

Language-Teaching in Pakistani Madrassas

Tariq Rahman

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Mailing Address: PO Box 2342, Islamabad, Pakistan.
Telephone ++ (92-51) 2278134, 2278136, 2277146, 2270674-76
Fax ++(92-51) 2278135, [URL:www.sdpi.org](http://www.sdpi.org)

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Language-Teaching in Pakistani Madrassas

Tariq Rahman

Introduction

The *madrassas* (or *madaris*) are religious seminaries which have been in the news in the last two years for two major reasons. First, their students, called *tulaba* in Arabic and *taliban* in Pashto, rose to rule most of Afghanistan. And second, because they are allegedly responsible for creating, or at least fanning, sectarian conflict in Pakistan between the Shias and the Sunnis. What goes on in the *madrassa*, then, is significant for understanding Pakistani society. This article, however, does not attempt to provide understanding of either the Taliban phenomenon or sectarian violence. What it attempts to do is much more modest i.e to provide an account of language-teaching in the Pakistani *madrassas*. This should be useful for scholars not only because there is no academic study of this phenomenon in English and this study fills a gap in our knowledge, but also because it helps us understand how language-teaching helps to reinforce the world view which makes the products of *madrassa* education behave the way they do in Pakistan.

Madrassas in Pakistan

According to a report of 1988 the total number of religious seminaries in Pakistan were 2,891 and their breakdown, sect and province-wise was as follows:

Table 1: Breakdown of Madrassas

| Province | Deobandi | Barelvi | Ahl-e-Hadith | Shi'ah | Others | Total of Provinces |
|----------------|----------|---------|--------------|--------|--------|--------------------|
| Punjab | 590 | 548 | 118 | 21 | 43 | 1320 |
| NWFP | 631 | 32 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 678 |
| Sindh | 208 | 61 | 6 | 10 | 6 | 291 |
| Baluchistan | 278 | 34 | 3 | 1 | 31 | 347 |
| Azad Kashmir | 51 | 20 | 2 | - | 3 | 76 |
| Islamabad | 51 | 20 | - | 2 | 3 | 76 |
| Northern Areas | 60 | 2 | 27 | 11 | 3 | 103 |
| Total of Sects | 1,869 | 717 | 161 | 47 | 97 | 2,891 |

Source: Report 1988.

In 1995 the number had grown to 3,906 (Directory 1995: 282) and it is still growing though the Minister of Education, in his reply to a question as to the number of *madrassas*, gave the same number even on 11 November 1997 (Senate 11 November 1997). The *madrassas* follow their own traditional courses with a few, generally minor, changes here and there. In the Sunni *madrassas*, which are in vast majority in Pakistan, a modified form of the *Dars-e-Nizami* is still taught (Sufi 1941 : 73). The duration of the course is between 6 to 17 years from the *Ibtidaiyah* (primary) to the *Takmeel* (*Daura-e-Hadith*) which is now considered equivalent to M.A in Arabic and Islamic Studies. However, a *Maulvi Fazil* who had passed the usual course based on *Dars-e-Nizami* at the *madrassa* was to be given a B.A degree only if he had passed the ordinary B.A examination in English (LAD-P 9 April 1982: 26).

Languages Taught in Madrassas

The focus of education in the *madrassas* is Islam – or, rather, Islam as interpreted by a sect or a sub-sect (Malik 1996). Languages are not taught for their intrinsic worth but because they aid religious learning or may be necessary for a religious scholar. For this purpose Arabic, of course, occupies the centre stage. Persian, which was socially and academically necessary in Muslim India, still forms part of the curriculum. Urdu is generally the medium of instruction in Pakistani *madrassas*. However, in the Pashto-speaking parts of the N.W.F.P, Pashto is the medium of instruction while Sindhi is the medium of instruction in many *madrassas* in the Sindhi-speaking parts of Sindh (Report 1988)¹. Urdu, however, is generally the language in which *madrassa* students become most competent in most of the *madrassas*. English is not taught to all *madrassa* students though the government has been encouraging its teaching as we shall see later. When it is taught, it is taught to very few students (2.87 per cent) and government text books are used for the purpose. See table 2 below for a summary of information on language-teaching in the *madrassas*.

