

PAKISTAN'S RECENT EXPERIENCE IN REFORMING ISLAMIC EDUCATION

*Christopher Candland*¹

When the Soviet Army invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, until it withdrew in defeat in August 1988, Pakistan's Islamic boarding schools were praised for absorbing tens of thousands of Afghan refugee children and young adults. Some of these schools received funding to train anti-Soviet *mujahidin* (fighters in defence of faith) and used as bulwarks against Soviet aggression. The takeover of Kabul by *taliban* (Islamic boarding school students, literally seekers of knowledge) in September 1996 and the attacks on New York's World Trade Center and the US Pentagon in September 2001 cast Pakistan's Islamic boarding schools in a disturbing new light.

Since 12 September 2001, the Pakistani government has been under considerable pressure to police the activities and reform the educational system of the Islamic boarding schools. In 2001 and 2002, the government issued two ordinances designed, respectively, to establish new exemplary Islamic boarding schools and to regulate better the existing Islamic boarding schools. What are the specifics of these reform measures? How have these reforms been received? How effective have they been? And how might they be made more effective?

Estimating madrasa enrolment

Recently, madrasa enrolments estimates have been keenly contested. How many Pakistani students study in a religious boarding school? And what percentage of total school enrolment does that represent? Estimates of madrasa enrolments range from fewer than half a million to more than two million. Because estimates of enrolments in private and public schools vary as well, estimates of the percentage of students studying in religious boarding schools vary even more widely, from fewer than 1 per cent to as much as 33 per cent.

The range of estimates and the bases of these estimates are themselves important pieces of evidence about the role of the madaris in Pakistani society and about scholarship on madaris. The wide range of estimates indicates that

generally scholars and educational professionals have a weak understanding of even the basic dimensions of the madrasa. The differing statistical bases for these estimates indicate that some scholars and educational professionals dismiss data sources that other researchers regard as convincing.

A recent World Bank funded study estimates that there are fewer than 475,000 madrasa students and that fewer than 1 per cent of the secondary school-going population attends a madrasa (Andrabi *et al.* 2005). The attempt to ground the widely ranging estimates of madrasa enrolments in verifiable data is laudable, but some scholars have found the assumptions used for those estimates to be problematic. The report is based, in part, on a national census and a national household survey, neither of which was designed to gauge madrasa enrolment. Indeed, the national census does not ask about children's school or madrasa attendance. It asks about adults' "field of education." The authors find that three times the number of children in their survey of three districts study in madaris than was estimated by the national census and the household surveys. Yet their survey was restricted to areas served by public schools and is thus unrepresentative of Pakistan as a whole. Further, the extrapolation, that fewer than 1 per cent of Pakistani primary-aged students attend madaris, is based on the statistic that 19 million students are enrolled in private and public schools (GOP 2004). However, half of these children drop out before reaching the fifth grade. Finally, the report conflates a madrasa education with an education in religious schools, as suggested by the title of the report. This leads to problems with interpretation of the data, as will be discussed below.

Many scholars find that establishment-based surveys are more trustworthy than statistical adjustment of household surveys. Pakistani police and officials in the Ministries of Education and Religious Affairs conduct establishment surveys of madrasa enrolments. These count the number of students in madaris, rather than estimate enrolments from household responses. By these estimates, between 1.7 million and 1.9 million students in Pakistan are educated in madaris. The former estimate comes from the former Minister of Religious Affairs, Mahmood Ahmed Ghazi (ICG 2002: 2). The latter estimate comes from Pakistani police. The number of madaris supports these estimates. More than 10,000 madaris are registered with the government. At least that many are thought to operate without registration. A typical madrasa will educate more than 100 children. Thus, the official establishment surveys' estimate of nearly two million madrasa students is not unrealistic. An estimate of fewer than 500,000 is. Whatever the precise number of madrasa students, the Islamic boarding schools of Pakistan educate not merely the residual few whom government and private schools do not reach but a substantial segment of the population.

