

Sectarian landscape, Madrasas and Militancy in Punjab

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Abstract

In Punjab more than 50% people are traditional Ahl-e-Sunnat or Brelvis. They are mystical and ritualistic and show extreme reverence and respect for Holy Prophet and saints. Second in number are Deobandis, a sub-sect of Ahl-e-Sunnat who challenge the mystical and ritualistic views of traditional Sunnis. However both follow fiqah of Imam Abu Hanifa. Third in term of population are Ahl-e-Tashi who follow the fiqah of Imam Ja'fir Sadiq. Fourth in number are Ahl-e-Hadith, another sub-sect of Ahl-e-Sunnat, who do not follow any specific fiqah and are dubbed as ghairmuqqallid or Wahabis by others. Ahl-e-Hadith are slightly less than Ahl-e-Tashi in the province. Sect based violence in Punjab was high in 1980s when Sunni-oriented ASS had armed clashes with Ahl-e-Tashi's SMP. Iranian revolution, Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and enforcement of martial law in Pakistan created a nexus of factors wherein interests of various domestic and foreign players clashed with each other. Military government with the assistance of oil rich Gulf States promoted a particular sect while Iran assisted their rivals. Since then the issue of sectarianism assumed prominence in internal security paradigm. Side by side mushrooming of madrasas also took place. Regulated by madrasa boards established on sectarian basis, these madrasas promote sectarianism both by default and by design. Though Brelvis have more madrasas than those of all others yet theirs are less in ratio than their population. Deobandis are the only sect who has phenomenally more madrasas than their ratio of population. Some of the madrasas of these sects are suspected to have links with militancy in one form or other. Most of such madrasas are being run by Deobandis while very few by other three sects. Each of these sects has their khateeb, who through fiery speeches spread hatred against rival sects and fan sectarianism. An astonishing number of such khateeb belongs to Deobandi sect, followed by Ahl-e-Hadith, Brelvis and Ahl-e-Tashi respectively.

Key words: Ahl-e-Sunnat, Ahl-e-Hadith, Ahl-e-Tashi, Brelvis, Deobandis, Wahabis, Shia, Madrasas, Khateeb, Sectarianism, Fiqah

Introduction

The convergence of sectarianism, extremism and militancy has assumed monstrous proportions in Pakistan and has been feeding terrorism since long. Since 2001, when Pakistan joined the US led international war on terror, there

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has been a significant deterioration in internal security situation. Particularly, the July 2007 Lal Masjid incident resulted in intensified militant activities throughout Pakistan including assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in December 2008. Thousands of people have been killed in terrorist attacks. After the launch of military operation *Rah-e-Rast* in Swat, militants have attacked major cities like Lahore and Peshawar, and termed the attacks as retaliation to the operation. The roots of militancy in Pakistan are traced to many socio-political factors. Social deprivation and social inequalities, poverty and illiteracy, drug-smuggling, Afghan refugees, religious exploitation through madrasas and provocative khateebes, and external factors like interplay of power politics at the international and regional levels and activities of hostile intelligence agencies all have had their share in spreading militancy in Pakistan. Before the start of the US led war on terror and especially before 2007 Lal Masjid operation in Islamabad, the terrorist activities were mainly attributed to foreign elements, Afghan groups or Pakhtoon Taliban. Later a group of militants known as Punjabi Taliban came to fore. Though the Punjab Government denied existence of any such group in Punjab, fingers were raised on Punjab based sectarian militant groups particularly those having their presence in South Punjab- being dubbed as hub of terrorists and their sympathizers (The Express Tribune, 2010). An internal security analyst in one of his articles stated, "it is actually Punjab that had turned into the main center of militancy and religious extremism. Most of the banned militant and sectarian outfits have their base in the province." (Hussain, 2014). Basically these were sectarian-turned-jehadi groups who had established their links with FATA based militants and were being identified as Punjabi Taliban. Most of the analysts are of the view that the roots of Punjabi Taliban go to sectarian groups like SSP, LeJ and JeM. (Hussain, 2009). Earlier in 1980s Punjab has been a battle ground of sectarian fight between Deobandi oriented ASS and Shia oriented SMP. The situation warrants a detailed study of distribution of different sects, their madrasas and activities of their *ulema* and *khateebes* in the province. This paper is an attempt to carve out a comparative sectarian scenario along with number of madrasas of each sect, madrasas which are suspected to have links with militants and number of Khateebes of each sects who are involved in fanning sectarianism through their hate-mongering and fiery speeches in each administrative division of Punjab which will be basic unit of analysis. First I will look into percentagewise population of each sect in a division showing which of the four sects is numerically bigger and which is smaller with relative position of each. This will help draw a sectarian landscape of the province. Later I will move towards number of madrasas of each sect in a division. The relevant percentage of madrasas of a particular sect will be compared to the percentage of population of that sect in that division and finally in the province. A look would also be cast on sect-wise number of madrasas suspected to have links with militancy. Then I will move to number

