Militancy and Madrasa System of Education in India: A Critique to Yoginder Sikand

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MILITANCY AND MADRASA SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN INDIA: A CRITIQUE TO YOGINDER SIKAND

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Abstract: In media as well as in some research studies the propaganda of militancy enterer to be flourished by the madrasah system of education was so strong that the common readers of India were found to be confused. Yoginder Sikand, an influential writer in his famous book Bastion of the Believers Madrasas and Islamic Education in India, provided information about the myth and clarified the confusions over the issue. He found the Indian madrasas a nursery of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect that has been propagated by the Indian madrasah system of education. This paper evaluates Yoginder Sikand research work and substantiate with arguments in his favour.

Keywords: Yoginder Sikand; Militancy; Religious Seminaries; Education in India; Madrasah Education.

PERSONAL ACCOUNT

In recent years Yoginder Singh Sikand has rapidly moved to the front rank of the coming generation of Scholars of the Muslim world. He was born in 1967, and an Indian writer and professor who has published several works on Islam-related issues in India. He received his B.A. (Hons.) degree in economics from the University of Delhi's St. Stephen's College in 1985-88, as well as an M.A. in sociology in 1990-92 and an M.Phil. in sociology in 1992-94 from Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. Following that, he was completed his Ph.D. in history from Royal Holloway College, University of London, in 1995-98. He finished his post-doctoral work at the International Institute for

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the Study of Islam in the Modern World in Leiden, the Netherlands, on an *Islamic Perspective on Inter-Faith Relations in Contemporary India* in 2002-2004.

Sikand was a reader in the Department of Islamic Studies at Hamdard University in New Delhi and then he was appointed as a professor at the Centre for Jawaharlal Nehru Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi. He has written several articles on Islam and Muslims in contemporary India and has published *The Origins and Development of the Tablighi Jam'aat 1920–2000: A Cross-Country Comparative Study* (2002), *Sacred Spaces: Exploring Traditions of Shared Faith in India* (Penguin, 2003) and *Muslims in India Since 1947: Islamic Perspectives on Inter-Faith Relations* (Routledge Curzon, 2004), *Islam, Caste, and Dalit-Muslim Relations in India* (2004).[1] In addition to these academic contributions, Sikand also writes frequently for the press, publishes a web magazine, *Qalandār*, which has a specific inter-faith agenda, and maintain his own email circulation list. Which offers some fresh piece of research, or some comment, on aspects of contemporary Indian Islam almost every day. There is already a worldwide community of scholars which holds Yoginder Sikand in high esteem.

Yoginder Sikand is motivated by a powerful desire to bring great harmony to India and, by extension, the rest of the world. He has sought to use the outcomes of scholarly research to establish new levels of understanding about Muslim issues and thereby improve the quality of national and international discourse about them. This has of course meant that he has been increasingly concerned to do what many of the best scholars do, which is to liberate his learning from the narrow confines of scholarly publication, make it accessible to the general public, and make it work in the world. His one concern, following the spiritual traditions of the great faiths of South Asia, has been to be in the best possible position to enable his knowledge to create a better world for its people.[2]

In the Indian Subcontinent, madrasahs have a negative image. The madrasahs are frequently portrayed as hotbeds of terrorism and breeding grounds for hardline fundamentalists by mainstream media in the West and the Indian subcontinent.

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[1]   Find more here; https://peoplepill.com/people/yoginder-sikand
[2]   Sikand, Yoginder. Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India, Penguin Books India, 2005, p. ix-x.

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Although academics and intellectuals are not as critical of madrasahs, they are characterized by a general lack of in-depth investigation and analysis.

ENHANCING THE LITERACY

The madrasa system of education, independent of any government funding, has been increasing the literacy rate of the country based on public donation they receive from Muslim community. When I conducted an interview about the issue with Professor Mirza Asmar Baig,[1] former Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Aligarh Muslim University, and Professor M. Saud Alam Qasmi,[2] former Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the same university, both scholars expressed a clear and positive perspective on the role of madrasas. Professor Baig remarked, "Obviously, a madrasa is an educational institution whose primary purpose is religious education. In that regard, madrasas are playing a very important role." He further emphasized that the majority of madrasa students come from extremely poor backgrounds. "Without madrasas," he explained, "these children—who often struggle to afford even basic necessities like food—would likely never have seen the inside of a school, as most schools require fees their families simply cannot pay. In this context, madrasas are making a significant contribution by at least ensuring that these underprivileged students receive some form of education." Education of any kind is basically education for our convenience we have divided into education which is religious, or which is about other subjects. Education of religion is being done in higher universities also. We have the department of theology for example. So, that is giving religious education.

Professor Asmar stated that students attending madrasas are predominantly Muslims, although many madrasas also have non-Muslim students. The madrasa system operates primarily through donations from the community, with most contributions coming from Muslims. The Sachar Committee Report was the first official government commission to study madrasa education in the country. While many individuals have written books on the subject, government commissions are generally

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[1]   Interviewed with Mirza Asmar Baig conducted on 1st November 2022, in the Dean Office of Faculty of Social Science, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

[2]   Interviewed conducted on 2nd November 2022, in the Dean office with Professor M. Saud Alam Qasmi.

considered more authoritative. The report acknowledges the important role that madrasas play in providing education to the Muslim population in India.

Professor Qasmi highlighted the critical role of maktabs and madrasas in remote regions of the country where formal educational institutions are often absent. He cited the state of Kerala as an example, where mosques in local communities provide foundational education to children in the regional language. Following this initial instruction, students are then enrolled in either madrasas or mainstream schools. These madrasas operate without government funding and contribute significantly to the promotion of literacy across the country. A noteworthy observation made by Professor Qasmi was the involvement of Hindu teachers in madrasas, particularly in teaching subjects such as Hindi, English, and Mathematics. Qasmi shared his personal experience. He was taught mathematics by a Brahman teacher in the madrasa, who is still teaching in his birth place.