World View Through Text Books

The most striking fact about language-teaching in the *madrassas* is that it is, to use a phrase from A.H. Nayyar, 'frozen in time' (Nayyar, forthcoming). The Arabic books are often those which were used in the medieval age and were prescribed later by Mullah Nizamuddin Sehavi in the middle of the 18th century. (Those marked by asterisks below were part of the original *Dars-e-Nizami*).

The core textbooks of Arabic grammar -- *sarf* and *nahw* -- are shared by all the sects. The following, for instance, are used by *madrassas* of most sects at some level:

| Sarf | Nahw | Literature |
|--|--|--------------------------|
| * <i>Sarf-e-Meer</i> <i>Ilm-ul-Seegha</i> * <i>Fasul-e-Akbari</i> * <i>Munshaib</i> | <i>Nahw-e-Meer</i> <i>Sharah Ibn-e-Aqil</i> * <i>Kafia</i> * <i>Sharh Jami</i> * <i>Sharah-i-Miat Amil</i> | <i>Muqamat-e-Hurairi</i> |

Table 2: Language Teaching in Madrassas – Facts about Schools & Students

| Province/ Area | Number of Madrassas (Number in 1995 & 1997 is given in brackets but is not used for calculating percentages etc) | | Number of Students in 1988 | Schools teaching Persian | Schools teaching English and level of teaching | | Number of students learning English | Schools giving more marks for taking examination in Arabic |
|-------------------|---|------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|-----------------|--|--|
| | (1995) | 1988 | | | Middle Matric Above | | | |
| Punjab | (1886) | 1320 | 206,778 | 779 | Middle Matric Above | 101 78 36 | 6,951 | 510 |
| N.W.F.P FATA | (686) (184) | 678 | 87,707 | 513 | Middle Matric Above | 10 13 8 | 2,608 | 396 |

Continued...

1 The medium of instruction in parts of Sind is Sindhi : At least one madrassa out of a sample of 50 reported using Siraiki in Southern Punjab. All teachers of junior classes use the local language for explanation no matter what the medium of instruction is -- field investigation and survey of 50 madrassas during April – May 1997.

| Province/ Area | Number of Madrassas (Number in 1995 & 1997 is given in brackets but is not used for calculating percentages etc) | | Number of Students in 1988 | Schools teaching Persian | Schools teaching English and level of teaching | | Number of students learning English | Schools giving more marks for taking examination in Arabic |
|-------------------|---|-------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---------------|--|--|
| | (1995) | 1988 | | | | | | |
| Sind | (499) | 291 | 71,239 | 262 | Middle Matric Above | 10 15 8 | 2,529 | 163 |
| Baluchistan | (403) | 347 | 40,390 | 260 | Middle Matric Above | 14 7 6 | 1,139 | 239 |
| Azad Kashmir | (83) | 76 | 43,787 | 22 | Middle Above | 7 6 | 91 | 17 |
| Islamabad | (58) | 76 | 8,258 | 46 | Middle Matric Above | 6 4 1 | 110 | 11 |
| Northern Areas | (107) | 103 | 12,150 | 36 | Middle Matric | 4 1 | 102 | 25 |
| Numbers | (3,906) | 2,891 | 470,309 | 1,918 | | 335 | 13,530 | 1,361 |
| Percentage | | | | 66.34%* | | 11.58%* | 2.87%+ | 47.07* |

Note: * The percentages of schools teaching different languages are based on the 1988 total of 2,891 schools given in chart-1.

+ The percentages of students are also based on the figure of 470,309 for 1988 which has changed to 540,048 in 1995 but the percentage probably still remains valid.

