UOS Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities (UOSJSSH)
ISSN (P) 2224-2341, ISSN (E) 2310-0249
Volume: 8, (2) 2024, Pages (58-69)
Journal Homepage: https://uosjssh.su.edu.pk/

Growth of Madrasas and Islamic Education in Pakistan: Historical Analysis and Prospects

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Abstract

The word "madrassa" does generate a huge complexity, negative propaganda, and curiosity among scholars of regional, national, and international communities since 9/11. It is considered an institution of preaching hatred and breeding violence and extremism. Madrassa as a unit of study also remainsless focused by academics and came to the forefront since 9/11. Ilm, Talib, Maktab, all terms have been denoted as negative but never understood in a concrete term to their original sense. No heed has been paid to the mushroom growth of these madrassas across Pakistan at any level. This increase in numerical strength itself is an alarming situation not only for national or regional peace and stability but for the international community as well. Post 9/11 Government of Pakistan has tried to reform madrassa system but could not achieve much success due to a shallow approach and non-compliance of various madrassa establishments. Therefore, the fundamental objective of the study is to understand the changing pattern of madrassa with a focus on patron-client case study of Sindh and the role of local chieftains and government to modernize these institutions. This paper is an initial and early attempt to highlight major causes responsible for the mushroom development of patron-client relationship and to highlight the conundrum of a gap between state and society in the province of Sindh.

Keyword: Madrasa, Religion, State, Education, Islam, Pakistan.

Introduction

The word 'madrassa' is originally derived from an Arabic word '*Dars*' which means lesson or an instruction. Thus, the word madrassa has been used to refer to a 'centre of learning' that may be religious as well as a formal school or a college. Madrassas were established as institutions of higher learning where law, Jurisprudence, Islamic studies and philosophy were taught for ages (Jalalzai, 2008. P. 41). Variety of connotations are used to understand meaning of 'madrassa' which includes but not limited to traditional Islamic learning institution, providing basic and higher values of Islamic learning and all types of subjects of Quran, Hadith, Jurisprudence etc. To understand their role, Madrassas need to be studied in Pakistani educational context with varied orientations and interpretations prevailing within and outside the society (CGP, 2004).

Pakistani educational institutions can be broadly divided into three distinct typologies, namely English medium, Urdu/Vernacular schools, and Arabic focused and medium madrassa and *masjid* schools of various sectarian discourses. This division is based on class and language structure. The incidents of 9/11 brought madrassas into the limelight and they emerged as a

controversial educational institution of Pakistan. International opinion and scholarship is polarized on the madrassa issue and presents two opposing pictures of these institutions. For some, madrassas are serving as a nursery of militancy and radical ideology, and for others they are a source of free education for the underprivileged. Madrassas across the board provide religious education, free boarding and lodging, and are patronized by some local individuals and families of low-income owing to their religious fervor (Ali, 2006, P.13-43).

Madrassas provide free residence, food, and sometimes monthly stipends, which is a blessing for people living below the poverty line, and therefore they send their siblings to madrassas for learning as well as for getting bread and butter to become productive citizens of society. Madrassa and its education is an important issue in the contemporary era. The tragic incident of 9/11 further enhanced its significance and took its implications beyond the national and regional domains. After this incident, madrassas of the Muslim world in general and Pakistani madrassas in particular gained special world attention: mainly because madrassas in Pakistan are seen as more militant in their outlook as compared to their counterparts in other parts of the Islamic world.

No doubt, infrastructure and facilities are nonetheless poor and in some cases pathetic in madrassas, but there is no other choice for those parents by sending their children to madrassas. "The madrasa students are, after all, rejecters of the system. They either opt out because the state is still an alien entity for them, or, as is more often the case, are too poor to survive in the state system which does not provide free food, lodging, books, clothes, and shelter" (Rahman, 2002, P. 544).

Madrassa education emphasizes the transmission of Islamic education, and to understand it, one has to know about the concept of Islamic education. Madrassa education comes in a totality with aims, objectives, goals, and accomplishments of formal education for every pupil admitted in them.