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of khateebis fanning sectarianism stating their sect with their residential division. This will draw a picture depicting which sect is more radicalized and which areas are more sectarianism prone. The data used in this paper are mostly gathered by the staff of law enforcement and intelligence agencies for their use in connection with maintenance of law and order and official record and may not be completely free of biases. These data are being used here due to very limited other options. No population data with sectarian identities is available with Population Census Organization of Pakistan.

Sectarian scenario

In Punjab, population is more concentrated in the central divisions i.e. Lahore, Faisalabad, Sheikhpura, Gujranwala and Sahiwal while Southern and North Western divisions of Multan, Bahawalpur, D G Khan, Sargodha and Rawalpindi are relatively thinner populated. No official data collected or maintained by Census Organization of Pakistan on sectarian identities is available as the state prefers not to make any distinction on sectarian basis. Unofficial estimates indicate that in whole of the country Ahl-e-Sunnat are from 75 to 80 percent and Shias from 15 to 20 percent. Ahl-e-Sunnat can further be divided in three main categories i.e. Brelvis, Deobandis and Ahl-e-Hadith. Some analysts take revivalists (of Jamaat-e-Islami) as fourth sub-sect of Sunnis in Pakistan. (Crisis Group Asia Report, 2005). However, if analyzed on sectarian criteria we find that JI is not a sectarian organization, rather it is a political party and most of its members espouse the beliefs practiced by Deobandis and/or Ahl-e-Hadith sects.

What is called Shia-Sunni conflict especially in Punjab is actually a Deobandi-Shia tussle as Deobandis use the term Sunnis for themselves. In their anti-Shia stance they are supported by Ahl-e-Hadith as well. They have even renamed their party (Sipah-e-Sahaba) as Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) to which Brelvis object and insist that they are Deobandis or Wahabis not Sunnis. Brelvis claim to be real Ahl-e-Sunnat. Brelvis and Deobandis both are Hanfies and follow the same school of fiqah but they differ in theological interpretations of injunctions. Their differences stem from their understanding of the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ. Deobandis take him as a model man to be emulated. To Brelvis he ﷺ is bestowed with special powers and status which make him unique who must be venerated and followed. They embrace such beliefs as devotion to shrines, celebration of auspicious days and veneration of graves of saints etc. For Deobandis veneration of Prophet constitutes associating him a partner to Allah (shirk). (Alam, 2008). Initially their differences started on some statements and pieces of writings of Deobandi Ulema to which Maulana Ahmad Reza of Braili objected. Later

