

MADRASAS IN SOUTH ASIA

Teaching terror?

Edited by Jamal Malik

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The subject of madrasas has now acquired special relevance internationally for a number of reasons. Talking generally about Islam in South Asia, the role of madrasas can hardly be overemphasized. Madrasas have been central to the religious imagination of religious scholars (the ulama) in terms of denominational debates or their activities related to the guarding of the personal sphere of Muslims, or more recently over questions of reform, islah. In fact, most movements of renewal in Islam developed networks of madrasas or at least tried to do so in an effort to institutionalize their ideas and precepts. Islamic education has thus been “constituted” as one of the most important building blocks of any “Islamic society”. It is for this reason that madrasas present an important case to start a discussion about Islam, in this case in South Asia.

In order to understand and discuss different facets of Islamic learning and madrasas, an international workshop on “Islamic Learning in South Asia” took place in Erfurt (Germany) from 19 to 21 May 2005. It was supported financially by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the German Science Association, to whom the editor is most grateful. I would also like to thank the staff of the Chair of Islamic Studies at the University of Erfurt, in particular Silvia Martens, for their hard work in realizing this volume, which comprises the revised papers presented at the above-mentioned workshop. Some chapters were added to the volume to make it more comprehensive and to introduce important advances in what is an exciting new subject for research, as it focuses on the actors, repertoires, institutions, and ideas emerging in different minority and majority contexts.

It is hoped that this volume will stimulate further interest in this area.

As far as the system of transliteration is concerned, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hindi, and Sanskrit words have been written without diacritical marks, using a simplified version of the format in The Encyclopaedia of Islam (New Edition), unless otherwise noted. It should be emphasized that the avoidance of diacriticals is aimed at making these studies accessible to a wider audience in comparative studies of religion.

Jamal Malik
Erfurt

1: INTRODUCTION

Jamal Malik

When debating Islam and its political role in South Asia and especially in Pakistan, the role of the religious schools (in Arabic: *madrasa*, plural *madaris*=place of learning) is often central to the public imagination. There are three categories of religious schools: the *madrasa* teaches from first to tenth grade, the *dar al-ulum* (*dar al-'ulum*) the eleventh and twelfth, while the *jamia* (*jami'a*) has university status. For a variety of reasons, *madrasas* have acquired significance, attracting increasing interest from secular political actors and organizations, not only since 11 September 2001.¹

The popular literature concerning *madrasas* in South Asia has expanded enormously in recent years, especially in policy-oriented journals and the press. But, even when this literature has appeared in peer-reviewed journals (as very few books have emerged yet), most of that literature has been written from a point of view of securitization. Usually, a connection between religious education and religious extremism is made, then *madrasas* are connected to the notion of religious education, and the task becomes one of counting up the number of *madrasas* (or *madrasa* students) in order to “measure” the (Islamist) extremist “threat”. More sophisticated studies then go on to note that, owing to the problem of sectarianism, the threat of extremism is a problem not only for “the West”, but also for the individual countries of South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and so on.

Few of these studies are well grounded in empirical research – in fact, most of them, lack such research altogether (however, for well-researched studies of the subject, see Metcalf 1982; Grandin and Gaborieau 1997; Robinson 2001; Zaman 2002; Hartung and Reifeld 2006). And of course, most are prone to sensationalized over-generalizations that obscure far more than they reveal about the history of religious education, the forces that have led to various changes in the supply of, and demand for, religious education, and the link between religious education and religious violence. In effect, they pile assertions on top of assertions in an effort to frame and “support” their exceedingly thin, or dubious, “arguments”.

The chapters in this volume are nothing like this general trend. Assumptions regarding the link between religious education and religious extremism, or terrorism, for instance, are extremely few and far between. Assumptions regarding “Islamic” education as a “monolithic” form of education are also noticeably rare. In fact, the reader is generally provided with an opportunity to see the terms of Islamic education take shape along several different dimensions – class dimensions, gendered dimensions, sectarian dimensions, urban/rural divisions, and so on. The result is a picture of Islamic education that amounts to a comprehensive and illuminating picture, at least in the context of South Asia.

It is hoped that no one who reads this book will emerge with an understanding of Islamic education that is one-dimensional and cast within an exceedingly narrow rubric defined by the United States’ ongoing “war on terror”. Indeed, it is hoped that the reader will emerge with a sense that Islamic education is an integral – some might say indispensable – feature of

modern Muslim life in South Asia, one that has been (or become) associated with violence under very specific conditions.

In fact, much of the current talk on madrasas has been associated with the emerging geo-political order which has sought to link these institutions to global terrorism. More often than not, the assertion has been that they have become something like a factory for global jihad and a breeding ground for terrorism; it is being increasingly argued that madrasa pedagogy produces fanaticism and intolerance, which are detrimental to pluralism and multicultural reality. Thus, in Pakistan and Afghanistan it has been linked to the rise of the Taliban. In India it has come under attack from Hindu nationalists who charge them of producing and harboring “terrorists”. In Bangladesh we witness similar problems.

The increasing research on madrasas then coincides with the events of 9/11, when the state saw fit to subject civil rights to severe restrictions. This has enabled governments across the world to push through restrictive policies in ways previously unknown. This linking of madrasas to terror seems to have brought “relief” to the “world of governments”, the event of 9/11 itself being turned into an excuse for asserting much more control and surveillance over what has been called the non-modern or traditional sectors. However, while the ferocity of the state in subjecting madrasas to scrutiny may be new, its suspicion of these institutions has a much longer precedent, as can be read into the efforts of various governments under the guise of streamlining madrasas into the national educational systems.

The problematique

This streamlining is often dictated by the postulates of a “global modernization” assuming that there is a “universalizing code” through which modernity unfolds itself. Such a paternalistic and arrogant assumption is at the same time informed by a calculated expansion of the state-domain to previously untouched areas. It is interesting to note that Islamists apologetic towards the state, as well as some orthodox scholars struggling for political recognition, have repeatedly supported such homogenizing attempts to domesticate religion, rather than presenting proper alternatives fit for fragmented societies that are predominantly organized on agrarian and tribal lines.

State policies, serving to extend the process of globalization and homogenization and seeking to impose transcultural values, look for recognition and acceptance of this process as a “de-cultured” one. However, this globalization, presented as “induced misrecognition” encounters various reactions and meets resistance or even “counter-globalizations”, in a process of interrelating the external global pressures and distinct local struggles. Hence, the recent expressions of religious “resistance” in the context of local madrasas – as a space of autochthonous cultural articulation, as it were – can be seen as a response to the political economy of globalization and state penetration proceeding “from above”.

At the same time, madrasas have developed their own dynamics vis-à-vis the ever encroaching state responding to local skirmishes between local factions competing for scarce resources “from below”. Their engagement in homogenization and contestation in the pursuit of agencies over their and

others' constituencies is the case in point. Hence, madrasas are focused on, or affected by, global as well as local concerns. In fact, there is interplay between these two levels of analysis, when madrasas are situated in ways that merge both levels.

Thus, one may distinguish two equally viable but largely competing approaches. One approach stresses the terms of political economy – what might be called the “objective” approach to an understanding of specific changes in the landscape of contemporary religious education. The other stresses the role of ideas – what might be called the “intersubjective” approach. In the course of the argument it becomes evident that these different approaches are entangled. How do these approaches then fit with the different contributions in this volume?

Against the backdrop of the state's tendency to expand its homogenizing notion of “global modernity” and the levels of resistance which it faces, we need to appreciate the role of madrasas in non-colonial, but not necessarily precolonial, traditional societies, in which they command a high degree of autonomy. Madrasas offer free education, often for students with meager provisions, and provide learning which seems to be tailored to the surrounding culture. They traditionally earn their income from the local or regional environments, for example from neighboring tradesmen, notables and farmers, but also politicians and foreign donors. With this income they then offer financial help to their students, who usually hail from adjoining regions but who can also come from farflung areas. At present, police sources estimate about two million madrasa students in Pakistan, considerably more than a World Bank report of 2005, which counts less than half a million, as has been argued by Christopher Candland in this volume. The difficulty in providing sound figures is that most of the students in madrasas are not officially registered, though most of the madrasas are affiliated to one or another umbrella organization of religious schools set up since the 1960s. Nevertheless, a considerable number of their graduates, especially those of the higher Islamic education institutions, go on to take up important political and religious leadership, such as in religio-political parties.

It is evident that there is a variety of educational institutions in Muslim culture ranging from mosques, khanaqahs (Sufi hospice) and maktabas (primary schools) to madrasas, and even to some other informal modes of Islamic learning and practices. All of them have a long tradition in Muslim contexts, often sponsored and patronized by the ruling classes and notables through waqf (religious endowment). Madrasas especially were of utmost importance both for the cultural and imperial and later national integration processes, and can be regarded as continuation of the Nizamiyya tradition in Baghdad (inaugurated in 1067) (cf. Sourdél 1976; Sourdél-Thomine 1976; Makdisi 1981; Leiser 1986). This institution became prominent under the Saljuq wazir in 'Abbasid caliphate, Nizam al- Mulk al-Tusi (d. 1092), in the eleventh century, as a means, among others, for countering the rising Ismaili mission and the spread of Shiite and the Mu'tazila “heresies”. Sciences taught at the madrasas provided for trained service elites, and it is said particularly jurists, as the second form of the verb darasa, i.e. darrasa, used

without a complement, originally meant “to teach law”, while *tadris*, its verbal noun, meant “the teaching of law”. Based on the pious endowment (*waqf*) and stipulated by the pious deed, the ideal was to receive a license to teach law and issue legal opinions.² While jurisprudence stood at the forefront of Muslim teaching, at the same time, secular law (*qanun*) promulgated by the politically powerful – *siyasa* – became an alternative authoritative source to the *sharia* (*shari’ah*), prompting religious scholars to face and challenge secularization (on the tussle between *sharia* and *siyasa* see Muzaffar Alam 2004).

At the same time, Islamic law taught in the *madrasas* encouraged pluralism, so much so that a science of disputation (*‘ilm al-khilaf*) developed and became part of Islamic legal training. This went so far that a doctrine of concession to disputed doctrine (*mura’ah al-khilaf*) was demanded from the jurists to accommodate opposite views (cf. M.K. Masud 2000: 237). Hence, law and jurisprudence, rather than theology, claimed a central position in the tradition of teaching and learning. In fact, there were “no separate *madaris* exclusively for religious education. . . . Theology became a regular subject in the *madrasah* curriculum in later periods” (*ibid.*), eventually highlighting religious and sectarian identity, an issue that is of some concern to the present volume.

The historical context

Since the focus of this book is on modern and particularly contemporary South Asia, we briefly need to introduce the *madrasa* and its subject matters in the backdrop of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when the *Dars-i Nizami*, the name given to the old as well as current system of subject matters, evolved. That was the time when the country was dotted with *madrasas* (Leitner 1971). It was also the time when new territorial lords, supported by wealthy merchants and bankers, emerged at the margins of the Mughal court. This complex process resulted in what may be called the “regional centralization” of Mughal power leading to the establishment of territorial princely states. The emerging new identities, through ethnic or sectarian grouping, were informed by real as well as invented genealogies, local patriotisms, devotional religions, centralized revenue systems, and the creation of standardized languages. Every principality claimed its own religio-cultural “variety”. Knowledge was sought to be transmitted as uniformly as possible, ideally through a set package known as *Dars-i Nizami* (named after its founder, Mulla Nizam al-Din of Lucknow, who died in 1748). The *dars* supported Muslim scholastic philosophy and law, both of which were based on logic and were most congruent with state domination.³ It seems that the *Dars-i Nizami* was part of what might be called a wider standardizing endeavor – the compilation of *al-Fatawa al-Alamgiriyya*; the writing of autobiographies, lexicons and encyclopedia, etc., were other such attempts. In these and similar endeavors the aspiration of the time for intellectual universality is manifestly visible, as is an inclination to summarize the accumulated knowledge systematically and popularize it.⁴ At the same time, it must be stressed that the *Dars-i Nizami* was/is as little monolithic as is Islamic law or Islamic “orthodoxy”. Instead it was and still is highly pluralistic and divergent. There are personal

differences among scholars in the ways to teach. Similarly, the scholarly ideas change from person to person and from group to group, depending on their contexts, functions and patronage as stipulated in the waqfiyyat, the deed constituting a domain, i.e. madrasa, into a pious endowment.⁵ In fact, the local differences are noticeable such as those between Lucknow and Delhi, Allahabad and Khairabad, Bareilly and Deoband. Putting it simply, one region was known for its mystical inclination, the other for precisely the opposite, yet another for its rational or transmitted approach, and so on. While the impact of a certain school was not necessarily restricted to one single place, local styles could change through contact with other influences. In the face of these differences, cleavages and varieties in the Dars-i Nizami, it seems difficult to generalize about its foci and developments, but later generations of scholars have always tried to classify the scattered testimonies of their ancestors, thereby rationalizing their own experiences (see for a prototype of Dars-i Nizami Malik 1997: 522ff.).

The “science of the classification of the sciences”, divided – according to the medieval scholar Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) – the sciences into transmitted (naqliyya) and rational (aqliyya or tabi’iyya), sacred (diniyya) and profane (dunyawiyya). The first comprises all branches of knowledge which owe their existence to Islam based on a divinely inspired law, such as Qur’an, the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (hadith), law and the principles of law, theology and auxiliary sciences such as grammar and syntax. The latter is believed by some scholars to be fashioned on the Hellenistic, Judaic and Nestorian scientific traditions, consisting of logic, philosophy, astronomy, medicine, mathematics and metaphysics.

The essential difference between these two branches of science is their ultimate source, i.e. divinely and human inspired knowledge. Together with the concept of the “unity of being” (wahdat al-wujud) elaborated upon by the wellknown Spanish mystic theorist Ibn Arabi (d. 1240), the so-called rational sciences soon became a powerful aspect of Muslim education and knowledge, particularly in the context of empire-building and processes of cultural integration (Alam 1993; Robinson 1993; Malik 1997).

In all probability, the distinction between rational (ma’qulat) and transmitted sciences (manqulat) was overplayed by later, nineteenth-century Muslim generations in order to prove their rational approach vis-à-vis colonial – orientalist – polemics, though it is not to deny that the stage for this distinction had long been set before the advent of colonial rule, as is evident from Ibn Khaldun’s division of sciences. Moreover, if we believe Muslim historiographers, the study of ma’qulat acquired considerable importance during the Mughal Era, when Persian scholars were attracted to the South Asian imperial courts in great numbers. Hence, the madrasa witnessed several changes in the subject matters reflecting the political and social orders of the day. As can be found in many nineteenth-century Muslim sources, ma’qulat were designed particularly for the functionally diversified service elites and the networks surrounding them. Yet, the study of jurisprudence (manqulat) was at the focus of madrasa education even in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and was acquired by scholarly elites for almost similar reasons, as can be gleaned from many biographies

on the learned. Shah Wali Allah (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 the sharia, which was more complete than (temporally limited) human rational deductions because of its divine inspiration. Hence, he drew a distinction between revelation and reason, and at the same time related and harmonized them to each other. We may therefore provisionally conclude that in the politically uncertain times leading up to the disintegration of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century, manqulat seemed to have regained importance – at least in the cultural memory and public imagination of the people concerned – as they were often propagated by reformers based in the declining imperial Mughal city (cf. Malik 2003).

In the wake of the colonial penetration – that is, in the second half of the nineteenth century – with the introduction of new systems of education, the madrasa largely lost its function as a general training institute and turned into an institution exclusively for religious education. It has been argued by many scholars that this trend was informed by the colonial division between “religious” (dini) and “secular” (dunyawi), i.e. public and private spheres, a division premised on experiences peculiar to contemporary Europe. Modernization and the notion of “useful education” (i.e. natural sciences, mathematics, economics, philosophy, ethics and history) became catchwords in the colonial civilizing mission, which eventually transformed a European Enlightenment tradition into a “global ethic”. Institutions which did not subscribe to this process of authoritative epistemological homogenization were marginalized and compelled to withdraw to the private realm.⁶ Nevertheless, they still continued to provide knowledge to a majority of Muslims. It is probably in this context that the term dini madrasa surfaced,⁷ that is, an institution designed exclusively for religious learning.

In the fermentation process brought about by colonialism, some groups made use of Islamic symbolism to mobilize against colonial power, others tried to change, reform or conserve religious education which aimed at providing the Muslim community with a (Islamically) legal basis for action, the urgency of which was informed by the loss of the so-called “Islamic Empire” to the British once and for all. Various Sunni schools of thought emerged, including the Deobandi, the Barelwi and the Ahl-i Hadith (on these movements and groups, see Metcalf 1982).

They appealed to specific social groups and were tied to particular regions, thereby adding to the religious and societal complexity of South Asia. Law, mysticism and prophetic tradition were the main orientations of the new religious consciousness.

The political economy of madrasas

This process led to a societal split in Muslim societies, a split that was comfortably accepted and reproduced not only by the representatives of post-colonial states, but also by the guardians of madrasas. They seemed to accommodate themselves with this notion of fragmentation of life-spheres

into private and public, profane and sacred, quite easily – most likely because similar divisions of sciences had already been existent before the advent of colonialism. Religion, it was said, was privatized; the rest was to be governed by secular logic. In contestation with the postulates of later Islamists or “peripheral ulama”, the ulama eventually came to try to hold sway over this privatized realm, thereby implicitly accepting and cementing the colonial dichotomization (Zaman 2002). In contemporary times the contest over this “private” realm has taken dramatic shape. In this context one has to take the post-colonial state intervention into account, since it is the state that has had a major impact on traditional institutions. In fact, as long as the state did not try to colonialize hitherto virgin areas, the ulama were more or less docile with this neat division of labor. But the increasing infiltration by the state into non-colonialized traditional society, through a rationale to curb the ulama’s power and thereby become the sole interpreter of religion in the public as well as the private sphere, threatens the authority of ulama and further restricts their scope.⁸ They either have to be pacified, by means of privileges, or marginalized through legal restrictions. Both these strategies, however, evoke reaction among the ulama and the institutions which they control. And it should come as no surprise that due to their increasing economic and social pauperization, they tend to become increasingly radical.

The considerable local popularity of madrasas further aggravates the situation, and this leads to the second – inter-subjective – argument (see below). It is not only the madrasas that cater for the majority of state-school drop-outs, but also mosques, on their part, allow themselves to be important centers for rallying large sections of the population. There are more than one million mosques in Pakistan alone, of which approximately half are not registered. The sermon at the Friday prayer gathering (khutba) provides an important venue for such mobilization, for it often includes socio-political information and often appeals to political agitation. Religious specialists may frequently use these gatherings to question the legitimacy of the state.⁹ For the government, then, the khutba has become a very difficult issue, which has, in the current “war on terrorism”, led to harsh restrictions on dissident preachers both in mosques and madrasas, in order to de-politicize the Friday gathering, for example (on khutba in the Arab context, see Mattes 2005).

This radicalization is obviously not inherently Islamic let alone typical in the course of Muslim history. The current increasing path of resistance is rather home-grown in the first place, resulting from the encroachment of post-colonial states into arenas hitherto dominated by old established lineages and categories of social organization such as family, tribes, religious endowments, charities and networks of learned tradition.¹⁰ These traditional patterns had developed their own mores and regulations necessary to function in a larger context. Moreover, they could “renew” themselves by means of a global Islamic discourse, and they produced public spheres with particular civic cultures. These non-state forms of social organization and ideas stand apart from the rather “limited” ones introduced by the state. Tensions between these two patterns become virulent if both

contest each other. This is particularly the case when the state incompletely diffuses into society, because of its being transient, half-legitimate or even parasitic. Lacking legitimacy, it is not capable of becoming the prime source of authority and justice. Tensions increase since there is no central religious authority which would neutralize competing claims, and also because religious education is not supervised by the state, especially in Muslim minority states.¹¹ Religious education and its practitioners thus become intellectually and financially independent from the state. Funds flowing from abroad and contributions from the public make them ever more distant from the state, while at the same time embedding them ever more into the affairs of their local community. The fact is, that limited market and job opportunities for the ulama have led to a growing radicalization, as the increasing number of sectarian or communal outbreaks exemplify. These organizations become more efficient in responding to the needs of the local community as compared to the rather anonymous state structures. Seen from the state's perspective, it is hardly possible to rule out these culturally rooted lineages and forms of social organization. In fact, couched in Islamic repertory, the latter can and have served as a source of limitation and regulation of state power, as has been the case in Muslim history.¹² In such a seemingly uncontrollable situation the state becomes paranoiac. Contested from within, it takes to even more authoritarian means. As an effect of unsatisfactory and failing state alternatives, the non-state contesters have since the 1990s become increasingly radicalized to the extent that they have been made responsible for terrorist assaults. They have also increasingly been making use of the option of shifting across confessional and sectarian affiliations in order to renegotiate and expand their positions, thereby arriving at virtuous alliances. The result is a flexibility of ideas and divergence over time and space when faced with social reality. Theological and political conflicts between traditional enemies such as the Barelwi and Deobandi have been largely laid aside in the Muttahida Majlis-i Amal (United Action Council) governing the North Western Frontier Province in Pakistan.

In the face of these developments, the semantic of obscurantism is initiated and dramatized by state agents as well as their Islamist supporters. This semantic is informed by an obligation of reform and change of what is considered "uncivilized" space. The desire to "enlighten" and reform (islah) the masses with "true" Islam for the sake of the common good (maslaha) is part of the postcolonial civilizing missions. Akin to the various nineteenth-century reform movements which targeted the hinterland of garrison and market towns (qasbas), contemporary Islamists, in collaboration with state agents, again seek to impose an urban global Islam on rural areas, attempting to replace local heteropraxy by universal orthopraxy, factual feudal oppressiveness and corruption by potential empowerment and a global set of ideas, practices and ethics. However, these civilizing missions are experienced by target groups in an increasingly sectarian imagination. Madrasas often provide the loci for dissemination and proliferation of such ideas. Mostly they are led by laymen/Islamists/peripheral ulama but are provided with ideological nutrition by well established ulama themselves.¹³

Support for these endeavors comes mostly from the middle classes and local commercial bourgeoisie, who are often of rural background themselves. Increasingly, returnees from Arab countries become part of this rejuvenating scenario. They participate in these sectarian movements because it helps the re-migrants in their quest of social and economic mobility. The riots between Shia landowners and Sunni merchants in the Punjab provide a striking example.¹⁴ From the cities they increasingly infiltrate the countryside where they provoke regionalisms, thereby endangering further the (post-) colonial state's attempt to reorder society in its own image. Eventually, this leads to an expansion of the ulama's influence to the extent that they even come to dominate the Islamist discourse¹⁵ leading to an Islamization from below. This accounts for divergent and competing ideas primarily in the context of struggle against the homogenizing language of secular modernity. Religious schools therefore increasingly play an important role in interior politics.

In terms of foreign affairs, madrasas also play a part: their role in Afghanistan, when they were used and supported by certain intelligence services and foreign governments; their role post-Afghan civil war, when once again they were caught up in power politics supported by different secret services; and then in the post-Taliban era, when some of them took sides with groups who resist using what has been called terror in the mind of God (Juergensmeyer 2000). The revolution of rising expectation often pushes the graduates of religious schools into the hands of more or less dubious players. This led to the emergence of newer identities and several branches of madrasas, enhancing the state of sectarian fights. To be sure, these branches and forms of socialization do interact in a variety of channels of understanding and reciprocal obligation, which are often built on the resilient framework of informal networks of trust and responsibility.

For analytical purposes, however, we may distinguish several groups: first, the students of religious schools in general; second, the mujahidin or freedom fighters; third, the Taliban; and fourth, the jihadi groups.¹⁶

According to this taxonomy, the first group has been subject to several reforms from within and without, and has played a quietist role. However, because of their traditional ties with Afghanistan and other neighboring countries and as a result of the use of jihad rhetoric, some of them were used as footsoldiers in the Afghan civil war. A sub-sect of this first category therefore became the second group – the mujahidin.¹⁷ In order to keep these rather diverse and contesting and ethnically organized groups under control, and to maintain a grip on the region for economic and political purposes, yet another version was established by interested parties: the Taliban.¹⁸ As far as the fourth category of jihadis is concerned, many of them can be traced back to the Taliban and mujahidin themselves, others to groups returning from battlefields such as Kashmir, Afghanistan and Chechnya. Their leaders usually hail from the middle class and are secular educated men, rather than madrasa students, though madrasa students also join the militant and radical groups in the global rise of religious violence. Hence, it is true that the struggle for victory over a superpower and an alleged affiliation to some global network enhance the radicals' feeling of Islamicity, no matter how

blurred and intangible it may be. Yet, it is the objective material conditions coupled with the symbolic power of regional conflicts, such as Palestine and Kashmir, that make up for the explosive mixture because these conflicts represent the suppression of whole nations. However international and global these organizations may be, they have risen as a result of internal problems caused by political mismanagement, and they have subsequently been exploited by external powers. The government of Pakistan now tries to control this rather gloomy scenario through the centralized Model Dini Madaris Ordinance 2002, the Dini Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance 2003 and the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board 2004 introducing yet new institutions for this purpose. However, its success has proved rather limited so far.

This rather grave picture in Pakistan is certainly different from the Indian scene where the government has started to launch similar reform programs which were met by severe reactions by the ulama, fearing a profound change in their – sometimes flourishing – madrasas and hence a loss of Islamic identity.¹⁹

In Bangladesh the situation is quite similar where the madrasas are witnessing a boom.²⁰ It must be reiterated though that religious schools in these areas provide at least some kind of education and survival. What is more important perhaps is that they use a variety of religious symbols – both homogenizing and localizing – to articulate the predicaments which people face in highly fragmented societies which have become increasingly subjected to unilateral globalization through its prime agent, the post-colonial state. The growing presence and visibility of religious power in the public sphere represents this struggle between state and religious scholars and their institutions that have been exploited by different groups but at the same time been denied their share. In the context of these developments read in terms of resistance, the making of an epitomizing prophet is easy: the “Ladinist” savior, who would lead the campaign against suppression. But the basis of this Islamic radicalism still has very profane reasons: social conflict, poverty, political suppression.

This paradigm of globalization incarnated through the post-colonial state may be helpful for some theoretical argument. As it stands, state-led globalization is met with counter-globalization(s) which at the same time takes recourse to the imagined concept of the umma and also indigenizes global Islamic knowledge. It is debatable, though, whether this can be seen as a challenge to globalizing Western epistemological hegemony, which is still prevalent among educational elites in Muslim majority societies (cf. Adas 1993). But there are globalization processes from without and from within, occurring simultaneously and benefiting immensely with the unprecedented technologies of transportation, information and communication. On the one hand, there is an intensification of a universal Islam and movement towards a more or less uniform, global civilization similar to the one proclaimed by the policies of post-colonial states. On the other hand, one can discern different positions Muslim communities take vis-à-vis various types of contemporary globalization as (co-)actors,

reactionary forces, or as affected, such as is the case with Islamic scholars and the madrasa.

At the same time there are many instances of reciprocity which renders postcolonial processes into complex encounters of local and global factors. Hence, Islamic scholars and their institutions “share external [global] pressures, but represent distinct domestic [local] struggles” (Schäbler and Stenberg 2004: xx).

Therefore, both these facets of globalization have to be taken into account in their mutual encounters which lead to new processes of self-authentication.

There seems to be a systemic combination of continuity and change, of transformation and permanence.

From the above discussion it becomes obvious that changes in the religious landscape proceed, in the final analysis, from changes in the distribution of global (or state) resources and in the power structures thereof. In effect, the forces of globalization, combined with the penetration of the modern state, seek ever more efficient forms of local control, and, insofar as this is the case, they search relentlessly for ways to standardize, or homogenize, the intricacies of their social, economic, political and demographic environment. This, in turn, produces a reaction on the part of local forces – forces that draw upon a wide range of local resources, including not only radical but also eclectic forms of religious expression, to “resist”. Hence, madrasas have become more and more influential as disgruntled young Muslims turn to religion in protest at the economic injustice and political marginalization of the “modern” era, a view echoed, to a certain extent, in some chapters, notably those by Tariq Rahman and Saleem H. Ali in this volume (Chapters 4 and 5).

The ideational resistance

Beyond this argument for a struggle for scarce resources in response to the political economy of globalization and state penetration “from above”, there seems to be enough evidence that the recent expressions of religious “resistance” in the context of local madrasas are a response to local skirmishes between local factions competing for scarce resources “from below”, or even a combination of both.²¹ Here the ideational or inter-subjective argument comes to the fore. In fact, most of the chapters’ point of departure lies in an account of divergent or competing responses in terms of ideas, arguing that the source of emerging forms of religious resistance is not “economic” but “ideational”, not a struggle for scarce resources, i.e. a fair deal in the context of the global economy or the modern state, but a struggle against the homogenizing language of secular “modernity”. Not “Islam” versus “the West” in a struggle for economic and political control but divergent approaches within the specific terms of Islam itself – monolithic expressions of religious identity, for instance – are pitted against diverse expressions of religious or sectarian alternatives. Hence, it seems that the homogenizing and essentializing assumptions of secular modernity are counteracted by two very different forms of religious resistance, both of which take shape in the context of the modern madrasa.

In the first form of resistance, homogenizing notions of secular modernity are challenged by (similarly) homogenizing notions of Islam articulated in the language associated with specific Muslim sects or groups; for example, the Barelwis insist that “the only true Muslim is an Ahl-i Sunnat/Barelwi Muslim”, or the Jama’at-i Islami propagates a universal, de-cultured and de-territorialized Islamic identity.

In the second form of resistance against the homogenizing terms of secular modernity, both the homogenizing notions of secularism and homogenizing notions of Islam are challenged by an appreciation for pluralism and diversity even within the specific terms of Islam. This pluralist form of resistance is spelled out as a desirable option by different contributors. But for the most part, the individual chapters examine the link between “modern” colonial and postcolonial trends favoring secular homogeneity or conformity and the first (ironically quite “modern”) form of religious, anti-pluralist, singularizing resistance.

Usha Sanyal and Arshad Alam, for instance, describe Barelwi efforts to homogenize the Islamic community, while Irfan Ahmed describes Jama’at-i Islami efforts to accomplish the same thing. Nita Kumar discusses a similar process in the conformist pressures associated with the religious education of young boys and girls. And Christopher Candland criticizes recent madrasa reform efforts because they merely seek to add “modern” mathematics and science subjects to the existing madrasa curriculum, all the while ignoring the “real” problem, which Candland describes as a lack of appreciation for the diversity of the Muslim community as a whole and a certain aversion to the diversity of the modern world.

The struggle, at any rate, between competing approaches to Islam and Islamic education, particularly at the level of ideas, is obvious, though reciprocating the political economy argument: homogenizing notions of secularism versus homogenizing notions of Islam, all pitted against a countervailing appreciation for religious and sectarian “diversity”. Zakir Hussain Raju’s Chapter 8 draws out this theme quite effectively, when revealing the extent to which these homogenizing forms of state-formation are not the only options.

The arrangement of contributions

Keeping this underlying “framework” in mind, the sequencing of the chapters has been arranged in the following way:

The chapters by Usha Sanyal and Arshad Alam (Chapters 2 and 3, respectively), both of which focus on Ahl-i Sunnat (Barelwi) madrasas in India, fit together quite well, as their special historical aspects also make for a very nice opening pair. Even beyond this, however, both Sanyal and Alam do a fine job in terms of foregrounding the ideational aspects of sectarian rivalry and then configuring these aspects as a driving force in the work of the madrasas that concern them.

Usha Sanyal portrays two madrasas of the Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama’at, i.e. the Barelwis in independent India: the Madrasa Manzar-i Islam, the first madrasa of the movement, founded by Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi (1856–1921) in 1904, and the Jamia Ashrafiyya in Mubarakpur which is currently the biggest school of the movement in India. Both schools are called dar al-

ulum. While these madrasas follow the Dars-i Nizami syllabus like other groups, different texts are adopted by each madrasa and there are differences in the interpretation of the basic texts (for example specific hadiths; the Ahl-i Sunnat do not regard the study of philosophy as important as other schools do). In recent years, the Ahl-i Sunnat madrasas expanded and modernized their syllabi to gain state recognition of their certification and thereby make their students eligible for entry into the modern university system. Many former students become teachers in other madrasas or muftis and seem to be in high demand; the best of them go to work abroad.

Two topics are crucial to this chapter: first, the constant struggle for financial support for the madrasas and second, the continuous competition/rivalry and conflict of the Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at with other Sunni groups, especially the Deobandis. Financial needs are met primarily by donations and some financial assistance from the government. Because of its symbolic importance the Madrasa Manzar-i Islam is now also strongly supported by members of the Ahl-i Sunnat from abroad. In the case of the Ashrafiyya, much money for the construction of school buildings came from locals who seem to sympathize with the Ahl-i Sunnat movement. However, in terms of visibility, the rival madrasas dominate, because since the 1980s they have been benefiting from Saudi Arabian support. In contrast, the Ahl-i Sunnat have been excluded from such funding because of their strong denunciation of all forms of "Wahhabism" and their association with sufi rituals and beliefs.

Arshad Alam's chapter attempts to analyze the process of identity formation within madrasas, focusing on an Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at madrasa in North India but occasionally mentions a Deobandi madrasa for comparison. This Barelwi madrasa aims at the propagation of their own school of thought, the maslak. In doing so it defines a Sunni (or "true believer") as someone who believes in every word written by Ahmad Riza Khan, the founder of the movement, and who struggles against rival interpretations of Islam such as those of the Deobandis and the Ahl-i Hadith. Teachers and other staff members usually belong to the Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at, fully wedded to its ideology. Even in terms of organizational matters, it insists on having members of its own maslak, providing for a social space with a well-defined value system towards which all the different constituents of madrasa are supposed to conform.

Though all madrasas follow the Dars-i Nizami (or a modified version of it devised by the ulama at Deoband), emphasis on and interpretation of subjects vary. But the madrasas focus on the study of hadith. Hence, madrasa classes are important spaces for the transmission of the maslak's ideology and the constitution of identities (of "us" and "them"). The "Islam" of other groups is depicted as false and perceived as a threat to "true Islam". Thus, in these places of Islamic learning sectarian differences are created and internalized by the students. Furthermore, debating courses instil the students with confidence to publicly present their ideology. Strategies of identity formation include the teaching of books which are formally part of the syllabus. This ideological construction is actively reproduced by madrasa students, who hail from different social and cultural backgrounds.

They acquire a common identity of being members of the community of Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at in their routine, through teaching, learning and other allied processes. According to Alam, madrasas are primarily concerned with teaching what is “true” and “false” Islam rather than with the “othering” of Hindus and Christians. The debate is an internal one, which rarely exceeds the Muslim community.

Turning to Pakistan, the chapter by Tariq Rahman follows on quite meaningfully from the chapters by Sanyal and Alam, particularly insofar as it sustains the focus on sectarian difference. But Rahman also provides a neat bridge to many of the themes addressed in the next chapter by Saleem H. Ali – for example, the political economy of Shia landownership and the Sunni resentments that appear to flow from it. In fact, following on Sanyal and Alam, Rahman and Ali draw special attention to the different, competing “approaches” described above:

Sanyal and Alam stress inter-subjective issues; Rahman and Ali rely on the specific terms of political economy. The chapter by Christopher Candland, in turn, wraps up this section on Pakistan with a focus on recent efforts to promote specific madrasa “reforms”, reforms that have failed so far because their emphasis lies on building parallel new institutions without addressing the issues of curriculum, content and pedagogy prevalent in madrasas in general.

The main points in these three chapters can be summarized thus: Tariq Rahman argues that madrasas are not inherently militant. The madrasas of the various sects all use the Dars-i Nizami, though they use different texts. The basic books on the subjects are canonical texts sometimes dating back to the tenth century. They are rather irrelevant to contemporary concerns, their syllabus tending to disengage one from the modern world. Moreover, the traditional orthodox ulama teach it in a way which is not amenable to contemporary political awareness. In addition to these texts, madrasas usually use contemporary works of ideologues of their own school of thought which very often discredit other groups. When one is searching for the source of sectarianism, militancy and anti-Westernism, it is here rather than in the old texts that one must look. What is even more concerning to the author is that in the madrasa students are taught the art of debate – they learn the rhetoric, polemic and arguments of their sub-sect.

The graduates use these skills in public discussions and sermons which are more and more politicized. Non-madrasa students also adopt such political perspectives.

However, Rahman emphasizes that the source of or reason for such politicization lies not within the madrasa. In his opinion, anti-Western and jihadist ideas result from contemporary international and local conflicts and economic inequalities (e.g. Western domination and exploitation).

Rahman mentions the internal problems of poverty, underdevelopment and inequality in Pakistan. Both students and teachers of madrasas are of poor background and the madrasa offers them not only spiritual comfort but food and accommodation, performing the role of the welfare state in the country. There is a correlation between the increase of poverty and the increasing influence of the madrasas, to the extent that Islamic militancy has

an element of class conflict, a reaction of the have-nots against the haves. Rahman considers this to be a dangerous trend because madrasa students are taught to be intolerant of religious minorities. In this context, ulama have been drifting more and more from conservatism to revivalism and activism in recent decades. But this is not a problem of madrasas only, militants are also trained in secular institutions. The Pakistani state as well as the United States contributed to this when they supported religious and non-religious institutions to train fighters for the Afghan–Soviet war, for example.

In his final analysis Rahman opines that essentially Muslim militancy is a reaction to Western injustice, violence and a history of exploitation and domination over Muslims. “This can only be reversed by genuinely reversing Western militant policies and a more equitable distribution of global wealth” (Rahman, Chapter 4, this volume).

Saleem H. Ali discusses the role of madrasas in sectarian conflicts specifically. His findings are based on an empirical study conducted in Punjab which particularly focuses on the linkage between madrasa-attendance, conflict dynamics and social (development) indicators. The author describes the positive as well as negative impact of madrasas on Pakistani society as follows: the important positive contribution is that the madrasa provides not only for religious education, it also caters for other needs of the poor and is therefore widely supported by the Pakistani masses. Particularly in areas where there is no proper infrastructure (electricity, drinking water supply, roads, etc.), madrasas are of central importance.

However, madrasas strongly promote their own religious perspective and genealogy and seem to engage in violent conflict with rival Muslim groups. The region studied by Saleem H. Ali experiences considerable sectarian violence, especially between Deobandis and Shias. “However, Barelwi madrasas which were traditionally very tolerant . . . have also started showing violent and sectarian tendencies. In many instances this is a response to violent and aggressive attitudes of some Deobandi institutions and their managers” (Ali, Chapter 5, this volume).

Sectarian groups have the greatest following in areas where there is a high degree of economic inequality, the overall living conditions are low and feudal landowners are also politically powerful. It is precisely in this context that madrasas have challenged the legitimacy of the ruling families and gathered a strong following. The author emphasizes that this sectarianism is an internal problem of Pakistan which is not linked to international terrorism. Although madrasas are contributing to sectarian violence in Pakistan, they should not be perceived as training camps of al-Qaeda.

Since madrasas as a social movement have received legitimacy particularly on account of the existing economic inequalities and daily hardships of the poor, it should therefore be a priority to improve the living conditions in poor areas.

Ali opines that conversion of madrasas into conventional schools is not viable.

Instead, “there should be an attempt made to expose madrasa leaders to alternative voices of Islamic learning and facilitating dialog between various

sects” (Ali, this volume) Christopher Candland argues in Chapter 6 that the attempts to reform undertaken by the government in recent years have been unsuccessful because they do not tackle the main problem. Model madrasas were established but their impact has been very limited since they do not receive sufficient financial support from the government. They have no permanent space, the facilities are sub-standard.

Moreover, most of the reforms aim at the surveillance and control of existing madrasas by obliging them to integrate parts of the National Curriculum – a product of the government of General Zia al-Haq (1977–1988) – into their curricula.

According to Candland, this coercive approach is counter-productive because the contents of this curriculum are biased against religious minorities and against the Indian state. Furthermore, they tend to glorify the military and the use of violence for political ends.

Most of the present Pakistani madrasas were established during the tenure of General Zia al-Haq and became militant and sectarian because of the then militaristic politics. Candland argues that – just as the US government used madrasa students to fight the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan and supplied texts to glorify and sanction war in the name of Islam – moderate interpretations of Islam could be promoted through the madrasas to counterbalance this approach.

However, there seems to be a lack of funding and interest – neither the Pakistani government nor international policy makers apply such an approach.

While some madrasas promote militancy, and many even politicize their students to a particular sectarian organization or religious political party’s perspective, the problem does not lie with Islam. Indeed, Islamic education is important in “secular education” as well as in madrasa education.

According to some ulama, the Islamiyyat [study of Islam] taught in government and private schools focus on those portions of the Qur’an and hadiths that might be interpreted in line with intolerant and militant ideologies while the passages which clearly invoke tolerance and enlightenment are ignored. . . . Just as militant prayer leaders in the armed services and militant teachers in government schools were promoted in the 1980s, it is possible to promote moderate prayer leaders and teachers today. (Candland, this volume) In any case, each of these five chapters – Sanyal, Alam, Rahman, Ali, and Candland – is clearly focused on madrasas, drawing illuminating comparisons between madrasas in India and madrasas in Pakistan. In the next three chapters, madrasas remain important, but the terms of “religious education” are also more broadly defined. In other words, the last three chapters focus on madrasas, but they place these schools within a much larger universe of “religious education” broadly defined – again, showing that, when it comes to spelling out the role of the madrasa in contemporary South Asia, ideas do matter.

Indeed, if the first five chapters leave the reader with the impression that local madrasas have emerged as a homogenizing site of Muslim resistance in the face of homogenizing global/state forces, the last three reveal that,

although this type of homogenizing “resistance” is extremely common, alternatives do exist.

Nita Kumar, for instance, writing about India (Chapter 7), considers the terms of gendered education both in the context of local madrasas and in the home.

Zakir Hussain Raju, writing about Bangladesh (Chapter 8), notes that, although those with a modern religious education may be associated with their local madrasa, this is not always the case. They may be associated with the terms of “religious education” for other reasons, for example, their status as a hajji. And Irfan Ahmed, focusing on Pakistan, traces the ways in which Maududi situated the terms of religious education in opposition to the education provided in traditional madrasas. To give some details: in her chapter on gender and madrasa training Nita Kumar argues that there are two main problems with the educational system in India – both related to the colonial experience: first, there is an inadequate infrastructure of pedagogy, and second, there is a mental or psychological attitude which hinders educational progress.

The introduction of a modern education system with colonialism took place in a climate of mutual hostility between the public and the state, which resulted in a hostile family–school relationship. The British opined that the school’s job was to reform the backward public and it praised those who supported the new colonial schooling. In this picture the school/teacher emerges as reformer on the one side and the family as backward and rooted in its local culture on the other.

By the same token, nationalist schools aim at erasing the religious and cultural identity of the traditional communities.

Instead of integrating into the new education system, many castes and communities in India founded their own institutions with the aim of synthesizing the dini and the dunyawī to allow the groups to stick to their vocational and cultural traditions.

Today modernity is the privilege only of those families who cooperate with the nationalist schools. The corollary of this cooperation is the neglect of local culture and histories, often also of ethics [the ethics of being a well adjusted member of his society] (Kumar, this volume) The dilemma for many people is that one decides to be adjusted to the own community (traditions) or to become a well-educated person. However, it is not up to the child to decide – the community and the madrasa has decided already.

The traditional communities aim at securing their identity and fulfilling the goals of the community which does not necessarily provide the children with a good (modern) education. This affects girls even more than boys. Hence, madrasas in India are pedagogically underdeveloped and the teaching in school is ineffective compared with the teaching at home (and the teachings/interests of the community).

Even where modern teaching material is available, teachers lack the ability to transfer the contents (knowledge) to their students. According to Kumar, colonialism is responsible for these problems:

Colonialism has produced a separation between what is “ours” no matter however injurious to us, and what is “foreign” such as supposedly many

philosophies and practices associated with modernity. This also correlates to the foreign as abstract and theoretical, and the indigenous as practical. (Kumar, this volume) Therefore, madrasa education as well as education at home serves to integrate children into “the larger gendered society” which more often than not means that good/modern education is not seen as necessary, or that it is even seen as an obstacle (or threat) to securing the community and family values.

Zakir Hossain Raju analyzes the conflict between cultural nationalist and pro-Islamic conceptions of Bangladeshi identity and its cinematographic representation.

In this context Islamic learning plays a central role in a dual sense: as the everyday practice of Islamic teaching among Bengali Muslims and through Islamic educational institutions (madrasas). The cultural nationalist Bengali-Muslim middle class considers Islam to be alien to Bangladesh, as backward and restricting. In this view, Islamic learning and Bengali cultural practices are opposites. Reversely, the syncretistic or shared approach sees Islam as part of the Bangladeshi identity. However, in this conception Islam is not understood as an orthodox monolithic religion; rather it is the indigenized Bengali Islam, popular Islamic practice in Bangladesh, which is a marker of the local national identity.

This perceived conflict between Islam and Bengali identity is a relatively new phenomenon. It started only in the late nineteenth century when the British contributed to the formation of a political Muslim community. A sense of a Muslim identity was thus constructed.

This identity put emphasis on the affiliation of Bengali Muslims with the “original” version of Islam and considers the Islamic education including the learning and practice of Arabic as much more important than the learning of English and indigenous Bengali cultural practices. (Raju, this volume) The expansion of Islamic learning and education was a means to promote Muslim identity in Bangladesh. This enforced the view that Bengali-ness was incompatible with Muslim-ness. Islamic learning was thus seen as something not quite in conformity with Bengali cultural practice.

Against the backdrop of these developments, cultural-nationalist Bengali Muslims started a Bengali film industry as a medium to define and promote a modern cultural-national identity of Bengali Muslims from the 1950s onwards, in terms of a Bengali-Muslim counter-discourse against the Calcutta-produced Bengali-Hindu modernity and pan-Indian Muslim identity advocated by the pro-Pakistan elite through Urdu and Bengali print media.

Later, the opposition to Muslim identity propagated by the middle classes acted as the driving force for the establishment and development of a national art cinema in Bangladesh. These films however, address the Westernized middle classes, not the majority of rural Bangladeshis. They reinforce the Bengali-Islam dichotomy and depict Islamic learning as anti-modern and primitive. Hence, most art cinema films are simultaneously engaged in constructing and opposing a monolithic perception of Islamic orthodoxy. The author analyzes a contemporary film that advocates the multiplicity and pluralism of Islam and its attachment to Bengali identity. It

does not draw a binary opposition between Islam and Bengali identity but rather argues that Islam has become indigenized in rural Bangladesh.

Irfan Ahmad's Chapter 9 discusses the Jama'at-i Islami's (or rather Maududi's) ideas on Muslim education. He argues that it is misleading to say that Islamists stick to traditions and refute "modernity". In the case of Abul Ala Maududi (1903–1979) and his party it is rather the opposite, because he was neither trained in a traditional madrasa, nor did he appreciate such traditional education. Rather, he critiqued the Islamic system of learning prevalent in India and called for a change along the pattern of Western education – however, without openly adopting Western values. Maududi believed that political power results from the superiority of the education system of a group/civilization; that is, whoever possesses the most superior knowledge would become the leader.

Therefore in the ideology of the Jama'at-i Islami, education has a central role for the aspired Islamic revolution and the creation of an Islamic state. Hence, traditional ulama were attacked for their "blind imitation" or taqlid and the lack of ijihad, independent reasoning. Modernists like Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1899) were denounced because their education system lacked Muslim character and did not aim at a sharia-based state. In his attempt to re-invent tradition, Maududi conceptualizes ilm and promulgation of law (zabta) as being based on the superior command over the former by the latter, which radically departed from Islamic traditions. His ideas of Allah's Government on earth, and true Muslims being a party of the vanguard to lead that movement towards its ultimate goal, are inherent parts of his argument. Hence, Maududi aimed at a purely Islamic education which would bring Muslims to power (again). This, however, could only be accomplished by "total revolutionary reforms" and the overhauling of the entire education system. Thus, he complained about the partial and half-hearted reforms which were undertaken in many madrasas of the time. Instead, he wanted modern subjects to be introduced to the curriculum. In this new system all subjects should be taught in conformity with Islam and with emphasis on religion; a distinction between religious and secular sciences would not prevail. In short, all subjects have to be Islamized and the education must intend to lead to the establishment of an Islamic state, to bring about an Islamic revolution. "[N]o other sect or ideological group shared the sine qua non of Jama'at's ideology according to which education was an instrument of heralding an Islamic revolution/state" (Ahmad, this volume).

Hence, it is this variety and variation of madrasas in South Asia that transgresses the boundaries between resistance and homogenization, terror and Islamic normativity, between radicalization and Islamic learning, and which provides for a variety of cultural articulations and institutions important for old and new identities. The chapters display the entanglement of discourses of resistance against and challenges to the homogenizing notions of secular modernity and homogenizing notions of Islam. By the same token, new processes of selfauthentication in the context of modern madrasas are grounded in a systemic combination of continuity and change,

of transformation and permanence. As such, madrasas provide for specific local needs as well as for the articulation of needs of a major part of society.

As a consequence, religious specialists and their institutions might well play a crucial role in the adaptation of globalizing and modernizing developments to specific local needs and situations in the sense of glocalization,²² thereby providing a variety of embedded cultural articulations and potentially the much needed national and cultural integration. Institutions of religious education can in this way offer alternative solutions in their capacity of adaptive agents of indigenous structures, solutions which the post-colonial states would hardly be able to offer with their authoritative means alone. It is this potential which needs to be cherished and appreciated, and which seems to be the only way to come to terms with the wider sections of societies that are deprived of basic human – political, socio-economic and cultural – rights, and to give voice to these alternative discourses.

“Teaching terror” and religious violence can be endowed with different meanings if seen in their specific contexts, whether as Islamic resistance to secular modernity and its homogenization/globalization or as localized challenges to both Islamic and modern secular homogenizations/globalizations. How difficult the misuse of concepts such as “holy war”, “war on terror” or “infinite justice” would be, if one knew about their cultural meaning and embedded varieties.

It is high time to realize these issues.

Notes

1 I wish to thank the anonymous readers for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of the introduction. Thanks go also to Muhammad Akram, University of Erfurt, for his insightful suggestions.

2 See the article on “madrasa” by J. Pedersen and G. Makdisi in Bearman, P.J. et al. (eds) (2004) *Encyclopaedia of Islam (New Edition)*, Vol. V: 1123ff.

