

‘Objectification’ of Islam: A Study of Pakistani Madrassah Texts

Muhammad Farooq*

Abstract

This article examines the texts used by madrassah or religious schools in Pakistan which are playing a major role in framing the larger part of madrassah students’ worldview. A considerable part of madrassah graduates are busy in what they called it jihad in Afghanistan Northern Pakistan. Comparing these texts with that of the nineteenth century, this study investigates that how a substantial change in the emphasis laid by the madrassah teaching took place which aimed at ‘objectifying’ Islam, a concept unknown to pre-modern societies. This query is important for understanding not only the madrassah mind but also important for understanding current politics in Pakistan and West and South Asia.

Introduction

The world media kept Pakistan under strict watch after the events of nine eleven. Branding Madrassahs as “dens of terror,” and recruiting agency for militants, analysts have attempted to establish a relationship between these madrassahs and militancy.¹ Most of the policy reports contend that all madrassahs are not active centres of *jihad* militancy, nevertheless, even those having

* Associate Professor, Department of Pakistan Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan.

1 There is much rhetoric than authentic statistical data on alleged link between madrassahs education and militancy. It is calculated that out of 79 leading Muslim terrorists only nine could be considered madrassah graduates, i.e., 11 percent. Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey, “The Madrasa Scapegoat,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.29, No.2, (2006), pp.117-25.

no direct links to violence, promote an ideology that provides logical justification for such activities. Keeping in view the role madrassahs are playing in contemporary international as well as domestic politics of Pakistan and their place in the “war against terror”, it is imperative to investigate the process and nature of change that takes place in these institutions of learning within the span of a century. Almost all the post-9/11 studies,² policy reports³ and media projections have attempted to trace out madrassahs’ history, analyze their structure, finances, curriculum, reforms, and identify their role in promoting sectarianism, alleging their involvement in Afghan war and post-9/11 *jihad*. However, none of these studies analyse the texts which are being taught in contemporary Pakistani madrassahs. This study would examine these texts - the very basic and fundamental ingredient of the madrassah education.

Madrassah education has had a long tradition among the Muslims of South Asia. Madrassahs have played an important role in imparting Islamic education, increasing literacy, and strengthening Islamic consciousness and most importantly providing training to the prospective candidates of civil service in

-
- 2 See Mumtaz Ahmad, “Continuity and Change in the Traditional System of Islamic Education: The Case of Pakistan,” in Charles H. Kennedy and Craig Baxter, eds. *Pakistan 2000* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000); Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (London: I.B Tauris, 2000); and *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (Lahore: Vanguard, 2002). Husain Haqqani, “Islam’s Medieval Outpost,” *Foreign Policy*, No.133 (November, 2002), pp.58-64; Tariq Rehman *Denizens of Alien Worlds: A Study of Education, Inequality and Polarization in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004). Masooda Bano, Beyond Politics: the Reality of a Deobandi Madrasa in Pakistan, *Journal of Islamic Studies* Vol.18, No.1 (2007), pp.43-68. W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman eds., *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
 - 3 Peter W. Singer, “Pakistan’s Madrassahs: Ensuring a System of Education not Jihad,” Analysis Paper No.14 (November, 2001). <http://www.brookings.edu/news/papers/singer/20020103htm>; Internet accessed 16 December, 2010. International Crisis Group, “Pakistan: Madrassahs and Extremism and the Military,” *Asia Report* No. 36, Islamabad/Brussels, 29 July, 2002, amended on 15 July, 2005; International Crisis Group, “The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan,” *Asia Report* No. 95, Islamabad/ Brussels, 18 April, 2005; International Crisis Group, “Pakistan: Karachi’s Madrassahs and Violent Extremism,” *Asia Report* No.130, March 29, 2007; Tahir Andrabi, Jashnu Das, Asim Ejaz Khawaja, and Tristan Zajonc, “Religious School Enrolment in Pakistan: A Look at Data,” *Working Paper Series* 3521, World Bank, 1 February, 2005.

pre-colonial Muslim India. The number of madrassahs has increased enormously during the post-independence period, providing free education to a large number of students who have no or a little chance of getting employment in civil bureaucracy or in other public sectors. In post-colonial Pakistan, one can see a qualitative change in the emphasis of texts used in madrassahs. Although critics accused madrassahs' curriculum as stagnant and static, however, contemporary Pakistani madrassah curriculum is not the same as it was a century and a half before. Some old texts are replaced with new ones and some have fresh commentaries and glosses with renewed focus and emphasis. This new revamping of the curriculum is instrumental in constructing the major part of the present madrassah students' worldview.

After the technological and institutional changes introduced by the colonial administration in the nineteenth century, the South Asian madrassahs are constantly adjusting, readjusting and reviewing the curriculum according to the need of the time. In modern Muslim societies, like Pakistan, Islam is undergoing a process of "objectification". The contemporary Pakistani madrassahs are pursuing this object vigorously and trying to redefine Islam through teaching of new and old texts. Here, objectification denotes a normative and eternal Islam which is assumed to consist of a set of beliefs, values and practices. It is stark departure from pre-modern Islam which was defined on the principle of consensus (*ijma'*) – a quite broader base. The practice of Western culture in post-colonial state contributed a lot towards objectification process. The important aspect of objectification of Islam in modern times is the insistence that there is just one objective i.e. invariant Islam – a primary aim of Muslims.

This study concerns with the evaluation of curriculum, used in present Pakistani madrassahs, which has been developed after yielding, to some extent, to forces of modernization, governmental pressures and the texts used by nineteenth century madrassahs. Giving new interpretations to the problems the Muslim Ummah is facing today, the curricular changes are 'objectifying' Islam, a concept alien to 'ulama [religious scholars] of the nineteenth century. New curriculum attempts to draw a line between modern educated Muslims, and the Western culture suggesting that the

Muslims should adopt certain behaviours to challenge the modern advances that may encroach upon Muslim identity. The old books did not contain lessons on Islamic mannerism and norms of behaviour, whereas the new books do. Preserving Muslim identity in a Muslim majority country is a new phenomenon that could be witnessed all over the Muslim World and religious educational institutions are considered as the most suitable forums for it. Political expediencies urge the 'ulama to reinterpret the classical texts and, also, write new ones. It would be interesting to explore how contemporary Pakistani madrassahs are interpreting and using texts in preparing their students for practical life with a particular mindset. Through reviewing the madrassah texts used in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries we can identify where and how the emphasis in religious education changed which lead us to understand madrassah in a better perspective.

