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *tafsir* (Quranic commentary), on the one hand, and the *aqli 'ulum* (rational sciences), including Arabic language, grammar, logic, rhetoric, philosophy, astronomy, medicine, physics and mathematics, on the other. In medieval times, the Madrassahs served as the only available centers of formal education for Muslims. Their graduates went on to assume a variety of occupations, such as administrators and military officers, as well as what would today be called strictly "religious" posts as judges in religious courts, teachers in Islamic schools and prayer leaders in mosques (*Imams*).³³

Dars-i-Nizami the syllabus included new books on *Hadith* and Quranic commentary, but the focus on the rational sciences remained, for products of the Madrassahs were to be trained not only for strictly religious posts but also as general administrators and functionaries in the state bureaucracies.³⁴ Still the majority of Madrassahs in South Asia have a shared foundation in the "*Dars-e Nizami*" curriculum (The *Dars-e Nizami* syllabus includes studies in: *tafsir* (Quranic exegesis); *hifz* (Quranic memorization); *sarf* and *nahw* (Arabic syntax and grammar); Persian; Urdu; *taarikh* (Islamic history); *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *shari'ah* (Islamic law).³⁵

Curriculum in Indian Madrassahs in the Eighteenth Century

S.No.	Subjects	Madrassah-i-Rahimiyya No. Of Books	Dars-i-Nizami No. of Books
•	Exegesis (<i>Tafsir</i>)	2	2
•	Hadith (traditions of the Prophet)	3	1
•	Philosophy (<i>falsafa</i>)	1	3
•	Logic (<i>mantiq</i>)	2	11
•	Scholasticism (<i>Kalam</i>)	3	3
•	Rhetoric (<i>Balaghat</i>)	2	2
•	Entomology and syntax	2	12

•	Medicine (<i>tibb</i>)	1	
•	Astronomy and mathematics (<i>Ha'at aur Hisab</i>)	Few small brochures	5
•	Jurisprudence (<i>fiqh</i>)	2	2
•	Principles of Jurisprudence (<i>Usul-i-fiqh</i>)	2	3
•	Mysticism	5	

Source: Nizami, F.A. 1983. "Madrassahs, Scholars and Saints: Muslim Response to the British Presence in Delhi and Upper Doab, 1803-1857" Ph.D. thesis University of Oxford.

What is a Madrassah?

Madrassahs generally provide free religious education, boarding and lodging and are in many contemporary cases patronized by low-income families. However, some rich and middle class families also send their children to Madrassahs for Quranic lessons and memorization where they are usually day students. A Madrassah student lesson to know to read, memorize and recite the Quarn properly. Madrassahs issue certificates of various levels. A primary or portative religious school and one focused primarily on Quaranic recitation and memorization is often referred to as a *Maktab* (derived from the Arabic word *Kuttab* (books) and integrated school with various levels is simply called a Madrassah. While the distinction between a *Maktab* and a Madrassah may be important in some contexts – often both are affiliated with mosques and religious institutions and may share teachers. What is also significant is that many Madrassahs are residential and often these institutions play a more significant role in shaping the personality of students.³⁶

There are also regional variations in others parts of the Muslim World. It is interesting to note that in many countries, including Egypt and Lebanon, 'Madrassah' refers to any educational institute, while in Pakistan and Bangladesh, it commonly refers to an Islamic religious schools (both at primary and secondary levels) only. For example in Bangladesh, the primary stage of a Madrassah is called a *Maktab* or *Nurani* Madrassah or *Furqania* Madrassah.³⁷ There are also primary education centres giving lessons on reading and reciting the Holy Quran are known as *Darse Quran*. Usually the local mosques serve as the centres for primary education for boys and girls of nearby families. The *imams* and *muazzins* of local mosques work as teachers.³⁸

The word 'Madrassah' is derived from an Arabic word *darsum* meaning lesson. In contemporary Arabic, the word 'Madrassah' means 'center of learning' (the Arabic plural from is Madrassahs).³⁹ The Arabic world Madrassah generally has two meanings: in its more everyday usage, it means school; and in its secondary meanings, it is an educational institution offering instruction in Islamic subjects including the Quran, the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), jurisprudence and law.⁴⁰

One of the first known Madrassahs is believed to have been established in AD 1005 by the Fatimid caliphs in Egypt, teaching the minority *Shiite* version of Islam. It was a fairly well-resourced educational institute complete with a library, teachers for different subjects, including astronomy, architecture and philosophy, and students were provided with free ink, pens and papers.⁴¹ After the sumo conquest of Egypt, the *Shiite* version of Islam was promptly replaced

with the Sunni version. Several Shia manuscripts were destroyed but secular writings on astronomy and other fields of general knowledge were preserved. A number of books were subsequently preserved and taken to Baghdad, were a Seljuk Vizier called *Nizam-ul-Mulk bin al-tusi* established the first organized Madrassah called the *Nizamiyah* in AD 1067.⁴²