Islamic boarding schools in Pakistani society

A brief explanation of the terminology that teachers in Islamic boarding schools themselves use will make the following discussion more productive. A madrasa

is a school for grades one to ten. Thus, the age of students in madaris typically runs from five to 16 years. Children below the age of 12 are typically non-residential students. The plural of madrasa is madaris. Many refer to Islamic boarding schools as *dini madaris* to distinguish them from Western-style government and private schools, which were introduced under British rule. *Din* refers to faith. Thus, the Urdu word *dini* might be translated as “religious.” For study beyond the ten years offered by the madaris, one would attend a *dar al-ulum* (literally, an abode of knowledge), for grades 11 and 12. The dar al-ulum, then, is the equivalent of upper secondary schools, in the British system, also known in Britain as sixth form colleges. For study beyond the dar al-ulum, one would attend a *jamia*, the equivalent of a college or university. Thus, some Islamic educators in Pakistan suggest that the name of the Pakistan Madrasa Education (Establishment and Affiliation of Model Dini Madaris) Board Ordinance 2001 and the Dini Madrasa (Regulation and Control) Ordinance 2002 (aimed at, respectively, building new institutions of Islamic education and reforming existing Islamic boarding schools, at all levels not merely at the madrasa level), itself demonstrates that the government does not adequately understand the structure of Islamic educational institutions.

The Pakistani madrasa has only recently assumed its present form. Most of the madaris were established during General Zia al-Haq’s tenure (1977–1988), not only through the encouragement of the state but also often with the financial assistance of the state. In 1977, there were a couple of hundred madaris registered with the madaris central boards (Malik 1996). By 1988, there were more than 2,800 madaris registered with one of the five madaris boards (GOP 1988, cited in Rahman 2004: 79).

If madaris are sectarian and militant, it is not the product of an Islamic approach to education but of the militaristic policies of General Zia al-Haq and his supporters. For nearly a decade, the US government, among others, poured hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of weapons into Pakistan, much of it through madaris, and used madrasa students to fight a proxy war in Afghanistan. According to the *Washington Post*, the US government even supplied texts to madaris glorifying and sanctioning war in the name of Islam (Stephens and Ottaway 2002, cited in ICG 2002: 13). If only a small fraction of that money and ingenuity were sustained over the next decade on curriculum development, books and scholarships, teacher and staff salaries, and on facilities and amenities, the madaris sector could be transformed again – this time into a foundation for tolerance and moderation, essential teachings of Islam. Indeed, it might be argued that the US government has a moral duty – not merely a strategic interest – to commit such funds and to help to repair the damage done to the madaris sector.

Some madaris – well known to those who study Pakistani sectarianism – continue to serve as recruitment grounds for young militants (Abbas 2002; Rana 2004). Many madaris also socialize and politicize youth to a particular sectarian organization’s or a religious political party’s perspective. Generally, however,

madaris are institutions of caretaking and education (Candland 2005). Most have done a remarkable job of caring for and educating a large population whose basic needs have been neglected by the state.

There are five boards (*wafaqha*) that oversee the institutions of Islamic education in their respective “school” of Islamic thought: Ahl-i Hadith, Barelwi, Deobandi, Jama’at-i Islam and Shia. With the exception of the Rabat al-Madaris al-Islamiyya, the Jama’at-i Islam board, which was established under the patronage of General Zia al-Haq in 1983, each of these boards has been in operation since the late 1950s. The boards determine the curriculum of the Islamic schools registered with them, provide examination questions, grade examinations, and issue graduation certificates and diplomas. There are approximately 10,000 institutions of Islamic education registered with these five boards. Roughly 70 per cent are Deobandi, 16 per cent are Barelwi, 5 per cent are Jama’at-i Islam, 4 per cent Ahl-i Hadith, and 3 per cent Shia. The differences between these schools of Islam will be explained, briefly, below. Over the past two decades, the fastest growing Sunni madaris seem to be those of the well-patronized Jama’at-i Islam (Rahman 2004: 79).

The recent madaris ordinances

General Pervez Musharraf, as the Chief Executive of Pakistan, promulgated the Pakistan Madrasa Education (Establishment and Affiliation of Model Dini Madaris) Board Ordinance in August 2001. The Ordinance, hereafter referred to as the Model Dini Madaris Ordinance, created the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board with the responsibility of establishing new, exemplary dini madaris and dar al-ulum and overseeing those existing dini madaris and dar al-ulum that choose to affiliate with the Board. The Board is based in Islamabad. The Model Dini Madaris Ordinance also established a Pakistan Madrasa Education Fund. The Model Dini Madaris were to be semi-autonomous, public corporations to demonstrate to existing madaris how to modernize and to train a new generation of liberal-minded *ulama* (religious scholars). The approach of the pre-9/11 Model Dini Madaris Ordinance might be characterized as enabling.

