

Madrassa Education in the Sub-Continent— Myths and Realities

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Abstract:

In the wake of terrorist attacks in Pakistan and other parts of the world, especially the Deoband Madrassas have come under deep criticism and scrutiny and they are quite often criticized as sanctuaries of terrorism. The authors hold that this notion is somewhat misleading. This research paper critically examines the educative role of madrassas in the Sub-Continent. Tracing the evolution of madrassa education system in India, an effort has been made to build the thesis that these educational institutions have made a pivotal role in the social and political up-lift of the Muslims and even in the today Pakistan, they are the source of education for thousands of children, who are otherwise denied of public sector schooling, especially in the remote areas.

Introduction:

The resurgence of Islamic educational institutions in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is a significant phenomenon from the viewpoints of education and history. The British replaced the old educational system with a new system and English language was made compulsory in educational institutions and to get the government jobs. The Muslims showed their continuous disregard to such a type of policies as they thought that the new English system of education was an effort to centrifuge the Muslims from Islam and a section of Muslim intellectuals conceived of preserving their culture and identity by preserving their traditional system of education and establishing new schools based on these traditions. These religious institutions produced very long lasting impacts on the Muslim society during the colonial rule and in the post-independence era in Pakistan and India.

The global interest in madrasas has increased exponentially in the last decade owing to the threat of terrorism, while previously published work, mostly by Muslim writers, tended to look at the historical and social domains and no solid piece of research work was produced to show the educative role of these

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madrassas. This research paper dilates upon the evolution of religious institutions in the sub-continent and attempts to review the role of such religious educational institutions in the prevailing educational system in the country. The research paper also makes an attempt to answer the research question that does the prevalent madrassa education is really promoting radicalism among the Muslims.

Methodology: This is a library based research – a most widely used technique in the social sciences research. A library based research is a piece of scholarship in which the work of others is put under close scrutiny, rather than the gathering of new, primary data directly from observation or measurement. However, it is not the simple describing of work that has been carried out in an area, although this will be part of the task; in this study, an extensive review of literature has been made and a combination of descriptive and analytical methods has been used in the interpretation of facts.

Review of the Traditional System of Muslims Education in India:

Prior to the Colonial era, Muslim education in India was centered on *maktabs*, mosques, *Khanqahs*, *madrassas* and private houses for an informal transmission of knowledge¹. *Maktabs* were for primary education where traditionally, a child was sent to a *maktab* after he/she had attained an age of four years. At this school, students were taught the Arabic alphabets with correct pronunciation, punctuation and vocalization and after that, they learned the Quranic recitation².

The *Madrassa* was considered centre of higher learning. Traditionally *madrassa* education incorporated two parallel streams of education: the revealed knowledge (*Manqoolat* or *Uloom-e-Naqaliya*) and the intellectual sciences (*Ma'aqoolat* or *Uloom-e-Aqalia*)³; the specialists of the former were known as *ulema* while those of the latter were known as *fudala* and *danishmands*⁴. The curricula varied from one *madrassa* to another. The *madrassa* of Farangi Mahall in Lucknow, founded in 1693, for example, taught *sarf*, *nahw*, *mantiq*, *hikamat*, *hisab*, *balagha*, *fiqh*, *kalam*, *usul al-fiqh*, *tafsir* and *hadith*⁵. In addition, some *madrassas* were well-known for their specializations, including, for instance, the Farangi Mahall *madrassa* famed for its instruction in *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh* and the *madrassa* of Shah Wall Ullâh was famous for its teaching of *hadith*⁶. The medium of instruction in the *madrassas* was usually the Persian language. *Madrassas* at a higher level usually prescribed texts in Arabic. A command over the Arabic text was required from those who opted for the specialized pursuits.

A *khanqah* was an institution of residential training and teaching for *sufis*. It was usually attached to a shrine (*dargah*) and a mosque⁷. It did not offer formal education and was dedicated to adults. The subject matter taught varied from one *Khanqah* to another, depending on the needs of disciples, the preferences of masters and the orientation of the *sufi* order. However, similarities among the different *khanqahs* could still be found. Nasr states, "The *Khanqah* was to provide a place for transmission of the highest form of knowledge,

namely Divine knowledge (*al-ma'raf o irfan*), hence, it also became the centre of moral training on the highest level⁸.