3 For similar developments in Egypt see the most interesting account by Gran 1998: xvi, f. 50, 96.

4 Compare Urs Bitterli, *Die “Wilden” und die “Zivilisierten”; Grundzüge einer Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte der europäischen-überseeischen Begegnung* (Munich, 1991), p. 223.

5 Compare “madrasa” by J. Pedersen and G. Makdisi in Bearman, P.J. et al. (eds) (2004) *Encyclopaedia of Islam (New Edition)*, Vol. V, 1123ff.

6 For a brief but useful discussion of the criterion of “useful” instruction and “privatization” of (religious) education, see Zaman 2002: 64–66.

7 It would be interesting to trace the genealogy and career of the term “dini madrasa” to substantiate or refute this hypothesis.

8 It should be mentioned that the crucial point of departure into resistance was – at least in Pakistan – just prior to the proclamation of the West Pakistan Waqf Property Ordinance 1961, which aimed at nationalizing waqf properties, thus interrogating the deeds given in the waqfiyyat.

9 See Gaffney 1994. Increasingly, Islamists and traditionalists are converging. The reason is not only the common dissatisfaction with the representatives of the government.

Paradoxically, state reform interventions in the traditional religious education system have led to an ideological rapprochement between Islamists and traditionalists.

For Egypt, see for example Zeghal 1999; for Pakistan, see Malik 1998b.

10 In fact, as far as the dissemination of knowledge is concerned it was primarily disseminated and reproduced – up to contemporary times – through family ties; see Salibi 1958; Brinner 1960; Bulliet 1972: 55–60; Mottahedeh 1980: 135ff.; Voll 1982; Robinson 1987.

11 See the interesting introduction by Jan-Peter Hartung, in Hartung and Reifeld 2006.

12 Historically speaking, the activities of the ulama can also be seen as a means to limit caliphal despotism. See Bulliet 1999 and Bamyeh 2005: 40f. Cf. also Johansen 1999: 189–218.

13 There is obviously a long tradition of disputes, polemics and heresy. But this so-called refutation- or radd-literature did not traditionally focus on indoctrination with an intolerance of other religious systems. In Pakistan, however, the discriminating political and discursive strategies against the Ahmadiyya of the 1950s were frequently used as a template for later debates.

14 Apart from the domestic Pakistani tensions, ideological and power political differences between Saudi Arabia and Iran might have played an important role in these riots.

15 This has been elaborated by Nasr 2000: 139–180.

16 It is banal to point out that an ordinary madrasa student can join the mujahidin, who themselves, like the Taliban, could have joined jihadi groups.

17 The mujahidin became warlords who in course of the war in Afghanistan had divided the country into fiefdoms. They fought in a bewildering array of alliances, betrayals and bloodshed, switching sides again and again. Rashid Ahmed opines in Chapter 1

of his celebrated *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, that US funds were matched by Saudi Arabia and together with support from other European and Islamic countries, the Mujaheddin received a total of over US\$10 billion. Most of this aid was in the form of lethal modern weaponry given to a simple agricultural people who used it with devastating results.

18 The word taliban is actually the Persian plural of the Arabic word talib, student, hence “students of (religious) schools”. Most of them had been students in Pakistani madrasas, principally in NWFP and Baluchistan, where they founded a network of schools and ethnic affinities before they emerged at the end of 1994. The name Taliban was to make clear that they categorically rejected the party politics of the mujahidin.

19 See also Malik 2006.

20 An overview on madrasas in Bangladesh is given by Abdalla et al. 2004.

21 This is an interesting question for scholars with an interest in the relationship between, say, contemporary political economy and specific patterns of ongoing institutional change, a question that has to be dealt with separately.

22 On glocalization see Robertson 1995.

2: AHL-I SUNNAT MADRASAS

The Madrasa Manzar-i Islam, Bareilly, and Jamia Ashrafiyya, Mubarakpur

Usha Sanyal

The Ahl-i Sunnat or Barelwi movement began in the 1880s under the leadership of Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwi (1856–1921), who spent his lifetime writing fatwas from his hometown of Bareilly, in west Uttar Pradesh (U.P.).

Ahmad Raza's family was of Pathan ancestry and belonged to the class of the ashraf or elite. They made their livelihood through the ownership of land and assets in Bareilly and neighbouring villages, as well as land holdings in east U.P.

Like most other North Indian ulama, Ahmad Raza was a Sunni Hanafi scholar.

He was educated entirely at home. Since the years of his youth coincided with the turbulence of the post-1857 period, including the British occupation of Muslim mosques, his family may have decided to keep him at home rather than sending him to a madrasa. The sources are silent on the issue, even though there were well-known madrasas in towns such as Rampur, close to Bareilly.

Ahmad Raza's main teacher was his father Maulana Naqi Ali Khan (d. 1880).

His education was similar to that of most North Indian Sunni ulama at the time:

the subjects studied were chiefly fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), the 'queen' of the Islamic sciences for an alim (scholar), and other associated disciplines – principles of jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh), hadith, Qur'an, grammar and rhetoric, philosophy and logic, mathematics, and so on. Early on he imbibed the intellectual perspective of his father. The latter devoted himself to refuting the ideas of Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (d. 1831), leader of the Tariqa-i Muhammadiyya movement, who was from Rae Bareli, Awadh (not to be confused with Bareilly, Rohilkhand). Naqi Ali considered Sayyid Ahmad a 'Wahhabi'. In his writings, Naqi Ali defended the Prophet Muhammad against what he considered the belittling of his powers by Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi and his associate Muhammad Isma'il Dihlawi (d. 1831), author of the book *Taqwiyat al-Iman* (Strengthening of the Faith). Ahmad Raza carried these concerns forward in his own career, writing numerous fatwas in defence of the Prophet. These fatwas were issued from his *Dar al-Ifta'* which occupied a part of his home.

23

Together with the education he received as an alim, Ahmad Raza was a sufi affiliated with the Qadiri order (though he was also formally affiliated with the other major orders). This too was a family tradition. His paternal grandfather, Raza Ali Khan (d. 1865–6) had distinguished himself as a sufi of great piety, and was said to have passed on his gnostic knowledge to Ahmad Raza. At a young age, Ahmad Raza became discipled to Sayyid Shah Al-i Rasul (d. 1878–9), a sayyid (descendant of the Prophet) from the

town of Mahrehra, near Aligarh, jointly with his father. Although his pir (spiritual guide) died a few years later, Ahmad Raza retained a lifelong connection with his spiritual successor (sajjadanishin, literally, 'one who sits on the prayer mat'), Nuri Miyan (d. 1906), and celebrated Shah Al-i Rasul's death anniversary (urs) annually at Bareilly.

To this day the Ahl-i Sunnat or Barelwi movement reveres the memory and legacy of Ahmad Raza Khan and all that he stood for. His students and followers took his message of love for the Prophet and strong disagreement with all those who in his view belittled the Prophet's powers, and publicized it in their own schools, journals, and other endeavours. After Ahmad Raza's death, his home in Bareilly became a sufi hospice or khanqah called the Khanqah Aliyya Rizwiyya under the direction of Hamid Raza Khan (d. 1943), his eldest son.

In this chapter, I refer to the movement by its chosen name, Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at (or 'Ahl-i Sunnat' for short), rather than Barelwi. The issue of nomenclature and its implications are well known to all those who have worked on the South Asian Sunni Muslim movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Thus, in their literature the Ahl-i Sunnat refer to themselves as 'Sunnis', implying thereby that Deobandis and other Sunni groups are non-Sunni, which turns the tables on the Deobandis and other antagonists, who make similar claims about them. They sometimes refer to the Deobandis as 'Wahhabis', a term first used by Ahmad Raza Khan for certain founders of the Dar al-Ulum in Deoband in the 1860s.

The chapter deals with two madrasas, one at Bareilly, in west U.P., and the other, the Jamia Ashrafiyya, the Ahl-i Sunnat's largest madrasa in India today, in Azamgarh, east U.P. I shall try to draw some points of contrast between them.

In addition, I follow the career of a leading Ahl-i Sunnat scholar, Yasin Akhtar Misbahi, who is a graduate of the Jamia Ashrafiyya. Over the years he has worn many hats – that of community activist, editor, writer and teacher – from different cities in North India, including his centre in Delhi, to promote the aims of the Ahl-i Sunnat perspective.

The Dars-i Nizami and other intellectual issues

The books taught at the Madrasa Manzar-i Islam and the Jamia Ashrafiyya – broadly based on the Dars-i Nizami 'syllabus', which was created by Maulana Nizam al-Din Sihalawi (d. 1748) in the eighteenth century – are common to all the different Sunni groups (the Deobandis, Farangi Mahallis, Nadwis and others), although each madrasa adopts somewhat different texts. (The names of the texts used by the two Ahl-i Sunnat madrasas examined here are noted in the appendices at the end of this essay.) Francis Robinson, who has closely studied the Farangi Mahalli ulama and their intellectual tradition (Robinson 2001), points out that the Dars-i Nizami is less a fixed set of books taught – and therefore less a syllabus as such – than it is a method of teaching:

Too much emphasis . . . should not be given to the actual number of books in each subject. Nothing was laid down that all should be taught; teachers introduced books according to the ability of the student.

Indeed, Mulla Nizam al-Din's method was to teach the two most difficult books in each subject on the grounds that once they had been mastered the rest would present few problems. (2001: 46) The idea was to encourage critical thinking rather than promote rote learning.

By the eighteenth century the high ideals of the Dars-i Nizami method 'ossified' – to cite Robinson again (2001: 37) – into a standard set of prescribed texts favoured by Nizam al-Din. While this development has come under increasing criticism of late, we must be careful not to ascribe too much uniformity to the curriculum across South Asian madrasas, either diachronically over time or synchronically over space. Hartung (n.d.) argues that madrasas' choice of texts was often determined by the wishes expressed by those making endowments (waqfs) and by individual teachers, and that there was considerable variety from one madrasa to another. A similar argument is made by Zaman (2002). An example of the variety of texts used is found in the Jamia Ashrafiyya, where one of the texts – Bahar-i Shariat, an eighteen-volume collection of legal opinions (fatwas) dealing with aqa'id or articles of faith – was written by Amjad Ali A'zami, a deputy (khalifa) of Ahmad Raza Khan. As we will see in the section on the Jamia Ashrafiyya below, he was associated with the madrasa's early history.

This work, being associated with the Ahl-i Sunnat movement and its perspective, is unlikely to be used in madrasas belonging to other movements.

Even when similar texts are used, we might expect interpretive differences to prevail, reflecting the perspective of the particular madrasa. Because the Ahl-i Sunnat pride themselves on their love of the Prophet, their interpretation of specific hadiths (traditions of the Prophet), for instance, is likely to differ from that of the Deobandis, Ahl-i Hadith or the Nadwa, who view the Prophet in 'human' rather than 'superhuman' terms (on the evolution of the Nadwa, see Malik 1997). In addition, the criteria which determine which hadiths different ulama would accept as sound might – and sometimes did – differ from one to another, depending on the issue at hand.

In terms of the well-known distinction between ulama movements that favoured the transmitted sciences (manqulat) and those that favoured the Islamic rational sciences (ma'qulat), the Farangi Mahalli ulama belonged to the latter tradition, as reflected in their choice of texts (Robinson 2001: 46–55). The Ahl-i Sunnat ulama were in the ma'qulat tradition as well. However, Hartung reminds us that here again we must beware of drawing rigid distinctions, for the ideal Islamic scholar, regardless of specific affiliation, was that of an all-rounded person, 'skilled in all the Islamic sciences', as so many biographical dictionaries (tazkiras) of South Asian ulama tell us in describing their subjects' intellectual attainments (Hartung n.d.). Furthermore, a single text might span a number of subject areas, not just one. We need, then, to think of the madrasa 'syllabus' in an open-ended way, both today and in the colonial period.

One of the characteristics of contemporary Ahl-i Sunnat madrasas, compared to those in the past, is that they downplay the study of philosophy, on the grounds that a teacher whose adherence to the 'principles and truth of

Sunni Islam' falls short of expectations and whose knowledge of the faith is not sound would not be able to lead students forward in their studies, and may in fact mislead them. Similarly, the study of grammar and related skills, according to the Ahl-i Sunnat ulama, must be undertaken in conjunction with the religious sciences and not for their own sake (Jandran n.d.: 84–5). This view appears to have had broad agreement among several Deobandi and Ahl-i Sunnat ulama.

Madrasa Manzar-i Islam

The Ahl-i Sunnat movement's first madrasa was the Madrasa Manzar-i Islam at Bareilly, founded by Ahmad Raza in 1904. It celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in 2004. This occasion was marked by a series of publications by the journal Ala Hazrat in Bareilly, whose editor-in-chief (mudir-i ala) is Subhan Raza Khan, known as Subhani Miyan.

Starting in 2001, the journal published four volumes dealing with the history of the madrasa, together with a separate volume dealing exclusively with fatwas issued over the preceding 100 years. In Karachi, Pakistan, where the journal Ma'arif-i Raza is published, the occasion was also marked by special issues of the journal. The following brief account is based on a small selection of articles from Ala Hazrat.

The Madrasa Manzar-i Islam, although formally founded by Ahmad Raza, owed a great deal to the initiative of other ulama as well. Ahmad Raza's disciple and biographer Zafar al-Din Bihari (d. 1942) played a leading role in its creation, having found that the only madrasa in Bareilly was dominated by Deobandis (Bihari 1938). Ahmad Raza appears to have been reluctant to approve the idea at first, but was persuaded by the arguments made by a sayyid:

Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan was busy writing fatwas and other literary pursuits. But his dear friend, Sayyid Amir Ahmad Sahib, persisted and said that if you don't strengthen religious belief and close the door to the absence of religiosity (la-diniyat) by starting a madrasa, I will speak against you on Judgment Day. Maulana Zafar al-Din Bihari seconded his plea. Hearing this from a descendant of the Prophet (al-i rasul), [Ahmad Raza] said: 'I accept your command. The madrasa will be established. I will contribute my own money for its expenses in the first months. After that others will take over the responsibility for running it.' (Latifi 2004: 81) The fact that a sayyid recommended the idea to him was important, as in Ahmad Raza's view sayyids, being descendants of the Prophet, were by definition owed respect by all non-sayyids (Ahmad Raza, of Pathan ancestry, was not a sayyid).

The school building was provided by another well-wisher, who gave his house, and Zafar al-Din Bihari and another of Ahmad Raza's students became its first regular teachers. Ahmad Raza became its founder (bani). He taught there (the hadith collection of Bukhari is specifically mentioned) for a few years, but his fatwa-writing and other intellectual activities made it impossible for him to continue and soon he turned over its administration and overall management to Hamid Raza, his older son, with his younger brother Hasan Raza Khan (d. 1908) playing a supportive role. Once a year, as the school's rector or patron (sarparast), he addressed the teachers,

students and guests at the annual graduation (dastar-bandi) ceremonies. This public address was one of three annual events when he addressed his followers from his house – the other two were the birth anniversary of the Prophet (on the twelfth day of Rabi' al-Awwal) and the urs (celebration of a saint's day of death) of his pir, Shah Al-i Rasul.

The historical context for the founding of the Madrasa Manzar-i Islam is noteworthy. As the sayyid quoted above indicated (by asking Ahmad Raza to 'strengthen religious belief and close the door to the lack of religiosity'), the school was founded in an atmosphere of competition with other Sunni Muslim groups. At this time the Ahl-i Sunnat felt threatened particularly by the Deobandis and the Nadwat al-Ulama. In the 1890s, Ahmad Raza had been actively engaged in refuting the Nadwa, writing about 200 fatwas on this specific issue.

In 1900, one of his anti-Nadwa fatwas was published with the confirmatory opinions (tasdiqat) of sixteen ulama from Mecca and seven from Medina. That same year, he was declared the Renewer (mujaddid) of the fourteenth Hijri century by his followers in the course of an anti-Nadwa conference in Patna (Bihari 1980: 66). In 1906, shortly after the founding of the Madrasa Manzar-i Islam, Ahmad Raza Khan went to the Haramayn where he wrote a fatwa against a number of Indian ulama, going so far as to declare Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi of Deoband, and some others, to be kafirs (Sanyal 1996a, 1999).

In the first decades after its founding, the number of graduating students in a given year was initially quite small (from four to ten graduates in the years 1908–17, according to newspaper reports I consulted, growing to twenty per year in the 1930s and 1940s). However, followers remember the early years as glorious ones, given that Ahmad Raza Khan himself was teaching there at the time:

In a few years . . . students began to seek admission in this center of education (markaz-i 'ilm) and the chain of teaching and learning reached its zenith. In a short time the Jamia became famous and students began to flock to it. And why would it not be so? [At this time] A'la Hazrat [Ahmad Raza] taught there [and] paid the teachers' salaries out of his own pocket and met other expenses too. (Latifi 2004: 147) Bihari relates a story illustrating Ahmad Raza's love for his students and his personal generosity toward them, which also shows that students came to the madrasa from all over the country:

[When Ahmad Raza's first grandson, Ibrahim Raza Khan, was born in 1907–8, Ahmad Raza] gave a great feast for everyone, including all the students of the Madrasa Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at Manzar-i Islam. The Bengali students were asked what they would like to eat, and they said fish and rice. Accordingly, Rohu fish was sent for, and they were fed as they had desired. We Bihari students asked for meat and rice (biryani), a spiced rice desert (zarda), a rice and milk pudding (firni), roast lamb (kabab), etc., and this was prepared with every care for the Bihari students.

The Panjabi and foreign students wanted fatty sheep's meat (dumba) and hot baked bread. This was arranged for them. On this occasion, new suits of clothes had also been stitched for special friends (aziz) and disciples

(murids). (Bihari 1938: 47) Nevertheless, after a few years Ahmad Raza was forced to withdraw from teaching because of the pressure of his scholarly pursuits, and the school suffered from lack of funds and consequently of teachers and facilities. These problems were exacerbated during the First World War and by the fact that Ahmad Raza and Hamid Raza were both averse to fund-raising. After Ahmad Raza's death in 1921, the movement had to deal with the political upheavals of the period, including the Khilafat, Hijrat and Shuddhi movements, among others, culminating in 1947 in the creation of the independent state of Pakistan.

From the perspective of Ahl-i Sunnat followers, the history of the Madrasa Manzar-i Islam is intimately tied to this larger political context, in that some of its graduates or benefactors were later associated with the founding of other Ahl-i Sunnat organizations with an explicitly political purpose, and with support for Pakistan. Indeed, one writer says that when in 1940 the journey (marhala) of the Pakistan movement began, ulama and sufi shaykhs associated with the philosophy (maktaba-i fikr) of the Dar al-Ulum Bareilly spared no effort to guide (rahnuma'i) the community (qaum), and gave all they had (tan, man, dhan) toward the attainment of freedom and Islamic sovereignty. (Qadiri 2001: 34–5) He goes on to say that after the Muslim League ceased to call for Hindu–Muslim unity (a stand Ahmad Raza had consistently opposed on shari grounds), and Jinnah had begun to call for a separate Muslim state, Ahmad Raza's khalifa Na'im al-Din Muradabadi formed the All India Sunni Conference to support his call and the ulama of the Ahl-i Sunnat became the 'hands and arms' (dast o bazu) of the Pakistan movement (Qadri 2001: 34–5). While Ahmad Raza had indeed opposed joint political action of any sort by Hindus and Muslims on shari grounds and the All India Sunni Conference did support the demand for the separate state of Pakistan, in my view the writer does not acknowledge that several important Ahl-i Sunnat leaders (such as the Barkatiyya sayyids of Marehra) were opposed to the Pakistan movement. His account, written from the vantage point of a Pakistani scholar, overemphasizes the role of the Ahl-i Sunnat ulama in the Pakistan movement while de-emphasizing their deeply felt political uncertainty and consequent lack of unity.

Looking back at the pre-Partition history of the Madrasa Manzar-i Islam, it is clear that it enjoyed a long period under the leadership of a single manager, Hamid Raza. For close to forty years, from 1904 or thereabouts until his death in 1943, he both taught at the school and managed it. He was helped by his nephew (hamshirzada), Hakim Ali Ahmad Khan, and Maulana Taqaddus Ali Khan, known as 'Na'ib Sahib', who was closely involved in the day-to-day management.

Unfortunately for the madrasa, the trauma of Partition coincided with Hamid Raza's death a few years earlier (in 1943), followed by Na'ib Sahib's decision to go to Pakistan. The school thus had a complete change of leadership in the mid-1940s, and appears to have gone through an acrimonious internal dispute over leadership (Latifi 2004: 152).

The next manager (muhtamim) was Hamid Raza's eldest son, Ibrahim Raza Khan (d. 1965), known as Jilani Miyan. He made significant

improvements in every department of the school and devoted the rest of his life to its management.

Apparently still facing internal opposition and hostility, he led it through difficult financial times – so much so that sometimes he paid teachers' salaries by selling the jewellery of the women of his household. He is said to have been an excellent teacher who made his hadith lessons come alive, becoming totally engrossed in the spirit (ruhaniyyat) of 'Imam Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj [d. 875] and Sahib-i Shifa' Qazi Iyaz [d. 1149]' and forgetting where he was (Latifi 2004: 153). He was especially fond of Shaykh Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dihlawi (d.

1642), one of the great hadith scholars of Mughal India and a staunch Qadiri (the sufi order especially close to all Ahmad Raza's family members and followers generally), reading his works frequently and 'even deriving benefit from his gravesite'. He travelled extensively outside Bareilly (in Bihar and Nepal, especially) to raise funds and sent his students far and wide to spread the Ahl-i Sunnat's influence. He also began a publications division (Markaz Ahl-i Sunnat) for the same purpose, and in December 1960 launched a monthly magazine called Ala Hazrat, the title by which Ahmad Raza Khan is known to his followers. (As noted above, this journal is thriving today under the editorship of Subhani Miyan.) Other journals had been started earlier, such as al-Raza, Yadgar-i Raza, and Radd-i Mirza'iyat. But they had been short-lived (Yadgar-i Raza ceased publication upon Hamid Raza's death in 1943) and there was a strongly felt need for a publication which would promote the Ahl-i Sunnat message in view of the fact that other Sunni groups were spreading what the Ahl-i Sunnat considered to be false and misleading views of Islam.

Another success during Ibrahim Raza's leadership of the school was the hiring of an Egyptian graduate of al-Azhar to teach Arabic, thereby raising students' Arabic-reading and speaking skills (Latifi 2004: 154–5; Gauhar n.d.:

208–15). In 1948, Arabic and Persian exams recognized by Allahabad University were added, which gave the Manzar-i Islam's certificate (sanad) greater weight than before and made it easier for its graduates to find jobs.

The next administrator, Rehan Raza Khan, known as Rehani Miyan (d. 1985), who was also the trustee (mutawalli) of the Khanqah Rizwiyya in keeping with his grandfather Hamid Raza Khan's will, made great strides despite severe funding problems in the 1960s. (As in Ibrahim Raza's time, he too on occasion had to pawn the family jewels in order to pay the madrasa's teachers.) Family disputes also plagued the school. However, the financial situation improved slowly. Rehani Miyan travelled both in the country and abroad, spreading the Ahl-i Sunnat message by doing missionary work (tabligh) and raising funds for the school. Physical expansion of the school was undertaken, with the construction of a three-storey hostel (Rizvi Afriqi Hostel), and expansion of the adjacent mosque (Raza Masjid) (Latifi 2004: 157).

To improve the educational standards of the school, a constitution (dastur-i amal) was drawn up and adopted. The teaching staff was overhauled by reappointing the experienced Mufti Muhammad Ahmad

Jahangir Sahib as Shaykh al-Hadith, and replacing teachers who had retired or were in ill health with younger ones. Rehani Miyan himself taught hadith classes whenever there was a shortage of teachers. In fact, at one time he had three Sri Lankan students who spoke fluent Arabic but didn't speak any Urdu. He taught them Bukhari in Arabic. When they returned to Sri Lanka, they began a printing press which published Ahl-i Sunnat materials. It is still in operation today (ibid.: 157, 159).

There were two important landmarks in the early 1980s. First, in 1983, the Bihar Madrasa Education Board approved the Manzar-i Islam's Dars-i Nizami syllabus. As a result of this, according to Muhammad Aijaz Anjum Latifi's history of the madrasa, thousands of its graduates are now able to teach in Bihar and improve their financial situation. This in turn caused the madrasa to be sought after by students and led to a shortage of space, as there was no room for expansion. However, by a stroke of luck Rehani Miyan met a man called Muhammad Niyaz Ahmad Sheri who in 1984 (a year before Rehani Miyan's death) donated fifty-one bighas or about thirty-two acres of land, outside Bareilly, in the form of a waqf, for the creation of a new madrasa to be called Jamia Qadiriyya. Given the lack of open space in the heart of the city, where Manzar-i Islam is located, this was a considerable gift (ibid.: 158).

The Madrasa today

At present, under the leadership of Subhan Raza Khan or Subhani Miyan, its fourth manager in its 100-year history, the Madrasa Manzar-i Islam has advanced to the point where, with the support of Ahl-i Sunnat members from abroad (in Britain, South Africa and Holland, specifically) as well as those in other parts of India, it has acquired the status of a dar al-ulum, higher in status than a madrasa, with new buildings, a hostel and so on. It has raised academic standards by requiring students to pass an entrance exam, sit for six-monthly and annual exams, impose minimum age requirements on graduates, and in other ways to conform to U.P. and other state board requirements for madrasas whose graduates' qualifications it recognizes. The number of students has also increased (Latifi 2004: 162–3). Although I was unable to obtain definite numbers in terms of either the student body or the number of teachers, it appears to have between 200 and 300 students. This does not include the students at the Jamia Qadiriyya, mentioned above, or the Markaz al-Dirasat al-Islamiyya Jamia al-Raza, which is managed by Akhtar Raza Khan or Azhari Miyan, Rehani Miyan's younger brother.

The Jamia Ashrafiyya, Mubarakpur

Early years

The Ahl-i Sunnat movement also had a number of other madrasas in other North Indian towns. After Partition, Ahl-i Sunnat ulama set up schools in Pakistan – in Lahore and Karachi as well as smaller towns. Currently their biggest school in India, which has the title of dar al-ulum, is in Mubarakpur, Azamgarh district, in east U.P (see also Arshad Alam, Chapter 3, this volume). It has about 1,500 students, including those resident at the

school and local day scholars, and about 200 faculty and staff members, who teach at the Ashrafiyya and other madrasas in Mubarakpur associated with it. My account of the history and current status of this school is based on an Urdu history of it by an alim who has studied and taught there for several years, and whom I have known personally since the late 1980s. I will talk about him at the end of the chapter.

Mubarakpur, today a city with about 75,000 people, is largely Muslimdominated.

Its major economic activity is cloth weaving and the making of Banarasi saris. As a textile centre it attracts a lot of cloth merchants who come from distant places, and has close ties with the city of Banaras. There are a number of madrasas, catering to all the different religious affiliations: the Deobandi school is called Ihya al-Ulum, the school of the Ahl-i Hadith (whom the Ahl-i Sunnat call 'ghair muqallid', those who do not practice taqlid) is called Dar al-Ta'lim, and the Shia school is Bab al-Ilm, while the Bohras have no central school, as their children study in private homes. The Ahl-i Sunnat and Deobandis also have their own mosques.

The Ahl-i Sunnat school, the Jamia Ashrafiyya, began as a madrasa called Misbah al-Ulum in 1898 in the heart of the city. Its early history was turbulent.

In 1903, there was a severe plague in Mubarakpur which took many lives. Every household lost an average of three people, resulting in thousands of orphans.

Many of these children came to the Madrasa Misbah al-Ulum and its orphanage for shelter and began to study at the madrasa.

Soon the madrasa was beset with difficulties of another sort, when one of its teachers became a Deobandi and began to sow dissent within the ranks of the students and teachers alike. Anger grew over differences of opinion on a theological question:

the problem of whether God can lie (imkan-i kizb) assumed a severe form. It was the belief of the Sunni students that the idea that God could tell a lie is absurd. Whereas under the influence of Maulvi Mahmud [the Deobandi alim], some students were saying that it was possible. This matter grew and grew until the Madrasa Misbah al-Ulum became a victim of vicious conspiracies and in 1329 A.H. [approx.

1911] it even closed down. The Deobandis began their own madrasa called Ihya al-Ulum. (Misbahi 2000: 17) After many changes of venue, the Deobandis finally established their madrasa in a different section of the city, where they set up a large building and where they operate today.

Meanwhile, the Madrasa Misbah al-Ulum struggled for several years, moving from one location to another and changing its name several times. Conflict with the Deobandis was revived when, in about 1917, Maulana Shukrallah Mubarakpuri, a graduate of the Dar al-Ulum at Deoband, returned to Mubarakpur and separated his followers from all the other Muslims who had so far offered their Friday prayers and celebrated the two 'ids together at the same Jamia Masjid. The imam of this mosque was a teacher at the Madrasa Misbah al-Ulum, an alim 'in the old mode', who loved the Qasida Burda, the Mathnawi of Rumi, and mahfil-i milad – in

other words, one who would identify as a 'Barelwi' rather than a 'Deobandi' alim. According to Yasin Akhtar Misbahi, Maulana Shukrallah also got the wealthy people of Mubarakpur on his side, thereby dividing the people into two hostile camps and leaving the Ahl-i Sunnat in a weakened position.

To counter this dire situation, in 1934 two Ahl-i Sunnat ulama who were themselves students and/or disciples of Ahmad Raza Khan (Maulanas Amjad Ali A'zami Rizwi and Sayyid Muhammad Ashrafi Kachchochi) invited a person they trusted to go to the Madrasa Misbah al-Ulum and put it on a sound footing. He was a former student of the Madrasa Manzar-i Islam at Bareilly and a disciple of Amjad Ali A'zami, and his name was Hafiz Abd al-Aziz Muradabadi.

In Muradabad, his hometown, he received a letter from Amjad Ali A'zami calling him to Bareilly for a meeting. Accordingly, he went as asked:

[Amjad Ali] told him, 'I am sending you to Mubarakpur to perform a religious service (khidmat-i din ke liye).' He protested: 'Sir, I don't want a job (mulazamat).' [Amjad Ali] said: 'Who said anything about a job? I'm talking about service. I'm sending you to Mubarakpur. Don't think of what you will get. All you have to do there is religious service.' With these instructions, he arrived in Mubarakpur on the 7th or 8th of February 1934, for the purpose of religious service. (Misbahi 2000: 20) Because of his continuous service over the next forty years at the madrasa, he is remembered as 'Hafiz-i Millat', protector of the community, muhaddith (a master of hadith), and founder of the Jamia Ashrafiyya. He died in 1976.

Consolidation and growth: 1934–72

When Abd al-Aziz came to Mubarakpur, he brought two teachers with him. There were five teachers already in place, who taught the Qur'an (that is, the students studied it, as opposed to rote memorization), mathematics, and other subjects at the elementary level. But soon students began to arrive from outside Mubarakpur and the numbers began to grow. This led to renewed conflict with the Deobandis, and for four months there was continuous debate and counterdebate between them.

After this had died down, Abd al-Aziz began to raise funds for the construction of a new building. Despite their general poverty, the people of Mubarakpur ('Sunni' Muslims, that is) gave generously, women even giving their jewellery.

In two months, about Rs 10,000 was collected, which enabled construction to begin on a two-storey building. The construction took ten years. This was the site for the school, now called the Dar al-Ulum Ahl-i Sunnat or Misbah al-Ulum, for close to forty years, until the early 1970s. Today there is a five-storey building in its place (the old building was razed to the ground in the early 1970s). It is occupied on the lower two floors by shops, and on the upper floors by the office of the Ashrafiyya monthly magazine, classrooms for a nursery school, a large hall for congregational prayers, and a classroom for Qur'an study (hifz al- Qur'an). The building itself is called Bagh-i Firdaus, 'Heavenly Garden', a name chosen to reflect the year of its founding (1353 A.H. or 1935), based on the abjad system which assigns each letter of the alphabet a numerical value.

Among other changes introduced by Maulana Abd al-Aziz was the studentrun Anjuman Ahl-i Sunnat, which, through its elected student committee, organized an annual procession in Mubarakpur during milad al-nabi, the Prophet's birthday. The students also began a Reading Room (dar al-mutala'a), which contained books and periodicals for circulation. Several construction and other projects followed: among them, reconstruction of the mosque in 1951; foundation of the Sunni Dar al-Isha'at or publications department in 1959, which over the next several years published volumes three to eight of Ahmad Raza Khan's fatwas (twelve volumes were projected altogether, containing approximately 1,000 fatwas); and the start of the Ashrafiyya Girls' School in 1967.

The level of local participation by the people of Mubarakpur appears to have been high. Until 1944, all the money for construction came from the townspeople.

Not only did people donate generously at periodic intervals toward the construction of the madrasa and a new mosque, but some of them also took responsibility for feeding students from outside Mubarakpur who came as boarders. The students were fed twice a day at their homes and treated like members of the family. This unique arrangement continued even after the number of outside students had grown sufficiently large to require the setting up of a central kitchen. Some students enjoyed this relationship with a given family for ten years. This 'jagir' system, as it was called (the person doing the feeding was called a mujgir), was unique to Mubarakpur, though it is no longer practised (Misbahi 2000: 27-8).

Maulana Abd al-Aziz, founder of the Dar al-Ulum Ashrafiyya

Steady growth during the approximately forty years of stewardship by Maulana Abd al-Aziz led to the realization that the premises were becoming too small, and in May 1972 he organized an educational conference (the first in a series of such conferences) to discuss moving the Ashrafiyya to a larger campus.

Although he died four years later, before his vision could be realized in concrete terms, he is understandably credited with being the founder of the Jamia Ashrafiyya. The foundation stone for the Jamia Ashrafiyya was laid in 1972

amid great fanfare at a site outside the city of Azamgarh. Among the guests of honour at the ceremony were Maulana Mustafa Raza Khan (d. 1981), younger son of Ahmad Raza Khan of Bareilly, who was known to followers as 'Mufti-i Azam-i Hind', and, second in importance, a member of the family of Barkatiyya sayyids from Marehra to which Ahmad Raza Khan was affiliated by virtue of sufi discipleship.

The importance of the occasion was highlighted by Maulana Mustafa Raza Khan, when he said in his speech that he hoped the Dar al-Ulum Ashrafiyya would become the leading 'Sunni' university in India. Although no mention was made of the Dar al-Ulum at Deoband, undoubtedly the challenge posed by this institution was foremost in the minds of the

Ashrafiyya's founders. A two-storey building for classrooms was soon built, followed by a magnificent dome.

Construction on the forty-acre plot, which now houses a number of other buildings, started in 1992. The old site in the city centre became ancillary to this main campus.

The sense of corporate unity symbolized by the addition of the name (nisba) 'Misbahi' by all those who have been associated with the Ashrafiyya is remarkable.

As Maulana Yasin Akhtar Misbahi writes in his history of the school:

One feels proud to be known as Misbahi. 'Misbahi' refers to an alim who has had the good fortune of being part of the Ashrafiyya, receiving his formal education and training there. May Allah shower His blessings and grace on the grave of Hafiz-i Millat. It is the result of his untiring efforts and brilliant guidance and training that . . . the 'ulama' of this madrasa are . . . leading the community to the straight path. (Misbahi 2000, English translation, modified, 9) In the past, nisbas have referred to a person's place of birth, sufi affiliation or specific line of discipleship to a particular line of sufi shaykhs (thus, in Ahmad Raza's case, he was called 'Barelwi, Qadiri, Barkati' after his name proper). In contrast, the term Misbahi refers to a formal institution rather than a town, sufi order or family of sufi shaykhs. It transcends loyalty to place or person and replaces it with loyalty to an institution. The history on which the facts reported here rely includes a list of ulama who have graduated from the Ashrafiyya and have contributed to the spread of its ideas in other parts of the subcontinent and abroad, including Europe, North America and South Africa.

Jamia Ashrafiyya, 1990s to the present

The Jamia is run by a managing committee (majlis intizami) which has sixteen office bearers and several members drawn from the town of Mubarakpur. The present president or head (sadr) of the Jamia Ashrafiyya is Maulana Abd al- Hafeez Muradabadi. Below him are a vice president (na'ib-i sadr) and three managers (one nazim-i a'la and two na'ib-i nazims). In addition, there is an Advisory Committee of forty-nine members, the leader of which is Mufti Akhtar Raza Khan Azhari (Azhari Miyan), grandson of Hamid Raza Khan. Maulana Yasin Akhtar Misbahi is also currently on the Advisory Committee.

In addition to its primary and secondary schools, the Ashrafiyya has a Department of Memorization and Recitation of the Qur'an (hifz wa tajwid), in which students learn Qur'an recitation according to recognized principles of tajwid.

Students receive three certificates at the end of this course of study: one of these is for memorizing the Qur'an, and the two others are for tajwid. This course takes six years.

After this preparatory stage, students start an eight-year course, the syllabus of which is modelled on the Dars-i Nizami, though it incorporates modifications (see Appendix, Table 2.2). After six years of this course – during which they study approximately forty different subjects, including four languages (Persian grammar and literature, Urdu literature, Arabic grammar and literature, and English grammar and literature), the natural

sciences, mathematics, geography, history, logic and philosophy, polemics (radda), and the religious sciences (fiqh, usul-i fiqh, sirat, hadith, tafsir or exegesis of the Qur'an, and the like), and write a research paper – students receive an Alimiyya Certificate (alimiyyat ki sanad), which makes them eligible for entry into either Lucknow University or Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi, as first year B.A. students. Other possibilities (open to the best-performing students, usually) are Hamdard University in Delhi or Aligarh Muslim University. If they choose to stay on, however, after another two years they receive a Fazil Certificate. In these two years, they study some new subjects such as the science of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an and its secret meaning (ilm-i asrar), the study of fatwa collections, in addition to secular subjects such as political science and cultural history, a comparison of Islamic and man-made laws, and a research paper on a selected topic.

There are six-monthly and annual exams in every class. The final exam consists of a viva followed by a written exam. Students pass by getting marks in either the first, second, or third division. A student who fails (i.e. gets below 33

per cent) has to retake the class the following year. Academic standards are high, and the exams are demanding of students: typically a student has to study intensely for a month and a half before an exam. Because of its high standards the madrasa enjoys a good reputation and is in great demand: every year about 1,400 students apply for admission. Of these, between 300 and 400 are accepted, depending on the space available (Misbahi, personal communication, July 2005). Students have gone on to become teachers in other madrasas around the country, as well as muftis, and are said to be in great demand. Its graduates have also migrated to other countries, where they work as teachers and activists-cumcommunity workers. Lower performers tend to stay close to their hometowns, where they become imams of mosques or teachers in local madrasas.

The Ashrafiyya has a number of libraries. The oldest one, the Dar al-Mutala'a, run by students, has already been mentioned. The Central Library, which caters to students' needs and has books in all the subjects they need to study, lends out textbooks to students at the beginning of the school year (in the month of Shawwal), and takes them back after the final exams, before the students go home for the holidays (from Sha'ban through the whole of Ramadan and the first half of Shawwal). The practice of lending textbooks to students during the school year helps those for whom buying their own textbooks is an economic hardship.

There is also a library that specializes in Arabic books on prose and poetry (Maktabat al-Lugha al-Arabiyya), and another dealing with Islamic law, attached to the Dar al-Ifta'. Finally, there is a Computer Centre, equipped with twenty computers and staffed by three full-time teachers to teach students programming and other computer skills.

The Sunni Dar al-Isha'at or publications department was one of the first departments to be set up. Its major publication is the Ashrafiyya monthly magazine, which has an editorial staff and office in the old campus, the one started by Maulana Abd al-Aziz in the 1940s. The Dar al-Isha'at's major project was the publication of several volumes of Ahmad Raza Khan's

fatwas, which had been only partially published in the fifty years since his death in 1921. Today it has a number of publications to its credit, including some in English.

The new campus of the Jamia Ashrafiyya has many facilities and buildings. A total of 175 students are divided into sections of about 30 per section. During the school day, a student has between six or seven class periods, each of which lasts about forty-five minutes. Students sit on the floor, about thirty to a class in the more junior classes and more as they progress to the higher grades. In the evening, they play football and volleyball between the late afternoon (asr) and evening (maghrib) prayers. Other non-academic activities include a weekly gathering (bazm) for the recitation of poetry in praise of the Prophet (na'tkhwani) and debates (taqir wa tahrir). Either every fifteen days or every month, there is also a wall magazine. Although these activities are voluntary, students who shine in them receive much praise and encouragement (for more on these activities, see Alam, Chapter 3, this volume).

The hostel has two buildings, each with about 250 rooms. Each room houses six students. Although fees are charged for some students (not all, as the hifz students do not pay fees, and they also receive food from the school administration at reduced rates), the school meets most of its financial needs from donations (chanda) from local people and others. These are usually given during the two big festivals, Id al-azha and Id al-fitr, and during Ramadan in the form of zakat and sadaqa (gift, donation). The U.P. state government also gives limited financial assistance, paying the monthly salaries of a third of the total staff (fifty out of 150 teachers and staff). The school also has some assets in the form of rent from the shops it owns.

The Dar al-Ifta' handles legal questions from followers far and wide. It is equipped with computers, and has a specialized library. For twenty-four years (1976–2000), until his death in 2000, the head of this department was Mufti Sharif al-Haqq Amjadi. However, by the early 1990s the ulama began to feel a strong need to collaborate to address serious issues raised by new scientific discoveries and inventions which they felt were beyond the capacity of a single alim to resolve, and to try to come up with answers that would guide their people in the light of the Qur'an, hadith and principles of fiqh. For this, they created a Council of Islamic Jurisprudence (majlis-i sharia), which was responsible for organizing annual seminars where papers would be read and discussed, and an attempt made to come to a consensus on specific issues. Between 1993

and 2000, nine seminars (at a cost of over Rs 1 lakh each, paid for entirely by the Jamia without recourse to loans) have been held. The topics addressed have included a number of economic and medical issues, such as the legal status of medicines containing alcohol and artificial colour additives, life and property insurance, partnership in joint investment companies and the purchase of shares, the problem of illegal fees ('pagri'), zakat on debts and the profits made on loans, organ transplants, blood transfusion, the purchase and sale of blood, and blood banks, among other things. Sometimes several seminars are required, including review of an issue by the paper-writers and Council of Ulama. The Council tries hard to

come to a conclusion on an issue so that guidance can be given to the community. This process is also a valuable means of training younger ulama in debating and eliciting answers to difficult issues in light of Hanafi law.

Other institutions include the Hafiz-i Millat Research Institute (Idara-i tahqiqat hafiz-i millat), which was founded in 1989, and which undertakes research and publication on the lives and achievements of Maulana Abd al-Aziz, the Jamia Ashrafiyya itself, and other ulama associated with it. So far it has held a seminar on the former head of the Dar al-Ifta' Mufti Sharif al-Haqq Amjadi and another on Maulana Abd al-Aziz ('Hafiz-i millat') and has published its findings in books on these important figures.

Maulana Yasin Akhtar Misbahi

The preceding account of the Jamia Ashrafiyya is based on an Urdu history of the school by one of its former students and later a teacher of Arabic literature there for eight years. I met and worked with him in New Delhi when doing fieldwork for my dissertation in the 1980s. I called him 'Misbahi Sahib', not knowing then that 'Misbahi' represented his association with the Jamia Ashrafiyya.

Maulana Yasin Akhtar Misbahi's resumé illustrates the possibilities opened up to graduates of the Jamia Ashrafiyya in recent years. He wears many hats: he is a teacher, a journalist, a writer, an organizer, and a religious leader. Born in 1953 in the district of Azamgarh, he went on to complete the full course of studies at the Ashrafiyya, obtaining his Fazil degree in 1970. He began to study for a B.A. at Lucknow University, but decided to opt out and study for the Arabic and Persian Board exams in Allahabad, U.P. He taught at a madrasa in Allahabad while studying for his board exams. In 1974, after passing the exams, he began to teach Arabic literature at Jamia Ashrafiyya. Then followed two years in Saudi Arabia (1982–4) for intensive Arabic language study and free time to write, and two years as a teacher of Islamic Studies (Islamiyyat) at Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi (1988–90).

Since the 1990s he has been active in many different organizations to further the Ahl-i Sunnat point of view, travelling both in India and abroad (in Britain, South Africa and Pakistan), writing books and editing journals, addressing large audiences, and establishing foundations. In 1985 he became one of the vice presidents of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board at a time when the Shah Bano controversy in India raised the issue about creating a single personal law for all religious communities. In 1991 he founded, and became the director of, a research and writing centre called the Dar al-Qalam in Delhi. This centre occupies much of his time today, as well as the monthly journal *Kanz al-Iman*, of which he is the chief editor. It is published in Urdu and Hindi. He is also the chairman of the All India Majlis-i Mushawwarat, which debates issues of current concern.

Since the 1990s, Yasin Akhtar Misbahi has expanded the scope of his activities, becoming known at the regional and national levels for his work on specific political causes. In 2000, he was among a group of Muslim leaders from different organizations who presented a memorandum voicing their concerns about attacks against Muslims in Maharashtra State to Sonia Gandhi, Congress Party president, and asking for the dismissal of the chief minister, Narayan Rane, then of the Shiv Sena (he has since switched to the

Congress Party). In 2002, Misbahi joined with Muslim leaders once again in asking for a thorough probe of anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat and the dismissal of Gujarat's Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) chief minister Narendra Modi. Failure to do so, they said, would compel them to 'take the issue to the International Court of Justice, Amnesty International and [the] Human Rights Commission of the United Nations' (Milli Gazette 2002: 3). In 2004, he and other Muslim leaders discussed their alarm at the low rate of Muslim representation in government departments nationwide (only 1.5 per cent, according to a government survey), and in March, he urged secular Indian parties to come together to defeat the BJP in the national elections held later that year.

In short, Yasin Akhtar Misbahi is a modern intellectual and activist of the Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at. His activities cross boundaries, going beyond the religious in a narrow sense to encompass social and political issues of concern to his community.

Conclusion

The Jamia Ashrafiyya is actively trying to expand and modernize its syllabus, within the parameters of the Dars-i Nizami, so as to gain state recognition of its certification and deal with the challenges arising from modernization and its associated economic pressures. The Madrasa Manzar-i Islam has had more continuity of leadership than the Jamia Ashrafiyya over the past 100 years, though today it is in the second tier of madrasas, compared to the Jamia Ashrafiyya, which has become the leading Ahl-i Sunnat teaching institution in South Asia in the last twenty years. The Ashrafiyya has a strong emphasis on teaching Arabic, so as to give students direct access to Arabic-language books, including of course the Qur'an. It also offers English instruction to its students over several years. Moreover, it is clearly trying to provide leadership to its followers on practical issues through the judgments made on an ongoing basis by the Council of Islamic Jurisprudence.

The Madrasa Manzar-i Islam is closely related to Bareilly being the home of Ahmad Raza Khan, and since his death the site of his khanqah with its associated sufi activities. It has enormous symbolic importance to the Ahl-i Sunnat movement on account of this association. There has clearly been a good deal of family dissension over the position of manager (muhtamim), which has so far gone in a continuous line of descent from Hamid Raza Khan to his eldest son, and so on. The Ashrafiyya, on the other hand, has no historical attachment to its specific location. This may in fact have been a source of strength, as it was created from scratch by a small number of people who provided strong leadership. Furthermore, it is a centre of learning only, not competing for attention with sufi-related institutions.

Both have struggled financially. They have been driven to overcome these problems by the perception that should they fail, their 'Sunni' perspective will be lost, given the competition posed by the Deobandis, Ahl-i Hadith, and others. Since the 1980s, they have been at a relative disadvantage compared to their rivals – especially the Nadwat al-Ulama and the Ahl-i Hadith, but also to some extent Deobandis – who have benefited

from Saudi Arabian munificence and generosity (on the Nadwa's relationship with the Arab world in general and the Saudi kingdom in particular, see Hartung 2006a; on the Ahl-i Hadith and Deoband, see Zaman 2002: 175–6). The Ahl-i Sunnat have been excluded from close relations with the Saudis on account of their strong denunciation of all forms of 'Wahhabism', and particularly their association with sufi ritual and belief. They have had to rely on their own resources, mainly drawn from the local population, but also including followers in other parts of the country and, occasionally, abroad (they have a strong presence in the United Kingdom in particular, on which see Lewis 1994). In overall terms, therefore, the Ahl-i Sunnat have a smaller presence in terms of South Asian madrasas than the other groups, though they firmly believe that the local Muslim population is of their persuasion rather than that of their rivals.