In spite of the fact that Madrassahs during the centuries that followed remained primarily as centers of Islamic education and learning, a large number of them produced distinguished scholars and philosophers who contributed to earthly knowledge as well. *Ijtihad*, or independent thinking, was a notable feature of these Madrassahs especially for some in Andalusian Spain which was under Muslim rule for almost 800 years – a much celebrated age for both Islamic and Jewish progress in science, technology and philosophy.⁴³

Criteria for Admission in Madrassah

As Turkish rule expanded over other parts of India, Muslim rulers established Madrassahs in their own domains, providing them with extensive land grants (*jagirs, madad-i-ma'ash*) for meeting their expenses and scholarships for their students. Muslim nobles and scholars also followed suit and set up large educational centers. Great centers of Islamic knowledge emerged in various parts of India, and the Madrassahs of Gujarat, Ucc (Sind), Multan (Punjab), Delhi, Pandua and Gaur (Bengal), Bidar, Gulbarga and Aurangabad (Deccan) were among the most renowned in the entire Muslim world at their time.⁴⁴

Generally, despite the Quranic insistence on the equality of all believers, students and teachers at the Madrassahs were drawn from the Muslim elite—the *ashraf* nobility—consisting of migrants from Central Asia, Iran and Arabia, and their descendants. The thirteenth-century court historian Ziauddin Barani insisted that higher education must remain a closely guarded preserve of the *ashraf*. The “base-born” *ajlaf*, Muslims of indigenous origin, he insisted, must remain content with just a basic knowledge of the Islamic faith and rituals.⁴⁵

Ironically, Madrassahs in South Asia, were at one time considered elite institutions and a certificate of high birth (*sharafatnama*) was after required for enrolment. While the message of Islam was quite egalitarian, there was considerable emphasis in the admission process on family upbringing and training as a prerequisite for being a serious student, the elite status of Madrassahs was challenged as the Mughal Empire and sultanates began to collapse towards the end of the eighteenth century.⁴⁶ However, Deoband tradition had introduced new reforms in Islamic education system and made it possible for common public to get Islamic and rational education in Madrassahs without any elite family background.

The Madrassah at Deoband

The revolt of 1857, in which several Indian Ulama are said to have played an important role, represented, in a sense, an effort on the part of the increasingly threatened Ulama to defend their privileges. With the failure of the revolt, many Ulama turned now to setting up a chain of Madrassahs, for it was felt that under alien rule Islam was under grave threat and that it was only by preserving and promoting Islamic knowledge that the younger generation of Muslims could be saved from sliding into apostasy and prevented from falling prey to the blandishments of the Christian missionaries. Because they perceived themselves under siege and saw Islam as under attack by the Christian British, the Ulama seem to have adopted a deeply hostile attitude toward Western knowledge.⁴⁷

The “educational jihad” that they now launched to preserve traditional Islamic learning was seen as taking the place of the failed physical jihad against the British, and as working to train a class of Ulama who would take revenge on the British for having overthrown the Mughals.⁴⁸

Subsequently, another important development in the history of Madrassahs in India was the development of a new and well organized Madrassah at Deoband near Delhi. Maulana Qasim Nanawtawi established a Madrassah at Deoband in 1867. Through all its vicissitudes, Deoband remained a centre of Muslim culture and religion. In the pre-Mutiny period, many of its leading families had responded to the reformist movement of Sayyid Ahmed Barelwi. Shaikh Nihal Ahmed, for example, had entertained Sayyid Ahmed several times.⁴⁹

In choosing Deoband, however, the founder did not cite these considerations or the amenities of the town as motives. Rather, to them, the decision had had divine sanction. Both Shaikh Ahmed Sarhindi in the Seventeenth century and Sayyid Ahmed Barelwi in the early nineteenth were said to have commented that an “odour of learning” (*bu-yi 'ilm*) came from the very ground of the town. Maulana Rafi ud-Din dreamed of seeing the *Ka'bah* located in Deoband's garden; of Hazrat Ali founding a school whose pupils he later recognized as Deobandis; and of the prophet himself giving milk to students there. Such dreams not only endowed the location of the school with sanctity, but gave the founders a self-fulfilling confidence in their mission. It was said that all received simultaneous inspiration actually to found the school there.⁵⁰

The Madrassah began modestly in the old Chattah Masjid under a spreading pomegranate tree that still stands. The first teacher and the first pupil, in a coincidence deemed auspicious, were both named Mahmud: Mullah Mahmud, the teacher, and Mahmud Hasan, the pupil, who was later to become the school's most famous teacher.⁵¹

This Madrassah was developed on the style of western educational institutions; Madrassah had class rooms, library, prescribed curriculum and exams system. Gradually the small Madrassah was transformed into a grand *Dar-ul-Uloom* and it became an epicentre of educational and political activities. Importantly, it refused to get financial support from the British rulers of India, while, traditionally, Madrassahs were financially supported by Muslim rulers in India. It is known as reformist movement for Indian Muslims. Historian Professor Frances Robinson describes it as ‘Islamic Protestant Movement.’⁵² The most important contribution of Deoband Madrassah was that Madrassah made it possible for common public to get Islamic and rational education, which was earlier limited to individual and families.