He emphasized the need of madrasa for the Muslim youth since modern education does not instruct the religious needs of the students. He supported the stand taken by Maulana Sayyid Ashraf Madani in the public program of all India Rabitah al-Madaris al-Islamia at Deoband, held on 30th October 2022, attended by more than six thousand theologians and Islamic scholars from all over the country. Maulana Ashraf Madani while addressing the media persons supported the modern education and wished the Muslim students to learn Engineering, Natural Sciences, Medical Sciences, Law, and Administrations, and successfully compete the Indian Administrative Service Examinations. He, however, emphasized the specialized knowledge of theology to be imparted in the madrasas since the Muslim community needed also the ulamā and the muftis to guide religiously the Muslims rightly and properly.[1]

LIMINAL RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Bastions of the Believers: Madrasahs and Islamic Education in India, by Yoginder Sikand examines the historical, social, and political dimensions of Islamic education and the role of madrasas in contemporary India. It is one of the rare books that attempts to provide a firsthand account of madrasahs based on fieldwork. This work is likely unique in that

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[1]   *The Inquilab Daily*, (Urdu), 31st October 2022, Vol. 10, Issue 248.

the author begins it by honestly introducing himself to the reader. As part of his interfaith activities, the author has visited madrasahs across India and interacted with 'ulamā from many schools of thought. This has provided him with a broad perspective from which to examine the situation at the madrasahs as well as their public image.

In this book he described a range of 'liminal' religious traditions in various parts of India, traditions that blur the lines between Hindus, Muslims, and Christians, among others. His quotation marks are there to emphasize that these are historical constructs rather than self-evident, well-defined concepts. Each of the groups he portrays are folks he met on his travels across the country, so the book reads like a wonderful travelogue. It does, however, serve a real purpose, namely, to highlight the variety of ways in which religious traditions are shared at the local level, in contrast to the image most of us have of India's religions as watertight, rigidly distinct, and frequently hostile. In order to promote more religious harmony in the world we live in, Sikand believes it is critical to investigate these bridge-building religious traditions.

The book is organized into six chapters, beginning with the fundamental concept of *ilm* (knowledge) in early Islamic history and emphasizing the value of knowledge acquisition in both the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*. Sikand points out that the *Qur'ān* emphasizes the necessity of gaining knowledge three times as much as it emphasizes the importance of praying. The *Qur'ān* repeatedly stresses the need to acquire knowledge, insisting that the knowledge is the truly God-fearing. Due to the high value early, Islamic thought placed on education, centers of learning—especially madrasas—emerged across the Islamic world. Prominent examples include Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Empire, and Cairo, the capital of the Fatimid dynasty. These institutions played a vital role in the preservation and transmission of knowledge, including the translation of Greek texts, which significantly influenced the intellectual development of Europe. After that the author has mentioned that the tradition of Prophet Muḥammad attributed to that importance of acquiring knowledge as a religious duty. In contemporary Muslim representations, the Prophet is presented as, above all, a teacher (*mu'allim*), and Islam as the first religion to enjoin universal literacy. However, the writer has discussed the post-Prophetic developments in the field of education. As we can see, education was provided in mosques during the prophet's lifetime. However, as Islam spread fast outside of the Arabian Peninsula, the demand for a more organized educational system to satisfy the

empire's administrative needs grew. As a result, the madrasa emerged as a separate institution from the mosque.

When it comes to the Indian subcontinent, which is the subject of this book, Sikand makes a crucial point when he states that early Muslims did not distinguish between religious and secular matters, which a term was created by the British under colonial control. In India, Muslim scholars ('ulamā) separated between 'transmitted' and 'rational' sciences, with the former referring to *Qur'ānic* commentary, the science of *Ḥadith*, and *fiqh*, and the latter to Arabic grammar, poetry, philosophy, medicine, and other subjects. The madrasa respected and imparted both sorts of knowledge, and they were a source of upward mobility, reputation, and employment.

MADRASA SYSTEM IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

In the second chapter of his book, Sikand expands on his analysis of the madrasa system in contemporary India. He traces the marginalization of the ʿulamāʾ to the colonial period, beginning in 1772, when Warren Hastings and the East India Company codified Muslim personal law while simultaneously dismissing the services of *qāzīs* and *muftīs* from the colonial courts. This process continued into the nineteenth century. A significant blow came in 1844, when madrasa graduates were excluded from eligibility for government employment. With the introduction of English-medium schools in the nineteenth century, a clear educational dualism emerged in British India. English-language education, primarily accessible to the upper classes (*ashrāf*), became a route to government jobs and social advancement, while madrasas increasingly catered to the lower classes and were left behind. As a result, the role of the ʿulamāʾ became confined to religious affairs, leading to a rigidification of Islam and Islamic knowledge. This shift was evident in the narrowing scope of the madrasa curriculum, which came to center around medieval Ḥanafī *fiqh* texts, while rational sciences—especially philosophy—were increasingly de-emphasized or entirely excluded. According to Sikand, the ʿulamāʾ grew increasingly absorbed in the details of ritual observance, isolating themselves from broader social and intellectual currents.

During the colonial period, a parallel development noted in several studies of North Indian Sunni ʿulamāʾ was their internal fragmentation into distinct *maslaks* or schools of thought. Each *maslak* considered itself reformist, though they interpreted the idea of

reform in different ways. Many of these movements were centered around madrasas, the most prominent being Deoband's Dār al-ʿUlūm. Since the late nineteenth century, numerous efforts at educational reform have taken place, with various maslaks, including the Deobandis, Ahl-i Ḥadīth, Barelvis, Nadwīs, and others proposing different combinations of religious and secular subjects in their curricula. In contrast, the Aligarh Muslim Anglo-Oriental College (which later became Aligarh Muslim University) represented a more modernist approach to Muslim education. The Jamāʿat-i Islāmī, an Islamist movement distinct from what Sikand calls the traditionalist ʿulamāʾ, has also emerged as a major educational force. One institution at the forefront of educational reform, as discussed by Sikand in the second chapter, is Jāmiʿat al-Falāḥ near Azamgarh in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

In the following chapter, the author provides a historical overview of the Islamic scholarly tradition in India. This is followed by an examination of the state of madrasas in post-independence India. The madrasa system in North India is his main concern. He pays close attention to its curriculum and charts its evolution from the time of its founder, Mullā Nizamuddin (d.1748), through Shāh WaliAllāh[1] and the establishment of Dar al-ʿUlūm at Deoband, to the present day. He emphasizes the importance of Indian ʿulamā in the struggle for independence. Later, he draws a comparison between North Indian tradition and the situation in Kerala (South India), emphasizing the diversity of the Islamic educational system. It is marked by considerable regional variances and is not restricted to the Deobandi-Barelvi conflict.[2]

REFORMISTS FROM THE MADRASA

Sikand expresses a deep and consistent engagement with the theme of reform throughout his work. We find him quoting reformists from the madrasa tradition with zeal. He does, however, provide counter-arguments. From his presentation, he comes

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[1]   Shāh Walī Allāh, also spelled Shah Waliullāh, (born in 1702/03, Delhi and died in 1762, Delhi), Indian theologian and promulgator of modern Islamic thought who first attempted to reassess Islamic theology in the light of modern changes.

