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The *Dars-i Nizāmī* as Method

“It is more plausible to regard the *Dars-i Nizāmī* as a ‘method of instruction’ rather than as a set curriculum” - Farhan Ahmad Nizami

Firstly, this paper introduces the *Dars-i Nizāmī*, historically. Broadly speaking, it inherited a composition of both the rational and revealed sciences. The *Dars-i Nizāmī* gained wide currency allowing students to become highly skilled scholars, bureaucrats, and intellectuals. Others have argued against its “integrational potential” and that it was indeed intended to remain a faith-based curriculum and was highly confessional. The texts, though chosen carefully, were secondary to the primary aim of gradually developing the students’ intellectual abilities, to become independent scholars upon graduation. The method mattered. The books, which were a selection from each discipline, were often archaic and terse. Yet, it was expected that the student would have enough knowledge of the essentials of those disciplines, such as law, philosophy, logic, and speculative theology, by the time they graduate, to specialise and become leading intellectuals and thinkers.

This sets the stage for the second part of the paper. Central to the paper will be an empirical exposition of the lived reality of how the *Dars-i Nizāmī* is deployed in a Dar al Uloom in modern Britain. This is based on the first-ever PhD thesis looking at the formation and training of the ‘*ulamā*’ in Britain, completed in 2019. The *Dars-i Nizāmī* has been criticised for being irrelevant and ill-suited for life in modern Britain, while maintaining a sense of sacrality. It is argued as being largely relevant to Muslim communities that are of South Asian origin (Mukadam et al., 2010). Here I will explore such critiques and look at how the *Dars-i Nizāmī*, if we can call it that, has adapted and is changing to serve Muslims now living in a secular post-Christian world. Here we look at methods, texts, and the balancing of the rooted *ṣuḥbah* of pious exemplars with the needs of the time, to produce intellectuals who can respond and articulate a way of living that responds to the challenges facing civilization today.



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Dr Sidat is a Research Associate at the Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK, at Cardiff University. His PhD looked at the formation and training of British Muslim Scholarship (*ulama*) with an ethnographic study of a Dar al-Uloom, or traditional Islamic seminary in modern Britain.

Haroon is currently working on two major projects. The first, Understanding British Imams, is a four-year research project. The second is in the field of Islamic History and Civilisation, and is titled '*Legacies of Learning*'; it explores the Islamic educational and intellectual tradition.