The system of traditional education survived from one generation to the next due to imperial and private support for the advancement of learning. N. N. Law explains the system of patronage and provides a detailed account of the development of education from the reign of Mahmood of Ghazni to the reign of Shah Alam of the Mughal dynasty. According to him, the fate of Muslim education was, to a large extent, dependent upon the goodwill of the government⁹.

Early *madrassas* in the Indian sub-continent were designed to educate people for state employment as well as to prepare future religious scholars (*Ulema*). *Madrassa* education initially comprised of ten subjects, taught via seventeen books. Students were introduced to the study of the Qur'an and the Persian language. In later years, they were taught Arabic grammar (*Sarf* and *Nahwa*), Arabic Literature, *Tafseer* of Qur'an, *Fiqh*, and *Usul-e-Fiqh*, *Mantiq*, *Kalam*, *Tasawwuf*, etc. Over the centuries more books and subjects were added

<i>Sarf</i>	<i>Mizan, Munshaib, Sarf i Mir, Shafiyah,</i>
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to the curriculum to include *Balaghat*, Mathematics, Astronomy, Philosophy and Medical Science (*Tib*) etc. However, it was Mullah Nizamuddin Sehaldi of *Madrassa Firangi Mahal* (Lucknow) who formalized the foundations of contemporary *madrassas* by establishing the *Dars-i-Nizami* curriculum¹⁰. The *Dars-i Nizami* consists of the following subjects and the course books¹¹.

Nahw	<i>Nahw-i Mir, Kafiyah, Sharah-i Jami</i>
Mantiq	<i>Sughra, Kubra, Isaghuji, Tahdhib, Qutbi.</i>
Hikmah	<i>Maybudhi, Mulla Sadra, Shams-i-Bazighah</i>
Hisab	<i>Khulasat al-Hisab, Euclid Book 1</i>
Balaghah	<i>Mukhtasar Maani, Mutaawal</i>
Fiqh	<i>Sharh-i Wiqayah, Hidayah</i>
Kalam	<i>Aqaid-i Nasafi, Sharh Aqaid-i Jalait, Mir Zahid, Sharh Mawaqif,</i>
Usul al-Faqh	<i>Usul Shashi, Nur al-Anwar, Talwih, Musallam. Al- thubut.</i>
Tafsir	<i>Jalalayn, Baydawi</i>
Hadith	<i>Mishkat al Masabih</i>

The main peculiarity of the tradition established by Nizamuddin Sehalvi was that although a text book was prescribed, he paid scant attention to the text itself, but around the text he wove a wide net of learning by which the inner eye of the student was opened¹². This great centre of learning produced illustrious ulema like Mulla Bahr al-Uloom Moulana Abdul Rabb, Moulana Abdul-Hayy Farangi Mahall, and Moulana Abdul Bari. With its emphasis on the study of logic, philosophy, mathematics and linguistics using recent texts, and religious education through classical texts, *Dars-i Nizami* soon became the most popular curriculum used in *madrassas* across the sub-continent and remains so to this day.

As the social, economic and political influence of various Muslim empires deteriorated, some *ulema* began to disparage abandoned the practice of independent thinking and reasoning (*ijtihad*) and concentrated exclusively on the preservation of the teachings of Islam. This radical shift in priorities was particularly noticeable in the Indian subcontinent, where many *madrassas* removed all secular and earthly subjects from their curriculum to focus solely on Islamic religious education, aiming to counter the influence of British colonialism¹³.

Madaris System under the Colonial Rule:

When the British took over the country, they introduced a secular type of education and replaced Persian with English. Thus the system of the *madrassas* received a damaging blow. In 1835, the Governor General Lord William

Bentinck made the law that it was the prime obligation of the government to make better arrangements for the teaching of English and also issued a resolution that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on the English education alone¹⁴. Subsequently, Lord Macaulay, the first Law Member of the Governor-General's Council in India, stressed the British Government to establish education system that can secure the interests of the British¹⁵.