these differences led to development of groups leading to separate sects. A century and a half ago, almost all Sunnis of South Asia were espousing beliefs and practicing rituals like those who are today termed as Brelvis. (Amritsari, 1938). They also have differing views about Sufism that have been prevalent in South Asia for centuries before formation of Pakistan or emergence of sects like Deobandis and Brelvis. The Brelvi school is associated with this order and tries to promote the religion of saints and shrine culture. They believe that blessings can be obtained from the shrines of holy prophet and other saints. All the shrines of holy saints and their progeny are kept in high esteem and reverence by them. It is pertinent to make here clear that many of the Brelvis do not use the title of Brelvi for themselves. They call themselves Ahl-e-Sunnat or Sunnis as most of them are neither students nor *mureeds* (disciples) of the line of Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan of Brelvi. However, if called Brelvi they do not mind. The word Brelvi has been derived from the name of a North Indian town Brelvi, where Imam Ahmad Raza Khan established a religious school named Dar-ul-Uloom Manzar-e-Islam in 1904 mainly to impart religious education to Muslim youth, save them from corrupt practices and counter the influence of Wahabi movement on traditional Sunnis. Deobandis to a large extent and Ahl-e-Hadith to the full extent reject and oppose such Brelvi beliefs and practices and terms these as *shirk* and *bidah*. They also dismiss traditional marriage and death rites being practiced in South Asia for centuries. Traditional multi-cultural practices are held as un-Islamic by them. Brelvis condemn such attitude of Deobandis and Ahl-e-Hadith as disrespectful, arrogant, impudent and insolent. Such differences initially started as different intellectual points of view on interpretation of various religious injunctions but over the time they evolved into sectarian groups, political parties and extremist organizations.

The title of Deobandi was derived from the name of an Indian town Deoband situated in district Saharanpur of Uttar Pradesh, where a religious school or Dar-ul-Uloom was established by Maulana Qasim Nanautvi (1833-1877) and Maulana Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi (1829-1905) in 1867 with the aim to preserve Islamic culture and train Muslim youth in Islamic teachings in the wake of debacle of 1857 which resulted in complete subjugation of India by the British. Founders of Deoband movement sought to purify Islam from mystical beliefs of folk Islam associated with saints and prophets. Since independence in 1947 Deobandis have become more strident in opposing mystical practices. (Fair, 2009). In recent years two sub-sects of Deobandis have come to fore. These are *Mammatis* (believer in death of Holy Prophet) and *Hayatis* (believer in life of Holy Prophet in the other world). Every sect is striving to accumulate the largest number of followers. They keep trying to persuade more and more persons to follow their school of thought. Since Zia-ul-Haq era Deobandis and Ahl-e-Hadith have succeeded to make some

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inroads at the expense of majority Brelvi sect with blessings of Pakistani government and finances provided by oil rich Wahabi-oriented Gulf states. Notwithstanding number factor, assertive presence in madrasa sector, dexterity and rich experience in religious publications, sophisticated organizational structure and assertive attitude in political discourse have helped Deobandi sect emerge as the most articulate and politically dominant representative of Sunnis.

Ahl-e-Hadith are also a sub-sect of Ahl-e-Sunnat but distinguish themselves from other Sunnis of Pakistan who are mainly followers of Hanfi school of thought. While rival sects call them *Ghair Muqqalid* (those who do not follow any Imam of fiqha) or *Wahabis*, they themselves use the term Ahl-e-Hadith for themselves, which their prominent scholar Maulvi Muhammad Hussain Batalvi got approved from British Government in 1887. (Batalvi, 1887). They claim to seek guidance direct from Hadith and Sunna (traditions of Holy Prophet). This sect was influenced by the Wahabi movement of Arabia and was introduced in Indo-Pakistan subcontinent in nineteenth century by elite religious scholars like Maulvi Nazir Hussain Dehlvi, Shah Ismael Dehlvi and Nawab Siddiq Hassan Khan Bhopali. They ardently oppose folk traditions that Brelvis practice including death anniversaries, mystical beliefs and distribution of food on religious occasions. After oil boom of 1970s Arab states and affluent individuals generously supported Ahl-e-Hadith in Pakistan. Many new masajid and madrasas were set up by Pakistani Ahl-e-Hadith with the financial help of Arabs. (Rahman, 2008).

