Reforms in *Dars-e-Nizami* Curricula: Western and Indigenous Influence During the 20th Century

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Abstract

In the 20th century, educationists and researchers witnessed significant reforms in the Dars-e-Nizami curricula across South Asia, influenced by Western ideas and indigenous reform movements within religious communities. This article examines the evolution of Dars-e-Nizami education, focusing on the contrasting responses of Hindu and Muslim reformers to Western education and its impact on religious and social ideologies. This study utilises a qualitative research methodology, specifically employing discourse analysis, drawing on a comprehensive review of historical documents, academic journals, books, and other scholarly works. Key movements, such as the Deobandi and Aligarh movements, were analysed to understand their roles in modern Islamic education amidst global transformations Moreover, this article also examines how these reform movements shaped the evolution of Dars-e-Nizami curricula, highlighting the tensions between traditionalism and modernity, Indigenous and Western influences, and their implications for religious identity and education in South Asia. Future researchers should explore the socio-economic impact of the shift in madrasa education towards religious instruction and investigate the structural challenges in implementing effective reforms, focusing on creating a cohesive framework that aligns with broader educational goals.

Keywords: Madrassa Reforms, Dars-e-Nizami Curricula, Western Influence, Indigenous Influence

Introduction

The Dars-e-Nizami educational system, established in the 7th century, remains active to the present day.Nizam ul Mulk, a minister of Alp Arslan, initiated a network of institutions known as the Al-Nizamiyyah Madrasas. Nizam ul Mulk established these madrasas in cities such as Nishapur, Isfahan, Mosul, Baghdad, Basrah, Herat, and Balkh. They played a significant role in the history of educational institutions, resembling modern universities with their structured infrastructure. Nizam ul Mulk sponsored and managed these institutions, marking the first instance in history where a government took responsibility for the economic expenditures of educational institutions, including teachers' salaries, administrative staff payments, and financial assistance for students' basic needs, such as education and free accommodation. The most renowned of these madrasas was the Al-Nizamiyyah in Baghdad, although the Nizamiyyah Madrasa of Nishapur was

established earlier and located in a prime area of Baghdad, even though it featured a library, large lecture halls, boarding houses, and shops. The construction cost of Al-Nizamiyyah was two hundred thousand dinars with annual expenses amounting to fifteen thousand dinars in 457 H. Each year, six thousand students enrolled in this institution. The educational hierarchy included professors, assistant professors, and lecturers. To maintain the institution's decorum, teachers adhered to a dress code, wearing black gowns while teaching. Arabic served as the medium of instruction, and the curriculum comprised traditional Islamic disciplines such as Arabic language, Quranic Sciences, Hadith Sciences, Islamic Jurisprudence, and Mathematics. Nizamia system, rooted in traditional Islamic education, underwent profound transformations during the 20th century under the influence of Western colonialism and indigenous reform movements. Initially focused on religious sciences and by the time the introduction of Western education sparked debates and reform initiatives became its elementary parts. In the 19th century, figures like Rammohun Roy and Sayyid Ahmad Khan pioneered intellectual movements that embraced Western thought while advocating for social reforms within Hindu and Muslim communities, respectively. These movements marked a divergence in responses: Hindu reformers integrated Western education with liberal ideals, challenging caste distinctions and promoting social equality. In contrast, Muslim reformers like Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan sought to reconcile Islamic teachings with Western education through institutions. English education alongside religious studies was an important portion of education at Aligarh Muslim University. Simultaneously, the Deobandi movement emerged as a conservative response within the Muslim community, emphasizing traditional Islamic education at Darul-Uloom Deoband while rejecting Western influences perceived as incompatible with Islamic values. The establishment of Nadwatul Ulama in Lucknow represented a middle ground, aiming to modernize Islamic education while preserving religious integrity.

Literature Review

The literature on reforms in Islamic education, particularly within South Asia, emphasizes historical continuity and modern changes within madrassa systems. Ahmad (2000) explores the persistence of traditional Islamic educational structures in Pakistan amidst evolving political contexts, while Bano (2011) and Fair (2008) critically address how religious education is often linked to militancy, particularly within Deobandi madrassas. Tan (2014) and Conroy (2013) offer broader investigations into the philosophical and practical reforms in Islamic pedagogy, emphasizing the need for aligning religious education with modern values. In addition, works by Hussain and Ashraf (1979) highlight the crisis in Muslim education due to colonial influences, which Malik (1989) further discusses in the context of traditional institutions' dissolution. Meanwhile, authors like Daud (1989) and Iqbal (1968) delve into the philosophical underpinnings of Islamic knowledge, advocating for a reconstruction of religious thought. Nanda (1980) and Alam (2011) provide historical and ethnographic perspectives on madrassas, while Khan (2020) and Jacobson (1998) focus on identity formation within these institutions in pluralistic societies. , Collectively, these works underscore the tensions between traditionalism, modernity, and the sociopolitical dynamics surrounding Islamic education.