British educational policies were regarded by Muslim leaders as a threat to the integrity of their religion and culture. English education was not seen by the Muslims as merely being a medium for the transference of knowledge but as a vehicle for the Christianization of Indian Muslims. This suspicion was not without grounds in light of this statement made by Sir Charles Trevelyan, a member of a commission of inquiry in to education: *...the primary design of the Government scheme of education is to advance the progress of civilization in India by the diffusion of useful knowledge, as the phrase is generally understood. The design of the Missionary institutions is to convert the Natives to Christianity. The two objects are distinct, but they are by no means opposed to one another*¹⁶.

Muslims, who were now behind the Hindus in terms of having an English education, also lost their traditional system of education as the Government confiscated tax-free lands. This measure was the result of the East India Company's financial difficulties with respect to shareholders' payments in England. To compensate for the shortfall the Company boosted its revenue by confiscating the tax-free lands on which many primary schools and the institutions of higher learning were situated. To stem this action, the legal deed-holders of these lands were obliged to submit proper documentation, which in most cases had either been lost or eaten by termites¹⁷.

In these circumstances, the Muslims intelligentsia realized that Muslims must reorganize their educational system and they must also acquire the modern education so that they may be at par with the other communalities in order to have an access to economic opportunities. This passion was transformed into educational reform movements with the mission to revive the national pride of Muslims. Muslim leaders, on their respective positions, started various educational movements.

Nine years after the first war of Independence against British colonialism, an educational institution known as **Dar-ul-uloom** was founded in **Deoband** by Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautavi¹⁸. Maulana Muhammad Tayyeb says: "As the Indian Muslims were in the process of total political and intellectual annihilation, the only way open to save Islam was the religious education which would reconstruct the hearts and minds of the Muslims and which could pattern their lives into the Islamic mould. This would give them internal guidance and at the same time defend them from external onslaughts. This would, it was thought, create in them a sense of true Islamic education and

a sound political consciousness¹⁹. The objectives set forth by the founders were: imparting and teaching the Holy Quran, *Tafseer*, *Hadith*, Beliefs and other useful sciences; providing Muslims with complete knowledge of Islam; nurturing Islamic morals and inculcating Islamic spirit in students; propagating, preserving and defending Islam through pen and tongue; keeping Dar ul uloom away from the influence of government and maintain the freedom of knowledge and thought and finally, establishing madrassas at various places in order to spread Islamic sciences²⁰.

Since it was very beginning, the constitution of Dar ul uloom Deoband laid down the following basic principles: (1) the authorities of the madrassa should always take utmost interest in raising funds from the public; (2) constant and serious endeavors are to be made towards the establishment of quality living accommodations for students; (3) the members of the Shura (council) who are responsible for the management of the madrassa should be individually dedicated to its aims; (4) the teachers of the madrassa must be like-minded, tolerant and respectful of each other; (5) the curriculum and method of instruction must be strictly adhered to; (6) as long as the madrassa does not have a regular source of income, it will exist: if some permanent source is found, i.e., landed property or a factory, the purpose of the madrassa will be lost sight of. In the matter of income, some uncertainty is beneficial; (7) the participation of government and wealthy persons in madrassa affairs is harmful; and (8) donations of anonymous persons are blessings; the sincerity of these persons is a permanent source of income²¹.

The departments of the Dar ul uloom are: Arabic; Persian, Quranic memorization; theology; calligraphy; medicine; handicrafts, like leather work; research in the Quran; *dar al-ifta*, and *tabligh*. Subjects like grammar, etymology, syntax, Prosody, rhetoric, Arabic, literature, history, strah, munazarah, logic, philosophy, arithmetic, astronomy, tib, kalam, fiqh, usul-i Fiqh, farai'd, Hadith, Usul-i Hadith, Tafsir and Usul-i Tafseer are studied there and for the most part, are based on Dars-i-Nizami. However, this syllabus appears to be a significant improvement on Dars-i Nizami. More books on Hadith, Fiqh and Arabic Literature have been added, and the new subjects of prophetic biography, history, medicine and the overall curriculum have been oriented towards the production of scholars well-versed in classical disciplines and imbued with piety, simplicity and dedication to the cause of Islam. This *madrassa* achieved astounding success in producing a great number of scholars. In addition, over thousands Arabic *madrassas* have been established throughout the subcontinent in the Deoband tradition.