General Musharraf promulgated the second ordinance related to madaris, the Dini Madaris (Regulation and Control) Ordinance in June 2002. This second Madaris Ordinance, hereafter referred to as the Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance, requires all dini madaris and dar al-ulum to register with the government and to make regular financial declarations. The dini madaris and dar al-ulum that registered with the Board would receive scholarships for their students. Dini madaris and dar al-ulum that do not comply would be closed. The approach of the post-9/11 Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance might be characterized as controlling. Ulama opposition to the Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance has prevented it from being implemented.

Each ordinance was promulgated as an Extraordinary Ordinance, indicating the high importance that the government attached to reform of institutions of

Islamic education. Each ordinance was also promulgated before the October 2002 general elections that produced the present National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies. The Ordinances, promulgated by a military government, did not receive the broad public support or the critical study that an elected government might have generated. It is not surprising, therefore, that they need to be revised, as will be argued below.

Impact of ordinances on Islamic educational reforms

The impact of the Model Dini Madaris Ordinance has been positive but quite limited. The impact of the Dini Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance has been extensive but largely counter-productive. A poorly designed administrative structure rather than intransigence of ulama is the greatest limitation to the Model Dini Madaris Ordinance. However, very recent initiatives suggest that there may be positive changes in the near future.

The counter-productive element of the Dini Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance stems from its heavy-handed approach and its requirement that all institutions of Islamic education integrate parts of the National Curriculum into their curricula. The present National Curriculum is largely the product of the military government of General Zia al-Haq. Those parts of the National Curriculum that are required to be added to the curricula of institutions of Islamic education – Civics, Pakistan Studies, Social Studies and Urdu – are sectarian, highly biased against religious minorities and against India, and glorify the military and the use of violence for political ends (Nayyar and Salim 2003). Indeed, the National Curriculum may give greater sanction to intolerance toward religious minorities, to sectarianism, and to violence toward perceived enemies than do the curricula in the madaris.

Registration of existing madaris

While the richness and variety of Islamic expression in Pakistan defies easy categorization, one might, for convenience, distinguish between three major Sunni traditions. The Deobandi tradition has its roots in the “shock” of the British response to the Indian Mutiny of 1856 (Robinson 2000). British forces responded to the Mutiny by expelling Muslims from several Indian cities and destroying or occupying Muslim places of learning and worship. The Dar al-Ulum established in 1867 at Deoband, in Uttar Pradesh, was designed to protect Muslim education from Western incursion and to extract and eliminate practices from the Muslim community that it regarded as un-Islamic. The Bareilwi tradition, established soon after the Dar al-Ulum at Deoband and named after Riza Ahmad Khan of Bareilly, also founded a dar al-ulum, in Uttar Pradesh, which affirmed the devotional practices that the Deobandi school sought to eliminate, such as worshipping *pir* (living Muslim saints) and offering prayers at the graves of revered teachers. The Jama’at-i Islam has later origins. Sayyid Abul Ala

Maududi, a prolific writer, founded the Jama’at-i Islam as a political party in 1941. The Jama’at-i Islam, a leading member of the opposition Muttahida Majlis-i Amal (United Action Council), now ruling the North West Frontier Province and the Karachi Metropolitan Government, aims to combat corruption and immorality by establishing an Islamic state capable of imposing justice and morality.

Many leaders from Islamic boarding schools have evidenced a strong demand for reform of their institutions, contrary to elite perceptions. Nearly 500 Islamic education institutions applied for affiliation with the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board in 2003, its first full year of operation. Had the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board conducted their meetings in 2004 as mandated by the Model Dini Madaris Ordinance, there could be 100 institutions of Islamic education affiliated to the board.

Islamic institutions that affiliated with the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board include some of the largest and most highly respected. Further, these institutions represent the entire spectrum of Muslim traditions in Pakistan. The Bareilwi-oriented Jamiat al-Ulum Rasuliyya, in Faisalabad, one of Pakistan’s oldest institutions of Islamic learning, established in the 1930s, affiliated itself with the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board. The well-known Deobandi Jamia Abu Huraira of Maulana Abdul Qayyum Haqqani, in Nowshera, has also affiliated with the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board. And the dar al-ulum degrees given by the Jama’at-i Islam-affiliated Fikr-i Maududi (Maududi’s Thoughts) Institute in Lahore are now recognized by the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board as equivalent to the Bachelor of Arts.

There is, however, significant resistance to the government’s attempts, represented by the Dini Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance, to control institutions of Islamic education. An association of madaris, the Ittehad Tanzimat Madaris Diniyya (Religious Madaris Organization Alliance), was formed to protest against and oppose the coercive dimensions of government’s reform efforts. All five *wafaqha* participated in the formation of the Ittehad Tanzimat Madaris Diniyya. Member madaris have declared that they would refuse government scholarships for their students. According to some authoritative estimates, the Ittehad Tanzimat Madaris Diniyya may represent as many as 15,000 madaris. However, most of the members of the association are principals and teachers at relatively small madaris.