Methodology

This study employs qualitative research methodology, with a specific focus on discourse analysis, to examine the reforms in the Dars-e-Nizami curricula during the 20th century in South Asia. The analysis aims to understand the contrasting responses of Hindu and Muslim reformers to Western education and its impact on religious and social ideologies, as well as the roles of key movements such as the Deobandi and Aligarh movements in shaping modern Islamic education. The source collection includes a comprehensive review of historical documents, academic journals, books,

and other scholarly works related to the Dars-e-Nizami curricula, the Deobandi and Aligarh movements, and broader educational reforms in South Asia.

Results and Findings

Western and Indigenous Influence

The nineteenth century saw tremendous intellectual turmoil around the globe. Some of the philosophical movements, such as Rammohun Roy from the Hindu community and Sayyid Ahmad Khan from the Muslim community, were directly influenced by Western thoughts. In contrast, many others, such as Dayanand Saraswati among Hindus and Jamaludin Afghani from Muslims were fully Indigenous. A number of these movements aimed at reforming the society around them. These reform movements were directed at different religious communities; therefore these reformers could not address the evils of another religion or religion-based community, they resulted in defining separate identities of various sections of the populace exclusively based on their religion.[1]

Response of Hindus towards external influences

It was Hindu Catholicity, or perhaps it was the largely diffused or heterogeneous character of Hinduism, or perhaps it was the fact that Hindus had already confronted a foreign religion, Islam; whatever the reason, they did not feel traumatized by either the introduction of Christianity or of English education in India. The middle class, or the upper castes among them, took up English education. Perhaps the original motivation among Hindus was to get employment as babus (clerks), but once they took up English education, they benefited from the flow of the ideas of the Enlightenment (18th century) and Liberalism (19th century)[2]. Luckily for Hindus, their introduction to Western liberal thought through English education generated in them an admiration for freedom of thought and liberal ideas. That, in turn, gave birth to several religious-social reform movements that together generated a Renaissance of sorts in Hindu thought and practice.[3] These Hindu reform movements mainly tried to bring about social change by introducing Western ideas of social equality and freedom of thought, and most of them were directed towards the rejection of caste distinctions and improvement regarding women.

Response of Muslims towards external influences

The primary driving force behind the establishment of madrasas was the Muslim perception of the British as a threat to their religion and cultural traditions. This perception led to a strong desire to safeguard Muslim culture. It was thought that well-planned madrasas, which would provide knowledge of Islam, its culture, and its values in such a way that the students would become fully convinced of the ultimate 'truth' of Islam, was the best way to preserve the religion. A second factor mentioned earlier in determining the nature and set-up of these madrasas was that the secular education given so far in the madrasas was found to be of no use. As a result, madrasas were limited to dini madrasas, focusing solely on teaching Islamic religion and related subjects. Madrasa authorities and teachers were not averse to this new classification. Unluckily, the Muslim reform movements aimed at going back centuries to the pristine purity of Islam by rejecting English education and the Western ideas that it stood for. There were several reasons for their rejection, as suggested above. The Muslim leaders thought themselves to be the legitimate rulers of India and regarded the Englishmen as usurpers of that power. Maulanas and some fundamentalist leaders

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[1] Douglass, S, L and M. A. Shaikh, *"Defining Islamic Education: Differentiation and Applications, Current Issues in Comparative Education"*, 2004, pp (18-19).

[2] Daud, W. M. N., *"The Concept of Knowledge in Islam and Its Implications for a Developing Country"* Mansell Islamic Studies, London and New York 1989, pp (92-93).