Evolution of Indian Madrassahs' Curriculum

Before the emergence of madrassahs, there were informal institutions of learning. *Maktab* [Arabic: primary school] and *kutab* [Arabic: primary teaching center at teacher's home] were schools for elementary education whereas *masjid* [Arabic: literal meaning Mosque, but here term used as law school] became the place for higher learning, particularly for teaching law.⁴ Here, the education was informal and intrapersonal, which became formal and institutionalized with the emergence of madrassah in eleventh century when Saljuq Wazir, Nizam al-Mulk established a chain of madrassahs in Muslim domains, among them madrassah at Baghdad became more famous. According to George Makdisi madrassahs were the Sunnis' response to the growing influence of Shi'as, who took them as dangerous heretics. In his opinion madrassahs, though not state sponsored, were politically motivated and autonomous in devising their curriculum.⁵

Mostly religious disciplines were taught at these schools. Medieval madrassahs also taught a number of rational sciences such as grammar, poetry, philosophy, medicine, mathematics and

4 George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), p.27.

5 *Ibid.*, p.32.

astronomy. Despite institutionalization, the mode of education was personalized and the primary allegiance of the student was to individual teacher, which means that teacher was the focal point of the educational system and not the madrassah as such. When student had completed the book, he would receive a certificate (*ijazah*) from his teacher certifying that he had learnt the book from him along with others who were also named, allowing him to transmit it to other.⁶ After spending years at a madrassah, a student had a variety of career options before him. He could join the state bureaucracy, take up teaching in a madrassah or set up one of his own or could become a preacher or a khatib/Imam in a mosque.

The system of Muslim education and the various 'rational' and 'transmitted' sciences developed during medieval period were to have a profound influence on Muslims elsewhere. When Muslims occupied and settled in India and established Sultanate in the early thirteenth century, the developed Islamic scholarly tradition and the system of madrassah gained roots in India with the consolidation of Muslim rule. Soon India became a leading centre of Islamic education with the establishment of a number of important madrassahs, many of them patronized by Muslim rulers and nobility.

In India from twelfth to fifteenth century curriculum of Arabic for Muslim Education focused on the study of law. Specialization in *fiqh*⁷ [jurisprudence] and *usul-e-fiqh* [principles of jurisprudence] became the standard qualification for scholarship. Philosophy and other secular sciences were condemned by the 'ulama. Even *ilm-e-hadith* [knowledge of Prophet's traditions] was not a part of Islamic learning circles, hence received little heed.⁸ From sixteenth to seventeenth century, we find an inclination towards rational sciences. At the end of the fifteenth

6 *Ibid.*, pp.147-48.

7 *Fiqh* means the science of religious law in Islam. In addition to the laws regulating ritual and religious observance, containing orders and prohibitions, *fiqh* includes the whole field of family law, the law of inheritance, of property and of contract and obligations, criminal law and procedure, and finally, constitutional law and laws regulating the administration of the state and the conduct of war.

8 Abul Hasanat Nadwi, *Hindustan ki Qadim Islami Darshahain* [Urdu: The Ancient Islamic Educational Institutions of India] (Azam Garh: Mutba' Ma'rif, 1936), p.92.

century, *ma'qulat* [rational sciences] – rhetoric, scholastic theology and logic were introduced in curriculum. By that time, in Muslim India rational sciences systemically gained space in the curriculum. For someone to be a scholar, it was even necessary to be well-versed in *Miftah*, *Mawaqif* and *Matala*'. These books defined the parameters of Islamic learning of the 16th and 17th centuries India.⁹

From the eighteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth century, the rationalist tradition consolidated with the introduction of Dars-i-Nizami by Mullah Nizamuddin of Farangi Mahall (d. 1740), Lukhnow. Nizamuddin made some changes which not only gave the curriculum a standard format but also a comprehensive shape. *Dars* was basically a standardized method of learning rather than a list of books being taught to the students.¹⁰ It considered book as a mean to education for developing skills in a particular discipline, and not an end itself that was the basic reason behind the changes the curriculum is facing since three centuries.¹¹ *Dars* was designed in such a way that an average student could complete it at the age of 18 or 19. Again, Mullah tried to keep the *Dars* in neutral tone, so it could not develop sectarian biases among the students. For that matter, in addition to emphasis on logic and philosophy, he kept those books on *fiqh* which were written logically and presented *fiqhi* [related to law] debates based on rational arguments.

Dars was intended to preserve and transmit Islamic learning tradition by heavily relying on secular subjects. The conscious choice of various disciplines with the emphasis on *ma'qulat* and language learning skills, *Dars* had contributed a lot for developing a liberal and progressive intellectual atmosphere, which was flexible to accommodate the variety of views on different religious and secular issues. The original curriculum not only comprised of many secular disciplines but, surprise for many, *Mousiqi* [music] was the part of curriculum also.¹² What *Dars* promoted was,

9 *Ibid.*, p.95.

10 Muhammad Raza Ansari Farangi Mahalli, *Bani-e-Dars-i-Nizami* [Urdu: The Founder of Dars-i-Nizami] (Lukhnow: Nakhas Press, 1973), p.259.

11 *Ibid.*, p.261; Nadwi, *Hindustan ki Qadim Islami Darsghain*, p.98.

12 Shibli Naumani, "Dars-i-Nizamiyyah" in *An-Nadwah* (December 1910), referred in Ghulam Muhyid Din Sufi, *Al-Minhaj: Being the Evolution of Curriculum in the*

definitely, not the religious extremism among the Muslims of India but Islamic tradition and encouraging scholarly debates and disputations. Though at the initial stage mysticism was not part of curriculum, but was later included and the teachers of *Dars* were active Sufis and practitioners of Sufism.¹³ Cultivation of spiritualism coupled with the rationalist teaching, *Dars* had set tradition in Indo-Muslim scholarship which stayed dominant until the middle of the 19th century.¹⁴

However, it does not mean that the *Dars* overwhelmed the South Asian Muslim teaching system. Other curriculum also continued to exist, for instance, Shah Wali Ullah's Madrassah-e-Rahimia and its tradition of hadith teaching that produced the leadership for the Tehrik-e-Mujahideen. Syed Ahmed (d. 1831) and Shah Isma'il (d. 1831), who had led the movement and actively participated in the war against Sikhs for the establishment of Islamic state, both were not the product of *ma'quli* tradition of Dars-i-Nizami.

After the War of Independence/Mutiny 1857, when Muslim rule in India finally and formally ended and the 'ulama and madrassahs assumed the responsibility of promoting Islamic learning and preserving Islamic tradition in a political environment where, by that time, Muslims were no more the masters of land. Defending the Muslim identity became the prime task the 'ulama took on their shoulders whereas religious education and madrassahs became instrumental for accompanying the said task.

In the second half of the nineteenth century two different *maslaks* [schools or sects] emerged among the Sunni Muslims of India which were projected by their respective madrassahs. The most renowned of these madrassahs was Darul al-'Ulum at Deoband, established in 1867. The Deoband Madrassah's founders accepted the British rule and did not try to confront with the colonial rulers at least till the end of the nineteenth century. Deoband educational movement was reformist in its orientation –

Muslim Educational Institutions of India (Lahore: Sheikh Muhamad Ashraf, 1941), pp.75-76.