Appendix

Table 2.1 Books taught at the Madrasa Manzar-i Islam

First year

Grammar-etymology: Mizan (Muhammad ibn Mustafa, taught in Bursa and Istanbul, d. 1505–6), Munsha'ib, Panj-ganj (Mahmud Kashmiri) Syntax: Nahw mir (Mir Sayyid Sharif Jurjani, d. 1413) Persian: Gulistan (Sa'di, d. 1292), Bustan (Sa'di), Faiz al-adab, first book Logic: Kubra (Mir Sayyid Sharif Jurjani, d. 1413)

Second year

Persian Grammar: Tashil al-masadir, Amadnama (Fazl-i Imam Khairabadi) Persian: Farsi ki pahli o dusri kitab (Mufti Muhammad Ashraf al-Qadri) Elementary Urdu: Ta'mir-i adab, part 5 Arabic: Manhaj al-arabiyya Jurisprudence (fiqh): Qanun-i shariat, first book

Third year

Syntax: Kafiyya (Ibn Hajib, d. 1248) Jurisprudence: Quduri (Ahmad ibn Muhammad Quduri of Baghdad, d. 1036–7. Glosses by many Ottoman scholars) Principles of Jurisprudence: Usul al-shashi Arabic Grammar: Fusul kubra Arabic Literature: Qalauji Logic: Mirqat

Fourth year

Grammar (commentary): Sharh jami (Commentary on Kafiyya by Mulla Jami of Herat, d. 1492) Jurisprudence (commentary): Sharh-i wuqayah (Commentary by Ubayd Allah ibn Masud, d. 1346–7) Logic (commentary): Sharh-i tahzib (Commentary by Najm al-Din Abd Allah Qazdi, d. 1606) Principles of Jurisprudence: Nur al-anwar (Commentary by Mulla Jiwan of Amethi, d. 1718, on Abd Allah Nasafi's [d. 1310] Kitab al-manar) Laws of Inheritance (ilm-i fara'iz): Siraji Philosophy: Hidayat al-hikmat

Fifth year

Exegesis of the Qur'an (tafsir): Jalalain, first book (A commentary in two parts, one by Jalal al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Shafi'i [d.1459] and the second by Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti [d. 1505]) Hadith: Muwatta-i Imam Malik Rhetoric: Majanil al-adab Arabic Poetry (anthology): Azhar al-arab wa

insha' Principles of Jurisprudence: Talkhis al-muqtam Logic: Qutbi (Qutb al-Din Razi, d. 1364–5) Philosophy: Hidayat al-saidiya (Fazl-i Haqq Khairabadi)

Sixth year

Hadith: Mishkat, first book (Shah Wali al-Din Abu Abd Allah al-Khatib) Exegesis of the Qur'an (tafsir): Jalalain, last book Scholastics (ilm al-kalam): Sharh aqa'id Principles of Jurisprudence: Mulla Hasan (Mulla Hasan Farangi Mahalli, eighteenth century, commentary on Musallam al-thubut) Arabic Literature and Composition: Diwan-i mutanabbi Arabic Literature: Manshurat Jurisprudence: Hidayat, first book (Burhan al-Din Marghinani, d. 1196)

Seventh year

Hadith: Mishkat, last book Principles of Jurisprudence: Musallam al-thubut (Muhibb Allah Bihari, d. 1707–8); Tauzih wa talwih Scholastics: al-Mu'taqad Rhetoric: Mukhtasar al-ma'ni Philosophy and Logic (commentary): Mulla Jalal (Mir Muhammad Zahid al-Harawi's gloss on Jalal al-Din Dawwani's commentary on Sa'd al-Din Taftazani's Tahzib al-mantiq wa-l kalam) Philosophy (hikmat): Hamd Allah (Commentary by Hamd Allah Sandilawi, eighteenth century, on Muhibb Allah Bihari's Sullam al-Ulum) (Subject unidentified): Mazi

Eighth year

Hadith: Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi Jurisprudence: Hidayat, last book (Burhan al-Din Marghinani) Qur'an (commentary): Baidawi

Sources: Salim Allah Jandaran, 'Manzar al-Islam ka tarikhi tanazur men aghaz wa irtiqa', in Mahnama Ma'rif-e Raza, Sad Sala Jashn Dar al-Ulum Manzar-i Islam Number, p. 84. (Additional information about subjects and authors obtained from Francis Robinson, The Ulama of Farangi Mahall (2001), G.M.D. Sufi, Al-Minhaj (1941) and Jamal Malik, Islamische Gelehrtenkultur in Nordindien. Entwicklungsgeschichte und Tendenzen am Beispiel von Lucknow (1997), pp. 71–6, and App. 1–3.) My sincere thanks to Jan-Peter Hartung, Arshad Alam, and Tahsin Khan for their help with some of the titles.

Appendix

Table 2.1 Books taught at the Madrasa Manzar-i Islam

First year	Grammar-etymology: <i>Mizan</i> (Muhammad ibn Mustafa, taught in Bursa and Istanbul, d. 1505–6), <i>Munsha'ib</i> , <i>Panj-ganj</i> (Mahmud Kashmiri) Syntax: <i>Nahw mir</i> (Mir Sayyid Sharif Jurjani, d. 1413) Persian: <i>Gulistan</i> (Sa'di, d. 1292), <i>Bustan</i> (Sa'di), <i>Faiz al-adab</i> , first book Logic: <i>Kubra</i> (Mir Sayyid Sharif Jurjani, d. 1413)
Second year	Persian Grammar: <i>Tashil al-masadir</i> , <i>Amadnama</i> (Fazl-i Imam Khairabadi) Persian: <i>Farsi ki pahli o dusri kitab</i> (Mufti Muhammad Ashraf al-Qadri) Elementary Urdu: <i>Ta'mir-i adab</i> , part 5 Arabic: <i>Manhaj al-arabiyya</i> Jurisprudence (<i>fiqh</i>): <i>Qanun-i shariat</i> , first book
Third year	Syntax: <i>Kafiyya</i> (Ibn Hajib, d. 1248) Jurisprudence: <i>Quduri</i> (Ahmad ibn Muhammad Quduri of Baghdad, d. 1036–7. Glosses by many Ottoman scholars)

	Principles of Jurisprudence: <i>Usul al-shashi</i> Arabic Grammar: <i>Fusul kubra</i> Arabic Literature: <i>Qalauji</i> Logic: <i>Mirqat</i>
Fourth year	Grammar (commentary): <i>Sharh jami</i> (Commentary on <i>Kafiyya</i> by Mulla Jami of Herat, d. 1492) Jurisprudence (commentary): <i>Sharh-i wuqayah</i> (Commentary by Ubayd Allah ibn Masud, d. 1346–7) Logic (commentary): <i>Sharh-i tahzib</i> (Commentary by Najm al-Din Abd Allah Qazdi, d. 1606) Principles of Jurisprudence: <i>Nur al-anwar</i> (Commentary by Mulla Jiwan of Amethi, d. 1718, on Abd Allah Nasafi's [d. 1310] <i>Kitab al-manar</i>) Laws of Inheritance (<i>ilm-i fara'iz</i>): <i>Siraji</i> Philosophy: <i>Hidayat al-hikmat</i>
Fifth year	Exegesis of the Qur'an (<i>tafsir</i>): <i>Jalalain</i> , first book (A commentary in two parts, one by Jalal al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Shafi'i [d. 1459] and the second by Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti [d. 1505]) Hadith: <i>Muwatta-i Imam Malik</i> Rhetoric: <i>Majanil al-adab</i> Arabic Poetry (anthology): <i>Azhar al-arab wa insha'</i> Principles of Jurisprudence: <i>Talkhis al-muqtam</i> Logic: <i>Qutbi</i> (Qutb al-Din Razi, d. 1364–5) Philosophy: <i>Hidayat al-saidiya</i> (Fazl-i Haqq Khairabadi)
Sixth year	Hadith: <i>Mishkat</i> , first book (Shah Wali al-Din Abu Abd Allah al-Khatib) Exegesis of the Qur'an (<i>tafsir</i>): <i>Jalalain</i> , last book Scholastics (<i>ilm al-kalam</i>): <i>Sharh aqa'id</i> Principles of Jurisprudence: <i>Mulla Hasan</i> (Mulla Hasan Farangi Mahalli, eighteenth century, commentary on <i>Musallam al-thubut</i>) Arabic Literature and Composition: <i>Diwan-i mutanabbi</i> Arabic Literature: <i>Manshurat</i>
Seventh year	Jurisprudence: <i>Hidaya</i> , first book (Burhan al-Din Marghinani, d. 1196) Hadith: <i>Mishkat</i> , last book Principles of Jurisprudence: <i>Musallam al-thubut</i> (Muhibb Allah Bihari, d. 1707–8); <i>Tauzih wa talwih</i> Scholastics: <i>al-Mu'taqad</i> Rhetoric: <i>Mukhtasar al-ma'ni</i> Philosophy and Logic (commentary): <i>Mulla Jalal</i> (Mir Muhammad Zahid al-Harawi's gloss on Jalal al-Din Dawwani's commentary on Sa'd al-Din Taftazani's <i>Tahzib al-mantiq wa-l kalam</i>) Philosophy (<i>hikmat</i>): <i>Hamd Allah</i> (Commentary by Hamd Allah Sandilawi, eighteenth century, on Muhibb Allah Bihari's <i>Sullam al-Ulum</i>) (Subject unidentified): <i>Mazi</i>
Eighth year	Hadith: <i>Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi</i> Jurisprudence: <i>Hidaya</i> , last book (Burhan al-Din Marghinani) Qur'an (commentary): <i>Baidawi</i>

Sources: Salim Allah Jandaran, 'Manzar al-Islam ka tarikhī tanazur men aghaz wa irtiqa', in *Mahnama Ma'rif-e Raza, Sad Sala Jashn Dar al-Ulum Manzar-i Islam Number*, p. 84. (Additional information about subjects and authors obtained from Francis Robinson, *The Ulama of Farangi Mahall* (2001), G.M.D. Sufi, *Al-Minhaj* (1941) and Jamal Malik, *Islamische Gelehrtenkultur in Nordindien. Entwicklungsgeschichte und Tendenzen am Beispiel von Lucknow* (1997), pp. 71–6, and App. 1–3.) My sincere thanks to Jan-Peter Hartung, Arshad Alam, and Tahsin Khan for their help with some of the titles.

Table 2.2 Books taught at the Jamia Ashrafiyya, Mubarakpur

Table 2.2 Books taught at the Jamia Ashrafiyya, Mubarakpur	
Preparatory year (<i>idadiya</i>); first six months	Persian Grammar: <i>Tashil al-masadir</i> Persian: <i>Farsi ki pahli kitab</i> (Mufti Muhammad Ashraf al-Qadri) Persian Composition: <i>Farsi insha'</i> Life of the Prophet: <i>Tawarikh-i habib allah</i> (Mufti Inayat Ahmad Kakorwi, d. 1863) Arithmetic: <i>Hisab</i> , level 3
Preparatory year; second six months	Persian: <i>Gulzar o Bustan, Farsi ki dusri kitab</i> Life of the Prophet: <i>Sirat-i rasul-i akram</i> Arabic: <i>Manhaj al-arabiyya</i> Arithmetic: <i>Hisab</i> , level 3
First year; first six months	Persian: <i>Gulistan, Bustan</i> Grammar-Etymology: <i>Mizan wa munsha'ib</i> Syntax: <i>Nahw mir</i> Jurisprudence: <i>Qanun-i shariat</i> , first book Arabic: <i>Manhaj al-arabiyya</i> , second book
First year; second six months	Persian: <i>Faiz al-adab</i> , first book, <i>Sukhn-e Nau</i> Grammar-Etymology: <i>Panj-ganj</i> (Arabic grammar in Persian) Arabic Grammar: <i>al-Nahw al-wazeh</i> , first book Articles of Faith (<i>aqa'id</i>): <i>Bahar-i shariat</i> (Amjad Ali A'zami, 18-volume collection of <i>fatwas</i>) Arabic: <i>Manhaj al-arabiyya</i> Qur'an Recitation: <i>al-Qirat al-rashid</i>
Second year; first six months	Persian: <i>Sher-i bustan, Faiz al-adab</i> , second book Arabic Etymology: <i>'Ilm al-sighah</i> Arabic Grammar: <i>Hidayat al-nahw kamil</i> Logic: <i>Kubra</i> (in Persian) English: text not specified
Second year; second six months	Grammar and Syntax: <i>Sharh-i mi'at amil</i> (Husayn ibn Tawqani, d. 1520) Arabic Poetry (anthology): <i>Azhar al-arab wa insha'</i> Jurisprudence: <i>Nur al-idah</i> Syntax: <i>Kafiyya</i> (Ibn Hajib of Cairo, d. 1248) Logic: <i>Sharh tahzib</i> (Commentary by Najm al-Din Abd Allah Yazdi, d. 1606, on <i>Tahzib</i>) English: text not specified
Third year; first six months	Principles of Jurisprudence: <i>Usul al-shashi</i> Arabic Poetry (anthology): <i>Azhar al-arab wa insha'</i> Jurisprudence: <i>Nur al-izah</i> Syntax: <i>Kafiyya</i> Logic: <i>Sharh tahzib</i> English: text not specified
Third year; second six months	Hadith: <i>Muwatta-i Imam Malik</i> Prosody: <i>Mu'in al-urud wa insha'</i> Jurisprudence: <i>Quduri</i> Rhetoric: <i>Durus al-balaghat</i> (Commentaries by Qutb al-Din Shirazi [d. 1311], Sa'd al-Din Taftazani [d. 1389], and Mir Sayyid Sharif Jurjani [d. 1413] on <i>Balaghat miftah al-ulum</i> , by al-Sakkaki, d. 1228)

Fourth year; first six months	<p>Logic: <i>Qutbi tasdiqat</i> English: text not specified Philosophy: <i>Hidayat al-hikmat</i> Arabic Literature: <i>Mansurat wa insha'</i> Jurisprudence: <i>Sharh-i wuqaya awwal</i> (Commentary on religion and the law of inheritance, first book) Syntax: <i>Sharh jami</i> Logic: <i>Qutbi tasawwur</i>at (gloss by Qutb al-Din Razi, d. 1364–65?) English: text not specified</p>
Fourth year; second six months	<p>Philosophy: <i>Hidayat al-sa'idiya</i> Translation of Qur'an: <i>Dars al-qur'an wa insha'</i> Jurisprudence: <i>Sharh-i wuqaya sani</i> (Commentary on religion and the law of inheritance, second book) Syntax: <i>Sharh jami</i> Logic: <i>Mir qutbi</i> English: text not specified</p>
Fifth year; first six months	<p>Scholastics (<i>ilm al-kalam</i>) (commentary): <i>Sharh aqa'id al-nasafi</i> (Taftazani) Arabic literature: <i>Diwan-i mutanabbi</i> Principles of Jurisprudence: <i>Nur al-anwar</i>, <i>Mulla hasan</i> Translation of Qur'an: <i>Dars al-Qur'an wa insha'</i> English: text not specified</p>
Fifth year; second six months	<p>Scholastics (<i>ilm al-kalam</i>) (commentary): <i>Sharh aqa'id al-nasafi</i> (Taftazani) History: <i>Al-adad al-jamil</i> (history of the first four caliphs in Arabic) Principles of Jurisprudence: <i>Nur al-anwar</i> Translation of Qur'an: <i>Dars al-qur'an wa insha'</i> Rhetoric: <i>Talkhis al-miftah</i> (Jalal al-Din Qazwini, d. 1338, a summary of al-Sakkaki) History and Composition (instead of English): <i>Tarikh al-khulafa' wa insha'</i></p>
Sixth year; first six months	<p>Exegesis of the Qur'an (<i>tafsir</i>): <i>Jalalain</i> (Commentary in two parts, the first by Jalal al-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Shafi'i [d. 1459], and the second by Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti [d. 1505]) Hadith: <i>Mishkat</i> Jurisprudence: <i>Hidaya</i>, 1st book (al-Marghinani) Rhetoric: <i>Mukhtasar al-ma'ani</i> Philosophy (commentary): <i>Sharh hidayat al-hikmat</i> Arabic Poetry: <i>Al-Madih al-Nabwi</i></p>
Sixth year; second six months	<p>Exegesis of the Qur'an (<i>tafsir</i>): <i>Jalalain</i> Hadith: <i>Mishkat</i> Jurisprudence: <i>Hidaya</i>, first book (al-Marghinani) Rhetoric: <i>Mukhtasar al-ma'ani</i> Disputation: <i>Munazara rashidiyya</i> English: text not specified</p>
Seventh year; first six months	<p>Exegesis of the Qur'an (<i>tafsir</i>): <i>Madarik</i> Hadith: <i>Sunan jami'at al-Tirmizi</i> Jurisprudence: <i>Hidayat</i>, second book Principles of Jurisprudence: <i>Husami</i></p>

Table 2.2 continued

Seventh year; second six months	Hadith (methodology) : <i>Sharh mukhbat al-fikr</i> Arabic Poetry (anthology): <i>Saba malika wa insha'</i> (Urdu translation) or English Exegesis of the Qur'an: <i>Madarik</i> (Commentary by Abdullah ibn Ahmad Hafiz al-Din al-Nasafi, d. 1310) Hadith: <i>Sunan jami'at al-Tirmizi</i> Jurisprudence: <i>Hidaya</i> , 2nd book (al-Marghinani) Principles of Jurisprudence: <i>Tauzih</i> Laws of Inheritance ('ilm-e fara'iz): <i>Siraji</i> Arabic Literature and Composition: <i>Muqamat-i haririwa insha'</i> or English
Eighth year; first six months	Exegesis of the Qur'an: <i>Baidawi</i> (Commentary by Abdullah ibn Umar al-Baidawi, d. 1316) Hadith: <i>Bukhari, Muslim</i> Logic: <i>Hamdullah</i> Arabic Literature and Composition: <i>Diwan-i hamasa o insha'</i>
Eighth year; second six months	Exegesis of the Qur'an: <i>Baidawi</i> Hadith: <i>Bukhari, Muslim</i> Principles of Jurisprudence: <i>Musallam al-subut</i> (Muhibb Allah Bihari, d. 1707–8) Arabic Literature and Composition: <i>Diwan-i hamasa o insha'</i> or English

Source: Yasin Akhtar Misbahi, personal communication, 10 July 2005. (As noted in Table 2.1, information about subjects and authors was obtained from Robinson, *The Ulama of Farangi Mahall, Sufi, Al-Minhaj* and Malik, *Islamische Gelehrtenkultur in Nordindien*.) My thanks to Jan-Peter Hartung, Arshad Alam and Tahsin Khan for their help in identifying some of the books.

Note

From the fifth to the eighth years, students have to choose between Arabic and English.

1 My thanks to Jan-Peter Hartung for his close reading of an earlier draft of this chapter, and for comments and questions which greatly improved the final outcome. All errors are of course my own.

3: MAKING MUSLIMS

Identity and difference in Indian madrasas

Arshad Alam

The present chapter is an attempt to understand the formation of contemporary Muslim identity in India. The central tool through which understanding is sought is, in Clifford Geertz's words, 'the master institution' of Muslim society, the madrasas, or centres of Islamic learning. Scholarly works on madrasas in India have largely had a historical focus. Metcalf has shown how Deoband madrasa was central in the articulation of Indian Muslim identity during the nineteenth century (Metcalf 1982). Similarly Sanyal's work has shown how the Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at, through the writings of Ahmad Riza Khan constructed its identity against that of the Deobandis and the Ahl-i Hadith (Sanyal 1999). Both these works have been central in identifying that there has never been a single monolithic Muslim identity in India. Rather Indian Muslim identity itself has been a site of contest, among different social groups and different interpretations of texts. However, partly owing to the historical nature of their works, neither tell how this identity is actually formed. What are the processes and mechanisms that go into the making of this identity? In other words, what is missing from their analyses is the process of identity formation. It is these processes and mechanisms which are the central focus of this chapter. In this chapter, I enquire into Muslim identity formation by looking at a madrasa and the kind of educational strategies adopted therein for the inculcation of a Muslim identity. In other words, I ask how this construction of identity takes place. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part looks at the prescribed syllabus and the books therein which are taught to the students and how they impart a certain identity to an average madrasa student. The second part is concerned with those books which are not part of the formal syllabus, but are nevertheless prescribed for self-study and are important for the self-identity of the students. The last part describes the institutionalized performance of constructing identity and creating difference. The chapter is largely the outcome of fieldwork conducted during 2004 and 2005 in which I made use of the methods of observation and interviews.

Most of the observations in the chapter relate to a Barelwi¹ madrasa called Ashrafiyya. But for the purposes of further clarity, I have occasionally contrasted it with a Deobandi madrasa called Ihya al-Ulum. It is therefore important that we should start with a brief history of both these institutions.

The madrasas Ashrafiyya and Ihya al-Ulum are both located in Qasba Mubarakpur, in the district of Azamgarh, North India. The qasba (town) is dominated by Muslims, primarily comprising the lower Muslim caste of Ansari (weaver). Both the madrasas have a common origin in a madrasa called Misbah al-Ulum which was formed in the 1920s through local initiative (Misbahi 1975: 8). Differences over whether Allah could lie or not led to a split within this madrasa so that those who argued that Allah could lie moved out of the premises and formed their own madrasa called Ihya al-

Ulum. For the teachers who stayed with the old Misbah al-Ulum, the founders of the new madrasa were Deobandis.

However, even after this, the Friday prayers continued to be said under the same imam, which meant that the differences had not become so acute. It was during 1934–6 that the qasba witnessed intense ideological rivalry bolstered by the arrival of two prominent personalities, each belonging to the rival madrasa.

Misbah al-Ulum got a new teacher in the person of Abd al-Aziz, who was a student and khalifa of Amjad Ali,² a revered alim of the area. On the other hand, the rival Ihya al-Ulum saw amongst its ranks Shukrullah Mubarakpuri, who had freshly graduated from the famous madrasa at Deoband. Both were convinced of the falsity of the other and what ensued was a wide debate (munazara) in the qasba on ‘true’ Islam. By the end of this two-year period of ideological rivalry, both sides claimed victory. Yet the most important result was not who won, but that the qasba had become so ideologically polarized that parallel Friday prayers started being held in different mosques. The Deobandis led by Ihya al-Ulum and Shukhrullah Mubarakpuri and the Barelwis led by Abd al-Aziz and Misbah al-Ulum were busy carving out spheres of influence for their own respective denominations centred on their respective madrasas.

Owing to a number of factors, the prefix Ashrafiyya was added to Misbah al-Ulum, by which name it is known today. Also due to many factors, Ashrafiyya was able to develop itself much more, compared to its rival Ihya al-Ulum.

Today, while Ashrafiyya has grown to accommodate about 1500 students in its various hostels, Ihya al-Ulum has the capacity to provide for only about 250.³

The influence of the Madrasa Ashrafiyya is also apparent through the fact that the majority of the Muslims in Mubarakpur belong to the Barelwi denomination (maslak). Moreover, its donor networks as well as composition of students are much more geographically varied compared to Ihya al-Ulum. The prestige it commands has made it the apex madrasa of Barelwi Muslims.

It is important at this stage to say a few words about the differences between the Deobandis and the Barelwis. The chapter will be replete with examples of finer differences between the two denominations. It is sufficient here to state that the basic difference stems over ways to understand the personhood of Prophet Muhammad. For the Barelwis, Muhammad is not just a model man, as the Deobandis claim; rather he was bestowed with special powers which make him truly unique. For the Deobandis, the Prophet was a model man, to be emulated, but not to be venerated since according to them it constitutes associating partners to Allah (shirk). All other differences emanate from this basic difference over the personality of the Prophet Muhammad. And through their networks of madrasas, this difference is transmitted to the students. It is with the strategies of this transmission that the present chapter is concerned. I have observed these strategies in Madrasa Ashrafiyya, thus most of the chapter will draw from

Ashrafiyya. I use the example of *Ihya al-Ulum* solely for the purpose of comparative elucidation.

Dastur-i Amal

The formative influences on Ashrafiyya during the debates of 1934–6 have been so definitive that its reflection can be found in its Constitution (Dastur-i Amal). The document not only envisages the growth and development of the madrasa, but also specifically states that the madrasa will be ‘Sunni’⁴ in its orientation. At least three of the objectives laid down in its dastur clearly relate to the propagation of their own *maslak*.⁵ The very first objective of the madrasa is to ‘spread education of true religion’. The dastur goes on to define ‘true religion’ as the *madhhab* of *Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama’at*. Further down it mentions that a ‘Sunni’ is one who follows and practises the path of *Ala Hazrat*.⁶ It reiterates this definition of *Barelwis* by further mentioning that a *Sunni* is one who believes in every word written by ‘*Ala Hazrat*’. However, to be a ‘Sunni’ it is not enough just to believe in every word of *Ala Hazrat*. At the same time he has to struggle against the *Deobandis*, *Ahl-i Hadith*, *Shias*, etc. Thus, against the rather amorphous category of *Deobandis* and *Barelwis*, the founders of *Ashrafiyya* perhaps for the first time give us a clear definition of who they consider to be *Barelwi*. Those who do not subscribe to their definition are simply outside the pale of Islam.⁷ Moreover, a *Barelwi* has to consistently struggle against those it considers as *bad-madhhabis*.

Apart from these clauses, the dastur also has a section which it calls ‘nonchangeable laws’ (*ghair mutabaddil usul*). They are three in number, and two of them call attention once again to the very *Barelwi* character of the madrasa.⁸ Clause one states that ‘members of this madrasa, from a humble sweeper to the Manager (*Nazim-i Ala*), should all be the followers of *Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama’at*’. No non-Sunni should ever find a place in this madrasa. It further mentions that ‘if for any reason this madrasa falls into the hands of a non-Sunni, then any *Sunni* from anywhere in India will have the right to move to court in order to bring back the madrasa into the hands of the *Sunnis* once again’. Clause three of this Principle makes it mandatory for all officials of the madrasa including the members of *General Committee* (*Majlis-i Shura*) and *Working Committee* (*Majlis-i Amal*) to take a pledge of loyalty to the madrasa. This pledge of loyalty also includes the statement, ‘I am a true *Sunni Muslim* and I believe in every word of *Hussam al-Haramain*.’ Writing about medieval *Damascus*, *Chamberlain* argues that books had many uses at that time including being the source of *baraka*; hence they were not only revered but also served as tools of political opposition (*Chamberlain 1997*). To these multifarious uses must be added the usage of a book against which faith was to be measured, as exemplified by *Ashrafiyya* in its ritualistic insistence on confirming membership of their community by reciting a pledge.

Hussam al-Haramain, a polemical work written in 1906 by *Ahmad Riza Khan*, is a collection of *fatwas* against the ‘*Deobandis*’ and ‘*Wahhabis*’. It was in this work that *Ahmad Riza Khan* had pronounced the *fatwa* of *kufr* on some of the *ulama* of *Deoband* and by extension anyone associated with the *Deoband madrasa* (on *Hussam al-Haramain*, see *Sanyal 1999: 231–40*).

Ashrafiyya perhaps is not unique in insisting that its members and officials all belong to the school which it terms 'true Islam'. All madrasas do so. Thus, the Ihya al-Ulum also insists that its teachers and others 'responsible' (zimedaran) should be the followers of their maslak, which they argue is the 'correct Islam'.⁹ Even in madrasas where this has not been put down in the dastur, there will be a marked preference of recruiting teachers and other officials of the madrasa from within the maslak. What distinguishes Madrasa Ashrafiyya's effort is its insistence on taking a pledge on a book written by Ahmad Riza. Even some Barelwis¹⁰ of the qasba are uncomfortable with this clause since they argue that loyalty should be only for Allah, not for the words of a human being.

Its critics apart, the institution of the pledge shows that Ashrafiyya is fully wedded to the ideology of the Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at. Even in terms of organizational matters, it insists on having members of its own maslak. For the students therefore, Ashrafiyya is a pre-given ideological space; a social space with a well defined value system towards which all the different constituents of madrasa are supposed to conform. In this pre-constructed space, practices and symbols only make sense when they are attuned to the ideological parameters set by the madrasa. Respect, status and esteem are dependent on approximation to the supposed ideal of the madrasa: an ideal which has well defined signposts for what to do in order to be a 'good Muslim'. It is an ideal which tells the students that it is not enough to be a follower of the Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at. It is equally important to struggle against the supposed heresies of the Deobandis, Ghair Muqallids, etc.

It is against this ideological backdrop that students of the madrasa take to their daily practice. This is not to say that students are passive recipients of madrasa ideology, but that their practice makes sense only in relation to the aforementioned objectives of the madrasa. In their routine, through teaching, learning and other allied processes, madrasa students actively reproduce this ideological construction of the madrasa of which they are themselves part. In the process of this ideological construction, students, who come from different social and cultural backgrounds, acquire a common identity of being members of the community of Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at, which in their understanding translates as being true Muslim. For such an identity to take root, the madrasa adopts three related strategies which I have called the dars, the non-dars and the performance.

The dars

Like most of Indian madrasas, Ashrafiyya also teaches what it calls the Dars-i Nizami, the curriculum developed by Mulla Nizam al-Din (d. 1748) during the eighteenth century. This curriculum was the culmination of a process of standardization and systematization of Islamic learning. Before that time, there was no specific time period to 'complete' the studies. Indeed, education was thought to be a continuous process throughout one's life which was gained at the feet of a learned master or at various sufi hospices. Competence to teach came from mastery of certain books learnt from an alim who, after being satisfied with his disciple's progress, would issue an ijaza which would connect the student with a spiritual chain (silsila), as well as give him the 'license' to teach that particular book.¹¹ In

this way, an aspiring student had to move from master to master in order to gain knowledge of different books. Education was also transmitted through different scholarly networks (halqa) of which aspiring students became part. What Mulla Nizam al-Din did was systematize this process of Islamic learning and divide it into a number of years, the end of each year meant that a certain number of books have been mastered. This curriculum reflected the need of the state to arrive at uniformity, and thus the curriculum of Mulla Nizam al-Din met with widespread approval. The curriculum had a bias in favour of what was called the 'rational sciences' (ma'qulat) as opposed to the 'transmitted sciences' (manqulat). Thus, books on philosophy, logic (mantiq), medicine (tibb), etc. far outnumbered books which had a purely religious character. According to Francis Robinson, the emphasis on ma'qulat was because of the 'superior training it offered to prospective lawyers, judges and administrators', and its popularity was explicable because the skills that it offered 'were in demand from the increasingly sophisticated and complex bureaucratic systems of eighteenth century India' (Robinson 2002: 53).

The Dars-i Nizami that contemporary madrasas teach have far less in common with this original curriculum devised by Mulla Nizam al-Din. Rather it resembles more the modified Dars-i Nizami devised by the ulama at the Madrasa of Deoband. This modified Dars-i Nizami drastically reduced the content of 'rational studies'. In place of this, a lot of emphasis was placed on studying hadith. Metcalf informs us that they included all the six classical hadith traditions in their curriculum (Metcalf 1982: 101). Whatever the reasons behind this transformation, the overall effect was that madrasa education came to be concerned solely with religious education. Indeed madrasas today are, in the popular imagination, solely associated with religious learning, a perception which is shared as well as defended by the ulama of different madrasas (Zaman 1999: 297). When contemporary madrasas say that they teach Dars-i Nizami, they refer to the reformed curriculum adopted by the Deoband Madrasa during the nineteenth century. It is not surprising therefore that the madrasas, Ashrafiyya as well as Ihya al-Ulum, teach what they call the Dars-i Nizami.¹²

However, this does not mean that they teach identical syllabi. In the absence of a single governing body, madrasas have considerable freedom in choosing which books to teach in their respective institutions. Thus, for example, even though the study of hadith forms an important part of the curriculum of all madrasas, the commentaries selected for this purpose differ depending on the denominational identity of the madrasa.¹³ Hadiths are taught in all madrasas with the help of these commentaries, being mediated in the process by the ideological predilection of their commentators. Moreover, verses in any compilation of hadith often lead to different interpretations since they sometimes contradict each other. Therefore, hadith classes in madrasas like Ashrafiyya and Ihya al-Ulum act as spaces for ideological transmission. These differences in interpretation act as one set of strategies to create the 'other', an other which, through its interpretation, is out to 'confuse' the Muslim community about the 'true' teachings of Islam. For the students of Madrasa Ashrafiyya, this 'other' is

the Deobandis and for the students of *Ihya al-Ulum*, the Barelwis form the ‘other’ who are said to be corrupting the true spirit of Islam. To make it clearer, I cite below some of the important point of differences between the Barelwis and the Deobandis as it is taught in *Madrasa Ashrafiyya*, an observation that I made during my fieldwork.

In one of the hadith classes meant for students of *Fazilat*, the teacher was expounding on ‘*Ilm-i Ghaib*’, a belief that Prophet Muhammad had knowledge of the unseen. Translating a verse from Bukhari’s *Kitab Badaul Khalkh*, the teacher stated that according to a tradition, the Prophet knew who was going to heaven and who would go to hell, meaning that from the beginning to the end, he had knowledge of everything.¹⁴ As will be made clearer below, this is one of the prominent beliefs of the Barelwis. The teacher, however, makes it clear that in opposition to this ‘truth’ about the quality of Prophet Muhammad, the Deobandis believe that he was given knowledge of only certain events. This was confirmed by observing the classes held at the *Ihya al-Ulum Madrasa*. There, teachers cited another tradition recorded in the same *Bukhari Sharif (Kitab al- Iman)* according to which ‘*ilm-i qiyamat (knowledge of the Judgement Day)* is one of the five things whose knowledge Allah alone possesses’. This tradition therefore meant that the knowledge of the Prophet was only partial. In the same vein, this Deobandi teacher sought to correct what he considered ‘erroneous beliefs’ of the Barelwis to his students.

Similarly, there are differences over the question of *Hazir o Nazir*. This is another belief of the Barelwis that the Prophet could be present on different occasions at the same time and that he could see the affairs of the world just like the palm of his hand. Students in *Ashrafiyya* learn how, during a certain battle, the Prophet announced the death of a companion long before he had actually died. Now this quality again is denied by the Deobandis. Students at the *Ihya al- Ulum* would learn no such tradition, but would be made aware of what the Barelwis believe and how it is false. In a similar fashion, the Deobandis would emphasize that a Muslim should not ask help from anyone other than Allah. Students at the *Ihya al-Ulum* would learn that the prophet asked his own daughter *Fatima* to seek help only from Allah.¹⁵ Rubbishing the claim of the Deobandis, students at *Madrasa Ashrafiyya* would learn that it is permissible to ask help, when in crisis, not only from the Prophet, but also from pirs and other holy men.

Certainly hadith studies are not the only arena through which the abovementioned differences are created. Other subjects of study such as jurisprudence also serve to do the same. In the process of acquiring Islamic knowledge, an average madrasa student simultaneously becomes aware of different schools of thought within Islam. However, this does not lead to an ecumenical understanding of different interpretations. Becoming aware of other schools of thought is inextricably woven with the understanding that all other schools of thought, excepting one’s own are false. Thus for a student of *Ashrafiyya*, it is only the Barelwi/Ahl-i Sunnat interpretation which is the correct one. Others such as the Deobandis, Ahl-i Hadith, etc. are all erroneous and constitute a ‘danger’ to Muslims. In their self-

understanding, madrasas belonging to any denomination see themselves as the 'saviour' of Muslims.

The non-dars

It would be too restrictive if we devoted our attention only to the formal curriculum and books taught therein. There are books which are not mentioned in the printed syllabus which Ashrafiyya provides, but which are extremely popular with the students. Students at Ashrafiyya informed me that it is considered 'obligatory' especially for the students of Fazilat that they be well acquainted with books written by their 'own scholars', i.e. scholars of the Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at. For the students of Ashrafiyya, the most popular books were those written against the Deobandis and the Ahl-i Hadith. Indeed, such a practice is not unique to Ashrafiyya, it is found also in Ihya al-Ulum and, I understand, in bigger madrasas belonging to all maslaks. In Ashrafiyya, the most popular books for 'self-reading' are Zalzala and Da'wat-i Insaf. It must be mentioned that their popularity is not confined within Ashrafiyya. These books have a wide readership, particularly in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In Ashrafiyya, the fact that the author of both these books was Arshadul Qadiri, a graduate of their own madrasa, must have added to its popularity.

Arshadul Qadiri (1925–2002) is considered one of the most illustrious graduates of Madrasa Ashrafiyya. Religious education ran in the family: his father was himself a student of Madrasa Hanafia at Jaunpur, Eastern Uttar Pradesh.¹⁶ Although Arshadul Qadiri hailed from Balia, he stayed with his sister in Azamgarh who was married to Amjad Ali. As mentioned earlier, Amjad Ali was one of the important figures in Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at. Thus both at his paternal house as well as later at his sister's house, Arshadul Qadiri was brought up in a religious environment. It was from Azamgarh that his elder brother took him to Madrasa Ashrafiyya in Mubarakpur and entrusted his education to Abd al-Aziz.

Arshadul Qadiri even in his student days was known for oratory and writings.

And he became convinced of the 'falsity' of Deobandi teachings during his stay at Ashrafiyya. Once when a preacher of Tabligh-i Jama'at¹⁷ came to Mubarakpur, he is said to have asked him a number of questions which the preacher could not answer. This incident made him popular among the Muslims, but more importantly he became much more convinced that the only purpose of Tabligh-i Jama'at, and by extension the Deobandis, was to lead them astray.

Moreover, he came to believe that the Tabligh-i Jama'at was out to ridicule ordinary Muslims, since they never tired of saying that whatever the Muslims did was bid'a and that only they (the Tablighis) knew what was correct Islam.

Arshadul Qadiri was given the degree of Fazilat in 1944. Following in the footsteps of Abd al-Aziz, he went to Jamia Shams al-Ulum in Nagpur as a teacher for six years. In 1950 he came to Jamshedpur, in Bihar, and started teaching a small group of students, initially under the open sky. Through his relentless efforts this open-air school was to become Jamia Faiz al-Ulum. He secured land, built a madrasa and soon had a technical institute running

under its aegis. For funds he appealed to local Muslims as well as lobbying the state and industrialists. In each of these endeavours he was successful. Apart from his own madrasa at Jamshedpur, now in Jharkhand, he was instrumental in opening other madrasas in Calcutta, Bangalore and Assam. His organizational work also saw him travelling to Europe, where his efforts were vital in the formation of the World Islamic Mission in London in 1972 (Lewis 1994: 86), of which he was the Vice President. Arshadul Qadri was also the editor of *Jam-i Nur*, which was published from Kolkata. But more than his organizational works, he is known as a writer, who through his pen showed the Deobandis 'their place'. In his works, he sought to rebut what he claimed was the falsity of Deobandi *maslak*. *Zalzala*, *Dawat-i Insaf*, *Zer o Zabar*, *Tablighi Jama'at* and *Lala Zar* are said to be his most famous works with a wide circulation. Of these it is the first two, *Zalzala* and *Dawat-i Insaf*, which are the favourites among the students of *Madrasa Ashrafiyya*, and towards which we now turn our attention.

Originally written in 1972, *Zalzala* became widely known as an important Barelwi response to the Deobandis. Its popularity was not limited to Indian Barelwi madrasas but also in the neighbouring Barelwi madrasas of Pakistan.

Indeed as the author himself maintains in the preface (*Sab-e Talif*), he wrote the book with the Muslims not only of India but also of Pakistan in mind. He maintains that the book is a *writ* (*Istigaza*) which he has placed in front of the Muslims of the subcontinent in order that they can themselves judge what is right and differentiate it from wrong. It is therefore an appeal to consider the *madhhab* of *Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at* in the light of this book and evaluate it against the backdrop of the writings of Deobandi *ulama* (Qadiri 1972: 8, translation mine). The subject of the book concerns a very special characteristic of Prophet Muhammad, which is his knowledge of the unseen (*Ilm-i Ghaib*).

Ahmad Riza Khan, through his various works, maintained that the Prophet had knowledge of the unseen (Sanyal 1999). This special power was granted to him by Allah himself and once granted it stayed with him until his death. The Prophet not only knew what was going to happen in the future, but he also publicly predicted some of the events. Through various *hadiths*, Ahmad Riza Khan had laboriously maintained that this power of the Prophet was something which made him unique and an object of special veneration. Indeed, during his lifetime Ahmad Riza Khan maintained that not believing in the knowledge of the unseen which the Prophet possessed itself constitutes a grave *shirk* and he charged the Deobandi *ulama* with being knee-deep in this *shirk*.

Zalzala takes this criticism of the Deobandi denial of *Ilm-i Ghaib* to a higher level. The whole import of the book is not that the Deobandis do not believe in *Ilm-i Ghaib*, but to prove that they do, as well as acknowledging it themselves.

Rather the purpose of this book is to show that while the Deobandis themselves believed that their *ulama* possessed this power, they at the same denied that the Prophet himself possessed *Ilm-i Ghaib*. *Zalzala* therefore starts with numerous quotations from various *ulama* related to Deoband,

citing the books as well as the page numbers in which they have expressively denied that the Prophet had any knowledge of the unseen. Among the more important ulama which are mentioned are Muhammad Ismail, Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Ashraf Ali Thanwi and Manzoor Nomani. After naming these ulama, Arshadul Qadiri proceeds to quote them from their own writings in which they are said to have denied that the Prophet had knowledge of unseen. For example, Muhammad Ismail is said to have written in his popular work *Taqwiyat al Iman* that ‘whosoever says that Allah’s Prophet or any Imam or Saint (Buzurg) had knowledge of the unseen is the greatest liar. Knowledge of the unseen rests with Allah alone’ (ibid.: 10).

Similarly, a statement by Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, published in *Fatawa Rashidiya* reads, ‘and to believe that Prophet Muhammad had *Ilm e Ghaib* is a grave shirk’. Furthermore, Ashraf Ali Thanwi in his ‘*Beheshti Zeawar*’ is said to have written that, ‘to believe that a Buzurg or Pir has knowledge of all our activities is kufr’ (ibid.: 12).

After having noted down the denials of *Ilm-i Ghaib* of Prophet Muhammad by what Arshadul Qadiri calls the Deobandi ulama, he goes on to divide the book into six long chapters. Each chapter is about a single alim related to the Deobandi madhhab, and in each of these chapters, he contrasts the above statements with their own religious practice and sayings. Among those singled out for this special treatment are Qasim Nanotwi and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, the founders of Dar al-Ulum Deoband, the famous Deobandi alim Ashraf Ali Thanwi, Husain Ahmad Madani and Imdadullah Thanwi respectively. The sixth chapter is not on any particular alim but a collection of various aspects of other Deobandi ulama, all geared to prove that they did not practice what they preached, meaning that while they denied the *Ilm-i Ghaib* of Prophet, they themselves believed that their own ulama had this power.

The second book, *Dawat-i Insaf*, published in 1993, is the last of the important polemical works by Arshadul Qadiri. While in his earliest works (see above), he asked the Deobandi ulama to clarify whether in the light of their own teachings, their own practices amounted to bid‘a or not, this work, written much later, takes the attack on the Deobandis onto a much sharper plane, having a distinct focus as to the differences of the Barelwis with the Deobandis. Twenty years after the publication of *Zalzala*, this book reflects of a kind of maturing of Ahl-i Sunnat grievance. No longer is there any attempt to show that the Barelwis were not the only ones to respect the karamat (miracles) of their elders, that the Deobandis also did the same, only that they never proclaimed it. ‘*Da’wat-i Insaf*’ does not talk to the Deobandis any more, rather it talks directly to the imagined Muslim community and appeals to them to use their rationalism to see which of the aqida are true. Despite the polemics, it must have been a bold attempt by a low-caste Muslim to hint that the Deobandis are incorrigible. Any attempt to bring them back to the fold and see reason is therefore futile.

Da’wat-i Insaf underlines three important point of difference between the Ahl-i Sunnat and Deobandis. The first of these three have to do with what it considers disrespect to the personhood of Prophet Muhammad by what it

calls the 'elders of Deoband' (Qadiri 1993: 15). Arguing that the sword of Islam has not spared anyone who has shown disrespect to the Prophet, Ashadul Qadiri states that the famous Deobandi alim Ashraf Ali Thanwi, in his book *Hifz al-Iman*, wrote that the knowledge possessed by the Prophet could be likened to that possessed even by a maverick or the Shaitan (ibid.: 13). This comparison, according to Qadiri, amounts to a disrespect to the Prophet of Islam. He argues that according to various verses of the Qur'an, no matter how much a Muslim follows the precepts of Islam, dishonouring the Prophet even in the slightest form amounts to his severing the ties with Islam and Muslims (ibid.: 15).

The second set of objections broadens the scope of complaint against the Deobandi ulama. It is no longer confined to the Prophet but brings within the ambit of discussion the question of the status of shrines as well as that of the special status of pirs and walis. As Metcalf and Sanyal have shown, one of the principal concerns of Deobandi ulama was to wean away Indian Muslims from what they considered to be bid'a, or deviation from 'true' Islamic precepts.¹⁸ In their understanding of Islam, visiting shrines or tombs of holy men and asking for boons compromised the fundamental Islamic principle of tawhid or the Oneness of Allah. They argued that turning to anyone other than Allah amounted to associating partners with Him, which was a grave sin. The Deobandi ulama reasoned that the popularity of shrines and 'grave worship' among Indian Muslims was due to Hindu influence on Islam. Deoband was, therefore, geared towards weeding out this 'Hindu' Islam in its search for a purified Muslim community in India. For the Ahl-i Sunnat, however, the practice of visiting shrines in no way constituted associating partners to Allah. Rather, for them it provided an occasion to remember His glory. In addition, since Allah is so great, He cannot be reached directly by his followers and therefore something akin to a spiritual ladder is necessary (Sanyal 1999: 163–5). Again, Qadiri cites references from the works of Deobandi ulama to prove that they disrespect the walis of Allah.

Thus, it is stated that according to the *Fatawa Rashidiyya*, a person who says that the Companions of the Prophet are kafirs does not cease to be Muslim.

Similarly, Qadiri states that it is written in *Sirat-i Mustaqim* that if a person thinks of the Prophet during Namaz, he becomes a Mushrik (Qadiri 1993: 23).

The third set of objections relate to 'those fatwas and writings of Deobandi ulama through which they have termed as bid'a, the religious traditions of the Muslims'. Again Ashadul Qadiri point by point states that the ulama of Deoband have tried to show that most of the religious practices of Indian Muslims are non-Islamic or in need of reform. Thus, he complains that a person who organizes the urs (death or birth anniversary) of a saint, or even participates in it, becomes less of a Muslim according to the writings of Deobandi ulama. Moreover, he is particularly concerned with their diatribe against even seemingly traditional ceremonies such as marriage, which in the eyes of Deobandis do not fulfil the religious decrees of Islam. Thus Qadiri informs us that Deobandi ulama even frown upon the sehera,

which the bridegroom wears on his marriage, and term them as un-Islamic (ibid.: 26).

Taken together, Zalzalā and Da'wat-i Insaf, paint the Deobandis as the internal enemy of Muslims. Students learn that the Deobandis are most dangerous since they appear very pious and committed to the Islamic precepts.

Ashrafiyya students internalize such notions and, in conversation with them, one learns that they regard the Deobandis as an enemy of Islam. To buttress their contention they cite a hadith according to which the Prophet had foretold that the most important danger to Islam would come from a community who would act as Muslims and be steadfast in their prayers, but in reality they will spread confusion and discord among the Muslims. Students at Ashrafiyya as well as Bareilwis generally identify this community as the Deobandis. The cumulative effect of the strategies adopted in the dars as well as the non-dars is to produce an 'other'. It is through the production of this 'other' that the self is imagined.

The self-identity of an average Ashrafiyya graduate is therefore necessarily defined in opposition to the other. The awareness of the other is intertwined with the awareness of the self. But in order to understand how this self/other awareness becomes embedded further, we need to turn to the third strategy, of performance, which is akin to 'acting out' these texts in 'imagined real life situations'.

The performance

On every Thursday evening, Madrasa Ashrafiyya turns into something akin to an oratory and debating space. Students form into groups of twenty or more and occupy spaces within the madrasa to prepare and participate in what is popularly called 'bazm'.¹⁹ There is no fixed space for this performance; it could be any place ranging from their own living quarters even to the mosque or an open space within the madrasa boundaries. The groups generally comprise students with similar interests: for example those having interest in 'na't' (elegy sung in the praise of Prophet) would often cluster together; those interested in speechmaking (taqrir) would gather separately. Given the large number of students, one would find more than one group practising na't or taqrir and refining their skills. It is interesting that despite the overarching Sunni ideology of Madrasa Ashrafiyya, student groups are mostly based on regional affiliations: those from particular districts of Bihar would organize their separate bazms, and so on. Although the institution is listed as one of the objectives in the dastur of madrasa, its actual organizational detail is taken care of mostly by students themselves. The presence of teachers as supervisors is expected but not considered obligatory. Mostly the senior students of each of these groups have the responsibility of allocating topics on which students were supposed to speak. However, in some groups the choice of topics depended entirely on individual students. The senior students are present on these occasions when their respective groups are making their speeches, etc. Towards the end, the merits and demerits of individual presentations are discussed and commented upon by the senior students, this being the method for all groups.

These practices are important for the students in a number of ways. First of all, apart from the institutional bonding, these strategies involve a cementing of bond based on regional or age affiliation. Often madrasa graduates go to different places depending on the opportunity they get. The bonds that they share through such practices, and belonging to the same group, goes a long way in maintaining and sustaining their network of relationships at a later stage. Second, and perhaps more importantly for the students involved in these performances, it is one of the most important tools to gain self-confidence, which is essential for public speaking, a role that many of them take up later. Coming mostly from non- or semi-literate families, the institution of bazm offers them that space to build self-confidence, and to imagine their future role as potential public figures. Thus, for the large majority of students who share this practice, it gives them a sense of empowerment.

Most of what happens during the performance of bazm revolves around the personality of, as well as a sense of perceived disrespect towards, Prophet Muhammad. This is perhaps understandable since the Barelwi maslak crystallized, so to speak, around the writings of Ahmad Riza Khan, who wrote extensively against the Deobandis and Ahl-i Hadith, arguing most of the time that they did not accord the Prophet as much respect as he deserved (Sanyal 1999: 151–6). In the Barelwi prophetology, Muhammad is considered something much more than a mere human, endowed with qualities such as the knowledge of the unseen, the ability to be present anywhere at any time, etc. With such an understanding of Prophet-hood, even an attempt to consider him as any other mortal would be hard to tolerate. And it is these very attempts, I was told, which made the Barelwis think that Deobandis and others were outside the pale of Islam. There are certain fixed accusations, which I came across, against other denominations. First and foremost among them was that certain ulama of the Deobandi school, like Ashraf Ali Thanwi, in his book *Hifz al-Iman*, has compared the Prophet's knowledge to that of an animal or a mad man. Going further back they told me that an intellectual ancestor of Deobandis, Muhammad Ismail Dehlavi, in his *Taqwiyat al-Iman*, has also written sentences which are derogatory to the person of the Prophet. They considered the Deobandis (whom they also called the Wahhabis) as the followers of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (also called Najdi) whose very name they detested and charged him with the crime of desecrating the grave of Prophet Muhammad in Medina.²⁰ In a sense therefore, their own history is defined in terms of defending the dignity of Prophet Muhammad from what they consider the sacrilegious affronts of others. Related to this is their firm belief that they are indeed the chosen ones. I was told that Prophet Muhammad had predicted that his community (qaum) would be divided into seventy-three groups, and only one among them would be true followers of the Sunna and thus be true Muslims who would go to heaven. The other seventy-two groups would be banished into hell fire. The students of this madrasa firmly believe in this hadith as well as in the fact that they and their maslak are indeed the ones who are on the right path as ordained by Prophet Muhammad.²¹

It is perhaps this understanding of being the chosen one that impels an average student of this madrasa to participate in the bazm with much enthusiasm and religious fervour. The debates (taqir) mentioned above are themselves a constant reminder of the fact that there exists in the mind of the speaker an imaginary but at the same time real opponent in the form of Deobandis and Ahli Hadith who are attacking Islam. Such attacks on Islam mostly seem to be through the person of Prophet Muhammad. In one of the taqirs, the speaker claims that Najdis/Wahhabis dare to say that Prophet Muhammad is like them, that he was just an ordinary mortal who was given Prophet-hood (nubuwwat) by the grace of Allah. The speaker then goes on to explicate his own understanding of Prophet, linking him with the concept of Nur (light), which according to him existed long before the world had been created. In his schema, considering the prophet like any other mortal was a sin, since he was made of light rather than of mere clay as ordinary mortals are. In his argument the speaker cites hadith to corroborate his claim that the Prophet did not cast a shadow and this was only possible if he was made of light. As to why the Deobandis are keen to malign the image of the Prophet, the speaker argues that this is nothing new, such things have been happening throughout Islamic history. This time he links the Deobandis/Wahhabis with the munafiqin and narrates an unbroken history of conspirators against Islam. Indeed he cautions his fellow listeners that the most dangerous of these conspirators are to be found within the community since they are like 'termites' which make things hollow from within. In what appears to be the logic of pre-destination, the speaker claims that all this was foretold by the Prophet himself. But as Sunnis, it was incumbent upon all of them to fight against the Wahhabis. Another speaker, at another venue, is giving a similar taqir, and, although the style is different, the subject is the same. Again it is concerned with how to understand the Prophet of Islam. For this speaker, the importance of the Prophet can be gauged from the fact that whatever he did, became Islam. Arguing that namaz is the most important pillar of Islam after iman, he maintained that nowhere in the Qur'an is it written how to offer the prayer. This important article of faith is done in the way the Prophet himself did.