An Islamic Concept of Education

Seeking knowledge remained an integral part of Islamic tradition. The early revelations of the Quran to the Prophet were rooted in the oral tradition. People started memorizing the revelations verses by heart. As time passed, the need of documenting these verses was required to have a consensus on the text. Verses were written and divided into chapters, which later became the Quran. From the earlier time, Islam emphasized two types of knowledge, revealed and non-revealed (worldly/earthly), i.e., revealed knowledge comes straight from God through revelations, sacred books, and messengers, and worldly or earthly knowledge is to be discovered and explored by human beings themselves. Islam considers both of vital importance and directs its followers, men and women to go and seek knowledge (Boyle, 2002). The Quran is a perfect word of God and impossible to be altered and changed.

Islam is commonly known as a "religion of the Book" – the Holy Quran. Therefore, the Quran is regarded as sacred words of GOD and a source of knowledge. Learning Quran and the

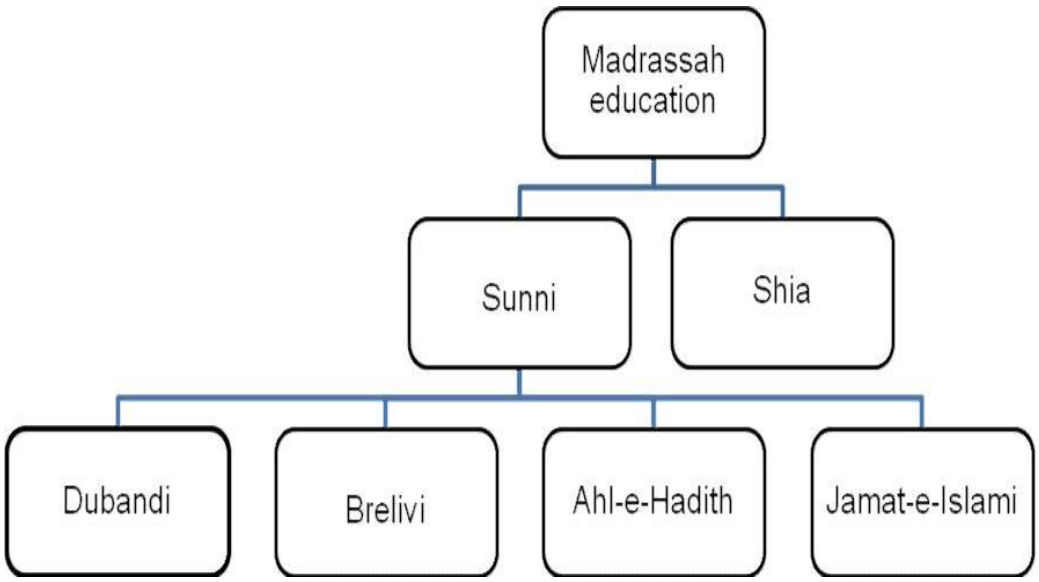
words of Almighty is considered necessary for everyone as per the needs and necessities of societal norms. In other words, Islam means complete submission of one's will to Almighty and every Muslim does so. Hence, the Quran is central to Islamic education and knowledge, later on comes Hadith, sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Both the Quran and Hadith play a vital role in the learning and knowledge of Islamic education in each sphere (Sikand, 2002, P. 27-28). Learning of such education requires an environment which is suitably provided by Madrassahs (Islamic learning institutions) everywhere in the globe. This environment provides an interaction between the tutor (*alim*) and pupil (*talib*). South Asian concept of Islamic education traces its roots back to Mughal era (Robinson, 2000. P. 14) and got royal patronage later on known as *dars-e-nizami* as the curriculum for formal Islamic learning and education throughout madrassas of South Asia (Robinson, 2001. P. 24). Islamic education and learning is considered one important pillar in the life of every Muslim.

History of Madrassa Growth in Pakistan

The history of the *madrassa* extends almost to the origins of Islam. Some Islamic scholars suggest the first *madrassa* was established near the Prophet's mosque in Medina after the *hijra* Called *Ahl-e-Suffa*, it educated the followers of the Prophet about Islam (Armanios, 2003. P. 1).However, most Islamic scholars contend the *madrassa* evolved in the eleventh century from existing education centers, both religious and secular.