[3] Ibid.

among Muslims maintained the belief that their religion was God's supreme and final and that they were the chosen people of God's final revelation. Therefore, they were reluctant to acknowledge the potential lessons that the Western world could impart to them. Above all, they viewed the British as embodying a culture and religion that contradicted and undermined their religion, culture, and values. The ulama and other elite members of Muslim society had not yet felt threatened by the presence of Hindus and the Hindu religion, as they perceived the latter as an inferior religion due to its polytheistic and idolatrous practices. However, there was another Semitic religion, a religion of the Book, which also claimed to be the highest and final religion. Hinduism does not always make such a claim. Muslims saw it as a threat to their religion. Muslims are so sure of the Bible's truth that few convert to Christianity. So, they need not have worried about the challenge posed by Christianity.[4] Until now, very few madrasas have been recognized for their specialization in specific fields of knowledge. For instance, the Khairabad madrasa specialized in Iranian philosophy, the Lucknow Firangi Mahal focused on fiqh, and some other madrasas primarily taught Arabic grammar. The Madrasa Alia of Calcutta, and later Delhi College, under the influence of English Company officers, stressed the learning of literature and history. Shah Waliullah had earlier stressed the significance of teaching religious subjects like the Quran, tafsir (Quranic commentaries), and Hadith. Although his ideas were not embraced initially, they are now recognized and valued by the ulama.

Movements with the orientation of Madrassas' establishment
Over time, additional madrasas emerged in response to the challenges posed by British rule and the spread of English education. In this context, the Darul-Uloom was founded in Deoband, near Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh, in 1866. Maulana Qasim Nanautawi and Maulana Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi, especially the former, were among the chief founders of the madrasa.[5] Nanautawi tried to reconcile several traditions of his time, which were used for madrasa teaching at Khairabad, Firangi Mahal (Lucknow), Delhi, and Punjab. As a result, Deoband's syllabus became lengthy and cumbersome. Despite its length, the Deoband syllabus remained mostly confined to what is called intellectual sciences (ma'qulat), such as Arabic grammar and the art of flowery language both in oratory' and writing (balaghat, Ma'ani, Bayan). At first, religious subjects were not very important. They were only gradually added and became integral to the madrasa syllabus. Darul-Uloom was likely the first madrasa in the world, and certainly in India, to adopt a structured curriculum and syllabus. Its primary focus was on fiqh, as well as the study of Arabic and Persian. The original syllabus incorporated traditional Islamic studies but prioritized 'rational sciences' over dini subjects. It largely ignored the significant changes taking place in India and the world at the time. Nevertheless, it highlighted the central role of religion in both personal and social life, aiming to preserve and promote the Islamic way of life (shari'a).[6] The approach and views of the Deoband ulama came to be known as the Deobandi movement. It tried hard to preserve and emphasize the religious and traditional values of Islam and affirmed that religious education alone could give Muslims a firm grounding in Islam. These ulama also encouraged the setting up of other madrasas, mainly in north India, which were expected to follow the Deobandi curriculum. Madrasas were established in Saharanpur and Rampur soon afterwards. During this time, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan recognized that Muslims were falling behind in worldly progress due to their rejection of English education. To address this, he founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (MAO) in

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[4] Ibid
[5] Fair, C. C., *"The Madrassa Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan"*, United Institute Press, Washington DC., 2008, pp (233-234).
[6] Halstead, J. M., *"An Islamic Concept of education"*, Comparative Education, 2004, pp (229).