Most of these books were used even earlier than the *Dars-e-Nizami* and they were also prescribed in it. What is striking is that the *madrassas* of Pakistan today still teach many of the *Dars-e-Nizami* texts on Arabic. The oldest books are in Arabic, then come books in Arabic with explanation in Persian and the most modern texts explicate in Urdu.

The Arabic books are treatises on grammar in rhymed couplets. One of the best known among them, *Kafia Ibn-e-Malik*, is so obscure that it is always taught through a commentary called the *Sharah Ibn-e-Aqil*. The commentary is often the dread of students and a source of pride for the teacher who has mastered it. In the *madrassas* Arabic is not taught as a living language. The student is made to memorise the rhymed couplets from the ancient texts as well as their explanations. As the explanations in a number of texts are in Persian, which is also memorized, the student generally fails to apply his knowledge to the living language. Some ancient texts, such as the *Mizbah-ul-Nahw*, are explained in Urdu. But in this case the Urdu is very Arabicized. The explanation is scholastic and would not be understood, let alone convince, somebody who is not familiar with (and convinced by) the special branch of medieval Islamic philosophy on which it is based.

Grammar is divided in *nahw* and *sarf*. *Nahw* is generally translated as syntax. But the beginning of this branch of learning was concern for religious correctness. According to Abdur Rahman a man mispronounced Rasulullah as Rasulillah and the Caliph Umar ordered Abu Al Sood Du'ali to collect the rules of correct pronunciation -- *nahw* (Ahmad n.d). In short, *nahw* referred to pronunciation or, to be more exact, the mispronunciation of segments which could bring unacceptable changes in the meaning. This would be something which modern linguists call morphophonemics -- rules about the pronunciation of units of meaning. However, in time pronunciation has become the concern of *qira'at* -- the art of reciting the Quran -- while books of *nahw* deal with word-order i.e with roughly what may be called syntax.

Sarf is translated as morphology -- the study of the formation of words. But this is not to be understood as the kind of morphology taught by modern linguists trained in the West. Both *sarf* and *nahw* are prescriptive and their underlying aim is not the investigation of language to see how it functions but to preserve it against change. The standard of correctness is, of course, classical Arabic and the idea of teaching grammatical texts is to create a defensive mechanism which would prevent any deviation from the linguistic rules found therein.

The following chart gives a general idea of the languages taught in the *madrassas*:

Table 3: Sect-wise Information on Language-Teaching in Madrassas

| Sect | Year of study | Languages Taught | Comments on texts |
|--------------|---------------|---|--|
| Deobandi | 16 | Urdu, Arabic, Persian | Upto 8 th class government textbooks are used. After that, traditional Arabic and Persian ones are taught. Only Arabic is taught after 8th. |
| Barelvi | 8 | Arabic, Persian | Except in the Persian course for the first year, traditional Arabic textbooks are used till the 6 th year. |
| Ahl-e-Hadith | 6 | Arabic, Optional English from level 9th to 12th | Traditional textbooks begin in the first year (equivalent to class 9) and M.A. Arabic textbooks are used for composition (<i>Insha</i>) in the last two years. |
| Shia | | Arabic, Persian | The beginning year (equivalent of class 6) as well as classes 7&8 have government textbooks of Persian and Arabic. Above that level traditional Arabic texts are taught with more emphasis on Arabic literature than in the other schools. |

Change in Language-Teaching and Threat to World View

In British India the *madrassas* were a response to the dominance of the West. The essence of this response was to create a little oasis of orthodoxy in the midst of the heterodoxy created by the 'colonial' sector (to use Jamal Malik's term). But so powerful, clearly structured and efficient was the modern sector that the *ulema* could not totally resist its intrusion even into the *madrassas* which were supposed to lock the modern world out. There were, therefore, many concessions to modernity. For one, the examination system was established at Darul uloom Deoband and the Nadwat ul Ulema -- the primary *madrassas* of Muslim India. The other, and even more significant, was the way Urdu -- a language promoted by the British state in the domains of formal learning -- replaced Persian in the *madrassas*. Indeed, the *ulema* adapted Urdu not only for teaching but for writing their sermons and tracts to the extent that Urdu became associated with Islam in South Asia (Metcalf 1982: 206-210, 215). Indeed, even the Burmese Muslims claimed it as an Islamic language and argued that their religious books were written in it (EII 1930: 42).