The goal of the school was to train well-educated ‘Ulama who would be dedicated to reformed Islam. Such Ulama would become prayer leaders, writers, preachers, and teachers and thus disseminate their learning, in turn. To this end the school set formal requirements for admission and matriculation.⁵³

Students were expected to study a fixed and comprehensive body of learning in the course of a program of studies originally scheduled for ten years, later reduced to six, they were not come informally, sit at the feet of a particular teacher, their move on to another master and another centre of learning. Rather, in this one place, the school claimed, students would be trained in the specialties of the three great intellectual centres of north India: in *manqulat*, the studies of Quran and *Hadith*, the specialty of Delhi; and in *maqulat*, the rational studies of law, logic and philosophy, the specialty of the two eastern cities of Lucknow and Khairabad.⁵⁴ The school taught basically the *dars-i-nizami*, the curriculum evolved at Farangi Mahall in the eighteenth century. The Deobandis, however, reversed the emphasis on “rational” studies in favour of an emphasis on *Hadith*, which was to be the basis of their popular teaching.⁵⁵

Thus, the founders of the Deoband Madrassah made efforts to establish close links with ordinary Muslims in small towns and villages. A few years after its setting up, its graduates had established their own small Madrassahs in various parts of India, spreading the Deobandi teachings of Islamic reforms.⁵⁶

Consequently, the social composition of the Madrassah student body began undergoing a noticeable change, as many young men from lower class, *ajlaf* families began enrolling in Deoband and the network of Islamic schools that it helped spawn. For these people, access to the cherished resources associated with the Islamic scripturalist tradition provided a means for upward social mobility in a society deeply stratified by caste. Further, the free education, board and lodging provided by the Madrassahs often attracted many poor Muslims who could not afford to study in schools that charged fees. The hope of getting employment as *muezzins*, *imams* and Madrassah teachers, also attracted many poor Muslims with no other reasonable job prospects.⁵⁷

The Deobandi intellectual and institutional style, despite opposition, proved popular. The Deobandis rapidly assumed a position of great authority through their pronouncement of *fatawa*. During the first decades of the school's existence, Muhammad Yaqub and Rashid Ahmed were particularly distinguished as jurists.⁵⁸ Subsequently, the *fatawa* clearly place the Deobandis in the reformist tradition of the pre-mutiny reformers.⁵⁹

The entire system has been traditionally supported by the community through trusts, endowments, charitable donations, and *zakat* contributions. In the case of Pakistan Madrassahs are getting funds from government including the Deobandi Madrassahs; since the introduction of the compulsory collection of *zakat* and *ushr* by the Zia ul-Haq government in 1980, a large number of Madrassahs receive regular financial assistance from the publicly administered *zakat* funds. Not only the students not pay any tuition fee, they are provided with free textbooks, board and lodging, and a modest stipend.⁶⁰

Short History of Madrassah in Pakistan

Pakistan's Madrassahs are part of a modern South Asian Madrassah tradition developed in the Indian subcontinent under Islamic reformist thinkers and the Ulema, educated Muslim religious scholars, during the 19th Century. Still the majority of Madrassahs in South Asia have a shared foundation in the *Dars-e-Nizami* curriculum

The Madrassahs in today's Pakistan and Bangladesh, as in India, represent the legacy of the spectacular resurgence of Islamic religious education in India during the late nineteenth century, beginning with the establishment of the Deoband Madrassah in 1867. Since then, the Madrassah system has played an important historical role by preserving the orthodox tradition of Islam in the wake of the downfall of Muslim political power; by training generations of Islamic religious scholars and functionaries; by providing vigorous religio-political leadership; and, more importantly, by reawakening the consciousness of Islamic solidarity and the Islamic way of life among the Muslims of South Asia.⁶¹

At the time of independence, only 245 Madrassahs were recognized in West Pakistan. In 1960, this number increased to 464 and many of the Madrassahs were located in the countryside and rural areas.⁶² The defining features of Madrassahs in contemporary Pakistan are their close connections with political activism, their transformation into institution of indoctrination from predominantly educational institutions, and their interplay with national and international politics.⁶³