Ahl-e-Tashi are altogether a different sect, other than Sunnis. They follow the fiqha of Imam Ja'fir Sadiq, grandson of Ali bin Hussain bin Ali popularly known as Imam Zayn-ul-Abiddeen. There are various sub-sects of Ahl-e-Tahsi but in Punjab (Pakistan) almost all are Ithna-e-Ashri. (believers in twelve imams) with a small population of Bohras and Ismaelias. Ahl-e-Tashi came to India from Iran during Mughal period and since then they have been living here side by side with Sunnis in almost peace and harmony. Shias started to assert themselves as a religious and political entity after Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, which was in essence a Shia revolution. Revolutionary regime promised to export its revolutionary Shia ideas to other Muslim states. (Haqqani, 2009). Getting inspiration and moral support from Iran, Pakistani Shias aggressively started to articulate and put forward their demands at national level. In addition to Iranian revolution, Zia's sponsorship and preference to Deobandis and their madaris in respect of government jobs, official grants, Zakat funds, places in government consultative bodies forced other sects especially Shias and Brelvis to strive for protection of their rights. One single incident which encouraged Shias to assert themselves and articulate demands was opposition of Shia community to enforcement of Zakat Ordinance by Zia-ul-

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Haq Government in 1980. In July they converged to Islamabad from all over the country and marched toward PakSecretariat to express their opposition to the law. The demonstration was organized by newly formed Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah Jafria (TNFJ). This was an unprecedented show of strength which forced the government to exempt Shias from payment of Zakat. Encouraged and emboldened they started to represent a much more ambitious vision than was initially envisaged. Opponents alleged that TNFJ wanted to get Shia law enforced on Sunnis too in a bid to import the influences of Iranian revolution. (Zaman, 1998).

Deobandis and Ahl-e-Hadith are more vehemently opposed to Shia beliefs and practices than Brelvis who are traditionally more tolerant of Shia rituals and even some times participate in these activities. However, with the rise of radicalization and khateeb's rabble rousing sectarian identities are becoming more and more prominent with diminishing gray area. Such plurality representing and all inclusive occasions are becoming rare. (Crisis Group, Asia Report, 2005).

Table 1 shows population of each division with estimated percentage of population distribution on sect basis. Though the official data depicting sectarian distribution in the province is not available, this distribution is based on personal estimates of officials of provincial and local governments.

Table 1: Division-wise sectarian landscape in Punjab

Division	Total Population	% of Brelvis	% of Deobandis	% of Ahle Hadith	% of Ahle Tashi	% of Others
Lahore	12636625	55.00	16.00	13.00	10.00	6.00
Sheikhupura	7358300	47.67	18.67	20.00	8.67	5.00
Rawalpindi	8480522	51.25	21.75	7.25	16.75	2.50
Sargodha	6308817	46.88	28.75	5.75	17.50	1.13
Gujranwala	14173713	65.33	16.67	8.50	7.33	2.17
Faisalabad	12069421	53.25	23.00	5.75	15.50	2.50
Sahiwal	5361159	56.67	19.33	15.00	6.33	2.67
Multan	13365750	53.13	25.93	10.08	8.50	2.38
D. G. Khan	8017056	50.25	23.75	13.38	10.69	1.94
Bahawalpur	10880339	54.67	30.33	5.67	7.33	2.00
Total	98651702	53.41	22.42	10.44	10.86	2.83

Source: i. Population Census Organization of Pakistan
ii. Record of government of the Punjab

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A look on table 1 reveals that out of 98.65 million people living in Punjab, 53.4% are Brelvis. They are the single largest sect in the province. A detailed analysis of the table shows that the maximum percentage of Brelvis is living in Gujranwala division, where they are 65.3% and minimum in Sargodha where they are 46.8 %.