Although the curriculum of the madrassa was improved from time to time and although Moulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautavi himself was not opposed to the study of modern sciences along with the religious sciences, the forces of conservatism ultimately triumphed when at the instigation of Moulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, even philosophical disciplines were removed from the

list of course offerings²². The study of the English language and of modern sciences was excluded from the syllabus and education was imparted from the old Dars-i Nizami. This caused the ulema to be more conservative and traditional in their outlook and unmindful of modern changes in the philosophy of education. Resisting the change, a section of ulema, led by Qari Muhammad Tayyeb, established another institution, (*Waqf*) Dar ul uloom Deoband in 1982.

Deoband, however, produced religious leaders of first-rate importance who played significant roles in the education of the masses and in the national struggle for freedom. The time when the Dar ul uloom Deoband, was established, the old Madrassa in India had almost become extinct, and the condition of surviving madrassas was not appreciable at all and the establishment of such a type of institutions certainly made valuable contributions to the preservation of Muslim culture; however, their founders were far more concerned with the past glories of Islam than with the contemporary needs of Indian Muslims. What Muslims needed was the knowledge and skills to compete politically and intellectually with their non-Muslim counterparts. Moreover, the Dar-ul-uloom Deoband excluded the teaching of English from the syllabus; something which was vital for graduates interested in government employment or for anyone who wanted to be kept apprised of new developments with respect to science and technology. Thus the revitalization of the Muslim community remained unrealized.

Another group, headed by Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan, accused the ulema of narrow mindedness and obscurantism for their opposition to English education. He came to the conclusion that madrassa education, using traditional subjects, had become irrelevant to the modern age²³. Sir Sayyed emphasized to accept the new educational system thoroughly and he introduced it among the Muslims with partial amendments, through the establishment of a school at Aligarh, initially called the Madrassa tul Aloom, Aligarh, and subsequently transformed into Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College and Aligarh Muslim University. The ideology was in sharp contrast with that of Deoband. Deoband aimed at the total declination by the Muslims of the modern education System. Aligarh Educational System started creating a class of people who were suited to meet the modern and mundane needs of the Muslims, for example, to compete with the other communities in the economic opportunities and to get the official jobs, etc. In contrast, the Dar-ul-uloom Deoband started to meet the religious needs of the Muslims. However the comparative study of the ideologies of both the Aligarh and the Deoband is not within the scope of this research paper and has been discussed in length somewhere else²⁴.

In reaction to the liberalism of Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College and against the conservative thought of Deoband, **Nadwa tul Ulema** was founded. It was the product of several important conferences attended by many famous ulema held at Lucknow. The Nadwa delegates had a realization that Muslims can equip themselves with the knowledge that European science and

education provided while remaining in consistent with their religious outlook. Moulana Shibli was the most active and enthusiastic of conference member and its driving force. For sixteen years he taught Arabic and Persian at Aligarh but differed with Sir Sayyed on many points. He criticized the ancient curriculum of the madrassas, and wrote papers and delivered speeches which forcefully called for improvements. Shibli felt need for improvement to meet the requirements of modern times.

According to Shibli, the current curriculum suffered from defects such as: (a) the subjects which are necessary and important are not taught whereas the subjects which are the means and tools to understanding the real subjects are given too much importance. For example Nahw (syntax) is needed for the study of Arabic literature, but so much concentration is given to syntax and as a result Arabic literature is practically neglected; (b) the books on logic and philosophy outnumber the books on Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh and Usul i Fiqh; (c) most of the books used are confusing and vague in their presentation and some books that are used in the study of logic but many of their discussions more closely pertain to philosophy. The result is that the student is perplexed and is not able to grasp either logic or philosophy; (d) only two books are taught in the study of Tafsir, which are so concise and brief; (e) most of the books do not help the student to discuss, analyze and infer in order to understand problems; rather they increase his confusion and dull his mind; (f) the syllabus does not contain any book on modern sciences; and (g) no attention is paid to the study of the English language²⁵.

The *Nadwa tul Ulema*, was officially organized at Lucknow on November 2, 1898, with the objectives and aims as: (1) the advancement and reform of *maktabs* and *madrasahs* and the promotion of higher learning in Islamic disciplines; (2) the suppression of sectarian quarrels, especially between the Wahhabis and the people of Sunnah wa'l-Jami'at; (3) social reforms among all classes of Muslims; and (4) the pursuit of Muslim spiritual welfare and the spread of Islam through *tabligh*²⁶.