Establishment of new Model Dini Madaris

The government’s own orders and regulations related to the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board have not been met. The Model Dini Madaris Ordinance requires the chairman of the Board to hold meetings of the Board at intervals of no longer than six months. However, the Board has not met since 10 January 2004. Since its inception, the Board has not had a permanent chairman or secretary.

The government's orders and regulations related to the establishment of new madaris have also not been substantially fulfilled. Three Model Dini Madaris were established under the Ordinance, in Karachi, Sukkur and Islamabad. The Islamabad Model Madaris was established for the education of girls; the Karachi and Sukkur Model Madaris were established for the education of boys. These three institutions were not given adequate authority, staffing or financing to perform as mandated. To date, no permanent principals have been appointed. Until recently, the same person was appointed principal of both the Karachi and Sukkur madaris. The principal of the Islamabad Model Madrasa has been replaced four times. Those in charge of the three madaris have not been given authority to hire staff or allocate resources. Instead, they must appeal to the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board in Islamabad. Facilities are sub-standard. All three Model Dini Madaris are housed in the Hajj Directorate's *hajji* (pilgrimage to Mecca) camps. During the Hajj season, the camps are very noisy and packed with people on their way to and from Mecca. In Karachi, the Pakistan Army Rangers are permanently camped at the New Hajji Camp. The Rangers have forcibly occupied part of the premises of the Model Dini Madrasa. The presence of heavily armed men, occupying a part of the madrasa premises, is not conducive to study.

There is considerable misinformation issued about the model madaris. Occasionally, a Pakistani newspaper will report that the government intends to establish several dozens of model dini madaris. In February 2004, it was reported that the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board had announced that it would establish 98 Model Dini Madaris. In March 2005, it was reported that additional Model Dini Madaris would be established in Lahore and Multan, in Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province; in Quetta, in Balochistan; and in Peshawar, in the North West Frontier Province. However, the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board claims to have no knowledge of such plans. Some speculate that KNI, the press service behind these reports, has been fed these stories to give the false impression that the establishment of model madaris is proceeding quickly.

Islamic education in private and government schools

Islamic education makes up a large part of the general education imparted in government and private schools. The National Curriculum includes *Islamiyyat* (the study of Islam) as one of the mandatory subjects for Muslims. Additionally, there is a great emphasis on Islam in the Civics, Pakistani Studies, Social Studies and Urdu sections of the National Curriculum (Nayyar and Salim 2002). According to some ulama, the *Islamiyyat* taught in government and private schools focus on those portions of the *Qur'an* and a *hadith* (practices and sayings of Mohammad) that might be interpreted in line with intolerant and militant ideologies while the passages which clearly invoke tolerance and enlightenment are ignored. This bias can be traced to the 1980s, when Pakistan was home to millions of Afghan refugees and was a front-line state in the fight against

Soviet aggression. Just as militant prayer leaders in the armed services and militant teachers in government schools were promoted in the 1980s, it is possible to promote moderate prayer leaders and teachers today.

The private schools with the widest reach in Pakistan are those run by Islamic associations and Islamic foundations, some affiliated with Islamic political parties, not those that are most visible in the affluent sections of Pakistan's larger cities, which generally follow the Cambridge or Oxford curriculum. These private schools are not madaris, but educators in many of them, by their own account, would like to raise children in the ideology of their political party or in a particular sect of Islam. It is a mistake to assume that only Islamic boarding schools are involved in Islamic education. Thousands of private schools, using either the Cambridge or Oxford curriculum or the National Curriculum, or both, impart a predominantly Islamic education. Yet very little attention has been focused on the curriculum or pedagogy in these sectarian and political party-oriented private schools (Candland 2005).

Madaris in the context of general education

Reform of Islamic education and institutions of Islamic instruction must proceed from the recognition that Islamic boarding schools and Islamic education are an integral part of national education in Pakistan. Reform efforts based on the assumption that national education must remove discussion of religion from the educational curriculum are not only impractical; avoidance of religious subjects in national education and weakening of the Islamic education sector are unlikely to improve tolerance and understanding between people of differing faiths or diminish violence in Pakistan or abroad.