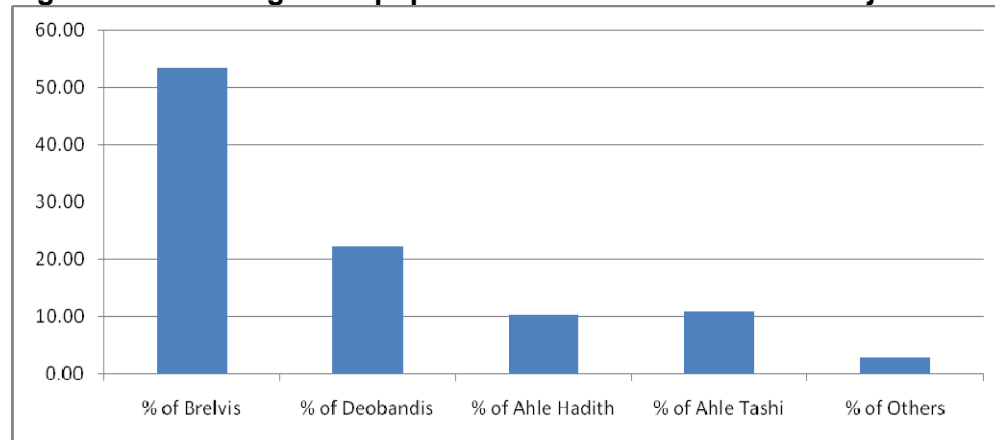
Next are Deobandis, who are 22.4% of the total population of the Punjab. They also call them Ahle Sunnat but are happy to be identified as Deobandis and are proud of this title. Deobandis are in large proportion in Bahawalpur division, where they are about 30.33%, followed by Sargodha division with 28.75% and Multan division with 25.93% strength. They are least in Gujranwala division where they are 16.67% of total population.

Ahl-e-Hadith are 10.44% of total population of the province and are more concentrated in Sheikhpura division where they are 20% of the population, followed by 15% in Sahiwal and 13.38% in DG Khan division. They are least in Bahawalpur division where their strength is 5.67% of the total population.

Ahl-e-Tashi are slightly more than Ahl-e-Hadith being 10.86% of total population of the province. They are more concentrated in Sargodha division where they are 17.50% of the population followed by Rawalpindi division where they are 16.75% and Faisalabad where they are 15.50%. They are least in Sahiwal division where their strength is 6.33% of total population.

If prioritized on population basis, Brelvis are on the top followed by Deobandis, then come Ahl-e-Tashi and last are Ahl-e-Hadith. Figure 1 shows comparative sectarian population in Punjab.

Figure 1: Percentage-wise population of different sects in Punjab



Madrasas in Punjab

Though the madrasa institution existed in Indo-Pakistan subcontinent since pre-British period, it developed into a modern institute of Islamic learning in reaction to domination of British education system in India after the failed war of independence of 1857. Basically it was a politically oriented move to protect and promote Islamic values which were under threat from domineering European culture. With the passage of time the madrasa sector developed into organized groups of institutions representing different sectarian and ideological positions and political affiliations. (Borchgrevink, 2011). After independence, madrasa institution further developed and they started to organize themselves in Madrasa Boards (Wafaqs) to register and accredit madrasas of their relevant sect, devise curriculum, conduct examination and issue certificates. Madrasas in Pakistan are considered by many a people as welfare institutions providing education, boarding and lodging to the needy students who otherwise cannot afford joining formal education schools. Number of madrasas increased steadily after independence, however their mushrooming took place in late 1970s and 1980s mainly during Zia-ul-Haq's martial law, because of anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan and increased interest of state to support a certain religious group to carry on a proxy war in Held Kashmir. The Saudi based Haramain Islamic Foundation also supported Ahl-e-Hadith, financed establishment of madrasas and made them powerful. (Rahman, 2008). During this period a big development took place, which is usually ignored by researchers. For the first time in the history of the country, the degree of Dars-e-Nizami which is awarded by madrasa boards was declared at par with the Master's degree awarded by public universities. This development opened ways for entry of madrasa graduates in government services especially in the army of Pakistan as non-commissioned officers and Khateebes. (Hussain, n.d).

These madaris are organized under various Madrasa Borads, called Wafaq or Tanzeem, on sectarian and political lines. This is the root cause of politicization and sectarianism emanating from these madrasas. There are five madrasa boards, of which four are run by sectarian oriented organizations and one by a political party. There is an umbrella organization overarching these boards, called *Ittehad-e-Tanzeemat-e-Madaris-e-Deeniya*.