Aligarh in 1875, which later evolved into Aligarh Muslim University in 1920.[7] He also actively advocated English education among Muslims, contending that instead of opposing the British, Muslims should reconcile with the ground realities and learn the English language, which had now become the means of social, political, and economic upliftment. His approach to education came to be known as the Aligarh movement. Sir Sayyid was not against religious education. However, according to him, an ideal system of education in modern times should be that of the type of English schools, though religious education may be imparted along with it. Apart from advocating and actively working for modern education for Muslims, he also had relatively heterodox views on matters of shari'a, advocating ijtihad (reasoning by scriptures) in doubtful matters. He advocated embracing Western education and practices, provided they did not conflict with shari'a. Subsequently, Sir Sayyid gave up efforts to interpret Islam and devoted himself to the MAO College in Aligarh. He visualized the college not as a vehicle for reforms but as A place where Muslims could receive an English education without compromising their religious beliefs.[8] Therefore, women were not considered for admission because of the opposition of the more fundamentalist Muslims. Importantly, MAO was not meant only for Muslims: Hindus were equally welcome. However, scholars such as M. Mujeeb and Rajmohan Gandhi have bemoaned the fact that to establish an English-medium college; Sir Sayyid had to give up his modernist views and goals of religious reforms so that he could get Muslim boys to learn Western education.[9] Moreover, to achieve the goal of uplifting his community through English education, he also denounced the national movement and asked Muslims not to participate in it. At first, there was strong opposition to his views, especially since he had adopted Western dress and lifestyle along with his Western education. At the same time, his strong advocacy for modern education had some effect on the traditionalist ulama. It prompted them to question for the first time whether their system of education in vogue so far was sufficient for modern times. A large convention of Muslim ulama, both traditionalists and modernists, was held at Kanpur in 1894; several other conventions followed it. Both groups of ulama agreed that the purpose of Muslim education was not being served rightly either by Darul-Uloom, Deoband, or MAO College. In 1898, Darul-Uloom Nadwatul Ulama was established in Lucknow as a model educational institution. Maulana Muhammad Ali Munger and Allama Shibli Nomani were key ideologues and activists among its founders. The institution aimed to strike a balance between the educational approaches of Deoband and MAO College. Its primary objectives were to bring about significant reforms in the syllabi of Islamic studies, develop a new curriculum, produce a generation of religious scholars (ulama) who possessed both profound knowledge of Islamic studies and modern thought, while understanding the needs of contemporary society. Additionally, it sought to foster unity and brotherhood among Muslims and promote Islamic teachings, particularly among non-Muslims. Maulana Sayyid Hasan Ali Nadwi was a prominent scholar of Nadwa. He had observed that though the syllabus and approach of the Madaris had been changing in earlier centuries, it suddenly became stagnant in the nineteenth century due to global transformations and changes in the personal human approach. We will have the opportunity to discuss Nadwa's syllabus briefly in our next chapter. There is some teaching of modern subjects, but only at the primary stage. The English language is taught throughout. However, other than English, there is no fundamental difference between Nadwa's syllabus and that of Deoband, or most madrasas in India.[10] The movement for reform in the madrasa system became stagnant immediately after the establishment of Nadwa. Shibli Nomani,

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[7] Iqbal, M, "The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam" Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, Lahore, Pakistan, 1968, pp (53-55).

[8] Jacobson, R., "*Islam in Transition: Religion and Identity among British Pakistani Youth*", Routledge, London, 1998, pp (249-250).

[9] Jacobson, *Islam in Transition: Religion and Identity among British Pakistani Youth, 1998,* pp (249-250)

[10] Saeedah Shah, "*Education, Leadership and Islam",* Routledge, London and Newyork, 2016, pp (22-23).

who was a prominent figure in the pro-reform movement, resigned from his post in Nadwa in frustration. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, another distinguished scholar from Nadwa, acknowledged the failure of this thrust for reform in the Nadwa experiment. Noumani then went to Azamgarh and helped in establishing, along with others, Madrasat-al-Islah in Sarai Mir, Azamgarh, in 1909, as an institution that aimed to combine the two systems of education. It is continuing this course even now, though perhaps not very successfully. Nomani also founded Dar-ul Musannifin (House of Authors), a publishing house in Azamgarh that continues to operate today. A renowned scholar of Islam, Nomani, along with Qasim Nanautawi, was a strong advocate for communal harmony. The fourth major madrasa was established after a few years of Nadwa. Maulana Nanautawi was dissatisfied with the direction Deoband's madrasa was taking, particularly its focus on the so-called rational sciences at the expense of dini subjects. As a result, he moved to Azamgarh and became one of the founders of Madrasa Jamiatul Falah in Balariaganj, Azamgarh. He intended to create an institution for Muslim boys that would give them genuine religious education along with elementary knowledge of modern subjects. Now, the madrasa follows the curriculum of Jamaat-e-Islami and has a number of modern subjects in its curriculum. We will briefly discuss its syllabus in the next chapter. There are several other notable madrasas in Azamgarh. Almost all the schools of Islam have established a distinct madrasa of their own in the city. There is also a women's madrasa, a branch of Jamiat-ul Falah. The fifth important madrasa is Darul-Uloom Manzar-i-Islam, Bareilly, founded by Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan in 1904. The founder of Madrasa Jamiatul Falah strongly opposed Deoband's interpretation and teaching of Islam, even issuing fatwas against the founders of the Deoband madrasa. This institution identifies itself as Ahl-e-Sunnat.[11] It regards all other schools of Sunni Islam as misrepresenting the religion while declaring itself as true Islam. Ahl-e-Sunnat followers are popularly called Barelvis, though they do not accept this nomenclature. They are in favor of retaining certain Sufi customs like saint worship (including visiting Mazars), idolisation of Prophet Muhammad, and celebration of his birthday. However, acceptance of certain popular customs does not make them liberal. They are quite fanatic in their views and even condemn followers of other schools of Islam as non-believers. In contrast to the Deoband maulanas, Ahmad Raza opposed the Khilafat movement and supported the Muslim League. We will discuss its curriculum in the next chapter. Apart from the above, several other important madrassas were established in the same period:[12]

