



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Madrassah Education System: Evolution and Contemporary Challenges**

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Received:</b> October 08, 2021</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> January 16, 2022</p> <p><b>Online:</b> January 21, 2022</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Evolution, Extremism, Jihad, Madrassah Education, Sectarianism</p> <p><b>*Corresponding Author:</b> sumerazafar84@gmail.com</p>	<p>Madrassah education system holds special place in the Pakistani society as it is associated with the religious education. This system of education runs parallel to the other systems of education. The origin of madrassahs can be traced back to the early times of Islam when mosques served as the learning centers for the Muslim community. The madrassahs in Pakistan received criticism after the incident of 9/11. The world community criticized madrassahs for their involvement in militant activities which, according to the dominant perception, becomes the major cause of terrorism. After 9/11 Pakistan started reform process of madrassahs and revision of their curriculum. This article is based on the qualitative research which traced back the historical evolution of the madrassah education system and finds that the curriculum needs to be revised and updated according to the modern trends.</p>

**Introduction**

Pakistan has become a victim of sectarianism, radicalism, extremism and violence. This is the major cause of terrorism which became the most concerning issue for Pakistan as well as for international community. The issue of terrorism is directly linked to the sectarianism which worsens the existing situation in Pakistan. The division of population according to the sectarian beliefs is very sharp in Pakistan which is basically a Sunni dominated country. Only 20% of the population belongs to the Shia sect while Sunni community comprised of the 75-80% of the total population. The Sunni community has different strands and is divided into different sub-sects. This division which is based on different sectarian beliefs is the root cause of radicalism and intolerance in the society. The international community links this extremism with the Madrassah education system. They are of the view that madrassah education system is teaching the students those hard sectarian beliefs and hence deepening the root cause of extremism and ultimately exploit those young minds to their own benefits.

In Pakistan there are different education system which run parallel in the society. They are providing different kinds of education and their targeted communities are also very different. Those education systems are as follows:

- Government Schools
- Private education system
- Islamic education system/ Madrassah education system

Madrassah education system is not a new one in the society. Its origin can be traced back to the times of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH). Madrassahs are Islamic schools which impart religious education to the people who can serve as the Islamic scholars and perform duties in the society. The meaning of the word Madrassah is the 'learning center'. It is a common practice in the madrassah education system that students are being provided education with free boarding and lodging. This makes madrassahs the schools for the poor. The division on the basis of the class system also breeds extremist tendencies in the young minds (Ahmed, 2009).

The madrassah education system operates on the basis of the sects. There are different wafaqs which are based on the respective sect and operates madrassahs of the respective sect. These sects are Shia, Sunni, Ahl e Hadith, Barelvi, Salfi. The administrative body of each sect manages the madrassahs associated with that sect and develops the curricular content. This creates difference of content taught in madrassahs of different sects. Madrassahs teach content which conforms to their values and beliefs which highlights the sectarian divide in the society (Begum, 2014).

The curricular content of the madrassahs has become the major concern for the international community. After 9/11 the world believes that the curriculum of the madrassahs is the cause of sectarianism and violence in the society. The curriculum acts as a tool in the hands of the administrative bodies which can be used to inculcate the beliefs of the respective sect. The international community believes that the themes of the madrassah curriculum, such as Jihad, are the cause of terrorism, radicalism and extremism. It is also a general perception that madrassah education system is inculcating hatred against West in the minds of the students which, after becoming the part of the mainstream system, also transfers that hatred and negative mindset against the West (Begum, 2014).

The international community perceives the madrassahs as the safe havens for the terrorists. The division of Pakistani society on the basis of the sect is very prominent and so is the case of the Ulemas, madrassahs and the curriculum being taught in these Islamic schools. After 9/11 there is an immediate change in the perception against madrassahs. The West perceives madrassahs as the centers which are not fulfilling their aim of religious education rather they are deepening the sectarian divide and inculcating hatred against West. These madrassahs are producing terrorists which set the world in chaos. Madrassahs, according to the West, are not developing positive values in the society, they are developing rigid version of Islam which is the cause of radicalism, terrorism and extremism in the society (Stern, 1999).