However, over the last few years, interest in Pakistan's Madrassah has generated a significant amount of literature. These writings fall into two distinct categories: a predominantly policy-oriented series of studies and reports mainly addressing the relationship between Madrassah and militancy; and scholarly studies placing the Pakistani Madrassah within the South Asian tradition of Islamic education.⁶⁴

There is an extraordinary growth of Madrassahs in Pakistan, in which the reformist Deobandis have played the leading role. Amongst the elements which help this movement

forward are processes of urbanization, the failures of the state, the competition of religious world views, the struggle for power between organization, as well as funding from outside sources. The Madrassah movements seek their particular routes to the further Islamization of Pakistani society and are often prepared to use force to realize their ends.⁶⁵

Madrassah Connections to Religious Militancy in Pakistan

According to rough estimate there are 20, 000 Madrassahs in Pakistan most of them were established during the General Zia era (1977-1988), the Madrassah proliferation policy developed under the state institutions sponsorship and patronage. However, after 9/11 media and the world become interested to know the Pakistani Madrassah connection with militancy and terrorism.

There are two popular views about Madrassahs in Pakistan; Madrassahs as a Jihad factories producing Jihadis, militants and extremists through political indoctrination and seen as a threat to Pakistan and the world. Other view is that the Madrassahs are providing free religious education, teaching morality and playing important role to create a peaceful society based on social justice.

Thus, the important question, is there any connection of Madrassah and militancy? We would try to answer this question through historical evidence. A new wave of Madrassah came in Pakistan after Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The linkage between Jihad and Madrassah is well established now; and much has been said about the connection between the war in Afghanistan and the Madrassah in Pakistan. Madrassahs are the important source of human resource for Afghan Jihad, Taliban, TTP and other religious militants groups. Christine Fair writes, links between militant groups and certain Madrassahs in Pakistan are well established.⁶⁶

The power of Madrassahs in Pakistan can be judged from the fact that almost all of the leadership of the Taliban and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, including Mullah Omar and Hakeemullah Mehsud, were educated in Pakistan Madrassahs—most of them linked of *Jamia Darul-e-Uloom* in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁶⁷

Subsequently, one group of scholars understood Madrassahs as *jihad* factories having less to do with education and more to do with political indoctrination; incubators of Muslim terrorists; origins of conservative violent ideologies, and thus, a security threat to the modern world. The other group of scholars presents Madrassah playing peaceful roles in society; like, increasing literacy rate, spreading religious morality and human values, giving space to marginalized class of society, discourage criminality, and thus, maintain a social order.⁶⁸

Since the late nineteenth century in colonial South Asia, Madrassahs have played a significant role in the political process, including the anti-colonial struggle; but the tie between politics and Madrassahs as witnessed in Pakistan over the last three decades is not a continuation of this tradition; instead, it has taken a new shape, this relationship has been forged under different circumstances and has been propelled by varied dynamics almost three decades after the country came into existence.⁶⁹

However, the establishment of Madrassahs for political purposes as bases for mujahidin in the 1980s, which involved the training of religious students who would join the jihad movement of the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan. Most of the newly-established Madrassahs in both NWFP (now KPK) and FATA were called '*Dar al-Ulum*' which was also the name given to the traditional local Madrassahs since they also imparted Deobandi-style education.⁷⁰

Many of these Madrassahs were actually formed as militant training centers to support the Afghan war and called Madrassahs to "Islamically legitimize their operations and to solicit funds from all over the Muslim World," and were never intended to fulfill the traditional role of producing Ulama or even Islamic bureaucrats.⁷¹

Therefore, the changing face of the Madrassah and increasing radicalization in Pakistan can be directly traced to Zia-ul-Haq's rule, when the students of the seminaries were indoctrinated with a jihadi ideology and sent to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet occupiers. The same war-hardened zealots were used by Zia's military establishment in Indian-occupied Kashmir.⁷²

Most of these soldiers, who had voluntarily joined, were once Afghan refugees belonging to the Madrassahs in Pakistan. They were treated as guests by the local traditional society where the traditional tribal code of life —*Pashtunwali*— has been in effect. However, some of the Mullahs and Madrassah students opposed the traditional leadership.⁷³

Moreover, it has serious implications on society and culture of Pashtun, the authority of the tribal leaders in FATA has been challenged by the Mullahs and the students of the newly-established Madrassahs in two ways. First, the students are not necessarily Pashtun, and they neglect the Pashtun tribal code and seniority system. Second, the students challenge the tribal people understanding of the co-existence of Islam and the tribal code by introducing politicized Islam.⁷⁴

Perhaps one of the most pressing reasons for policy-makers attention to Madrassah is the putative link between these schools and militancy in Pakistan and beyond. The role of Madrassah in recruiting mujahideen during U.S. and international efforts to expel the Soviets from Afghanistan during the 1980s is well known. It is certain that some Madrassahs along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border are linked to the ongoing militancy in North and South Waziristan and the insurgency in Afghanistan. No doubt, some Madrassahs have ties to militant organizations and actively help channel potential recruits to their representatives.