The British state ignored the *madrassas* but its policy of not giving high-status jobs to the *maulanas* effectively led to their having a low social status. The Pakistani state continued this policy but, as Jamal Malik argues, also tried to 'colonialize' them. By 'colonialization' Malik means that 'the regime not only expands into hitherto untouched areas and thus colonizes them, as, for example shrines and religious schools, but also aims at traditionalizing colonial structures such as the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) and the Zakat system' (Malik 1996: 24). This policy expands the power of the state in hitherto untouched sectors thus changing their nature. But such a policy, one could also argue, also Islamizes the society. Thus, in the attempt to incorporate the *madrassas* and other Islamic institutions the state recognised and disseminated values which resulted in a higher acceptance of the values of the *ulema* by people not educated in *madrassas*

The Madrassas in Pakistan

The first regime which tried to integrate the *madrassas* was the military regime of Ayub Khan (1958-1969). The regime was modernist, authoritarian and centrist (i.e it wanted a strong centre). Ayub Khan's Commission on National Education emphasized Urdu and English. At the secondary level, indeed, English was recommended as the alternative medium of instruction (the other being Arabic). The relevant changes proposed by the Commission are as follows:

Table 4:

| Ibtedayyah | Thanawi Tahtoni | Thanawi Wastani | Thanawi Fawqani | Al'la |
|---|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 5 years | 3 years | 2 years | 2 years | 3 years |
| 1-5 class | 6-8 class | 9-10 class | 11-12 class | 13-15 class |
| Language texts used in government schools | Modern Arabic Literature, English, Urdu | English (Urdu as optional). | Modern Arabic Literature, English. | English as an additional subject |

Source: Report 1962 in Malik 1996 : Table II, p. 127

The emphasis on English was meant to introduce the *ulema* to the modern world. The function of modern Arabic literature was also the same. Moreover, both Urdu and English would be taught through the texts prepared by the official Textbook Boards. They would have lessons on nationalism and one of their aims would be to create a modern citizen and a Pakistani nationalist. Moreover, if the *ulema* learnt to read English, arguably some of them would encounter alien philosophies such as socialism, human rights, feminism and liberal democracy on their own rather than through the polemical refutations of these philosophies taught to them in their final year. In short, as the *ulema* realised, changes in language-teaching threatened their world view. Not surprisingly, then, they opposed them strongly and the reforms 'were translated into action in a limited way' (Report 1962 in Malik 1996: 128) -- so 'limited' indeed that the average *madrassa* student still has a medieval perception of the world: that it is divided into believers and non-believers and that the latter are enemies.

The common perception of educated people in Pakistan is that Ayub Khan tried to integrate the *madrassa*, as it were, from the outside while Zia ul Haq (1977-1988), the champion of Islamization in Pakistan, tried the same from the inside. Among other things Zia ul Haq used the mosques to spread literacy. In 1984-85 the Iqra Centres were launched by the Literacy and Mass Education Campaign (LAMEC). These centres, established in mosques and *madrassas*, were required to teach Urdu. The teacher or his delegate was supposed to be an *alim*. He 'would have to know Islamic injunctions and act accordingly' (Malik 1996: 274) -- which, of course, was superfluous for an *alim* but ensured that his delegate could only be an orthodox, practising Muslim.