13 Francis Robinson, *The 'Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), pp.56-68, 251.

14 *Ibid.*, p.131.

reverting to orthodox Islam while opposing modern sciences. They manoeuvred to reach common Indian Muslim through opening up the gates of madrassah for all Muslims and by replacing Persian with Urdu as a medium of instruction in the madrassahs. Claiming their respective line of understanding Islam as valid, every *maslak* launched reform agenda through *tabligh wa tadris* (preaching and teaching).

The ‘ulama of new Sunni movements — Deobandi and Barelwi — who termed themselves reformist-revivalist, exploited the new technologies introduced by the British, particularly print¹⁵ and new means of communications. Since last decades of 19th century, ‘ulama switched over from Persian to Urdu as the language of communication, both in print and madrassahs. The Persian commentaries and glosses on Arabic texts that started publishing in early nineteenth century, were gradually replaced with their Urdu translation. A large number of religious tracts were published in the last three decades of the nineteenth century in Urdu language — the *lingua franca* of Muslims of North and North Western India.¹⁶ Despite the popularity and use of Urdu as medium of instruction in madrassah, till the mid of the twentieth century or even after that, the works published by the ‘ulama were not in Urdu, particularly the commentaries on *hadith*.¹⁷ These works were for Arabic literate scholars and students and not for the general public, which reinforced the authority of ‘ulama, whereas for the general public they wrote commentaries and other religious literature in Urdu.

Founders of the Deoband *maslak* like Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (d.1905) despised the logic and philosophy, and even the

15 On impact of print on South Asian Muslim society, see Francis Robinson, “Islam and the Impact of Print in South Asia,” in, N. Crook, ed., *Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, New Delhi, 1997, reprinted in Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.66-104; Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp.198-234; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, “Commentaries, Print and Patronage: *Hadith* and Madrassahs in Modern South Asia,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol.62, No.1 (1999), pp.60-81.

16 Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*, p.67.

17 Zaman, “*Commentaries Print and Patronage*”, p.76.

second generation 'ulama and teachers of Deoband like Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri (d.1933) was not in favour of *ma'qulat*,¹⁸ However, texts on logic, though few, remained on Deobandi curriculum of *Dars*. Even today, Pakistani madrassahs affiliated with Deobandi *maslak* are teaching few texts on logic and philosophy. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, when Maulana Gangohi was still living spirit behind the Dar al-'Ulum and Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri was a student, the madrassah was teaching *Qadi Mubarak*, on philosophy *Shams al-Bazigha*, and *Sadra* on logic, and *Tasrih* and *Sharah Chighmini* on mathematics and astronomy.¹⁹

Until the early decades of the twentieth century we find that side by side, with the new style of madrassahs concentrating on teaching fundamental texts, the madrassahs were still working on original curriculum of Dars-i-Nizami. These madrassahs belonged to 'ulama and graduates of Farangi Mahall, who established them in various parts of India. Madrassah 'Alia Nizamiyyah of Farangi Mahall, Lukhnow, was frontrunner in teaching rational sciences.²⁰ Besides, the Farangi Mahalli madrassahs, Khairabadi family, and their pupils were keeping up alive the rationalist tradition in Muslim scholarship.²¹ Various scholars of Khairabadi school of

18 Manazar Ahsan Gilani, *Ahatah' Dar al-'Ulum mein beetay ho'y din*, ed. Ejaz Ahmed Azmi (Deoband: Maktabah-e-Tayyaba, 1416 AH (1995)), p.96. Sheikh al-Hadith Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri, who was the student at Dar al-'Ulum Deoband in last decade of 19th century and taught there for six years as teacher and thirteen years as *sadr mudaris*, head teacher, before parting ways with Deoband, in early decades of 20th century. For details see, Abdur-Rehman Kondah, *Al-Anwar: Sheikh al-hadith Hadrat Allama Muhammad Anwar Shah Kashmiri ki Sawnih Hayat aur Kamalat wa Tajjaliiyyat* [Urdu: The Enlightenemnt: The Biography, Achievment and Brilliance of Shiekh al-Hadith Hadrat Allam Muhammad Anwar Shah Kashmiri] (Delhi: Nadwat ul-Musanayfin, 1976).

19 *Ibid.*, p.95.

20 On house of Farangi Mahall and Dars-i-Nizami see, Francis Robinson, *The 'Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia*; Farangi Mahalli, *Bani-e-Dars-i-Nizami*.

21 Fazal Imam Khairabadi (d. 1827), who wrote *Mirqat*, a famous book on logic which was later on included in Dars's curriculum and is still part of Deobandi curriculum, was the leading *ma'quli* scholar of the time. He also wrote glosses on *Risalah Mir Zahid* and *Mir Zahid Mullah Jalal*. His son Allama Fazl-e-Haq Khairabadi (d. 1862) was also a great scholar of *ma'qulat* and authored *Hadiyyah Sa'diah*, participated in the Mutiny, arrested and deported to Andaman where he died. Son of Fazl-e-Haq, Abdul Haq Khairabadi (d. 1899) carried on the tradition

thought established madrassahs until the early decades of twentieth century and tried the rationalist tradition alive through using Dars-i-Nizami's teaching techniques.²²

In pre-British India, madrassahs in general, and the ulama patronized by various Muslim rulers in particular, catered to the needs of the elite, including upper class Muslims and even in many cases caste-Hindus, whereas Muslims from lower strata, by and large, were excluded from the system. With the collapse of the Mughal Empire, the relationship changed and the 'ulama had to turn to the general Muslim populace including the low caste Muslims for patronage as a new concern of their influence. Consequently, during the colonial period a growing number of Muslims from the lower strata of the society belonging to poor families were enrolled in the madrassahs which continues to-date. In turn, this was linked to an increasing involvement of the 'ulama in reforming popular religious traditions among the lower class illiterate Muslims. This concern for the Muslim public was a novel development. In the past leading 'ulama associated with the Muslim courts displayed little concern for the religious instruction of common Muslims. This shifting of constituency of the 'ulama must be seen, in part, as an effort by them to maintain hegemony within the civil society in the absence of royal patronage.

After independence Pakistan did inherit the modern school system which has dominated over the educational sphere, yet the madrassahs have not only survived, showing a slower but gradual

through teaching and writing commentaries and glosses on various *ma'qulat* books and *sharahs*.