Historically, the Afghan war pushed over 3 million Afghan refugees into Pakistan, majority of them were accommodated in camps in NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). The Afghan youth was trained in Madrassahs by ISI and CIA for Jihad, for the purpose to send them in to Afghanistan to fight against Soviets. The Deoband Madrassahs and some religious political parties for example Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) were very active players of Jihad in Afghanistan and proudly they accept and recognize their role to defeat the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. *Dur-ul-Uloom Haqania* in Akora Khattak, one of the most well-known Madrassah has direct links with Taliban and its leadership.

Moreover, these Madrassahs which were providing human resource for Jihad were facilitated by General Zia regime, funded by Saudis (Saudis have long history of supporting these Madrassahs in Pakistan, for the purpose to propagate its own brand of Islam (Wahhabism) to counter the Iranian Islam in Pakistan, interestingly, now Pakistanis have started to criticize the role of Saudi Arabia to fund the various religious militant organization and Madrassahs in Pakistan). Most of Afghan Taliban leadership also studied in these Madrassahs.

Goldberg termed the Pakistani Madrassahs a means of education of the holy warrior" a "jihad factory", [in the eighties] many Madrassahs were financed by the *Zakat* (the Islamic tithe collected by the state) giving the government at least a modicum of control. But now, more and more religious schools are funded privately —by wealthy Pakistani industrialists at home or abroad, by private and government —funded non-governmental organizations in the Persian Gulf states and Saudi Arabia, and by Iran. Without state supervision, these Madrassahs are free to preach a narrow and violent version of Islam...Most Madrassahs offer only religious instruction, ignoring math, science and other secular subjects important for functioning in modern society.⁷⁵

Madrassahs are recruiting bases or centers for Afghan Jihad and Taliban. Lal Masjid operation of Pakistan Army has proved that Madrassahs from Tribal Areas to Federal Capital are involved in violence and have close links with militants, Jihadis, Taliban and TTP.

It is now a more cliché to say that the Afghan war, especially the creation of the mujahideen (holy warriors) has played a significant role in the proliferation of Madrassahs and the militarization of these educational institutions in Pakistan. It is also well known that the mujahideen, the rebel forces who fought against the Soviet invasion, and the Taliban, the most violent products of these schools, are essentially the by-products of cold war rivalry between the West and the Soviet Union.⁷⁶

However, the nature of these Madrassahs differed from the traditional ones as they were established for political purposes and had close links with the ministry of interior, the NWFP government, intelligence or religious parties that had close links with the government. During the anti-Soviet War, the local Malik were quite satisfied with the support that they got from the western countries through the religious parties and intelligence of Pakistan. However, soon after the anti-Soviet War, with the cessation of support from other countries and lack of attentions paid to the area, social disorder, influenced by the internal war in Afghanistan, became a serious problem in FATA. The Maliks were helpless in this situation and were rapidly losing their local authority. Soon, the Ulama of the newly-established Madrassahs, instead of the Maliks, began to emerge in the society.⁷⁷

Labelling these recruiting centres as Madrassahs was to give them respectability, to provide rationales for the influx of foreigners who would come to join the war and to demonstrate that the Pakistani government was offering not only food and shelter but also education to the Afghan refugees. Although these are important factors, there were deeper issues as well: the historical connections between the Afghan Ulama and the Pakistani Madrassahs, the militant tradition within the frontier areas, and the rebel leaders chosen to pursue Pakistani strategic objectives.⁷⁸

Thousands of Madrassahs across the country became the hubs for militancy and religious extremism, having a spill-over effect and presenting a serious threat to Pakistan's internal security. Pakistani Madrassahs once considered centers for basic learning, mostly attached to local mosque. The more formal one were used for educating clergy.⁷⁹

Historically, the development of simple, sparse religious schools into training centres for Kalashnikov-toting religious warriors was directly linked with the rise of militant Islam. Many of the religious parties operating the Madrassahs turned to militancy courtesy of the US-sponsored jihad in Afghanistan. The Afghan war pushed over 3 million Afghan refugees into Pakistan, which accommodated them in to the Pashtun-dominated areas of the NWFP (now PKP) and Baluchistan. The Afghan youth, Deobandi seminaries in these two provinces for over ten years, who later became the Taliban warriors of Mullah Omar. In their war with the Northern Alliance, the Taliban armies were constantly 'replenished' by fresh Taliban from Pakistan.⁸⁰