In Pakistan the sectarian conflict took its worst form in the 1980s and 1990s. This was the time when the state used islamization as its policy to achieve strategic interests. The use of Islam as a tool to achieve state's goals deepens the sectarian divide. The Jihadi groups got associated with the political parties and established their madrassahs which changed the madrassahs into militant training centers (Ramzan & Rabab, 2013). Madrassahs which were involved in the militant training also used concept of Jihad to further their aims. The political use of jihad started during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The focus of USA

and world powers was the failure of Soviet Union in Afghanistan. USA, in order to achieve this objective, supported the ideology of Jihad and funded the madrassahs to establish their militant wings in order to serve as training centers. At that time the radicalization and extremist ideologies of madrassahs were ignored by the Pakistani State, USA and other allied powers. This became the major cause for the strengthening of militant madrassahs which spread extremism and terrorism in the world (Ahmed, 2009).

The perception against madrassahs changed after the incident of 9/11. The major super powers waged the war against terrorism and madrassahs became the focus during this war. The world powers criticized madrassahs for the curriculum that it breeds extremism and radicalism in the society. The reform process started by the Pakistani government. During the President Musharraf era the slogans of 'enlig'tened moderation' and reformation' were used to show the world the new face of the country. The Pakistani government took a major shift in its policy regarding madrassahs. Pakistan withdrew its support for the madrassahs and started reforming the madrassah curriculum. On the international level the major super powers started criticizing Pakistan for breeding Taliban and militant madrassahs on its land. On the other front media houses, independent of government's control, emerged in Pakistan. The Pakistani media also campaigned negatively against madrassahs and criticized the curriculum and the published literature. Although few madrassahs are involved in the militant activities but the media criticized all religious institutions. Many media projects such as dramas and films show the negative image madrassahs and criticized their curriculum and published literature (Ahmad, 2002)

The major accusation levelled by the international community is that the madrassah curriculum and teaching content is spreading extremism. Pakistan took a major shift in the policy and registration was made compulsory for the madrassahs. The curriculum underwent revision and the main aim was to omit and exclude those parts of the curriculum which were considered the cause for spreading hatred, extremism and religious conflicts. In the reform process the content about the concept of Jihad was also modified (Bano, 2010).

### **Historical Development of Madrassah**

When a religion becomes complex, it has to adapt to changing circumstances. Society at this point needs theological experts and well-educated scholars to clarify, describe, and explain to people the religious concepts. The religious schools have different names in different religions. In Christianity they are known as seminaries and Muslims address them as Madrassahs. These schools fulfill the requirement for the development of religious scholars (Puri, 2010).

Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2017 defined Madrassah as:

“Muslim School, College or University that is often part of a mosque”

Madrassah can also be defined as:

“Traditionally Madrassahs are Islamic learning institutions aimed at building a generation of Islamic scholars and leaders.” (Ahmed, 2009)

In the Subcontinent madrasah is a religious institution that imparts education about Quran, Hadith, jurisprudence and law. The madrasahs are religious institutes that teaches Islamic curricula (Ahmed, 2009).

In the premature times of Muslim history there were no proper institutions for education. The Ulema used either Mosques or their homes to gather students in order to impart education. Hence Mosques served as the primary centers of learning for Muslims. The students tried to memorize their teacher's lessons as books and papers were scarce in those times. Teachers taught students to understand each word of a book so they could replicate it based on their experiences if it was lost (Blanchard, 2008), (Ahmed, 2009).

The Abbasid Caliph Haroon ur Rashid created 'Baitul Hikmat' to conduct research. It also translated Greek and Indian philosophies for higher learning (Powell, 2014).