Reform of Islamic education must also recognize that the present "backwardness" – in administrative, curricular and financial terms – of institutions of Islamic instruction is a direct product of a highly polarized educational system. As Tariq Rahman aptly puts it:

The madrasa students regard their Westernized counterparts as stooges of the West and possibly as very bad Muslims if not apostates. The Westernized people, in turn, regard their madrasa counterparts as backward, prejudiced, narrow-minded bigots who would put women under a virtual curfew and destroy all the pleasures of life as the Taliban did in Afghanistan.

(Rahman 2004: 150–151)

In this context, it should be recognized that the promotion and subsidy of elite education is responsible for much of the "backwardness" of the institutions of Islamic education. Most of Pakistan's children have been neglected by the state's educational system (Candland 2001). The madaris have done a remarkable job of reaching a large sector of the Pakistani public with virtually no

government support and very modest funding from the public. However, they have educated this neglected sector largely within a sectarian tradition and have not inculcated moderation and tolerance. At the same time, when the government has involved itself in the madaris sector, as under General Zia al-Haq, the consequences have been detrimental to the cause of education.

Moderately minded leaders in the field of Islamic education need to be made full partners in the reform of madaris and Islamic education in non-madrasa educational institutions. Pakistan's experience with the reform of Islamic education demonstrates that such reforms, to be effective, cannot be imposed. Ulama themselves will determine whether the government's attempts to reform Islamic education succeed or fail. A coercive approach is likely to fail.

The suggestion that all ulama are against reforms seems to be designed to excuse the clumsiness in and the delay of government reform attempts. Just as it benefits some opposition politicians to claim that the attempt at reforming Islamic education is a plot by the US government to weaken Islam, it benefits other governing politicians to suggest that their attempts at reforming institutions of Islamic education are being waged against the opposition of recalcitrant and backward ulama. Many ulama are in favour of reform. Indeed, many madaris have already integrated social studies and natural sciences into their curriculum.

What is needed for successful uplift of institutions of Islamic education is not the promulgation of more ordinances but constructive conversations between accomplished ulama and senior government officials. The government already has the authority – through the Societies Act of 1860 – to regulate and control institutions of Islamic education. The Societies Act requires all educational institutions to register with provincial governments and to make regular financial declarations. Thus, the Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance's requirement that institutions of Islamic education register and disclose their accounts irritated educators at Islamic educational institutions.

Recommendations

Greater attention to the model dini madaris could have a strong influence on the entire reform programme. The government could appoint qualified ulama – like the principal of the Model Dini Madrasa Karachi – as administrators and educators at these madaris and give them regular appointments and the prospect of promotion. The government could also provide model dini madaris with permanent facilities. The government could involve educators at these institutions in significant conferences and press events – as was successfully done in a conference on abolishing sectarianism and promoting enlightened moderation at the Sindh Governor's House in March 2005. Model dini madaris administrators and educators could also be invited to be external examiners in Islamiyyat examinations at government colleges and universities.

Further, the government might ask qualified ulama and university professors

in Islamiyyat to develop an alternative curriculum for Islamic educational institutions. The faculty of Islamic and Oriental Studies at the University of Peshawar and the staff of the National Research and Development Foundation in Peshawar have extensive experience in and promising proposals for consultations leading to such an alternative curriculum. The present programme for a new curriculum in Islamic educational institutions merely adds National Curriculum textbooks – many of them substandard and biased against minorities – to the existing curricula in Islamic educational institutions. The real problem in the Islamic educational institutions is not that students are not taught computer studies and natural sciences. Many madaris, dar al-ulums and jamias do teach these subjects. But a natural science education is not a guarantee of an enlightened mind. Indeed, many of those most committed to violence in the name of Islam were educated in the natural sciences. The real problem in these schools is that students do not learn how to relate with other communities in a culturally diverse country and a globally interdependent world.

The Qur'an is full of recommendations and insights on how to relate peacefully with other communities through goodwill and tolerance. Of course, those looking for justifications for violence can find them in the sacred texts of any religion (Candland 1992). The purpose of an alternative curriculum for Pakistan's Islamic educational institutions would be to develop a curriculum based on the enlightened and tolerant messages of Islam. Ulama and Islamic educators in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Turkey have already succeeded in framing such a curriculum and, thereby, in engaging Islamic educational institutions in their countries in national development programmes, including community health and income generation programmes. Scholars from these countries could be consulted while crafting an alternative curriculum for Islamic education institutions in Pakistan.