Anthony Davis wrote, most of the Taliban cadres received their education in Madrassahs of NWFP and Baluchistan. Majority of these Madrassahs were followers of what is popularly known as Deobandi Traditions. Madrassahs in Pakistan proved to be the fertile recruiting bases for the Taliban ever expanding manpower needs. As the movement grew and engaged in multi-frontal war with their opponents in Afghanistan, the steady supply of dedicated young cadres became a basic requirement. According to an estimate, the Taliban from Pakistani Madrassahs comprised 25-30 percent of the total militia force.⁸¹

Rahimuallah Yousafzai considers Pakistan Madrassahs as centers for manpower of the Taliban. He is of the view "the majority of students in many Madrassahs in Pakistan were Afghan refugees. So the production of the Taliban was endless. It was like factory they are producing more and more Taliban. There were some Madrassahs in Afghanistan and we had more in Pakistan but earlier they were producing Mujahideen (during the Afghan resistance against Soviet occupation) and the later on the Taliban. These people were actually very

determining to fight for Islam. Therefore, the role of Pakistan Madrassahs in producing the Taliban was very significant. The Pakistani Madrassahs had real influence on the Taliban because they studied there, So many Afghan Taliban leaders who were proud to add Haqqani to their names because they study in *Darul-ulum Haqqania*, Okora Khattak.⁸²

General Hamid Gul, who served in the army during the Zia years and was later the head of the Pakistani ISI towards the end of the Afghan war, denied any direct support from the ISI for the Madrassahs. However, he acknowledged that the influx of Afghan refugees during this time necessitated the establishment of schools for the education of their children and since the Afghan population had a greater proclivity for religious education, Madrassahs started to emerge naturally near refugee settlements and military provided logistical support to these institution.⁸³

However, Pakistani Madrassahs were the main source of recruitment for the mujahideen, Taliban and other religious militant groups, and it was under the patronage of Pakistan government, ISI and military.

Following the retreat of Soviet forces in 1989, and the ensuing civil war in Afghanistan, the Madrassahs connection to conflict is more clear. For example, the *Dur-ul-Uloom Haqqania* in Akora Khattak, one of the most well-famous Madrassah has direct connections with the Taliban, whose name itself means ‘the student’ Mullah Umar, the leader of the Taliban has an honorary degree from this Madrassah. The head of *Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania*, Maulana Sami-ul-Haq was elected a member of the Pakistani Parliament in the 2002 election, has a student body of 1500 boarding students and 1000 day students, from 6 years old upwards. Each year over 18,000 applicants from poor families compete for around 500 open spaces.⁸⁴

The crushing of the Red Mosque resistance gave rise to another Madrassahs-based armed resistance movement in the Swat Valley, where a local ‘*alim*, Maulana Fazlullah raised an army of 2,000 *Shaheen* (eagle) fighters allegedly to avenge the Red Mosque operation. This resistance quickly spilled out of the Madrassahs and took on a greater dynamic, spreading across the valley to involve non-Madrassahs groups.⁸⁵

These two cases thus raise legitimate concerns about possible links between Madrassahs and jihad; however, the cases alone do not prove the existence of a direct connection, as there are 16,000 registered Madrassahs in Pakistan, the vast majority of which show no tendencies towards militancy. Rather than demonstrate a link between Madrassahs and jihad, the Red Mosque incident forcefully presents a real analytical challenge: namely, why an educational tradition, which at one time was associated with reasoning and debate.⁸⁶ would in recent times gravitate towards militancy.⁸⁷

During the survey conducted in KPK on the contribution of Deoband Madrassah to education and connection with jihad and Taliban. Responding to my questions one of the teachers at *Darul Uluom Haqqania* told me, “many leaders among the Taliban of Afghanistan had studied in the Madrassah” therefore, they [Taliban] had lot of respect for their teachers and for Madrassah. An other young teacher who was teaching there since last fifteen years and the nephew of Mollana Sami-ull-Haq, shared, “Taliban leadership had great respect for their teachers, when they meet them they [Taliban] standup with close arms in the respect of teachers and never sit on chair before their teachers, in some cases they [Taliban] were holding important positions in the government but they were giving same respect to their teachers. Taliban had great respect for their teachers; they [Taliban] considered their teacher as “Spiritual Father” one who gives them religious education and takes them from earth to the sky.”⁸⁸ One of the senior students of Madrassah who was studying *Fiqah* shared his views, ‘it is compulsory for student to obey his teacher’s all orders, because teacher’s status is higher than parents, so, the teacher can send them for jihad and he can die for his teacher,’ he told.⁸⁹

However, there are quite few good works in English language on *Darul Ullum* Deoband (India), but as matter of fact I have not seen any work which covers the history and development of Deoband Madrassahs in Pakistan, while, lot of literature is available in Urdu language on the subject.