The Fatimid Caliphate established Al-Azhar University in Cairo in 972 C.E. Its major objective was to educate missionaries to spread the teachings of Ismaili. In order to combat this move and to protect orthodoxy, Nizam ul Mulk Tusi of the Seljuq Dynasty founded Madrasah Nizamia in Baghdad. This was the first proper religious institution which worked with defined curricula. There were two kinds of curriculum.

- Maqool (reason, rationale): this illustrated case law and reason. It created qazis, muftis and mohtasibs who became officials of the nation.
- Manqool was the second form of curriculum. It emphasized the study of Holy Quran and the practices of Holy Prophet (PBUH). Students who completed this education became Imams, orators and muazzins.

Generally these madaris were either created or sponsored by the rulers and aristocracy (Blanchard, 2008). In 1866 Deoband madrasahs Darul Uloom were founded in India. The founders followed the modern teaching method, such as yearly exams, awards and holding ceremonies. In the Deoband madrasahs education was divided into various departments. The most relevant agency was Darul Ifta of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. They addressed Muslim community on various social, political and economic questions. In the curriculum of Deoband madrasahs there were no philosophies or any subject relevant to social sciences. Education was also divided into various departments. Darul Ifta of the Ministry of Legal Affairs was the most relevant agency. They addressed Muslim community questions on various social, political, and economic questions and released the compilation of these Fatwas for the public knowledge. Initially in these madrasahs students were encouraged to opt different careers, such as, carpentry, pottery and weaving but later on professors and students opposed this on the basis that certain abilities were below the integrity of a religious scholar. The relevance of madrasahs as purely religious institutes increased after the introduction of modern education system. This difference splits the education system into two forms of education. The madrasahs impart religious education and mostly considered to be orthodox and conservatory while modern teaching system is considered to be enlightened and progressive (Taylor, 2012).

### **Evolution of Madrasah in Subcontinent**

The historical and social conditions of this region greatly impacted the growth of madrasahs and also determines their role. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century the emergence of Islamic educational institutions in the Subcontinent is an important phenomenon in the field

of education and history in this part of the world. During Muslim rule especially Mughals, madrassah education system spread widely in the Subcontinent. Mughal ruler Akbar introduced major changes in the content of madrassah education. These changes were introduced to gain political advantages. It is evident that madrassah education system earned respect during Mughal Empire and Ulemas became the part of the state to ensure the implementation of their religious interpretations and to play the role of nation's guide (Ramzan & Rabab, 2013).

After establishing control on major part of the Subcontinent, the British, changed the entire educational system prevalent in the Subcontinent. English was made compulsory not only to acquire education but also to get the government jobs. This major change in the educational system was rejected by Muslims as they perceived it as the steps taken by the British to eliminate Muslim identity. These steps against the religious education impacted the structure, function and curriculum of the religious institutes (Ahmed, 2009). To preserve the Muslim culture, and their identity a section of Muslim intellectuals established schools based on Islamic educational traditions. Later, these schools played important role and had long lasting impact on Muslims during the British rule as well as after independence (Ramzan & Rabab, 2013).

In the Subcontinent before Mughal dynasty the rulers, like Qutb ud Din Aybak and others, established religious institutions. Students like Nizamuddin Auliya and Moinuddin Chishti became famous teachers. They founded religious communities and run their respective madrassahs (Taylor, 2012).

In India Islamic schools and madrassahs comprised of traditional madrassahs and maktabas which are known for higher learning. In these schools they taught Greek, traditions of Persia and Near East. They also taught grammar, philosophy, and mathematics. In Delhi during 18<sup>th</sup> century, Madrassah Rahimiyya under the guidance of Shah Waliullah was one of the schools in India which focused on both types of education. This madrassah was also famous for its teaching of Hadith. It opted for Persian language as a medium of instruction. In this school they taught grammar, philosophy, logic, astronomy and mathematics and mysticism books. The prominent aspect of this school was its introduction of six collections of hadith known as sahih sitta. In Lucknow Mullah Nizamuddin Sahlawi started Dars-i-Nizami which focused on conventional as well as modern study (Policy, USAID. 2011), (Ramzan & Rabab, 2013).

