The *Dars-e-Nizāmī* and the Transnational Traditionalist *Madāris* in Britain

- Hamid Mahmood

Queen Mary, University of London

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# List of Transliterations

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'ن' - ň
The *Dars-e-Niẓāmī* and the Transnational Traditionalist *Madarīs* in Britain

Our story is a mixed story, and one part leads to the memory of another part. These lands of ours are a long distance away from the lands of Islam like ‘Irāq, Shām and Miṣr, so the symbols of Islam here are weak and the lighthouses of knowledge are hidden, except what Allah wills and who He wills, and these are few.

- ‘Allāmah Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī on Deoband

At the conference ‘Our Mosques, Our Future’ which took place in Hounslow on the 21\textsuperscript{st} of October 2008, Tim Winter (Abdal Hakim Murad) delivered a presentation on the lack of Islamic leadership in the United Kingdom as opposed to the United States, who boast the likes of Sirāj Wahhāj, Zaid Shākir, Hamza Yūsuf, ‘Umar ‘Abdullāh and other significant scholars who have huge followings not just amongst the intelligentsia, but at the grassroots of the community. Winter insisted that there must be something lacking with the madrasa sector and elaborates:

‘...It is an interesting fact that there are twice as many Muslims training as Imams in this country as there are Christians of all denominations training for Christian ministry. It’s kind of an over population. There are at least twenty institutions now as far as I can see that are doing it, but as yet we have not found the one leader, who can lead cheering crowds in Trafalgar Square, who can galvanise teenagers and lead them in the direction of something that is mainstream, normative and convivial Islam – that individual has not yet appeared. So something needs to be done in that sector as well if we are going to build this thing we want which is the positive outwardly oriented 21\textsuperscript{st} century Mosque...’\textsuperscript{1}

As, Winter believes that the number of Imams currently under training exceeds that of Christians in Christian ministries and describes it as ‘a kind of an over population’. Firstly, it is essential here that one must explore and define the nature and purpose of leadership that the *madāris* are providing. Is it really to ‘cheer the crowds at Trafalgar Square’ as Winter insists, to produce orators who speak to Mosque congregations already practising their faith or to provide Mosques with men who can lead the congregational prayers? The question is

\textsuperscript{1} Murad, A. H. (2008). Youtube - Our Mosques, Our Future - Abdul Hakim Murad. For full excerpt see ‘Appendix 3’
whether the ṭālibs studying at the madāris themselves are aware of the role they must play in wider society or what the wider society expects from them.

I will explore the phenomenon of transnational traditionalist madāris in Britain by analysing three periods; madāris in pre-colonial India, in colonised India, and post-colonial Britain. I will focus specially on dars-e-nizāmī pedagogy and how this may influence the thought process of the madāris. Part of my methodology was to interview and discuss contemporary issues with fāḍils (madrasa graduates) as opposed to ṭālibs (madrasa undergraduates), all of which have been provided in Appendix 1. I have taken much from Sikand, as he has researched the madāris of India much and has a profound understanding of transnational Islamic movements and is proficient in all sub-continent languages. Metcalf is instrumental in portraying the image of colonised Musalmāns. I benefitted from Zaman’s exploration of the mind and ideology of the ‘ulamā’ and finally for ethnography and fieldwork I relied on the works of Gilliat-Ray and Alam and changed my method of approach from ṭālib to fāḍil, which I will elaborate. In my work I have focused thoroughly on three aspects not covered and seen as whole, and examined how they influence madāris here in Britain: the history that has constructed the syllabus; the history and response of a specific madrasa to the media; and an analysis of criticism and reform history of the madāris of Britain.

The Dars-e-Niẓāmī and the Evolution of Madāris in Hind and British India

To understand the madāris in Britain it is essential that the study begins in medieval Hind (India) and an analysis of the context to which the madrasa was a response or a number of contexts that today defines the outlook of Madāris (pl. of madrasa). Gilliat-Ray too insists that the study ‘has to be set against a canvas of responses to colonialism, and the founding of ‘seminaries’ in India in the mid-1800s’.