[2]   Sanyal, Usha. *Yoginder Sikand, Bastions of the Believers. Madrasas and Islamic Education in India*, South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal [Online], 13 October 2007, on https://journals.openedition.org/samaj/216

out as someone who really wants madrasas to improve. In addition, he is not condescending in his approach. He contends that change must originate from inside, and that anything imposed from without will be ineffective. He therefore, cites several examples of many madrasas which are adapting to the changing circumstances incorporating modern subjects in their curriculum. On the whole it could be said that strong opposition to all forms of modernization do not represent the majority of the 'ulamā. Many of them are pragmatic individuals who wish to change according to their needs but want to do it at their own pace.[1]

However, reformers voices are numerous, and Sikand travelled extensively around India in search of them and to hear what they have to say. Maulānā Zain ul-Sajid bin Qasmi, a Deobandi scholar who now teaches at Aligarh Muslim University and advocates for the inclusion of' modern' subjects in the curriculum; Waris Mazhari, editor of *Tarjuman-i Dar ul-Ulūm,* an Urdu monthly magazine, who is a passionate advocate for change on many fronts, including curricular reform, vocational training, and girls' education; and Muḥammad Aslam Parvaiz, editor of Science , the only Urdu-language science magazine in India, who wants science to be included in the curriculum; Aṣghar Alī Engineer, director of the Institute of Islamic Studies in Mumbai, who wants a thorough revision of the syllabus; Maqbool Aḥmad Sirāj, editor of Islamic Voice, an English-language monthly in Bangalore, and many others.

Many of these reformers want to define the issue in terms of 'useful' versus 'harmful' information: by 'useful', they mean 'all knowledge that leads to piety as well as worldly and social good', as opposed to 'harmful', which leads to irreligious and immoral behavior. Concern for bolstering the 'ulamā's authority and improving the economic situations of madrasa students and the question of the Muslim community's empowerment under the leadership of the 'ulamā' are the underlying concerns that they are wrestling with. Modernization is sometimes linked to the search for political empowerment, according to both Islamists and many traditional 'ulamā. Many reformers (though not all) have a defensive attitude toward change, as Sikand points

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[1] Bashir, Aamir. *Book Review of Yoginder Sikand's Bastions Of The Believers: Madrasahs And Islamic Education India;* https://www.academia.edu/2503463/Bastions_of_the_Believers_Madrasahs_and_Islamic_Education_in_India

out, and are responding under a state of duress and siege. Sikand said that besides the rational science of philosophy and logic, certain other subjects included in the present madrasa system are regarded by numerous advocates of madrasa reform as unnecessary and in urgent need of reform or removal. Most of the madrasa's function as independent bodies, run by their own management committees. The author has also elaborated his views on reform in teaching methods, the pace of madrasa reform, state-sponsored efforts at madrasa reform.[1]

However, in the fifth chapter of the book Sikand discussed the new form of Islamic education. The dualism that has developed between religious and worldly knowledge, Islamist's activists have seen both forms of knowledge as part of a comprehensive whole. Accordingly, educational institutions run by Islamist groups in India have incorporated a range of modern subjects into their curriculum, thus helping to bridge the educational dualism that has characterized Muslim education for almost two centuries now. In this chapter he has mentioned the madrasas of Indian subcontinent such as Jamāʿat-i Islāmī Hind, Jāmiʿāt ul-Falāh of Azamgarh. After that he discussed the new madrasa which are incorporating modern subjects into their curriculum. A good example of modernizing madrasa is the Markaz ul-Maʿarif Education and Research Centre, Mumbai. He has also mentioned here the girls' madrasas. In recent years is the setting up of a small, yet growing, number of the madrasa specifically for girls by Muslim groups belonging to different *maslaks*.[2]

Therefore, Professor Asmar Baig questioned the appropriateness of using the term reform in the context of madrasa education. He argued that updating curricula is not unique to madrasas—colleges and universities also revise their syllabi regularly. Madrasas, particularly the larger and more well-known ones in India, have consistently updated their syllabi and already offer a wide range of subjects. He emphasized the need for government support in the form of resources, enabling madrasas to broaden their curricula further. In today's world, students from all educational backgrounds seek employment, and it is unrealistic to expect that religious education alone can meet the

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[1]   Sanyal, Usha. Yoginder Sikand, Bastions of the Believers. Madrasas and Islamic Education in India, op. cit.

[2]   Sikand, Yoginder. Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India, op. cit., pp. 196, 200, 206, 214.

diverse demands of the job market. While religious education remains essential, it must be complemented by modern tools and skills—such as computer literacy and proficiency in English, which, along with Arabic, opens up global opportunities. However, Professor Baig cautioned against using the term reform, as it implies that subjects like science and social studies must necessarily be introduced into madrasas, potentially overlooking their core purpose as institutions of religious education. He stressed that while changes and enhancements are necessary, especially in under-resourced madrasas, a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate. Reform, he argued, should be contextual and responsive rather than imposed uniformly.

Professor Qasmi cited the example of Jamiat-ul-Hidaya in Jaipur, Rajasthan, which is run under the leadership of Maulana Fazlul Raheem Mujaddidi. This institution not only offers traditional religious education but also operates a polytechnic and prepares students for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) examinations. According to Qasmi, necessary changes are already being implemented, and even the Deoband madrasa now acknowledges the importance of integrating modern education.

In contrast, Waris Mazhari observed that Yoginder Sikand, in his discussion of madrasa reform, relies heavily on citing others rather than presenting a fully developed thesis of his own. Sikand's work is primarily based on interviews with teachers and administrators of various Indian madrasas, and he incorporates these perspectives throughout his book.

I feel he was closely associated with the theologians and the madrasa of India and being open minded always I welcome his suggestions. Whatever he has discuss in the book regarding the reform in the syllabus as well as entire education system of madrasa and whatever he has suggested about the replacement of outdated and irrelevant classical text book with the subjects of modern natural social sciences are of no questionable position and therefor may not be criticized.