So, his argument goes on, whatever the Prophet did, became Islam.²² The practice of na't similarly brings out the centrality of the Prophet for the Barelwis, although much more poetically. Similar to the taqir sessions, here also the Prophet is understood as someone who is extraordinary, more than a mere human being, as alleged by the Deobandis. Moreover, the na'ts place Prophet Muhammad as the saviour for the followers of the right path. In the religious imagination of the Barelwis, as it comes out through various na'ts, they understand themselves as one who is mired in numerous problems from which only the Prophet can save them. The na'ts would frequently talk about their powerlessness and appeal to the Prophet to help them. This is an imagination perhaps something akin to a self-victimology of the Barelwis. While in the taqir sessions, wherein the Prophet became constituted as the victim of vicious attacks by the Deobandis, etc., in the na't this 'victimhood' is transferred to one's own self, thus producing some kind of extended victimization via the person of Prophet Muhammad.

The bazm goes on until late in the night of Thursday. Towards the end of it, the students are told the merits and demerits of their na'ts or taqirrs, mostly by senior students who act as guides for their juniors. This performance, however, is not of Ashrafiyya alone. Indeed in almost all the madrasas of the area, it is part of the wider pedagogy. The techniques of doing so, however, might differ.

Thus, in Madrasa Ain al-Ulum,²³ in Gaya, Bihar, the institution of bazm is much more theatrical. This is a small Barelwi madrasa compared to the Ashrafiyya.

The students here are divided into two groups, one group comprises Barelwis and the other group Deobandis. There is then question and counter-question about the understanding of Islam. Always the Barelwi group will win since both the questions as well as the answers are written by the Barelwi teachers of the madrasa! A teacher of the madrasa told me that since the students of this madrasa are of small age groups, they find it much more interesting to get involved in theatrical performances rather than formal taqirrs.

The presence of these institutions, in almost all madrasas belonging to different maslaks, makes it central to the imagination of madrasa education in India.

Since madrasas in India are invariably linked to the ideology of one maslak or the other, these practices become important for teaching and sharpening the ideological divide, which cannot be done just through teaching. Performance therefore becomes necessary for the 'stylized repetition of acts',²⁴ through which identity is more thoroughly internalized by the students. The expression of this internalized ideology is frequently visible in the various wall magazines, which the students of this madrasa bring out. In piece after piece, one finds similar vitriol against the Deobandis/Wahhabis, the need to guard the Muslims from them and be vigilant against the canard spread by the opposite camps.²⁵ Strategies discussed above and the practices associated with it go a long way to link an individual student with all those prominent ulama of the Barelwi maslak, who are said to have been the defenders of the Muslim faith against the onslaught of Deobandis and other maslaks. The identity which is created in such a setting is at once oppositional, depending on the negation of the other, feeding on a sense of being wronged, and committed to spreading the 'true Islam' of their maslak.

Concluding remark

Rather than assuming a given religious identity of Indian Muslims, this chapter has focused on the very process of this identity formation. It is via an understanding of the process that the chapter has argued that there exists no singular identity of Indian Muslims. In contrast to discourses on Indian Muslim identity that invariably reproduce a monolithic religious identity, I have tried to show that the interpretation of texts lead to the development of a pluralistic identity even within the religious domain. In a sense therefore, the 'religious' is in itself not a monolith but subject to multiple understanding. Differences over interpretation lead to textual plurality, which are instituted through certain strategies discussed in the chapter. It

follows from the chapter that the Hindu Right assertion about madrasas being antithetical to other communities is simply erroneous. Far from talking about Hindus or Christians, madrasas are solely concerned with what is the correct interpretation of Islam. In the process, they create an ‘other’ within rather than outside the community. While there have been studies on how the Hindu Right constructs the Muslims as the ‘other’ (cf. Sundar 2004), this chapter has shown that such processes are intrinsic to the Muslims also. Appreciating this internal contestation within Muslims might lead us to different results.

Notes

1 The terms Deobandi and Barelwi will be made clear in the course of the chapter.

Suffice it here to note that they are the two major religious denominations within Indian Islam. I am aware that both these terms are pejorative. However, I retain them in the chapter because the followers of these denominations do not hesitate to use these terms for defining themselves.

2 Amjad Ali (1878?–1948), also known as ‘Sadr al-Sharia’ among the Barelwis, spent eighteen years at Bareilly in the service of Ahmad Riza Khan, often helping him with writing fatwas as well as teaching in the madrasa there. Cf. Qasimi 1976: 64; Sanyal 1999: 299.

3 Data for the year 2003–4; from the offices of madrasas Ashrafiyya and Ihya al-Ulum respectively.

4 In this case ‘Sunni’ refers to a maslak rather than denoting the broad division between Shias and Sunnis.

5 Dastur-i Amal, al-Jamiat al-Ashrafiyya, Purpose/Objective, Clause 1, 5 and 7.

6 Ahmad Riza Khan is referred to as Ala Hazrat by the Barelwis. For more on the person and his importance within the Barelwi maslak, see Sanyal 1999.

7 They do not consider the Deobandis as Muslims. Ahmad Riza had pronounced the fatwa of kufr on two of the leading lights of Deoband madrasa. Cf. Sanyal 1999: 231–2.

8 Dastur, Ghair Mutabaddil Usul, Clause 1 and 3.

9 Moeed Qasimi, Nazim of madrasa Ihya al-Ulum, personal interview. The madrasa as yet does not have a written Dastur.

10 Barelwi residents of Mubarakpur, personal interviews. The sources would not like to be identified.

11 On the medieval system of education, see among others, Jafar 1972; Nizami 1996.

12 Al-Jamiat al-Ashrafiyya introductory booklet; interview with Moeed Qasimi, Nazim of Ihya al-Ulum.

13 An example may be the collection of hadiths by Bukhari, called Bukhari Sharif, which is taught in almost all madrasas for a degree in Fazilat. Now there are commentaries written on Bukhari and these commentaries reflect the ideological orientation of the commentator. Therefore, Bukhari as taught in a Barelwi madrasa like Ashrafiyya would differ from Bukhari being taught in a Deobandi madrasa like Ihya al-Ulum.

14 I was told that the verse is from Bukhari’s Badi al-Uh’alq, Vol. 1 Karachi: Qadiuri Vistubklana, n.d., p. 453.

Huzur ne hame aik jagah qayam farmaya; bas humko ibtida’i paidaish ki khabar de di. Yahan tak ke jannati log apni manzilon mein pahunch gaye, aur jahannumi apni manzilon mein. Jisne yad rakha usne yad rakha aur jo bhul gaya wo bhul gaya.

15 I was told that this tradition is said to be recorded in Mishkat al-Masabih, Bombay:

Raza Academy, n.d., p. 46. “Huzur ne Fatima Zahra se farmaya: main tumhari madad nahin kar sakta.” The implication is that if he could not help his own daughter, then how could he help others?

16 As has been generally true for a lower caste alim, very little has been written on Arshadul Qadiri. This and the following information is based on a collection of articles on the author published in Jam-i Nur, a Barelwi/Ahl-i Sunnat monthly published from Delhi.

17 The ‘faith movement’ started by Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas (d. 1944) during the late 1920s. The Tabligh movement aims at revitalization of Islam through individual

regeneration. The movement has close links with Deobandi Islam, Mawlana Ilyas family having long association with Deoband and its sister madrasa at Saharanpur, Mazahir ul-Ulum. Deobandi madrasas like the Ihya al-Ulum serve as institutional networks for visiting batches of tablighis in the area in the sense of providing them with boarding and other facilities.

18 For a fuller discussion of the issue, see Metcalf 1982 and Sanyal 1999.

19 It must be mentioned that this institution is in no way unique to Ashrafiyya. Bigger madrasas in India belonging to all denominations do have such institutions, which are known by different names.

20 The Barelwi belief about the close connection of the Wahhabis of Arabia with the Indian Deobandis has not been proven. It appears this linkage was first made by the British and later on adopted by the Barelwis. For details see Hermansen 2000.

21 Interestingly, this hadith also forms one of the core beliefs of the Deobandis as well other denominations. They all consider themselves the chosen one!

22 I am reminded here of a visit to a village in the district of Garhwa, now located in Jharkhand, whose Muslim inhabitants were mostly Barelwis. At the entrance of the lone mosque in the village, inscribed from right to left, are the names of Muhammad and Allah respectively. I asked why Muhammad was written before Allah. The reply was that since it was through Muhammad that they knew about Islam and Allah, it was logical that his name would come first!

23 The Principal (sadr mudarris) of the madrasa was a student of madrasa Ashrafiyya.

Also the Manager (nazim) of this madrasa had been a student of Ashrafiyya during the days of Abd al-Aziz.

24 The usage is from Judith Butler. Although she uses it in the context of gender identity, I find the expression useful in this context also. See Butler 1999: 179.

25 Wall magazines are a familiar feature in the bigger madrasas of India. Similar vitriolic essays against the Barelwis can be seen on the walls of the Dar al-Ulum, Deoband. I am thankful to Yoginder Sikand for this information.

4: MADRASAS

The potential for violence in Pakistan?

Tariq Rahman¹

Introduction The madrasas of Pakistan have been making headlines since 9/11 when the twin towers of the World Trade Center were attacked by Islamic militants in the United States. Predictably, when the London Underground transport system was attacked on 7 July 2005, these institutions once again came under the spotlight. While none of the perpetrators of 9/11 was a student of a Pakistani madrasa, one of the British terrorists had allegedly visited one. According to Maulana Sami al-Haq, head of his own faction of the Jamiat-i Ulama-i Islam and of the Dar al-Ulum Haqqaniyya in Akora Khattak (North West Frontier Province, or NWFP), 'linking the London bombing with Pakistani madrasas is only part of a broader campaign against these madrasas' (Ali 2005). But no matter what the Maulana says, the madrasas are widely seen as promoting Islamic militancy.

Recently (in March 2007) a madrasa for girls, the Jamia Hafsa of Islamabad, was in the news first for having occupied a children's library to prevent the government from demolishing mosques built in green areas, and then for having kidnapped a woman who allegedly ran a brothel in Islamabad. Another major madrasa, the Jamia Binoriyya in SITE (Sindh Industrial Training Estate) (Karachi), has also been in the news – again for violence. On 23 June 2005, two of its clerics were gunned down by unidentified men. Later, ten students of this seminary were killed in a bomb blast. In short, the madrasas, which were earlier associated with conservatism, ossification and stagnation of Islam, are now seen as hotbeds of militancy in the name of Islam. After 9/11, a number of authors, both Western (Singer 2001) and Pakistani (Haqqani 2002), have connected the madrasas with militancy. At least three reports of the International Crisis Group (ICG) – published on 29 July 2002, on 20 March 2003 and on 16 January 2004 – have taken the nexus between militancy and the madrasas as a given. However, these reports do not take a simplistic view of militancy among Muslims and do point out that Pakistan's military has strengthened the religious lobby in Pakistan, of which madrasas are a part, in its own political interests.

The madrasas are blamed for terrorism not only in Pakistan but in India as well (Winkelmann 2006). They are harassed by the police (Rahman 2005: 117–123) and by the Hindu right (Kandasamy 2005: 97–103). Thus, in India, as in Pakistan, the madrasas defend themselves against allegations of terrorism and remain deeply sceptical of bringing about changes which, they feel, would undermine their autonomy and the authority of the ulama who control them (Wasey 2005).

Review of literature

There was not much writing on the madrasas before the events of 9/11 in Pakistan. J.D. Kraan, writing for the Christian Study Centre, had provided a brief introduction (Kraan 1984). One of the first scholars to write on the madrasas was Jamal Malik. In his book (originally a doctoral dissertation),

Colonialization of Islam, he included a chapter (V) on ‘The Islamic system of education’, which explained how the state dispensed alms (zakat) to the madrasas only if they complied with some of its rules and conditions. This had succeeded, ‘at least partially, in subordinating parts of the clergy and their centres to its own interests’ (Malik 1996: 153). However, during this process the clergy had succeeded, though again partially, in increasing its presence and voice in public institutions of learning. Later, A.H. Nayyar, an academic but not a scholar of Islam, had opined that sectarian violence was traceable to madrasa education (Nayyar 1998) – a position which was becoming the common perception of the intelligentsia of Pakistan at that time. The present writer wrote on language-teaching in the madrasas (Rahman 2002). The book also contained a survey of the opinions of madrasa students on Kashmir, the implementation of the sharia, equal rights for religious minorities and women, freedom of the media, democracy etc. (Rahman 2002: Appendix 14). By far the most insightful comment on the madrasa system of education and the world-view it produces comes from Khalid Ahmed, the highly erudite editor of the Daily Times English newspaper from Lahore. He claims that the madrasas create a rejectionist mind: one which rejects modernity and discourses from outside the madrasa (Ahmed, K. 2006: 45–67).

The ulama or the Islamists in Pakistan have been writing, generally in Urdu, in defence of the madrasas which the state sought to modernize and secularize.

Two recent books, a survey by the Institute of Policy Studies (patronized by the revivalist, Islamist, Jama’at-i Islami) on the madrasas (IPS 2002) and a longer book by Saleem Mansur Khalid (Khalid 2002), are useful because they contain much recent data. Otherwise the Pakistani ulama’s work is polemical and tendentious.

They feel themselves increasingly besieged by Western (Singer 2001) and Pakistani secular critics (Ahmad 2000: 191–192; Haqqani 2002) and feel that they should defend their position from the inside rather than wait for sympathetic outsiders to do it for them (as by Sikand 2001 and 2006). Reports on the increasing militancy with reference to Islam, especially its relationship with madrasas, have been produced by the ICG. The ICG proposes measures to reduce militancy in Pakistani society which include reforming the curriculum of these seminaries and having greater control over them (ICG 2007: 22).

Studies relating indirectly to Pakistan’s madrasas are also relevant for understanding them. An important book, comprising chapters by scholars on different aspects of madrasas in India, has been edited by Hartung and Reifeld (2006).

This book has an excellent historical section on the development of the madrasas in India and sections about these institutions in contemporary India. The focus of attention is on the changes (reforms?) which can be made in these institutions with a view to making them potentially peaceful and unthreatening. The seminal work on the ulama, and indirectly on the madrasas in which they are trained, is by Qasim Zaman (2002). This is an

excellent study of how the traditional ulama can be differentiated from the Islamists who react to modernity by attempting to go back to fundamentalist, and essentially political, interpretations of Islam.

This work draws for data on the chapter on madrasa education in my book entitled *Denizens of Alien Worlds* (2004: chapter 5, 77–98). While some of the information given there has been repeated here to provide the historical background, there is some new information and, more significantly, new insights provided by recent reading and the conference on Islamic education in South Asia in May 2005 at the University of Erfurt (Germany).

Type and number of madrasas

There is hardly any credible information on the unregistered madrasas. However, those which are registered are controlled by their own central organizations or boards, which determine the syllabi, collect a registration fee and an examination fee, and send examination papers, in Urdu and Arabic, to the madrasas where pupils sit for examinations and declare results. The names of the boards are as follows in Table 4.1.

At independence there were 245, or even fewer, madrasas (IPS 2002: 25). In April 2002, Dr Mahmood Ahmed Ghazi, the Minister of Religious Affairs, put the figure at 10,000 with 1.7 million students (ICG 2002: 2). They belong to the major sects of Islam, the Sunnis and the Shias. However, Pakistan being a

Table 4.1 Central boards of madrasas in Pakistan

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<i>Name</i>	<i>Sub-sect</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Date established</i>
Wafaq al-Madaris	Deobandi	Multan	1959
Tanzim al-Madaris	Barelwi	Lahore	1960
Wafaq al-Madaris (Shia) Pakistan	Shia	Lahore	1959
Rabt al-Madaris al-Islamia	Jama'at-i Islami	Lahore	1983
Wafq al-Madaris al-Salafia	Ahl-i Hadith	Faislabad	1955

Source: Offices of the respective boards.

predominantly Sunni country, the Shia madrasas are very few. Among the Sunni ones there are three sub-sects: Deobandis, Barelwis and the Ahl-i Hadith (salafi).

Besides these, the revivalist Jama'at-i Islami also has its own madrasas.

The number of madrasas increased during General Zia al-Haq's rule (1977–1988), presumably because of the Afghan war and increased interest of the Pakistani state in supporting a certain kind of religious group to carry on a proxy war with India for Kashmir (more details about this will follow). The increase in the number of registered madrasas up to 2002 was as follows in Table 4.2.

The figures for 2005 given by the Ittehad Tanzimat Madaris-i Diniya (ITMD) on 23 September 2005 is some 13,000 seminaries (quoted from Ahmed 2006: 45). This is confirmed by the Ministry of Education which gives the figure of 12,979 madrasas in its National Education Census (GOP 2006: Table 8, p. 22).

P.W. Singer, however, gave the figure of 45,000 madrasas as early as 2000 but quotes no source for this number (Singer 2001). The enrolment figures of the government census are 1,549,242 students and 58,391 teachers for 2005 (GOP 2006: Table 9, p. 23). The enrolment in all institutions was 33,379,578 with a teaching staff of 1,356,802 according to the same source (ibid.: Table 3, p. 17).

The madrasas are not easy to count because, among other reasons, if a trust registered under the 1860 (Societies) Act or any other law 'runs a chain of twenty madrasas, in government files it would be counted as one institution' (ICG 2007: 5). Moreover, some seminaries, teaching only part of the madrasa curriculum, are registered as welfare or charity (ibid.: 5).

The Saudi Arabian organization, Haramain Islamic Foundation, is said to have helped the Ahl-i Hadith and made them powerful. Indeed, the Lashkar-i Tayyaba, an organization which has been active in fighting in Kashmir, belongs to the Ahl-i Hadith (Ahmed 2002: 10). In recent years, the Deobandi influence has increased as the Taliban were trained in their seminaries (for more on the

Table 4.2 Sect-wise increase in the number of madrasas

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Sect	Number of madrasas	
	1988	2002
Deobandi	1,779	7,000
Barelwi	717	1,585
Ahl-i Hadith	161	376
Shia	47	419
Jama'at-i Isami	97*	500
Total	2,801	9,880

Source: For 1988 see GOP 1988; for 2002 Report of Sindh Police in *Dawn*, 16 January 2003. The other figures have been provided by the Central Boards of madrasas.

Note

* This figure in GOP 1988 was for 'Others' and not only for the Jama'at-i Islami madrasas. The figure for 2000 given in several sources is 6,761 (IPS 2002: 25). The government census gives different figures (see Appendices 2 and 3).

Table 4.3 Increase in the madrasas between 1988 and 2000

Table 4.3 Increase in the madrasas between 1988 and 2000

Sect	Increase in madrasas, 1988–2000 (%)
Deobandi	294
Barelwi	121
Ahl-i Hadith	134
Shia	792
Others	415
Total	253

Source: These percentages are based on the data in Table 4.2 (Khalid (2002: 176) gives entirely different, and unbelievable, figures.)

Taliban see Rashid 2000). This increase, calculated on the basis of figures available up to 2000, is as follows in Table 4.3.

It should be remembered that the Deobandi madrasas are concentrated in the NWFP and Balochistan which are ruled by the Muttahida Majlis-i Amal (MMA), a religious political party, which is seen as a threat to liberal democracy in Pakistan. Moreover, the people of the NWFP, being of the same ethnic group as the Taliban, are closely engaged in military action against the latter. This means that resentment against the government of Pakistan's policy toward the Taliban, or al-Qaeda, are expressed in the idiom of Islam. This is a major source of anxiety as far as the Deobandi influence is concerned.

The sectarian divide among the madrasa

Islam, like Christianity and other major world religions, has several interpretations. The Sunni and the Shia sects made their appearance within less than a century of Islam's emergence in Arabia (see Jafri 1979). But both these major sects have sub-sects or maslaks among them. The madrasas teach the basic principles of Islam as well as the maslak, the particular point of view of a certain subsect, to their students. For the Sunnis, the majority sect in Pakistan, the madrasas belong to the Deobandi, Barelwi or the Ahl-i Hadith maslak. Briefly, the Barelwis give a central place of extreme reverence to the Prophet of Islam to whom they attribute super-human qualities. They also believe in the intercession of saints (Sanyal 1996). The Deobandis deny the claims of the Barelwis, following a strict version of Islam in which saint worship is discouraged (Metcalf 1982). Being fundamentalists, the Ahl-i Hadith are even more strict and, therefore, forbid the practices of folk Islam (Ahmed 1994). The Jama'at-i Islami is a revivalist religious party inspired by Abul Ala Maududi (1903–1979) which aims at taking political power so as to create an Islamic state and purify Islam (Nasr 1996). Besides the Sunni madrasas, there are Shia madrasas also, as we have seen.

All the madrasas, including the Shia ones, teach the Dars-i Nizami, though they do not use the same texts. They also teach their particular point of view (madhhab or maslak) which clarifies and rationalizes the beliefs of the sect (Sunni or Shia) and sub-sect (Deobandi, Barelwi and Ahl-i Hadith). Moreover they train their students to refute what in their views are heretical beliefs and some Western ideas.

The curriculum of the madrasas

The Dars-i Nizami was evolved by Mulla Nizam al-Din Sihalvi (d.1748) at Farangi Mahall, a famous seminary of a family of Islamic ulama in Lucknow (Robinson 2002; for its contents see Sufi 1941 and Malik 1997: 522–529).

The Dars-i Nizami is taught for eight years. Students begin studying the Dars-i Nizami after they complete elementary school. Not all madrasas teach the full course. The ones which do are generally called jamia or dar al-ulum. The medium of instruction is generally Urdu, but in some parts of the NWFP it is Pashto, while in parts of rural Sindh it is Sindhi. However, the examinations of the central boards allow answers to be given only in Urdu and Arabic. Hence, on the whole, the madrasas promote the dissemination of Urdu in Pakistan.

All the madrasas teach some modified form of the Dars-i Nizami which comprises: Arabic grammar and literature; logic; rhetoric and mathematics among the rational sciences (ma'qulat), among the religious sciences are the principles of jurisprudence; the Qur'an and its commentaries; and the hadith. Some madrasas also teach medicine and astronomy. However, the books on these subjects – indeed on all subjects – are canonical texts sometimes going back to the tenth century. For instance, geometry is still taught through an Arabic rendition of Euclid (Aqladees). Medicine goes back to Abu Ali Ibn Sina (980–1037), whose Al-Qanun was written under the influence of the Greek theory of the imbalance of humours in the body creating disease. Similarly, the canonical texts on the Qur'an and the hadith are texts produced during the medieval period and do not have contemporary relevance.

Indeed, most people who write about the Dars-i Nizami complain that it is medieval, stagnant and, therefore, irrelevant to contemporary concerns. The typical criticism runs as follows:

Take, for instance, the case of the Sharh-i-Aqa'id, a treatise on theology (Kalam) written some eight hundred years ago, which continues to be taught in many Indian madrasas. It is written in an archaic style and is full of references to antiquated Greek philosophy that students today can hardly comprehend.

. . . So, it asks question such as: Is there one sky or seven or nine?

Can the sky be broken into parts? Now all this has been convincingly refuted and consigned to the rubbish heap by modern science. (Mazhari 2005: 37–38)

Similarly the medieval commentaries (tafsir) on the Qur'an drew for arguments on the social and intellectual milieu of their period as did the law (fiqh) (Sikand 2005: 70–71). There are, of course, works in both Urdu and English on all these subjects (Maududi's Tafsir al-Qur'an being an outstanding example of a contemporary commentary), but all of them would tend to expose the madrasa students to contemporary realities. And this exposure would make them question the hypocrisy and injustice of the Muslim elites of several countries – including Pakistan – who legitimize themselves in the name of Islam but exclude the ulama as well as the masses from the exercise of power and the enjoyment of its economic fruit. It would also make them question the hegemony of the West, and especially the United States, which allows the impoverishment of the Muslim masses in the name of globalization, market-oriented reforms and democracy. That this is happening is, of course, true. But it is not because of the medieval Dars-i Nizami. It is happening because of other influences and extracurricular reading material which shapes the world-view of madrasa students as well as other politically aware Muslims.

It is up to the person teaching the Qur'an or the hadith to give it whatever interpretation and time he decides and these vary according to the orientation of the teachers. However, the Dars-i Nizami, if anything, tends to disengage one from the modern world rather than engage with it. Moreover, the traditional orthodox ulama teach it in a way which is not

amenable to contemporary political awareness. So, if the Dars-i Nizami does not create anti-Western, anti-elitist, sectarian militancy, what does?

One aspect of teaching in the madrasas which has received scant attention is that the students are taught the art of debate (munazara). This too is taught through the canonical texts: Sharifiyya of Mir Sharif Ali Jurjani (1413) and Rashidiyya of Abdul Rashid Jaunpuri (1672). However, the art is actually practised in such a way that madrasa students learn the skill of using rhetoric, polemic, intonation, quotation and arguments from their own sub-sect to win an argument. This kind of real-life debating is not taught in any secular institution in Pakistan where, indeed, the so-called ‘debates’ are written by teachers and memorized by the would-be debaters. The munazara is important because it is the bridge between memorization and the use of knowledge to present an argument relevant to present issues. It is also the bridge between the medieval contents of the curricula and the concerns of the contemporary world. The preachers in the mosques of Pakistan, graduates of madrasas (called maulvis or mullahs), use all the flourishes of rhetoric, the skills learnt for munazaras, in their sermons. These sermons, as anyone who has heard them will testify, have been becoming increasingly politicized. They dwell on the heresies in the Muslim world, the conspiracies of non-Muslims against the Muslims and, in recent years, the ongoing crusades in the lands of Islam – Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq and so on. These are all contemporary concerns and completely unrelated to the Dars-i Nizami. That is why it is not only the madrasa graduates but other Muslims too who have the maulvi’s political perspective. As the larger part of these sermons and the munazaras themselves consists of refuting other world-views, I will now focus upon the texts used for refutation among the Islamic-minded people (whether from the madrasa or not) in Pakistan.

The refutation of other sects and sub-sects

Refutation (Radd in Urdu) has always been part of religious education.

However, it is only in recent years that it has been blamed for the unprecedented increase in sectarian violence in Pakistan.

According to A.H. Nayyar, ‘The madrasahs have, not surprisingly, become a source of hate-filled propaganda against other Sects and the sectarian divide has become sharper and more violent’ (Nayyar 1998: 243). However, it appears that there was much more acrimonious theological debate among the Shias and Sunnis and among the Sunnis themselves during British rule than is common nowadays. The militancy in sectarian conflicts cannot be attributed to the teaching in the madrasas, though, of course, the awareness of divergent beliefs does create the potential for a negative bias against people of other beliefs.

They were also very bitter as the Deobandi–Barelwi munazaras of 1928 collected in Futuhat-i Nu’maniyya (Nu’mani n.d) illustrate. Moreover, the pioneers of the sects and sub-sects did indulge in refuting each other’s beliefs. For instance Ahmed Riza Khan, (1856–1921), the pioneer of the Barelwi school, wrote a series of fatwas (fatwa=religious decree) against Sir Sayyid of Aligarh, the Shias, the Ahl-i Hadith, the Deobandis and the Nadwat al-Ulama in 1896. These were published as Fatawa al-Haramain bi-

Rajf Nadwat al-Main (1900) (Sanyal 1996: 203). The Barelwis, in turn, were refuted by their rivals. The followers of the main debaters sometimes exchanged invective and even came to blows but never turned to terrorism as witnessed in Pakistan's recent history.

As the inculcation of sectarian bias is an offence, no madrasa teacher or administrator confesses to teach any text refuting the beliefs of other sects. Maulana Mohammad Hussain, Nazim-i Madrasa Jamia al-Salafiyya (Ahl-i Hadith) (Islamabad) said that comparative religion was taught in the final Alimiyya (M.A.) class and it did contain material refuting heretical beliefs. Moreover, Islam was confirmed as the only true religion, refuting other religions. The library did contain books refuting other sects and sub-sects but they were not prescribed in the syllabus. Maulana Muhammad Ishaq Zafar of the Jamia Rizwiyya Aiz al-Ulum (Barelwi) in Rawalpindi said that books against other sects were not taught. However, during the interpretation of texts the maslak was passed on to the student. Students of the final year, when questioned specifically about the teaching of the maslak, said that it was taught through questions and answers, interpretation of texts and sometimes some teachers recommended supplementary reading material specifically for the refutation of the doctrines of other sects and sub-sects.

In some cases, as in the Jamia Ashrafiyya, a famous Deobandi seminary of Lahore, an institution for publication, established in 1993, publishes only those articles and journals which are written by the scholars of the Deobandi school of thought (Hussain 1994: 42). Moreover, in writings, sermons and conversation, the teachers refer to the pioneers of their own maslak so that the views of the sub-sect are internalized and become the primary way of thinking.

However, despite all denials, the printed syllabi of the following sects do have books which refute the beliefs of other sects. The Report on the Religious Seminaries (GOP 1988) lists several books of Deobandi madrasas refuting Shia beliefs including Maulana Mohammad Qasim's Hadiyyat al-Shia which has been reprinted several times and is still in print. There are also several books on the debates between the Barelwis and the Deobandis and even a book refuting Maududi's views (GOP 1988: 73-74). The Barelwis have given only one book, Rashidiyya, under the heading of 'preparation for debates on controversial issues' (ibid.: 76). It is not true, however, that the students are mired in medieval scholasticism despite the texts prescribed for them. They do put their debates in the contemporary context though they refer to examples on the lines established by the medieval texts. The Ahl-i Hadith have given a choice of opting for any two of the following courses: the political system of Islam, the economic system of Islam, Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah, the history of ideas and comparative religious systems. The Shia courses list no book on this subject.

Recently published courses list no book on the maslak for the Deobandis. The Barelwis mention 'comparative religions' but no specific text. The Ahl-i Hadith retain almost the same optional courses as before. The Shia madrasas list books on beliefs which include comparative religions in which, of course, Shia beliefs are taught as the only true ones. Polemical

pamphlets claiming that there are conspiracies against the Shias are available. Incidentally such pamphlets, warning about alleged Shia deviations from the correct interpretations of the faith, are also in circulation among Sunni madrasas and religious organizations.

Moreover, some guidebooks for teachers note that Qur'anic verses about controversial issues should be taught with great attention and students should memorize them. In one Barelwi book it is specified that teachers must make the students note down interpretations of the ulama of their sub-sect concerning beliefs and controversial issues so that students can use them later – i.e. as preachers and ulama.

The Jama'at-i Islami syllabus (2002) mentions additional books by Maulana Maududi and other intellectuals of the Jama'at on a number of subjects including the hadith. They also teach 'comparative religions'.

The refutation of heretical beliefs

One of the aims of the madrasas, ever since 1057 when Nizam al-Mulk established the famous madrasa at Baghdad, was to counter heresies within the Islamic world and outside influences which could change or dilute Islam. Other religions are refuted in 'comparative religions' but there are specific books for heresies within the Islamic world. In Pakistan the ulama unite in refuting the beliefs of the Ahmadi (or Qaidianis) (for these views see Friedmann 1989). The Deoband course for the Aliyya (B.A.) degree includes five books refuting Ahmadi beliefs (GOP 1988: 71). The Barelwis prescribe no specific books.

However, the fatwas of the pioneer, Ahmad Riza Khan, are referred to and they refute the ideas of the other sects and sub-sects. The Ahl-i Hadith note that in 'comparative religions' they would refute the Ahmadi beliefs. The Shias too do not prescribe any specific books. The Jama'at-i Islami's syllabus (2002) prescribes four books for the refutation of 'Qaidiani religion'. Besides the Ahmadi, other beliefs deemed to be heretical are also refuted. All these books are written in a polemical style and are in Urdu which all madrasa students understand.

The refutation of alien philosophies

The earliest madrasas refuted Greek philosophy which was seen as an intellectual invasion of the Muslim ideological space. Since the rise of the West, madrasas, and even more than them revivalist movements outside the madrasas, refute Western philosophies. Thus, there are books given in the reading lists for Aliyya (B.A.) of 1988 by the Deobandis refuting capitalism, socialism and feudalism. These books are no longer listed but they are in print and in the libraries of the madrasas. The Jama'at-i Islami probably goes to great lengths – judging from its 2002 syllabus – to make the students aware of Western domination, the exploitative potential of Western political and economic ideas and the disruptive influence of Western liberty and individualism on Muslim societies. Besides Maududi's own books on all subjects relating to the modern world, a book on the conflict between Islam and Western ideas (Nadwi n.d.) is widely available.

These texts, which may be called Radd-texts, may not be formally taught in most of the madrasas as the ulama claim, but they are being printed which

means they are in circulation. They are openly sold in the market and sometimes in front of mosques. They are also available in the libraries of madrasas. They may be given as supplementary reading material or used in the arguments by the teachers which are probably internalized by the students. In any case, being in Urdu rather than Arabic, such texts can be comprehended rather than merely memorized. As such, without formally being given the centrality which the Dars-i Nizami has, the opinions these texts disseminate – opinions against other sects, sub-sects, etc., seen as being heretical by the ulama, Western ideas – may be the major formative influence on the minds of madrasa students. Thus, while it is true that education in the madrasa produces religious, sectarian, sub-sectarian and anti-Western bias, it may not be true to assume that this bias automatically translates into militancy and violence of the type Pakistan has experienced. For that to happen other factors – the arming of religious young men to fight in Afghanistan and Kashmir; the state’s clampdown on free expression of political dissent during Zia al-Haq’s martial law; the appalling poverty of rural, peripheral areas and urban slums, Western domination and injustices etc. – must be taken into account.

Another factor which must be taken into account is Khalid Ahmed’s thesis that the madrasas create a rejectionist world-view. In his own words:

The danger from madrasa is not its ability to train for terrorism and teach violence, but in its ability to isolate its pupils completely from society representing existential Islam and indoctrinate them with rejectionism.

A graduate from a madrasa is more likely to be persuaded to activate himself in the achievement of an ‘exclusive’ shariah than a pupil drawn from a normal state-owned institution. (Ahmed 2006: 64)

Poverty and socio-economic class of madrasa students

Madrasas in Pakistan are generally financed by voluntary charity provided by the bazaar businessmen and others who believe that they are earning great merit by contributing to them. Some of them are also given financial assistance by foreign governments – the Saudi government is said to help the Ahl-i Hadith seminaries and the Iranian government the Shia ones – but there is no proof of this assistance. And even if it does exist, it goes only to a few madrasas, whereas the vast majority of them are run on charity (zakat=alms, khairat=charity, atiyat=gifts, etc.). The Zia al-Haq government (1977–1988) tried to gain influence on the madrasas by distributing the zakat funds to them in the 1980s. The only scholarly study of this is by Jamal Malik, who points out that most of the madrasas who received these funds were Deobandi. However, as the madrasas had to be registered, this increased the government’s influence over them (Malik 1996: 150–153).

The government of Pakistan gives financial assistance to the madrasas even now for modernizing textbooks, including secular subjects in the curricula and introducing computers. In 2001–2002 a total of Rs 1,654,000 was given to all madrasas which accepted this help. As the number of students is 1,065,277 this comes to Rs 1.55 per student per year. The government also launched a US\$113 million plan to teach secular subjects to 8,000 willing madrasas according to the US Congressional Research

Service report (New York Times, 15 March 2005. Quoted from Ahmed 2006: 47). In November 2003, the government decided to allocate US\$50 million annually to registered madrasas. However, not all madrasas accept financial help from the government and the money is not distributed evenly as the above calculations might suggest.

According to the Jamia Salafiyya of Faisalabad, the annual expenditure on the seminary, which has about 700 students, is 40,000,000 rupees. Another madrasa, this time a Barelwi one, gave roughly the same figure for the same number of students. This comes to Rs 5,714 per year (or Rs 476 per month) which is an incredibly small amount of money for education, books, board and lodging. In India, where conditions are similar to those in Pakistan, the madrasa Mazahir al-Ulum in Saharanpur (Uttar Pradesh), has 1,300 students and 115 employees and its income between 2000 and 2001 was Rs 9,720,649 or Rs 948 per student per year (Mehdi 2005: 93).

Table 4.4 Causes of joining madrasas given by students

Table 4.4 Causes of joining madrasas given by students

<i>Cause</i>	<i>Students (%)</i>
Economic	48.95
Social	40.63
Religious	5.71
Educational	3.12
Political	2.09

Source: Hussain 1994: 84.

The expenditure from the government in 2001–2002 was Rs 1,654,000 for all the madrasas in the country and as about 32.6 per cent of madrasas do not receive any financial support at all, the total spending on these institutions is very little (IPS 2002: 33). However, as mentioned above, there are plans to change this in a radical manner.

As the madrasas generally do not charge a tuition fee – though they do charge a small admission fee which does not exceed Rs 400 – they attract very poor students who would not receive any education otherwise. According to Fayyaz Hussain, a student who completed his ethnographic

research on Jamia Ashrafiyya of Lahore in 1994, students joined the madrasa for the reasons listed in Table 4.4:

The categories have not been explained by the author nor is it known exactly what questions were asked from the students. According to Singer:

[the] Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania, one of the most popular and influential Madrasahs (it includes most of the Afghani Taliban leadership among its alumni) – has a student body of 1500 boarding students and 1000 day students, from 6 years old upwards. Each year over 15,000 applicants from poor families vie for its 400 open spaces. (Singer 2001)

According to a survey conducted by Mumtaz Ahmad in 1976:

more than 80 per cent of the madrasa students in Peshawar, Multan, and Gujranwala were found to be sons of small or landless peasants, rural artisans, or village imams of the mosques. The remaining 20 per cent came from families of small shopkeepers and rural laborers. (quoted from Ahmad 2000: 185)

According to a survey by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), 64 per cent of the madrasa students come from rural areas and belong to poor agrarian families (IPS 2002: 41). The present researcher also observed that many students, upon probing, confessed that their parents had admitted them in the madrasas because they could not afford to feed them and educate them in the government schools. Even such students, while making this confession, also insist that they are in the madrasas because of their love for Islam.

In my survey of December 2002 and January 2003, madrasa students and teachers were asked about their income. Not many replied to these questions, but of those who did 76.62 per cent suggest that they belong to poor sections of society. Many teachers of the madrasas (61.11 per cent) also belong to the same socio-economic class as their students (for details see Rahman 2004: Annex 1). The madrasas provide sustenance for all these poor people.

In short, the madrasas are performing the role of the welfare state in the country. This being so, their influence on rural people and the poorer sections of the urban proletariat will continue to increase as poverty increases.

Poverty and the roots of religious violence

The proposition that there is a connection between poverty and religious violence has empirical backing. Khalid Ahmed quotes the cases of Jihadi leaders from Pakistan who had a madrasa background. He says that, because they reject all forms of governance after the pious caliphate, they are in a condition of perpetual revolt against the modern state. He mentions a number of cases: Qari Saifullah Akhtar (b. 1958) (head of Harkat-i Jihad-i Islami who influenced the Islamist officers implicated in a coup in 1995); Maulana Masood Azhar (head of Jaish-i Muhammad); Abdullah Mehsud (from Banuri Masjid in Karachi; he abducted two Chinese engineers in 2004); Mufti Shamsuddin Shamazai (d. 2004) (patron of Harkat al-Mujahidin which has been known for fighting in Kashmir) (Ahmed 2006: 51–63). Qasim Zaman also tells us that in Jhang – the birthplace of the militant Sunni organization called the Sipah-i Sahaba – the proportion of

Shias in the affluent urban middle class is higher than other areas of Pakistan. Moreover, the feudal gentry too has many Shia families. Thus the Sipah-i Sahaba appeals to the interests of the ordinary people who are oppressed by the rich and the influential. Indeed, Maulana Haqq Nawaz, the fiery preacher who raised much animosity against the Shias, was ‘himself a man of humble origin’ and ‘had a reputation for being much concerned with the welfare of the poor and the helpless, and he was known to regularly spend time at government courts helping out poor illiterate litigants’ (Zaman 2002: 125).

Another leader of the Sipah-i Sahaba, Maulana Isar al-Qasimi (1964–1991), also preached in Jhang. He too denounced the Shia magnates of the area, and the peasants, terrorized by the feudal magnates, responded to him as if he were a messiah. Even shopkeepers rejoiced in the aggressive Sunni identity he helped create. When the Shia feudal lords attacked and burnt some defiant Sunni shops this identity was further radicalized (Zaman 2002: 127). Masood Azhar, devoted to Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, became an aggressive fighter against the Shia as well as in Kashmir (Ahmed 2006: 61).

In the same manner, the Muslim radicals in the Philippines also attack social and economic privilege. Indeed, Islamist movements from Turkey to Indonesia talk of the poor and oppressed and sometimes do take up their cause. This has won them votes in Turkey where they have been suppressed by the secular military. It was also a major factor for mobilization in Iran against the Shah who was seen as being rich, wasteful, corrupt and decadent. So, though difficult to demonstrate, Islamic militancy – whether by radicalized madrasa students or members of Islamist or Jihadi groups in Pakistan – has an element of class conflict. It is, at least in part, a reaction of the have-nots against the haves. This is a dangerous trend for the country because madrasa students are taught to be intolerant of religious minorities and are hawkish about Kashmir. As they are also from poor backgrounds they express their sense of being cheated by society in the idiom of religion. This gives them the self-righteousness to fight against the oppressive and unjust system in the name of Islam.

The world-view of madrasa students

The madrasa students are the most intolerant of all the other student groups in Pakistan. They are also the most supportive of an aggressive foreign policy. In my survey of 2002–2003, mentioned earlier, the madrasa students were the only group of students – out of Urdu and English-medium school students – who supported both overt and covert conflict with India over Kashmir in large numbers. They were also against giving equal rights to non-Muslims (equal to Muslims) and women (equal to men) as citizens. These figures and the survey itself are given in Rahman 2004: Annex 2. However, an excerpt from the survey showing the key points can be found in Appendix 1.

Madrasas and militancy

The madrasas are obviously institutions which have a blueprint of society in mind. What needs explanation is that the madrasas, which were basically conservative institutions before the Afghan–Soviet War of the 1980s, are

both ideologically activist and sometimes militant. This, indeed, is the major change which seems to have occurred in the Pakistani religious establishment. The British conquest was opposed with some armed resistance, but mostly the ulama retreated into their madrasas where orthodoxy, conserving the legacy of the past, was the order of the day. Folk Islam in South Asia was mystical, ritualistic and superstitious. The Barelwi sub-sect, which was very popular, supported extreme reverence for saints and rituals – such as the distribution of sweetmeats (halwa) on certain sacred days. This type of Islam was challenged by the Deobandis, the Ahl-i Hadith and the Jama'at-i Islami because none of these believed in the intercession of saints, the distribution of food on fixed days or other practices of folk Islam. These strict religious groups found unexpected allies among modernist Muslims and Westernized or secular urban people who were in a Muslim culture but whose world-view was Western. All these people opposed mysticism and folk Islam also, which they considered irrational and retrogressive. The result of these tendencies was that Islam came to be defined more and more in legalistic terms and the conservative point of view came to be replaced slowly by the revivalist one.

As the Pakistani ulama came to be drawn more and more into the ideology of the state (by becoming teachers of Arabic in ordinary schools or minor bureaucrats, for instance (see Malik 1996: 273)), they became politicized. They began to consider how they could pursue power to make the society Islamic, as they understood the term. The Iranian revolution of 1979, the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the late 1980s and, later, the rise of the Taliban convinced the Pakistani ulama that Islam could be a power in its own right. In short, the ulama were drifting from conservatism to revivalism and activism. The Deobandi and Ahl-i Hadith ulama were more consciously revivalist, as were the Shia ulama but, on the whole, the character of Islam, as preached in Pakistan, has undergone a tremendous change. Even the Barelwi sub-sect, with the second-largest madrasa board in the country, is not entirely peaceful. The ICG report of 2007 says that the 'Faizan-e-Madina chain' of madrasas is 'certainly militant in its approach', but adds that much of their hostility is directed 'more towards the Deobandis and Ahl-e-Hadith than Shias' (ICG 2007: 11).

So, while the basic texts of the Dars-i Nizami remain the same, what has changed is that the ulama are more conscious of world affairs which they see and describe with reference to the Crusades. Indeed, Karen Armstrong, writing on the impact of the Crusades on the world, states clearly that 'The wars in the Middle East today are becoming more like the Crusades in this respect, especially in the religious escalation on both sides of the conflict' (Armstrong 1988: 530). And it is not just the Israel–Arab conflict but other wars in the Muslim world which are seen in religious terms. Thus, even before Huntington presented his thesis about the 'clash of civilizations', the imams of Pakistani mosques used to describe world affairs with reference to such a theory. This political conciseness invoking the name of Kashmir and Palestine in Pakistan, has permeated much of the religious establishment and the middle class in Pakistan (see my survey of 1999 in Rahman 2002: Appendix 14). Thus, not just the madrasa teachers and students but people

from secular institutions belonging to the lower-middle and middle classes respond to political Islam. Such people see the West in general and the United States in particular as the major forces for oppression and injustice in the world. According to Peter L. Bergen, author of a book on Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda group: ‘nowhere is bin Laden more popular than in Pakistan’s madrasas, religious schools from which the Taliban draw many of its recruits’ (Bergen 2001: 150). While it is not clear how Bergen obtained this information, my own impression is that his statement is largely accurate, but it can be said that bin Laden is also popular among a number of non-madrasa-educated young Muslims, especially the politically aware ones.

What made the madrasas militant?

Not all madrasas are militant. Those which became militant when they were used by the Pakistani state to fight in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation and then in Kashmir so as to force India to leave the state. Pakistan’s claim on Kashmir, as discussed by many including Alastair Lamb (1977), has led to conflict with India and the Islamic militants or jihadis, who have entered the fray since 1989. The United States indirectly (and sometimes directly) helped in creating militancy among the clergy. For instance, special textbooks in Dari (Afghan Persian) and Pashto were written at the University of Nebraska–Omaha with a USAID grant in the 1980s (Stephens and Ottaway 2002: Sec. A, p. 1). American arms and money flowed to Afghanistan through Pakistan’s Inter Services Intelligence as several books have indicated (see Cooley 1999). At that time all this was done with the aim of defeating the Soviet Union.

The fact that until January 2002, when General Pervez Musharraf clamped down on Islamic militants, lists published by fighting groups included madrasa and non-madrasa students, suggests that at least some madrasas did send their students to fight in Kashmir. This has been reduced considerably, though *The Herald*, one of the most prestigious monthly publications from Karachi, tells us in its July 2005 issue that ‘hundreds of young boys between the ages of 13 and 15 years make ready cannon fodder for violent militant campaigns’ (p. 53). These young boys, who do not necessarily belong to madrasas, belong to private armies – there are said to be 15 of them – raised by different religious-political parties. *The Herald*’s implication is that, at some covert level, the state is still supporting these militant outfits so that they can be used to fight in Kashmir if the peace process fails.

However, while Pakistan’s military kept using militant Islamists in Kashmir, the United States was much alarmed by them – and not without reason, as the events of 9/11 demonstrated later. The Americans then attempted to understand the madrasas better. P.W. Singer, an analyst in the Brookings Institute, wrote that there were 10–15 per cent of ‘radical’ madrasas which teach anti-American rhetoric, terrorism and even impart military training (Singer 2001). No proof for these claims was offered. However, fighters from Afghanistan, Kashmir and even Chechnya did come to the madrasas, and it is possible that their contact with the students

inspired the madrasa students to fight against those whom they saw as the enemies of Islam.

More significantly, the private armed groups or armies either associated with religious parties or acting on their own, train both madrasa and other school dropouts. They were financed by the intelligence agencies of Pakistan, as The Herald, Newline, Friday Times and a number of Pakistani publications have repeatedly claimed in the past few years. Some of these armies such as Lashkar-i Tayyaba, Jaish-i Muhammad and Harkat al-Mujahidin print militant literature which circulates among the madrasas and other institutions. According to chapter 3 of a book entitled Ideas on Democracy, Freedom and Peace in Text- books (2003), Al-Da'wah uses textbooks for English in which many questions and answers refer to war, weapons, blood and victory. According to the author: 'The students studying in jihadi schools are totally brain washed right from the very beginning. The textbooks have been authored to provide only onedimensional worldview and restrict the independent thought process of children' (Liberal Forum 2003: 72). Although these parties have been banned, their members are said to be dispersed all over Pakistan, especially in the madrasas. The madrasas, then, may be the potential centres of Islamic militancy in Pakistan not because of what they teach but because of the politically motivated people, committed to radical, political Islam, who seek refuge in them. However, such people are to be found outside the madrasas also. It is to this aspect that we turn now.