2 The seminary at Deoband further expanded and saw a vast increase in madāris that claim allegiance to Deoband, they too have to be seen in context:

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‘Deoband was intended to resist the British by non-violent methods, the military option having been tried fruitlessly in 1857. But the Mazahir-i-’Ulum had since its very inception opted out of this worldly (dunya); it had remained committed only to the faith (dīn).³

In the UK the Dār al-‘Ulūm al-’Arabiyyah al-Islāmiyyah (Bury madrasa) and Jāmi’at ta’līm al-Islām (Dewsbury madrasa) are considered the ‘Oxbridge’ of the traditional madrasa world. These have their foundations not directly with Deoband, but through its expanded seminaries, namely Maẓāhir-e-’Ulūm (Saharanpūr) and Niẓām al-Dīn (Tablíghī Jamā’at HQ at New Delhi). Here we seek to explore the civilizational modes that nurtured their mother institutes as, Winter explains: . . . ‘the traditional madrasa curriculum (the dars-e-nizāmī) and allied curricula are in fact extraordinarily brilliant articulations of Islam in a particular civilizational mode’⁴ It is for this reason essential to begin with a brief history of madāris and their curriculum (dars-e-nizāmī) in Hind and how Mughal India and British colonialism influence Madāris today in the modern world.

Very little is actually known about the medieval madāris of Sind, Multan and Ajmer but our attention is drawn to 1258 and the Mongol destruction of the Abbasid Caliphate. The incident of 1258 saw vast numbers of refugees seeking refuge in Hind and among them were ‘ulamā and ṣūfis, the former who brought with them major ḥanafi texts, and the trend of producing commentaries of the texts and then commentaries of commentaries further ensured insistence on taqlīd of the earlier ḥanafi ‘ulamā’. And as I believe, this left no room from a critical analysis of the texts being studied. Sikand suggests that due to this notion ‘the ulamā’ failed to develop a system of jurisprudence grounded in the particular context of India, where Muslims were a small minority’.⁵ However, it was then that a systematic curriculum was founded in Hind.⁶ I will further elaborate on why I am convinced that the dars-e-nizāmī syllabus and pedagogy, too play a significant role in the madrasa thought process. However, the ‘ulamā’ in medieval India were employed in the state bureaucracy in various capacities,

³ ibid.
⁴ Murad, A. H. (2008). For full excerpt see ‘Appendix 3’
⁵ Sikand, Y. (2005). Bastions of the Believers: Madrasa and Islamic Education in India. p. 35
as judges, experts in offering legal opinions, censors of public morals, preachers and teachers. Leading ‘ulamā’ thus enjoyed close relations with the state.

The Deobandi academic journal ‘Māhnāmah Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband’ elaborates how the history of ‘the system of Muslim education in India’ is divided into four stages by Mawlānā ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Lukhnawī. In his article ‘Hindustān kā qadīm niṣāb-e-dars awr us ke taghayyurāt – India’s medieval system of education and its modification’, Lukhnawī begins with dawr-e-awwal, the first period – 7th Century A.H. to 9th Century A.H. This period saw the founding of the following subjects: nahw (Arabic grammar), ṣarf (etymology), adab wa balāghat (rhetoric and literature), fiqh (jurisprudence), uṣūl-e-fiqh (principles of jurisprudence), manṭiq (logic), kalām (cosmology), taṣawwuf (Sufism), tafsīr (Qur’anic exegesis) and ḥadīth (traditions of Prophet Muḥammad).

In this period fiqh was considered to be the most significant subject, and it was deemed sufficient to merely study Mashāriq al-Anwār or Maṣābīḥ for ḥadīth. This heavy influence of fiqh is believed to be the influence the conquerors of Hind had on the land, as they were from Ghaznī and Ghawr – both lands that prided themselves with the study of fiqh.

**Dawr-e-Dawn**, the second period, begins with Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh and Shaykh ‘Azīz Allāh travelling from Multān to Delhi to the throne of Sulṭān Sikandar Lodhī (d. 1517 C.E) in order to reform the previous curriculum by requesting the

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7 Sikand, Y. (2005), op. cit., p. 37
8 ibid.
10 ibid.
11 Mashāriq al-Anwār al-Nabawiyyah min Ṣiḥāḥ al-Akhbār al-Muṣṭafawiyyah was written by Raḍīyy al-Dīn Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣāghāniyy (577 – 650 A.H. / 1181-1252 C.E.) who was born in Lahore, Hind (present day Pakistan). This book was a collection of ḥadīth from the ṣaḥīḥayn and hence amongst the kutub muntakhabāt al-ḥadīth (Books that were regarded collections of ḥadīths from various other books). See Gangohī, M. H. (1969), pp. 477-479.
12 Maṣābīḥ al-Sunnah too is amongst the kutub muntakhabāt al-ḥadīth, which includes 4484 aḥādīth from ṣaḥīḥayn and 2434 from Sunan Abī Dawūd and Tirmidhī. This book was written by Muḥiyy al-Sunnah al-Baghawiyy (435 A.H / 1043 C.E.). See Gangohī, M. H. (1969), pp. 169-171
inclusion of Qādī ‘Aḍud al-Dīn’s Maṭāli’ and Mawāqif and Sakākī’s Miṣfāṭ al-‘ulūm. This period further saw the extension of the syllabus by Sayyid Mīr Shāh’s students by producing commentaries of the mentioned books: Sharḥ Maṭāli’ and Sharḥ Mawāqif. And Sa’d al-Dīn Taftāzānī’s students embraced Muṭawwal, Talwīkh, Mukhtaṣar al-Ma‘ānī and Sharḥ ‘Aqā'id al-Nasafīyyah, the latter two which still remain part of the dars-e-nizāmī in the UK. In this period Sharḥ Jāmi’ and Sharḥ Wiqāyah too were added to the study of ‘ulamā’. Again the latter text is still studied to this day in the madāris of Britain.  