But Zia ul Haq was not an insider of the *madrassa* system. However Islamic in his views, he was a product of the colonial sector. Thus, his aims were modern : the spread of literacy; nation-building; integration; using Islam as a symbol of unity; creation of an educated national work force and so on. That is why Jamal Malik's thesis that all governments, including that of Zia ul Haq, try to colonialize Islam seems credible. This 'colonialization' changes the world view of the *ulema*. It grafts new ideas, such as that of nationalism on traditional beliefs. The state believes that nothing should remain outside the ambit of its overriding ideology nationalism, and incorporating it with Islam is a way of making it palatable for the *madrassas*.

One thing, however, which Malik has not mentioned in this context is that in this process the medieval institution transforms the colonial sector too. The Pakistani state's emphasis on Islamic texts in state-controlled schools, for instance, has made vernacular-educated urban Pakistanis more receptive to the ideas of the *madrassas* than before. So, spreading literacy through the *ulema* (or people like them), would arguably make people more open to orthodox opinions than before. The employment of the *ulema* as teachers of Arabic (especially in the NWFP and Balochistan) when it was made compulsory in 1982, again by Zia ul Haq, also meant that more students in state schools came in contact with orthodox views. This means that the effort to bring the *madrassa* in the mainstream, the process of 'colonialization' or integration, has brought about less change in the world view of the products of the *madrassas* than in that of the non-Westernized part of Pakistani urban society. That is perhaps why so many Pakistanis are now prone to seeing the 'other' in religious terms leading to attacks on other sects, minorities and people dubbed as blasphemers or heretics.

Change from Within

Not all of the *ulema* condemn all change. Many feel that changes in language-teaching should be encouraged. Among these changes is the proposed reform in the teaching of Arabic. Maulana Abdul Majid Nadwi, a writer and compiler of Arabic texts, writes as follows:

This is a very surprising and incomprehensible thing that some individual or group should spend a large part of their lives and their mental capabilities in studying compositions written in the Arabic language but still remain entirely incapable of expressing themselves in it. This experiment in languages is only the characteristic of the Arabic *madrassas* and learned councils of India (Nadwi 1953: 9).

In Pakistan, the Institute of Policy Studies, an organization of the Jama'at-i-Islami, too emphasizes change. Some people subjected the old Arabic texts to criticism on the grounds that they were very abstruse and old fashioned. Syed Mohammad Nazim Nadwi pointed out that when Nadwa was established some people wanted to prescribe books as outdated and obscure as *Muslim ul uloom* (Nadwi, N 1987: 183). Such texts, the reformers pointed out, encouraged memorization. But a substantial number of the *ulema* wanted just that. They opposed reform on the grounds that there would be a dilution of the Islamic canon and that, in the name of reform, the modern world would steal in (IPS 1987). In any case the Jama'at is a revivalist (Nasr 1996), not an orthodox, party which accepted Ayub Khan's proposals about changes in the curricula of the *madrassas* in 1959 (Malik 1996) despite opposition to his government otherwise.

However, despite the resistance to reform among the orthodox *ulema*, some aspects of the modern world view have crept in through the modern texts. In the Deobandi schools, Urdu is taught through the government textbooks till the equivalent of class 8th. This means that the messages of Pakistani nationalism, glorification of war and the military and some cognizance of the modern world becomes part of the students' world view. In the equivalent of class-12 the *Muallim ul Insha*, written by an Indian *alim*, is used. This book, by its very emphases and choice of topics, reveals itself to be a response, however reactionary, to modernity. Being a response it is in dialogue with modernity and does not live in a world which simply ignores it. For instance, whereas the ancient books never felt it necessary to prescribe an Islamic form of behaviour as it was not in dispute or under threat, this one does. Typical sentences from *Muallim ul Insha* are as follows:

1. These girls have been ordered to put on the veil and they have been stopped from going to the *bazaar*.
2. You women are really ungrateful to your husbands (Nadwi 1953 : 1) (My translation from Urdu).