PROPAGANDA OF MILITANCY

On the issue of madrasas and politics more generally, Sikand ends the book with a long chapter on Islamic militancy and its connection with madrasas. He began by mentioning how recent events, particularly 9/11, have heightened worry about so-called

Islamic "fundamentalist" forces. Because so little is known about madrasas, these occurrences have sparked increased interest in them among government officials, policy planners, and the general public. In the lack of any complete knowledge of madrasas, journalists and writers with their own objectives have been eager to link them to radical Islamist movements and to designate them indiscriminately as "dens of terror", reportedly turning out armies of fanatic 'warriors of Islam'.

Before delving into the purported link between madrasas and terrorism, it is worth noting that madrasas have existed in South Asia for centuries, and their curriculum has stayed largely unchanged for about 200 years. Those who call madrasas "dens of terror" overlook the reality that most Indian madrasas rarely teach politics directly. The majority of their course material focuses on religious ideas and the finer points of fiqh regulations controlling correct worship, dress, personal behavior, and gender restrictions. As a result, the curriculum is predominantly conservative, literalist, and legalist, but not politically extreme. Indeed, critics of the madrasas, including radical Islamists, frequently accuse them of weakening the community and playing into the hands of enemies of Islam by ignoring hot-button political issues and instead focusing on discussions about the proper length of one's beard or the Prophetic method of defecation purification.

According to various surveys, radical Islamist movements have little support in traditional madrasas. Rather, ordinary colleges and universities, particularly faculties of hard sciences such as engineering and medicine, are their main sources of financing. This phenomenon has been observed not only in South Asia, but also in the Arab world and the Western world. None of the Arabs accused of planning the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks had undergone a typical madrasa education. Neither did the feared Osama bin Laden, for that matter. They, like the leaders of nearly all Islamist organizations, had attended conventional institutions, some of them in the West.[1]

Radical Islamists poses threatens to traditional 'ulamā by skipping the centuries-old tradition of *fiqh*, which underpins the 'ulamā's influence, and instead seeking inspiration and guidance straight from the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*. Many Islamists believe that the 'ulamā have converted themselves into a quasi-priesthood, which Islam does not allow. Radical

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[1]   Sikand, Yoginder. Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India, pp. 224-225.

Islamists use the rhetoric of *ijtihād* in place of mediaeval *fiqh*, however there is no evidence that they have gone far enough in their search for a new or more contemporary understanding of Islamic jurisprudence. However, radical Islamists, unlike many ʻulamā, take politics very seriously. For them, Islam is centered on the concept of political power, and the Islamic state is considered as essential for Muslims to live fully in line with their faith's mandates. On the other hand, the essential heart of Islam for many madrasa ʻulamā is *fiqh*, and they are often pleased to accept the absence of an Islamic state if Muslims are free to practice their faith and follow their own personal laws. In other words, although radical Islamism has a natural inclination to emphasize conflict, conventional madrasa Islam, whether doctrinal or not, has an innate conservatism and pragmatic adaptability. True, there are exceptions in both circumstances. In truth, some Islamists are now leading proponents of peaceful interfaith dialogue, while some ʻulamā linked with madrasas are ardent supporters of armed *jihād*. Overall, though, it is safe to say that, contrary to popular belief, madrasas have had nothing to do with actual militancy in India.[1]

THE THEOLOGIANS AND POLITICS

Yoginder Sikand said that the debate on the alleged links between Indian madrasas and militancy needs to be situated in a broader political context. For one thing, and this must always be remembered, religious militancy in India in the form of large-scale violence and terror is far more common among Hindu groups than among Muslim groups. Hundreds of Hindu supremacist organizations publicly call for violence against Muslims and other marginalized communities, and have been directly involved in mass murders of Muslims, often in collaboration with state agencies, in which thousands of innocent people have died. While madrasas, the vast majority of which have nothing to do with militant activism, are routinely described as "dens of terror", schools and organizations run by Hindutva groups are generally seen as proudly nationalist, and as defending the honor of the country that is under constant threat from enemies within and without, which is a sign of the extremely loaded discourse on nationalism in India today. A comparison of madrasas and schools run by Hindu nationalist organizations is

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[1]   Sikand, Yoginder. Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India, pp. 226-227.

required. It would produce unexpected outcomes, demonstrating that obscurantism and militancy are not exclusive to Muslims.

He mentioned that the subject of madrasas apparent ties to militant activist groups must be viewed in the context of a larger historical context, following the complicated ways in which madrasas have attempted to relate to the Indian state. As previously stated, prior to 1947, various Islamic groups took a variety of positions on the conflict between the Congress and the Muslim League. Several Barelvi ʻulamā spoke out in favor of the League's proposal for a separate Muslim state in Pakistan. They said that Islam prevented Muslims from befriending unbelievers, saying that the Congress was attempting to construct a Hindu state and hence arguing that Muslims required their own homeland. Similarly, the Islamist Jamāʼat-i Islāmī, led by Sayyid Abū Alā Maudūdī, railed against the Congress, accusing it of promoting a composite nationalism as a cover for Hinduizing Muslims or reducing them to absolute subjection under a Hindu majority. The Jamāʼat also chastised the League's 'Muslim nationalism', stating that the concept of nationalism was alien to Islam. All Muslims the world over, Maudūdī argued, were one nation, and hence there could be no room for a separate Indian Muslim nation in the form of a separate state of Pakistan. Maudūdī, on the other hand, departed for Pakistan shortly after partition to continue the fight for an Islamic state. The Jamāʼat split after the partition, having branches in Pakistan and India. Separate leading ʻulamā linked with the Dar ul- ʻUlūm were closely associated with the Congress party in the case of the Deobandis. They were harsh critics of the League's "two-nation" idea, claiming that Islam did allow for territorial nationalism. They claimed that India's Muslims and Hindus were both citizens of the same country. There could be no contradiction between Islam and Indian nationalism, they believed, as long as Muslims were permitted to exercise their religion and follow their own personal laws in a free India. Some Deobandis, such as Āshraf Alī Thānvi and Shabbir Aḥmad_ʻUsmānī, disagreed and supported the League, but they were a small minority.