Dawr-e-sawm, the third stage, saw the polymath, Emperor Akbar’s vizier Mīr Fatḥ-Allāh Shirāzī (d. 1582), introduce ‘ma’qūlāt’ the logical and philosophical sciences to India. The courts of the Mughal emperors were significantly influenced by Iran especially the courts of Humāyūn (r. 1530 / Ilr. 1555)14 and Akbar (r. 1556).15 However, towards the end of this third period Shāh Waliyullāh (1702-1762 C.E.), following his 14 year stay in the Hijāz, introduced the teaching of the šīhāh sittah16 into the curriculum of India (dars-e-nizāmī) – which overlaps into the fourth period. Qāsmī further suggests that Shāh Waliyullāh had also devised a new syllabus but because the centre of Islamic knowledge at the time had shifted from Delhi to Lukhnaw and because of the influence of the Mughal ‘ulamā’ his syllabus did not reach fruition.17

Dawr-e-chahārum, the fourth period is the most significant in fully understanding contemporary madāris as it is the stage when Mullān Niẓām al-Dīn Sahālwī Lukhnawī (d. 1748 C.E.) laid the foundations to the dars-e-nizāmī prevalent throughout madrasas originating from the Subcontinent. The set of texts chosen by Mullān Niẓām al-Dīn were selected for the ṭālibs of Firangī Maḥal.18 The

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13 Qāsmī, M. K. (2010), op. cit.
14 Humāyūn had two reigns, as power was usurped from him by the Sūrī Sultāns of Delhi before he regained it for a second time.
16 šīhāh sittah (the six most authentic books of aḥādīth) refers to Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dawūd, Tirmidhī, Nasa‘ī and Ibn Mājah.
17 Qāsmī, M. K. (2010), op. cit.
18 Firangī Maḥal literally means ‘European Mansion’ – Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb offered this mansion to the sons of Mullān Quṭb al-Dīn Sihālwī, who was part of the ‘fatāwā-e-ālamgīrī’ project of Aurangzeb to produce an encyclopaedia of fatāwā still used by contemporary ‘ulamā’.
dars-e-nizāmī, which was named after him was in fact heavily influenced by ma’qūlāt (rational sciences) as opposed the manqūlāt (traditional sciences). This syllabus reserved ‘fifteen books on logic, and several books on Greek philosophy, mathematics, history, medicine, and engineering, and also texts on Persian literature and Arabic grammar, rhetoric and literature’. 19 Alongside fiqh, and Uṣūl al-Fiqh, for tafsīr ‘al-Bayḍāwiyy’ and ‘Jalālayn’ were taught, and for ḥadīth it was thought sufficient to study ‘Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ. It is interesting to note that part of the dars-e-nizāmī Engineering and Astronomy were also taught as part of the curriculum. Students were also taught the skills of official letter writing and calligraphy, which they would need as prospective civil servants. 20 It is interesting that despite this no longer being taught in the madāris of Britain, it is evident from a fāḍil’s response that skills of this kind may well be required:

‘...they could do more dunyavī (this worldly) wise. They could perhaps work more on career’s advice; we have started an organisation to help ‘ulamā and ḥuffāz21 after graduation to know how the system works e.g. Tax Credits, filling in forms, paying bills etc through our organisation ‘Khidma Station’.22

It is noted that the current madrasa syllabus is so textual that it fails to respond to the context that it now faces. For this very reason one finds that the ‘ulamā’ are passing this textual study down to their students, but for a living they are having to work other part-time jobs, such as in Asda, B&Q and as taxi drivers.23

Khalīlī finally elaborates the geographical divide in India during the final daur, as he believes the markaz (centre) of ‘ilm was then divided in three different locations: Delhi, Lukhnow, and Khayr Ābād. Shāh Waliyullah and his family were based in Delhi and they focused on the manqūlāt (tafsīr and ḥadīth); the ‘Ulamā’ of Lukhnow – the traditional scholars of Farangī Maḥal – still remained heavily influenced by the teachings of ‘mā warā’ al-nahr’ (Transoxania), hence