There is also some emphasis on militarism, also missing in the medieval texts. The choice of sentences was, according to the author, meant for those who would later be 'soldiers of Islam' (Nadwi 1953: 11). Some sentences promote glorification of conquest while others are anti-British:

3. Tariq Bin Ziyad conquered Andalusia.
4. The English were always the enemies of Islam (My translation from Urdu).

Egypt is often presented as a corrupt, licentious country where men and women meet freely and wine is imbibed (Nadwi 1954, Vol. 2 : 126). This is in keeping with the *madrassas* having taken up a more active role after the 1950s than before in the Islamic revivalist movement. Upto the middle of the twentieth century, as mentioned earlier, the *madrassas* were mostly concerned with the preservation of the past. Having a besieged mentality they buried themselves in the past and shunned change as the source of the greatest danger. After that, especially because of the rise of revivalist Islamic movements in Pakistan, Egypt, Iran and elsewhere, the *madrassas* have started incorporating some aspects of revivalism -- strict adherence to the *shari'ah* and militancy -- in their curricula.

It is because of this that some compilers, such as Abdul Majid Nadwi, go so far as to suggest that the *Muqamat-e-Hariri*, a prose work which has, for centuries, been and still is part of curricula for Arabic prose is no longer relevant for the present-day *alim*. Criticizing the traditional *alim* Nadwi says that he would consider it easier to express himself in poetry than in prose though this is unnatural (Nadwi 1954, Vol. 2 : 16). That is why his own text book contains essays on Qutub Minar, Deoband, Nadwa and so on (Nadwi 1955).

In the IPS seminar a number of ulema pointed out that the *madrassas* emphasize sectarianism -- a point brought out in detail by A.H. Nayyar -- and that, among other things, they should promote 'the ideology of Pakistan' in addition to theological learning (Hashmi 1987). But the *ulema* have generally resisted the state's attempts to turn them into 'instruments of nationalism' (Malik 1996: 175) as we have seen. Thus, even at this seminar some of the *ulema* even opposed the teaching of English until the students had completed their studies (Kakakhel 1987: 211) and most of them did not agree with any major change in their teaching.

The Teaching of Persian

Persian lingers on in the *madrassas* mainly because they are conservative. It is no longer the language of learning and the secular system of education has discarded it but the *madrassas* still teach it, though at a much reduced level, because they are resistant to change. Actually, Persian was often a source of embarrassment for some of the more puritanical *ulema* after the reformist zeal of Shah Waliullah and his disciples in India. During the heyday of Persian, the *madrassas* also taught Persian literature. In 1551 Abdul Haqq of Dehli studied the *Bostan*, *Gulistan* of Sa'adi as well as the *Dewan* of Hafiz before learning the Arabic texts from his father Sheikh Saif Uddin (Sufi 1941: 56-57).

The Persian schools, of course, taught much more Persian literature. But even if the *madrassas* did not, the *Gulistan* and *Bostan* had chapters on love, especially on love of boys. Poetry was, indeed, suspected by the *ulema* and there is a religious decree of a Deoband *alim* who blames poets for having 'fanned the flames' of unnatural lust (Zafeer Uddin, 1965: 37). Drinking wine, asking for kisses, desiring the beloved -- however

much they might by metaphors for the mystic desire for union with an immanent deity -- could not but focus the minds of the students on the aesthetic and erotic aspects of life. That is why the *ulema* were ambivalent towards Persian literature.

The books which they did approve of, and which remain necessary texts even now, were Attar's *Pand Nama*, *Nam-e-Haq* and Sa'adi's *Karima*. These books are didactic and they are in Persian rhymed couplets. Although they are 'safe' from the *ulema's* point of view, being about morality, this morality is strictly medieval and patriarchal. Both *Pand Nama* and *Karima* approve of hospitality and condemn miserliness. In both silence is a virtue and spontaneous talking is not. In both women are inferior, untrustworthy and alluring as, indeed, are beardless boys. Both belong to a male world confident in its superiority. Women are faithless and the wise must suspect them. As *Pand Nama* has it:

Awal az zan aashtan chashm-e-wafa
Soda dil ra bas khata bashad khata

(At first men hope for faith from women. Understand that giving one's heart to women is a mistake; a great mistake).

and *Karima*, *Gulistan* and *Bostan*, the basic texts which are taught in *madrassas*, reinforce this attitude.