Earlier the education in the madrassahs was focused to fulfill the two major objectives. These were:

- To educate people to get state employment
- To prepare future religious scholars (Ulema) who can uphold the Islamic culture and traditions.

In the early phase of its evolution, ten subjects were included in the madrassah education which were imparted through seventeen books. Study of Quran and Persian language were introduced to the students. At the advanced level students were taught Arabic literature, Sarf and Nahaw, Quranic Tafseer, Fiqh and Usul-e-Fiqh, Mantiq, Kalam, Tasawwuf, etc. with the passage of time more books and new subjects were introduced to the

curriculum of Madrasah education system. These subjects include Balaghat, Mathematics, Astronomy, Philosophy and medical science. Mullah Nizamuddin Sehavi of Madrasah Firangi Mahal Lucknow laid the foundations of modern madrasah curriculum by devising Dars e Nizami curriculum.

The focus of Dars e Nizami on both religious and contemporary subjects made it the most popular and aimed curriculum in the Sub-continent in that era (Ramzan & Rabab, 2013).

Madrasahs in the Subcontinent consisted on different types according to the content offered at that level. The three important levels of madrasahs are as follows:

- At ibtedai level students used to learn and memorize the Quran
- At Vustani level students were taught few books of Nizami curriculum
- At Fauqani level complete course of Dars e Nizami was implemented.
- At that time some madrasahs also taught specialized subjects which were tafsir, hadith and fiqh. Competent scholars were the part of this scheme of study.

The curriculum which was used in the madrasahs of Subcontinent underwent many stages and reform processes in order to provide refined system of education. The weakening of the Muslim rulers in the Subcontinent also weakened the hold of Islam in people's lives. The weak socio-economic and lost political control of Muslims as a nation, dispersed many Ulemas and they started focusing only on religious teachings. Many Ulemas abandoned the teaching of modern subjects in order to preserve true Islamic teachings to counter the increasing influence of British in the Subcontinent (Ramzan & Rabab, 2013).

### **Madrasah in the British Rule**

When British got control of the country they changed the entire system of education. They introduced the secular education in the country and they declared English as the medium of instructions instead of Persian. Lord Macaulay introduced such system of education which fulfilled the interests of the British. This attitude of British rulers gave serious blows to the traditional education system of Madrasahs. They boycotted the new education system and as a result Muslim community lagged behind the other communities. They were unable to compete the Hindus and to maintain their separate identity. Witnessing these circumstances Muslim Ulemas and leaders felt the need to reorganize their educational system (Ramzan & Rabab, 2013).

In order to cater the needs of the Muslims, Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautvi established the institution known as Darul Uloom in Deoband. This institution was established to fulfill the following objectives:

- To impart the knowledge of Quran, Hadith, Tafseer and Belief
- Teaching of other useful sciences
- To equip students with complete religious knowledge and understanding and nurturing Islamic morals.

- To defend and propagate Islam through all means
- To keep the institution away from Government influence
- To provide freedom of knowledge and thought.
- To establish madrassahs in other parts of the country to spread Islamic spirits.

Darul Uloom provided knowledge in Arabic; Persian, Quranic memorization; theology; calligraphy; medicine; handicrafts, like leather work; research in the Quran; dar al-ifta, and tabligh. Subjects like grammar, etymology, syntax, rhetoric, Arabic, literature, history, strah, munazarah, logic, philosophy, arithmetic, astronomy, tib, kalam, fiqh, usul-i Fiqh, farai'd, Hadith, Usul-i Hadith, Tafsir and Usul-i Tafseer were part of the syllabus which was partly based on Dars-i-Nizami. The important thing was they improved the syllabus of Dars e Nizami and added more books in different subjects. This madrassah achieved its objectives successfully and produced many scholars (Ramzan & Rabab, 2013).