- 22 Maulana Manazar Ahsan Gilani, a Deobandi scholar and prolific writer, before joining Dar al-'Ulum as a student in early years of second decade of twentieth century, he studied *ma'qulat* in a Khairabadi madrasa. He travelled from his home town in Bihar to Rajputana where the madrasa was located. Maulana Manazar narrates the method of teaching of *Mir Zahid*, a classical *Dars* method of teaching; first the text of *Mir Zahid* (i.e. text of *Qutbiah* of Qutb ud-Din Razi d. 1364) with *Sharah Mir Zahid* written by Mir Zahid (d. 1690) himself, then *hashiyyah* (gloss) on *Sharah Mir Zahid* (which is called *manhiyyah*) again written by Mir Zahid himself, after that Ghulam Yahya Bihari's *hashiyyah* on *Hashiyyah Sharah Mir Zahid* (*manhiyyah*), then student was taught the *hashiyyah* by Abdul Haq Khairabadi on *Bihari's hashiyyah*. This is the typical method of Dars-i-Nizami teaching difficult books on various sciences, mastering in one difficult book would open the gates of other books on the same discipline. Gilani, *Ahatah' Dar al-'Ulum mein beetay ho'y din*, p.157.

growth. During the first three decades Pakistani 'ulama who had migrated to Pakistan strived to establish new madrassahs to serve as the central madrassahs of various *maslaks* left behind in India. Since 1960s various governments of Pakistan made bid to control madrassahs through suggesting some changes in the curriculum. In 1961,²³ and then in 1979²⁴ committees were formed for the revision of curriculum of the madrassahs — with apparent objective to bring them into mainstream education system. Both committees recommended the integration of two educational systems and introduction of modern subjects in the madrassahs' curriculum. The 'ulama opposed the suggested reforms viewing both reports as an effort to dilute the new boundaries of their area of influence and considered it an attack on their centuries-old autonomy and interference in their internal affairs.

After initial response of rejection, the madrassah boards (*Wafaqs*)²⁵ slowly and gradually introduced some changes in the curriculum. New curriculum drawn up by the *Wafaqs* comprised modern subjects upto the levels eight and sixteen instead of eight-year schooling in accordance with the proposal of the 1979 report.²⁶ To some extent the major factors behind this yielding and reluctant acceptance of some recommendations of the 1979 report, *interalia*, were the recognition of madrassah degrees and hope funds from the *Zakat* System, introduced in 1980. This led to handsome increase in establishing new madrassahs. A further handsome growth of the madrassahs has been witnessed after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the launching of *jihad*.

23 *Report of the Committee set up by the Governor of Pakistan for Recommending Improved Syllabus for the various Dar ul Uloom and Arabic Madrassahs in West Pakistan*, Superintendent (Lahore: Government Printing West Pakistan, 1962).

24 *Report Qaumi Committee bara-yi' Dini Madaris-i-Pakistan* (Islamabad: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1979).

25 These madrasa boards are Wafaq al-Madaris Al-'Arabia, Head Office at Multan (Deobandi); Tanzeem al-Madaris Ahl-e-Sunnat, Head Office at Lahore (Barelwi); Wafaq al-Madaris Al-Salafia, Head Office at Faisaalabad. (Ahl-e-Haith); Wafaq-ul-Madaris Shia'h, Head Office at Lahore. (Athna 'Ashri Shia'h); Rabita al-Madaris Al-Islamiah, Head Office at Lahore, (Jama't-i-Islami).

26 *Solah Salah Nisab-e-Ta'lim: Wafaq al-Madaris al-'Arbiah Pakistan* (passed in Quetta), Wafaq al-Madris Multan, 1983; *Nisab-e-Ta'lim Wafaq al-Madaris al-'Arbiah Pakistan, Braiy Banin* (Multan: Wafaq al-Madaris al-'Arbiah Pakistan, 2003).

Objectification of Islam in Madrassah Texts

The selection of texts for teaching at madrassahs was defined by the spirit of the age. As discussed earlier the curriculum was not static and stagnant, rather as directed by the 'ulama it evolved through centuries-old process, was transformed and re-shaped according to the needs and necessities of the Muslim society. In medieval Islam when the texts were written, Muslim polity was so strong that the learned scholars did not feel necessary to objectify Islam or produce politically motivated texts. In all classical works, which were used as texts in madrassahs, Islam was taken for granted and projected as a social force. All medieval scholars stressed on intrinsic normative and universal humanistic values rather deriving political action from Islam or promoting Islamic mannerism.

After the mid of nineteenth century the situation changed in South Asia when British colonialism made inroads not only in the political but also social fabric of local communities. The texts produced in the twentieth century, particularly after Independence, present a new tone which was alien to the medieval Islam. The new texts, for the first time, projected Islamism. This trend gained further strength when Soviet invaded Afghanistan and the West sponsored Afghan *jihad* and madrassah texts were used to bolster it. In the twentieth century 'ulama objectified Islam as a sole remedy against the evils of Western Civilization.

The Nineteenth Century Texts

In the nineteenth century we saw decline of rational sciences and emphasis on Islamic survival through teaching religious sciences in madrassah which were growing in number. Now their target population was that of Muslim men and their preferred science was *hadith*. *Hadith*, the second most sacred texts after the Quran, has long been studied in South Asian Sunni madrassahs but from the second half of the 19th century the *Sihah Sittah* (six authentic collections of *hadith*) have become part of higher learning. It became compulsory part of the madrassahs' curriculum, specialization in it became the prequalification to be an '*alim*, religious scholar. *Masabih as-Sunan* or its revised edition

Mishkat al-Masabih,²⁷ still a popular book of *hadith* collection, remained part of higher learning madrassahs since Sultanate period (1206-1526). Sheikh Abdul Haq Dehlvi, translated and wrote Persian commentary on *Mishkat al-Masabih* in the sixteenth century. In his *muqadmah* (introduction) to *Mishkat*, he simply explained the principles of *hadith*, in brief and discussed the types of *ahadith* (pl. *hadith*). While defining the terms used in collecting the *ahadith*, he described the criteria used by early *muhaditheen* [Arabic: *hadith* collectors] for including as *ahadith* to their collections. Quoting the author of *Jami' al-Usul*, he asserted that a group of *muhaditheen* has derived many *hadith* from Khawarij, Qadriyah, Shia'h, and other *ashab-e-bidat* (people of innovation). So, he advised that it is better for someone not to derive *hadith* from these sources, because these parties coined *ahadith* for the propagation of their *madhhab* (schools of law).²⁸ He did not indulge in the debate as to what the Muslims should do or should not do. Nor did he try to dig out something, say, political.