- •Mazhar-al Uloom, Saharanpur, established in 1866.
- • Madrassa Baqyatris Salehat, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, established in 1883.
- • Jamiat-ul Falah, Balariaganj, Azamgarh, established in 1893.
- • Jamia Mazjharul Uloom, Banaras, established in 1893.
- • Madrassa Ameenia, Delhi, established in 1897.
- • Darul Uloom, Khalili Nizamia, Tonk, established in 1899.
- • Jamia Arabia Hayatul Uloom, Mubarakpur, Azamgarh, established in 1899.
- • Jamia Ashrafia, Mubarakpur, Azamgarh, 1905.
- • Madrasat-ul Islah, Sarai Mir, Azamgarh, established in 1909.
- • Jamia Darus Salem, Umnabad, established in 1924.

The sudden spurt in the establishment of and support for madrassas after 1857 not only usurped Muslim kingdoms but also epitomized opposite thinking and ways of life. The British at first hardened their attitude towards Muslims and persecuted them. However, gradually, they tried to be neutral in religious matters.[13] Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

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[11]Nanda, *""*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1980, pp (239-240)

[12] Robert W. Hefner, *"Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education"*, Princeton University Press, 2007, pp (54-55)

[13] Arshad Alam, *"Inside a Madrasa: Knowledge, Power and Islamic Identity in India"*, Routledge, London, 2011, pp (22).

Muslim leaders were deeply concerned with ensuring the 'correct' education of their youth. Many of them even favored modern education through the English medium. Anjuman-i-Islam, an education society of Muslims, was established in 1876 in Bombay.[14] Badruddin Tyabji was closely associated with it and encouraged modern education for Muslims. Ameer Ali also worked actively to spread modern education among Muslims in eastern India. Whatever the efforts of such leaders, children of the Muslim masses still mainly went to madrasas. The main reason for this was that most of them did not like the idea of sending their children to missionary-run schools, which were so far the primary vehicles of modern education. [15] Thus, two parallel trends emerged among the Muslims—first, those advocating modern education, and second, those who were making all-out efforts to promote traditional education. There was also a renewed effort to assert separate Islamic culture and values. For the time being, it appears that the number of Muslims favoring traditional education for their children increased with time due to the persistent efforts of ulama and other leaders to bring the Muslims to the fold of orthodoxy.[16]

Modernization in Madrassas' Curricula

Unlike among Hindus, reform movements among Muslims took an entirely different shape. Instead of focusing on enhancing the status of women or promoting education and liberal ideas, these reform movements advocated for the restoration of Islam to its original splendor and the elimination of all accretions, meaning beliefs and practices.

Madrasas' Curriculum in Pakistan: Government Measures

After the creation of Pakistan, there was a significant need for an educational framework at both public and private levels, which is reflected in the history of madrassas.[17] After the creation of Pakistan, there was an urgent need for an educational framework at both public and private levels, as demonstrated by the history of madrassas. Education reforms in Pakistan date back to the period of Ayub Khan's rule (1958-69), with subsequent governments continuing similar initiatives. It is crucial to acknowledge that the 1979 education policy was the first to explicitly advocate for the establishment of religious institutions that would teach modern subjects in addition to religious studies, without delve deeply into the historical context of religious education reforms in Pakistani madrassas. The President of Pakistan established a Madrassa Reform Commission to implement this recommendation. The commission was chaired by the late Dr. Halepota and consisted of prominent educationists and religious scholars from madrassa representative bodies (Wifaqs). In its comprehensive report, the Commission proposed several curriculum changes for religious institutions, some of which were not only welcomed by certain madrassas but also adopted in practice at the time.[18] The Council of Islamic Ideology was among the numerous new Islamic institutions, commissions, and committees that were established during the Zia period. It is a good idea for Madrassas students to connect with mainstream education, as this will help them secure their careers. Therefore, it is suggested that English should be included as a compulsory subject along with other modern subjects, like Economics, Political Science, Psychology, and Law. Madrassa students demonstrate a lack of general knowledge. Subjects such as geography, current history, and general knowledge should be included in the syllabus to help students understand current movements and find solutions to modern problems. The natural sciences' achievements cannot be ignored; to do so would be to oppress future generations. The religious ulama must

[14] Ibid.