The Madrassa phenomenon is not very recent or a new discourse, but it evolved with the history of human civilization. Madrassa education remains the focal agenda of the Islamic world. Interpretation of this particular institution, form of education, and reform structure are essentially multi-layered in character. But the focus and paradigm shift in this educational system changed the whole scenario through which this madrassa institution was observed, studied and explored over the past centuries, and therefore madrassas lost their originality in its entirety.

Islam is the core cause behind the formation of Pakistan as an independent sovereign state in 1947. Islam acted as a driving force, which resulted in Pakistan on August 14, 1947. Muslims were a minority of 19 per cent of the population of British India in 1947 (Qureshi, 2005, P. 87).



Pakistan has the majority of Muslims living in it; approximately 97% of the population has declared the religion of Islam. Pakistan's Muslims are divided between the Sunni majorities, which are 77% of the population. This division further goes down to the sectarian orientation like Sunnis are further divided into two main sub-sects, Deobandi and Braeilvi. The Shia community also lacks homogeneity and divided into further sub-sects like *Ismailis* and *Athna-Ashiri*. This lack of homogeny shows the existing ethnic, linguistic and cultural divisions in the society. Pakistan has been the subject of much debate concerning madrassas. One reason for focus on Pakistan is a rapid growth of madrassas. Between 1979 and 2003, the number of madrassas rose from 1,745 to somewhere between 7,000 and 10,000 (Billquist and Colbert, 2006, P. 24). There is hardly any credible information on statistics and numerical strength of madrassas in Pakistan. Out of the existing large number of madrassas, only registered madrassas have been controlled by their respective central boards and organizations (*wifaq*). These boards set the syllabi, collect a registration and examination fee in addition to examinations in Urdu and Arabic, and later on declare results. The names of the central boards are as follows:

Sr. No	**Name**	**Sub-sect**	**Place**	**Established**
1.	Wafaq ul Madaris	Deobandi	Multan	1959
2.	Tanzim ul Madaris	Barelvi	Lahore	1960
3.	Wafaq ul Madaris (Shia) Pakistan	Shia	Lahore	1959
4.	Rabta-tul-Madaris-al-Islamia	Jamaat-i-Islami	Lahore	1983

5.	Wafaq-ul-Madaris-al-Salafia	Ahl-i-Hadith	Faisalabad	1955

At the time of independence there were 245, or even fewer, madrassas (IPS, 2002). In 2002, the figure rose to 10,000 madrassas with 1.7 million students enrolled in them (ICG, 2002, P. 14). These madrassas belong to major sects like Sunnis and Shias, and as Pakistan being predominantly a Sunni State, the others have a minority in these madrassas. Among the Sunnis, further three sub-sects: Deobandis, Barelvis, and Ahl-i-Hadith (Salafis). The numerical strength of these madrassas increased during the Zia regime. But without ignoring the past leadership and previous successive regimes, who were also equally responsible for massive growth of madrassas owing to their policies and programs. Sect-wise madrassa increased rapidly in Pakistan and following numerical strength can explain the argument itself (Rahman, 2005, P. 29).

Sr. No	**Name of Sect**	**No. in 1988**	**No. in 2002**
1.	Deobandi	1779	7000
2.	Barelvi	717	1585
3.	Shia	47	419
4.	Jamaat-i-Islami	97	500
5.	Ahl-i-Hadith	161	376

Madrasas Curriculum and Teaching

Dars-e-Nizami is the curriculum of all *madrassas*in Pakistan regardless of the sect affiliation. This curriculum covers both religious and secular topics; however, most of the texts it uses were written between the ninth and eighteenth century (Zaman, 1999, P. 303). The primary difference between how each sect employs *Dars-e-Nizami* deals with non-curriculum texts each sect uses to reinforce their particular point of view or rationalize their particular beliefs (Rahman, 2016. P. 3). The emphasis on the *Dars-e-Nizami* method "lies in part in the superior training it offered prospective lawyers, judges and administrators. The study of advanced books of logic, philosophy and dialectics sharpened the rational faculties and, ideally, brought to the business of government men with better-trained minds and better-formed judgment (Rahman, 2016. P. 4)."While *Dars-e-Nizami* emphasizes studies based on *maqulat*, human reasoning, most sects ignore this aspect and focus instead on rote memorization of the classic texts prescribed by the curriculum (Ali, 2005, 37-38).