Sayyid Sulayman Nadwi observes that the original aim in establishing Nadwa was the reformation and improvement of the Arabic method of education and the *nisab*²⁷. The highest objective of the Nadwa was to produce specialists and experts of the highest level (*Darjah-i takmil*) in numerous subjects. The subjects of modern science, history, philosophy, and mathematics were introduced. Under Shibli's direction the Nadwa made great efforts to provide a more enlightened education for the Muslims. The Nadwa also established a department of research and writing, **Dar ul Mussannifin**, in 1914 which has since produced significant works on theology, history, and other subjects of Islamic learning, and has greatly developed the study of Urdu language and literature. However, the additional concentration of Nadwa on Arabic literature has resulted in an imbalance in the overall scheme and consequently, a great number of writers and journalists have been turned out, but with few exceptions,

not many legal experts, or original thinkers of high caliber are produced, observes Ziaul Haq²⁸.

The System of Education in Pakistan:

The prevalent system also divides educational institutions as: (a) the Religious Education and (b) the Modern Education. An excerpt from a report of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research about evolution of these Institutions is quoted here: *There are two distinct systems of education operating side by side in Pakistan today. They may be described as the modern system and the classical system. The modern system was developed by the British during their imperial rule of India and its objective was to create a class of persons, Indian in blood and color but English in taste in opinions, in moral and in intellect for service with the East India Company and later, with the Government of British India. It was not the aim of this system to promote national cohesion through imparting cultural values to its students or to promote national development through imparting technical skills. This system has remained unchanged since independence The classical system of education, on the other hand, developed in its present form at the turn of the century when Muslim leaders, worried about the fate of Islamic Cultural values in the subcontinent, established Madrassas, Dar-ul-ulooms and Jamia Milia, through which they hoped to preserve Muslim thoughts. This system has also remained largely unchanged over the years. It emphasis Arabic teaching and does not further the cause of economic development as it does not aim to promote the analytical and technical skills on which such development must be based*²⁹.

In public sector institutions, a specific mindset controlled Pakistan's education system since 1947. The English language has been a dominating language since the beginning of the Pakistan. Educational policies made in the country show the spirit of Aligarh underneath, for the reason being that those who were tasked to do the job, were the products of the same system. Sir Sayyed's ideology yielded effective results when the country was under the colonial rule and as such, it was aimed to promote the Muslims' well being under the colonial rule. After the independence, it was required that the educational system is shifted as per needs of the new society. Unfortunately, that transformation did not take place and colonial traditions still continue in our educational system. Most disappointing fact is that the English Language is still the official language, despite the governments many times claim to introduce Urdu as official language.

It is interesting to note that when the movement of Muslim separatism bore fruit and Pakistan came into being in 1947, a powerful *madrassa* movement was stimulated and hundreds of Dar ul ulooms sprang up throughout Pakistan. Moreover, the territories which became the part of Pakistan were the Muslim majority areas and many madrassas already existed and their faculty hailed from the Deoband. The prominent ulema after the partition migrated to Pakistan, also established religious institutions; for example Mufti Muhammad Hassan

established Jamia Ashrafia; Mufti Muhammad Shafi established Dar-UI-Aloom Malir, Maulana Muhammad Yousaf Banori established Dar-ul-Aloom Islamia Banori Town, Moulana Khair Muhammad Jalandhri established Jamia Khair-ul-Madaris in Multan and Moulana Muhammad Chirag established the Jamia Arbia in Gujranwala. Since the majority of these ulema were Deoband qualified; therefore they completely introduced the Deoband's system in these institutions.

The Madrassa system or deeni madaris focusing on religious teachings, classical logic, literature and Quran, operated in parallel with the formal education system. At independence in 1947 there were about 245 madrassas in Pakistan³⁰. The number of madrassas has increased since the rule of General Zia-ul-Haq. In April 2002, the Ministry of the Religious Affairs estimated the number of schools to be about 10,000, with 1.7 million students³¹. This number is, however, contested; different sources name figures from 600,000 to 2 million students³².