Militancy and Islamist fighters

Islamic militancy is going on in many parts of the world, notable among which are Palestine, Chechnya, the Philippines, Afghanistan, Kashmir and parts of Central Asia (for this last see Rashid 2002). However, what is surprising to many people is that secular institutions and Western countries also produce Islamic militants. As Olivier Roy points out, most young Islamist militants are trained in secular institutions. He cites many names of the 9/11 militants concluding that: 'None (except for the Saudis) was educated in a Muslim religious school and Jarrah even attended a Lebanese Christian School. Most of them studied technology, computing, or town planning, as the World Trade Center pilots had done' (Roy 2004: 310). Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey claimed that they 'examined the educational backgrounds of 75 terrorists behind some of the most significant recent terrorist attacks against Westerners. They found that a majority of them were college-educated, often in technical subjects like engineering.' About 53 per cent of the terrorists had been to college while 'only 52 per cent of Americans had been to college' (New York Times, 15 March 2005). This also seems to be true about the young British Muslims who struck on 7 July 2005 as well as the cadres of the Jama'at-i Islami in Pakistan who support fighting in Kashmir, though most of them come from the state education system and not the madrasas. Moreover, Sohail Abbas, a psychologist who interviewed jihadis who were incarcerated in Pakistani jails after having been captured in Afghanistan, where they had gone to fight the United States in defence of the Taliban in 2001, corroborates the same finding:

What we can say is that 232 jihadis out of the 319 in the Haripur group had attended school for at least five years or more. That means that most of the jihadis were in fact educated and that too in the mainstream education system. (Abbas 2006: 84)

In the Haripur group only 22.3 per cent had attended the madrasa while in the Peshawar group, out of 198, only 70 (35.5 per cent) had been to the madrasa. But even in the latter case, most (61.2 per cent) had attended the madrasa only for one to three months (Abbas 2006: 90–91). In short, mainstream education is no guarantee of preventing a person joining militant groups. In this context the influence of Islamists, whether in the peer group, family or teachers, is crucial.

Roy further points out that deterritorialized Muslims in Western countries, being overwhelmed by the dominant culture around them, fall back upon the Islamic identity. They are not guided by traditional texts or the ulama; they find their own meanings from the fundamental texts of the faith (the Qur'an and the hadith). Their neo-colonial reaction to the injustice of the world order, the irresistible globalization which seems to inundate all civilizations under the banner of Mickey Mouse, is to lash out in fury against Western targets and the elites in Muslim countries which support Western policies. They use the idiom of Islam but the anger which motivates them comes from a sense of being cheated. There are, of course, pegs to hang this anger on: Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran – the list can go on. But essentially, Muslim militancy is a reaction to Western injustice, violence and a history of exploitation and domination over Muslims. This can only be reversed by genuinely reversing Western militant policies and establishing a more equitable distribution of global wealth.

Can Islamic militancy be reduced?

In Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf feels that Islamic militancy can be reduced as far as Pakistan's madrasas are concerned, if secular subjects are taught in them and if foreigners are not allowed to study there.

What are called secular subjects were taught as ma'qulat in Mughal madrasas because one of the functions of these institutions was to produce bureaucrats for the state. What is now being advocated is to add the social sciences, English, computer skills and mathematics to the curricula. General Musharraf's military government introduced a law called the Pakistan Madrasa Education (Establishment and Affiliation of Model Dini Madaris) Board Ordinance 2001 on 18 August 2001. According to the Education Sector Reforms (GOP 2002c) three model institutions were established: one each at Karachi, Sukkur and Islamabad. Their curriculum 'includes subjects of English, Mathematics, Computer Science, Economics, Political Science, Law and Pakistan Studies' for its different levels (GOP 2002c: 23). These institutions were not welcomed by the ulama (for opposition from the ulama see Wafaq al-Madaris No. 6: Vol. 2, 2001).

However, some modern subjects have been taught for quite some time in the madrasas. The Ahl-i Hadith madrasas have been teaching Pakistan studies, English, mathematics and general science for a long time (GOP 1988: 85). The Jama'at-i Islami also teaches secular subjects. The larger

Deobandi, Barelwi and Shia madrasas have also made arrangements for teaching secular subjects including basic computer skills. According to a report in the weekly *The Friday Times* the Deobandi Wafaq al-Madaris has decided to accommodate modern subjects on a larger scale than ever before. They would make the students stay at school another two years to give a more thorough grounding in the secular subjects. The Wafaq has also formed committees to devise ways to capitalize on the government's US\$255 million for the madrasa reform scheme (Mansoor 2003). However, at present, the teaching is carried out by teachers approved by the ulama, or some of the ulama themselves. Thus, the potential for secularization of the subjects, which is small in any case, is reduced to nothing.

I believe that all attempts at secularizing madrasas will probably backfire. First, the madrasas work on charitable donations so they will not submit to the government's fiat. Second, they are not the only source of militants. It is poverty and the fighting in Kashmir and elsewhere in the world which does so, therefore these external conditions – greatly dependent on government policy as they are – must be changed to produce peaceful people. Third, the textbooks of the so-called 'secular' subjects produced by the educational boards in Pakistan are anti-India and tend to glorify armed conflict (Aziz 1993; Saigol 1995; Rahman 2002: 515–524; and Nayyar and Salim 2003). Moreover, the people who will teach 'secular' subjects will be selected by the clergy and will likely be highly politicized Islamists who are even more fiery in their denunciations of peace, liberal values and the West than even the ulama themselves. In any case, as we have observed earlier, Islamists from traditional educational institutions are even more prone to political violence than madrasa students. Thus, no amount of 'secularization' of the madrasas will eliminate violence.

The other proposal, that of not allowing foreigners to study in the madrasas, may be more successful. A law has now been introduced to control the entry of foreigners in the madrasas and keep a check on them. This law – Voluntary Registration and Regulation Ordinance 2002 – has, however, been rejected by most of the madrasas which want no state interference in their affairs (see Wafaq al-Madaris Vol. 3, No. 9, 2002, and unstructured interviews of the ulama). Indeed, according to Singer, '4,350, about one tenth, agreed to be registered and the rest simply ignored the statute' (Singer 2001). The number of those who did not register is not known. However, on 29 July 2005 President Musharraf said in an interview with foreign correspondents that 1,400 foreign students would be expelled and visas to aspiring students denied (*The News*, 30 July 2005). If this policy is rigorously enforced, motivated extremists from other parts of the Muslim world may cease entering Pakistan. Certain other recommendations, for instance those coming from the ICG, need to be carefully studied for possible implementation (see ICG 2007: 11–12). For instance, the state must impose law and order without fear of political fallout. In the case of the 29 March kidnapping of women by Jamia Hafsa students in Islamabad the state failed to act, on the basis that the kidnappers were women. This kind of dereliction of responsibility cannot but encourage the Islamic militants to

take the law into their own hands and increase what has been described as ‘Talibanization’ of the country.

Conclusion

Madrasas are not the only cause of potential violence in Pakistan or the world in general. They always had a sectarian bias as well as a bias against non-Muslims, but this did not necessarily translate into militancy. Nor are the madrasa students the only ones who are militant. Indeed, most of those who indulge in suicide bombings and actual fighting against non-Muslim targets are young, radical, angry Muslims who are dropouts or graduates of secular institutions of learning.

The madrasa students of Pakistan were radicalized because the United States and then successive governments in Pakistan used them to fight proxy wars against the Soviet Union and India (for Kashmir) respectively. Other Muslims were radicalized because of the neo-colonial policies of the West which makes Muslims feel they are being unjustly treated.

Thus, if militancy is to be decreased in Pakistan the ruling elite of the country would have to distribute wealth more equitably and provide justice to the poorest who send their children to the madrasas or religious armies. It would also have to eliminate all policies leading to the arming or militarization of religious cadres. This can only happen when there is peace with India, which is necessary if the world is to be at peace. Moreover, the government of Pakistan must oppose American aggression in the Muslim world without, however, allowing the Islamic militant groups to ignore the writ of the state as is happening in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (the case of the kidnapping and murder of a school principal who had prevented the jihadis from recruiting boys from his school in March 2007). The use of religion to legitimize the rule of the elite, as has been happening so far, will also have to stop. This would mean the reversal of laws enacted during Zia al-Haq’s rule which are misused and give more power to the religious lobby. It also entails the rewriting of textbooks so that they promote tolerance, peace and human rights in the country. Above all, the state must establish the rule of law and economic justice, because without them the anger that has built up in the society can take the form of a religious struggle to protest against the degradation and violation of daily life.

Appendix 4.1

Survey 2003

Survey of schools and madrasas

This survey is given in full in Rahman (2004: Annexures 1 and 2). The gist of the responses to some of the crucial questions on opinions of students is given below:

What should be Pakistan’s priorities?

1. Take Kashmir away from India by an open war?

(1) Yes (2) No (3) Don’t know 2. Take Kashmir away from India by supporting Jihadi groups to fight with the Indian army?

(1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know 3. Support Kashmir cause through peaceful means only (i.e. no open war or sending Jihadi groups across the line of control)?

(1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know 4. Give equal rights to Ahmadis in all jobs etc.?

(1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know 5. Give equal rights to Pakistani Hindus in all jobs etc.?

(1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know 6. Give equal rights to Pakistani Christians in all jobs etc.?

(1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know 7. Give equal rights to men and women as in Western countries?

(1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know 82

Table 4.5 Consolidated data of opinions indicating militancy and tolerance among three types of school students in Pakistan in survey 2003 (%)

Table 4.5 Consolidated data of opinions indicating militancy and tolerance among three types of school students in Pakistan in survey 2003 (%)

Abbreviated questions and responses	Madrastas	Urdu-medium schools	English-medium schools	Cadet colleges/public schools	Government colleges (326)	Public universities (206)	Private universities (133)
1. Open War							
Yes	59.86	39.56	25.86	36.92	46.01	34.95	35.34
No	31.69	53.04	64.66	60.00	48.47	55.34	57.89
Don't know	8.45	7.39	9.48	3.08	5.52	9.71	6.77
2. Jihadi groups							
Yes	52.82	33.04	22.41	53.08	50.00	46.12	34.59
No	32.39	45.22	60.34	40.00	38.04	43.20	57.14
Don't know	14.79	21.74	17.24	6.92	11.96	10.68	8.27
3. Peaceful means							
Yes	33.80	75.65	72.41	56.15	60.43	58.25	57.14
No	54.93	18.26	18.97	36.92	22.70	28.64	35.34
Don't know	11.27	6.09	8.62	6.92	16.87	13.11	7.52
4. Ahmadis							
Yes	12.68	46.95	65.52	41.54	38.04	38.83	40.60
No	82.39	36.95	9.48	36.92	38.34	49.51	36.84
Don't know	4.93	16.09	25.00	21.54	23.62	11.65	22.56
5. Hindus							
Yes	16.90	47.39	78.45	64.62	59.20	54.37	69.92
No	76.06	42.61	13.79	31.54	31.90	38.83	21.05
Don't know	7.04	10.00	7.76	3.85	8.89	6.80	9.02
6. Christians							
Yes	18.31	65.65	83.62	76.92	72.09	66.99	78.95
No	73.24	26.52	8.62	18.46	21.17	29.13	14.29
Don't know	8.45	7.83	7.76	4.62	6.75	3.88	6.77
7. Women							
Yes	16.90	75.22	90.52	67.69	65.34	64.56	76.69
No	77.46	17.39	6.03	25.38	30.98	31.55	17.29
Don't know	5.63	7.39	3.45	6.92	3.68	3.88	6.02

Note

Figures for (3) are uninterpretable because some respondents ticked opinion (1) and/or (2) while also ticking (3).

Appendi 4.2 and 4.3

Table 4.6 Number of Dini Madrasas by enrolment and teaching staff

And

Appendix 4.3

Table 4.7 Dini Madrasas by type of affiliation and area

Appendix 4.2

Table 4.6 Number of Dini Madrasas by enrolment and teaching staff

Area	Number of dini madaris covered	Number of dini madaris refusal	Number of dini madaris for which data is collected	Enrolment	Teaching staff
Pakistan	12,979	826	12,300	1,549,242	58,391
Punjab	5,459	159	5,300	674,281	24,977
Sindh	1,935	119	1,816	312,693	11,951
NWFP	2,843	279	2,568	336,983	12,058
Balochistan	769	99	670	65,597	2,891
ICT	77	15	62	10,557	657
FATA	135	43	92	14,162	481
FANA	1,193	39	1,154	88,540	3,160
AJK	568	77	491	46,429	2,216

Source: GOP 2006: Table 9, p. 23.

Appendix 4.3

Table 4.7 Dini Madrasas by type of affiliation and area

Area	Total	Affiliated with				Not affiliated
		Wafaq	Tanzim	Rabta	Others	
Pakistan	12,979	3,686 (28.4%)	2,829 (21.8%)	973 (7.5%)	999 (7.7%)	4,491 (34.6%)
Punjab	5,459	1,518 (27.8%)	1,370 (25.1%)	382 (7%)	306 (5.5%)	1,883 (34.5%)
Sindh	1,935	544 (28.1%)	478 (24.7%)	174 (9%)	182 (9.4%)	557 (28.8%)
NWFP	2,843	1,086 (38.2%)	389 (13.7%)	148 (5.2%)	214 (7.5%)	1,006 (35.4%)
Balochistan	769	201 (26.1%)	121 (15.7%)	51 (6.6%)	51 (6.7%)	345 (44.9%)
ICT	77	36 (46.8%)	20 (25.8%)	7 (9.7%)	2 (1.6%)	12 (16.1%)
FATA	135	31 (22.8%)	22 (16.3%)	22 (16.3%)	12 (8.7%)	48 (35.9%)
FANA	1,193	137 (11.5%)	267 (22.4%)	137 (11.5%)	186 (15.5%)	466 (39.1%)
AJK	568	151 (26.5%)	148 (26.1%)	48 (8.4%)	52 (9.2%)	170 (29.9%)

Source: GOP 2006: Table 10, p. 24.

Note

1 Apart from the literature cited, information for this chapter were collected through interviews. Many ulama and most students of madrasas did not want their interviews to be recorded by name. Those who allowed their names to be mentioned are listed below.

Hussain, Mohammad. Interview with the Nazim-i Daftar of Jamia al-Salafiyya, Islamabad, 13 December 2002.

Zafar, Mohammad Iqbal. Interview with the Head of Jamia Rizwiyya Zia al-Ulum, Satellite Town, Rawalpindi, 26 December 2002.

5: PAKISTANI MADRASAS AND RURAL UNDERDEVELOPMENT

An empirical study of Ahmedpur East

Saleem H. Ali*

Introduction

Islamic educational institutions have come under intense public scrutiny in recent years because of their perceived link to militancy. However, much of the research thus far has relied upon anecdotal accounts and investigative journalism, rather than rigorous social science. This study acknowledges and respects that madrasas are a vital institution in Islam and indeed in many cases even non-Muslims have sent their children to madrasas because of the high quality of education (such as those in West Bengal, India). However, Pakistani madrasas have endured much interference from various sources that have led to certain differences in operational style and function as compared to their historical predecessors. The aim of this chapter is to bring integrative and objective clarity to the issue – moving away from the propagandist negative accounts about madrasas as well as the revisionist positive accounts or diminution of their impact on Pakistani society. Madrasas do indeed have a significant impact on Pakistani society – both positive and negative. This study aims to provide an empirically grounded analysis of madrasas in Pakistan, thereby informing the larger discussion of the role of Islamic education in conflict causality.

While this topic has received widespread media coverage and has been discussed within the broader context of radical Islamization, the research thus far has generally been predicated on observational accounts and anecdotes that range from strongly positive to vehemently negative. Akbar S. Ahmed (2002) considers madrasas to be a “cheaper, more accessible and more Islamic alternative to education.” Singer (2001) calls them a “displacement of the public education system.” Jeffrey Goldberg (2000), even before 9/11, terms them as a means of “education of the holy warrior.” Jessica Stern (2004), while describing them as emblematic of “Pakistan’s jihad culture,” uses epithets and subheadings like “schools of hate” and “Jihad International Inc.” Andre Coulson (2004) refers to madrasas as “weapons of mass instruction.” Most consequentially, the 9/11 Commission refers to madrasas as “incubators of violent extremism.”¹

Recently, there have also been revisionist accounts of madrasa prevalence that question the sensationalism of some media reports. Even some journalists and travel writers have taken exception to this sensationalism and begun to publish more humane accounts of madrasas (Dalrymple 2005). Of particular note has been a controversial study prepared with World Bank funding that questions the need for such anxiety over madrasas by providing data that suggests their limited prevalence within the larger context of Pakistani schooling (Andrabi et al. 2006). This study contends that much of the information in reports and government documents, including the 9/11 Commission report of the US government, have largely predicated their estimate of madrasa enrollment on anecdotal

accounts. In particular, the World Bank study targets the work of the International Crisis Group – ICG (2004) for perpetuating an error in calculation of madrasa percentage.² While there was indeed a decimal calculation error in the ICG report, the World Bank study misses the major point that the exact number of madrasas might not necessarily be consequential in terms of conflict linkages.

Unlike the World Bank study that relied on Pakistan household census data and conducted some of its own household surveys to ascertain from families where they were sending their children for schooling, our study relies on exhaustive establishment surveys of each madrasa in Ahmedpur sub-district in Punjab. We thus get first-hand information from the schools themselves about enrollment, funding sources and connections with sectarian activity. The usual critique of establishment surveys in this context can be that schools might not provide accurate information about enrollment for strategic purposes of either gaining more government funding or diminishing scale to avoid political suspicion. However, we relied on local staff from villages in the area to conduct the surveys to provide quality assurance. We also supplemented our quantitative analysis with detailed interviews at the local and regional level with clerics, government officials, madrasa students, researchers from academia, journalists, and representatives from non-governmental organizations. Our aim is to thus provide an integrative, nuanced and prescriptive analysis that can have greater policy relevance and applicability.

Definition

The word “madrasa” is derived from the Arabic word *dars*, meaning lesson. In contemporary Arabic, the word “madrasa” means “center of learning.” The Arabic word *madrasa* generally has two meanings: in its more everyday usage, it means school and in its secondary meaning, it is an educational institution offering instruction in Islamic subjects including the Qur’an, the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, jurisprudence and law. Madrasas are in some ways analogous to a seminary in Christian tradition (Armanios 2003).

Madrasas 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 madrasas for Qur’anic lessons and memorization where they are usually day students. A madrasa student learns how to read, memorize and recite the Qur’an properly. Madrasas issue certificates of various levels. A primary or part-time religious school and one focused primarily on Qur’anic recitation and memorization is often referred to as a *maktab* (derived from the Arabic word *kataba*, to write), and an integrated school with various levels is simply called a madrasa. While the distinction between a *maktab* and a madrasa 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 madrasas are residential and often these play a more significant role in shaping the personality of students. Our study thus tries to differentiate between residential and nonresidential madrasas where possible.

At the time of independence in 1947, there were only 137 madrasas in Pakistan. According to a 1956 survey, there were 244 madrasas in all of Pakistan (excluding East Pakistan which became Bangladesh in 1971).³ While there is no comprehensive census of madrasas across Pakistan at present, a reasonable estimate based on our review of multiple empirical and journalistic sources would suggest that there are between 12,000 and 15,000 madrasas in Pakistan.⁴ However, as noted earlier the absolute number of madrasas across Pakistan is not consequential for understanding any conflict linkages. Instead, we focused on a case study of particular relevance to conflict dynamics and the demographics within the case – in particular the relationship between the various Islamic sects in this case.

Case analysis

The data on madrasas was gathered through primary field visits by individual survey data collectors. Statistics on government and private schools were obtained from secondary sources such as the UNESCO Education Atlas or the Ministry of Education. An effort was made to verify these numbers through cross-checking with local officials and civil society groups. A form was devised for the purpose of data collection from each madrasa and contained the following information:

1 Name of Police Station [key unit of administration and research analysis].

2 Name of Madrasa.

3 Name of In-charge/Manager.

4 Location (village/street).

5 Year of establishment.

6 Number of students-residential and non-residential.

7 Sect to which Madrasa belongs.

8 Whether receiving monetary aid from Government (from Zakat fund).⁵

Representatives of the Special Branch (provincial intelligence agency), local police and administration were also consulted for determining sectarian involvement of madrasas.

Ahmedpur case analysis

Ahmedpur East Sub-division, in Bahawalpur district, of Punjab (Pakistan) (Figure 5.1) has an area of approximately 6,000 sq. kilometers, and, of a population of 1,000,000, approximately 800,000 is rural and 200,000 urban.⁶ Ahmedpur East comprises 187 villages, and six police stations. The police station is an administrative unit for law enforcement based on demographic patterns. The sub-division is situated on the left bank of river Sutlej in the southern-most part of Punjab (Figure 5.1).

During the last decade, this region has been the locus of considerable sectarian violence. The region has a history of many fatal and violent incidents involving the Sipah-i Sahaba Pakistan (SSP-Deobandis) and Tahrik-i Jaffariyya Pakistan (TJP-Shias). Ahmedpur East Sub-division is considered to be a stronghold of the SSP – the strength of this organization here can be gauged from the fact that during the national elections of 1993, the SSP candidate gained approximately 24,000 votes, despite the fact that

the candidate was from another province and had no direct connection with the area.⁷

Figure 5.1 Study area location map.

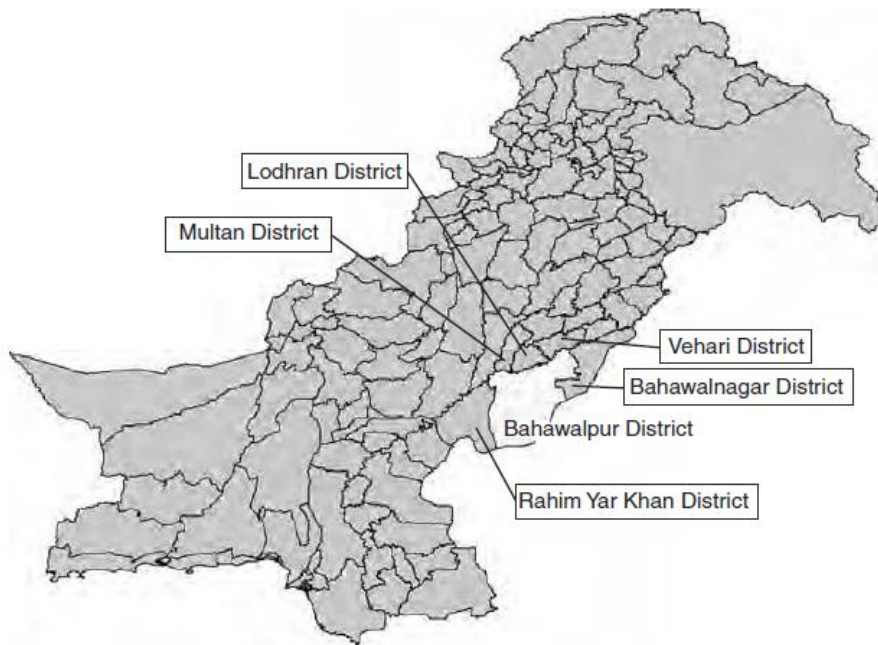


Figure 5.1 Study area location map.

The total number of madrasas in the Sub-division is 363; of these 166 belong to the Deobandi sect, 166 to the Barelwi, 21 to the Salafi (Ahl-i Hadith) and ten to the Shia (Ahl-i Tashi) sects. Percentage-wise, distribution between the different sects is 45.8 percent, 45.8 percent, 5.7 percent, and 2.75 percent respectively. Only 9.3 percent of the madrasas (34 out of 363) are receiving monetary aid from the Government/Zakat fund. Table 5.1 summarizes the results of the survey conducted for this study in Ahmedpur by sects.

An analysis of the growth of the madrasas shows that prior to 1975 and 1980 there were 82 and 124 madrasas respectively in Ahmedpur East. Much of the growth was experienced between 1980 and 1995, the growth of madrasas has greatly slowed down after 2001 – only eight new madrasas were set up between 2001 and 2004. This slowdown in growth can be attributed to a general administrative policy wherein new madrasas are being registered after an inquiry, and a ban imposed on the registration of new madrasas was in effect until September 2004, when it was lifted by authorities. However, the madrasas established earlier are still largely unregistered and very little effort is being expended in trying to register them.

It is worthwhile to compare this data with the survey done by the field research coordinator of this study in 1994, in the same area – this provides a rare comparison of data pertaining to the same area after ten years. Figure 5.2 provides the ten-year growth comparison for madrasas in this Sub-division.

During the last ten years, the number of madrasas has increased from 266 to 363. There has been a marked increase in the number of Deobandi and Barelwi madrasas. However, the rate of increase in Barelwi madrasas has been higher in the last ten years. This finding also matches the information gathered during the interviews which suggests that the Barelwi movement has also gained momentum as a foil to the rise of Deobandi madrasas. The coverage of Zakat to madrasas during this period remained similar, i.e. around 9 percent of Madrasas get monetary support from the Zakat system.

The study shows that a major concentration of these madrasas is in the area of the Police Station Uch Sharif and Naushera Jadid. These two police stations account for 55 percent of the madrasas and 58 percent of the students in the Subdivision. It is worth mentioning that 68 percent of the madrasas in Police Station Naushera Jadid are Deobandi, and incidentally this area is a main support base of the SSP. The same can be said about the madrasas situated in villages in the northern half of Police Station Uch Sharif. Table 5.2 shows the distinction between residential and non-residential madrasas in Ahmedpur.

Almost 40 percent of the students were living in the madrasas, and Deobandi madrasas, although equal in number, had greater student enrollment, particularly of residential students.

Table 5.3 shows the registration status of madrasas with the government. Only 39 madrasas out of 363 were registered. The registration is undertaken under the Societies Act of 1860, which was previously performed by the Registrar Joint Stock companies on the report and clearance by the district administration. After the administrative reforms called “The Devolution Plan 2001,” the authority to register any organization under the Societies Act 1860 has been delegated to the Executive District Officer (Finance and Planning) in the province of Punjab. In the other provinces this authority still remains with the Directorate of Industries at provincial level.

Table 5.1 Number of students by sect in madrasas, 2004

Table 5.1 Number of students by sect in madrasas, 2004

Police station	Number of students						Total						
	Deobandi		Barelwi		Salafi (Ahl-i-Hadith)			Shia					
	Residential	Non-residential	Residential	Non-residential	Residential	Non-residential							
Naushera Jaidid	3,149	2,117	5,266	1,576	490	2,066	30	10	40	104	45	149	7,521
Uch Sharif	759	3,366	4,125	667	1,796	2,463	270	265	535	52	55	107	7,230
Ahmedpur Sadar	274	343	617	2,185	2,111	4,296	91	180	271	0	0	0	5,184
Ahmedpur City	768	1,138	1,906	446	524	970	240	280	520	0	0	0	3,396
Changioth	324	974	1,298	207	931	1,138	0	0	0	0	5	175	2,606
Dera Nawab	100	20	120	72	40	112	0	0	0	0	0	0	232
Total	5,374	7,958	13,332 (51%)	5,153	5,892	11,045 (42%)	631	735	1,366 (5.2%)	161	275	436 (1%)	26,169

A greater proportion of the Barelwi and Salafi/Ahl-i Hadith madrasas are registered. As a general trend, larger madrasas, having an elaborate infrastructure and assets are registered while smaller madrasas (with fewer than 100 students) are mostly not registered.

State of public education and madrasas

Schooling options are an important variable to consider in understanding madrasa prevalence. Table 5.4 shows a comparison of the number of madrasas and student enrollment in different police station areas. It also shows how many schools are closed. These figures pertain to government schools only and include boys' and girls' schools of primary, middle and higher standard, whereas madrasas data shows only male students studying in madrasas since there were very few girl students in madrasas of Ahmedpur East.

Figure 5.2 Increase in number of madrasas in APE 1994–2004.

Table 5.2 Residential versus non-residential madrasas in Ahmedpur

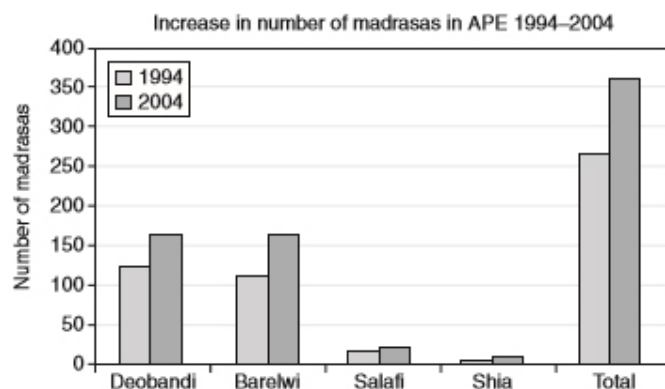


Figure 5.2 Increase in number of madrasas in APE 1994–2004.

Table 5.2 Residential versus non-residential madrasas in Ahmedpur

Sect	Residential	Non residential	Total
Deobandi	5,374	7,958	13,332
Barelwi	5,153	5,892	11,045
Salafi (Ahl-i Hadith)	631	735	1,366
Shia	57	230	287
Total	11,215	14,815	26,030

Table 5.3 Registration status of madrasas

Table 5.3 Registration status of madrasas

Police station	Number of madrasas registration by different sectarian affiliation												Total registered	
	Deobandi			Barelwi			Salafi			Shia				Total (percentage)
	Total	Registered	Total	Registered	Total	Registered	Total	Registered	Total	Registered				
Naushera Jadid	62	1	26	0	1	0	3	0	92 (36%)	1				
Uch Sharif	58	2	44	4	7	0	4	0	113 (32%)	6				
Alimedpur Sadr	10	1	63	13	4	0	0	0	77 (22%)	14				
Alimedpur City	15	3	16	3	9	0	0	0	40 (9%)	6				
Chani Goth	18	4	15	3	0	0	3	1	36 (10%)	8				
Dera Nawab	3	2	02	2	0	0	0	0	5 (1%)	4				
Total	166	13	166	25	21	0	10	1	363	39				

The data shows that, as compared to 363 madrasas, there are 465 schools, of which 69 (almost 13 percent) are closed due to non-availability of

teachers or teacher absenteeism. A total of 55,892 boys and girls were studying in public schools as compared to 26,169 in madrasas.

It is worth noting that two police station areas having fewer madrasas have comparatively more schools and hence more student enrollment. However, in the Police Stations Nushera Jadid and Uch Sharif the number of madrasas is higher than that of government schools. The student enrollment in Naushera Jadid between madrasas and public schools is quite comparable. If one accounts for the girl students, the number of students studying in madrasas and public schools becomes almost equal.

Data on private schools was also obtained from a local association of such schools (the government does not keep any detailed records of private schools).

Only aggregate data for the entire Sub-division was available and indicated that as of December 2004, there were a total of 17,137 students in 95 private schools.

Urdu-medium students account for 15,842 of this amount while there are only 1,295 English-medium students.

Is there madrasa involvement in sectarianism?

The ultimate aim of this study is to question the perceived linkage of madrasas to sectarian violence. This aspect of the research was assessed using proxy indicators – certain features or modes of behavior were picked to classify a madrasa as being involved in sectarianism. The following are some of the indicators used for the purpose:

1 Any madrasa, which is visited by leading sectarian leaders, whose documented speeches have clearly incited violence towards other sects (records of particular events were gathered to assure quality of the data).

Table 5.4 Comparison of government schools and madrasa enrolment in Ahmedpur

<i>Police station</i>	<i>Madrasa enrolment</i>	<i>Government school enrolment</i>	<i>Number of madrasas</i>	<i>Number of schools</i>	<i>Closed schools (%)</i>
Naushera Jadid	7,521	8,166	92	77	20 (20)
Uch Sharif	7,230	15,032	113	110	12 (9.8)
Ahmedpur Sadar	5,184	14,001	77	162	15 (8.4)
Ahmedpur City	3,396	7,554	40	26	0 (0)
Chanigoth	2,606	9,574	36	87	22 (20)
Dera Nawab	232	1,565	5	3	0 (0)
Total	26,169	55,892	363	465	69 (13)

2 If the students/in-charge of a madrasa participate in sectarian processions or gatherings as documented by the police authorities (detailed records are kept by the police authorities regarding apprehensions from each institution).

3 If the management of a madrasa lobbies for, or provides leadership to sectarian issues (documented through distribution of material at the madrasa and sermons at adjoining mosques).

4 If managers or students were involved in reported violent sectarian crimes (there will be a more specific analysis of this in Table 5.6).

Madrasas exhibiting any of the above features were categorized as positive for sectarian activity. The categorization was done after extensive interviews with local police officials, district administration officers, mosque imams and local community leaders.

Madrasas situated in the Police Station Naushera Jadid, Uch Sharif and Ahmedpur City have an involvement rate of 100 percent, 57 percent and 45 percent respectively. Deobandi and Shia sects have very high rates of involvement in violence and sectarianism. Traditionally Deobandi and Shia sects are in most acute conflict; hence, we observed that madrasas from these two sects are overwhelmingly sectarian. However, Barelwi madrasas, which were traditionally very tolerant and non-confrontational institutions, have also started showing violent and sectarian tendencies. In many instances this is a response to violent and aggressive attitudes of some Deobandi institutions and their managers.

Based on police data categorization, Table 5.5 shows the involvement of madrasas in sectarian incidents in the region.

In addition, we also analyzed particular incidents of violence or “hotspots,” as they are labeled by local law enforcement authorities. The hotspots are administratively also called trouble spots. The local administration and intelligence agencies in consultation with local police authorities classify the trouble spots or hotspots in A, B and C category. This categorization of trouble spots is an administrative tool used by local police authorities for vigilance, monitoring of sectarian violence and local law and order. It is used for deploying personnel for the prevention of serious conflict on different religious occasions. The trouble spots categorization can be both general and day- or event-specific. This helps local police to monitor the situation and make adequate preventative measures.

Table 5.5 Madrasas involved in sectarianism

Table 5.5 Madrasas involved in sectarianism

<i>Sect</i>	<i>Total madrasas</i>	<i>Involved in sectarianism</i>	<i>Not involved in sectarianism</i>	<i>Percentage involvement</i>
Deobandi	166	133	33	80
Barelwi	166	42	124	25
Ahl-i Hadith	21	3	18	14
Ahl-i Tashi	10	7	3	70
Total	363	185	178	51

This categorization or classification is based on the following criteria.

Category “A”: Any location where a serious sectarian conflict has happened in the past, and resulted in the death of a person, is labeled “A” category. Such locations are specially monitored on national occasions and are closely watched by supervisory officers on religious events. At many A category trouble spots military or para-military forces are deployed beforehand.

Category “B”: These are locations where in the past there has been physical conflict between different religious sects. The reason could be the holding of a religious event on contested territory, or the route taken by the procession. These spots indicate areas of serious conflict but without loss of life.

Category “C”: These are locations where there is potential for clash or conflict, based on the fact that verbal brawls have occurred in the past, or rival sects have been agitating against each other through demonstrations.

In Ahmedpur East, there are 90 trouble spots of A, B and C category. More than 90 percent of these are situated in the police station areas of Naushera Jadid, Uch Sharif and Ahmedpur City. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analysis has shown that there are eight “A” category trouble spots in Ahmedpur Subdivision; these are located in the Naushera Jadid, Ahmedpur East City and Uch Sharif police station areas. The trouble spots or hotspots are invariably situated in areas which have more concentration of Deobandi and Shia madrasas. A closer analysis and study of the background of trouble spots showed that management and students of particular madrasas were instrumental in the history of conflict pertaining to that trouble spot. Another finding is that the location of A category trouble spots is invariably linked to highly sectarian Deobandi and Shia madrasas.

The next question that we need to consider is what might be the underlying reasons for the high concentration of madrasas as well as sectarian activity in Naushera Jadid and Uch Sharif, which are relatively

rural areas and not subject to the same urban violence pressures as Ahmedpur.

Table 5.6 Location of trouble spots

Table 5.6 Location of trouble spots

<i>Police station</i>	<i>Category "A"</i>	<i>Category "B"</i>	<i>Category "C"</i>
Uch sharif	2	0	23
Naushera Jadid	3	2	26
Ahmedpur East City	2	0	18
Ahmedpur East Sadar	0	0	3
Dera Nawb	0	1	6
Chanigoth	0	0	3
Total	8	3	79

Environmental and developmental differentiation of sectors

In rural Pakistan and particularly South Punjab, political, economic and social power is closely linked to landownership. Access to land or landownership determines the social and political standing of an individual or a group of people in a society. Based on an analysis of landholding patterns from government records we concluded that 96 percent of the population of Ahmedpur holds less than five acres of land.

Extremist and sectarian groups and religious parties have larger followings in areas where local feudal landowners have been controlling political and economic (land) power. The districts of Jhang, Khanewal, Multan, Vehari (Mailsi) Bhawalpur are all cases in point. This reaction has been more radical and severe in areas where the local political power was with Shia land gentry or those more inclined to worship near shrines (often of Barelwi persuasion).

Madrasas were frequently the focal point of this movement against the traditional feudal leadership, particularly where it was Shia. For the downtrodden and politically, socially and economically marginalized peasants, the religious political parties were a means of turning the tables on the traditional elite. The state functionaries were particularly receptive and obliging to religious/sectarian leaders, thus adding to their mass appeal. The

disposition of the administrative machinery towards religious leaders, particularly those belonging to militant radical Deobandi groups, has been a post-Afghan jihad phenomenon. Many of the jihadis returned to their village bases and established madrasas as a means of livelihood. The administrative functionaries extended patronage to these groups accordingly. This phenomenon brought a fundamental change in the social standing of madrasas and their graduates since they began to symbolize a revolution against an oppressive feudal system.

In Ahmedpur East landownership patterns are also extremely asymmetric. Out of a total of 156,977 landowners, only 4 percent own more than five acres of land, whereas 96 percent of the land owners have less than five acres of land. In Pakistan the official economic subsistence holding size is 12.5 acres. This shows that an individual holding less than five acres is living at the margins and needs external assistance or extra employment to meet basic survival needs. In our survey area this phenomenon is seen across the whole Sub-division. However, we observed that in the Chanigoth and Ahmedpur East Sadar police station areas, although landholding patterns are similar, the phenomenon of sectarian madrasas is less prevalent. One reason could be the fact that the above two areas are near the national highway, thus giving many other economic opportunities and exposure. Further study, perhaps using anthropological methods, may be needed to obtain a more conclusive explanation to this observation.

Different environmental and developmental indicators were also studied to explore linkages between madrasa–conflict linkages and deprivation. Table 5.7 shows the electrification of the various areas studied.

Access to electricity is an important indicator of poverty and standard of living. Almost 13 percent of villages are without electricity, in 25 percent of the villages less than 25 percent of households have electricity, in another 30 percent the access to electricity is available to 25–50 percent of households. The area of Naushera Jadid which is worst hit by sectarianism and proliferation of madrasas, in 75 percent of the villages electricity is available to less than 50 percent of households.

Table 5.7 Electrification in key study area locations

Table 5.7 Electrification in key study area locations

Percentage of households with electricity	Number of villages falling in each percentile range				
	Uch Sharif	Naushera Jadid	Chanigoth	APE – met*	Total in range
1–25	17	11	5	13	46 (25%)
26–50	11	11	21	14	57 (30%)
51–75	4	6	9	12	31 (17%)
76–100	10	1	10	6	27 (15%)
No electricity	11	2	4	7	24 (13%)
Total villages	53	31	49	52	185

Note

*APE-met refers to Ahmedpur City and Ahmedpur Sadr combined.

The availability of potable water through government-provided safe drinking water supply schemes was also studied. Out of the 185 villages in the Subdistrict only nine villages have drinking water schemes. Considering that the incidence of water-borne diseases is extremely high in the area, the unavailability of safe drinking water is a major developmental challenge. Here also we observed that not a single water supply scheme is provided in Naushera Jadid and the northern half of Uch Sharif, areas of higher sectarian activity.

The provision of road connectivity has also been documented. In terms of mobility and providing access to the market for agricultural produce, farm-to-market roads are an important provision. Although generally better than other socio-economic indicators, approximately 20 percent of the villages are still not connected to the farm-to-market roads. The perennial shortage of irrigation water is one of the key factors contributing to the low productivity and poverty of the area. Scarcity indicators for the villages were developed based on municipal classifications. Given the semi-arid climate in this area, agriculture is highly dependent on irrigation water. Out of 185 villages in the region, 150 experience extreme water shortage. Only eight villages have no scarcity of canal water and another 25 villages have a mild shortage. In Naushera Jadid the water shortage is most acute, all 31 villages have extreme shortage of canal water.

In terms of agricultural productivity, although no major variation is seen between different regions of Ahmedpur Sub-division, the average yield of wheat and cotton is almost half of the average yields expected of subsistence farms.

The average yield of 15 maunds (one maund=40 kg) of wheat and 12 maunds of cotton is half of what some farmers get in the same Sub-division. This data shows that agricultural productivity in the region is at a sub-optimal or low productivity level.

As noted earlier, madrasas have been perceived as a counterweight to feudalism in Southern Punjab. Coupled with environmental resource scarcity and underdevelopment, the madrasas have provided a physical and emotional refuge for many families. Ahmedpur East is an example of this phenomenon. The political leadership here has for decades been with the Nawabs of Bhawalpur (based in Ahmedpur City and Dera Nawab) and the Makhdums of Uch Sharif (Gilani and Bukhari Shias). The religious leadership that rose from madrasas challenged these ruling families. One of the factors contributing to the growth and influence of madrasas in Ahmedpur East City, Uch Sharif and Naushera Jadid is the typical social response to feudal social structures described above. These are also manifest in some of the environmental and development indicators that we observed for the regions in question.

Conclusions and recommendations

This study finds that rural underdevelopment may contribute to the vulnerability of social institutions such as madrasas. However, poverty per se is not a sufficient condition for the co-option of educational institutions by extremists. Existing sectarian divides are sharpened by institutions such as madrasas which are often exclusionary of other religious interpretations. Young students under authoritative control of their teachers are easier targets of co-option by radical elements than the general public, and deserve to be considered for policy intervention.

However, such intervention will have to follow a theological path since madrasas are inherently religious schools and thus reforms would need to be introduced through scriptural exegesis rather than simply introducing parallel secular subjects.

Madrasas are an important social institution across the Muslim world and are often described by proponents as the nation's largest network of NGOs (nongovernmental organizations). However, the noble purpose of education and enlightenment, for which madrasas were originally intended, has been challenged by various sectarian elements within Pakistan. This study finds evidence of linkage between a large number of madrasas and sectarian violence in rural Punjab. We also found that the number of madrasas has increased over a tenyear period and that in some areas they are competing with government and secular private schools for enrollment. Many madrasas are residential and cater to relatively poor students in these areas. However, in urban madrasas, this pattern is not always followed as affluent families may also send their children to madrasas for disciplinary and theological reasons.

Sectarian activity in areas of greater madrasa density per population size was found to be higher, including incidents of violent unrest. Unfortunately, most urban observers in Pakistan tend to cast aspersions on "foreign elements" for any sectarian activity, without conducting in-depth analysis of causality. While Iran has funded Shia madrasas and Saudi Arabia has funded Salafi and Deobandi madrasas, there is no other external linkage to be found with regard to the violence observed on religious festivals and other occasions. Sectarianism is a serious and palpable internal challenge for Pakistan, and madrasas in this case study were found to be contributing to

this challenge. However, this is more of an internal challenge for Pakistan rather than a direct contributor to international terrorism. Indeed, most of the al-Qaeda operatives that have been apprehended did not attend madrasas and were often educated in Western schools. It is thus important to differentiate domestic sectarian activity and international violence.

There may be a connection between the two in some cases such as in Kashmir and domestic Afghan conflicts, but more generally, the two require complementary strategies rather than identical paths for resolution.

This chapter also looked at possible environmental and developmental factors that may be contributing to economic deprivation and consequential radicalization of the population. The continuing prevalence of the feudal elite and economic inequality have given madrasas a greater sense of legitimacy as a social movement in this region. Areas of higher madrasa prevalence had lower development indicators, such as electricity or roads and access to natural resources such as water for irrigation. Inequality in land distribution patterns between ethnic groups can provide fertile ground for radicalization to take root. Comprehensive land reforms across Pakistan are also essential to reduce radicalization that stems from disenfranchisement of peasant communities by the feudal elite that seeks refuge in religious radicalism for a sense of worth. Such reforms can be undertaken through market mechanisms and instituted gradually to avoid capital flight.

Development of these areas may also reduce radicalization and open other career opportunities for madrasa graduates. Vocational training programs for madrasa graduates following their seminary education and clear ways for them to be channeled into such programs should be funded independently of the madrasas themselves. In addition, the economic disparities that are perpetuated by the feudal elite need to be addressed through establishment of trust funds for each village serviced from property tax revenues that the landlords must be obliged to pay in order to retain title to their land. While major land redistribution is unlikely to occur in Punjab, there can be better management of existing land-use patterns to ensure more equitable distribution of resources and local involvement in economic decision-making.

The governments efforts at “mainstreaming” madrasas, as exemplified through programs such as the “model madrasas,” is not likely to succeed because it is perceived as an external imposition. While the allocation of resources for madrasas, such as the Rs 1 billion allocated for madrasa reform announced on 7 June 2005 (20 percent of the entire budget for the education ministry’s public sector development program) is laudatory, these resources might be channeled more appropriately. Instead of trying to convert madrasas into conventional schools, there should be an attempt made to expose madrasa leaders to alternative voices of Islamic learning and facilitating dialog between various sects. Curricular reform would naturally follow from such interactions and could complement the vocational training programs for madrasa graduates mentioned above.

Just as there have been attempts at ecumenical dialog between faiths, a concerted and deliberate national dialog between Shias and Sunnis (and

within the Sunni sub-sects) is essential. Apart from their educational activity, some of the larger madrasas also serve the purpose of providing theological opinions on various community concerns. Deliberative dialog on some of the issues that are raised by community members in these solicitations could be a formal means of initiating dialog between sects as well.

At the same time, violence and incitement to violence must be treated as any other law enforcement action. There should not be any exception made for particular establishments where communal violence is concerned as this sends a mixed message to agitators. While censorship of madrasa literature or any publications and sermons is to be avoided to preserve freedom of expression, the publication of erroneous data and inflammatory rhetoric that can be suggestive of violence is not protected under any freedom of expression legislation. Indeed, the role of the mass-media in instigating violence is widely documented in cases such as the Rwandan genocide and other cases (Schabas 2000). Hence, promoting a culture of responsible dissemination of information is essential in this context as well. Indeed, even in Islamic tradition, there are very strict injunctions and responsibility for giving inaccurate sermons and admonition for inciting violence. Such injunctions should be invoked in this regard. There should be closer scrutiny of any misinformation or incitement to violence in publications, particularly in areas of high sectarian activity.

The challenge of preventing co-option of Islamic institutions by external interests for political conflict, while preserving their independence and social service is reaching a critical juncture in Pakistan. A multifaceted strategy is essential to tackle this challenge – one that accepts the empirical insights that are provided by research and avoids sensationalistic or sanguine accounts of the problem.

Notes

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1 The 9/11 Commission Report, p. 385.

2 The disagreement between the ICG and the World Bank study authors became particularly acrimonious in April 2005 when the ICG issued a press release from its Islamabad office that questioned the motivation of the World Bank study since its policy impact had been that the Pakistani government was perceived to become more complacent about the matter. Andrabi et al. (2005), asserted that the ICG should at least acknowledge the numerical error and strongly resented any aspersions cast by the ICG.

The US government was also rather defensive about the matter and the 9/11

Commission commented that they had relied on more than just anecdotal accounts in their findings and the head of the ICG – Pakistan, Dr Samina Ahmed, was asked to testify before the congressional Foreign Relations Committee on 19 April 2005.

3 Nadhr Ahmad's 1956 survey quoted by Malik 1996.

4 According to Dr Mahmood Ahmed Ghazi, former Minister of Religious Affairs, there are about 10,000 registered religious schools, catering for as many as one million to more than 1.7 million children attending classes at least for a short period of time, as most do not

complete their education or appear for the final examination. According to the ICG, by 1995, 20,000 of them were likely to graduate as maulanas (holders of the highest madrasa certificate) of one sect or the other, in addition to the 40,000 who had graduated since 1947. The majority of madrasa students are in the age range 5–18 years.

Only those undertaking higher religious studies are above that age. Singer's (2001) estimate of 45,000 madrasas is unsubstantiated and despite attempts to ask for his sources, no response has been received by the author.

5 Zakat is an Islamic religious tithe collected through mandatory deduction from the savings accounts of people from banks and then spent on certain ordained purposes, aid to madrasas being one of them. The records of district Zakat offices were also consulted for this information.

6 Estimates are based on local district records and personal communication with the deputy commissioner of Bahawalpur.

7 Personal communication, Assistant Commissioner, Ahmedpur, January 2005.

6: PAKISTAN'S RECENT EXPERIENCE IN REFORMING ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Christopher Candland¹

When the Soviet Army invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, until it withdrew in defeat in August 1988, Pakistan's Islamic boarding schools were praised for absorbing tens of thousands of Afghan refugee children and young adults.

Some of these schools received funding to train anti-Soviet mujahidin (fighters in defence of faith) and used as bulwarks against Soviet aggression. The takeover of Kabul by taliban (Islamic boarding school students, literally seekers of knowledge) in September 1996 and the attacks on New York's World Trade Center and the US Pentagon in September 2001 cast Pakistan's Islamic boarding schools in a disturbing new light.

Since 12 September 2001, the Pakistani government has been under considerable pressure to police the activities and reform the educational system of the Islamic boarding schools. In 2001 and 2002, the government issued two ordinances designed, respectively, to establish new exemplary Islamic boarding schools and to regulate better the existing Islamic boarding schools. What are the specifics of these reform measures? How have these reforms been received? How effective have they been? And how might they be made more effective?

Estimating madrasa enrolment

Recently, madrasa enrolments estimates have been keenly contested. How many Pakistani students study in a religious boarding school? And what percentage of total school enrolment does that represent? Estimates of madrasa enrolments range from fewer than half a million to more than two million. Because estimates of enrolments in private and public schools vary as well, estimates of the percentage of students studying in religious boarding schools vary even more widely, from fewer than 1 per cent to as much as 33 per cent.

The range of estimates and the bases of these estimates are themselves important pieces of evidence about the role of the madaris in Pakistani society and about scholarship on madaris. The wide range of estimates indicates that generally scholars and educational professionals have a weak understanding of even the basic dimensions of the madrasa. The differing statistical bases for these estimates indicate that some scholars and educational professionals dismiss data sources that other researchers regard as convincing.

A recent World Bank funded study estimates that there are fewer than 475,000 madrasa students and that fewer than 1 per cent of the secondary school-going population attends a madrasa (Andrabi et al. 2005). The attempt to ground the widely ranging estimates of madrasa enrolments in verifiable data is laudable, but some scholars have found the assumptions used for those estimates to be problematic. The report is based, in part, on a national census and a national household survey, neither of which was designed to gauge madrasa enrolment. Indeed, the national census does not ask about children's school or madrasa attendance. It asks about adults'

“field of education.” The authors find that three times the number of children in their survey of three districts study in madaris than was estimated by the national census and the household surveys.