However, Islamic education imparted at formal religious institutions is systematized, even though the specific duration and content of education at each level may vary with the madrassa's sectarian orientation and the extent to which it has augmented its curriculum with mainstream subjects. Thus, conditions may vary. The following schedule is based on a standard, seventeen-year, formal Islamic education program.

- The first level is *Ibtedai* (primary or elementary), where only the Koran is taught. This level covers the early five-year period of education that is generally equivalent to the primary-school level in the mainstream educational sector.
- The second stage is *Mutawassitah*, or 'intermediary. It is generally three years long and comparable to the middle-school level at mainstream schools.
- The third through sixth levels are each two years long. At this stage students begin the *Alim* course curriculum. Often called *Dars-i-Nizami*, it is modified according to the particular sectarian affiliation of the madrassa. Madrassas of different sectarian affiliations will teach different versions of the curriculum. Sometimesthe eight-year, four-stage program is referred to as *fauqani*. Or it may be called the "Alim course," about the final certificate or degree (sanad). The first of the four stages is *Thanviyah-e-Ammah*, followed by *Thanviyah-e-Khasah*. The next two stages, Aaliyah and Alimiyah, are considered advanced. When students complete the Alimiyah level, they have completed the Dars-i-Nizami curriculum. This degree is recognized by the government of Pakistan as an M.A. in two subjects (Islamic studies and Arabic). A person with this degree is an alim.
- The final stage of religious study is *Takmeel*. Comparable to post-graduate studies, it can be one year or more long and comprises various specialized fields of study.

The *Dars-e-Nizami* curriculum is typically based on an eight-year timeline but can be as long as sixteen years, depending on when the student is accepted to the institution. The following table is a typical curriculum taken from the website of *Darul-Uloom Deoband*, India, which sets the basic curriculum taught by *madrassas* in Pakistan.

Year of Study	***Dars-e-Nizami* curriculum**
Year 1	Biography of the Prophet (*Syrat*), Conjugation-Grammar (*Sarf*), Syntax (*Nahv*), Arabic Literature, Chirography, Chant illation (*Tajvid*)
Year 2	Conjugation-Grammar (*Sarf*), Syntax (*Nahv*), Arabic Literature, Jurisprudence (*Fiqa*), Logic, Chirography (*Khush-navisi*), Chant illation, (*Tajvid*)
Year 3	*Qur'anic* Exegesis, Jurisprudence: (*Fiqh*), Syntax (*Nahv*), Arabic Literature, *Hadith*, Logic, Islamic Brotherhood, Chant illation: (*Tajvid*), External study (Tareekh Millat and Khilafat-e-Rashida – these are Indian Islamic movements).

Year 4	*Qur'anic* Exegesis, Jurisprudence (*Fiqa*), Principles of Jurisprudence, Rhetorics, Hadith, Logic, History, Cant illation, Modern Sciences (sciences of cities of Arabia, Geography of the Arab Peninsula and other Islamic countries)
Year 5	*Qur'anic* Exegesis, Jurisprudence, Principles of Jurisprudence, Rhetoric, Beliefs (*Aqa'id*), Logic, Arabic Literature, Chant illation, External study (History of Indian Kings)
Year 6	Interpretation of the *Qur'an*, Jurisprudence, Principles of Interpretation & Jurisprudence, Arabic Literature, Philosophy, Chant illation, Study of Prophet's traditions
Year 7	Sayings of the Prophet, Jurisprudence, Belief (Aqa'ed), Responsibility (Fra'iz), Chant illation, External Study (Urdu texts)
Year 8	Ten books by various authors focusing on the sayings of the Prophet.