The Pakistan Madrasa Education Board would function better if it had a permanent chairman and secretary who are respected ulama, and regular meetings of the Board, Academic Council and Ordinance Review Committee. The Board also needs to develop its own examination papers. The Pakistan Madrasa Education Board might also function better if it – and the authority and financing for both the operation of new Model Dini Madaris and the regulation of existing institutions of Islamic education – were transformed to a newly created Islamic Education Cell within the Ministry of Education. Presently, the administrative authority and the funding for reform of Islamic education belong to different ministries. The Ministry of Education receives funds – largely from foreign sources – for the reform of Islamic education. The Pakistan Madrasa Education Board is prohibited from taking funds from foreign sources. The Ministry of Religious Affairs is authorized – according to the Dini Madaris Regulation and Control Ordinance – to administer reforms. Adding to the confusion over administrative authority, there are Sub-directorates of Religious Education (Dini Madrasa Education Boards) in the provincial Ministries of Education.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs does not have experience or expertise in

education. Indeed, the Ministry does not have the ability to administer an *ushr* (Islamic charity based on land holdings) programme, despite being entrusted with that task, through the Zakat and Ushr Ordinance, more than 25 years ago. The administration of zakat (Islamic charity based on capital holdings) is the principal occupation of the Ministry. Further, the present Chairman of the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board, the Federal Secretary of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, is neither a graduate of an Islamic educational institution nor an educator.

The creation of an Islamic Education Cell within the Ministry of Education, the transfer of the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board to that Cell, and the appointment of a person who has an Islamic educational background and the rank of State Minister as a full-time chairman of the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board could reduce redundancy and guarantee that reform of Islamic education is treated as a national educational priority. The appointment of full-time staff with knowledge of systems of Islamic education to the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board would also improve its chances of success. If the aim of the Madaris Ordinances is "to improve and secure uniformity of standards of education and (to integrate) Islamic education imparted at dini madaris within the general education system," as stated by the Model Dini Madaris Ordinance (GOP 2001: 1), then it makes sense for the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board to have the staffing, status and autonomy that could make such a goal possible.

Note

- 1 This chapter was completed in April 2005. I am pleased to acknowledge the generous support of the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, which made possible the research upon which this chapter is based. The Foundation's support allowed me to organize a survey, of Pakistani students' views about injustice and justification for violence. I am grateful to Karen Colvard, Senior Program Officer of the Foundation, for helping me to design that research in a way that might help to determine the influence, if any, of different curricula on students' views about injustice and justification for violence. For comments on earlier drafts, I am grateful to Qibla Ayaz, Ainslie Embree, Ameer Liaqat Hussein, Tahseenullah Khan, Tariq Rahman, and staff of the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board who wish to remain anonymous. I alone am responsible for the content and recommendations.

THE GENDER OF MADRASA TEACHING

*Nita Kumar*¹

There are thousands of Muslim children, both girls and boys, going to madrasas in all the cities of South Asia (Sikand 2005: 313–14). Zeenat and Shahzad, a weaver's daughter and a weaver's son in the city of Varanasi, North India, the centre of silk weaving, are two such children. All adult Muslims, such as all the adult male and female members of Zeenat and Shahzad's families, explicitly articulate and perform gender identities. Can we make a useful co-relation between the gender identities of the adults and the experience of the madrasa?

It is easy to distinguish a madrasa-educated man or woman from an uneducated one, and in the population of an artisanal working-class city like Varanasi, both exist. The most readily apparent differences between the two are that, like all schooled adults, the madrasa-taught man or woman is more self-aware of him/herself in appearance and speech, more coherent in articulation and presentation, and more precise about his or her identity as sectarian Muslim, national Muslim, and universal Muslim. At a wider, national level, a lack of difference between a madrasa-educated and an uneducated person does appear, in that both would typically look poor and provincial, and would present themselves as different from the mainstream of Indian formal education. An important line of difference in a city's population is, therefore, based entirely on the fact of madrasa schooling.

Insofar that a madrasa is a *school*, there is, and always has been, a partly deliberate and partly unreflective hidden curriculum of gender socialization (Minault 1998). Yet, we must be sensitive to the actual territory occupied by the madrasa within the madrasa-goer's total learning experience. In the excerpts I discuss from the ethnography of children in Varanasi, I problematize what children, particularly girls, are learning, and if their madrasa teaching produces gender differences in the children. My chapter is in three parts. First, I look in detail at the case of a student of a girls' madrasa, Zeenat, as also being taught or trained into an identity and life course at home. It seems striking that her home socialization and education – the home as "madrasa or school" – is more power-

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