Yet their survey was restricted to areas served by public schools and is thus unrepresentative of Pakistan as a whole. Further, the extrapolation, that fewer than 1 per cent of Pakistani primary-aged students attend madaris, is based on the statistic that 19 million students are enrolled in private and public schools (GOP 2004). However, half of these children drop out before reaching the fifth grade. Finally, the report conflates a madrasa education with an education in religious schools, as suggested by the title of the report. This leads to problems with interpretation of the data, as will be discussed below.

Many scholars find that establishment-based surveys are more trustworthy than statistical adjustment of household surveys. Pakistani police and officials in the Ministries of Education and Religious Affairs conduct establishment surveys of madrasa enrolments. These count the number of students in madaris, rather than estimate enrolments from household responses. By these estimates, between 1.7 million and 1.9 million students in Pakistan are educated in madaris. The former estimate comes from the former Minister of Religious Affairs, Mahmood Ahmed Ghazi (ICG 2002: 2). The latter estimate comes from Pakistani police. The number of madaris supports these estimates. More than 10,000 madaris are registered with the government. At least that many are thought to operate without registration. A typical madrasa will educate more than 100 children. Thus, the official establishment surveys’ estimate of nearly two million madrasa students is not unrealistic. An estimate of fewer than 500,000 is. Whatever the precise number of madrasa students, the Islamic boarding schools of Pakistan educate not merely the residual few whom government and private schools do not reach but a substantial segment of the population.

Islamic boarding schools in Pakistani society

A brief explanation of the terminology that teachers in Islamic boarding schools themselves use will make the following discussion more productive. A madrasa is a school for grades one to ten. Thus, the age of students in madaris typically runs from five to 16 years. Children below the age of 12 are typically nonresidential students. The plural of madrasa is madaris. Many refer to Islamic boarding schools as dini madaris to distinguish them from Western-style government and private schools, which were introduced under British rule. Din refers to faith. Thus, the Urdu word dini might be translated as “religious.” For study beyond the ten years offered by the madaris, one would attend a dar alulum (literally, an abode of knowledge), for grades 11 and 12. The dar al-ulum, then, is the equivalent of upper secondary schools, in the British system, also known in Britain as sixth form colleges. For study beyond the dar al-ulum, one would attend a jamia, the equivalent of a college or university. Thus, some Islamic educators in Pakistan suggest that the name of the Pakistan Madrasa Education (Establishment and Affiliation of Model Dini Madaris) Board Ordinance 2001 and the Dini Madrasa (Regulation and Control) Ordinance 2002 (aimed at, respectively, building new institutions of Islamic education and

reforming existing Islamic boarding schools, at all levels not merely at the madrasa level), itself demonstrates that the government does not adequately understand the structure of Islamic educational institutions.

The Pakistani madrasa has only recently assumed its present form. Most of the madaris were established during General Zia al-Haq's tenure (1977–1988), not only through the encouragement of the state but also often with the financial assistance of the state. In 1977, there were a couple of hundred madaris registered with the madaris central boards (Malik 1996). By 1988, there were more than 2,800 madaris registered with one of the five madaris boards (GOP 1988, cited in Rahman 2004: 79).

If madaris are sectarian and militant, it is not the product of an Islamic approach to education but of the militaristic policies of General Zia al-Haq and his supporters. For nearly a decade, the US government, among others, poured hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of weapons into Pakistan, much of it through madaris, and used madrasa students to fight a proxy war in Afghanistan. According to the Washington Post, the US government even supplied texts to madaris glorifying and sanctioning war in the name of Islam (Stephens and Ottaway 2002, cited in ICG 2002: 13). If only a small fraction of that money and ingenuity were sustained over the next decade on curriculum development, books and scholarships, teacher and staff salaries, and on facilities and amenities, the madaris sector could be transformed again – this time into a foundation for tolerance and moderation, essential teachings of Islam. Indeed, it might be argued that the US government has a moral duty – not merely a strategic interest – to commit such funds and to help to repair the damage done to the madaris sector.

Some madaris – well known to those who study Pakistani sectarianism – continue to serve as recruitment grounds for young militants (Abbas 2002; Rana 2004). Many madaris also socialize and politicize youth to a particular sectarian organization's or a religious political party's perspective. Generally, however, madaris are institutions of caretaking and education (Candland 2005). Most have done a remarkable job of caring for and educating a large population whose basic needs have been neglected by the state.

There are five boards (wafaqha) that oversee the institutions of Islamic education in their respective "school" of Islamic thought: Ahl-i Hadith, Barelwi, Deobandi, Jama'at-i Islam and Shia. With the exception of the Rabtat al- Madaris al-Islamiyya, the Jama'at-i Islam board, which was established under the patronage of General Zia al-Haq in 1983, each of these boards has been in operation since the late 1950s. The boards determine the curriculum of the Islamic schools registered with them, provide examination questions, grade examinations, and issue graduation certificates and diplomas. There are approximately 10,000 institutions of Islamic education registered with these five boards.

Roughly 70 per cent are Deobandi, 16 per cent are Barelwi, 5 per cent are Jama'at-i Islam, 4 per cent Ahl-i Hadith, and 3 per cent Shia. The differences between these schools of Islam will be explained, briefly, below. Over the past two decades, the fastest growing Sunni madaris seem to be those of the wellpatronized Jama'at-i Islam (Rahman 2004: 79).

The recent madaris ordinances

General Pervez Musharraf, as the Chief Executive of Pakistan, promulgated the Pakistan Madrasa Education (Establishment and Affiliation of Model Dini Madaris) Board Ordinance in August 2001. The Ordinance, hereafter referred to as the Model Dini Madaris Ordinance, created the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board with the responsibility of establishing new, exemplary dini madaris and dar al-ulum and overseeing those existing dini madaris and dar al-ulum that choose to affiliate with the Board. The Board is based in Islamabad. The Model Dini Madaris Ordinance also established a Pakistan Madrasa Education Fund.

The Model Dini Madaris were to be semi-autonomous, public corporations to demonstrate to existing madaris how to modernize and to train a new generation of liberal-minded ulama (religious scholars). The approach of the pre-9/11 Model Dini Madaris Ordinance might be characterized as enabling.

General Musharraf promulgated the second ordinance related to madaris, the Dini Madaris (Regulation and Control) Ordinance in June 2002. This second Madaris Ordinance, hereafter referred to as the Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance, requires all dini madaris and dar al-ulum to register with the government and to make regular financial declarations. The dini madaris and dar alulum that registered with the Board would receive scholarships for their students. Dini madaris and dar al-ulum that do not comply would be closed. The approach of the post-9/11 Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance might be characterized as controlling. Ulama opposition to the Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance has prevented it from being implemented.

Each ordinance was promulgated as an Extraordinary Ordinance, indicating the high importance that the government attached to reform of institutions of Islamic education. Each ordinance was also promulgated before the October 2002 general elections that produced the present National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies. The Ordinances, promulgated by a military government, did not receive the broad public support or the critical study that an elected government might have generated. It is not surprising, therefore, that they need to be revised, as will be argued below.

Impact of ordinances on Islamic educational reforms

The impact of the Model Dini Madaris Ordinance has been positive but quite limited. The impact of the Dini Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance has been extensive but largely counter-productive. A poorly designed administrative structure rather than intransigence of ulama is the greatest limitation to the Model Dini Madaris Ordinance. However, very recent initiatives suggest that there may be positive changes in the near future.

The counter-productive element of the Dini Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance stems from its heavy-handed approach and its requirement that all institutions of Islamic education integrate parts of the National Curriculum into their curricula. The present National Curriculum is

largely the product of the military government of General Zia al-Haq. Those parts of the National Curriculum that are required to be added to the curricula of institutions of Islamic education – Civics, Pakistan Studies, Social Studies and Urdu – are sectarian, highly biased against religious minorities and against India, and glorify the military and the use of violence for political ends (Nayyar and Salim 2003). Indeed, the National Curriculum may give greater sanction to intolerance toward religious minorities, to sectarianism, and to violence toward perceived enemies than do the curricula in the madaris.

Registration of existing madaris

While the richness and variety of Islamic expression in Pakistan defies easy categorization, one might, for convenience, distinguish between three major Sunni traditions. The Deobandi tradition has its roots in the “shock” of the British response to the Indian Mutiny of 1856 (Robinson 2000). British forces responded to the Mutiny by expelling Muslims from several Indian cities and destroying or occupying Muslim places of learning and worship. The Dar al- Ulum established in 1867 at Deoband, in Uttar Pradesh, was designed to protect Muslim education from Western incursion and to extract and eliminate practices from the Muslim community that it regarded as un-Islamic. The Barelwi tradition, established soon after the Dar al-Ulum at Deoband and named after Riza Ahmad Khan of Bareilly, also founded a dar al-ulum, in Uttar Pradesh, which affirmed the devotional practices that the Deobandi school sought to eliminate, such as worshipping pir (living Muslim saints) and offering prayers at the graves of revered teachers. The Jama’at-i Islam has later origins. Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi, a prolific writer, founded the Jama’at-i Islam as a political party in 1941. The Jama’at-i Islam, a leading member of the opposition Muttahida Majlis-i Amal (United Action Council), now ruling the North West Frontier Province and the Karachi Metropolitan Government, aims to combat corruption and immorality by establishing an Islamic state capable of imposing justice and morality.

Many leaders from Islamic boarding schools have evidenced a strong demand for reform of their institutions, contrary to elite perceptions. Nearly 500 Islamic education institutions applied for affiliation with the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board in 2003, its first full year of operation. Had the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board conducted their meetings in 2004 as mandated by the Model Dini Madaris Ordinance, there could be 100 institutions of Islamic education affiliated to the board.

Islamic institutions that affiliated with the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board include some of the largest and most highly respected. Further, these institutions represent the entire spectrum of Muslim traditions in Pakistan. The Barelwioriented Jamiat al-Ulum Rasuliyya, in Faisalabad, one of Pakistan’s oldest institutions of Islamic learning, established in the 1930s, affiliated itself with the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board. The well-known Deobandi Jamia Abu Huraira of Maulana Abdul Qayyum Haqqani, in Nowshera, has also affiliated with the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board. And the dar al-ulum degrees given by the Jama’at-i Islam-affiliated Fikr-i Maududi (Maududi’s Thoughts) Institute in Lahore are now

recognized by the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board as equivalent to the Bachelor of Arts.

There is, however, significant resistance to the government's attempts, represented by the Dini Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance, to control institutions of Islamic education. An association of madaris, the Ittehad Tanzimat Madaris Diniyya (Religious Madaris Organization Alliance), was formed to protest against and oppose the coercive dimensions of government's reform efforts. All five wafaqha participated in the formation of the Ittehad Tanzimat Madaris Diniyya. Member madaris have declared that they would refuse government scholarships for their students. According to some authoritative estimates, the Ittehad Tanzimat Madaris Diniyya may represent as many as 15,000 madaris. However, most of the members of the association are principals and teachers at relatively small madaris.

Establishment of new Model Dini Madaris

The government's own orders and regulations related to the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board have not been met. The Model Dini Madaris Ordinance requires the chairman of the Board to hold meetings of the Board at intervals of no longer than six months. However, the Board has not met since 10 January 2004. Since its inception, the Board has not had a permanent chairman or secretary.

The government's orders and regulations related to the establishment of new madaris have also not been substantially fulfilled. Three Model Dini Madaris were established under the Ordinance, in Karachi, Sukkur and Islamabad. The Islamabad Model Madaris was established for the education of girls; the Karachi and Sukkur Model Madaris were established for the education of boys. These three institutions were not given adequate authority, staffing or financing to perform as mandated. To date, no permanent principals have been appointed.

Until recently, the same person was appointed principal of both the Karachi and Sukkur madaris. The principal of the Islamabad Model Madrasa has been replaced four times. Those in charge of the three madaris have not been given authority to hire staff or allocate resources. Instead, they must appeal to the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board in Islamabad. Facilities are sub-standard. All three Model Dini Madaris are housed in the Hajj Directorate's hajji (pilgrimage to Mecca) camps. During the Hajj season, the camps are very noisy and packed with people on their way to and from Mecca. In Karachi, the Pakistan Army Rangers are permanently camped at the New Hajji Camp. The Rangers have forcibly occupied part of the premises of the Model Dini Madrasa. The presence of heavily armed men, occupying a part of the madrasa premises, is not conducive to study.

There is considerable misinformation issued about the model madaris. Occasionally, a Pakistani newspaper will report that the government intends to establish several dozens of model dini madaris. In February 2004, it was reported that the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board had announced that it would establish 98 Model Dini Madaris. In March 2005, it was reported that additional Model Dini Madaris would be established in Lahore and Multan, in Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province; in Quetta, in Balochistan;

and in Peshawar, in the North West Frontier Province. However, the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board claims to have no knowledge of such plans. Some speculate that KNI, the press service behind these reports, has been fed these stories to give the false impression that the establishment of model madaris is proceeding quickly.

Islamic education in private and government schools

Islamic education makes up a large part of the general education imparted in government and private schools. The National Curriculum includes Islamiyyat (the study of Islam) as one of the mandatory subjects for Muslims. Additionally, there is a great emphasis on Islam in the Civics, Pakistani Studies, Social Studies and Urdu sections of the National Curriculum (Nayyar and Salim 2002).

According to some ulama, the Islamiyyat taught in government and private schools focus on those portions of the Qur'an and a hadith (practices and sayings of Mohammad) that might be interpreted in line with intolerant and militant ideologies while the passages which clearly invoke tolerance and enlightenment are ignored. This bias can be traced to the 1980s, when Pakistan was home to millions of Afghan refugees and was a front-line state in the fight against Soviet aggression. Just as militant prayer leaders in the armed services and militant teachers in government schools were promoted in the 1980s, it is possible to promote moderate prayer leaders and teachers today.

The private schools with the widest reach in Pakistan are those run by Islamic associations and Islamic foundations, some affiliated with Islamic political parties, not those that are most visible in the affluent sections of Pakistan's larger cities, which generally follow the Cambridge or Oxford curriculum. These private schools are not madaris, but educators in many of them, by their own account, would like to raise children in the ideology of their political party or in a particular sect of Islam. It is a mistake to assume that only Islamic boarding schools are involved in Islamic education. Thousands of private schools, using either the Cambridge or Oxford curriculum or the National Curriculum, or both, impart a predominantly Islamic education. Yet very little attention has been focused on the curriculum or pedagogy in these sectarian and political party-oriented private schools (Candland 2005).

Madaris in the context of general education

Reform of Islamic education and institutions of Islamic instruction must proceed from the recognition that Islamic boarding schools and Islamic education are an integral part of national education in Pakistan. Reform efforts based on the assumption that national education must remove discussion of religion from the educational curriculum are not only impractical; avoidance of religious subjects in national education and weakening of the Islamic education sector are unlikely to improve tolerance and understanding between people of differing faiths or diminish violence in Pakistan or abroad.

Reform of Islamic education must also recognize that the present "backwardness" – in administrative, curricular and financial terms – of

institutions of Islamic instruction is a direct product of a highly polarized educational system. As Tariq Rahman aptly puts it:

The madrassa students regard their Westernized counterparts as stooges of the West and possibly as very bad Muslims if not apostates. The Westernized people, in turn, regard their madrassa counterparts as backward, prejudiced, narrow-minded bigots who would put women under a virtual curfew and destroy all the pleasures of life as the Taliban did in Afghanistan. (Rahman 2004: 150–151) In this context, it should be recognized that the promotion and subsidy of elite education is responsible for much of the “backwardness” of the institutions of Islamic education. Most of Pakistan’s children have been neglected by the state’s educational system (Candland 2001). The madaris have done a remarkable job of reaching a large sector of the Pakistani public with virtually no government support and very modest funding from the public. However, they have educated this neglected sector largely within a sectarian tradition and have not inculcated moderation and tolerance. At the same time, when the government has involved itself in the madaris sector, as under General Zia al-Haq, the consequences have been detrimental to the cause of education.

Moderately minded leaders in the field of Islamic education need to be made full partners in the reform of madaris and Islamic education in non-madrassa educational institutions. Pakistan’s experience with the reform of Islamic education demonstrates that such reforms, to be effective, cannot be imposed. Ulama themselves will determine whether the government’s attempts to reform Islamic education succeed or fail. A coercive approach is likely to fail.

The suggestion that all ulama are against reforms seems to be designed to excuse the clumsiness in and the delay of government reform attempts. Just as it benefits some opposition politicians to claim that the attempt at reforming Islamic education is a plot by the US government to weaken Islam, it benefits other governing politicians to suggest that their attempts at reforming institutions of Islamic education are being waged against the opposition of recalcitrant and backward ulama. Many ulama are in favour of reform. Indeed, many madaris have already integrated social studies and natural sciences into their curriculum.

What is needed for successful uplift of institutions of Islamic education is not the promulgation of more ordinances but constructive conversations between accomplished ulama and senior government officials. The government already has the authority – through the Societies Act of 1860 – to regulate and control institutions of Islamic education. The Societies Act requires all educational institutions to register with provincial governments and to make regular financial declarations. Thus, the Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance’s requirement that institutions of Islamic education register and disclose their accounts irritated educators at Islamic educational institutions.

Recommendations

Greater attention to the model dini madaris could have a strong influence on the entire reform programme. The government could appoint qualified ulama – like the principal of the Model Dini Madrasa Karachi – as

administrators and educators at these madaris and give them regular appointments and the prospect of promotion. The government could also provide model dini madaris with permanent facilities. The government could involve educators at these institutions in significant conferences and press events – as was successfully done in a conference on abolishing sectarianism and promoting enlightened moderation at the Sindh Governor’s House in March 2005. Model dini madaris administrators and educators could also be invited to be external examiners in Islamiyyat examinations at government colleges and universities.

Further, the government might ask qualified ulama and university professors in Islamiyyat to develop an alternative curriculum for Islamic educational institutions. The faculty of Islamic and Oriental Studies at the University of Peshawar and the staff of the National Research and Development Foundation in Peshawar have extensive experience in and promising proposals for consultations leading to such an alternative curriculum. The present programme for a new curriculum in Islamic educational institutions merely adds National Curriculum textbooks – many of them substandard and biased against minorities – to the existing curricula in Islamic educational institutions. The real problem in the Islamic educational institutions is not that students are not taught computer studies and natural sciences. Many madaris, dar al-ulums and jamias do teach these subjects. But a natural science education is not a guarantee of an enlightened mind. Indeed, many of those most committed to violence in the name of Islam were educated in the natural sciences. The real problem in these schools is that students do not learn how to relate with other communities in a culturally diverse country and a globally interdependent world.

The Qur’an is full of recommendations and insights on how to relate peacefully with other communities through goodwill and tolerance. Of course, those looking for justifications for violence can find them in the sacred texts of any religion (Candland 1992). The purpose of an alternative curriculum for Pakistan’s Islamic educational institutions would be to develop a curriculum based on the enlightened and tolerant messages of Islam. Ulama and Islamic educators in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Turkey have already succeeded in framing such a curriculum and, thereby, in engaging Islamic educational institutions in their countries in national development programmes, including community health and income generation programmes. Scholars from these countries could be consulted while crafting an alternative curriculum for Islamic education institutions in Pakistan.

The Pakistan Madrasa Education Board would function better if it had a permanent chairman and secretary who are respected ulama, and regular meetings of the Board, Academic Council and Ordinance Review Committee. The Board also needs to develop its own examination papers. The Pakistan Madrasa Education Board might also function better if it – and the authority and financing for both the operation of new Model Dini Madaris and the regulation of existing institutions of Islamic education – were transformed to a newly created Islamic Education Cell within the Ministry of Education. Presently, the administrative authority and the

funding for reform of Islamic education belong to different ministries. The Ministry of Education receives funds – largely from foreign sources – for the reform of Islamic education. The Pakistan Madrasa Education Board is prohibited from taking funds from foreign sources. The Ministry of Religious Affairs is authorized – according to the Dini Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance – to administer reforms. Adding to the confusion over administrative authority, there are Sub-directorates of Religious Education (Dini Madrasa Education Boards) in the provincial Ministries of Education. The Ministry of Religious Affairs does not have experience or expertise in education. Indeed, the Ministry does not have the ability to administer an ushr (Islamic charity based on land holdings) programme, despite being entrusted with that task, through the Zakat and Ushr Ordinance, more than 25 years ago. The administration of zakat (Islamic charity based on capital holdings) is the principal occupation of the Ministry. Further, the present Chairman of the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board, the Federal Secretary of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, is neither a graduate of an Islamic educational institution nor an educator.

The creation of an Islamic Education Cell within the Ministry of Education, the transfer of the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board to that Cell, and the appointment of a person who has an Islamic educational background and the rank of State Minister as a full-time chairman of the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board could reduce redundancy and guarantee that reform of Islamic education is treated as an national educational priority. The appointment of full-time staff with knowledge of systems of Islamic education to the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board would also improve its chances of success. If the aim of the Madaris Ordinances is “to improve and secure uniformity of standards of education and (to integrate) Islamic education imparted at dini madaris within the general education system,” as stated by the Model Dini Madaris Ordinance (GOP 2001: 1), then it makes sense for the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board to have the staffing, status and autonomy that could make such a goal possible.

Note

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7: THE GENDER OF MADRASA TEACHING

Nita Kumar¹

There are thousands of Muslim children, both girls and boys, going to madrasas in all the cities of South Asia (Sikand 2005: 313–14). Zeenat and Shahzad, a weaver's daughter and a weaver's son in the city of Varanasi, North India, the centre of silk weaving, are two such children. All adult Muslims, such as all the adult male and female members of Zeenat and Shahzad's families, explicitly articulate and perform gender identities. Can we make a useful co-relation between the gender identities of the adults and the experience of the madrasa?

It is easy to distinguish a madrasa-educated man or woman from an uneducated one, and in the population of an artisanal working-class city like Varanasi, both exist. The most readily apparent differences between the two are that, like all schooled adults, the madrasa-taught man or woman is more self-aware of him/herself in appearance and speech, more coherent in articulation and presentation, and more precise about his or her identity as sectarian Muslim, national Muslim, and universal Muslim. At a wider, national level, a lack of difference between a madrasa-educated and an uneducated person does appear, in that both would typically look poor and provincial, and would present themselves as different from the mainstream of Indian formal education. An important line of difference in a city's population is, therefore, based entirely on the fact of madrasa schooling.

Insofar that a madrasa is a school, there is, and always has been, a partly deliberate and partly unreflective hidden curriculum of gender socialization (Minault 1998). Yet, we must be sensitive to the actual territory occupied by the madrasa within the madrasa-goer's total learning experience. In the excerpts I discuss from the ethnography of children in Varanasi, I problematize what children, particularly girls, are learning, and if their madrasa teaching produces gender differences in the children. My chapter is in three parts. First, I look in detail at the case of a student of a girls' madrasa, Zeenat, as also being taught or trained into an identity and life course at home. It seems striking that her home socialization and education – the home as “madrasa or school” – is more powerful than her education in her formal madrasa. Second, I look at the case of Shahzad and find that the same pattern holds true for boys. All non-elite children, and non-elite children are the only ones who go to the madrasa, experience a home “school” that is more formative than the school outside. We may conclude therefore that madrasas for girls are not different in structure or pedagogy to madrasas for boys, and the experience for girl students falls into the same patterns as for boys. Third, I look at a progressive and modern madrasa that is in fact a madrasa only in name and by virtue of including Qur'anic studies. This madrasa might produce some more liberal Muslims, but it could hypothetically do so for girls as well as for boys.

Finally, we must ask: what then is the significance of the difference between men and women in the Islamic society of South Asia? That is the question I attempt to answer at the end of the chapter.

I: Zeenat at school and at home

In class 3 of the madrasa Jamia Hamidiyya Rizwiyya for girls in Varanasi, India, the teacher puts some questions and answers on the blackboard and goes into a kind of doze. The children occupy themselves with playing, gossiping, exchanging objects. A few girls in front play with ink and write something playfully. I pick Zeenat because she seems to be a good student. She looks very solemn, has fine handwriting and aesthetic sense, writing all the questions in green and the answers in blue. I go home with her after school.

As with most of the children, her home is just across the road in the weaving mohalla of Madanpura. The building is of a familiar house design. We climb up four floors with an opening in the middle around a courtyard and rooms all around. The cooking is done on the landing. Women and children gather to stare at Zeenat's guest. Zeenat's family lives in one room, about ten feet square.

There is no furniture in the room. A mat is spread out for us. Zeenat's mother and father sit against one wall; two of the children sit near them; two others wander around and do their own things. The baby plays nearby.

Zeenat is the middle of five children. Her older brother and sister do not study. Wasim, the brother, is already a weaver and Shahina, the sister, does housework full-time. Their parents voice the discourse of education that is the discourse of all the parents of Varanasi. It states that there are two kinds of people in the world: those who do and those who do not have the zehen or mind to study. The oldest boy, Wasim Riaz, and the girl, Shahina Parveen, had both dropped out of school early because they did not have the inclination for studies. Wasim has the inclination for weaving and housework comes naturally to Shahina. Zeenat and her brother Mukhtar go to madrasas, and the youngest, Shagufta, only two years old, has the makings of the best scholar of them all – she grabs any paper or books she can find.

Zeenat's mother is educated, and moreover like all the women of her class does all the stitching for the family herself. Zeenat is learning stitching from her mother, not in the academic year but during the holidays, as her sister had learnt before her.

The older four siblings have all either completed their Qur'an courses or are now completing them. Qur'an courses are held in the house of their bari Amma, or senior mother, grandmother, or aunt, with at least twenty girls gathered under a maulani (a female Arabic teacher). Classes take two hours a day, from 2.30 to 4.30 or 5.00. There are no charges, but there is a gift given on graduation, and sweets at other occasions, and when the student gets married, a set of clothes.

An ustad, that is, a teacher, is to be honoured next only to the parents. I go to the Qur'an class for girls and am impressed by the fact that religious teaching is no different at this particular level for boys or for girls.

Arabic is taught to girls in that part of the neighbourhood by Salma Sultana, the wife of a maulana. I ask her directly how the keeping of roza (the fast during the month of Ramadan) is taught to children and how it is good for them. She says:

They can keep it from the age of ten onwards. This girl [pointing at one] is good at keeping rozas. Sometimes children keep a roza for part of the day, and then again for a longer part. Thus they get into the habit. They develop the shauk (passion). Nahin to zabardasti karni parti hai (or else we have to use force).

What is its usefulness? “Sabar sikhte hain (They learn patience, that is, self-denial).” If they learn this from the age of ten onwards, what is the procedure before that? How do they learn anything? Before that, she told me, they are small. “Samajh nahin hoti (they don’t have sense (understanding). Those who have sense are told. Suppose I am reading the namaz and he comes there, I could simply tell him, and if he understands, that’s fine. Otherwise I would scold him to teach him.”

Since teachers in other madrasas had not been as articulate, I probe the meanings of “understanding” further. She suggests that it is a faculty that belongs to maturity. Then she asks me, a little frustrated by my questions, “Do you all explain everything to babies?” A good question, and I replied at some length how there was a modern point of view according to which you did indeed explain everything to very small children. She nodded absently. It did not make much sense – even to me as I described it.

She supervises simultaneously four girls doing sari trimming and four girls studying the Qur’an. Rubina reads the Qur’an in an impressive musical style, asking the meaning of some difficult words. She will memorize it in this lesson and let the teacher hear three verses after learning it. Another child reads in a different musical style. Rubina has been learning since she was small, and is almost ten years old now. She will finish in about two years. She goes to a madrasa alongside. Salma Sultana tells me that girls do not become hafiz, or those who know the whole Qur’an by heart. There is no ban on it; they just do not. But boys study less of Qur’an than do girls, and fewer boys do. They get busy with their work.

All the children as well as the teachers are swaying to and fro. In answer to my question, do they understand the meaning? The answer is no. When they grow up, they can inform themselves of the translation in Urdu, if they like. Right now, there is no time; they have to study other things too. They laugh when I suggest that by not understanding the meaning of the Qur’an they are doing only half the work.

As one girl is put in charge of another to study, the former complains of the latter to “dadi”, their fictive kin-name of grandmother for the teacher. All the voices rise together in a thick, harmonious hum of Qur’an reading. A young daughter-in-law is teased about being called by her natal home while her in-laws conspire to keep her two more days. When I ask them tentatively, they do not know any facts in Indian history including who Babur was and when India became independent.

Watching Zeenat in her madrasa classroom I had imagined that a good young student like her would study hard and maybe achieve something like the women teachers in her own madrasa, or more advanced teachers of Arabic and Urdu. There were teachers I had interviewed earlier who continued teaching after marriage and after having young sons. But upon seeing Zeenat’s family, I realized that the little girl’s seriousness at school

was illusory. Whatever she ever did, she would do very well. What she did now was schoolwork; what she would do later was housework and child rearing. All the time she was learning as conscientiously at home as she did in school. In school, she was learning the reading and writing of three languages, and some other subjects, mostly by rote. At home, she was learning cooking, sewing, keeping baby, serving, tidying up, running errands, all the details of how a home works and what in that particular culture and community a homemaker should do. She was finishing the Qur'an and, because that was in a home setting, there was other intangible teaching that went along with it that she was imbibing.

Indeed, there was a socialization taking place in the home that I would not ever be able to directly observe but that I could, based on my observations, hypothesize about. Zeenat, like all children, wakes up to the sound of her parents. Gender socialization begins at that point, because the mother is typically sweeping the floor, filling water, doing the dishes, and soon lighting the fire for the first meal. The father is either still asleep, or grooming himself and preparing for the day, typically with a cup of tea, or a leisurely toilet. In no case is the father the person who is totally, and irrefutably, responsible for the morning meal and the children getting fed and sent off to school with their tiffin boxes. The mechanisms of all this are clear enough to the child, and the gender socialization is powerful.

By contrast the class socialization is much weaker because, unlike with gender where both the parents are simultaneously present to compare, there is no other model before the child except that of the home she is born into. Those whom she visits are other members of the family or close friends, and are typically of the same class. Only the outsider processes spaces, processes, etc. as limited or characteristic of a certain lifestyle. For the child they are normality itself and she finds them not remarkable in the least. A girl does not consciously think that the woman's situation could be compared to the man's and any constructive ideas generated from the comparison. The constructive ideas, rather, are in the lessons learned from watching the parent of the child's own sex.

For instance, there is the lesson regarding the use of space. The child awakes from a bed that has been made strictly for the night. It is not a permanent bed that will remain a bed throughout the day. She is typically pressed to get up and out of the way so that the space can be made available. Not only does she get into the habit of not sleeping late, she is told directly that she must help in clearing up the space.

Zeenat is learning how to deploy herself in the one room her family lives in, to share the bathroom on the landing with the extended family, to cook with her mother, and gradually by herself, in the space outside their door, to clean up each time and leave the space unmarked, and otherwise practice a total nonspecialization of domestic spaces. The room and its outside are swept morning and evening or when littered, whichever comes first. All materials are put away after use. No space is named after its function, as the place "for" some particular activity, including sleeping. The room becomes, in turn, a bedroom, a dining room, a sitting room, a family room, a study, a workplace, a dining room again, and again a bedroom. Zeenat is mastering

the discourse perfectly without a word being spoken on the subject. She is learning further where and how to spread out the rugs for those who would work or sleep, and those who visit. She is learning how every niche and cranny of the room has its uses.

Even when it is not the question of space that makes the child get up early, it is school. Schools begin at 7.00 or 7.30 and children must be up between 5.00 and 6.00. Few take a bath that early, unless in the height of summer. Baths are considered more leisurely than the fast-paced morning hours permit, mostly because of the shortage of space, but also because of the cultural notion that a bath is pleasurable and to be savoured slowly. Bathing places are not specialized, just as other spaces – certain workplaces excepted – are not. The tap or the bucket brought in for bathing, as it often is, is not in a closed space. Men and women bathe routinely in courtyards, with some items of clothing on. A small child could one day be bathed on the roof and another day in the corner of a room. As the child grows, she learns to make her decision to bathe based on several factors.

The night spaces get messy and are slowly transformed. A thorough sweeping is done of all the floors, by the mother or an elder sister, never by the father.

Sheets and blankets are folded up and stacked away. Mattresses and chatais are rolled up and put away. The floor everywhere is made clean enough to sit and eat at. Nowhere do people wear shoes in the house or living areas. All visitors are always made welcome. The males work downstairs and in specialized rooms. They are like visitors during the daytime as they come in to eat and rest.

All children take for granted that the mother should provide all the services at home, as well as be around the whole day like an anchor for the various vessels to come back to and tie themselves up temporarily.

Zeenat is, as a child, perfectly comfortable and natural, and will grow up into an adult in that way (Abu-Lughod 1993). She is and will be, “well-adjusted”, and depending on how she can adjust to the family she will marry into, she will be happy. And she will be thus well adjusted and happy because of the success of her education, that is, the education in her home. Her education in her madrasa is destined to pass like a happy dream. It occupies several hours every day but is, by all understanding, minimal. It consists, as described earlier, of the teacher putting up some basic questions and answers on the blackboard on a succession of subjects, and the children playing around while copying them. There are never any real questions asked or answers formulated, and emotional energy or thought is considered a waste on such interactions.

II: the case of Shahzad

I want to turn next to the story of Shahzad, a ten-year-old who studies in a boys’ madrasa in class IV. I met him on the road and talked to him in his home, together with his mother and sister. Like the girls in the Qur’an class that I put history questions to, Shahzad is unable to answer a single question I ask him on Indian history, including on the Slave Dynasty, on Babur, and on India’s independence. His mother explains that he is not learning well and that she would like to change madrasas, though this was the same one

that she had studied in herself and now it had deteriorated. Shahzad is learning several other things, however. He is learning how to weave and in a few years will become a fully-fledged weaver. He is learning how “to be” a weaver, that is a man of the streets, someone who labours hard, but cherishes his freedom which he uses for ghumna-phirna, or wandering around. He is also learning the history of his community of Ansaris, of where weavers came from, what kind of Muslims his particular group comprises, how the year is marked by certain events and celebrations, and the space of the city is marked by fairs, processions, neighbourhoods, and shrines.

Shahzad’s madrasa was founded 107 years ago by an association called Anjuman Taraqqi Ahl-i Sunnat. The founding of this and other madrasas, large and small, are part of the educational history of colonialism (Metcalf 1982). The Educational Dispatch of Sir Charles Wood of 1854 was injurious to all the crafts and industries of India (Nurullah and Naik 1951, 1964; Zastoupil and Moir 1999). Weavers, together with many other communities, failed to “take advantage” of the new government schemes of grants-in-aid. They turned their backs on the modern colonial schools partly for vocational reasons. Those who chose to study within the British system did so for professional or vocational reasons, but the weavers already had a profession. They also resisted them for ethical reasons. The new schools were inadequate because they did not provide any character formation. So, together with other castes and communities, the Ansaris of Banaras founded their own institutions in which they hoped and believed a synthesis between the dini or moral, and the duniawi or worldly, could be made.

While doing so they worked along denominational lines: the Deobandis, Barelwis, and Ahl-i Hadith all set up separate madrasas in which they hired teachers and used textbooks according to their sectarian preferences (Kumar 2000). So Shahzad is not only a weaver, an Ansari, a Banarasi, and a resident of Madanpura, all of which he would identify with if asked “Who are you?” he is also a Muslim and a Barelwi.

Shahzad does not know what happened in 1947. He cannot remember any episode or personality from Indian history. More than that, he cannot improvise or invent anything, as does a child in a moderately good school who has some training in answering questions from textbooks. So I turn to his teacher, master Mansoor to ask about the problem of poor teaching in the madrasa. Mansoor Alam Khan’s responses are very significant.

Those who are in the sari business do not want their children to get ahead. There are obstacles from the guardians. About 40 per cent of them work at the loom plus studying. They cannot pay enough attention to their subjects. Children drop out after class V because they have finished the Qur’an Sharif. This place has no society, no culture.

Master Mansoor’s complaint that “the guardians don’t take enough responsibility” is echoed and re-echoed by every teacher in every school where the surrounding population is largely uneducated. My interpretation of this negative assessment of guardians by educators is the following.

In colonial times, the fact that modern schooling was introduced in a climate of mutual hostility and even violence between the public and the

state produced a family–school relationship of conflict. The British maintained that the school’s job was to reform the backward public and it praised those who took up the new colonial schooling. Those who remained indifferent to it had their own excellent reasons for doing so, as have already been mentioned. However, a mutual suspicion was created between the school and its teachers as reformers on the one hand, and the family as backward and rooted in its local culture on the other hand. This relationship of mutual suspicion has continued into contemporary times. The colonial state’s role has been taken over by the nationalist state. Today, modernity is the privilege only of those families who cooperate with the nationalist schools. The corollary of this cooperation is the neglect of local culture and histories, often also of ethics. While Shahzad does not know what happened in 1947, what is important is that he does know and is learning many other things, such as the craft of weaving, the ethics of being a well adjusted member of his society, and the pleasures of a certain free lifestyle that includes a lot of ghumna phirna (wandering around), chewing and spitting pan everywhere, and sitting on benches at outdoor tea shops socializing and drinking tea.

The dilemma is this. Either Shahzad will be a good weaver, or he will be a well-educated person. His madrasa has already made the choice for him. The madrasas for weavers are such that they produce good weavers, people who are satisfied with their jobs and remain tied to them forever. The madrasas fit their students for certain roles. The roles are quintessentially male, lower class, and non-modern. They are justified and rendered attractive by a nice conflation of “male” and “free” – the “free” deriving from the non-modern – and the lower class, while never quite forgotten, is not fore-fronted. Shahzad’s freedom should certainly be greater than to wander in whichever gali he likes and spit pan wherever he likes. As a child going to school in a modern democratic state, he should have an education that would give him the freedom to choose his future. The choice seems to be between two kinds of freedom, and equally between two kinds of discipline. The discipline Shahzad is subjected to at present is only that of memorizing the Qur’an, learning his weaving, and practising some daily ethical-cultural codes. Weighty as this seems in description, it is actually quite easy. A different education would subject him to far more severe disciplining, including that of rigorous homework, examinations, and then presentation of the self.

There is no question that a different kind of schooling would open more doors for Shahzad, even as it would close others related to his religious and community identity. But maybe the two choices are more evenly balanced than we acknowledge. The community, in providing the madrasas it does for its children in its quite legitimate wish to protect its values and ethics, is one political actor. The state, and the modern schools based on its model, are another set of political actors. As we shall see below, they are doing a similar thing, that is, they are not fore-fronting the interests of the child but of an imagined modernity (Kumar 2007).

III: the progressive madrasa

In order to understand this business of the “interest of the child” I want to turn to my third story, that of Sabina in class I. This is in a modern institution that I would call a school, but that its administrators call a madrasa for girls, Umahutullah Ulum. The teacher in the English class has written three sentences on the board:

Q. What do you read?

Q. What does she read?

Q. Do we read the Qur’an everyday?

The teacher is revising for an exam and asks the children to write the questions and the answers in their copies and then walks around the room to check them. I am sitting at the back, a boy on my left, a girl on my right. The teacher sounds exhausted very quickly: “Ai-ee-ee!” she cries out, though all teachers try to minimize their shouting when an observer is present. “I am telling you! Write one question and one answer, one question and one answer.” What the children were doing is to write question two as the answer to question one, and so on. They had no idea what the teacher’s questions meant. They had no idea what the teacher meant by “questions” or, as she had written on the blackboard, “Q”. They could not read the adult pattern in her brain regarding the necessary sequence of questions and answers.

Unfortunately, for herself, the teacher did not grasp, as she raised her voice louder and louder and raised her hand as well, the gap in understanding between herself and her six- and seven-year-olds. It might have taken her one class period, or maybe just ten minutes, to explain the structure behind the weighty terms “question” and “answer”. Why did she not think of this obvious strategy? A lack of training certainly. Ignorance about child development and child psychology. Confusion about appropriate methods for different subjects such as English. The teacher seemed to lack elementary humanity as well. Could she not see the acute discomfort on the face of all the students, almost on the verge of tears? The boy on my left had finished very quickly and was sitting in an attitude of acute misery. He could hardly breathe. He had written:

A 1: Yes, I do read.

A 2: Yes, she does read.

A 3: Yes, I read the Qur’an everyday.

The girl on my right was trying to hide her copy but I could see that she was one of the many who had written down questions as answers. There was only one student in the class who was greeted with silence by the teacher which meant that she had written the answers perfectly. “Perfectly” is to reproduce what they have once written in their classwork copies, then repeated in their homework copies, then memorized, and then, as on this day, be asked to write from memory. In this case the correct or perfect answers were:

A 1: I read the Qur’an.

A 2: She reads the Qur’an.

A 3: Yes, I read the Qur’an everyday.

The bell rang and I wooed the spectacular student. I realized quickly that, apart from being a spoilt child (she had ten rupees to buy snacks for her

tiffin), she had a tutor for all the subjects. This madam came every evening and went through all her lessons, in and out, back and forth, until the little girl could answer the kind of questions her teacher might set her. The teacher must know that it is a tutor who makes the perfect reproduction of her teaching possible, but it is not part of her legitimate knowledge. It will not be mentioned by her as part of any discussion on teaching, learning, children, or current education. She is taking it for granted that out of the thirty or so students in her class the one or two who can get her questions right are the ones who have another teacher at home to drill them. If others cannot write the answers because they cannot understand, that is not the teacher's business.

The whole picture is probably even worse from the point of view of the larger development of the child. Sabina is a "good" student because she is docile, not because she is interested in the work. She has learnt to sit still because the rewards from sitting still – the red tick marks, the successful tests and exams, and the good marks – are greater than the rewards from doing her own thing. Her family is a "good" family because they care enough to get a tutor for their child.

Umahutullah is a modern institution which starts English from class I. The English textbook is called *Al Qalam English reader 1*, specially designed for Islamic madrasas. The first five lessons therefore teach five verbs through actions relating to the Qur'an, masjid, Allah, and the Prophet. Inside the front cover there is a message for teachers explaining that English is a foreign language and that whatever techniques we may develop to make it attractive for students must be found. Not only is this approach fine, it is excellent. The book brings the child's home culture closer to her school culture, or at least the desired home culture.

If the child still cannot respond to the teacher, the fault lies not with the textbook but in what is done with it. The textbook has become a master, not a tool. The teacher expects that the words or exercises of her book will miraculously produce the teaching that she should do. But words in a foreign language are only random sounds. For a child to grasp "I read", "she reads", etc. there must be an incorporation of the new sounds to the acts and practices she knows. Why do educators in India not grasp this? Is there a direct co-relation between economic underdevelopment and pedagogic underdevelopment?

I submit that there is a direct co-relation between pedagogic underdevelopment and colonialism. Colonialism has produced a separation between what is "ours" no matter however injurious to us and what is "foreign" such as supposedly many philosophies and practices associated with modernity. This also correlates to the foreign as abstract and theoretical, and the indigenous as practical. So, were someone to suggest new teaching methods, the response would be an agreement followed by rejection. Yes, of course, there are many nice tricks in teaching, we all know that. But we also know that classrooms cannot be run like that. In Banaras. In India. How could one handle a class of say fifty or sixty students, how could one manage in the little time, where would one get the artifacts? I am calling this a failure based on colonialism. The original ideas of modern

schooling – building, furniture, fixed curriculum, textbooks, exams, teaching aids – came as foreign ideas. They had originated in a different universe and were rudely introduced into this one. If there had been no colonialism then there would have been either a generic development of new ideas, or a comfortable translation of the ideas from elsewhere. Now there is only distrust and suspicion, and no will to adapt the “foreign” practices to “our” situations.

Conclusions

My discussion, based on ethnography in both girls’ and boys’ madrasas and then in their homes-as-madrasas, reveals the analytical limits of gender. The teaching in the madrasa classroom is ineffective for both girls and boys before the more powerful teaching in the home. While the “good” students, such as Zeenat, seem to be totally responsive to the teaching of school teachers, they are in fact “good” all the time, and are even more “good” at home, that is, more responsive to the teaching of the home, where the “teachers”, that is the seniors in the family, are more insidious and effective than the school teachers. This seems to be especially true for girls but is not actually a gender divided experience.

This is borne out by the case of Shahzad. His case reveals that the majority of madrasas, and indeed schools, that are trusted by poorer and less-educated parents as the appropriate school for their children, are successful in fulfilling the goals of the community to the neglect of the dreams or desires of the children.

The children, like Shahzad, may actually be very interested in being free and mobile and not tied down ineluctably to a profession and a lifestyle. But as the case of weavers’ chosen education shows us, weavers have preferred the combination of modernity and local identities that does not threaten their perceived securities and denies children the freedom, as we moderns might perceive it, of social mobility.

The experience of both girls and boys is of an early socialization into gender roles that serves to integrate them into the larger gendered society and dull any possible questioning about identity. Class and gender merge and become mutually supporting here, and each is possible only because of the other. Girls feel secure in their roles because they have, as females, a privileged place in their community. Boys feel secure in their roles because of course they are superior as males and will always be superior within their community.

This prioritization of security over mobility, however, exacts a heavy price especially from girls, because even when there may be some experimentation, with a new profession, or simply a new product or market, the woman is posited as the anchor that will hold the man, the family, and the community steadily in place (compare with Chatterjee 1993). The class-based nature of the social reproduction of the Ansaris includes within it this limit of gendered reproduction.

It is still important to put class first, because men are as helpless as women in terms of escaping a pre-determined future, and women collaborate as intelligently as men in actively constructing this future instead of waiting passively for processes to unfold.

Finally, the case of Sabina tells us that it is not so easy to formulate a solution. Amartya Sen (2000) might propose that education is development and development is freedom, and has proposed practical steps to provide such education/development. So have many institutional founders through the nineteenth century and continue to do so today. They do not comprehend that the solution lies in overcoming the twin legacies of colonialism: one, that of an inadequate infrastructure of pedagogy, and two, of a mental or psychological colonialism that ensures an inability to interpret a solution in a way that permits progress towards its resolution. Such an interpretation would involve regarding children as “individuals”, in the best of all possible cases, as potentially beyond class and gender pre-determination.

Altogether, then, the madrasas for both boys and girls are an excellent case in point of the larger problem of schooling in India: the family-home split with the child as an abandoned middle. Both girls and boys are especially abandoned if they are madrasa-goers, and the girl is the more abandoned of the two sexes. The best way to understand “gender in the madrasas” is to understand it as the unnecessary and unfortunate production of young people as “male” and “female” where both male and female identities are based on constraints to mobility.

Note

1 This chapter is based on research carried out between 2002 and 2005. I would like to thank the Indo-Dutch Programme in Alternative Development for funding part of this research. Part of the material has been presented in a different form in Kumar 2007, chapter 2.

8: MADRASA AND MUSLIM IDENTITY ON SCREEN

Nation, Islam and Bangladeshi art cinema on the global stage

Zakir Hossain Raju

This chapter demonstrates how Bangladeshi art cinema, a national-cultural institution developed in a post-colonial nation-space in South Asia and addressed to a global audience, represents and interacts with Islamic education and Muslim identity. Here I deconstruct the cinematic representation of Islam and Islamic learning in Bangladesh within the larger framework and continuous process of identity formation of Bengali Muslims. I understand that Islamic learning is not only practised inside madrasas and maktabas in Bangladesh. Many informal ways of Islamic learning have played a more important role in the indigenization of Islam in rural Bangladesh during the last few centuries. The British anthropologist David Abecassis identifies various means of Islamic learning in rural Bangladesh. He lists: the Islamic and Arabic instructions in public schools; the imam's speech (khutba) after the Friday prayer (juma namaz); the milad (prayer in commemoration of special events, e.g. a birth or death); prayers in the shrines of pirs (the Muslim saints); the yearly cycle of Islamic festivals; and the retelling of biographies of Islamic personalities and of popular folktales (Abecassis 1990: 41). When I refer to Islamic education and learning in the context of Bangladesh, I include these various modes of Islamic practices alongside structured institutions like madrasas and maktabas.

I argue in this chapter that Bangladeshi art cinema is ambivalent in representing Muslims as well as madrasas and other Islamic learning practices. This instability emanates from the ambiguities inherent in Bengali Muslim identity. It is enhanced by the contradictory ways of evaluating the place of Islam in the everyday life of ordinary Bangladeshis. On the one hand, the cultural-nationalists see Islam as an alien culture, a 'foreign' religion that entered Bangladesh through political-military aggression. Believing in an authentic version of Bengali culture, they complain that Islam posed certain threats to the development and dissemination of indigenous cultural practices. On the other hand, opposing this 'anti-Islam' culturalist approach, the 'pro-Islam' syncretistic approach sees Islam as part of the indigenized cultural practices of the majority population. Thus, the Bengali Muslims of Bangladesh are formulating new, emerging and conflicting versions of Bengali-ness and Muslim-ness, which are not pure concepts, rather they are always on the move. Within this theoretical framework, this chapter demonstrates how the cinematic texts produced and circulated as the art cinema mode are engaged in constructing and reconstructing different identities for Bengali Muslims in contemporary Bangladesh.

Following the cultural-nationalist pro-Bengali approach, the major tendency of Bangladeshi art cinema is to be anti-Islamic. Western-educated, urban-based, cultural-modernist Bengali Muslims who produce, watch and critique Bangladeshi art films utilized the discourse of art cinema to form a

contrast between Islam and Bengali culture. This tendency appears most visible when, later in this chapter, I analyse some of the well known films of Morshedul Islam and Tanvir Mokammel, two major authors of Bangladeshi art cinema, that were produced and circulated during the 1980s–2000s. These art cinema films, targeted to both national and global viewership, repeatedly show Islam as a singular and monolithic orthodoxy and demonstrate how obsolete and restrictive the madrasas and other forms of Islamic learning are. These films theatricalize and exoticize Islamic practices as something ancient in contemporary Bangladesh, a rapidly modernizing and commercializing nation-state in the face of globalization.