[15] Fair, C. C., *"The Madrassa Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan*", United Institute Press, Washington DC., 2008, pp (233-234).

[16] Fair, *The Madrassa Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan,* 2008, pp (234-235)

[17] Ibid.

[18] Andrabi, T., Das, J*., "Religious School Enrollment in Pakistan*", Comparative Education Review, 2006, pp (87-88).

realize that they can no longer overlook the significance of science. Sooner or later, they will have to accept its importance in modern life. As a result, incorporating a general science course into the curriculum is vital. Moreover, there is potential for growth in areas like physical activities, outings, sports, and games. This focus will support students in achieving a balance between their physical and mental abilities. The draft of the Ninth Five-Year Plan includes a dedicated chapter on madrassa education, thoroughly discussing its financial, administrative, and academic aspects, as well as issues related to the awarding of madrassa degrees. Furthermore, the 1998 Education Policy proposed the creation of model madrassas where students would be taught both modern subjects and specialized traditional studies. To implement this proposal, the Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, established a committee in 1998, led by Dr. S. M. Zaman, who later became Chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology. The committee presented its report to the government in early 1999, outlining a detailed framework for a model curriculum. This curriculum was designed collaboratively by Islamic scholars (Ulama) and leading educationists, blending traditional studies with modern challenges. However, the initiative was discontinued after General Pervez Musharraf's government was dismissed in October 1999.[19] In response to the recommendations of the Working Group appointed by the National Security Council under General Musharraf in 1999, the Cabinet decided on March 21, 2001, to establish a model madrassa in Karachi, Sukkur, and Islamabad, with the aim of setting an example for other madrassas across the country. To regulate and oversee these institutions, the "Pakistan Madrassa Education Board" was formed through an ordinance on August 18, 2001. A grant of thirty million rupees was allocated for this initiative, and the Board set up offices in Islamabad and all four provinces. Therefore, the claim that the idea of a model madrassa was driven by external foreign pressure or had any connection to the events of September 11, 2001, is incorrect and does not align with the facts. When prominent Ulema were consulted about the establishment of model madrassas, they raised three key concerns regarding the initiative. First, they emphasized that the independence and autonomy of madrassas must remain intact, with no government officials permitted to interfere in their internal affairs under any circumstances. Second, they asserted that the revision of syllabi and curricula is a specialized task that should be handled exclusively by relevant experts and educators, free from any influence driven by the government's short-term political interests. Third, they argued that private madrassas should not be compelled to affiliate with the proposed madrassa education board. Government officials acknowledged these concerns in principle, provided assurances, and ensured that the subsequent ordinance incorporated all of these observations.[20] On November 3, 2001, the Board finalized the curriculum for the model madrassas and recommended that all Wifaqs (madrassa boards) be invited to affiliate with the Board and implement this curriculum. The proposed curriculum went beyond traditional Islamic studies, incorporating subjects such as English, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Pakistan Studies, and General Sciences at the primary and secondary levels. At the intermediate level, it included Computer Science, Economics, Political Science, Law, and Pakistan Studies. The government hoped that by adopting these reforms, madrassas would enter a new era of educational development.[21] The government also formulated a plan to grant university status to several prominent madrassas, allowing them to conduct examinations and confer degrees. However, while these initiatives were still underway, the events of September significantly altered the landscape. Heightened tension and widespread mistrust regarding various government actions gave rise to

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[19] Bano, M., *"Beyond Politics: The reality of a Deobandi Madrassa in Pakistan*", Journal of Islamic studies, 2007, pp (43-44).

[20] Hussain, *Connecting the Dots: Education and Religious Discrimination in Pakistan,* 2011, pp (77-79)

[21] Malik. J., *"Colonization of Islam: Dissolution of Traditional Institutions in Pakistan"*, Vanguard Books, Lahore, 1989, pp (432).