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19 Sikand, Y. (2005), op. cit., p. 47
20 ibid. - By keeping the dars-e-nizāmī of Firangi Maḥal more rational it was made possible for non-Sunnis, Shia and Hindus to study alongside the ‘Ulamā.
21 Those madrasa graduates who memorise the Qur’an but do not follow on into the ‘Ālimiyah course.
22 See Appendix 1 - Fāḍil 8
23 Personal interviews
their focus was on *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and they taught *Jalālyn* and *Bayḍāwī* for *tafsīr* and sufficed in *ḥadīth* with the textual study of *mishkāt al-maṣābīḥ*. The latter, Khayr Ābādī ‘Ulamā’ focused all their attention around *manṭiq* and *falsafah*.24

Following the unsuccessful mutiny of 1857, the British Raj decided to uproot the *madāris* of India and hence Shāh Waliyullāh’s madrasa in Delhi too became a victim of their tyranny.25 It is said that for miles no ‘ālim could be found to even lead the funeral prayers.26 The state of the Mussalmāns of India and their religious institutes was then being compared to the Mongol invasion of 1258, where it was believed the sea first turned black with the ink of books and then red with the blood of the ‘ulamā’.27 And with this time period is connected the notion of the ‘closing of the doors of *ijtihād*’. The lack of ‘ulamā’ and also according to Tabassam another significant reason for the establishment of Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband in 1866 was to counter the British Education Policy that aimed at spreading Christianity through various British Colleges and other institutions, and the suppression and exclusion of Muslims from high vacancies.28 Hence, there grew this opposition to British culture and later western-influenced Muslims. It should, however, be noted that Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband’s foundation and institution did not carry the same grandeur as it does today. Rather it is always portrayed with rather simple and humble beginnings, as it is recorded that Deoband was founded on the 30th of May 1866 C.E. on a Thursday in the courtyard of Masjid Chattah under a pomegranate tree with a single teacher and his student, both Maḥmūds.29 For indeed this helped the madrasa to remain unnoticed by its colonial rulers.

24 Qāsmī, M. K. (2010), op. cit.


26 ibid.

27 These feelings, and comparisons are also found in Iqbal’s reconstruction of religious thought in Islam, where he compares ‘contemporary ‘ulamā’ and their approach to the ‘ulamā’ of Baghdad 1258. Sikand too points towards the ‘insecurity among the ‘ulamā’ that saw in free-ranging *ijtihad* a threat to the integrity of Islam’. See Sikand, Y. (2005), op. cit., p. 22.


29 Khan, S. A. (2011), op. cit. p. 23
The Syllabus of Deoband that was set, following a decade of the destruction of the three centres of ‘ilm, was a combination of the three centres of knowledge – Delhi, Lukhnaw, and Khayr Ābād. Hence, Khalili suggests that the syllabus was founded on *dars-e-niẓāmī* from Lukhnaw with the inclusion of *ṣiḥāh sittah* from the Delhi school and Logic and philosophy from the Khayr Ābādī scholars. Khan further elaborates how in the early syllabus of Deoband an eight volume ‘secular’ book *al-Naqsh fī al-Ḥajr* was part of the syllabus, which Rashīd Riḍā praised when visiting Deoband in 1912 C.E. Following are the titles of each of the volumes:

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<td>الگئوگرافی</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Cosmology &amp; Astronomy</td>
<td>اسطوره</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>علم النباتات</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Principles of Logic</td>
<td>اصول الاضنفقل</td>
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It is interesting to note all the subjects once part of the syllabus through this book and then how the early ‘ulamā of Deoband interwove the syllabus with

30 *ibid.*, p. 29
spirituality. Khan portrays this rich mix of religious, secular and spiritual development in the following way:

'These elders would teach the *ma'qūlāt* (secular sciences – Philosophy, logic etc) alongside the *manqūlāt* (Traditional / narrated), and then ‘drink’ the *manqūlāt* mixed with *ma'qūlāt*... so these elders would raise *manqūlāt* to the level of *ma'qūlāt* and then following their daily *adhkār* (supplications) and *murāqabāt* (*ṣūfī* meditations); *dhikr al-khafi* and *dhikr al-jali*; and after crossing the stages of *taṣawwuf* and asceticism they transpose *ma'qūlāt* into *iḥsāsāt* (sensory perceptions). Hence, what could be said about such individuals who took *manqūlāt* to the level of *ma'qūlāt* and then *ma'qūlāt* to *iḥsāsāt*!