As the conflict on the syllabus and language grew among the authorities of the madrassah, in 1982 the section of Ulema led by Qari Muhammad Tayyeb established another institution which was Darul Uloom Deoband. During this time the old traditional madrassahs were almost non-existent. The establishment of this type of institute was a valuable contribution towards the preservice of Muslim culture as well as teachings of Islam. This madrassah excluded teaching of English language which became a major hurdle in the progress of the students and scholars.

At this point Sir Syed Ahmad Khan stepped forward and emphasized that in order to save Muslim identity and to compete with other communities, the knowledge of English language is essential. He established Madrassah tul Uloom at Aligarh. This was based on new educational system but with partial amendments. With the passage of time first it was changed into Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College and then upgraded to Aligarh Muslim University (Ramzan & Rabab, 2013).

At this stage two opposing strands existed in the field of education among Muslims; one was the conservative strand of Deoband and the other was liberal approach of Aligarh. In reaction to both of them Nadwa tul Ulema was established. This was the result of conferences held at Lucknow and attended by many renowned scholars and Ulemas of the Subcontinent. Maulana Shibli was the most active member of these conferences. He criticized the old curriculum and emphasized the need to reform and upgrade the curriculum according to the needs of the times. The official organization was held at Lucknow on November 2, 1982. The objectives of Nadwa was the reformation and improvement of the nisab and Arabic method of education. Nadwa aimed at producing highest level of scholars to serve the Islam (Ramzan & Rabab, 2013).

### **Madrassah Education System after Independence**

Pakistan's educational system is complex and not homogenized. Parallel education systems exist in Pakistan. The three notable education system in Pakistan are;

- Government Schools

- Private Schools
- Deeni madrassahs

All three strands of education are different in their nature, characteristics and most importantly curriculum. Government schools mostly educate children of poor families who cannot afford expensive education in private schools. The government schools provide education at minimal fee and the stationary is also free of cost. This is very helpful to the lower middle classes who cannot afford expensive books and other expenditures of the private educational institutions. The standard of education of government schools in Pakistan is not up to the mark (Ahmad, 2002).

The private schools exist in Pakistan provide expensive education. Their syllabus and their fee structure are not affordable to the lower classes.

Madrassah education system provided cheaper religious education. Poor families prefer madrassah education because its free of cost. These madrassahs also provide boarding and lodging to the students who belonged to the distant areas (Dogar, 2010).

After independence in 1947 mushroom growth of madrassahs was observed. As the madrassahs provided cheaper mode of education their demand increased. The state and masses started to sponsor madrassah education system. The muslim majority areas became part of Pakistan. In these areas many madrassahs already existed and their faculty became attracted towards the established lines of Deoband. After partition many renowned Ulemas migrated from India and in Pakistan they established madrassahs. Some prominent examples included Jamia Ashrafia by Mufti Muhammad Hassan; Dar-ul-Aloom Malir by Mufti Muhammad Shafi, Dar-ul-Aloom Islamia Banori Town by Maulana Muhammad Yousaf Banori, Jamia Khair-ul Madaris in Multan by Moulana Khair Muhammad Jalandhri and Jamia Arbia in Gujranwala by Moulana Muhammad Chirag. These Ulemas were qualified from Deoband therefore they led these madrassahs with the same system and followed the same curriculum in their respective institutions (Rauf & Raza, 2015).

The madrassah system existed parallel to the formal education system of Pakistan. The number of madrassahs increased during the Zia ul Haq period as he supported the growth of religious institutions. After the partition of the Subcontinent there were 245 madrassahs in the areas known as Pakistan, which increased upto 10,000 in 2002 and 40,000 in 2008. General Zia ul Haq encouraged the growth of madrassahs for political reasons. The militant tendency in the madrassahs was not newly introduced during the Zia regime, it was originated from the ideals which were followed by the Ulemas against the British rulers in the Subcontinent. The madrassahs, in the colonial era, were so involved in the political matters that they continued their practices even after partition (Rauf & Raza, 2015).