Hafiz ibn Hajjar 'Asqalani (d.1449) authored a book on principles of *hadith*, *Nukhbat al-Fikr*. Later he wrote a *sharah* (commentary) on it because according to him it was written in difficult language. In introduction to *sharah*, 'Asqalani simply presents critical review of the literature on *usul-e-hadith*, explaining that he had tried to fill those gaps the previous books had left open.²⁹ The tone was same in nearly all texts created during the medieval Islam. They were not defending Islam in political sense or promoting Islamic values rather they were taking part in building Islamic State. Siraj al-Din Sajawandi (d. 12th century) wrote an excellent treatise on Muslim law of inheritance, *Sirajjiah* (or *Siraji*), which was taught not only in the Ottoman

27 Sheikh Wali al-Din 'Abdullah al-Khatib wrote revised edition of *Masabih al-Sunan*, of Abu Muhammad al-Husain ibn Masud al-Farra' Baghawi (d.1122), adding a chapter to each book and renamed it *Mishkat al-Masabih* (the niche for lamps)(completed in 737 AH/1336CE).

28 Sheikh Wali al-Din 'Abdullah al-Khatib, *Mishkat Sharif Mutarajim*, Urdu trans. Qari Ahmed (Karachi: Muhammad Saeed and Sons, 1977?), p.12.

29 Hafiz ibn Hajjar 'Asqalani, *Nuzhat-un-Nazar fi Tauzih-e Nukhbat al-Fikr ma Sharah Sharah-e Istijla al-Basra min Sharah-e Nahbat al-Fikr*, Urdu trans. by Maulwi Abu Muhammad 'Abdul 'Aziz, Matba' Mufeed-e-'Am (Lahore: 1322 AH. p.7.

madrassahs but also in Indian madrassahs and is still part of contemporary curriculum of Pakistani madrassahs. The book was so important that in the late eighteenth century, when East India Company made a bid to understand the Indian Muslim polity and started to translate the classical texts, the *Siraji* was among those few books which were translated and published. Preface to reprinted edition of the book by Almaric Rumsey reveals the colonial aim of the translation: “Of the *Sirajiyyah* itself may be said it contains definitions and rules which, if thoroughly understood and properly applied, are sufficient to enable us [the British] to solve most (perhaps all) of the problems which may occur in actual practice.”³⁰ On the other hand Sajawandi did not try to make lofty claims nor did he make effort to teach the Muslims *aadab*, in a very brief introduction, Sajawandi plainly advises his reader “learn and teach ‘ilm al-faraid (knowledge of law of inheritance).”

The classical texts were written in taking the cognizance of the contemporary state of affairs. The ‘ulama were skilfully utilizing the tools and models of the then developed sciences in understating the religion. Allama Sa‘d al-Din Masu‘d Taftazani in introduction to *Tahdhib al-Mantiq wa al-Kalam* (commonly known as *Tahdhib*) declared that “this book is related to very virtuous knowledge of logic and theology. The aim of this book is to bring the mind very near to the research on beliefs of Islam.”³¹ All books on rational sciences, such as *Talkhis al-Miftah*, *Mukhtasar al-Ma‘ni*, *Isaghoji*, *Qutbi*, *Mir Qutbi*, *Sughra*, *Kubra* and others, were debates on the philosophical issues of the day and endeavoured to understand the religion in broader spectrum rather than narrowing it down to parochialism.

The Arabic literature created and taught during the medieval period until the nineteenth century might be rhetorical but was not aimed at preaching religious concepts. It was created in a secular

30 Siraj al-Din Muhammad bin Muhammad Sajawandi, *Al-Sirajiyyah: or the Mohammedan Law of Inheritance*, Eng. trans. and commentary by Sir William Jones, (Calcutta: Joseph Cooper, 1792), reprinted with notes and appendix by Almaric Rumsey (London: William Amer, 1869), p.viii.

31 Sa‘d al-Din Taftazani, *Tahdhib*, trans. and commentary in Urdu ‘Abd al-Rehman Baqa’, *Taushih al-Tahdhib* (Calcutta: Sa‘eedi Press, 1316 AH, 1898/99), p.11.

tone and was entertaining, like literature in other language, till today whether it is *Maqamat al-Hariri* or *Dewan al-Hamasa*. The tenor of Arabic literature created in India in the early nineteenth century was relatively liberal and seemed a continuation of medieval literary tradition. During his stay at Madrassah 'Aliya Calcutta (estab. 1781) as teacher, Sheikh Ahmed Yamani Shirwani (d.1840) wrote *Nafahat al-Yaman* (published 1811), a book of instructive short stories and maxims, for students.³² Each story concludes with a moral lesson at the end, however, the book does not preach or contain any direct reference to Islamic values. The book later on became the part of Dars-i-Nizami and even Deobandi madrassahs until the mid-twentieth century, when they condemned its language as lewd — a disrespect to Islamic honour³³ — and replaced it with *Nafahat al-'Arab*.

Most of the classical texts, used in the nineteenth century Indian madrassahs, do not project Islamism — Islam as a political objective, rather Islam with its all political connotations was taken as granted. Even the books written by the Indian 'ulama in the nineteenth century or before, seemed exclusively an attempt to keep intact the link with Islamic learning tradition of the past and transmitting it to the new generation, though after the Mutiny reformist underpinnings were prominent. 'Ulama kept themselves away from being politicized, even common Muslim did not want to see 'ulama taking part in politics. The medieval Muslim polity's general opinion about the nature of relations between 'ulama and politics expressed by Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) in a proverbial comment, "*Al-'ulama al-bu'd al-nas un al-siyyasah*" ('Ulama have no compatibility with politics),³⁴ remained same in the nineteenth century India. For most of the history of the education of the Muslims India discussions on Islamic values did not appear in the curriculum. Most texts used in the curriculum did not contain lessons on Islamic demeanours and norms of conduct and more

32 Ahmed bin Muhammad Shirwani al-Yamani, *Nafhat al-Yaman*, trans. in Urdu, Maulwi 'Ali Asghar, Matba'-i-Nizami, 1869.

33 Muhammad Hanif Gangohi, *Zafarumuhsaleen ba Ahwal al-Musanayfeen*, Hanif Book Depot, Deoband, 1996. p.101; Akhtar Rahi, *Tazkirah Musanayfin-e-Dars-i-Nizami* [Urdu] (Lahore: Maktaba Rahmania, 1978), p.71.

34 Quoted in Gilani, *Ahatah' Dar al-'Ulum mein beetai ho 'y din*, p.56.

concerned about Muslim state and society in general, not for the establishment of Islamic state.