However, with contemporary *madāris* it has now become important to ask the question whether we can really claim or name this syllabus ‘*dars-e-nizāmī*’, when it only constitutes merely a third of the syllabus and the *isnād* do not lead to Mulla Niẓām al-Dīn but rather to ‘*masnad al-Hind*’ Shāh Waliyullāh. To determine this we will analyse the ‘reformed’ ‘*dars-e-nizāmī*’. The inclusion and stress laid upon the teaching of the *ṣiḥāḥ sittah* and *fiqh* (*manqūlāt*) also reflects Deoband’s reformist concerns specifically its opposition to un-Islamic and Hindu customs prevalent among the Muslims of India. And this notion, as Sikand suggests, was further deepened by ‘Western-influenced modernist Muslims as well as Muslim groups that opposed the traditional *hanafi* insistence on *taqlīd*’. This rigid insistence on *taqlīd* to oppose the threat of their legitimacy as authoritative spokesmen for Islam was dealt with a further insistence on *taqlīd* that they even condemned inter-scholastic eclecticism, the borrowing from other

31 ibid., pp. 22-23
32 By *isnād* here I refer to the chain from student through his teachers to the author of the book. This will be discussed later in the essay. Waliyullāh is regarded *masnad al-Hind* as all *asānīd* (pl. of *isnād*) are believed to go through him to the authors of classical texts and finally to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Also see Appendices 2.3 to 2.7 for examples of *ijāzats* and also Appendix 2.8 for the significance of Shāh Waliyullāh for various Indian Muslim denominations.
33 Sikand, Y. (2005), op. cit., p. 71
schools of *sunnī fiqh*, although they accepted these schools as equally ‘orthodox’.\textsuperscript{34} And I believe this position, taken by the founders of Deoband, towards ‘rigid *taqlīd*’ has prodigious influences on the *madāris* of Britain and the neo-Deobandi phenomenon that prevails over the understanding of mainstream Islam in England.

Six months after laying the foundation of Deoband, madrasa Mazāhir al-‘Ulūm was opened in Sahāranpūr in November 1866 with the same ethos and ideology as Deoband. However, it is significant to note that in 1875 Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817 - 1898 C.E.) undertook an opposing educational initiative to Deoband by opening the ‘Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental High School – an institute upgraded by the British to a college in 1877 and received full university recognition by 1921. I believe this ‘recognition’ of the college too would have put doubts in the minds of the Deobandis and those affiliated to them. Sir Sayyid had also clearly shunned the traditional ‘ulamā’ for their insistence on *taqlīd* and called for the Muslims to engage in *ijtihād* to develop a new modern thinking and understanding of the *manqūlāt* and *fiqh* in order to reform with ‘changing times’. Interestingly, he began calling for this ‘reform’ following his two year study of the education system in England. India began to witness this polar opposition: on one side the ‘traditionalists’ who were adamant on a rigid implementation of *taqlīd* and on the other a modernist ideology speaking only of reform and *ijtihād*.

The opposing phenomenon of Deoband on one side of the spectrum and Aligarh on the other created an educational dualism – this in part was inspired by colonial critiques of ‘native’ education as ‘irrelevant’ and ‘outdated’.\textsuperscript{35} The move to reconcile with tradition, modernity and various denominations came in the form of Nadwat al-‘Ulamā (The Council of the ‘Ulamā) in 1892, a group of ‘Ulamā from ‘different schools of thought, Muslim philanthropists, journalists, lawyers and government servants, who came together annually to discuss issues relating to promote a semblance of unity between different Muslim denominations’.\textsuperscript{36} I believe it is important to understand this opposition in order

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{34} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Sikand, Y. (2005), op. cit., p. 79
to begin understanding the madāris of Britain and their future as indeed currently there are over 17 madāris affiliated to Deoband with well over ‘three thousand’ ṭālibs as opposed to only one affiliated to Nadwa with two ṭalibs enrolled.\(^{37}\)

However, to elaborate the vision and ethos of the council, its first president Mawlānā Muhammad Ali Mungeri (1846 – 1927 C.E.) wrote a letter to ‘Ulamā throughout India:

‘Because it is seen that graduates of Arabic madāris have little knowledge of the affairs of the world around them, and because they can do little else at their age, they remain dependant on the people of the world (ahl-e-dunyā) and are considered useless in the eyes of the public. They also do not possess the level of religious knowledge that they should. This organization [the Nadwa] seeks to bring about appropriate reforms in this regard in all madrasas. Today the internal differences among our ‘ulamā are creating severe problems, giving rise to great strife over little issues, because of which the ‘ulamā of Islam and even our pure faith are lowered in the eyes of others. This organization shall strive to ensure that these differences do not rise, and if they do, it shall seek to resolve them’.\(^{38}\)