Historically Pakistani madrassahs were founded to impart religious education and to produce scholars and Ulemas for the next generation. Lower classes choose madrassahs as they provide free education, boarding and lodging and also give stipend to the students to help their families (Ahmad, 2002).

### **Contemporary System of Madrassah Education**

The madrassah system of education prevalent in Pakistan was developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the madrassahs established in Pakistan followed Dars e Nizami syllabus. The curriculum of the madrassah education consisted of logic, philosophy, rhetoric, dialectic reasoning, mathematics, traditional medicine, and grammar and literature of Persian and Arabic languages. In these madrassahs they taught Quran at the initial level and at the advance level the complete curriculum drawn from the syllabus of Dars e Nizami, was taught (Coulson, 2004). The basic foundations of madrassah curriculum are;

- The recitation of Quran in its original language i-e Arabic
- The knowledge of hadith and Sunnah

Historically the madrassahs were perceived as the training institutes for the individuals who can play as the leaders in Islamic world. Law and Fiqah were emphasized in the curriculum. Madrassahs are also perceived as the institutes for poor and needy people. The poor and lower class families prefer madrassah education for two important reasons;

- Madrassah education is cheaper as compared to government and private modes of education. Most of the madrassahs provide stipend to the needy and poor students in order to support their families. They also provide students with food, shelter and clothing free of cost. This is the big reason for poor families to prefer madrassah education for their children (Azam, 2014).
- For poor families the self-satisfaction of providing religious education is the major attraction towards madrassah education. In Pakistan religion is a sensitive issue. People perceive it their duty to give basic religious education to their children. For this reason they send their children to madrassahs which provide free education. By this parents fulfill their religious as well as educational duties towards the children.

The Pakistani society is divided into different sects so is the religious education. The madrassahs in Pakistan are governed by different boards which are based on sects and they promote the ideology of their respective sect. they represent the five dominant school of thoughts in the country (Bano, 2010). There are 5 Wafaqs or Boards based on different schools (Fiqhs) and manage their madrassahs according to the respective sects. The major functions of the Wafaqs are to monitor the registration of the students in the given wafaq and the coordination of all the madrassahs registered with that Wafaq. Their function also include the development of standardized curriculum to be followed by all the registered madrassahs with that board, to conduct examinations at senior levels within the madrassahs. These boards are semi-autonomous bodies and their working is analyzed by the ministries of Education and Religious Affairs (Azam, 2014) (Ramzan & Rabab, 2013).

All the five Wafaqs are the member of Ittehad Tanzeemat Madaaris Deenia (ITMD) which is the governing body of madrassahs in Pakistan. It was established in 2003. After teaching the prescribed syllabus, the wafaqs conduct examination and evaluate students in order to assess their capabilities and provide them certificates. The levels of religious education are similar to those of formal education (Azam, 2014). Following are the academic levels of madrassah education:

- Abtadaya/Amma is the primary level of education.

- Khasa is the secondary level of education.
- Aliya is the Bachelor's degree.
- And Almiya is the master's degree.

Madrassah education system is devised in such a manner that it provides all four levels of education within the same institution (Bano, 2010).