Nam-e-Haq is different, being about cleanliness, ablutions, prayers and other rituals. In a way all these books complement one another. The reality of the world view in the other books is supported by the rituals which are part of the faith. That is probably why the *ulema* feel that any idea challenging their patriarchal world view is a danger to the faith itself.

According to teachers of *madrassas*, the parts of the *Gulistan* and *Bostan* dealing with love are not taught nowadays². Chapter-5 of the *Gulistan*, which contains love stories, is not part of the curricula at all. The other books too are taught through rote learning. In the end, the products of *madrassas* can neither write nor speak modern Persian. In the Shia *madrassas* too, although the textbooks of Persian are those prescribed for classes 6 and 7 in government schools, there is no special emphasis on the language. Indeed, the traditional Persian texts are not prescribed as they are in the Sunni *madrassas*. In short, the teaching of Persian is meant to keep a symbolic link of continuity with tradition. That is why only the traditional texts, the ones which were used in medieval India, are used in most *madrassas* while modern Persian literature is ignored. Persian, like all the other languages, is meant to reinforce the *ulemas'* world view not to disrupt it.

Other Pakistani Languages

As mentioned earlier, the *madrassas* use Pashto, and in some parts of Sindh, Sindhi, as media of instruction. They also use other Pakistani languages which the state never uses in its own institutions. Among these languages are Punjabi, Siraiki and Hindko. At the basic level teachers use the local language because pupils understand no other. This, however, is not peculiar to *madrassas* since teachers in state schools also use local languages to explain points. What is different from the state institutions is that some *madrassas* report teaching Punjabi as an additional language. In south Punjab, in the Siraiki area, some respondents (*Madrassa ulema*) took pride in Siraiki saying that it was their identity³.

2 Interview of Persian teachers of *madrassas* during the above survey.

3 Remarks of 3 respondents (out of 10) to the question : 'Do you teach any of the local languages in your institution?' in the above survey in Southern Punjab.

In Sind the Deoband *ulema* seem to have supported Sindhi nationalism (Malik 1996: 216). The Barelvis, who also teach English, are also accommodating towards the other languages. At the intermediate level they offer Sindhi, Kashmiri, Siraiki, Punjabi, Balochi and Pashto. However, the books for these languages come from the state (Ibid 173). Are we then to conclude that, while the *ulema* resist Pakistani or state-imposed nationalism, they support ethnic nationalism? This, however, would not be true even for the Deobandis who are reported to have supported Sindhi nationalism. What is plausible is that the *ulema*, in reaction to the Westernized state, support what the common people find congenial -- their own languages. The *ulema* are from the poor classes, the classes which speak local languages most of the time, and their sympathy with these languages is a carryover of their class attitudes. It is unlikely that the *ulema* support ethnic nationalism any more than state nationalism. Their apparent support of Sindhi nationalism could be seen as a populist reaction to the alienation of the common people from the state everywhere but especially in Sindh.

Conclusion

Language-teaching in the Pakistani *madrassas* is part of indoctrination. It complements other doctrinaire subjects supporting, reproducing and reinforcing their philosophical import. This world view sees social reality in terms of faith. The 'other', then, is the non-Muslim, the heretic, the blasphemer and even the follower of another sect or a Westernized non-practising Muslim.

During British rule the 'other' was ignored or excommunicated. Since the creation of Pakistan the *ulema* have tried to empower themselves at the expense of the 'other'. In recent years, especially since the Islamic revolution in Iran and the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, this process of self-empowerment has become militant or, at the very least, much more aggressive and self-confident than before. The teaching of new languages could put dents, as it were, in the orthodox armoury of the *madrassas*. That is why it is resisted and the *madrassas* continue to uphold their traditional ways in the teaching of languages.

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