skepticism and concerns about the true motivations behind these reforms.[22] Despite the concerns raised by madrassas about these proposals, three model madrassas were established in Karachi, Sukkur, and Islamabad under the Model Madrassa Ordinance, with classes beginning in December 2003. Instruction up to the secondary level has already started, and plans are in place to introduce higher secondary classes (11th and 12th grades) in the next academic year. In July 2003, applications for affiliation with the Board were invited through national newspaper advertisements. The application form requests detailed information on various aspects of the institutions. As of May 2004, the Madrassa Board has received 492 applications, with 105 madrassas already granted affiliation. According to the ordinance, all affiliated institutions must offer education at least up to the middle level. The specific details are as follows:[23] The total student enrollment in these 105 affiliated institutions is 24,784, with 4,900 of them pursuing postgraduate (M.A.) studies. No discrimination is made based on sectarian background or orientation in granting affiliation to religious institutions. These affiliated institutions are also allowed to maintain their existing affiliations with their respective boards. However, students must sit for examinations administered by the Pakistan Madrassa Board, and upon successful completion, the Board will award degrees that are recognized nationwide.[24] On June 19, 2002, a draft of the Deeni Madrassa Registration and Regulation Ordinance 2002 was introduced to gather public input and stimulate discussion. The ordinance aimed to encourage religious institutions to voluntarily register with the government. Under its terms, new madrassas could not be established without the prior approval of district authorities, and existing ones were encouraged to register voluntarily. The ordinance sparked controversy, with the government and international agencies advocating for mandatory registration, while religious institutions resisted both compulsory registration and financial audits. These institutions argued that such government involvement would undermine their independence. Historically, religious institutions in the country have been registered under various laws, and there had been an informal restriction on registering new ones for some time. In response to persistent demands from religious groups to lift this ban, the Ministry of Religious Affairs revisited the issue, leading to the government's proposal for a new registration law that would address key concerns and establish a unified legal framework for all institutions. [25] While drafting the proposed law, the authorities faced three unresolved issues that prevented consensus. The first question was whether institutions already registered under previous laws should be required to register again. The government supported this idea, but religious scholars opposed it. The second issue was whether the registration authority would have the power to deny registration, and if so, what would happen to institutions whose registration was refused—would they be shut down? This sensitive matter remained without a satisfactory resolution. The third question concerned how to regulate financial assistance received from foreign donors, whether from individuals, organizations, or governments. There were differing opinions on this as well. Due to these unresolved issues, the finalization of the law was delayed.[26] Some initial progress was made on key elements of the charter, including requirements like a minimum number of students, sources of funding, financial stability, and management structures. However, the process was interrupted midway. More recently, the Ministry of Religious Affairs proposed a plan to upgrade madrassas that meet the necessary criteria of the Higher Education Commission to the status of

[23] Fair, C. C., *"The Madrassa Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan"*, United Institute Press, Washington DC., 2008, pp (143-145).
[24] Nadeem Khan, *Journal of Muslim Societies*, Vol 13, No 2, 2020, pp (145-146).
[25] Malik. J., "*Colonization of Islam: Dissolution of Traditional Institutions in Pakistan*", Vanguard Books, Lahore, 1989, pp (124)
[26] Malik *Colonization of Islam: Dissolution of Traditional Institutions in Pakistan,* 1989, pp (124-125).

private universities.[27] Madrassas raised concerns about incorporating modern sciences into their curriculum, arguing that their funds, collected through public donations for teaching the Qur'an and Hadith, could not be used for other subjects. In response, in April 2002, the government, with the support of the Ministries of Education and Religious Affairs, proposed providing financial aid to madrassas for paying the salaries of teachers in computer science and modern subjects, as well as for purchasing textbooks. It was also agreed that no madrassa would be obligated to accept this financial aid; it would only be available to those who applied for it. Regarding the hiring of teachers for modern subjects, madrassas expressed concerns about ensuring the teachers align with their particular school of thought (Maslak). As a result, it was decided that the government would have no role in teacher appointments, except to ensure that candidates met the necessary professional qualifications. The issue of teacher salaries was also discussed, with an agreement that salaries for modern subject teachers would range between 5,000 to 7,000 rupees ($90-120) per month to avoid a large disparity with religious subject teachers. In this context, the Ministry of Education developed a program worth Rs. 5.759 billion to encourage madrassas to adopt the new curriculum and register with the government's Madrassa Board.