Following Partition, Indian Muslims became an even smaller minority, further marginalized and threatened by the emergence of anti-Muslim Hindu extremism. As a result, several Muslim organizations in India have become more pragmatic and have distanced themselves from harsh communal politics. The Barelvis then turned their attention to targeting other Muslim organizations, designating them as non-Muslims for all intents and purposes, in order to build a distinct identity for themselves. Overall, the

Barelvi ʻulamā avoided overt political activity, preferring to focus their efforts and resources on weakening their Muslim adversaries. While the Jamāʻat-i Islāmī Hind remains committed to creating Islamic state in India, it has stressed the importance of accepting non-Muslim authority. This was regarded not as an abandonment of the long-term goal of the 'rule of Allah' (*bukumat-i ilahiya*), but, rather, as a sensible 'pious pragmatic policy' (*mukhlisana hikmat-i ʻamali*), given the virtual impossibility of establishing an Islamic state in India as long as Muslims remained a relatively small minority. Moving away from Maudūdī's assertion that secularism and democracy were entirely "un-Islamic", Jamāʻat leaders claimed that in the specific Indian setting, Muslims must collaborate with people of other religions to advance secular democracy, because the only other option was a fascist Hindu state. Meanwhile, they emphasized the importance of Muslims engaging in missionary activity among Hindus and other non-Muslims in the country, in the hopes that if the majority of Indians were converted to Islam, the government's aim of establishing an Islamic state would be much easier to achieve. The formation of such a state, on the other hand, was put off until some indeterminate time in the future. The Jamāʻat also emphasized the necessity of promoting inter-community cooperation, claiming that only in such an environment would some Hindus be receptive to its message. On the political front, the Jamāʻat relinquished its adamant insistence that its adherents abstain from participating in a parliamentary system that Maudūdī had branded "anti-Islamic". Instead, the Jamāʻat maintained that Muslims should strive to collaborate with and support political parties that are willing to serve Muslim interests in the way that the Jamāʻat sees them.

POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

The Deobandis found it relatively easy to adjust to the Congress-ruled Indian state, largely because many of them had remained close allies of the Congress during the independence movement. Prominent Deobandi ʻulamā were readily co-opted by the state, with some even being appointed as Members of Parliament by the Congress. The Deobandis, along with the pro-Congress Jāmiʻat ul-ʻUlamā-i Hind, which was predominantly Deobandi in composition—encouraged Indian Muslims to reject the divisive politics of the Muslim League. They believed the League's actions had caused immense suffering for Muslims who remained in India after Partition. Instead, the

Deobandis advocated for cooperation with secular political parties to help establish genuine democracy and secularism in India. The Jāmi'at also prioritized the advancement of Muslim religious education, support for victims of communal violence, and the protection of Islamic personal law. Like other 'ulamā, they consistently protested anti-Muslim pogroms often state-sponsored and resisted threats to Muslim identity.

Overall, Indian madrasas appear to have made a pragmatic adjustment to the reality of Hindu dominance after 1947. Most deliberately distanced themselves from government involvement and promoted a largely apolitical form of Islam. Although many 'ulamā affiliated with these madrasas continued to assert and teach that Islam offers a comprehensive legal and moral framework governing all aspects of life, including politics, they seemed content with the limited application of Islamic law to personal matters, as allowed by the Indian state, so long as Muslims remained a minority. As a result, Muslim personal law came to serve as a cornerstone of Muslim identity in India. This, in part, explains the rapid expansion of madrasas across the country after 1947. These institutions largely promoted an apolitical interpretation of Islam, focusing on teaching Muslim children the fundamentals of Islamic belief and practice. Few, if any, madrasas engaged in overt political discourse, while remaining deeply conservative in matters of spirituality and religious practice. However, this shift from the political to the personal did not signal a wholehearted embrace of secularism—understood as a complete separation of religion and state. Rather, secularism was often regarded as a necessary compromise, a matter of political expediency rather than principle.[1]

THEOLOGICAL PERCEPTION OF CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Sikand argues that one indication of how many Indian madrasas have pragmatically come to terms with the Indian state can be seen in how the state is perceived and represented in their activities and curricula. According to him, the portrayal of the Indian state within madrasa life reflects a conscious effort to engage with the realities of a post-Partition India. As part of this engagement, many madrasas now organize special

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[1]   Sikand, Yoginder. Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India, pp. 227-235.

celebrations on Independence Day and Republic Day, inviting both local Muslims and non-Muslims to participate. During these events, students perform patriotic songs honouring India's achievements, and the national flag is ceremonially hoisted. Senior madrasa teachers and sometimes students deliver speeches praising the country and highlighting the role of the 'ulamā in the freedom struggle, as well as the broader contributions of Muslims to Indian civilization. However, these celebrations are often accompanied by a sombre reflection on the current condition of Muslims in India. Speakers frequently express concern over the community's marginalization, underrepresentation in government services, and the heavy toll of repeated episodes of communal violence—issues that are portrayed as profound betrayals of the ideals of the independence movement.

The underlying message is that Muslims cannot be considered foreigners or adversaries of India. Indeed, it is frequently suggested in the literature of the 'ulamā that the Hindus owe a large obligation to Muslims for the country's independence as well as for their numerous contributions to Indian civilization. It is emphasised that Islam and patriotism are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, it is argued that Islam urges Muslims to love and even sacrifice their lives for their nation. This reinterpretation of history and the Islamic tradition has a very modern objective. If the Muslims owe so much to India, Muslims today must be granted a status at least equal to that of Hindus, not just in theory, but also in practise.

Explicit discussions of politics are uncommon in madrasa classrooms. However, some madrasas, during lessons on *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), do address debates concerning the legal status of the Indian state. While there are exceptions, the prevailing view among the 'ulamā seems to be that although India is not an Islamic state and therefore not considered *dār al-Islām* (abode of Islam), it is also not *dār al-ḥarb* (abode of war). Instead, some scholars classify it as *dār al-amān* (abode of peace) or *dār al-'ahd* (abode of covenant), emphasizing that while Muslims may not wield political power, they are nonetheless free to practice their religion. Chapters on politics found in classical *fiqh* texts particularly those discussing the relationship between the Caliph and his subjects, based on assumptions of Muslim rule are often omitted from the curriculum. In many cases, this omission is not due to a belief that the content is outdated, but rather reflects the sensitive nature of political discourse in the current context.