Table 2: Madrasa Boards in Pakistan

Sr. No.	Name of Board	Established In	Headquartered At	Sect/Party
1	Tanzeem-ul-Madaris Ahl-e-Sunnat-wal-Jamaat	1959	Karachi	Ahl-e-sunnat (Brelvi)
2	Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arbia	1959	Multan	Deobandi
3	Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Salfia	1955	Faisalabad	Ahl-e-Hadith
4	Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Shia	1960	Lahore	Ahl-e-Tashi
5	Rabita-tul-Madaris Al-Islamia	1983	Mansoor, Lahore	Jamaat-e-Islami

In 1947 there were total 137 madaris in Pakistan, the number rose to 401 in 1960. In 1971 there were 893 madaris, increasing to 1745 in 1979 and to about 3000 in 1988. (Crisis Group, 2005). According to one estimate at present the number of madrasas is around 35000. The unregulated madaris in FATA which are not affiliated with any of the five boards of ITMD are in addition to this tally. In Punjab all the five madrasa boards have their separate networks of madaris. The province has a vast mosque-madrasa network operated by multiple groups, some of them have links militant outfits. (DAWN, 2015). At present about 12000 madaris exist only in Punjab. Table 3 gives a picture of number of madaris of each sect in each division of the province. In this respect Multan division is at top with 1895 madaris followed by Bahawalpur division with 1618 and then Faisalabad with 1372 madaris. Lahore with total 603 madaris is at the bottom. If sect-wise analyzed Brelvis are at the top with 5584 madaris in whole of the province, followed by Deobandis with 4636 then Ahl-e-Hadith with 779 while Shias have 195 madaris in total in Punjab. In Bahawalpur and Rawalpindi divisions Deobandis have more Madaris than those of even Brelvis and in Sargodha they are very near behind Brelvis. If percentage of madaris of a particular sect to total number of madaris in Punjab is compared to percentage of their population in the province, Deobandis are on the top in this regard. They are 22.4% of total population of the province, while their madaris are 41.4% of total madaris. Hence ratio of their madaris to total madaris is almost double than ratio of their population to total population. Population of Brelvis is 53.4% of total population, while their madaris are about 50% of total madaris. Ahl-e-Hadith have 10.4% population, while their madaris are 7% and Ahl-e-Tashi are 10.80% of total population and their madaris are 1.74%.

Table 3: Division and sect-wise number of madrasas in Punjab

Sr. No.	District	Brelvi	Deobandi	Ahle Hadith	Ahle Tashi	Total
1.	Lahore	336	179	79	9	603
2.	Sheikhupura	336	171	126	6	639
3.	Gujranwala	633	369	95	16	1113
4.	Rawalpindi	387	424	16	20	847
5.	Faisalabad	675	566	108	23	1372
6.	Sargodha	461	442	32	36	971
7.	Multan	944	834	102	15	1895
8.	Sahiwal	458	327	119	7	911
9.	D.G.Khan	605	547	30	43	1225
10.	Bahawalpur	749	777	72	20	1618
	Total	5584	4636	779	195	11194

Source: Record of government of the Punjab, Lahore.

Madrasas and militancy

Initially madaris were formed to impart religious education to enable students to guide general public in religious matters and lead prayers in masajid. However, in Pakistan these are regulated and governed by sectarian organizations and their boards are sect oriented, each madressa now has adopted a particular sectarian line. Instructions are imparted in the teachings of that particular sect. There are rare instances of a comparative study of viewpoints of all sects and allowing students to analyze and adopt a more rational view. The curriculum being taught has become subjective interpretation of Islam which best suits to the political and sectarian agenda of the affiliated central board. This all restricts the thought process of students and results in exclusionism. Fundamentally sectarian differences especially within Sunni sub-sects are not on basics of Islam but are *free* or branch related, yet they are so entrenched that it has now become difficult to establish universal model madaris acceptable to all sects. Though books against other sects are not properly taught, yet during interpretation of text and QA sessions rival maslak is forcefully refuted and own is passed on to the students. Teachers recommend supplementary reading material for refutation of rival sects. During sermons and conversations, madrasa teachers refer to *aka'breen* (elders) of their own sect to internalize their views in students. (Rahman, 2008). Madaris not only spread a certain type of sectarian identity among its students, but spread it into families of those students and then the society at large. (Zaidi, 2013). Students with in madrasa are taught in a way