It is interesting to note that this letter was sent in 1892, just six years following the founding of Deoband and still Mungeri felt he had analysed enough of the madāris and also those running prior to Deoband in homes and Mosques. In this letter Mungeri points towards two significant issues within the madāris: Lack of knowledge of the worldly affairs (secular affairs) and ‘weakness’ in religious knowledge. The former issue left madrasa fāḍils to become dependent on worldly people, by which we suppose is meant those educated in academia, hence they were rendered ‘useless’. I find the latter critique most interesting, and will tackle more thoroughly later, as it resonates with fāḍil 2:

‘I would like to see more scholars discussed from different continents as this is very important for those who live in vibrant diverse societies such as London’.\(^{39}\)

‘Scholars being discussed from different continents refers to scholars not belonging to one’s own madhhab as indeed Deoband’s stress on taqlīd-e-


\(^{39}\) See Appendix 1 - Fāḍil 2
the following of the pious predecessors and the abundance of books on *fatāwā* from the sub-continent in use in Britain today and specifically for *Iftā’* courses indicate the confined and consolidated approaches within *madāris* compared to scholars of other *madhāhib*. This approach again, I believe, is a direct influence of British colonialism, where the need for standardising Islamic interpretation of *fiqh* and sacred texts is considered ‘protecting Islam and its interpretation from external dilution’ and hence a vivid metaphor is often quoted among the Deobandi ‘Ulamā:

‘*madāris* are the fortresses of *dīn-e-Islam* (religion of Islam)’.

It is believed that not only Islam but also its specific interpretation is defended from an external enemy. I believe, this response to colonialism is still echoed in the attitude of madāris in the West today through a reticence with any kind of external interference. Ron Geaves also elaborates: ‘Deobandi reticence to engage with outsiders has been variously analysed as due to defensive strategies of isolation developed to protect Islam in the crisis caused by the loss of Muslim power to the British in India in the second half of the nineteenth century’. However I strongly believe that even in Britain affiliation to ‘Deoband’ or being ‘Deobandi’ is a generalization and this notion requires further exploration, which is still not accomplished by a madrasa claiming to be ‘Deobandī / Sahāranpūrī’ or even Deobandī / Tablīghī.

Transnational Traditionalist *Madāris* in Britain: an Analysis of their Pedagogy.

The history of Muslims in Britain could be divided into two broad periods. The first period, which Ally suggests, stretches from 1850 to 1949 and the second period begins in 1949. The former period witnesses Muslim seamen, students and professionals from abroad and also the likes of Abdullah Quilliam are at the forefront of British Islam. However, the latter period is when large numbers of Muslims migrated from rural South Asia as workers following the Second World War and they brought along with them the *madāris* – transnational Islamic

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40 Mawlānā Gangohī defines *taqlīd-e-Shakh ī* as ‘seeking assistance in abiding by a law from a particular scholar.


educational institutes. And the fate of Islam in Britain now depended on the denominational divide of the migrants, as later that would be reflected in the madāris they built. The Gujratis from India play a significant role in this regard: when speaking to a Pakistani Mosque elder he quite wittingly explained how ‘the Gujratis successfully brought with them their poppadums, samosas and madrasas’. By madrasas here we mean the traditionalist Islamic institutes that provide a syllabus which is claimed to be associated to the dars-e-nizāmī.

When migrants came to Britain for economic prosperity they never had in mind the notion of settling down, but rather with the intent to make a fortune and return to their native land. However, this was not the way things worked out because they had finally decided to settle; in 1963 there were only thirteen Mosques that were registered with the Registrar-General as places of worship. But this number dramatically changed from 1966 onwards as new mosques were being registered at the rate of seven per year. The need for leadership and imams increased alongside the increasing number of Mosques and in 1975 the first madrasa was established in a village called Holcombe situated near Bury – known as Dār al-‘Ulūm Bury or Bury Madrasa. The second madrasa to be established was that of the Tablīghī Jamā’at called ‘Jāmi’at Ta’līm al-Islām (Dewsbury Madrasa) in Dewsbury in 1981, which will be under analysis in this essay.