Arabic and Persian have little effect on students' abilities to speak or read these languages beyond what is required for their studies. Many *madrassas* realize this and use supporting texts in native Pakistani languages of Pashto and Urdu when attempts are made to enlighten students as to the meaning of the classics. Regardless of the texts taught in *madrassas*, jihad and militancy are not topics of the traditional curriculum.

Patron- Client Relationship Connotation

The patron-client relationship is an exchange relationship between roles, may be defined as special case of dyadic (two person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron (Scott, 1972. P. 92). The functional model of patron-client relationship explores two unique sides of its exercise. On the one hand patronage is structural existence in which patron and client both are available and on the other level it is an internalized relationship of reciprocal dependency, which limits the developmental and adaptive capacities of role participants (Stein, 1984. P. 34). According to Scott there are different types of relationships amid patron and client which are as following:

a. The Basis and Operation of personal Exchange
b. The distinctiveness of the Patron
c. Patron and Client as Distinctive Groupings

He further explains that there is variation in ties of patron-client as well, which are based on which the Sindh case study is observed.

a. The Resource Base of Patronage

b. Resource Base of Clientage
c. Balance of Effective and Instrumental Ties
d. Balance of Volunteerism and Coercion
e. Durability Over Time
f. Homogeneity of Following

In the shadow of above given parameters, we will now look in to the urban Sindh and its madrassas which are distinctive example of such patron and client relationship within three different dimension including growth with sectarian orientation, socio-political base and support and finally with curriculum, *ulamas* and graduate students in detail to show the pragmatic approach which highlights the entire connection.

Madrassas as Patron- Client Model

As already identified that this part of paper will highlight three self-explanatory and inter-connected themes from different angles, including growth with sectarian orientation, socio-political base and support, and finally with curriculum, *ulamas,*and graduate students in detail to show their pragmatic approach.

a. Sectarian Affiliations and Attachments

Sect-wise madrassa increased rapidly in Sindh too, and following numerical strength can explain the argument itself of the main theme of this paper (Rahman, 2005, P. 53).

Sr. No	Name of Sect	No. in 1988	No. in 2002
1.	Deobandi	208	687
2.	Barelvi	61	487
3.	Shia	10	48
4.	Jamaat-i-Islami	6	Not Known
5.	Ahl-i-Hadith	6	26

This sectarian divide has widened the gulf amid followers and disciples. Once the madrassas of these urban settlements were lesser attracted to the masses and eventually became hub of students from across the country. Each of these three locales had now great concentrations of madrassas from various sectarian discourses and background. Karachi is one major center for this growth and therefore Sukkar and Hyderabad became lesser prominent over the decades. The assessment of the sectarian affiliation and discourse has proxy factors like leadership visiting madrassas, attitude, and behavior, etc. Each madrassa throughout the country can be attached to these three strings for checking its affiliations:

i. Madrassa visited by leading sectarian leaders

ii. Students participate in sectarian processions and gatherings/ meetings
iii. Management of madrassa lobbies for sectarian issues
iv. Manager or students found involved in sectarian violence, etc.

b. Socio-political base and support

The second parameter, which identifies growth at peak, is the financial support in addition to political influence and say in everyday state affairs. These three locales have better sources of earning than the rural setup, which is attached to land ownership. Access to resources, land or land ownership determines the social and political standing of individuals and groups of people in society. It is observed that extremist and sectarian groups and religious parties have more following in areas where land owners, influential individuals have been controlling political and economic power. Madrassas and their leadership are always a focal point to criticize these landed elites and controlling giants, but without their support and assistance, it's not possible to run day-to-day affairs of these religious seminaries. The State functionaries are particularly receptive to religious/sectarian leadership, to add to their mass support in urban Sindh.

c. Curriculum, *Ulama,* and Graduates relationship

Before Mullah Niaz ud Din standardized the curricula as *Dras-i-Nizami*, different teachers taught different books to students. According to Francis Robinson:

"The significance of the enhanced emphasis on ma'qulat in the Dars-i- Nizami yyalies in part in the superior training it offered prospective lawyers, judges and administrators. The study of advanced books of logic, philosophy and dialectics sharpened the rational faculties, and ideally, brought to the business of government men with better-trained minds and better-formed judgment." (Robinson, 2001. P.53)

In Pakistan, *Dars-i-Nizami* has been modified with the old texts and also reserving a few identical texts to show the preservation of its entity. This process of preservation is entangled with the reform structure of the curriculum and the introduction of new subjects, etc. This triangular relationship between *alim, talib,* and books is a timely connection to highlight the patron-client relationship.