There are five distinct types of Madrassahs in Pakistan, divided among sectarian and political lines, the two main branches of Sunni Islam in South Asia Deoband and Bareilvi – dominate this sector.⁹⁰ The largest group of Madrassahs is Bareilvi, which are diametrically opposed to the Wahabbi doctrine (that has received much media coverage) and have been linked to the Kashmiri conflict by the Indian government. Understanding the dynamics of Madrassah recruitment, funding sources and curricular differences between sectarian schools is critically important.⁹¹

Generally, it is perceived that Pakistani Madrassahs have connections with transnational Islamic militants, who are responsible for precipitate violence and terrorism in the name of religion, cause a global social disorder.⁹² Particularly, after the fall of Taliban in Afghanistan; Madrassahs in Pakistan have been considered supporting Taliban in many ways; like providing them sanctuary, and training of new recruits.⁹³

In the case of Pakistan, the majority of Madrassah students belong to the rural areas of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Azad Kashmir, and the economically depressed regions of Punjab.⁹² Although the Ulama have vigorously resisted efforts by the state to introduce changes in their Madrassahs, it would be wrong to assume that Madrassahs have become petrified forever. Contrary to general belief, traditional orthodoxy has never stagnated into a kind of intellectual- theological rigidity. Although the Madrassah system of education remains an exclusive and relatively isolated phenomenon, there are, nevertheless, powerful economic, social and political forces and institutions that cut across socio-economic and cultural strata and tend to create new linkages, whosoever weak, between the traditional and modern sectors.⁹⁴

The global Islamic militancy has also some links with Pakistani Madrassahs, because Madrassahs are playing a major role in spreading *jihadism* in the world, some of them are providing trainings to terrorists, who are threat for Pakistan and the world.

However, radicalism in some Madrassahs in Pakistan is the result of international and national politics; those who support and have links are using Madrassahs as source of manpower for their strategic and political interests and now it has historical, cultural and religious links. In fact, after the Afghan jihad was over, the “facilities” created for the Afghan jihad in these Madrassahs came in handy for another jihad in Kashmir, again with the involvement of the Pakistan Government. What the Kashmir operation and the proliferation of jihadi organizations in the mid-1990s did was to bring this Madrassah based militancy from the tribal belt of the NWFP to the plains of the Punjab, where it was linked up with sectarian violence and anti-Indianism.⁹⁵

Many journalist and commentators have suggested that these Madrassahs teach “jihadi literature” in their course of studies and that their entire curriculum is intended to produce “holy warriors.” It has been suggested by many western scholars that there is an inherent relationship between what is taught in the Madrassahs on the one hand and religious extremism, Talibanism, militancy, anti-Americanism, and even terrorism, on the other. It is also argued that Madrassah students through their reading of religious texts, become ‘soldiers of God’ and engages in militant activities those they consider enemies of Islam.⁹⁶ Thus, Islamic educational institutions called Madrassahs in Pakistan are major source of ideology, policy and manpower for Jihadis, Taliban, TTP and militants.

Reforms Agenda for Pakistani Madrassah

Despite the Madrassahs constituting an indigenous system of education in Pakistan, the Madrassah sector of the country has been at the center of debates on extremism and radicalization of society since Pakistan joined the US-led war on terror after 9/11. The Madrassahs are perceived as a crucial medium for promoting extreme religious, sectarian, social and political views which lead towards militancy. Meanwhile it has been highlighted time and again that there is a need to reform the Madrassahs to transform the radical ideologies with real Islamic moderate values, and provide an applied-education mode where Madrassahs students become useful members of the society.⁹⁷ Therefore, the question arises that if the Madrassahs are not involved in acts of militancy then why is the issue of Madrassah reforms so important in Pakistan, and if the Madrassahs are involved in militancy and terrorism then why is the Pakistani government reluctant to take action against them?

Historically speaking, in the post-colonial, the popular demand for Islamic education continued, through the platforms through which that demand was met varied across the Middle Eastern and South Asian States. The leaders in the Muslim countries, following in the footsteps of their colonial predecessors, tried to regulate the working of the Madrassahs to lead to a renewed interpretation of Islamic text, which could prove more amicable to their modernization agenda than the orthodox conceptions of those principles. However, across the Middle East and South Asia, the state tried to regulate the religious education in different ways. In the Middle East, the state has been more inclined to bring religious education within the domain of state responsibility. In South Asia, on the other hand, the state has been more tolerant to private ownership of Madrassahs despite making attempts to reform them. The resulting relationships have thus been different.⁹⁸

Thus, during the late nineteenth century there was also the emergence of a movement to reform Madrassahs within a religio-political context under the banner of the *Nadwat-ul-Ulama*. This group was led by Maulana Mohammad Ali Mongir Shibli Numani (d. 1914) who had an opportunity to visit many of the classical Madrassahs in Syria, Anatolia and Egypt before embarking on his own reform agenda. Maulana Numani was, however, not impressed by what being offered in these lands and felt that South Asian Madrassahs were quite exemplary in their approach regardless of the need for internal reform.⁹⁹