Since then there are now well over thirty such madāris functioning in Britain. Following is a table which shows twenty-five traditionalist madāris in order of the date they were established:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Established</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Dār al-‘ulūm al-‘arabiyyah al-islāmiyyah (DUAI)</td>
<td>Holcombe, Near Bury</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>Deobandi / Saharanpuri</td>
<td>Mother madrasa to five other UK seminaries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 Pā Ḍamīr (elder).
45 ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Establishment</th>
<th>Principle or Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Jāmi’at ta’līm al-Islām (Institute of Islamic Education)</td>
<td>Dewsbury, West Yorkshire</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Centre for Tablighi</td>
<td>Jamat in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Jāmi’at al-imām Muḥammad Zakariyyā</td>
<td>Bradford</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>Deobandi / Tablighi</td>
<td>Affiliated to DUAI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>The Muslim College</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Āzhari</td>
<td>Dr Zaki Badawi (Principal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Islamic Education Institute</td>
<td>Crowborough, East Sussex</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Deobandi</td>
<td>Principle a murid of DUAI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Dār al-‘ulūm London</td>
<td>Chislehurst (Kent)</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>Deobandi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Madīnat al-‘ulūm al-islāmiyyah</td>
<td>Kidderminster</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>Deobandi / Saharanpuri</td>
<td>Affiliated to DUAI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Dār al-‘ulūm School</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Deobandi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Hijāz College</td>
<td>Nuneaton</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Brelvi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Al-Jāmi’ah al-Islāmiyyah</td>
<td>Bolton</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>Deobandi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Al-Karam School</td>
<td>Retford, near Nottingham</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>Brelvi</td>
<td>Sends students to Al-Azhar for completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Jāmi’ah al-Kawthar</td>
<td>Lancaster</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>Deobandi / Saharanpuri</td>
<td>Affiliated to DUAI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Jāmi’at al-Hudā</td>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>Deobandi</td>
<td>Affiliated with Jāmi’at al-Hudā in Sheffield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Jāmi’at al-‘ilm wa al-Hudā</td>
<td>Blackburn</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>Deobandi / Saharanpuri</td>
<td>Affiliated to DUAI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Jāmi’at Riyāḍ al-‘Ulūm</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Deobandi</td>
<td>Principle is DUAI graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Dār al-‘ulūm Leicester</td>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Boys / Girls</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Deobandi</td>
<td>Principle is murid of DUAI principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Sulṭān Bāhū Trust</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Brelvi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Jāmi’at Madīnat al-‘Ulūm</td>
<td>Plaistow, London</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Deobandi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Dār al-‘Ulūm</td>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>Boys / Girls</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nadwi</td>
<td>Sends students to Syria for completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Kanz al-‘Ulūm</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Brelvi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>European Institute for Human Sciences</td>
<td>Llanbydder</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Ikhwani</td>
<td>Affiliated with EIHS in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>(EIHS)</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Creed</td>
<td>Affiliation</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>Blackburn</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Deobandi / Saharanpur</td>
<td>Principle is DUAI graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Jāmi‘at al-Hudā</td>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Deobandi</td>
<td>Affiliated with Jāmi‘at al-Hudā in Nottingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Hawza ‘Ilmiyyah</td>
<td>Willesden, London</td>
<td>Boys / Girls</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Shī‘i</td>
<td>Sends students to Qom, Iran for completion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yahya Birt gathered the above details from the ‘Muslim Directory 2001/2’, Register of Muslim Independent Schools in England, ‘Ulamā’-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat, Mashāikh & Sufis in UK, Muslim News (London) and telephone interviews. Despite such a diverse array of sources there are still many madāris that are not included in the list, such as ‘Ebrahim College’ and ‘Dār al-‘Ulūm Da’wat al-Īmān’, both of which have close affiliations with the Dewsbury madrasa (no. 2 in the table). Both will be under study in this essay. It is clear from an analysis of this table that the majority of established madāris are those affiliated to Deoband and most of the graduating fāḍils are Deobandī, making it very clear the grassroots interpretation of Islam in Britain is bound to be that of Deoband. I also believe that affiliations alone are not sufficient to understand the outlook and approach of madrasas, and one must go deeper. With the Dewsbury madrasa it becomes very clear just by simply viewing the websites and prospectuses of both Dewsbury and Bradford madrasas, it feels as though both madāris are run by different organisations but interestingly that is not the case (See Official Website screenshots below). The major difference here is that the former is headed by Mawlānā X, but superseded by the shūrā (council) of the Tablīghī Jamā‘at markaz, which is directly connected to the madrasa, whereas the latter is Mawlānā X’s own private venture and so one finds a well written prospectus more focus on academic studies; and a ‘more colourful’ website. What is more, not only do denominational affiliations influence the outlook of a madrasa but also the alma mater and taqlīd-e-shakhsī (the following of an individual) of ustādh-mashā‘ikhs. What I mean by ustādh-mashā‘ikhs are usually teachers who are also connected to the şūfī line.