While going through all these three dimensions, one can easily grasp the nature and scope of this patron-client case study, that those who are influential, elites, leaders of religio-political circles have used these madrassas as foci of their ends. This patron-client relationship further enhances our understanding of how this nexus of sectarian discourse, socio-political base and curriculum interchanges the needs and necessities of our environment.

d. Islamisation of Education

Another aspect for the popularity of Islamic education and Madrassa system in this 21st

century is the lack of harmony amid public sector education and lesser components of Islamic education in the curricula. Education is provided to make one aware of the needs and necessities of this society. Modern educational system lacks this feature and therefore madrassas' growth is taking place.

e. Education for All

Islamic education also deserves to be provided to everyone who wishes to learn and acquire knowledge, besides the barrier of age, caste, color, sect, and identity. Education is one powerful weapon which can change the entire world within no time. Education formally and informally equips individuals to cope with the devastation of issues and problems of society.

f. Madrassa Outreach and Welfare Plans

There is also a dire need of initiation madrassa outreach programs for the welfare and well-being of the madrassas and theirenvironment. Outreach programs and such activities will enable constructive mind nourishments for all and will avoid disappointment in youth attending madrassas. These outreach activities and drills will divert the destructive minds and goals into positive change for all.

g. Introducing Peace building Syllabus and Curriculum

Another positive change could be the introduction of peace building syllabi as part of madrassa curricula. Besides religious texts and training, there should be a proper portion of the curriculum containing material, practice, and exercise of peace, love, harmony, and tolerance in the regular training of madrassa *talibs*.

h. Building consensus among the educational systems

Last but not the least attempt could be managing all educational systems, either public, private, or English medium, at par with each other by exchange programs, and here the government can play its vital role in harmonizing the society and can fill the gap between different strata of society. These few initiatives and considerations could help the state and society both to have a peaceful and congenial environment not only for residents and citizens but also for maintaining a tranquil law and order situation.

Prognosis

The outcome of the debate is in a flowing process that is separately identified in the above patron-client connotation. But now giving them details one by one can help us to expand the results.

1. The case study of urban Sindh madrassas is an acute understanding of resource base patronage by the local chieftains and socio-political elites, which is a defaming manner to narrow down madrassas in their scope and nature.

2. On the second stage, it is also evident that clientage is helpless and always looks forward to resources to help them out of financial troubles. Here again patronage is dominant in the urban scenario.
3. The instrumental ties on the part of the patron from the donor side and effective reception form clientage in the shape of madrassa is one clear example of mushroom growth in Sindh province. This reciprocal process provides many examples of government intervention into reforming these madrassas since 9/11.
4. Balance of volunteerism and operational base is a give and take responsibility on the patron and client, both to get maximum out of given circumstances.
5. Following the mainstream and getting benefits out of the homogeneity of purpose, objective, and result-oriented approach could help patrons and clients both on equal scale.
6. Last but not the least is what one has said that "Necessity is the mother of invention" and same is the durability over time between madrassas, their patrons, graduates, *ulamas* and curriculum.

Conclusion: A Pragmatic Assessment

Madrassa is one of the oldest surviving institutions of human history. Unfortunately, its popularity graph is lessening and in the recent past it has become a face of evil in the international politics. The most pertinent question in front of the government of Pakistan is preservation and, side by side, remodeling of madrassas. There is a dire need for the revamping of the madrassa institution. Being an Islamic State, the Pakistani government has to provide a coherent educational system, better allocation of resources, and diminishing the gap between 'haves' and 'have-nots'. In a better perspective, madrassas can be used by the government to spread religious education, harmony, tolerance, and mass education to every doorstep.

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