The Twentieth Century Texts

The twentieth century saw proliferation of Islamic literature due to extensive use of print. Urdu was a marker of Muslim identity, and anti-colonial movement. Until the nineteenth century, India had a trained group of copyists in many cities and towns. These people copied the books and sold them to those who were in need. They also knew the whereabouts of the rare manuscripts and how to get permission for copying.³⁵ With the advent of the British this system had disrupted and later on disappeared. During the British period printing business flourished. In first half of the nineteenth century when Persian was the language of courts, more books were published in Persian. As the British state promoted vernaculars in the domains of formal learning, the printing business turned towards publishing Urdu books particularly in Northern India. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century translation of classical texts and their *sharahs* were coming out in Urdu, when madrassahs made it as prime medium of instruction. Indeed, the '*ulama* adopted Urdu not only for teaching but for writing their sermons and tracts to the extent that Urdu became associated with Islam in South Asia.³⁶ '*Ulama* used the print technology in their favour shrewdly, particularly in the twentieth century.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, attempts were made to bring reconciliation between modern sciences and Islam. Gradually, madrassah education became politicized though not in contents but in essence and by giving new meanings and interpretations to old texts or writing new books in accommodation with the environment. As Indian Muslims convalesced from the trauma of Mutiny, they slowly stepped in the troubled waters of politics. '*Ulama*, on one side, putting new responsibility on themselves of searching an identity for their community, and on

35 Manazar Ahsan Gilani, *Sawanah Qasimi* (Lahore: Maktabah-e-Rahimia, 1980), pp.307-08.

36 Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1982), pp.206-10, 215.

the other side tried to make themselves palatable for the new modern emerging Indian political elite. Like medieval theologians who with prudent use of logical tools, refuted the wrong beliefs which crept in after conquering of foreign lands and translation of Greek texts,³⁷ the 'ulama of the twentieth century also tried to bridge the gap between the modern sciences and religious sciences. Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Uthmani (d. 1949), a staunch Deobandi scholar, tried to prove, by using theological argumentation (*kalam*), that the tenets of Islam were not affected, in any way, by the discoveries science had made. He tried to convince that there was no conflict between '*aql-e-salim* (intelligent reason) and '*naql-e-sahih* (properly transmitted science).³⁸ It seems 'ulama were very much concerned about the criticism made by the modernists about the nature of madrassah education. On the other side, there was a cry for building a bulwark against Western civilization. As the tradition of writing commentaries and glosses on classical texts continued but references and contexts of these works were changed. To ward off the defects of Western education, the religious education is more imperative nowadays, cried a writer in early twentieth century while writing a gloss on Muhibullah Bihari's *Musallam al-Saboot*,³⁹ while Bihari himself did not say such things in his introduction to the book.

Creation of Islamic literature and writing of new books for madrassah curriculum continued during the whole twentieth century. However, the tone and tenor of the new literature, which is being taught presently in madrassahs, is qualitatively different from the literature written until Partition of the British India. During the colonial period where Muslim madrassahs were to respond to the new situation, by promoting orthodoxy it was also a rejoinder to the dominance of the Western civilization. After independence, 'ulama offered resistance to the intrusion of

37 Maulana Riyyasat Ali Bijnori, "Taqdeem" [introduction], Maulana Mujib Ullah Gondawi, *Biyan al-Fawa'id fi hal Sharah al-'Aqaid* [an Urdu trans. and commentary of Sa'd al-Din Taftazani's *Sharah 'Aqaid Nasafi*] (Multan: Dar al-Hadith, 1992), p.4.

38 Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Uthmani, *Al-'Aql wa al-Naql* (Deoband: Matba' Qasimi, 1916).

39 Muhibullah Bihari, *Musallam al-Saboot*, with Hashiyyah *Maftah al-Buyut*, by Muhammad Faiz al-Hassan (Cawnpore: Matba' Saeedi, 1910), p.1.

modernity and were supposed to lock out their madrassahs from modern world.

Until first half of the twentieth century, many classical texts were translated and glossed in Persian.⁴⁰ Even Arabic grammar and syntax were taught through books translated or written in Persian – medium of instruction in madrassahs. *Fasul-e-Akbari*, *‘Ilm al-Sigha* or *Sifwat al-Masdar*, written by Indian scholars, were aimed to teach Arabic grammar by using Persian medium. After independence, Persian was completely replaced by South Asian madrassahs as medium of instruction; therefore, both Nadwa and Deoband encouraged scholars for writing and publishing curricular texts in Urdu.

In 1950s Dar al-‘Ulum Nadwat al-‘Ulama published a book on Arabic grammar in Urdu in three volumes, which is included in the Pakistani Deobandi madrassahs’ curriculum. The basic aim of the book, *Mua‘llim al Insha*, is to create an ability to speak and write Arabic among the madrassah students. Generally, the ‘ulama are blamed that they are unable to communicate in Arabic, which is considered imperative to interact with the scholars of Arab world. Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali Nadwi (d. 1999), a great Indian Muslim scholar of the twentieth century, laments that it is very surprising and incomprehensible thing that the individual or group should spend a large part of their lives and their mental capabilities in studying compositions written in the Arabic language but still remain entirely incapable of expressing themselves in it.⁴¹ Though the book is on grammar, however, it is different from those written before the twentieth century that took it as purely instrumental and secular science. *Mua‘llim al Insha*, by its very emphases and

40 For instance, Jamal al-Din, *Sharah Tadhhib Farsi*, [Persian translation and commentary on Taftazani’s *Sharah Tahdhib*], Nol Kishor, Cawnpore, 1915; Muhammad Sharif, *Jawahir al-Hikam fi Tawdhih al-Sullam*, [A commentary, in Persian, on Muhibullah Bhari’s *Sullam al-‘Ulum*], Mutba‘ Ahmedi, Allahabad, 1910; Maulwi Muhammad Sharif, *Al-Taqrir al-Aslam fi Tawdhih al-Musallam*, [A Persian commentary on Muhibullah Bihari’s *Musa‘llam al-Saboot*] (Benares: Matba‘ Aksir A‘zam Press, 1912).

41 Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali Nadwi, “Muqadmah”, ‘Adu al-Majid Nadwi, *Mua‘llim al-Insha*, Vol. I, Majlis Nashriyyat-e-Islam, Karachi, 1372 AH (1952/53 CE). p. 9; Muhammad Nazim Nadwi [Shiekh al-Jami‘ Jami‘ ‘Abassiyah, Bahawalpur], “Muqadmah,” Muhammad al-Rabi‘ al-Hasani al-Nadwi, *Mua‘llim al-Insha*, Vol.III (Karachi: Majlis Nashriyyat-e-Islam, 1374 AH, 1955 CE), p.7.

choice of topics and selection of examples, reveals itself to be a response, however reactionary, to modern world politics. The book tries to keep away the young students mind from the evils of Western civilization and modernity by constantly indoctrinating Islamism. For instance, it attempts to prescribe an Islamic form of behaviour whereas the classical texts never felt it indispensable to prescribe the same as it was not in dispute or under threat.