### **Challenges to the Madrassah Education System**

Madrassahs in Pakistan became the focus of attention after the tragic incident of 9/11. After the attack on Twin Towers the world linked these educational institutions with religious militancy and radicalism. This portrayed the madrassahs as the factories for the production of militants and extremists. Extensive research was done on every aspect of madrassahs and many flaws were pinpointed in the madrassah education system (Riaz, 2005). Some of the challenges madrassah education system faced are as follows:

#### **Financial Issues**

Madrassahs, as an educational institutions, are based on doctrines of self-help. They rely on different sources to meet their requirements. The madrassah authorities rely on the elites of the society to provide funds for the institution. They launch regular appeals for funds in different magazines or through pamphlets and other sources available to them. The state also acts as a financial agent to some madrassahs. In return to funds the state used those madrassahs for its own purposes by providing them financial assistance. Due to financial control the state used to propagate its own version on different matters and influence the public opinion through Ulemas (Talvani, 1996).

Madrassahs also function as welfare organizations. The Madrassahs consider themselves as NGOs, doing whatever they can to help the poor people and to eliminate poverty. Indeed, religious leaders and organizations are also more reliable than government officials in delivering social services. Philanthropists see Madrassahs as worthy organizations to use their contributions efficiently. In the past few years, the tendency has been seen to show that large Madrassahs invest in real estate, education, and other profitable business projects (Khattak, 2012).

#### **Language Issues**

The medium of instruction in the madrassah education system is generally Urdu or Arabic. In madrassah education the focus is on the learning of Quran and Hadith and the Arabic language is preferred. The curriculum of the madrassah education system is devised in such a manner that no attention is paid to the teaching of modern language and contemporary subjects. The modern language and the modern education was ignored. Madrassah schools provide assistance in religious education only and the modern trends in education and curriculum were ignored. Due to this the students of madrassahs were unable to compete the world after completion of their studies. They were unable to secure good jobs and as a result they ended up as a burden on the economy (Ramzan & Rabab, 2013).

#### **Outdated Curriculum**

The curriculum which was used before the reforms, was outdated. The curriculum was only focused on religious subjects. The modern subjects like computer, modern sciences, importance of technology and other contemporary subjects were ignored completely. The Ulemas agreed on the change in the syllabus but they were not ready to introduce modern and technological subjects. Most madrassahs do not teach their students the basic skills of language, math, science and even critical thinking that all young people should acquire in school. This was a major setback to the madrassah educational system. The Ulemas were in the opinion that these modern subjects prepare students only for this worldly life. The subjects are materialistic in nature. This approach hinders the madrassah education system to prosper (Shahab, 2014).

### **Sectarian Trends in Madrassah Education System**

Pakistan is established on the name of religion but after establishment the society became divided into different segments according to the religion. The ideological and sectarian divide is very rigid in Pakistani society. Different sects are operating in the society. There are three major sects in Pakistan which are Sunni, Shia and Wahabi. The Sunnis are further divided into sub-sects which are Ahl e Hadith, Barelvis and Deobandis. Shia and Wahabi sects are also subdivided into different sub-sects. All these sects are running their own madrassahs. They are imparting education according to their beliefs. They are not considering true teachings of Islam which prohibits Muslims to be divided on the basis of sects. Therefore it is clear that madrassahs are not imparting true Islamic teachings and are not playing their role in educating the society. Islam teaches uniformity and brotherhood. On the other hand madrassahs strengthen sectarian beliefs and support sectarianism (Begum, 2014). Some madrassahs are spreading violence and intolerance under the cover of religious education. They are spreading extremism among students. Most of the madrassahs follows curriculum which is according to their sectarian belief. They are rigid in their beliefs to such an extent that they consider their version of Islam and Sunnah as true even the slightest difference is considered false. This religious divide is so intense that the country faced major sectarian clashes throughout the 90's decade. The violent sectarian clashes started in the mid 1980's when militant madrassahs of Deobandi sect started targeting Shia community. The country witnessed these sectarian clashes during the period from 1990-1999 (Shahab, 2014).

### **Madrassah Education System and The Ideology of Jihad**

The concept of Jihad is very important in Islam. Jihad provides the basis for the Islamic state to expand and strengthen itself. Jihad can be defined as:

“A struggle or fight against the enemies of Islam” (Wikipedia)

According to Britannica, Jihad is the human struggle to promote right and to prevent the wrong (Britannica).