Madrassas have their own examination system and award certificates called *sanad* corresponding to the formal system: (a) *Hifz/Tajweed-wa-Quiraat/Ibtedayia*, equivalent to the Primary School; (b) *Mutawassita*, equivalent to the Middle School; (c) the *Sanaviya Aama*, equivalent to the Secondary School Certificate; and (d) the *Sanaviya Khassa*, equivalent to the Higher Secondary School Certificate³³. Holders of the *Sanaviya Khassa* can either continue to higher education within the Madrassa system or in the formal sector. Madrassas are mostly run on a charitable basis. It may be free of cost for students or a tiny fee may be charged. Some madrassas provide free accommodation and boarding.

The madrassas are controlled by their own organizations or boards. The boards define the curriculum, and collect registration and examination fee. All the madrassas have a very clear sectarian split and are controlled by their respective boards as shown in Table 1 below. Sectarian wise, counts of madrassas are given in Table 2.

The existence of private *madrassas* has created a dichotomy in the system of education. On the one side there are the modern secular institutions, model schools, colleges and universities where the sons and daughters of the ruling elite can afford modern education. On the other side are the privately-executed *madrassas* which in general, attract the sons of the down-trodden lower classes. At the same time, the current education system of religious Schools failed to fulfill the requirements of modern age. Quite often, these religious educational institutions are blamed to lead the students towards extremism. The present situation of madrassas of country is very disappointing, keeping in view the prevailing sectarianism in the country. Moreover, many madrassas teach only religious subjects to their students, focusing on rote memorization of Arabic texts. In essence they are producing a generation of students unlikely to play a productive role in creating the type of modern dynamic economy necessary to

reduce the country's grinding poverty. Accounts of the daily life of students at Madrassas detail this grim picture³⁴

Table 1: Central Boards of Madrassas in Pakistan

Sr. No.	Name	Religious Inclination	Place	Established since
1	Wafaq-ul-Madaris-al-Salafia	Ahl-i-Hadith	Faislabad	1955
2	Wafaq ul Madaris	Deobandi	Multan	1959
3	Wafaq ul Madaris (Shia) Pakistan	Shia	Lahore	1959
4	Tanzim ul Madaris	Brevli	Lahore	1960
5	Rabta-tul-Madaris-al-Islamia	Jamat e Islami	Lahore	1983

(Source: Rehman, 2004)

Table 2: Sect wise break up of Madrassas

<i>Deobandi</i>		<i>Brevli</i>		<i>Ahl-i-Hadith</i>		<i>Shia</i>		<i>Jamat-e-Islami</i>		<i>Total</i>	
1988	2002	1988	2002	1988	2002	1988	2002	1988	2002	1988	2002
1779	7000	717	1585	161	378	47	419	97	500	2801	9880

(Source: GOP 1988; Report of Sindh Police, Daily Dawn 16th January, 2003).

Contrasting views of life in and after madrasa education manifest further polarized views on the issue. Some criticized for being and see them as strict institutions with inhumane conditions, while others condemn even the large madaris for lack of leisurely activities beyond sports. Other more damning critiques report incidents of torture and sex abuse while also being critical of the clergy who lure poor families for self-interest. At the same time, madrassas are criticized as breeding grounds for violence³⁵. Such perception emerged because of hailing of important leaders like Mullah Omar and others, supposedly from Dar ul uloom Deoband styled madrassas. However, despite the hype and headlines, there exists little empirical evidence to connect the madrasa education and militancy as **Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh**, commonly known as Umar Sheikh, Sheikh Omar, who was charged with kidnapping and murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl had studied at the London School of

Economics. None of the suspects of London 2005 Bombings had studies in any religious madrassa. Singer notes, during the 1980s the Madrassa system changed significantly³⁶.

General Zia encouraged the proliferation of *madrassas* in Pakistan along the Afghan frontier to amalgamate and educate young Afghan refugees as well as Pakistanis in Islamic precepts and to inject the extremist religious fervour needed to fuel the anticommunist *jihad*. Upon Zia's urging Saudi charities built and funded hundreds of *madrassas*, providing social outlet and religious instruction, along with free food, shelter, some military training and a small stipend for their students to send back to their families. Christine Fair asserts that madrassa students are not categorically tied to the militancy³⁷. Christopher Candland of Wellesley College holds that militant sectarianism did not arise organically within the madaris; sectarianism did find fertile soil in the communities, especially in the refugee communities, that madaris served. But militancy was not the exact aims of madaris principals, teachers, and students as much as it was their environment³⁸.