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SHARI'AH-RULED STATE

According to many 'ulamā, a state governed according to the *Shari'ah* is the best political system. It is stated that the requirement of such a state stem from Islam's insistence on following what are said to be God's rules in all aspects of personal and community life. It is stated that God's laws are revealed in the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*, and that they are further clarified and defined in mediaeval *fiqh* literature. The establishment of an Islamic state in India is seen as a long-term undertaking that will only be achievable once Muslims have transcended their minority status. Meanwhile, it is generally argued Muslims must obey the laws of the land, as long as these do not contradict the provisions of the *Qur'ān* and the *Ḥadīth*.

The contradiction between a supposedly secular state on the one hand and a steadfast devotion to the idea of a *Shari'ah*-ruled state on the other is difficult to reconcile. A small number of madrasas currently teach Indian history and civics, including the ideas of the Indian Constitution, using textbooks published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). This suggests a growing acceptance of a scenario in which there is no Muslim political power, which the authors of mediaeval *fiqh* texts did not foresee. On the other hand, arrangements are frequently made in these and other madrasas for the teaching of Islamic history. Students learn about the Prophet's life, including his role as Medina's ruler, as well as the rule of the four Righteous are Caliphs. This brief period of Muslim political history is referred to as the Golden Age of Islam, the pinnacle of humanity's growth, and one that Muslims must aim to replicate. The view that the ideal state is one ruled by a pious Muslim Caliph in conformity with Islamic precepts is continually emphasised. This is an implied critique of the modern nation-state, in which Muslims are no longer the governing class and the *Shari'ah's* function is severely curtailed. However, this should not be interpreted to mean that madrasas are actively involved in political indoctrination. Most madrasa norms forbid their students from participating in overt political activity. Islamist student groups like the Students Islamic Organization are only authorised to recruit members in a few madrasas, mostly those affiliated with the Jamā'at-i Islāmī.

On the issue of the state, 'ulamā from various schools of thought demonstrate a great diversity of understandings and attitudes on the important issues of nationalism, citizenship, and devotion to the state. On the one hand, many Deobandis, following in

the footsteps of Deobandi elders active in the liberation struggle, would say that all Indians, regardless of faith, are citizens of the same country.

The *Qur'ān*, like any other scripture, can be interpreted in a variety of ways in order to read different political objectives into it. While many Deobandis says that all Indians share a similar nationality, others read the *Qur'ān* in a variety of ways, resulting in differing perspectives on politics and nationalism. Some 'ulamā believe that nationality has no place in Islam, and that Muslims and non-Muslims are permanent rivals. Nationalism might even be viewed as an anti-Islamic conspiracy aimed at dividing the global Islamic community.[1]

Overall, the madrasas, 'ulamā, and Islamist groups in India have attempted to relate to the Indian nation-state through a remarkable diversity of perspectives and a distinct ambiguity. Despite their internal differences, there appears to be a general consensus on the need to recognise the legitimacy of the Indian nation-state, albeit as a temporary compromise for some. However, there is a strong longing for the idealised Islamic state, as well as a deep belief that if real Muslims were to rule India in line with Islam, all of the country's problems, not just those affecting Muslims, would be miraculously rectified.[2]

'ULAMĀ AND NON-MUSLIM

Sikand argues that 'ulemā perception regarding non-Muslim 'other' is a central issue in contemporary discussions of the Indian madrasas and their implications for national security. Here he denotes non-Muslim as other. As previously stated, one of the madrasas primary concerns is the maintenance and preservation of Muslim communal identity, which is typically based on a rigorous difference between Muslims who are genuine believers and those who are infidels. This, like all other boundary-keeping activities, requires the creation of dividing lines that clearly distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims, separating real believers from the remainder.

[1]   Sikand, Yoginder. Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India, pp. 235-241.

[2]   Sikand, Yoginder. Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India, pp. 243-244.

In the discourse of contemporary Indian 'ulamā, the religious 'other' so plays a fundamental role. The 'other' plays an important role in self-definition. The self is imagined as the only fully directed community of religion, God's sole trustworthy followers, in the process of building the 'other' as perverse, as an enemy of God, or simply as misguided. The 'other' might take several forms for contemporary Indian 'ulamā. The 'other' within is frequently perceived as more threatening than the 'other' without, because its familiarity jeopardises the community's integrity and faith.

While the 'other' within receives special attention in the 'ulamā's discourse, the 'other' without is also used to reinforce internal borders. The 'other' within is sometimes employed as a metaphor for the 'other' abroad, because overtly condemning and referring to the latter would be too politically sensitive and frightening. Because many of the practises associated with popular Sufism are seen by the Ahl-i Ḥadīth as Hinduistic, an Ahl-i Ḥadīth 'alim's critique of the practises associated with Sufi cults, which he condemns as un-Islamic and a product of an alleged Jewish conspiracy, could be interpreted as an indirect critique of Hinduism. When an Islamist activist claims that God bans Muslims from imitating or befriending Jews and Christians, he may be implying that Muslims should keep their social interactions with Hindus to a minimal minimum. Such a way of relating to the 'other' without needing to be understood in the context of Hindu militancy's growing impact, which makes open rejection of Hindus or their beliefs risky and threatening to many Muslims.

The many ways in which the 'ulamā understand the theological 'other' is reflected in the madrasa curriculum's depiction of other religions. Regardless of *maslak* differences, madrasas and their 'ulama are persuaded that Islam alone reflects the truth, despite the fact that, as we have seen, the ways in which they interpret Islam are diverse and often mutually contradictory. Only via Islam (as understood by each *maslak*) can one gain salvation in heaven after death, according to the 'ulama. Non-Muslims, no matter how religious or noble, are thought to be damned to a fiery eternity in hell. They are frequently referred to as misguided (*gumrah*) and ignorant (*jahil*). Unclean (*napak, najis*), enemies of Islam (*dushmanan-i islam*), and lovers of the devil (*auliya-i shaitan*) are among the harsher terms. Overall, there is no hope for the non-Muslim 'other' unless he or she converts to Islam. Although comparative religions are not taught as a separate subject in most madrasas, it is occasionally mentioned in the context of other courses or in casual

conversation. Such comparisons can be made in a negative manner in order to emphasise Islam's superiority claim.