These cinematic texts position Muslims and madrasas as arcane and orthodox because this mode vehemently creates and maintains a clear-cut dichotomy between Islam and Bengali culture. The dominant thrust of Bangladeshi art cinema is, then, to represent madrasas and Islamic practices as out-of-date and stereotypical spaces and rituals. This discourse shows Islamic learning as a weapon in the Islamic-fundamentalist attempt at turning the nation against modernist developments and taking it back to a pre-modern state. In other words, most art cinema films are committed to a definitive national-cultural modernity prescribed by cultural-nationalist Bengali Muslims, a modernity that normalizes the ‘Bengali’ identity as modern and secular, and locates the ‘Muslim’ identity of Bengali Muslims only as a religious category.

However, the cinematic representation based on a Bengali–Islam dichotomy is not the full picture of the relationship between art cinema and Islamic learning in Bangladesh. Going against such homogenizing notions of both Islam and Bengali identity, at least one of the major contemporary authors of Bangladeshi art cinema alongside Morshedul Islam and Tanvir Mokammel has depicted Islam, Muslim identity and madrasas as within heterogeneous discourse(s). His name is Tareque Masud. In order to locate this kind of ‘pro-Islam’ syncretistic representation of Islamic learning, I present a close analysis of one of the key art cinema texts, Tareque Masud’s *The Clay Bird* (Matir Moina, 2002). This film won a Critics’ Award in the prestigious Cannes Film Festival in 2002 and was released and/or broadcast in Europe, Australia, Canada and the US during 2003–5. Focusing on the world of a young madrasa student in 1960s East Pakistan, this autobiographical film of Masud visualized and presented Bangladeshi madrasas on the global stage. Providing a close reading of *The Clay Bird*, I position this film against the mainstream representational mode of art cinema based on the Bengali–Islam dichotomy as visible in the texts created by Morshedul Islam and Tanvir Mokammel. Unlike these art cinema films, *The Clay Bird* follows an uncertain itinerary in developing and neutralizing the conflict between Bengali culture and Islam and represents Islam as heterogeneous and Islamic education as a humane and gentle means of learning heterogeneity, not as a fierce homogenizing force working towards Islamicizing Bangladeshi society.

Construction of identities and Bengali–Muslim dichotomy in Bangladesh

A glance at the colonial and post-colonial trajectory of Bangladesh and its people demonstrates that the identity formation of Bengali Muslims was never a linear process. Alongside the indigenization of Islam and continuous transformations of local cultural practices, British and Pakistani colonialism as well as the post-colonial State of Bangladesh played a crucial role in constructing community identities in East Bengal/Pakistan and in Bangladesh. The sociologist Tazeen Murshid states, 'The history of the region demonstrates that the process of identity selection was not constant; the cultural markers adopted were not fixed. . . . Here, nationhood has been defined and re-defined three times within a quarter of a century' (Murshid 1997: 7). Though large-scale conversion to Islam started in Bengal in the thirteenth century, the conflict between Islam and Bengali identity started only in the late nineteenth century. This dichotomy strengthened because of the success of Islamic reform movements in rural Bengal as well as the subsidies provided by the British to Indian Muslims in order to turn them into a 'community'. The historian Asim Roy argues that the comprehensive outcome of the Islamic reform movements in nineteenth-century Bengal was to create a chasm between Muslim's 'Islamic' and 'Bengali' identities . . . the persistent and vigorous insistence on a revitalized Islamic consciousness and identity, with its corresponding denigration of Islam's local roots and associations in Bengal, sapped the very basis of the syncretistic tradition and of the Bengali identity in general. (Roy 1983: xvi-xvii)

Another major inducement in strengthening the Islam-Bengali dichotomy was the so-called pro-Muslim steps the British colonial regime took after 1857. The British directly supported the Indian Muslims to become and act like a community, as if the Muslims of various parts of the Indian sub-continent could easily get rid of their other differences, such as language and ethnicity. By consolidating the Indian Muslims as a religious community, they could implement their strategy of treating them as a political community, so that the other large community, the Indian Hindus, could be put in check. Rafiuddin Ahmed lists the special incentives the British handed to the Indian Muslims in the late nineteenth century.

These included support for madrasa education, introduction of Arabic, Persian and Urdu as 'Islamic' languages in schools and colleges, special reservations in jobs and finally, in 1906, the acceptance of a separate electorate for Muslims (Ahmed 2001: 19).

Through such special efforts of the British and also of the Muslim reformers, and, with the active campaign of the non-Bengali Urdu-speaking urban Muslim elite, something like a Muslim identity started to consolidate in late-nineteenth century Bengal. This identity put emphasis on the affiliation of Bengali Muslims with the 'original' version of Islam and considers Islamic education, including the learning and practice of Arabic, as much more important than the learning of English and indigenous Bengali. The proponents of this pro-British, anti-Bengali and anti-Hindu trend of 'Muslim' identity in colonial Bengal promoted the incompatibility of Bengali-ness and Muslim-ness and enforced a pan-Indian Islamic brotherhood upon Bengali Muslims. The upper-class, non-Bengali and Urdu-speaking Muslim leaders of Calcutta like Nawab Abdul Latif and Amir Ali led the process of identity formation of Bengali Muslims in this

way in the late nineteenth century. The geo-ethnic and cultural identity of Bengali Muslims that is Bengali-ness became negligible in this process, especially in its bid to get rid of the hegemonic umbrella of Bengali-Hindu identity. In a way, this notion of Muslim identity for Bengali Muslims accepted the hegemonic notion that Bengali identity can accommodate Bengali Hindus only, and not the Bengali Muslims, a notion established by modernist Bengali Hindus in colonial Bengal.

However, the emergent middle-class Bengali Muslims in the late nineteenth century were linked not only with the agricultural lands, but also with the indigenized version of Islam in rural East Bengal. The Arab-looking, Urdu-speaking elite Muslims with a pan-Indian Islamic view did not accept these Bengalispeaking rural Muslims as their 'real' brothers, though they wanted to accommodate them under the umbrella of Muslim identity. Opposing the Bengali-Hindu cultural modernity and the pro-Arab pan-Indian Muslim identity, the middle-class Bengali Muslims worked towards defining a modern cultural identity of/for Bengali Muslims. They felt strong affinity with their cultural root, that is Bengali-ness principally and visibly expressed through the Bengali language as well as with their religious affiliation that is indigenized Islam. In this way, by the beginning of the twentieth century a category called 'Bengali Muslim' identity came under discussion.

Muslim-ness and Bengali-ness, the two conflicting identity discourses, then served as crucial markers for Bengali Muslims in different historical junctures of the twentieth century. This conflict in different forms served as constituent to the Pakistan State in 1947 and also as the driving force for establishing the State of Bangladesh in 1971. The basis of the formation of Pakistan – the discourse of Muslim nationalism – lost its legitimacy in the wake of the counter-discourse of Bengali cultural nationalism in the 1950s. It is said that, apart from Islam and the PIA (Pakistan International Airlines), there was no bond between the populations of West and East Pakistan. The ethnic-cultural differences of various groups of Pakistanis, especially between the Bengalis of East Pakistan and the non-Bengali West Pakistanis (that is to say, Punjabis, Sindhis and other minority groups), became increasingly evident through the 1952 language movement and the 1954 elections. In the 1960s, Bengali Muslims made a radical shift from the religious to the cultural domain in terms of defining their identity. The culturalist discourse helped to unite the Bengali-Muslim middle-class of East Pakistan in the 1960s under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and fostered the popular protest against the West Pakistani military rule that was using the banner of a pan-Pakistan Muslim brotherhood. Thus, the Bengali identity was used as a powerful weapon by the Bengali-Muslim middle classes to mobilize the 1971 liberation war for Bangladesh against the (West) Pakistani, non-Bengali Muslim oligarchies and bourgeoisie.

In the search for a modern identity for Bengali Muslims, middle-class Bengali Muslims not only used the Bengali-Muslim dichotomy differently in different times, they also went beyond this dichotomy in order to construct or accommodate new identities. They propagated different notions of identity for Bengali Muslims in different historical conditions. Identities

such as ‘Bengaliness’, ‘Muslim-ness’, ‘Bengali-Muslim-ness’ and ‘Bangladeshi-ness’ have been constructed, questioned and redefined within a short period of time. These identities were imagined as natural and homogeneous identity-frameworks, but there were (and are) always overlaps and fissures between, and within, the identities.

The historian Rafiuddin Ahmed says,

The experiences of the Muslims of Bangladesh . . . point to the uselessness of trying to identify a fixed criterion for a definition of the cultural boundaries of such a community: a Bengali Muslim may have seen himself primarily as a ‘Muslim’ the other day, as a ‘Bengali’ yesterday, and a ‘Bengali Muslim’ today. (Ahmed 2001: 3–4)

Below I identify the ‘uselessness’ of such fixed notions of Bengali/Muslim identity by analysing some key texts of three major authors of Bangladeshi art cinema produced in 1990s–2000s Bangladesh.

Islam and Bangladeshi art cinema: Bengali/Muslim conflict on screen

The art cinema as a national-cultural institution has rigorously participated in the identity debate of Bengali Muslims during the last few decades. Drawing on certain realist idioms the modernist Bengali Muslims shaped the discourses around Bangladeshi art cinema, an art cinema that is quite different from what is normally considered art cinema in the West. The art cinema of Bangladesh then works as their vehicle, in Habermas’ words, ‘to generate subcultural counterpublics and counterinstitutions, to consolidate new collective identities’ (Habermas 1996: 370). The non-industrial mode of production, promotion and circulation of art films further re-confirm the characteristics of Bangladeshi art cinema as a counter-public sphere. However, there is an obvious paradox. The art cinema as counter-public sphere, because of its Western-modernist engagements, cannot be expanded to accommodate the majority of the population (that is the non-middle-class, less educated and less Westernized population) in rural Bangladesh. Rather, by recording and representing the cultural-nationalist essence of Bangladesh through Euro-American cinematic narration, the Bangladeshi art cinema addresses the art-house audiences and critics in the West (the ‘global’ audience) and the Westernized middle-class Bengali Muslims in Bangladesh. This art cinema is thus not (expected to be) appreciated by the ordinary, average cinema-goers in Bangladesh, some (if not most) of whom are strong Islamic believers and live in small towns and rural areas where indigenized Islam is very much part and parcel of their everyday lives.

The construction of a modern cultural-national identity for Bengali Muslims through a homegrown cinema industry became possible only in the mid-1950s, the heyday of Bengali nationalism. The Bangla-language films produced in East Pakistan during the 1960s served as tools in developing the Bengali-Muslim counter-discourse against the Calcutta-produced Bengali-Hindu modernity and pan-Indian Muslim identity. From the 1970s onwards, the Bangladesh State started highlighting the Muslim identity as the cultural marker for Bengali Muslims through various means. One major method of emphasizing Muslim identity in 1970s–80s Bangladesh was the expansion of Islamic learning and education. The die-hard Bengali-nationalist

government of Mujib in the early 1970s retained the madrasa system of Islamic education and even increased state grants for Islamic education (Rahim 2001: 248). The pro-West military government of General Ershad established 1,845 new madrasas and proposed the establishment of another 4,451 mosque-based learning centres during 1986–8 (Rahim 2001: 260). Such ‘Islamicization’ attempts of the state clearly contested the view of the cultural-modernist Bengali Muslims. Such marginalization of Bengali identity in the political/public sphere mainly propagated by the post-colonial state and also the absence of Bengali-ness in Bangladeshi popular cinema shattered the modernist vision of the cultural-nationalist Bengali Muslims. They started considering both the post-colonial state and the popular film industry as ominous genies against the formation of the cultural-national modernity they were envisaging. In these circumstances during the 1970s–80s, the notions of national-cultural modernity and Bengali identity as an opposition to Islam and Muslim identity acted to develop a ‘national’ art cinema in post-colonial Bangladesh. The first example of such Bangladeshi national art cinema appeared in the late 1970s.

This film, *Surya Dighal Bari* (*The Ominous House*, 1979), was directed by Shaker and Ali, two veteran film-club activists of the 1960s–70s. The film was made with a state grant and based on a renowned novel of the same title by a respected Bengali-Muslim novelist. The film received critical admiration from a number of European film festivals. It was awarded in Mannheim, screened in London, Berlin and Karlovy Vary and was invited to the Locarno film festival (Hayat 1987: 159). *The Ominous House* portrayed the sufferings of Jaigun, a poor Bengali-Muslim divorced mother in rural East Bengal/Pakistan in the 1940s–50s when the Muslim identity discourse became strong and worked towards establishing the Muslim-nationalist State of Pakistan. This film represents the dichotomy between Islam and Bengali rural lifestyle using a neorealist narrative mode. Jaigun represents a strong female figure fighting Muslim patriarchy in rural East Bengal. She travels to the nearby town by train and sells rice in a bid to earn enough to feed her two children. The pro-Islam village guardians find her mobility and visibility in the male public sphere unsuitable for a Muslim woman and decree that she should stay at home and follow the rule of purdah (seclusion of women/veiling). Jaigun continues to disobey them by asking, ‘will they [village guardians] feed my children?’ However, she also follows what can be termed the indigenized Islam of rural Bengal. She asks a Muslim folk-healer to ‘shut’ her house to get rid of bad spirits in the night. When her chicken lays its first eggs, Jaigun sends them to the village mosque; however, the imam of the mosque and the village guardians return them saying that, since she does not follow purdah, the eggs of her chicken are haram (polluted) and cannot be received by the mosque. Chicken eggs thus become the symbolic site of contest between Bengali culture and Islam in *The Ominous House*.

The production and circulation of *The Ominous House* and the genealogy of Bangladeshi art cinema as a cultural institution closely linked to Western modernity confirms that this cinematic discourse mainly reconstructs and reinforces the Bengali–Islam dichotomy on cinema screens. Most of these

films represent Islamic learning as anti-modern and arcane using the identity question of/for Bengali Muslims as the basis. By discussing a number of the globally-circulated films of Morshedul Islam and Tanvir Mokammel, I demonstrate below the tendency of this cinematic mode in negating Islamic practices.

Both these filmmakers entered filmmaking in the mid-1980s through what has been marked as the ‘short film movement’ in Bangladesh. This discourse comprises short features and documentaries on 16 mm and video, produced in artisanal mode with low budgets outside the popular film industry. Amid rapid globalization and the strengthening of Muslim identity through state mechanism, the film-club activists fostered this cultural-nationalist stream of visual culture in 1980s–90s Bangladesh. The short films were shown outside cinema theatres: among friends, local groups, and especially among college students and cultural activists. Two short features on the failed expectations of the 1971 liberation war, *Agami* (Towards, 1984) by Morshedul Islam and *Hulyia* (Wanted, 1984) by Tanvir Mokammel, started the ‘short film movement’ in Bangladesh. The cultural-modernist leaders of this film movement like M. Islam and T. Mokammel received their education on film appreciation and production through watching European and American film classics. In an informal setting such as within the film clubs, they watched and discussed classic films from Europe and the US as well as Indian art films following the Euro- American method of cinematic narration. The films they produced during the 1980s–2000s therefore followed the textual forms of these foreign cinemas, especially of Indian art cinema and Italian Neo-realism. Using these Western(-derived) cinematic-textual norms, the films of Islam and Mokammel severely criticized the pro-Islam position of the post-colonial state in Bangladesh.

The 1971 liberation war and its cultural-nationalist ideals opposing the pro- Pakistan discourse of Muslim identity appear as a recurring theme in the films of these two authors. The first of these films, *Towards*, started this trend. Morshedul Islam here visualizes the agonies of a liberation war veteran in 1980s Bangladesh using flash-back scenes. He juxtaposes how the Bengali-Muslim guerrillas forgave and let the captive Razakars (pro-Islam Bengali-Muslim supporters of the Pakistani army) flee during the 1971 war and how the Razakars punish the liberation war veterans in the 1980s. Morshedul Islam’s later films – *The Beginning* (Suchona, 1988), *The Wheel* (Chaka, 1993) and *The Rain* (Bristi, 1999) – continued such cultural-modernist rewriting of the contested history of nation and identity in Bangladesh. The conflict between Islamic practices and the Bengali nationalist spirit of the liberation war became a recurrent theme in his films.

Morshedul Islam’s *Chaka* (*The Wheel*, 1993) enjoyed global circulation, including critical acclaim in Europe. It won three awards in the 1993 Mannheim film festival and another three at the 1994 Danquirque Film Festival in France.

The Wheel also enjoyed theatrical release in global metropolitan centres like Paris and Tokyo (Majumder 1996: 8). This film narrates the tale of two bullockcart drivers who had to carry the corpse of an unnamed young man

and to travel from one village to another in search of the young man's family who can bury the corpse. Finally, being unable to locate the village of the young man, they themselves bury him beside a river. Through numerous extended long shots of the bullock-cart going through unpaved roads in rural Bangladesh, *The Wheel* depicts the rural landscapes and, in a subtle manner, the role of Islamic learning in the everyday life of ordinary Bengali Muslims. At the beginning of the film, the cart drivers reluctant to carry the corpse agree to take it only because 'Allah will reward them'. However, the corpse, when taken to different villages, receives hostile treatment. When the cart drivers request the imam of a village mosque to allow them to bury the corpse in the graveyard administered by the mosque, the imam poses an elementary question, 'How do you know if he [the corpse] was a Muslim or Hindu?' The hardcore Islamic position of the imam is contrasted sharply when, at the end of the film, the cart drivers themselves bury the corpse in a riverbank with no janaja (Islamic funeral rituals).

A few years after producing *The Wheel*, Morshedul Islam produced *The Rain*. Among his works, this film can be read as the key text to understand how he positions Islam in contemporary Bangladesh. For this film, Alauddin al-Azad, a renowned cultural-nationalist Bengali-Muslim author, penned the original short story during the Pakistan era. The story centres on a reverent Muslim old man in rural Bangladesh, his young bride and a young man he adopted as his 'son'. The old man is called Hajji Shaheb as he has accomplished the Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca), a rare feat for most rural Bangladeshis. Hajji Shaheb has considerable holdings of land and his religious and economic achievements have made him powerful in the village. So nobody questions when he marries for the fourth time and brings a young bride. However, a clandestine love affair develops between the young bride and Hajji Shaheb's adopted son, a young man who also follows Islamic learnings like his father. He also wears a beard, a Muslim cap and a long punjabi (traditional garment) with pyjamas understood as Islamic attire in Bangladesh. There is a drought in the village and Hajji Shaheb concludes that Batashi, a poor divorced woman who recently became pregnant is responsible for the long-lasting drought in the area. He presides over a village court on the matter and, as per the 'Islamic learning', he puts forth the verdict that Batashi should be stoned to death for her extra-marital relationship. When the village meeting adjourns, the rain comes and Hajji Shaheb takes it as Allah's quick appraisal and returns home happily. He finds that his young bride is happily taking a shower under the rain. He cannot realize that she just had a sexual encounter with her lover, the adopted son of Hajji Shaheb, a message the viewers have received through parallel editing during the scene of the village court.

The Rain reminds the viewers of Morshedul Islam's first filmic endeavour:

Towards. Though Islam made that film in 1984, almost 15 years before he made *The Rain* in 1999, his portrayal of Islam and its opposite, Bengali culture, are identical in both films. The appearance, attire and mannerism of Hajji Shaheb and the leader of Razakars (the pro-Islam supporters of the

Pakistani junta during liberation war) in *Towards* are almost the same. Indeed, the same actor was cast for both roles. More importantly, we also find a similar village court in *Towards* where the Razakar leader imposes cruel verdicts on poor women accused of adultery using the rhetoric of Islamic learning. Similar to the suggestion of sexual intercourse between the young bride and the son of Hajji Shaheb in *The Rain*, Morshedul Islam also presented a playful love-making scene between a Bengali guerrilla and his wife in a jungle in *Towards*.

Similar to films by Morshedul Islam, Tanvir Mokammel's films also contributed to sharpen the Bengali-Muslim dichotomy on screen. These films also portrayed, using different plots and narrative strategies, the conflict between the secular-modern and communal-Islamic forces in rural Bangladesh. Mokammel's *Modhumati*, *The Name of a River* (*Modhumati*, 1995) reveals this conflict in the form of a familial conflict between a hardcore Islamic father and modernist son, while his *In the Bank of Chitra* (*Chitra Nadir Pare*, 1999) portrays the migration of bitterly disillusioned Bengali Hindus of East Pakistan to West Bengal in India in the 1960s amid the increasing Islamicization of the Pakistani State.

In 2001 Mokammel made *A Tree without Roots* (*Lal Shalu*), a feature film based on the highly respected Bengali novel of the same title, a novel that has been on the syllabus of secondary and higher secondary schools in Bangladesh for many years. This film was also globally circulated like Morshedul Islam's *The Wheel*. It was shown in film festivals in London, Rotterdam, Fribourg (Switzerland), Cinema Novo (Belgium), Delhi and Fukuoka (Japan). The film depicts the rise and fall of Majid, a hypocrite mullah (Islamic priest) who creates a false mazar (shrine) of an imagined pir (Muslim saint) in order to collect money and gifts from the villagers. Jamila, his second wife, a playful rural girl, rejects his authority imposed in the name of Islamic wisdom. Her rebellious acts make Majid unsettled and display his vulnerability and powerlessness that he covered up by preaching Islam to the ordinary rural Muslims. Mokammel used many symbols in *A Tree without Roots* that show Islamic practices as medieval.

For example we see the shalu, that is the red coverings on the top of the false burial site of the so-called pir in many shots (including some close shots) in this film. Like *The Rain*, here also we see the marriage between an aged Islamic practitioner (Majid) and a young playful woman (Jamila) who is unwilling to receive Islamic pedagogy. The Islamic 'court' at the village level (for punishing unruly villagers) that we saw in both *The Rain* and *Wanted* is also present in *A Tree without Roots*.

The madrasa and the conflict between Islam and modern education are visibly present in *A Tree without Roots*. We see that Majid teaches Arabic language and Islamic norms to village children in his maktab (Islamic sessional school). So he feels threatened when a young man wants to establish a Western-model school in the village. Majid harshly scolds the man in the village court he presides over for such an un-Islamic action.

The above glimpse at the major representational tendency of Bangladeshi art cinema discourse through the works of two major authors demonstrates that middle-class Bengali Muslims utilize art cinema repeatedly to stage and

screen Islam and Islamic learning as arcane practices opposing the modern identity of Bengali Muslims. Cultural-modernist art cinema authors like Morshedul Islam and Tanvir Mokammel adamantly believe in a straightforward separation of the Muslim and Bengali identity of Bengali Muslims. In their films they took a clear position on the side of the Bengali identity and even tested its boundary by emphasizing issues like sexual intercourse, an issue normally treated as taboo even among modernist Bengali Muslims. These films repeatedly use the appearance of Islamic fundamentalists as a stereotype, imposing the same mannerisms and dress code on them. These films also repeatedly show us the innocent, powerless, female victims trapped in the so-called village court where they are subjected to the rhetoric of Islamic learning against which they can express no objection. Indeed, the character of the Islamic fundamentalist as a middle-aged or oldish man, wearing a beard and Islamic dress (e.g. long punjabi and pyjamas with cap), who cheats the ordinary villagers in the name of Islam, is omnipresent in the films of Morshedul Islam and Tanvir Mokammel. The Razakar leader in *Towards*, Hajji Shaheb in *The Rain*, the Muslim folk-healer and village guardians in *The Ominous House*, the imam in *The Wheel*, Majid, the hypocrite mullah and his opponent, another pir, in *A Tree without Roots* – all these characters basically represent an Islamic fundamentalist in different guises. These characters are built, in most cases, not as human characters with limitations and virtues. Rather they are shown as monsters who only plan and perform coercion, deceptions or evils to ordinary villagers using their Islamic clout.

As I have discussed above, their victims are mainly female and in most cases they are represented as innocent, youthful and playful girls who revolt against the restrictions imposed on them in the name of Islamic learning. Hajji Shaheb's young wife and Batashi, the girl to be stoned to death in *The Rain*, Jaigun, the struggling divorced mother in *The Ominous House* and Majid's second wife Jamila in *A Tree without Roots* represent these kind of woman-as-victim-and-rebel characters. Unlike the Islamic fundamentalist men, these women characters are created more delicately and resemble humane characters in the real world: they are people who feel love and hatred and wish to live their life according to their free will. Such opposition between Islamic fundamentalist men against freedom-aspiring women-victims is played out in Bangladeshi art cinema films so recurrently that I would argue that this opposition is actually used to establish the Bengali-Islam dichotomy on cinema screens. In this sense the women-victims symbolize the vulnerable state of Bengali cultural practices in 1980s–2000s Bangladesh amid the pro-Islam turn of the state power and the elite. However, this kind of oppressor–victim situation brings medieval feudalism to the cinema screen that easily rebukes Islam and Islamic learning for being anti-modern and outmoded. Bangladeshi art cinema then, mostly abstains from portraying the multiplicities of Islamic learning and how Islam has been localized and become a part of everyday Bengali cultural practices in the life of the Bengali Muslims. However, there is another side to this coin too, as there is another of the three major art cinema authors in Bangladesh who actually goes against this black-and-white anti-Islam tendency and

through his films presents a discursive analysis of the indigenization of Islam in rural Bangladesh on cinema screens around the world. Below I analyse Tareque Masud's *Matir Moina* (*The Clay Bird*, 2002), a Bangladeshi feature film that can be taken as an example of alternative representation of Islam and Islamic learning. This film advocates the multiplicity of Islam and its attachment to Bengali identity.

Madrasa, Masud and *The Clay Bird*: Bangladeshi art cinema towards heterogenizing Islam

The Clay Bird is one of the rare Bangladeshi art films that visibly and delicately represents Islamic education in/through the madrasa system in Bangladesh. The scriptwriter and director of the film, Tareque Masud, an important Bangladeshi art cinema author alongside Morshedul Islam and Tanvir Mokammel, contributed to the critique of Muslim nationalism and the formation of culturalnational modernity among Bengali Muslims through his documentary films in the 1980s–90s. Masud's first film, a video documentary, *The Chains of Gold* (*Shonar Beri*, 1985) looks at the everyday subordination of women under the Islamic regulations in Bangladesh society. His *Inner Strength* (*Adam Surat*, 1989) follows S.M. Sultan, one of the most controversial secular-modernist painters among Bengali Muslims well known for his Bengali-nationalist artworks and liberal humanist lifestyle. Masud's feature-length documentary *Song of Freedom* (*Muktir Gaan*, 1995) is a reconstructed narrative of the tour of a cultural troupe around refugee as well as guerrilla camps along the India–Bangladesh border during the Bangladesh war of liberation in 1971.

All these short and documentary films by Masud demonstrate that his filmmaking career and vision are also linked with the art cinema discourse and its clear-cut opposition against Islam and Islamic learning in contemporary Bangladesh. But we do not find black-and-white rivalry between Islam and Bengali identity in Masud's *The Clay Bird*. What we get is a discursive take on Bangladeshi madrasa education that he represents through cinema aesthetics mostly learnt from Western films. The film is an autobiographical journey that took Tareque Masud down memory lane as he himself studied in the madrasa in 1950s–60s East Pakistan. The madrasa-educated filmmaker Masud, with the collaboration of his American-born partner, Catherine, created a film that urges the viewer to see the divide between Islam and Bengali culture as minimal and proposes alternative perceptions of Islam in rural Bangladesh.

At the production stage, *The Clay Bird* received a grant from the French Ministry of Culture under the South Fund and secured a commitment for international distribution from MK2, the renowned French distributor. The finance and crew sent from France to Bangladesh contributed in the shaping of the film as a sophisticated visual commentary on the relationship between Islam and cultural nationalism in rural Bangladesh. It became the opening film at the directors' fortnight of the 2002 Cannes Film Festival and there it received the FIPRESCI award (along with the Palestinian film *Divine Intervention* and the Mauritanian film *Waiting for Happiness*), the highest international recognition earned by a Bangladeshi film. *The Clay Bird* was

the official Bangladeshi entry for the 2003 Academy Awards in the US. It also won an award for the best screenplay in the Marrakesh Film Festival in Morocco in September 2002 and as the best film in the Karafest Film Festival in Karachi in 2003. In the same year, *The Clay Bird* was shown in 35 cinemas in the US. It also had a commercial release in France, the UK, Japan, Italy, Canada and Australia (Farooki 2004: 5–6). Ironically, the film did not receive such good gestures on the home front.

Rather, the Bangladesh Film Censor Board banned the film for being ‘sensitive’ in May 2002. After a few months of playing cat-and-mouse, they lifted the ban and asked Masud to make some ‘corrections’ to the film in order for it to be released in Bangladesh.

Most commentators believed that the portrayal of Bangladeshi madrasa education, a key objective of *The Clay Bird*, made the current pro-Islam political-nationalist government nervous and sensitive. The centre-right government (that includes the Jama’at-i-Islami, the party which resisted Bangladesh’s liberation in 1971) readily concluded that the film highlighted madrasas as a breeding ground for terrorism and may develop further hatred against the madrasas. However, when one looks at the film’s narrative, it does not seem so simple and one-sided. The film is set in rural East Pakistan in the late 1960s. Kazi, the deeply religious father of young Anu, sends him to study at a madrasa amid the protests of Ayesha, Anu’s mother. Kazi is afraid that his college-going brother Milon and Hindu rituals in the village will ‘pollute’ Anu. In the madrasa, Anu finds Rokon, another young outcast and Ibrahim, a sympathetic teacher. At home, Anu’s sister Asma becomes very ill. Kazi does not permit Ayesha to treat her with Western medicine and eventually Asma dies. Rokon gets an ear infection (probably because of beating by Bakiullah, the madrasa headmaster, though the censored version of the film never shows that) and hears a noise continuously. In order to get rid of the ‘bad spirit’, Rokon is exorcised in the pond in front of all the boys. Bakiullah puts him in the store-room. Anu decides to leave the madrasa. This was the time of the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971. Anu reaches home at a time when the Pakistani army is coming to attack their village. He and Ayesha escape to the nearest jungle with other villagers, but Kazi stays at home in the belief that ‘Muslim brothers from Punjab’ will do no harm to Bengali Muslims. Milon joins the guerrillas fighting the Pakistani army and dies while protecting the bridge on the outskirts of the village. Ayesha and Anu return home and find a disillusioned Kazi sitting in front of the burnt pages of the Holy Qur’an. They leave home, leaving Kazi behind.

The story of *The Clay Bird* is presented in a textual structure that is similar to European art cinema. Here we find psychologically complex characters functioning within an ambiguous narrative. *The Clay Bird* is not committed to following narrative logic, linear storytelling based on a cause–effect chain.

Through the ambiguous and complex narrative of *The Clay Bird*, Bangladeshi madrasa education is represented and certainly this representation is not a simplistic one. Rather it leads us to no clear climax and we do not even see some of the key events of the narrative. The film opens with a scene of the madrasa students doing wazu (ablution) in a huge

pond early in the morning. Here the teacher Ibrahim shows Anu, the newcomer boy, how to brush his teeth properly.

Starting from this point, this film realistically depicts the mundane practices of Islamic education in this East Pakistan madrasa until the end of the film (though the narrative in the meantime moves towards the political upheaval and liberation war of 1971).

Why had such a complex cinematic representation of madrasa education been attempted for the first time in Bangladeshi cinema? While the madrasa is readily linked with the development of so-called Islamic terrorists wishing to impose an Islamic homogeneity on all kinds of people, Tareque Masud finds the madrasa as a special place for unlearning homogeneity:

Madrasas force you to learn how to adapt, how to accept differences. They are truly an unlearning process . . . you unlearn all the notions of homogeneity and prejudice that life otherwise teaches you. . . . You learn to see the world from perspectives other than your own. . . . (Z.A. Khan 2002: 20)

Then, within the madrasa in the film, Masud shows us heterogeneous modes of Islamic education. Two of the teachers in Anu's madrasa, Bakiullah and Ibrahim represent two versions of Islamic learning. Bakiullah, the headteacher, is a follower of a strict Islamic regulatory regime that he also establishes in the madrasa. No boy can have long hair here. They cannot play with any foreign object, say, a football (so we see Anu and Rokon play with an 'invisible' ball).

He rules that every student has to learn self-defence techniques. They, with their right hands, have to learn to write Arabic, the 'language of Allah', and because of that even the left-handed Rokon has to practise Arabic writing with his right hand. The teacher Ibrahim advocates a moderate way of Islamic learning for the madrasa students. He dislikes the exorcization of Rokon and organizes Western medicine for him. Ibrahim recalls his young daughter he left in the village who likes to dive in the pond (we see a mid-close shot of the girl having a dip in a pond full of flower petals). He dislikes Bakiullah's way of bringing politics in the madrasa: 'it is not fair to include these innocent boys [madrasa students] into the political game'. Ibrahim claims that 'Islam was established in this land [Bengal] not through the Sword. It was the numerous local sufis [mystics] who popularized Islam here.' So, his (and Masud's) version of Islam for Bengali Muslims is more akin to local culture and lifestyle and sympathetic to the creative and emotional faculties of Bengali mind.

In *The Clay Bird*, therefore, Masud uses Bengali folkloric materials to develop what he calls 'bahās' (debate) on Islam: 'it is important to bring back this dialogue between different interpretations of Islam' (Aziz 2002: 5). So he uses Bengali mystic songs in the film to expedite such dialogue between Islamic learning and Bengali culture, even though sometimes these songs block the film's narrative progression. These songs, mostly presented through contesting male-female pairs of folk-singers performing for ordinary rural Bangladeshis, also represent the debate between the fundamentalist/extremist and liberalhumanist view over Islam and Islamic learning. Masud states the reason for using Bengali mystic songs in the film in the following way:

In contrast to the written tradition of Sufism in Iran . . . in Bangladesh, mysticism took on the oral and musical forms of rural Bengali society. Although in the stricter sense of Shariah music is forbidden, in Bangladesh, mystical vocal music has become a powerful . . . form of protest. . . . This genre of local folk music is a confluence of Muslim Sufism, Hindu Vaishnavism, and Buddhist mysticism. (Masud 2002)

Both the confluence of various mystical trends in Bengali music and the tone of protest against Islamic orthodoxy and its education are present in the film's songs. The theme song, a Bengali mystical song clearly signifies the humane yearnings to liberalize orthodox Islam and its learning practices:

*The bird is trapped in the body's cage
Its feet are bound with worldly chains. . . .
The bird pines with longing
It yearns to spread its wings. . . .
The clay bird laments:
'Why did you infuse
My heart with longing
If you didn't give my wings
The strength to fly?'*
(*The Clay Bird publicity flyer 2002*)

The Clay Bird thus goes beyond the micro-level story of the madrasa student Anu who sees (and shows us) the world around him. Embodying Anu's subjective angle, this film participates in the ongoing battle of rewriting Bangladesh's national history and of the identity conflict of Bengali Muslims. Tareque Masud questions and reinterprets how the Bengali-Muslim middle class struggled (and somewhat failed) to apprise and accommodate their other self, Muslim identity, towards the formation of their cultural-national modernity. Drawing on the Chinese-American scholar Rey Chow's argument on Chinese Fifth Generation films, I want to point out that here Masud is actually busy in an 'exhibitionist self-display. . . . It turns the remnants of orientalism into elements of a new ethnography. . . . the Orient's orientalism is first and foremost a demonstration' (Chow 1995: 171). I find that the cinematic depiction of Islam and Muslim identity in The Clay Bird equates to an 'exhibitionist self-display' and thus it can be taken as the demonstration of a new, ongoing ethnography of Bengali Muslims. Here we find a close look at various streams of Islamic learning in Bangladesh that does not place Islam only as a homogeneous genie against Bengali culture, as portrayed in other Bangladeshi art cinema films.

The Clay Bird cleverly avoids becoming another example of black-and-white portrayal of Islamic learning as anti-modern, arcane and monolithic in Bangladesh. Let us consider the adversaries like Kazi and Milon. Kazi always wears Islamic dress, has a beard and believes in the Islamic way of life. Milon wears shirt and trousers and debates Western political trends including Marxism.

However, the film presents the conflict between Kazi and Milon quite humanly, gently and credibly. Like European art cinema films, we see no highly motivated goal-oriented protagonist in The Clay Bird. The protagonists seem to be suffering being caught between opposite ideals. For example, Kazi did not permit Western medicine for Asma's treatment, but gives money to the boatman to take his sick wife to a doctor in the town.

Therefore, neither Kazi nor Milon are characters chanting ideological slogans; they look and act like ordinary people with their own emotions and beliefs. Though Kazi represents the orthodox trend of Islamic learning, his character is not one-sided like the middle-aged fundamentalist men portrayed in other Bangladeshi art films. Again, Ayesha is subordinated by Kazi and she may look like the women-as-victim-and-rebel characters noted before, but the oppressor-victim schema normalized in those films does not suit well to clarify their relationship. Similarly, we can never be sure about the nature of the relationship between Ayesha and Milon, the sister-in-law and brother-in-law who were childhood friends and were always fond of each other.

In this way, *The Clay Bird* takes a different cinematic approach towards identifying the half-tone areas between Islam and Bengali identity as well as of the various streams of Islamic learning. Knitting together the realistic visuals and a soundtrack representing Bengali Muslim folk music, it argues that Islam has become indigenized and popularized in rural Bangladesh in the last few centuries. *The Clay Bird*, in this way, destabilizes the cultural-nationalist mission of Bangladeshi art cinema and brings to the forefront the concept of 'Bengali Islam'. This film questions the homogeneity of Islam and Islamic learning and also of the Bengali/Bangladeshi identity and thus demonstrates the ambiguities and syncretism inherent in Islam.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that the cultural-modernist Bengali Muslims urged the development of a modern national/cultural identity of Bangladesh during last few decades through Bangladeshi art cinema. In other words, they envisaged a 'national' art cinema that can create a certain kind of cinematic representation of Bengali Muslims and work towards their cultural modernity. In this way, Bangladeshi art cinema became overtly committed to the cultural modernity of middle-class Bengali Muslims, a modernity that emphasizes the secular notion of 'Bengali' cultural identity and opposes the 'Muslim-ness' of the Bengali Muslims.

This condition fostered the representation of Islam and Islamic learning as primitive practices in Bangladeshi art cinema. I analysed exemplary films of three major art cinema authors in contemporary Bangladesh to focus on how art cinema represents Islam and Islamic learning and thus relate to the disjunctive identity of being a Bengali Muslim in Bangladesh. As the art cinema authors are busy in the act of orientalizing Bangladesh for the global audience and Westernized Bengali-Muslims, in most cases, their representation of Islam and Islamic education deepens the Islam–Bengali dichotomy. However, *The Clay Bird*, a globally circulated Bangladeshi art film of the contemporary period, goes against this trend and forwards a discursive analysis of madrasa education in Bangladesh. It presents the possibility of merger between Islam and Bengali identity and the need to debate various trends of Islamic educational practices.

In this way, through questioning, reframing and othering Islamic learning and education, Bangladeshi art cinema largely affirms that Islamic education and learning is ambiguous. It is not always incompatible with Bengali

cultural practices, and indigenized Islam can also be seen as part of the Bengali-Muslim identity.

9: POWER, PURITY AND THE VANGUARD

Educational ideology of the Jama'at-i Islami of India

Irfan Ahmad

In order to keep everything as it is, we have to change every thing.

Giuseppe di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*

The argument

The dominant mode of understanding has it that Islamism or the Islamist movement¹ is traditionalist, and a revolt against modernity. Sivan describes Islamism as 'a reaction against modernity' (1985: 11). Likewise, Bernard Lewis (1988, 1993, 2002, 2003) and Moghissi (1999) contend that Islamism is hostile to modernity. A different version of this argument pleads that Islamism is an 'authentic' discourse untouched by modernity (Kelidar 1981; Davutoglu 1994; Sayyid 1997). In yet another version of this argument, Tibi avers that Islamism symbolizes the dream of 'semi-modernity' because, while it embraces the technological dimensions of modernity, it shuns the rationality of modernity (1995: 82). Based on the similar premise, Lawrence contends that Islamic fundamentalism is not only 'anti-intellectual' but also 'anti-modernist' (1987: 31, see also Ayubi 1991: 250). In *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age*, he makes a distinction between 'modern' and 'modernist'. In his view, fundamentalists are 'modern' because they welcome 'the instrumentalities of modern media, transport, or warfare' and 'relate fully to the infrastructures that have produced the unprecedented options for communication and mobility that today's world offers' (1995: 1). They are, however, not 'modernist' for they reject 'modernism as a holistic ideological framework' (ibid.: 17). Central to modernism, Lawrence writes, are the 'values of Enlightenment', 'banner of secularism' and 'individual autonomy' (ibid.: 6, 27). Though there are significant differences in the ways Tibi and Lawrence, as well as Lewis, Sayyid, Sivan and others, characterize Islamism, they tend to broadly converge in their view that it is opposed to 'real' modernity or it is only partially modern as it disregards Enlightenment values and rationality.

I call the above line of argument into question. To begin with, the idea of 'semi-modernity' wrongly presumes that there is something else called 'full modernity'. This, to me, appears to be a grossly quantitative rather than substantive argument. In what follows I make three interrelated arguments. First, I show that it is misleading to say that Islamism is adherent of traditions; opposed to and untouched by modernity or that its discourse is 'authentic' and 'indigenous'. To illustrate my argument, I take the educational ideology of the Jama'at-i Islami (hereafter Jama'at, see below), as propounded by its founder-ideologue, Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi (1903–79), as a case study. I show that Jama'at's educational ideology was characteristically modern. As a matter of fact, Maududi was never schooled in a traditional madrasa, Islamic seminary. As such, his corpus of writings begins with a ferocious assault on living traditions of Islam dear for ages to the majority of Muslims. Maududi indeed ruthlessly critiqued the relevance of the Islamic system of learning prevalent in India and elsewhere and urged Muslims to mimic the Western system wholesale, barring its values.

Second, Maududi's assault on traditions was accompanied by an 'invention of tradition' (Hobsbawm 1983; Eickelman and Piscatori 1996: 29) he called 'pure'. Of his many inventions, the following stand out for their centrality in his total ideology of which education was only a part. Invoking the Qur'an and hadith, Prophetic tradition, he contended that Islam was a movement whose goal was to inaugurate an Islamic state or revolution. And Muslims, particularly his own party, the Jama'at, would work as the vanguard of pious, true Muslims to lead that movement towards its ultimate goal. Finally, in his view, the function of education was to fashion and provide the party with leaders and activists who were 'pure' Muslims.²

Third, Jama'at's ideology cannot be divorced from the issue of power.

Maududi's primary concern was to rehabilitate the power Muslims had lost after the takeover of India by the British. In his reading of history informed by what I call 'Islamist dialectics',³ the reason for Muslims' decline lay in dilution, if not collapse, of pure Islam through jahiliyyat,⁴ other of Islam. It was a result of jahiliyat-infected education system, debased from the foundation of the Qur'an and hadith, that the rulers as well as ulama, clerics, got removed from pure Islam. Consequently, Muslims lost power. The only way they could regain it, he proposed, was to establish a 'pure' Islamic education system whose graduates would work as the vanguard of the Islamist movement for a future revolution. To this end, he called for a thorough change of the education system along the Western patterns because he held that the West derived its power from its superiority in education. To regain the bygone power, Maududi, like the aristocrat in Lumpeda's penetrating novel of nineteenth-century Italy, *The Leopard*, who called for changing everything to retain the hold of aristocracy, urged Muslims to change every aspect of their education system.

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, I outline the context in which the Jama'at was formed. I then move to unpack the links Maududi made between education, pure Islam and power. I end this part by showing how he urged Muslims to mimic Western education. Here I show his critique of the then existing madrasa education. In the following section, I deal with his opposition to a distinct type of modern education, especially his description of institutions such as Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Aligarh, as 'slaughterhouse[s]'. I then dwell on his alternative proposal and lay bare the sine qua non of Jama'at's ideology according to which education was a technology to fashion an Islamic revolution/state. In the final part, I show the distinction of the Jama'at vis-à-vis the ideologies of other sects or groups. Here I also account for Maududi's silence on institutions of sects or ideological collectivities such as the Deoband, the Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at (popularly called Barelwi by its rivals; hereafter Ahl-i Sunnat) and the Ahl-i Hadith. I end by showing that no other sect or ideological group shared what was the sine qua non of Jama'at's educational ideology.

Loss of power, power of loss

I will start this part by briefly outlining the historical context in which Maududi's ideas took shape and the factors that led to the formation of the Jama'at. Since he single-handedly propounded the Jama'at's ideology, it

would be helpful to have a biographical account, however sketchy, of his life. A basic familiarity with the political context and his biography will help the reader to appreciate the connections Maududi made between power, pure Islam and education.

Context and biography

During the 1930s and early 1940s, the Indian freedom struggle against British rule had entered a critical phase. Muslims were broadly divided into two streams. Led by the clerics of Dar al-Ulum, Deoband (henceforth Deoband) madrasa and the Jamiat-i Ulama-i Hind (both were almost synonymous), a majority of them were with the Indian National Congress that stood for a composite, secular and united India. Opposed to the Congress, the Muslim League advocated a separate homeland for Muslims. Maududi began his public life as a staunch Congressman. While still in his teens, he wrote panegyric biographies of M.K. Gandhi (soon confiscated by the British) and the Hindu revivalist leader Pundit Madanmohan Malaviya. He urged Muslims to emulate Malaviya: 'Today all respect him [Malaviya] and he is venerable not only in the eyes of Hindus but he is also a great figure for us [Muslims] to follow' (1992: 13). However, following the unceremonious demise of the Khilafat campaign in which he had enthusiastically participated, he grew disillusioned with the Congress–Jamiat-i Ulama alliance and moved away from the composite Hindu–Muslim nationalism to Islamism. In 1941, he formed the Jama'at-i Islami as an alternative to both the Congress and the League. His opposition to the League was, however, not whether or not a Muslim homeland be created but about its ideological content. Should it be based on democracy and ruled by Westernized Muslims or should it be based on sharia – caliphate⁵ – ruled by ulama? Maududi was unambiguously for the latter (for details, see Nasr 1994, 1996; Ahmad 2005b: Chapter 3). The Constitution of Jama'at thus characterized its goal as the establishment of *hukumat-i ilahiyya*, 'Allah's Kingdom' or 'Islamic State' (in Maududi 1942: 173).

It is clear that Maududi was greatly concerned with the recovery of Muslim power as he made its pursuit the very goal of the Jama'at. In fact, it mattered much more to him than many of his contemporary intellectuals because of the enduring historical ties of his family with the Mughal Empire on one hand and the Nizams of Hyderabad, the largest Muslim princely state in twentieth-century India, on the other. He grew up in Aurangabad, an important city of the princely state. After some years in Delhi and other North Indian towns, he went to Hyderabad where he lived until the late 1930s. The grandeur and spectacle of the Nizams notwithstanding, it was clear that in the vast sea that was India the Nizams had barely more than an island existence. Maududi grew up in the shadow of the ever-declining state of the Nizams and already extinguished Muslim power in Delhi. The sense of loss in him was total and it decisively shaped his ideas later. While there were many solutions to cope with the loss, such as the call of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, founder of the AMU, to embrace Western education, Maududi emphasized the rehabilitation of pure Islamic education for he thought that its corruption through *jahiliyyat* was the cause of the decline.

Purity and power

In Maududi's diagnosis, the signature cause of the loss of power was the shaky foundation of Islamic civilization, *tahzib*, in India right from its beginning. During the first century of Islam, India was on the margin of *dar al-Islam*, the abode of Islam. The religious deviants and rebels challenging the central power of Islam had taken refuge there. That was why, he argued, remnants of those deviations and waywardness were still pervasive. During the eleventh century when the 'real stream' (the political stream) of Islam came to India, it was already polluted with the 'dirt of *ajam*',⁶ non-Arab lands or cultures like Iran. In his view, most converts to Islam remained imprisoned in the practices of 'jahiliyyat and polytheism' prevalent before their conversion. Muslims who had come to India from outside were no different either. Since they were from *ajam*, central Asia, they too were ignorant of Islam. Their aim was to conquer lands and seek pleasure rather than follow pure Islam. Muslim civilization thus grew impure; it was an 'amalgam of *islamiyyat* [Islam], *ajamiyyat* [non-Arabism] and *hindiyyat* [Indianness]' (1937: 10). To Maududi, the Mughal emperor Akbar (1542–1605) was the greatest embodiment of impurity as he crafted an eclectic theology, *din-i ilahi*, by synthesizing the teachings of all religions, especially Hinduism (1940: 310–317). Hence his praise for Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (1569–1624), a purist theologian who resisted Akbar's eclecticism:

This [Akbar's *din-i ilahi*] was the first great sedition (*fitna*) that sought to absorb Muslims in territorial nationalism by spreading atheism and irreligiosity. . . . Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi unfurled the flag of *jihad* precisely against this. It was the impact of that very impious era that gave birth to Dara Shikoh [Akbar's great grandson who carried on theological eclecticism]. To eradicate this poison, Alamgir [popularly known as Aurangzeb, Dara Shikoh's brother] struggled for fifty years. And this very poison eventually destroyed the political power of Muslims. (1938: 61)

Given this impurity, a truly sharia government was never established in India. The *ulama* too sided with the impure rulers, Maududi observed, to fulfil their worldly desires (1937: 9). The downfall of the Muslims was thus, he noted, imminent and natural. It had indeed already reached its acme during the seventeenth century. Had it not been for Aurangzeb's Islamic zeal, Muslim power would have collapsed much earlier. With the death of the 'last sentry of the Islamic fort' (1937: 11), Aurangzeb, the hitherto invisible religious-moral weakness that had been growing for centuries beneath the surface became more prominent. Of all the Muslim rulers it was Aurangzeb alone whom he praised. All the rest, his argument implies, were steeped in *jahiliyyat* of one kind or another.⁷

Maududi attributed the impure character of Muslims to their lack of knowledge about 'pure Islam'. Throughout the Muslim period no concerted effort was made to impart pure Islam to the majority of people who converted to Islam. The then education system was along the lines later followed by the British. Its main objective was to generate the workforce to manage the state. The sciences of the Qur'an and hadith never became its foundation. The lack of pure Islamic education was the reason why, Maududi believed, Muslims lost power to the British (1937: 9–11; 1940: 314).

Education for power

The consolidation of the British rule after the revolt of 1857 only accentuated this impurity. According to Maududi, Muslims became much more corrupt and far removed from Islam due quintessentially to its anti-Muslim policy. The British particularly targeted Muslims. ‘Muslim principalities were destroyed and the legal and judicial system in practice for centuries was changed.’ The outcome was devastating. The ‘nation [Muslims] that once had the key to treasure’ was now ‘crying for a loaf of bread’. Muslims were deprived of the economic sources one by one.⁸ ‘And its [Muslim nation’s] ninety percent of population is now under the economic slavery of Hindus’ (1937: 46). The consequence of the British rule was as follows: ‘In this way during one and half a century Islamic power in India was thoroughly eliminated. And with the loss of political power this nation [Muslim] got mired in poverty, slavery, ignorance and immorality’ (ibid.: 11. Emphases added).