There is also some emphasis on militancy, which is missing in the medieval texts. According to Abu al-Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, Islamic mind (*Islami zahniyyat*) and religious ideology (*deeni khayyal*) is prominent in the choice of sentences and words in *Mua'llim al Insha'* and is meant for exciting religious sensibilities (*deeni ahsasat*) among the young students of madrassahs.⁴² It is clear that this text book is for those Muslim students who would later be "*deen ka da'ee aur Islam ka sipahi*" (preachers of religion and soldiers of Islam).⁴³ Again in introduction to second volume of the book, Nadwi revealed that this book was part of the project whose aim was to redesign the curriculum which carried Islamic and religious spirit. The essays and issues in this book are related to collectiveness, ethics and religion, and author avoided the literary colourfulness and advised young students that they should also avoid it. Every topic in the book contains "religious element or viewpoint."⁴⁴

The book is heavily loaded with Islamic values. While teaching grammar to the students, references are taken from the past, such as, examples are taken from the Battle of Badr (the first battle fought between Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Meccans in 624 CE) or from biography of 'Umer bin 'Abd al-'Aziz (eighth Umayyad Caliph d. 1720). In some sentences it instructs values, like obedience to parents and Islamic norms and in others promotes Islamic Brotherhood. The great quality of the book, as Muhammad Nazim Nadwi declares, is that in the exercises on translation rather mentioning "fables of dogs, cats,

42 Abu al-Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, "Muqadmah", 'Adu al-Majid Nadwi, *Mua'llim al-Insha'*, Vol.I, p.10.

43 *Ibid.*, p.11.

44 Abu al-Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, "Muqadmah", 'Adu al-Majid Nadwi, *Mua'llim al-Insha'*, Vol. II, (Karachi: Majlis Nashriyyat-e-Islam, 1374 AH, 1954 CE), pp.16-17.

boars and hares,” it derives lessons from the history of Islam and chivalrous deeds of Muslim heroes,⁴⁵ such as Muhammad bin Qasim, the first Muslim general who successfully invaded India and conquered Sind and Multan (d.715 CE).⁴⁶ *Mua'llim al-Insha'* seems to be a pioneering attempt of a bigger project, started after Partition and now matured, of Islamization of those disciplines of Islamic tradition which were considered instrumental but secular. The author of the third volume goes so far as to convince the students that the art of essay writing (*insha'*), in this modern world, is not meant for enjoyment or entertainment, it should be used in propagation and preaching of Islam.⁴⁷ He further added that present syllabus of the literature, grammar and syntax is based on un-Islamic values, so this book, keeping in view the current requirements, is prepared for the Muslims of Indo-Pak Subcontinent.⁴⁸

After 1950s, madrassahs were taking part more actively in the Islamic revivalist movements than before. 'Ulama were busy in imprinting a specific world-view, inculcating Islamic values through text books to the students. Up to the middle of the twentieth century the madrassahs were mostly concerned with preservation of the past. Having a besieged mentality they buried themselves in the past and shunned change as a source of the greatest danger. After that, especially because of the rise of revivalist Islamic movements in the Muslim world, the madrassahs have started incorporating some aspects of revivalism—strict adherence to the shari'ah and Islamism - in their curricula. It is because of this that the scholars, such as Abu al-Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, go so far as to suggest that the *Maqamat-e-Hariri*, a prose work which has been, for centuries, and still is part of curricula for Arabic prose is no longer relevant to fulfil the needs for present-day.⁴⁹ Arabic poetry, which was important part of old syllabus, is

45 Muhammad Nazim Nadwi, “Muqadmah,” Muhammad al-Rabi' al-Hasani al-Nadwi, *Mua'llim al-Insha'*, Vol. III (Karachi: Majlis Nashriyyat-e-Islam, 1374 AH, 1955 CE), p.10.

46 *Ibid.*, p.157.

47 *Ibid.*, p.11.

48 *Ibid.*, p.12.

49 Abu al-Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, “Muqadmah,” 'Adu al-Majid Nadwi, *Mua'llim al-Insha'*, Vol.II, p.15.

not helpful in developing essay-writing skills. Nadwi considered it unnatural for scholars to express themselves in poetry than in prose.⁵⁰ That is why, this textbook on writing skills contains essays on Nadwat al-'Ulama, Dar al-'Ulum Deoband, Jami' Azhar, Shah Wali Ullah, Syed Qutab an Egyptian reformist scholar (d. 1966) and so on.⁵¹

Nafhat al-'Arab, authored by Muhammad 'Azaz Ali (d. 1955), a student and teacher at Dar ul-'Ulum Doeband, is presently taught in Deobandi madrassahs, again is an attempt of objectification of Islam and Islamization of literature like *sarf* and *nahw*. This was, basically, a response to *Nufat al-Yaman* of Sheikh Ahmed Shirwani, which is considered by the present-day Deobandis unsuitable for the students and projects un-Islamic values and immorality. *Nufhat al-'Arab* measured appropriate for refining students' ethics, morality and Islamic mannerism,⁵² qualifications for a book on arabic literature, not the literary traits and style become the judging criteria. On the contrary even classical texts on ethics had not tried to preach Islamic values, rather promoting universal human values, such as *Akhlaq-e-Jalali*, which simply advises selflessness, self-abnegation and asks everyone to maintain justice in daily affairs.⁵³

Although many religious texts and their *sharahs* are translated into Urdu, still, prerequisite to be an '*alim* is having a skill in religious sciences. Whether the present 'ulama are well-versed in modern Arabic or not, but they have had proficiency in reading and understanding olden Arabic. So it is necessary for one who wants to comprehend the Quran, *hadith*, *tafsir* and *fiqh* to learn instrumental sciences of *sarf*, *nahw*, *ma'ni* and *biyan* related to old Arabic.⁵⁴ So it is because of this sheer necessity, rather

50 *Ibid.*, p.16.

51 Muhammad al-Rabi' al-Hasani al-Nadwi, *Mua'llim al-Insha'*, Vol. III. pp 132,133,153,154,184.

52 Muhammad Hanif Gangohi, *Zafar al- Muhsalin ba Ahwal al-Musanayfin*, new edition (Deoband: Hanif Book Depot, 1996), p.377.

53 Jalal al-Din Muhammad Dawani, *Akhlaq-e-Jalali*, Urdu trans. Syed Maqbool Husain Saifi (Lahore: Mashhoor 'Alam Press, 1923).

54 Mufti Muhammad Shafi', "Paysh Lafz," Mufti 'Anayat Ahmed [Kakori], *'Iml al-Sigha*, Urdu trans, Mufti Muhammad Rafi' Uthmani (Karachi: Idarah al-Ma'rif, 2006), p.7.

conservatism that all these are still present in madrassah curriculum.