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that instead of recognizing the other sect as a differing viewpoint, they start to look at others with suspicion and contempt as they are altogether on the wrong path.(Rasool, 2014).Another reason of drawing madrasas towards militancy is their use by Pakistani state to recruit and train students to fight in Afghanistan and Kashmir. (Rahman, 2008). After fall of Taliban in Afghanistan these trained jihadi students of madrasas came back and turned against the state of Pakistan and its institutions. Being old boys they had links with and sympathizers in madrasas. These madrasas were used as place of abode, recruitment and training for militant activities. (Hussain, 2014). It would be appropriate to have a look on number of madaris suspected to have some link with or a role in militancy. Most of the Punjabi Taliban leaders received their ideological training in those hardline seminaries, which were nurtured and expanded under state patronage in the 1980s. (Husain, 2014). Table 4 shows that there are total 86 madaris which are suspected and reported by the intelligence agencies to have some link with militancy. A substantial number of these madaris belong to Deobandi sect. Out of total 86 madaris of this sort, 81 are being run by Deobandis. Ahl-e-Tashi and Ahl-e-Hadith both have two each while Brelvis have one madrasa of this sort in the province. This shows that trend of militancy is maximum in Deobandis and minimum in Brelvis. If division-wise analyzed, we see that Rawalpindi division is on the top which have 30 madaris having some link with militancy, followed by Multan with 18 and then Lahore with nine such madrasas. Gujranwala has no madrasa having any link with militancy, while Faisalabad and Sheikhupura have two each, Sahiwal and Bahawalpur have five each and DG Khan has seven and Sargodha has eight such madrasas.

Table 4: Madrasas suspected to be linked with militancy

S #	Region	Brelvi	Deobandi	Ahle Hadith	Ahle Tashi	Total
1	Lahore	0	8	1	0	9
2	Sheikhupura	0	2	0	0	2
3	Gujranwala	0	0	0	0	0
4	Rawalpindi	0	30	0	0	30
5	Faisalabad	0	2	0	0	2
6	Sargodha	0	6	0	2	8
7	Multan	0	18	0	0	18
8	Sahiwal	0	4	1	0	5
9	D.G.Khan	0	7	0	0	7
10	Bahawalpur	1	4	0	0	5
	Total	1	81	2	2	86

Source: Record of government of the Punjab, Lahore.

Khateeb's fanning sectarianism

Speeches of khateeb's play an important role in determining sectarian environment and creating harmony or otherwise in the locality where they operate and have a following. One of the main causes of rising sectarianism and propensity to violence against members of rival sects is rabble-rousing and provocative speeches of *khateeb's* that generate hatred and provocation. (Ayaz, 2012). The birth of Anjuman-e-Sipah-e-Sahab (the parent organization of present day Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat ASWJ) and defunct Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP) is attributed by the scholars to the use of hate spiting and derogatory speeches against religious personalities of rival sects by relevant Deobandi and Shia Ulema/Zakirs. (Zaman, 1998). Record shows that many of the sectarian terrorists turned to terrorism due to such derogatory attitude of sectarian demagogues towards religious sensitivities of each others. Sectarian terrorists who killed prominent sectarian leaders of their rival sect told their interrogators that they killed them because they used sacrilegious language about their respectable religious personalities. (Elahi, 2014). *Ulema* and khateeb's enjoy a respect and a following in public and are in possession of an affective platform to propagate their views. As they have developed their identities with a special sect and exploit the sectarian sentiments for monetary gains, they deliver such speeches which have some attractive features for their followers. A lot of them are known for their sectarian and provocative tendencies and deliver speeches severely criticizing rival sects. Some also propagate for and collect funds in the name of jihad. Table 5 gives a detail of such khateeb's in Punjab.