Scholars from Dar ul uloom Deoband have always denounced all the forms of terrorism in their conferences and moots. The historical fatwa, signed on 31st May, 2008 has about 6000 signatories, is reproduced below. This fatwa is issued under the seal of *Da rul Ifta*, Darul Uloom Deoband and is signed by Moulana Habibur Rehman, the Grand Mufti of the Dar ul Uloom Deoband and is ratified by: Zain ul Islam Qasmi (Deputy Mufti), and Mufti Waqar Ali (Assistant Mufti) and Mufti Mehmood ul Hasan.

Question: *These days, a sinister campaign is going on in an organized manner, to tarnish the image of, and to malign against Islamic faith, Holy Quran and teachings of the Prophet (PBUP), by linking terrorism with Islam and distorting the meanings of Quranic verses and the Prophet traditions. Therefore, please clarify what is the clear stand of Islam towards world peace? What are the guidelines issued to humanity in Quran and Prophet's traditions about this matter? - Mahmood Asad Madani.*

Answer: *..... Islam is a religion of peace and Harmony. In Islam, creating social discord or disorder, breach of peace, rioting, bloodshed, pillage or plunder and killing of innocent persons anywhere in the world are all considered most inhuman crimes..... There are several verses in the Quran that strictly prohibit the breach of peace. "Do not spread discord on Earth after it has been set in order" (Surah Aaraf , V. 56); "When he (the mischief-maker) turns his back, his aim is to spread mischief everywhere on earth, to destroy crops and cattle but Allah loveth not mischief." (Surah AlBaqarah V. 205); " And do*

not spread discord on the (face of the) earth" (Surah AlBaqarah V. 60).

The Quran clearly states that the killing of (even) one innocent person is equivalent to massacre of all humankind because it's like opening the floodgates that creates a situation beyond anyone's control; while saving one life is equivalent to the rescue of all humankind. Allah says "On that account: We ordained for the children of Israel that if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people." (Surah Maidah, V. 32); in another place it has been clearly ordered, "and do not kill anyone whose killing has been prohibited except in just manner".

The extent of Islam's emphasis on peace can be seen from the fact that even while granting the right of self-defense to the oppressed, it insists that no excess be committed in retribution and strictly forbids the targeting of any innocent person. Thus, Allah Almighty says, "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors". That is why the Prophet (PBUH) insisted that even during a war; human rights must be fully respected. Several examples of such teaching are to be found in the Prophet's traditions. Besides, Islam teaches is that all the creatures of Allah are like one family and whoever treats this family of Allah with compassion and mercy, would be loved the most by Allah (Baihaqi). Our Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) has said that Allah takes mercy upon those who take mercy upon fellow human beings. You treat the inhabitants of earth with compassion and the inhabitant of Heaven (Allah) shall show compassion towards you (Tirmizi, Abu Dawood).

In short, Islam rejects all kinds of unwarranted violence, breach of peace, bloodshed, killing and plunder and does not allow it in any form. It is a basic principle of Islam that you assist each other in the pursuit of good and righteous cause and NOT TO COOPERATE with ANYONE for committing sin or oppression. Allah Almighty says: "Help ye one another in righteousness and piety but help ye not one another sin and rancour". It is evident from the clear guidelines given in the Holy Quran that the allegation of terrorism against a religion like Islam which enjoins word peace is nothing but a lie. In fact, Islam was born to wipe out all kinds of terrorism and to spread the message of global peace. Allah knows the best³⁹.

By issuing the far fatwa and launching the campaign against terrorism, Deoband not only disapproved of terrorism, but also set an example how Muslims and madrassas in other parts of the world can play a role in checking the radicalisation of Muslim youth. In fact, apart from India and Pakistan, the Deoband approach has been practised by many Islamic groups and movements in the Muslim world such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey.