Despite the conformity and adherence to the centuries old texts, the ‘ulamas’ shared engagement with these texts and scholarly discourse, and a consensus on the methodology of this engagement among them forms madrassah tradition which still continues.⁵⁵ Islamic tradition of learning continued despite the odd circumstances the learned Muslim scholars faced in the twentieth century. Colonialism and the modernity disrupted the Islamic religious tradition, such as *fiqh*, and theology, however, it provided a suitable environment for *tafsir* (exegesis). Modern Muslim scholars usually express themselves through the exegesis.⁵⁶ Pakistan’s Deobandi madrassahs are teaching Quranic translation and *tafsir* authored by Deoband stalwarts, Maulana Mahmud Hassan (d. 1921) and Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani (d.1957). However, *Jalalain* and *Baidawi* are still favourite among Deobandis, however, according to a Deobandi scholar, *Jalalain* is so concise that equals its words with Quran.⁵⁷

Teaching *fiqh* at South Asian madrassahs have long history. As discussed earlier, *fiqh* became the marker of scholarship during Sultanate period (13th to 15th century) among the ‘ulama. Before the introduction of Anglo-Saxon codified laws by the British in India and by other western states in all over their colonies, Muslims did use the codified laws. *Muftis* and judges interpreted and implemented the Islamic laws according to their understanding of the *fiqh* of their own *madhhab* or school of law, and made decision by recourse to the law books, not codified law, if it deemed necessary.

After the consolidation of *madhhabs* (schools of law) in Arab lands in 7th and 8th centuries, study of *fiqh* had become deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition. The understanding of *fiqh*, for use in private life or for getting teaching jobs or becoming *mufti* and judges in government Justice Department, became the part and parcel of all Muslim

55 Muhammad Qasim Zaman, “Tradition and Authority in Deobandi Madrassahs in South Asia,” in Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, eds., *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Muslim Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 64.

56 Few examples are Muhammad Abdu (d. 1905), Ahmed Raza Barelwi (d. 1921), Ashraf Ali Thanawi’s (d. 1943) *Bayan ul Quran*, and Sayyed Qutab (d. 1966), Mufti Muhammad Shafi’, Abul ‘Ala Maududi (d. 1979) Allama Shabir Ahmed Uthmani’s (d. 1949) *Tafsir-e-Uthmani*.

57 Muhammad Hanif Gangohi, *op.cit.*, p.101.

madrassahs' curriculum, since medieval times to the present day and Indian madrassahs were not exception.

The tradition of teaching of *fiqh* that started from the early days of Muslims in India still continues in South Asian madrassahs. Keeping in tact the tradition of *taqlid*, the Sunni 'ulama, Deobandi and Barelwi both, did not venture to understand and analyze the modern problems the Muslims are facing and did not want to rewrite or even reinterpret the classical *fiqhi* texts in the light of new requirements. The most favourite texts for teaching *fiqh* in Hanafi madrassahs were *Mukhtasar al-Quduri* of Ahmed bin Muhammad al-Quduri (d 1037), *Hidaya* of al-Marghinani (d. 1196/97), *Sharah Wiqaya* of 'Ubaidullah bin Mas'ud (d. 1346/47). Though, there are no more *Qadi* courts administering Hanafi *fiqh* at lower levels exist in Pakistan, still teaching and learning of *fiqh* is considered by 'ulama necessary for a Muslim in his/her daily routine particularly in private sphere and for those who want to be a *mufti*, a scholar who, by virtue of his knowledge of *fiqh*, has the right to issue *fatwa*, a formal legal decree or opinion. On *usul-e-fiqh* (principles of law) where we find South Asian madrassahs engaging teaching *Manar al-Anwar* of Hafiz al-Din Abdullah al-Nasafi (d. 1310), *Tanqih* and its *Sharah Tawdih*, both by 'Ubaid Ullah bin Mas'ud, *Talwih*, a *sharah* on *Tawdih* by Allama Sa'd ud-Din Taftazani (d.1389) and *Usul al-Shashi*, there Dars-i-Nizami contains books by Indian authors, like *Musalam us-Sabut* of Mullah Muhib Ullah Bihari (d. 1707) and *Nur al-Anwar, sharah* on al-Nasafi's *al-Manar* by Mullah Jiwan of Amethi (d. 1718). In modern Pakistan, *fiqh* has lost its practical utility particularly in state apparatus, but it still forms a commendable, though without vitality and *ijtehad*, part of Islamic tradition of which the madrassahs are inheritors and are trying to preserve and transmit. Emerging contemporary questions and problems could not be solved and understood with the help of classical texts on *fiqh*, written more than seven hundred years ago. For instance, these texts discussed issues of trade and business which were prevalent in medieval times and drew instances from the professions and means of transportation, which were later obsolete and hence unintelligible. All these issues discussed in the texts are, somehow, alien to the madrassah students living in modern world. Consequently, they could not be able to relate the texts with the issues of present-day world.

Conclusion

After independence, being entangled in the web of Western culture and modern state system, the 'ulama started a new struggle to become the guardians of morals and culture. Therefore, for them reverting to 'Scripturalism' remained the only option, which steamed out the

flexibility of medieval Islam. For indoctrination of Islamic values and norms of behaviour, 'ulama used the medium of madrassah texts — new texts and new commentaries on classical texts. With the initiation of Afghan *Jihad*, in early 1980s, and after the events of 9/11 the politicization of madrassahs and their texts took new heights. It seems that the use of new texts and the Islamized commentaries of old texts and their new interpretations in the classrooms bring madrassah students to believe that imposition of tenets of Islam through *jihad* is the chosen path, which forms major part of their worldview. Different Pakistani governments tried to reform madrassah curriculum aiming at injecting the modern subject into it, which the 'ulama resisted. However, despite the 'ulamas' resistance to these attempts, some aspects of the modern worldview have crept in madrassahs' organization and curriculum, and in the modern texts. In the Deobandi madrassahs, Urdu and Pakistan/Social Studies are taught through the government textbooks till the level 10 to boys and 8 to girls. This means that the messages of Pakistani nationalism, exaltation of Muslim invaders as heroes and glorification of war and some knowledge of the modern world becomes part of the students' worldview. However, the attempt to broaden their vision through familiarizing them with modern subjects utterly failed.

In present madrassah discourse, usually textual analysis has taken a back seat. Despite the availability of a wide range of material on Pakistani madrassahs, in any evaluation of madrassahs' role in contemporary politics, a textual critique is imperative. To start with, Islamism crept into religious tracts in 1920s, when for the first time religion entered in Indian politics during the Caliphate Movement which was reinforced after decolonization when 'ulama found themselves entangled with modern state and western cultural onslaught and defined them as Other. The emphasis on objectification and Islamism upturn the focus of tradition of Islamic learning. The politicization of madrassah texts and new textual interpretations of old texts, a phenomenon that is, now, common in current madrassah tradition. So, in any estimation of madrassah, we need a critical review of madrassah texts which are being taught in Pakistani madrassahs.