Table 5: Khateeb's fanning sectarianism

S #	Region	Brelvis	Deobandi	Ahle Hadith	Ahle Tashi	Total
1	Lahore	1	11	1	0	13
2	Sheikhupura	1	12	1	0	14
3	Gujranwala	1	11	2	0	14
4	Rawalpindi	1	4	0	0	5
5	Faisalabad	1	20	7	4	32
6	Sargodha	1	5	0	0	6
7	Multan	2	28	2	2	34
8	Sahiwal	0	0	0	0	0
9	D.G.Khan	0	3	0	0	3
10	Bahawalpur	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	8	94	13	6	121

Source: Record of government of the Punjab, Lahore.

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According to the reports of intelligence agencies, there are about 121 such khateeb who are involved in provocative speeches and most of them are in Multan division where their number is 34, followed by Faisalabad where they are 32, fourteen each in Sheikhpur and Gujranwala, six in Sargodha, five in Rawalpindi and three in DG Khan. Interestingly no such khateeb has been reported from Bahawalpur division. Analyzing on sectarian basis, we see that most of the khateeb involved in provocative sectarian speeches belong to Deobandi sect, then come Ahl-e-Hadith followed by Brelvis and then Shias. Out of total 121 khateeb falling in this category, 94 are Deobandis, leaving far behind Ahl-e-Hadith who are 13, Brelvis are eight and Ahl-e-Tashi six. The data can well explain as to which sect is more radicalized and which one is less.

Conclusion

In Punjab, beside Ahl-e-Tashi there are three sub-sects of Ahl-e-Sunnat i.e. Brelvis, Deobandis and Ahl-e-Hadith. Brelvis or traditional Sunnis outnumber all other sects combined. They believe in mystical, ritualistic and traditional Islam which has been being practiced in India for centuries before emergence of sub-sects of Ahl-e-Sunnat. They are about 53.4% of total population of the province. They are not less than 47% in any of the division and go to even 65% in Gujranwala. Second are Deobandis who are 22.4% of total population with their maximum strength in Sargodha where they are about 29% and least in Gujranwala where their strength is 17%. Ahl-e-Tashi are third in numerical order with 10.9% population in the province having maximum strength of 17% in Sargodha and minimum of 6% in Sahiwal division. Ahle-e-Hadith are slightly less than Ahl-e-Tashi with 10.4% population. They are maximum in Sheikhpura with 20% strength and minimum in Bahawalpur with 5.6% population.

All these four sects have established their separate networks of madaris throughout the province. There are total 11194 madrasas in Punjab being regulated by five different sectarian based madrasa boards. Brelvis who are about 54% of total population run about 50% of total madrasas. Deobandis have 22.4% population and 41.4% of total madrasas in Punjab. Ahl-e-Hadith with 10.4% population run 7% of madrasas while Ahl-e-Tashi who are 10.9% of population are having 1.7% of madrasas. It is the only Deobandi sect which is running more madrasas than their ratio of population in the province. The ratio of their madrasas is about 86% more than ratio of their population. Of the total madrasas 86 are suspected to have links with militancy in one form or other. Out of these 86 madarasa 81 are being run by Deobandis, two each by Ahl-e-Hadith and Ahl-e-Tashi and one by Brelvis. Such madrasas are more concentrated in Rawalpindi and Multan divisions where they are 30 and 18

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followed by Lahore and Sargodha where these are nine and eight respectively.

In the province 121 *khateeb*s have been identified as hate monger and rabble-rouser by state agencies. These *khateeb*s are involved in fanning sectarianism through their provocative and hate spiting speeches. They use their demagoguery to arouse sectarian sentiments of their followers and exploit them for material gains. Again their substantial number is of Deobandi sect. Out of total 121, 91 are Deobandis, 13 Ahl-e-Hadith, eight Brelvis and six are Ahl-e-Tashi in the province. The data on number of madaris having links with militancy and number of hate speakers can well explain the reasons behind radicalization and extremism in different sects. Though no training camps and bases of militant organization have been identified in the province, yet the observations describing Punjab as epicenter of sectarian militancy carry some weight. Sectarian organizations and provocative khateeb are conveniently creating more and more radicalized persons and such radicalization is high in Deobandi sect. It is Punjab where real battle against violent extremism will have to be fought not only at operational and tactical level but also at strategic level with counter radicalization as a permanent policy measure.

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