Conclusion

During the Middle Ages in the Islamic world, and later in India, till the Mughal rule lasted, the chief motive for madrasa education was worldly, not spiritual. It was not that those who went in for madrasa education undermined their religion, only that acquiring religion was not their priority. Contemporary ulama and other scholars repeatedly assert that teaching students to earn their livelihood is not one of the goals of madrasa education; it is chiefly, and perhaps solely, to train them to become righteous and devoted Muslims (Momin). Possibly, this was not the case with medieval madrasas, which taught their students to be efficient Qazis, muftis, and administrators. Moreover, this is not the case even now, as the pass-outs of madrasas want to earn a decent living through their laboriously acquired education. So far, at the level of the masses, Hindus and Muslims have been living in harmony, having close contact at the social level. Neither the Muslim nor the Hindu masses cared much for education, as they were too busy making two ends meet. However, if they ever thought of educating their children, while the Muslims sent them to maktabs, Hindus sent them to the government or even missionary schools. Significantly, very few Muslim leaders were, and even now are, bothered about the conditions and educational level of maktabs, the academic institutions integrally associated with mosques, to which most children of poor Muslims go. A minimal number of them pursue further studies in madrasas or common schools. However, the emphasis throughout Muslim thinking and writing has been on madrasas, which give comprehensive Islamic education. Maktabs of today, like those of medieval times, continue to teach memorization of some verses of the Quran, necessary Islamic rituals, and Arabic and Urdu alphabets (Some maktabs in modern times have introduced Urdu, Hindi, and arithmetic, but there is no proper information as to the number of such maktabs and the level of their teaching). With the coming of the British, the situation changed drastically. English schools became an instrument for students to earn a livelihood and status in society. The role of madaris was confined to one of providing religious education. Thus, the madaris, which were the providers of comprehensive overall education, became dini madaris. The duality between the secular or worldly and the religious was firmly established. No one seems to have noticed it, or the leaders of the Muslim community could do nothing about it. However, though their role was confined to religious (dini) education, the madaris, especially those following the Deobandi syllabus, Islamic reform movements of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took the form of revivalism, through which they sought to bring back the 'pure' form of Islam, as it was understood in the times

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[27] Arshad Alam, *'Inside a Madrasa: Knowledge, Power and Islamic Identity in India'*, Routledge Press, London, 2011 pp (7-9).

of the first four pious Khalifas and the Companions of the Prophet. The right Islamic way was conceived as one that follows the shari'a unquestioningly (Taqalid). The ulama, who were until now preoccupied with the feudal lords and the landed gentry of Muslim society, suddenly found themselves deprived of their patronage, as the latter themselves had lost their privileged positions. The ulama, for the first time, turned their attention to the common people for patronage and field of influence. They found that what the Muslim masses were practicing was very different from what they knew the 'true' Islam to be. They at once set about correcting the ways of the masses and teaching them the true religion. They also realized that Islamic education was urgently needed to tell the common people about Islam and, above all, Islamic shari'a. Although the government's measures seemed appealing, they have not yielded the desired outcomes. This is partly due to the global climate following 9/11, which fostered suspicion about the sincerity of these initiatives. Additionally, the lack of coordinated and comprehensive efforts by the government has reinforced the belief that these actions were driven by external pressures and temporary political motivations. As a result, the reform program has failed to bridge the gap between the government and madrassas. Moreover, when preparing the financial aid package for madrassa reforms, the government overlooked the issues of sectarian divisions, their varying capacities, and the specific needs of these institutions, further complicating the implementation of the program. At the operational level, there is significant ambiguity and overlap among various ministries and departments in implementing the reform initiatives. The Ministries of Education, Religious Affairs, and Interior are all involved in madrassa-related activities, along with autonomous organizations like the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD). Law enforcement agencies also have interactions with madrassas. However, there is no central agency to coordinate these efforts, define their authority, and ensure smooth implementation of reforms. There is confusion, particularly regarding the roles of the Ministries of Education and Religious Affairs in registration and curriculum matters. The provincial Auqaf department, responsible for registering mosques and madrassas, seems unaware of ongoing efforts. Unless the coordination issues are addressed and madrassa representatives are fully consulted in the reform process, meaningful change is unlikely.

Recommendations

For future researchers and scholars in the 21st century, a deeper exploration into the socio-economic dimensions of madrasa education is recommended. The existing research indicates a significant shift in the objectives of madrasas over time, from institutions providing a broad, practical education for various roles in society to centers focused primarily on religious instruction. Further studies could examine how this transformation has affected the socio-economic mobility of madrasa graduates, particularly in comparison to those educated in secular or alternative religious institutions. Additionally, there is a need to investigate the structural and administrative challenges that impede effective reforms in madrasa education. As current reform efforts are hindered by a lack of coordination among governmental bodies and ambiguity in policy implementation, research could focus on developing a cohesive framework that integrates the perspectives of madrasa authorities and aligns with broader educational objectives. Such studies would be instrumental in understanding how these institutions can evolve to meet contemporary educational needs while maintaining their religious and cultural significance.

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