Islamic concept of Jihad is based on the teachings of Quran and Hadith. After the establishment of Pakistan, political parties and different stakeholders used Jihad as a political tool to further their own interests and to propagate their own political agendas. Madrassah education system was used to fulfill political motives. After the completion of the religious education, Ulemas or Maulvis go back to their native areas and started training

students according to their ideologies. Students, teachers and Ulema also go on trips to different areas to encourage parents to send their children to madrassahs. They also persuade people to participate in religious causes. They also attempted to recruit students for militant activities. The madrassah schools are nurturing young minds with the ideology of intolerance, hatred and violence (Coulson, 2004).

In Pakistan, some madrassahs teach their students rigid version of Islam. The students are trained in such a manner that they develop extremist mindset. The students in militant madrassahs are trained in such a manner that they target all those who do not conform to their version of Islamic ideology. These madrassahs create an environment in which students have no contact with the outside world. Most of the madrassahs which are involved in militant activities they follow closed system where students have no contact with the outside world. Madrassahs provide food, shelter and clothing and in return they control student's activities. They develop extremist ideologies in the young minds. To propagate their ideology and rigid versions they used Friday sermons and published literature of the madrassahs and in some cases interpretation of curriculum is used to serve the purpose. Through these means they propagate their political ideologies. The madrassah instructors built up their argument by highlighting the situations of Palestine, Afghanistan and Kashmir. They also used deteriorating condition of Muslims all over the world to further instigate extremist ideologies in the students' mind. The American involvement and hatred against America and the West is the base of this mindset. In these circumstances some madrassahs used Islamic concept of Jihad in order to further their political agendas. Some of the madrassahs educated and trained Taliban leaders who became active in Afghanistan. Madrassahs are not only involved in the national politics, but they played their role in international and regional politics also. Madrassahs trained people to fight in Kashmir, Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan and other regions also (Coulson, 2004).

The Islamic Religious Schools were active in regional politics before 9/11 attack. Madrassahs were involved in the Kashmir movement and call it Jihad. They viewed their involvement in Kashmir cause as Jihad against Indian occupation of a Muslim territory against their will. Similarly they launched Jihad in Afghanistan against Soviet Union. But here notable point is that in both these scenarios Jihad and involvement of Madrassahs in Kashmir and Afghanistan were treated as a policy by Pakistan (Azam, 2014) (Stern, 1999).

During Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan openly allied with US and supported Afghan Jihad (Azam, 2014). At this stage, state used madrassahs to attain its political goals. During this time internal political situations underwent many changes. The military established its control in the country and General Zia Ul Haq took over the charge in 1977. To strengthen and to legitimize his un-constitutional rule Zia used the three main interest groups which were the establishment, the religious class and the business class. This politicized the religious class in the country which adversely affected the madrassah education system. General Zia ul Haq took many steps to implement his Islamization policy. He also supported madrassah involvement in the militant activities under the banner of Jihad and pan Islamization. All these policies added to the rapid increase in the number of madrassahs in the country and their involvement in militant activities. There was a mushroom growth of madrassah education centers during 1980s. The madrassahs which were established during Zia period promoted the culture of violence, extremism, hatred and militancy. The religious and ideological training that takes place in many of them also plays a crucial role in expanding the networks of religious extremists in Pakistan (Azam, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

Madrassah as an educational institution is an important part of the society. As an institution its history can be traced back to many years back. It plays vital role in serving the society in the Subcontinent. With the passage of time there is a change in the role and purpose of the madrassah education, but in every aspect it serves as a vital player in the society. Although it failed to adapt itself with the needs of the time it still enjoys relevance and plays major role in educational affairs. Therefore to make madrassah an effective institution the detailed plan of reforms is the need of the hour to acquaint this educational institution with the modern trends so that the maximum benefit can be achieved.

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