Historically Pakistan's madrassas were founded as centers of learning for the next generation of Islamic scholars and clerics. Parents send their children to madaris for a variety of reasons. Many madaris are free. Madaris provide children with a place to sleep and meals as well as books and instruction. The most obvious reason for sending one's child to a madrassa is often overlooked. A madrassa provides the opportunity to strengthen ones children's faith. It is important to many parents that their sons are pious Muslims. Parents also often want to teach their children adab [manners]. Parents of madaris students express the hope that their children will learn to obey their elders and to be disciplined in life. Children are instructed in how to greet and converse with people of different ages and status and how to address family members and others respectfully. Parents also hope that madaris education will keep their children protected from gangs, drugs, and the violence of everyday life. Madaris often serve as care-providing institutions for parents who cannot take care of their children. All madaris are single-sex institutions and most are for male students. Is there any ready alternative to the public educational (and social welfare) that madaris provide to more than one million children?

Conclusions:

Traditionally madrassas have played a pivotal role in the education system of Pakistan. A sizeable population of students is enrolled in these madrassas. Religious educational institutions have always played a positive role in strengthening and shaping the religious beliefs. Children of our families learn to read the Holy Quran through a religious madrassa trained "molvi". However, the madrassa system at present has its own peculiar problems such as the stagnation of the curricula and its more emphasis on rote learning, rather to develop the spirit of research and enquiry. Though there is no conclusive evidence in this regard, some madrassa are criticized for promoting the religious hatred and extremism. In fact, the present madrassa system suffers badly from the government neglect and they lack a clear vision as many governments have used them as instrumental to their strategic designs. Mainstreaming the madrassa system can harness a very competitive system of education in Pakistan.

END NOTES

¹ (Kuldip Kaur, 1990), P. 7-12.

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- ² (P.N.Chopra), P. 132.
- ³ (Sarah Ashraf, 2012), P. 8.
- ⁴ (Moonis Raza, 1991), P. 20.
- ⁵ (Kuldip Kaur, 1990), P.52.
- ⁶ (Ziaul Haq, 1975), P. 277; (Kuldip Kaur, 1990), P.45.
- ⁷ (Marcia K. Hermansen, 1995), P.415.
- ⁸ (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1994), P.127.
- ⁹ (Narendra Nath Law, 1916), P.xivi.
- ¹⁰ (Pervez Hoodbhoy, 1988), P.217.
- ¹¹ (Z. Faruqi, 1963), P.27.
- ¹² (Asaf A.A. Fyzee, quoted from Shibli Numani, 1932), P. 169.
- ¹³ (ICG, 2002), P.5.
- ¹⁴ (Percival Spear, 1938), P.
- ¹⁵ (Stephens Evans, 2002), P. 261.
- ¹⁶ (Syed Masroor Ali Akber Hashmi, 1989), P.23.
- ¹⁷ (Jawaharal Nehru, 1960), P. 296.
- ¹⁸ (Muhammad Tayyeb, 1965), P. 76.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, P.14.
- ²⁰ Ibid, 2005, P. 34.
- ²¹ (Ibid, 1965), P.17-18.
- ²² (Z. Faruqi, 1963), P.31.
- ²³ (Altaf Hussain Hali, 1979), P.87.
- ²⁴ (Shazia Ramzan, 2012), P.234.
- ²⁵ (Sayyed Sulayman Nadwi, 1970), P. 412.
- ²⁶ (Rafiq Zakaria, 1971), P. 308.
- ²⁷ (Sayyed Sulayman Nadwi, 1970), P. 414.
- ²⁸ (Ziaul Haq, 1975), P. 286.
- ²⁹ (GOP, 1969), P.1.
- ³⁰ (IPS, 2005), P.12
- ³¹ (ICG, 2002), P.23.
- ³² (Tahir *et al.*, 2006), P. 4

³³(NORDIC, 2006), P. 55.

³⁴(David Blair, 2002), P. 11.

³⁵(D. Bandyopadhyay, 2002), P.1483; Murphy, B., 2005; Das, S., 2008; Hussain, Z., 2007, P.34.

³⁶(P W Singer, 2001), P. 1.

³⁷(C. Christine Fair, 2007), P.107.

³⁸ See the Web link: <http://www.wellesley.edu/Polisci/Candland/MadarisViolence.pdf>

³⁹ See the Web link: <http://www.mfsd.org/fatwaenglish.htm>

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