Two points follow from Maududi’s reading of history, and they seem to be in fierce tension. First, right from the beginning there was no ‘pure Islam’ in India. In a different context, he wrote that

ninety nine percent individuals of this qaum [Muslims] are ignorant of Islam, 95 per cent are deviant and 90 per cent are adamant on deviance; which is to say that they themselves neither wish to follow the path of Islam, nor fulfil the objective because of which they have been made Muslim. (1999 [1944]: 290)

Neither did a truly Islamic government ever exist. Second, the British destroyed the Islamic power in India. The paradox is glaring. If there was no true Islam, 99 per cent of Muslims were deviant and never was a truly Islamic government ever established, how could the British have destroyed it? If the majority of Muslims were never pure and instead steeped in practices of jahiliat, as he so confidently argued, does not the figure of 90 per cent of Muslims under economic slavery of Hindus sound tension-ridden?

The umbilical link between education and power came out most eloquently in a lecture Maududi delivered in 1941 at Nadwat al-Ulama (hereafter Nadwa), a madrasa at Lucknow.⁹ Four years later when the Jama’at met at its headquarters in Dar al-Islam, Pathankot (a village in Punjab), to put its ideology into practice, as the Jama’at’s amir, President, he presented his 1941 lecture as the foundation upon which to build the institutions in future (1991: 85). Given the monumental significance he himself assigned to it, it would be worthwhile to see what was the crux of his lecture. Titled ‘New Education System’, Maududi praised the initiative for reforms of institutions under discussion during the 1930s. While applauding it he, however, warned the audience that mere patchwork reform would do no good today. Mocking the ‘progressivism (raushankhayali)’ of those who wanted to give English education to madrasa graduates, he stressed that this novelty had already become old. The need was not to replace a few old books by new ones, as reform was understood to imply. He argued for ‘total revolutionary reforms’ and overhauling of the entire education system so as to create an absolutely new one.¹⁰ Questioning the piecemeal reform advocated by some, Maududi doubted if it would result in ‘restoring the world leadership to the ulama?’ In his view, there was an organic link between knowledge/education¹¹ and ‘leadership’. A people

(giroh) that had the most superior form of knowledge also always became the world leader; it was the superiority of knowledge that made Greece and Europe world leaders in different epochs of history (1991: 56–57). The reason why Muslims were ‘dislodged from the leadership (imatat)’ was because they could not compete with the West in mastering knowledge. Distrustful of any divine role, he asserted that whosoever, whether atheist or believer, possessed the most superior knowledge would become the world leader. What did he mean by knowledge, however?

Sources of knowledge and historical lag

According to Maududi, ilm meant ‘to know’. He used it in a strictly worldly sense. Based on this definition, he identified three sources of knowledge in the Qur’an: aural, sama, observational, basar, and inductive, the ability to deduce results from the first two, fawad. Compared to others, when and if a given group – whether atheist or believing – acquired the best command over education in its entirety, it had ruled the world throughout history and would rule it in the future as well. This, to him, was the guiding principle behind the rise and fall of nations. However, he put greater emphasis on basar and fawad than on sama, (ibid.: 57–58) because the first two were directly pertinent to worldly affairs. When a mighty nation/people began to fall, he presented it like a natural law; it tended to confine its education to aural methods and close its doors for reforms and additions. Such a nation was doomed to collapse. A new nation armed with the most sophisticated control over all the three sources of knowledge then took over the world leadership.

Maududi’s conceptualization of ilm and promulgation of law (zabta) of the rise of nations based on the superior command over the former by the latter radically departed from Islamic traditions. In a challenging paper, Israr Ahmad, formerly one of the editors of the Jama’at’s English organ, Radiance, argued that Maududi’s ideology was ‘in spirit Western’ (1990: 54). I would mention three elements of his critique. First, historically, ulama conceived ilm in a primarily religious sense. That is to say, ‘to know’ was to know and believe in God. From this perspective, the three sources of knowledge – aural, observational and inductive – might not necessarily and always aid in knowing or believing in God. Rather they might foster doubts in knowing God and hence might prove lethal. Moreover, ilm was always tied to the success in the life hereafter rather than worldly domination, which was Maududi’s prime concern (ibid.: 41, 49). Second, Maududi wrongly interpreted leadership in a worldly-political sense. Ahmad contended that the sense in which the Qur’an used imamat was in the sense of Muslims being the best of all peoples (khair-i ummat) in that they possessed the divine truth. And through the Qur’an Allah guaranteed that they would do so for good. To Ahmad, therefore, there was no question of Muslims being dislodged from the leadership in so far as they alone held the divine truth. To say that would be to distrust the Qur’an. As for the leadership in the political domain, he argued that the Qur’an considered it neither desirable nor necessary (ibid.: 33–37). Third, he saw no necessary link between knowledge (not in Maududi’s sense) and leadership. It was rather the other way round. In his reading of the Qur’an and what he called

‘historology’, divine history, many a politically dominant people (qaum) stood condemned in the eyes of Allah because they flouted His will, whereas the politically weak ones were praised by Allah because they followed Him and had the right knowledge (ibid.: 37).

Mimic the West

Ahmad’s critique of Maududi perfectly fits in the larger framework that I have outlined. Much like the four Qur’anic words – ilah (God), rabb (God), ibadat (worship) and din (religion) – which he had politicized and secularized,¹² Maududi also interpreted ilm and imamat in a strictly political sense and imposed on them the meanings of the then dominant ideologies. Again, there was no role for Allah to play; a people (even if atheists) would become the world leader regardless of His grace if only they could acquire the most superior form of knowledge. It is to be noted that Maududi did not believe in dajjal, anti- Christ, either. Since his reference point was always the dominant West and how Muslims could compete with it, he urged Muslims to imitate the West and overcome the historical lag because of which they had lost power. Comparing the salutary achievements of the ‘atheist West’¹³ and failure of Muslims in education which made the former a world leader and the latter a mere follower, or subjugated, or both, he wrote:

By contrast, the God-rebelling Europe progressed in education. It used aural knowledge more than you did. In observational and inductive fields too Europe has made all the contributions in the last three centuries. Its obligatory outcome had to be . . . that it [Europe] became a leader and you [Muslims] a follower. (1991: 60)

If Muslims today wanted to regain the world leadership, Maududi urged, they had to acquire more efficient mastery over all sources of education than Europe had. He wondered why Shah Wali Allah (d. 1762) and his son, Shah Abd al-Aziz (d. 1824), two of the most important revivalist scholars of their times, did not send a delegation of ulama to Europe to discover the ‘secret of its power’ and what ‘we lacked in comparison to it [Europe]’ (1940: 345). He offered a long list of philosophers whose contributions had made Europe a world power – Fichte, Hegel, Comte, Schleiermacher, Mill, Quesnay, Turgot, Adam Smith, Malthus, Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Thomas Paine, Darwin, Goethe, Herder, Lessing, etc. Comparing their contribution with that of Muslims during the same period, he concluded that the latter’s had not been even 1 per cent (1940: 342–346). His call to Muslims was obvious: master the Western sciences and knowledge so as to overtake – and overtake they must – the ‘hell-inviting atheist world leadership’ of the West and restore it to the ‘paradise-bound, Godknowing’ Muslim leadership.¹⁴

Maududi’s call to mimic the West went hand-in-hand with his resounding critique of the traditional Islamic education system in which he found three basic demerits. To begin with, for ages it did not use observational and inductive methods of ilm. The aural method was also limited only to acquiring already accumulated knowledge. He described the continued insistence on the aural method and refusal to employ observational and inductive methods as a common mistake of ‘all the centers of Islamic education’. Both the Nadwa and the Jamia Azhar of Cairo

introduced some reforms, but they too did not go far enough. The net outcome of their reform, Maududi stated, was that they expanded the aural method to include contemporary knowledge. But observational and inductive methods remained suspended in both the seminaries (1991: 60). Lamenting such partial and half-hearted reforms, he predicted that they would never enable Muslims to compete with the West and regain the leadership:

The maximum benefit of this knowledge [reformed curricula at the Nadwa and the Azhar] would be that you become an excellent, rather than a worse, follower. You would not get leadership, however. All the reform proposals that I have seen till now can only make you a better follower. No proposal has been conceived so far that makes you a leader. (ibid.: 60)

Second, there was a glaring absence of specialization in Islamic seminaries. They produced generalists of all subjects rather than specialists of one. The existing tradition to make every student a ‘maulana (cleric)’ should be done away with (ibid.: 72). Third, most seminaries did not teach new subjects. Responding to a proposal that every maulwi (theologian) be taught English, Maududi said that that was far from sufficient. He was in favour of the introduction of not only English but other sciences as well.¹⁵ Modern subjects, he pleaded, must figure in the curricula. But not in the way the Nadwa or the Azhar had incorporated them. By merely adding them to the curriculum, he argued, no revolution can be brought about in the leadership. The West had produced the sciences, both natural and social, with its own God-denying values. Teaching them, along with the traditional sciences, exactly the way they were available then would create a split in the minds of the students. Influenced by Islamic sciences, some would become ‘maulwi’, influenced by Western subjects, while others would become westerner, rather than comrade (ibid.: 68–69). The need, therefore, was not to add modern subjects as an appendix to the old curriculum of theology ‘but to turn all subjects [Western sciences] into a course of theology’ (ibid.: 71). He argued that the madrasa system must undergo ‘total revolutionary reforms’ to adopt all the elements of the Western education that had the following aspects: sources of knowledge, methods of imparting knowledge, facts and, above all, values accompanying them. Maududi argued for the adoption of all the elements barring values because he regarded them as amrit, elixir of life; he pleaded to shun the values because they were ‘poison’. The Western values were poison because they were based on atheism, and consequently, humans in the West had turned immoral, materialist, selfish and so on.

So far I have demonstrated that in Maududi’s analysis the reason why Muslims lost power was because they had turned away from pure Islam and embraced jahiliyyat. The emperor Akbar was a quintessential example of the impurity. With the solidification of the British rule, the impurity further exacerbated and Muslims eventually lost whatever power was left them. To Maududi, there was an organic link between education and power. Based on this assumption, he concluded that the reason behind the rise of the West as the world leader was that during the last three centuries it had developed the most superior command over the sources of knowledge. If Muslims desired to compete and vanquish the West, he stressed that they must mimic the

Western system of education. I conclude this part by depicting his critique of the Islamic education system, which he found fully out of tune with the challenges of the modern age.

New alternative

In the second part of this chapter, I discuss the contours of the alternative system Maududi proposed. However, it seems relevant here to elucidate first how he saw modern education prevalent among Muslims then. In the previous section I showed that one of his criticisms of institutions like the Nadwa and the Azhar was that they had incorporated Western sciences without Islamizing them. This precisely was the ground on which he also attacked colleges and universities like the AMU that Muslims had founded along the Western line. To Maududi, rather than only borrowing facts from Western education they had also blindly borrowed its values. Such institutions were, he noted with a sense of rage, therefore, producing ‘black Englishman’ rather than pure Muslims. More importantly, they had no goal of establishing Allah’s Kingdom. In a phrase that became a metaphor in the Jama’at’s language, he called Muslim colleges and universities ‘slaughterhouse[s]’.

College as ‘slaughterhouse’

In an article written in response to a proposal of the AMU Court, Maududi spelled out his position on modern institutions. The AMU Court had set up a committee to recommend modern means of education and revision of the syllabi of Islam so as to make their ‘teaching more satisfactory’ and foster an Islamic spirit in students. Maududi’s response to the committee was a damning critique of the very rationale of the AMU. He stated that if the purpose of its establishment was only to impart modern education there was no need for it. The universities of Agra, Lucknow and Dhaka were well equipped for it. In his opinion, it was founded to give modern education and make students Muslim at the same time. Since other universities did not meet this need, the AMU was established and hence it was called ‘Muslim University’. However, he found no difference whatsoever between the graduates of the AMU and those of other (non-Muslim) universities. Since its inception, the AMU had failed, he complained, in meeting this objective.

The number of students who graduated from this university with an Islamic viewpoint . . . is perhaps even less than 1 per cent. . . . It is sad that the existence of a large number of . . . products and those currently studying is not only not beneficial but is rather harmful for the Islamic civilization. . . . Among them there is not only indifference to religion but also a sense of hatred. The frame of their mind has been cast in such a manner that they have gone beyond doubt and reached a stage of disbelief. And they are rebelling against those principles on which lies Islam’s foundation. (1991: 9, italics mine)

Maududi cited a private letter of one of its alumni to support his argument. To add weight to his argument, he called the letter a ‘real reflection of university’s inner reality’. Once under the spell of communism and Western culture, but later seemingly returned to Islam, the alumnus regarded ‘Westernism’ (maghrabiyyat) as a ‘dangerous thing’. ‘In this center of Islamic India [AMU] there are a significant number of students who have become apostates and turned . . . apostles of communism,’ he

wrote. Soon after citing the letter, Maududi offered his own judgement that it is 'giving results against the objectives' for which Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan had established the AMU (1991: 10–11). From the quotation it thus appears that Khan had founded the AMU precisely for the purpose Maududi wanted it to serve. It was a tactical move. Like Maududi later, Khan was surely concerned with the downfall of the Mughal Empire and wanted Muslims to be on a par with the Hindu middle class. But his project, unlike Maududi's, did not envisage Allah's Kingdom (Nizami 1966). Indeed, his reading of Islam along the lines of European rationalism only irked the established orthodoxy. He was branded as 'nacheri', naturist, and 'kafir' (Lelyveld 1978: 110–111, 130–134). Not surprisingly, only four pages later the tactics gave way to an open assault on Khan.

Setting aside the metaphorical language, now I will say something straight. The temporary objective of the educational movement launched under the leadership of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (God forgive him) was to enable Muslims to better this world according to the needs of modern age. (Maududi 1991: 15)

Maududi's opposition to Khan and his educational movement is clearly evident from the phrase 'God forgive him'. Such a phrase is often employed when someone is considered impious. It is hardly unambiguous that in his view Khan had seemingly committed a sacrilegious act of sorts.¹⁶ This indeed was the case. In a different context, he wrote that the 'ancestry of all the deviations that had cropped up in Muslims after 1857 directly or indirectly went back to the personality of Sir Sayyid [Ahmad Khan]' and that 'he died after having damaged the mindset of the entire Muslim community' (in Nu'mani 1998: 92). He described Khan as 'the foremost imam of Westernism (tajaddud)'. Continuing his assault on Khan, Maududi added:

This movement [Sayyid Ahmad Khan's] has definitely bettered our world to an extent. But it has destroyed our religion (din) more than it has built our world (dunya). It has produced black Englishmen (firangi) among us. . . . It has sold the upper and middle strata of our nation, both externally and internally . . . off to the materialist civilization of Europe. (1991: 16, emphasis added)

Maududi believed that the AMU should meet the objective of producing leaders to establish Allah's Kingdom (1991: 28). It was, however, on the contrary serving Western culture both through its curriculum and extra curricular activities (ibid.: 26). As for the former, Western sciences were being taught in such a way that students' minds too turned Western. They came to believe that if there was a proper and valuable thing in the world it was only that which accorded with Western principles (ibid.: 22–23). As for the latter, dress, sports and overall environment at the AMU was '95 per cent, if not fully, definitely Western' (ibid.: 23). To add a contextual note, Maududi's grandfather had recalled his father from the AMU because he had played cricket there wearing 'infidelic [kafir] dress' (1979: 30). Since Maududi considered institutions like the AMU to be wholly against his Islamist project, he urged Muslims not to go there. In a convocation address delivered in 1940 at Islamia College,¹⁷ Amritsar, he fearlessly articulated his hostility to Western education. While delivering it, he thanked the college for inviting him despite knowing that he was a 'great enemy of the education system under which this great college is founded' (1991: 44).

Asking the audience to bear with his unpleasant but true feelings, he said:

In fact, I consider your mother college – and not only this college but also all such colleges – slaughterhouse (qatlghah) rather than education house. In my view, you have been slaughtered here and the degrees that you are about to get are indeed death certificates. (1991: 45, emphasis added)

The metaphors of ‘slaughterhouse’ and ‘death certificates’ became so powerful that many students under Maududi’s influence left the AMU (and other modern colleges), considering it un-Islamic to study there. Indeed, until the late 1950s, the Jama’at imposed a ban on its members to study at such institutions. Soon after Partition, the Jama’at set up an alternative institution for those who had left colleges and universities. In what follows we will see what kind of alternative education Maududi had in mind and how it was different both from madrasas on the one hand and modern universities such as the AMU on the other.

Features of the alternative

Dissatisfied with both the Nadwa and the AMU, as demonstrated in the preceding pages, Maududi offered his own alternative. He presented it in two articles and one lecture: first, in his 1936 critique of the AMU education, second, in a clarification about the critique, but, more importantly, in his lecture at the Nadwa. Since these pieces were written or delivered on different occasions with different types of audience, the emphasis was varying, as was the style.

However, there was a unity of purpose informing them all. Maududi’s alternative had the following major features:

- make education mission-oriented;
- abolish the distinction between religious and secular sciences (ergo, between religion, din, and world, dunya);
- following from the second, Islamize all sciences; and
- introduce specialization

Of all the features of his alternative, Maududi regarded having a mission as the most important. Both teachers and the taught should have a mission, and he lamented that graduates of modern education rarely had one. He likened aimless students with animals because the latter had no mission (ibid.: 50). What should be the objective of education, then? As Muslims, the mission of students was to wage a greater jihad for the formation of Allah’s Kingdom. And the objective of the education system was to prepare the ‘ground to bring about an Islamic revolution’ (Tarjuman al-Qur’an¹⁸ 1941, June–August: 477). The mission had to be fostered in all possible ways, including through sports and recreation. The product of the new system would be a ‘mujahid in the path of Allah’ (1991: 79).¹⁹ Among others, this was arguably the unique feature of Maududi’s alternative.

He stated that, since no other system in the whole of India had such a mission, the Jama’at had no option but to establish its own. In other words, its objective was to manufacture a ‘leader’ and workers for the Islamist movement (ibid.: 86–87). So central was the mission to him that he warned the Jama’at members not to make the running of institutions an end in itself. If they became the end rather than the means for the ultimate mission, he advised them to destroy such institutions as the USSR had destroyed their

own industrial centres during the Second World War to safeguard its ideology (1944: 54).

The rationale behind dissolving the distinction between religious and secular education was that, if maintained, it would turn the minds of the students into ‘a battle ground’ for the conflict between Westernism, firangiyyat, and Islam (1991: 24). Anticipating the religious commitment of the students produced out of this curriculum, he said, ‘Your products would be non-Muslim in philosophy, science, laws, politics. . . . And their Islam would get limited to a set of mere beliefs and religious rituals’ (ibid.: 35). Maududi’s opposition to the secular–religious distinction was also premised on his novel theorization of Islam as an organic whole. For him, Islam was a complete, inseparable system of life, which, unlike Christianity, did not maintain the distinction between world and religion. Since the AMU reproduced this distinction, it went against his Islamist definition of Islam. Instead of attaching theology as appendix to the Western sciences, as in his view the AMU did, he called for a theologization of entire sciences (1991: 27, 71). Once that had happened, he noted that there would be no need for a separate subject of theology. Indeed, he said that examinations for graduates of theology should be abolished. Instead of domesticating Islam to the department of theology, he argued for Islam to dominate all subjects (ibid.: 35–36).

Based on the above, in his 1941 lecture, he proposed the specialized pursuit of knowledge because it was impossible to teach the ever-increasing knowledge in its entirety to every student. He envisaged four faculties for Western sciences: faculties of philosophy, history, social sciences and natural sciences.²⁰ In all those faculties, the Qur’an-based viewpoints of philosophy, history, society and civilization, and nature were respectively to be taught so as to refute the views on those themes of the Western sciences, other religions such as Hinduism or deviant schools within Islam like Sufism. Anti-Islamic thought should also be taught to show that it was the philosophy of the condemned and the misguided.²¹ The guiding framework to teach all subjects would be to prove that Islam was the only true and viable system of life and that it was superior to all (1991: 72–79). There should be a faculty for Islamic sciences subdivided into departments for the study of the Qur’an, hadith and Islamic law. The last one would be the most important, for it would show the way other departments would function under an Islamic framework.²²

Situating the alternative

In the preceding pages, I discussed the distinct features of Maududi’s alternative ideology. In the final part, I intend to place Jama’at’s alternative in relation to the larger discourses on education by different collectivities of Muslim society. My aim in undertaking this exercise is to show the distinction of the Jama’at ideology vis-à-vis the ideologies of other sects and groups already alluded to, such as the Nadwa and the AMU. However, I will also account for Maududi’s silence on sects and/or ideological collectivities such as the Deoband, the Ahl-i Sunnat and the Ahl-i Hadith. I will end by showing that no other sect or ideological group shared the sine qua non of

Jama'at's ideology, according to which education was an instrument of heralding an Islamic revolution/state.

New ship, new captain

In his 1936 article on the AMU, Maududi employed the metaphor of a ship to attack both the traditionalist and modernists and to foreground his own alternative. Taking 1857 as a benchmark, he said that two groups emerged to save their sinking ship in its aftermath. The first group (i.e. the traditionalists) sought to repair the old ship; the second one (i.e. the modernists) 'rented' a new one, the Western ship. He was critical of both. The first one, he said, was incapable of competing with the Western ship because the traditionalists were following the same old path charted long ago. He asked them to give up blind imitation, andhi taqlid, and instead do ijihad (interpretation based on reason). 'A real leader . . . is he who adopts, subject to time and occasions, most proper ways using his power of ijihad' (1991: 13–14). His call for ijihad was reflected in his rejection of all the existing corpus of texts on Islam and the need for writing new ones.

On the principles of fiqh [jurisprudence], commandments of fiqh, Islamic economics, sociological principles of Islam and hikmat of the Qur'an there is an urgent need for writing modern books . . . as the old book are no longer relevant for teaching. . . . People of ijihad may find good materials in them but teaching them exactly as they are to students of contemporary age is absolutely useless. (ibid.: 40)

He repeatedly urged the recasting of Islam so that it appealed to the 'minds and psychology of boys and girls of this age' (1991: 38). This he sought to do by way of restoring the 'real spirit of Islam'. Dissatisfied with the available books, he wrote, 'For this purpose you will not get a ready made syllabus; you have to make everything anew' (ibid.: 18). The most radical element in Maududi's ijihad was the direct reading of the Qur'an in Arabic and then its application to the problems of the world. 'To understand the Qur'an there is no need for any of its interpretation (tafsir)' (ibid.: 38, 54). From this perspective, he found the captains of the old ship steeped in blind imitation. In the name of so-called ijihad, he said, the traditionalists had added a few electric bulbs to the old ship and pretended that it had become new (ibid.: 14). As such, it was incapable of facing a terrible storm (of the West). A single wave may sabotage it completely.

The other ship, 'rented' by the modernists, was more up-to-date and capable of competing with the Western ship. The danger, Maududi feared, was that it would lead Muslims, as indeed it already had done in his opinion, away from the Islamic 'destination' (1991: 13). To fool themselves and Muslims at large that it was an 'Islamic ship', the modernists had employed a few Muslim captains. But in fact it was not. The rented ship was 'more dangerous than the old ship' as it would alienate Muslims in a single stroke and turn them into Englishmen, comrade or apostate. Having shown the demerits of the old and new ships, Maududi asked Muslims to get down from both and manufacture a ship of 'their own'. The new ship, he proposed, would be armed with the latest Western technologies but its design would be of a 'purely Islamic ship and its engineers, captains and watchdog all would be familiar with ways of destination of the Kaba' (ibid.: 15).

Educational spectrum

The metaphor of old and new ships, it is not difficult to dissect, symbolized the Nadwa and the AMU respectively. They referred to two points on the educational spectrum characteristic of Muslims during that period: Nadwa as a symbol of traditionalism and AMU of modernism. Though the Nadwa stood for reform, it was unprepared for the ‘total revolutionary reforms’ Maududi desired. That was what he meant by a few electric bulbs that the Nadwa had added and pretended that it had a new ship. Applauding it for its reform initiative and simultaneously critiquing it for its insufficiency leaves one crucial question unanswered. What did he think of the Deoband and madrasas of Ahl-i Sunnat sect/ideology?²³

In his book, *Ta’limat*, Maududi did not even mention the Deoband. Why this silence? In the wake of the 1936 provincial elections, he had attacked Hussain Ahmad Madani, head of the Deoband madrasa, for lending unstinted support to the Congress and opposing the League. Based on his Islamic notion of united nationalism or nationhood, he had pleaded for a joint Muslim–Hindu struggle against the British (Madani 2002 [1938]). In Maududi’s view, Madani was distorting Islam and making Muslims hostage to the Hindu majority (Maududi 1938). Given his fierce opposition to the Congress and Madani, it was only expected that he would ignore the Deoband madrasa. An equally important reason seemed to be the Deoband’s opposition to Western sciences. Though it had incorporated *ma’qulat*, rational sciences (philosophy, logic, etc.) in its syllabus, its balance was tilted towards *manqulat*, transmitted sciences (e.g. the Qur’an and hadith). Sociology, economics, history, English and pure sciences were not part of its curriculum. Its method of teaching and acquiring knowledge was still aural. Such a curriculum bereft of *ijtihad*, as Maududi argued, could hardly compete with and beat the West. Additionally, despite its call to revive pure Islam, the Deobandi school did not fully break off from Sufism. The emphasis on close relations between student and a chosen spiritual guide was in fact a crucial feature at Deoband (Metcalf 1982: 265–267). Maududi’s description of popular Islam as *jahiliyyat* and of Sufism as ‘opium’ (1940: 340) would have hardly made him look towards the Deoband. For the same set of reasons he also did not mention the madrasas of the Ahl-i Sunnat sect. In two crucial treatises, ‘Renewal and Revival of Religion’ (1940) and ‘Islam and Jahiliyyat’ (1941), he had the dubbed core beliefs and practices associated with the Ahl-i Sunnat sect polytheistic and signs of *jahiliyyat*. Compared to the Deobandis, the Ahl-i Sunnat sect was clearly a far more ardent supporter of popular, customladen, Sufism-oriented, ritualistic Islam (Metcalf 1982; Sanyal 1999) or what Gellner wrongly calls ‘Low Islam’.²⁴ Also, it was least, if at all, open to *ijtihad*.

In contrast to the Deoband and the Ahl-i Sunnat madrasas, the Nadwa, the venue of Maududi’s 1941 lecture, was closer to his alternative. Established in 1893, the key idea behind the formation of the Nadwa was to work as a mid-way between the modernism of the AMU and the traditionalism of the Deoband (Agwani 1992: 357; Ansari 1995; Hasani 1997a: 48). Shibli Nu’mani, a close associate of Sayyid Ahmad Khan at Aligarh, was one of its founding fathers. Later, Nu’mani parted ways with

Khan's modernism, left Aligarh and helped establish the Nadwa (Lelyveld 1978: 247–248). The founders of the Nadwa were uncomfortable with the AMU's exclusive focus on modern subjects, with Islam having just a decorative presence (Akbarabadi 1995: 186) in its syllabi.

They were equally unhappy with the Deoband madrasa because it focused primarily on traditional subjects to the neglect of the modern sciences (Zaman 2002: 69). Nadwa thus introduced English, history and geography in its curriculum (Hasani 1997: 47–54). It was the first madrasa designed to meet the need for a reformed Islamic syllabus in the late nineteenth century.²⁵ As such, the Nadwa was more inclined toward reform and Western subjects. Moreover, it was more puritan in its beliefs than both the Deoband and the Ahl-i Sunnat madrasas. Put differently, Islam in the rendition of Nadwa's ideology was, if not fully pure as Maududi desired, less contaminated with jahiliat than that of the Deoband and the Ahl-i Sunnat madrasas. That was why he applauded the Nadwa. For his educational agenda to unfold, Maududi did not find any other madrasa more appropriate than the Nadwa (1991: 55). His opposition to modern colleges in general and the AMU in particular pushed him more towards it. Given this distinct orientation of the Nadwa, Maududi was able to win support there first. His articles on the contemporary issues in *Tarjuman al-Qur'an* had deeply influenced Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, then a young student at Nadwa and later to become its rector and a world-famous theologian, and Masud Alam, both of whom later joined the Jama'at. Nadwi had already met Maududi in 1939 at Lahore. In a letter to Nadwi, the latter had requested him to look for someone who could translate his book *Purda* (The Veil) into Arabic, for sale in Arab countries. To do this work, wrote Maududi, my 'eyes do not look towards any other center except the Nadwa' (Nadwi 2000: 304). Moreover, it was Nadwi who had invited him to deliver the lecture at the Nadwa. In 1941 when the Jama'at was formed, Ali became amir of its Lucknow unit.²⁶

Table 9.1, based on Maududi's educational ideology and the proposed alternative, shows his ideological position vis-à-vis the educational institutions of other sects/ideologies.

Table 9.1 synoptically presents Maududi's position towards the then-known institutions and why he referred to some of them and maintained silence about others. In the remainder of this chapter, I intend to show that no other sect/- ideology-based educational institution shared the goal that the Jama'at had set for itself, namely the pursuit of an Islamic state.

Table 9.1 Maududi's position towards sect/ideology-based educational institutions

Table 9.1 Maududi's position towards sect/ideology-based educational institutions

<i>Sect/ideology-based institutions</i>	<i>How he looked at them</i>	<i>Reasons for neglect*/contact**/hostility***</i>
Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at (Barelwis) Deoband	Unimportant, not even mentioned Ignored it	*Impure Muslim; jahiliyat beliefs & practices */***Supporter of the Congress and, therefore, part of the design to destroy Muslims; not modern enough to compete with the West, lack of ijihad
Nadwa ^a	Close to his own agenda; potential convert	**Besides some form of ideological affinity, few of its students already under Maududi's influence; open to ijihad, but not sufficiently enough
AMU, Aligarh ^b	'Slaughterhouse'	***Producing 'black Englishman', atheists; not pure Muslims

Notes

a Theoretically, the Ahl-i Sunnat, the Deoband and the Nadwa all claim to belong to the school of Imam Hanifa. Yet, in practice, they function as separate sects because of their irreconcilably different interpretations of Hanifa. Admittedly, there are fewer creedal differences between the followers of the Deoband and the Nadwa. However, historically there have been serious differences regarding their openness to the Western sciences and culture. The sectarian proximity apart, in practice they have worked as two ideological groups.

b Clearly, it was (is) not a sect. Ideologically, it is appropriate to call it a university for the modernist Muslims.

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State, Islam and education

Though some argue that the Deoband was founded to compensate for the defeat Muslims suffered in the anti-British revolt of 1857 to regain Mughal power, and hence it had political ambition (Ahmad 1997: 19), afterwards it barely nursed any desire to regain the state (Metcalf 1982). This is not to say that it ceased to be political. Far from it – it grew more political, especially with the onset of the Congress-led non-cooperation and Khilafat mobilizations. But like the Congress, the Deoband unflinchingly believed in a secular India based on the composite nationalism of Hindus and Muslims (Madani 2002; Shahjahanpuri 2003).

Neither in theory nor in practice did it ever desire caliphate. Thus, soon after independence in 1947, the Jamiat-i Ulama, the political wing of the Deobandi school,²⁷ stated that it would no longer play a political role now that its objective of India's independence had been met. Further, it said that in future it would limit its role to religious reform and advancement of the rights of Muslims (Dastur of the Jamiat-i Ulama-i Hind undated: 2). The same was true for the Nadwa. In spite of some affinities with Maududi's alternative, the pursuit of a sharia state did not figure in its agenda. Contra Maududi, Shibli Nu'mani, a prominent leader-theologian of the Nadwa, indeed argued that Islam did not require a state and that Muslims ought to be 'loyal and obedient to whatever government they are under' for that was the 'teaching of Islam, as . . . enunciated in the Qur'an, hadith, fiqh and all' (1999: 161). Following India's independence, the Nadwa also firmly believed in Indian secularism and democracy. As its agenda-setter in post-Independence India, Nadwi took pride in the Muslim civilization being an amalgam of Islamic and Indian influences. Though initially a Jama'at member, for him, unlike Maududi, the amalgamated Indian Muslim civilization was 'a matter of beauty' (Nadwi 1992: 96).

The pursuit of a state did not constitute the agenda of the Ahl-i Sunnat sect either. Unlike Maududi, its ulama did not consider the state to be central to Islam (Kachhochhvi 1997: 298). As its supreme leader, Imam Ahmad Riza Khan (d. 1921) did not support the Khilafat campaign for the restoration of the Turkish caliphate. And unlike the Ahl-i Hadith ulama (see below), a prominent figure of which had, in 1803, declared India dar al-harb, abode of war, Ahmad Riza Khan instead regarded it dar al-Islam, the abode of Islam (Sanyal 1996: ch. IX). The prime concern of the Ahl-i Sunnat was to combat the flood of reformism of the Deoband, the Nadwa,

the Ahl-i Hadith and the Sayyid Ahmad Khan-led Aligarh movement, which it regarded as an assault on its version of pure Islam (Rizwi 2001: 13). The objective of its madrasas in colonial India was to combat the impurity of its rival sects (Sanyal 1996). In post-colonial India also, the objective remained the same. As its central madrasa, the goal of the Jamia Ashrafiyya (in the Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh (UP); formed in 1972) was to spread its version of authentic Islam and combat the deviations and falsehoods of its rivals (Jamia Ashrafiyya undated).

In contrast to all the sects mentioned above, the state had been historically central to the Ahl-i Hadith sect (known as Wahhabi to its rivals). Though it took an organizational shape only in 1906 with the formation of the All India Ahl-i Hadith Conference (Akbar 1999: 320), its leaders traced its genealogy to Shah Wali Allah (Ghazipuri 1999: 77). It was his son Shah Abd al-Aziz who, in 1803, had declared India dar al-harb. Since the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Ahl-i Hadith ulama, however, began to acknowledge the infeasibility of turning India into dar al-Islam. Some joined the Congress while others joined the League (Ghazipuri 1999: 79). They, therefore, exclusively focused on attacking their rival sects in the name of pure Islam (Rahmani and Salafi 1980: 15; Ghazipuri 1999; Salafi 2004). After India's independence, its central madrasa, Jamia Salafiyya, was established in Banaras, UP, in 1963. Of its eight objectives, none mentioned an Islamic state. Its central objective was to spread puritan Islam by 'eliminating all innovations (bidat) and superstitions, false customs and traditions, wrong creeds and ideologies' which have spread among Muslims as a result of their 'intermingling with non-Muslims and the Western onslaught' (Rahmani and Salafi 1980: 103–104).

Conclusion

Taking Jama'at-i Islami and the educational writings of its founder-ideologue, Maududi, as a case study, I have shown the fallacies of arguments made by scholars like Lawrence, Sivan, Moghissi, Lewis, Sayyid and Tibi who assert, though with varying degrees of emphasis and significantly different angles, that Islamism is 'anti-modernist', a revolt against or hostile to modernity. I have argued that it is wrong to call it an 'authentic', 'indigenous' discourse untouched by modernity. As a matter of fact, Maududi did not have a madrasa education. On his graduation from the secular-composite nationalism of the Indian National Congress–Jamiat-i Ulama alliance to Islamism, he began to mount a ferocious attack on madrasa education and the ways of teaching Islam therein. Thus, rather than being an adherent of tradition, he attacked it. He stressed that the traditional madrasas were no longer relevant. He stood for its 'total revolutionary reforms' and expressed the need for a new, pure Islamic system. In so doing, he invented tradition. His most important invention was that Islam was an eternal movement with a divine goal to establish hukumat-i ilahiyya, Allah's Government or the Islamic state/revolution, and Muslims were a party of the vanguard to lead that movement towards its ultimate goal. This realization led him to form the Jama'at-i Islami, whose objective he defined as the establishment of Allah's Kingdom. I demonstrated that the Jama'at's goal of an Islamic state was rooted in a historical context in which Muslims

had lost power to the British. The aristocratic family lineage of Maududi played an equally important role in determining the goal of the Jama'at.

In the Jama'at's discourse, education figured as an instrument of rehabilitating the power Muslims had lost to the British/the West. Maududi believed that Muslims lost power because they had deviated from pure Islam and embraced jahiliyyat, the 'other' of Islam. To regain power, he called upon Muslims to shun jahiliyyat and fashion a pure Islamic education system whose graduates would work as leaders and activists of the Islamist movement to herald an Islamic revolution. Since his concern was always the dominant West, he asked Muslims to embrace Western education wholesale, except for its values. Maududi's call to embrace Western education stemmed from the belief that the West derived its dominant position from its superiority in knowledge. If Muslims were to beat the West and regain the dominant position, he urged them to imitate Western education. It was for this reason that he lamented the slow pace of reforms at madrasas like the Nadwa in India and the Jamia Azhar in Egypt. He found the old books taught in madrasas 'useless' and emphasized the need for writing new ones for the modern age. While he attacked the traditional madrasas for their 'blind imitation' of tradition and the lack of 'ijtihad', this did not mean that he endorsed the agenda of the modernists like Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan who introduced Western education and founded the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). Maududi called such modern institutions 'slaughterhouse[s]' and its degrees 'death certificates'. Indeed, he held Khan responsible for all the recent deviations among Muslims. He attacked Western educational institutions for two reasons. First, he held that they were making their students 'black Englishmen', apostates, 'comrades' rather than pure Muslims. Second, they did not have any agenda of pursuing a sharia-based state, which he considered to be the divine objective of Islam.

The sine qua non of the Jama'at's ideology was that pursuit of the state was the main objective of a pure Islamic education. I concluded by showing that the educational institutions of none of the other ideological groups or sects among Indian Muslims, including those of the Ahl-i Hadith sect, had this objective. In this respect, the Jama'at stood alone and is unique. By way of a final remark, I would like to add that while it is important to take into account the ideology of a movement such as the Jama'at, it is much more important to empirically study how an ideology is put into practice. In the case of the Jama'at in post-colonial India, its practices diverged from its ideology to the extent that ideology itself got astonishingly transformed. However, this is a subject beyond the scope of this chapter.

Notes

1 Given its analytical disutility, not to speak of the pejorative connotation, I will refrain from using the term 'fundamentalism'. I will instead refer to the Jama'at-i Islami as an example of Islamism or an Islamist movement. On the reasons for this choice see Ahmad (2005a: 282–283). By Islamist, following Roy (1994) and Fuller (2003), I mean an activist who regards Islam as a complete system of life and believes in founding a sharia state as his foremost duty.

2 Clearly, Maududi's model of Islamic revolution was inspired by the Leninist model.

For an elaborate treatment of these points, see my PhD dissertation, particularly Chapter III (Ahmad 2005b).

3 Under the combined influence of Hegel and Marx, Maududi developed an absolutely novel framework of reading Islamic history. According to him, the whole history of humankind has been the history of continuous, irreconcilable battle between Islam and jahiliyyat (see note 5). For details, see Ahmad (2005b).

4 It means pre-Islamic beliefs and practices. However, Maududi used it to mean an anti-Islamic polity.

5 Maududi used caliphate, Islamic government/revolution/system and Allah's Government interchangeably.

6 In Urdu, 'ajam' means dumb, tongue-tied, even barbarian. Historically, it is regarded as 'the other' of the Arab (especially Persia), which is considered civilized and eloquent.

See Urdu English Dictionary (undated).

7 Maududi warned his readers not to conflate Islamic history with the history of Muslim rulers. To see acts of Muslims as Islamic stemmed from what he called a 'crooked perspective'. Chiding Muslims who presented the Taj Mahal as the shining symbol of Islam, he argued that it was un-Islamic that in order to bury the dead acres of land were occupied and millions of rupees spent to erect a monument thereon. 'From a purely Islamic framework of history,' he continued, 'a major part of the achievements of these people [the Abbasids, the Saljuq and the Mughals] have to be written not with golden water but in black ink of the catalogue of crimes' (2001 [1939]: 138).

8 That in medieval India Muslims had the 'key to the treasure' clearly indicates that Maududi's concern was the rich, Turkish governing class, not the majority of Muslim peasants or artisans who, as the historian Mohammad Habib (1961: xii) observed, shared the same hardship as their Hindu counterparts.

9 On the history and role of the Nadwa, see Agwani (1992) and Malik (1994, 1998).

10 Hence the title of his lecture, 'New Education System'! The discussion on the Jama'at's ideology draws heavily on Maududi's Ta'limat, a collection of his writings on education. Where relevant, I also refer to his other writings.

11 Maududi often used ilm, knowledge, and Ta'lim, education, as substitutes.

12 For details, see Ahmad (2006). Maududi's (1979a) Four Basic Qur'anic Terms, which I consider as the bible of his philosophy of Islamism, is an exposition of these terms. For a critique, see Khan (1995 [1963]).

13 Maududi interchangeably used west, maghrib, and Europe 14 Throughout his lecture, Maududi used the binary phrases of God-rebelling/ignorant, na-khuda shanash, leadership of the West and God-knowing, khuda shanash, leadership of Islam.

15 'All the teachers of theology and Islamic sciences should know both English and Arabic. Now no mono-directional, yek-rukha, person can be a right teacher of theology' (1991: 41).

16 The absence of the Arabic phrase Rahmatullah Alaih (blessing of Allah be upon him), inserted after a dead person's name, certainly when he is a religiously pious and public figure, also explains his disgust of Khan.

17 Colleges such as Islamia College, like the AMU, were 'Western' in that they taught Western social and natural sciences. They had only one subject of Islam called Islamic theology. See, Husain (1999: 24).

18 This is the name of the official journal of the Jama'at and chief carrier of Maududi's ideas.

19 Nowhere did Maududi mention the need for spiritual education.

20 Compared to social science and humanities, Maududi's take on the Islamization of natural sciences was substantially different. Unlike social domains where laws from the Qur'an could be less problematically explicated, it was difficult, he admitted, to Islamize natural science. 'This [the Qur'an] is not a book of science.' Yet, since it was the 'master key', he argued that it could offer a 'starting point' in unravelling the universe (1991: 77).

21 The words used are in Arabic: dallin and maghdub. They occur at the end in the opening chapter of the Qur'an. Maududi translated them into Urdu in the sense I have used here. See Maududi (2001a: 13).

22 Since Maududi claimed to have inspiration for his ideology from the Qur'an, he considered the knowledge of Arabic essential. He emphasized it more in his articles or lectures at the Western Muslim colleges (1991: 30, 37, 54). This is understandable as Arabic was far from central to their curricula. At the Nadwa, he did not even mention it

because the audience was from a madrasa where Arabic was taught. In articles on the AMU, however, he urged students and teachers of theology to learn one European language, preferably English (ibid.: 41).

23 Despite Wilson's (1982: 103) warning that the term 'sect' cannot be applied to 'nonwestern cultures', including Islam, I use it. His argument is similar to the one made by writers I have quoted and critiqued in the beginning. Wilson's argument is based on the flimsy assumption of a perennial difference between 'East' and 'West'. Since I argue that Maududi's discourse is inextricably tied to the Western discourse, I also use 'sect' to analyse 'non-Western culture'. I use it to refer to a religious group that (1) has exclusive allegiance, (2) claims to have the monopoly of truth, and (3) exercises sanctions against deviants (Wilson 1982: 91–92). In modern India, madrasas have evolved along the lines of sects and as such they have their respective ideologies.

In my usage, a given sect also has its own ideology.

24 Gellner's description of scriptural, standardized Islam as 'High' and that of popular, non-standardized as 'Low', (1992: 10–14) is misleading. Do the practitioners of 'Low Islam', I wonder, consider their Islam as 'low'?

25 Incorporation of modern subjects, including English, was not an end in itself. They were rather tools; necessary because of the superior might of the British, to counter the missionaries and anti-Islam ideas such as atheism, immorality etc. of the West and also the falsehood of the 'deviant sects' within Islam (Hasni 1997a: 47). It is to be noted that the suggested reform was barely implemented in its entirety or, when implemented, it diverged significantly from the proposed model (Zaman 1999: 306–309).

26 A few years later, Nadwi resigned from the Jama'at. See his critique of Maududi (1980, 2000).

27 As would be obvious, ideologically I equate the Jamiat al-Ulama with the Deoband madrasa.

10: IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

Jamal Malik

As we have seen, madrasas and Islamic learning traditions are the embodiment of a variety of resistance patterns. On the one hand, they appear to be the local resistance forces arrayed against the universalizing and homogenizing notions of secular modernity as stipulated by the state from above. On the other hand, they are exposed to the challenges of homogenizing and globalizing notions of Islam emerging within the religious discourses, that is to say, from below. These forms of resistance do have the potential to evolve into some radicalism, as the resistance adapts itself to the political economy of madrasas. On the positive side, however, these forms also provide for creative alternatives allowing accommodation and appeasement from within. Both aspects can be traced in the ideas proliferated in and about madrasas and Islamic learning.

Apart from the political economy argument which seems to put madrasas merely on the receiving end, one can witness tremendous internal dynamics in these institutions, rendering them active agents of political economy themselves. Interestingly enough, the language they speak is similar to the one imposed by the state: homogenizing and globalizing, yet pluralistic and localizing. Two extreme examples can display this tension, when, in the homogenizing discursive processes of identity formation, pluralistic tendencies can be traced as well. The strategically instituted different interpretations of texts as used by the Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at seem to provide for multiple understanding and thus space for plurality, at least within the religious domain. Their homogenizing notions of Islam target and contest the Muslim Other rather than the non-Muslims. These sorts of skirmishes between local factions competing for scarce resources “from below” provide authoritative agency which seems to be necessary for the survival in the same religious domain. Outwardly, this might look as if these Islamic scholars were striving solely towards a universal Muslim identity. In the case of another Barelwi school, similar homogenizing tendencies are apparent, the motives being state recognition and economic factors. In their struggle for financial betterment they try to resist the centripetal and centrifugal forces of secular modernity when they stress their particular identity as being Muslims, Sunnis and Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at (Barelwis). Again, it is in the contestation with other Muslim groups rather than non-Muslims that they engage in their own “homogenizing” forms of religious resistance. Similarly, the Jama'at-i Islami, far from being hostile to the homogenizing terms of secular modernity, comes up with a specific homogenizing notion of Islam. Historically, it evolved in the 1930s distinguishing itself both from the politically-dominant colonial sector and from adherents of Muslim traditions passed on from generation to generation. On the one hand Maududi's vision of the Islamic system was fairly compatible with Western ideologies. On the other it calls for a return to the righteous society and for the reconstruction of an idealized pure, yet deculturalized, Islamic society. The aim is revival, tajdid – thought necessary to respond to the changes of modernity. This is possible only through the evolution of a unique, singular and synchronic Islamic identity

produced in a pure Islamic education system. There is a clear universalizing contestation to the homogenization attempts of the state as well as those of traditionalist madrasas.

Hence, alternatives to these “homogenizing” forms of religious resistance do exist. The chapter that draws out this alternative most effectively is that on cinematic representations of Islam and Islamic learning in Bangladesh (Chapter 8). Here, the homogenizing pressures of the modern state and the various forms of resistance it produces are explicated in terms of the progression within East Bengal: from (a) resistance against the homogenizing colonial state culminating in the formation of homogenized Hindu and Muslim states (India and Pakistan); (b) resistance against the homogenizing Islam of “Pakistan” culminating in the formation of homogenized Urdu and Bengali-speaking states (Pakistan and Bangladesh); and, last but not least, (c) resistance against the homogenizing language of “Bengali” nationalism culminating in the formation of competing, “Islamic” and “Bengali Muslim” identities. It is revealed that these homogenizing forms of state-formation are not the only options. In fact, the cinematic representations conclude with an example in which this relentless homogenizing impulse is set aside, across lines of class and political power, to illuminate a more ambiguous (and satisfying) solution – one that remains open to shifting connections and diverse forms of religious understanding, when the madrasa is considered to be a space for actually unlearning homogeneity, forcing to learn to adopt and accept difference. Indeed, a set of tensions is shrewdly illuminated within which one homogenized (singular) identity eliminates the other only to be replaced by yet another homogenized identity. On the contrary, what is presented is a case in which Islamic education is able to accommodate, even embrace, a “third” option – one in which the tensions themselves remain in place; when Islam and Islamic learning is vernacularized to fit local needs in the widest sense.

This rare pluralist approach we encounter in *The Clay Bird* that finds precedents in Muslim history where the principle of pluralism was prevailing and commonly accepted, such as Islamic law: in fact, it was this law that evolved from long scholastic debates, bringing about a consensus that is adaptable enough to guarantee a life in accordance with Islam in many different ways, harking back to the science of disputation mentioned earlier. This development rendered the singular and normative religious dynamics and a central scholastic teaching institution superfluous. It implied that active engagement with plurality required participation, beyond mere tolerance, and it did not displace or eliminate deep religious commitments, rather it was the encounter of commitments.

A major discursive field to discuss these dynamics and pluralist as well as non-pluralist, globalizing as well as localizing tendencies is the pedagogy and subject matters that disseminate knowledge in madrasas. Mention has been made of the titles of major canonical texts and of the books added from time to time. But so far little academic effort has been invested to research the exact content of the texts taught in religious schools. What is required then is a careful look into the gradual changes in the subject matters. In contrast to the widespread perception that madrasa education is out-dated

and in need of reform, it is contended here that there has been a process of between-the-line-changes to the major texts, which can be discerned from the classical texts that still enjoy universal popularity within the madrasa system. The changes lie not in the body of the main texts but in the explanatory commentaries, super-commentaries, glosses and super-glosses that have been written and re-written by contemporary scholars to make the core texts accessible and meaningful in different times. One may presume that these additions changed over the course of time, reflecting the context in which the core texts were to be re-read – as has been the case with Qur’anic interpretation, jurisprudence, philosophy, theology, and so on. So far, these specific additions and modifications to the subject matters in madrasas have hardly been studied properly. Hence, what is needed precisely is an indepth view into the curricular dynamics of madrasas before one can really come up with some plausible statement about what is being taught and what is to be reformed in these schools. Given the societal, religious and curricular dynamics in madrasas, these changes should not be too difficult to instal, once the tussle between and among different contenders from above and from below has taken on a constructive shape. For this to happen, however, the role of the state is crucial.

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