During the confrontation with the British, the Deobandi Ulama institutionalised the Madrassah system, and gave it an administrative and academic structure. They adopted *Dars-e-Nizami*, but only after overturning its emphasis on non-religious studies.¹⁰⁰

Since the inception of Pakistan in 1947, three organized efforts have been launched to reform the Madrassahs: in 1962, 1979, and 2001. These efforts have been planned, initiated and implemented by the government with and without the help of the Ulama. All of these endeavours are closely tied to politics in Pakistan, not only because they were initiated by military rulers (General Ayub Khan, General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervez Musharraf, respectively) but also because political considerations shaped the contents and contours of these reforms.

In recent years, reform has become one of the central elements of discussion concerning Madrassahs. Media analyses and policy discourse, especially in the West present a simple and linear equation—the problem is security threats, the causes are the Madrassahs, and reform is the panacea. Whether or not they subscribe to this perceived causal relationship, governments and civil societies in countries with substantial Muslim populations have also emphasized the need for reform. In a similar vein, some of the scholars of Islamic history and contemporary Muslim politics, portrayed as “Muslim modernists”, insist that reform of the Madrassahs, particularly in South Asia, is long overdue.¹⁰¹ In the context of Pakistani Madrassah and

reforms, negotiations between the government and the Madrassah boards have been in progress for many years, but desired results have not been achieved so far.

Most Ulama, leaders of religious political parties and the owners of these Madrassahs believe 'Madrassah Reforms Agenda' is a western world conspiracy against Madrassah education system, Pakistan and Islam. Thus, there is huge propaganda and resistance against the reforms. Pakistani state's writ is weak due to the failure of democratic institutions and army intervention in politics; hence, the government is unable to implement any policy or reforms in Madrassahs, weakness of government can be seen from the failure of government to register all Madrassahs in Pakistan because of the resistance which came from Madrassahs administration, they believe government want to control Madrassah through registration which Madrassah administration will never accept. Madrassah reforms are now a controversial subject in Pakistan and it was very difficult for Nawaz Sharif government to introduce any reforms in Madrassah.

Prime Minister Imran Khan also promise to reform Madrassah as his predesssors Pakistan's new government, facing pressure from global powers to act against militant groups carrying out attacks in India and Afghanistan, has vowed major reforms and Prime Minister Imran Khan has promised the South Asian nation will no longer tolerate such outfits operating on its territory. "The government of Pakistan ...has decided that these madrasas will be mainstreamed," spokesman Gen. Asif Ghafoor told reporters at military headquarters in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.¹⁰² "An Islamic education will continue to be provided but there will be no hate speech," Ghafoor added, saying that religious schools will come under the purview of the ministry of educations and incorporate other subjects into their syllabus.¹⁰³

Conclusion

To conclude, the education has been always top priority in Islam, the holy book of Islam Quran emphasis on to seek knowledge, it is the foremost duty of a Muslim to acquire knowledge and Islam as religion also encourages for rational knowledge. Madrassah as education center in Islamic society has regarded as a high place of learning throughout the Muslim history. The history of the Madrassah extends almost to the origins of Islam. Some Islamic scholars suggest the Madrassah was established near the prophet's mosque in Madina after the *hijra* called *Ahle-Suffa*. However, most Islamic scholars contend the Madrassah evolved in the eleventh century from existing education centers, both religious and secular. From the beginning of Islam the mosque was recognized as the first and important institution as a place for praying, center of learning and education for the Muslims.

In subcontinent the Mughal emperor and their predecessor were great patrons of education and literature particularly the Mughal emperors established educational institutions in different parts of the empire. They patronized education by grants of lands or money for this purpose. As a result of Muslim rule and its support for education; historically two important Islamic educational traditions emerged in India *Farangi Mahall* and Deobandi traditions respectively. After independence Pakistan inherited few Madrassahs but these Madrassahs played very important role in education particularly for poor class.

However, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan paved the way for General Zia to use this traditional religious and historical institution for his vested interests. Thus, it is now well established fact that Madrassahs were providing human resources for Afghan Jihad and later to Taliban movement and now to TTP and other sectarian militant groups. Subsequently, religious educational institutions turned into training camps for militants. Many Madrassahs have close links with religious militant organizations and are also directly involved in sectarian violence in Pakistan. Thus, those Madrassahs are involved in violence getting funds and support from USA, Saudi, UAE and Iran, all is happening under the patronage of Pakistani state institutions.

Thus, it is increasingly becoming a threat to the national security of Pakistan. Further, it needs to investigate, the Madrassah supported militancy in Pakistan and its implications on South Asia and its links to Middle East.

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