VIEWS OF THEOLOGIANS

These viewpoints, however, do not reflect all shades of Muslim thought according to Yoginder Sikand. These interpretations are based on selective readings of the *Qur'ān*, *Ḥadīth*, and *fiqh* books, and should not be assumed to be shared by all Muslims or even all 'ulamā. Then he mentioned thoughts of Wahiduddin Khān of Delhi is one religious scholars who has regularly spoken out against the derogatory image of people of different religions both inside and outside the madrasas. Khān, the author of multiple novels, is a divisive figure among Muslims, notably because of his suspected ties to Hindutva leaders. Despite being called a Hindutva agent on a regular basis, Khān continues to advocate for interfaith dialogue and a more open and accepting attitude toward individuals of various religions. Khān believes that interfaith dialogue is important. Despite what he perceives to be the Islamic urge on conversation, Khān Laments the fact that few, if any, madrasas have made any genuine efforts to develop bridges with individuals of other religions. Instead, he claims, many Muslim writers who claim to speak for Islam have exacerbated and worsened the problem of interfaith relations by designating non-Muslims as sworn enemies of Islam.

Another contemporary Indian advocate for inter-faith dialogue who argues his case from within the Islamic tradition is Hameed Nasīm Rafiabadi. Interfaith conversation, in Rafiabadi's opinion, should not be limited to doctrinal debates between religious experts held in seminar rooms. Rather, it must be turned into real action, with individuals of many faiths coming together to work for similar social goals, each inspired by their own faith commitments. Sikand said Khān and Rafiabadi are little more than a lone voice in the wilderness. Throughout Muslim history, several Sufis, as well as some contemporary Muslim writers from the late 1800s onwards, have attempted to interpret the *Qur'ān* in order to demonstrate that redemption is available to individuals of all religions. However, the vast majority of madrasa 'ulamā would strongly disagree.

In recent years, several madrasas have begun to offer comparative religions as a specialist subject after the ordinary *fazil* degree to higher-level students. They believe that knowledge of various religions would be valuable in missionary activity among

people of different faiths. These classes are taught using tracts and publications on other religions, most of which are produced from a polemical perspective by the 'ulamā themselves. The teaching of other faiths, especially if done with the intention of demonstrating them wrong and therefore emphasising Islam's intrinsic truth, can occasionally have unforeseen repercussions. It may, unwittingly, help to stimulate genuine efforts to establish bridges between individuals of various religions in some circumstances.

However, the notion that non-Muslims are enemies of God and that infidelity (*kufr*) is the most serious kind of treachery (*baghawat*) against Allah does not always imply that madrasas preach uncompromising hatred and violence against non-Muslims, as is widely assumed. On the contrary, the 'ulamā frequently emphasise the need of Muslims cultivating good ties with people of other faiths, because only then will they be willing to listen to Islam's message.

One of the main tasks of the Muslim ummah, according to the 'ulamā, is *da'wah*, or inviting non-Muslims to Islam. If Muslims fail to fulfil that obligation, the 'ulama warn, God will punish them harshly, either in this life or the next. Da'wah is thus a fundamental technique through which some 'ulamā have attempted to connect with people of different faiths. In recent years, some madrasas and Islamic organisations have established their own *da'wah* departments, publishing literature on Islam in local languages intended specifically for non-Muslims and regularly inviting non-Muslims to seminars and conferences on Islam. Interfaith discussion projects, as well as active collaboration with non-Muslim groups in working for social welfare or communal harmony, are examples of more engaged but less visible types of da'wah. Reaching out to non-Muslims through various da'wah endeavours so helps to develop new lines of communication between Muslims and outsiders, which, ironically, might progressively weaken the separatist and insularity that the traditional 'ulamā's worldview is otherwise so assiduously geared at maintaining.

Despite their passionate belief that other religions are erroneous and insufficient for salvation, a number of 'ulamā have participated in informal interfaith conversation projects. This frequently takes the form of attending local gatherings where individuals of various faiths come together to emphasise the importance of peace and cooperation. The growing worsening of Hindu-Muslim relations in major sections of India has forced

numerous 'ulama to see the importance of reaching out to people of other faiths and collaborating with them to achieve communal harmony while keeping rooted in their own interpretations of normative Islam. The interaction with others can sometimes lead to a revision of previous beliefs about other religions, resulting in a more positive appreciation of their teachings, especially those that the various religions share in common.[1]

DENS OF TERROR

Following virulent Hindutva propaganda portraying madrasas as "dens of terror", top right-wing Hindu politicians demanded that madrasas be closely monitored and controlled. The Indian press was awash with allegations of suspected "dens of terror" operating in various madrasas across the country. Almost no Hindu-owned publication, even the most secular, has anything favourable to say about madrasas. In the Indian press, carefully doctored investigative stories concerning madrasas began to surface on a regular basis, plainly intended to demonise Muslims as terrorists and foment anti-Muslim sentiments. The vernacular Hindu press, which is notorious for its pro-Hindutva lean, played a key role in this campaign, but even the so-called national English journals, which are supposed to be less skewed, were swayed. Surprisingly, while attacking Muslim organisations for supposedly promoting militancy and endangering India's unity, intelligence reports and many journalists were strangely mute on militant Hindu outfits, which have been particularly aggressive in recent decades.

Senior government officials and ministers from the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which was then leading a coalition government at the Centre, cooperated in the witch-hunt against the madrasas, just as substantial portions of the Hindu-owned press and the intelligence services. There were wild, mostly baseless assertions that the madrasas were working with enemies of the country and posed a serious threat to India's stability. Ministers spoke in a variety of tones and sang different tunes in front of different audiences, implying that their claims about the madrasas were mostly baseless. For example, Vidyasagar Rao, the then-Union minister of state for home affairs, alleged

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[1]   Sikand, Yoginder. Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India, Op. cit., pp. 244-255.

that some madrasas in Kerala were sponsoring terrorist activities and that most madrasas in the state were involved in shady deals. The minister, predictably, did not name any of the madrasas he had accused, nor did he present any credible evidence to back up his assertions. The media failed to mention it, instead merely repeating his comments without more explanation. On the other hand, the Hindutva hawk Murli Manohar Josh, the then Union minister for human resources, explained that a remark made by the VHP's acting president Ashok Singhal, claiming madrasas in Uttar Pradesh were terrorist dens, was false. But his own ministers, as well as top officials of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the VHP, both passionately anti-Muslim nationalist Hindu organisations, were attacking madrasas as ISI hotspots, Atal Bihari Vajpayee chose to disagree, while without directly criticising his own colleagues. He asserted to a Muslim delegation that he was unaware of any Indian madrasas involved in anti-India efforts on behalf of the ISI. Instead, he is claimed to have hailed madrasas as learning centres and for their contribution to India's independence war.

The government decided in 1998 to cease giving visas to international students who wanted to study at a number of madrasas, including Deoband. Following the fighting in Kargil, the Indian prime minister formed a four-member top ministerial group to recommend security measures. Home Minister L.K. Advani, Defence Minister George Fernandes, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha, and Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh made up the committee. The panel delivered a 135-page study titled Reforming the National Security System in February 2001, which obtained official approval but was not made public. Nonetheless, it was widely publicised in the press, causing a huge uproar and exacerbating claims against madrasas.

Detailing various threats to internal security, the report claimed:

A recent phenomenon is the mushrooming of pan-Islamist militant outfits with links of radical orientation in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and some other West Asian countries. Funded by Saudi and Gulf sources, many new madrasas have come up all over the country in recent years.

The reporter went on to add that a chain of madrasas had lately opened in the country's sensitive border areas, saying that they were engaged in systematic indoctrination of Muslims in what it called fundamentalist ideology, and that this was detrimental to community cohesion. In a nutshell, it claimed that many madrasas had

become a menace to national security. The report recommended that the government take adequate measures against such madrasas and that they be closely monitored while making these claims. It was advised that attempts be done to arrange for madrasas to provide 'modern' education in order to bring them into the national mainstream in order to wean madrasa students away from any ISI-inspired propaganda. It advised that a Central Advisory Board of Madrasa Education be established under the Ministry of Human Resources Development for this purpose. In other words, madrasa reform and the promotion of Muslim education, as the report's architects saw it, were unimportant in and of themselves. They were only a source of concern because they appeared to jeopardise 'national security'.

Predictably, the report led to considerable controversy. Hindutva claimed that it had only confirmed what they groups had been saying all along. Their critics, on the other hand, argued that the report had been carefully designed to promote the fiercely anti-Muslim Hindutva agenda. Muslim groups and leaders saw the report as undeniably anti-Muslim. They pointed groups to what they saw as serious lacunae in the arguments put forward and in the report. In claiming that many madrasas had been receiving external funds, allegedly from pan-Islamic groups, the report, they insisted, had grossly exaggerated the magnitude of such support. Only a few, larger madrasas were said to have received such funds, while the vast majority of the madrasa in the country were entirely dependent on local resources, operating on minimal budgets. It was also argued that the madras as which did accept foreign funding had done so after seeking the approval of the state authorities, and that this was perfectly legal. Several Hindu and Christian organizations, too, they pointed out, received foreign money, and in fact on considerably larger scale than Muslim organizations.

The report's suggestion that madrasas needed to be brought into the national 'mainstream' and the proposal to set up a central madrasa authority under close state supervision were seen as sinister moves on the part of the government and Hindutva groups to dilute the religious character of the madrasas and subject them to state control. The notion of the mainstream' that the government sought to impose was itself critically interrogated and dismissed. In defending the madrasas from the charge of keeping

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Muslims apart and away from the mainstream, Muslim leaders insisted that, far from encouraging separatism, the madrasas were deeply committed to national unity.[1]

Professor Mirza Asmar Baig was of the opinion that one important thing which the Sachar Committee Report[2] did was that it also rather answers this question is madrasa a den of terror, which is quite often there in the popular media. A lot of questions are raised on the madrasas and we used to counter them by our own statements. So, one person's statement against the other person's statement, and when we use to say this, people would say that you to belong to the Muslim community, so, you are defending madrasas, they are dens of terror or whatever they say. A lot of investigative agencies also put a lot of cloud on the role of madrasas but, the Sachar Committee Report answered it very clearly. When they said that, they demolished two myths, one myth was all Muslims or majority of the Muslims are studying in madrasas. The Sachar committee said that only four percent of Muslims go to madrasas, so, that shattered one myth that everybody goes to madrasa and consequently everybody has the same mindset which they are saying madrasas have. So, all of them are not going to madrasa, ninety six percent are not going to madrasa. Second, madrasas are like any other education institution and there is no evidence, and still even in the courts of law in the county, no evidence has come out which would proof this suggestion which is made in the media or by some irresponsible people in the media that madrasas promote terrorism. Because they are not places where any other thing other than religious text are taught and a lot of researches in the whole world that have been made a religious text, the *Qur'ān*, and *Hadith*, and so many scholars everywhere in the world. Nobody has been able to come up with any evidence to suggest that these are the texts which promote

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[1]   Sikand, Yoginder. Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India, Op. cit., pp. 267-273.

[2]   The Sachar Committee was a seven-member High Level Committee in India established in March 2005 by then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The committee was headed by former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court Rajinder Sachar to study the social, economic, and educational condition of Muslims in India. The committee submitted its report in 2006 and the report was available in public domain on 30 November 2006. As per the Sachar Committee report, only 4% of Muslim students across India go to madrasas. The number is slightly higher in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, while in Maharashtra, the figure is less This effectively means that given a chance, an overwhelming majority of Muslims would want to send their children to normal schools.

terrorism. So, it is just a figment of some people's imagination, and the kind of majoritarian politics which is there in the country, where by this kind of position is held some people, so, they rather keep on repeating the same thing without any basis. So, this a suggestion which has no evidentiary basis, somebody is saying that, like it is your own opinion, and there is no evidence to prove this.

Professor Qasmi interacting with the writer about the terror activities of the madrasas, pointed out some terror attacks made in the country for which Muslims were not responsible outrightly as the brutally killing of Gandhi Ji, Indira Gandhi, the Samjhota Express Event etc. The Quran did not support any terror activity nor did Muslims even favour any terror outfit.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, for the transmission of the Islamic tradition, madrasas continue to play an important role in the lives of millions of Muslims in India. The task of madrasa reform is best left to the Muslim community itself, although the state and well-meaning non-Muslims including secular non-governmental organizations, do have role play in this regard. The author emphasizes the critical role that progressive Muslims need to play to make Islam relevant to the modern world. Here, he seems to be stuck in the liberal trap of hoping to transform Islam from within so that it can become something like Reformed Judaism, even though that might not be Islam anymore. But he balances it out by calling upon Hindus to seriously address the growing threat of Hindu militancy. Notwithstanding the author's inclinations and biases, of which he had warned us in the beginning, the book is still a very nice read especially for those who wish to have a better and more nuanced understanding of the complex reality of madrasahs in Hindu-majority India.

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