47 ibid.
48 Official Website: http://www.ebrahimcollege.org.uk/
49 Official Website: http://www.dawatulimaan.org.uk/
50 What I mean by ustādh-mashā‘ikhs are usually teachers who are also connected to the şūfī line.
taught more in Dewsbury madrasa than any other because of the close affiliation of the muhtamim with Jāmi’ah Islāmiyyah Ta’līm al-Dīn, situated in Dhābel – India.

Dār al-‘Ulūm Da’wat al-Imān (Bradford Madrasa) – Official Website 51

Firstly, accessing traditional madāris itself has a history among academics and I believe the reader could also understand much from an analysis of this. In 2005

51 ibid.
52 Official Website: http://jaamia.org/
Gilliat-Ray tried to access a number of madāris through fāḍil leads, but found herself being refused on all fronts and noticed that this was a problem more to do with Deobandī madāris than any other. And from amongst the Deobandī madāris it was even more difficult to speak to Tablīghī ones. Hence, she wrote an article based on her experiences of ‘not’ accessing the madāris entitled ‘Closed Worlds: (Not) Accessing Deobandi dār ul-uloom in Britain’. It is important to ask the question why, despite the positive approaches, she and other academics were flatly refused from carrying out their ethnographies. Here are two examples of the refusals and the wording that were recorded by a (non-Muslim) doctoral researcher in the 1990’s, who found himself unwelcomed at the ‘Dewsbury centre (markaz), and was asked to, ‘to leave and never come back’.53 And this happened despite the academic having been to Deoband itself, ‘proof’ if any were needed of the seriousness of his intent.54 Here I think it is absolutely crucial to differentiate between the ‘Dewsbury markaz and the ‘Dewsbury madrasa’, and this incident took place in the ‘centre (markaz) as opposed to the ‘madrasa’. I will expound on this later in the essay. The second incident took place in the House of Lords on Thursday 4th October 2001 when the Bishop of Bradford showed a willingness, on behalf of himself and his clergy, to observe a madrasa first hand in order to better work with the Muslims in Bradford but was flatly refused, “No, we do not want you”.55 This incident and the statement too highlight the ultra-defensive tone of the speaker.

Gilliat-Ray gave the madāris open proposals that she would be delighted to offer her academic skills and services in whatever she could during or after the project through workshops or simply sharing of findings. She further persuaded the institutions of the disadvantages of isolating themselves,

‘There is considerable, but unfounded suspicion of dār ul-uloom in wider British society. Much media coverage is extremely negative. The more that institutions isolate themselves, the more suspicion is created. Opening the door to qualified, independent, responsible academics is the beginning of dispelling myths and breaking down prejudice. The current Islamophobic climate is exactly the time when dār ul-uloom should welcome sensitively-conducted

54 ibid.
55 ibid.
research which is actively looking for good practice, positive stories, and examples of successful training’.\textsuperscript{56}

It is important to understand the lack of understanding in madāris of such anthropological research and fieldwork. I was in Bangladesh’s Tablīghi markaz in 2006 where an anthropologist came in wanting to look around. Despite being granted permission there was a feeling of suspicion around him amongst the markaz elders. What I believe contributes to this isolation is madāris’ inability to differentiate between ‘academics’ and the ‘media’ and and their differing intentions. This can be understood from two cases; firstly, following the 7/7 London bombings the Dewsbury madrasa was surrounded by the world’s media because one of the bombers ‘Mohammad Sidique Khan’ happened to pray at the Tablīghī markaz in Dewsbury. And the madrasa being directly connected to the Mosque via a bridge link was also under the spotlight and erroneously accused of ‘training its students for Jihād’.

I believe this was the first time the madrasa was faced with such a situation and not knowing what to do they remained isolated. Specially when under the Tablīghi markaz, they even prohibited their students from leaving the building. And it was said to them that, ‘the moment any student interacts with the media, they should simply pack their bags and leave’.\textsuperscript{57} ‘Fear’ of the ‘other’ was definitely the case as the madrasa was forced to feel isolated. Another reason for this approach was the experience of Mufti Dudha, a ṣūfī Imam and the founder of the ‘Islāmic Tarbiyah Academy’ in Dewsbury.\textsuperscript{58} He invited the local press for an interview and everything went well until the next day the front page of the local newspaper announced ‘Dewsbury-born mufti hates British way of life’\textsuperscript{59} This, I believe, further deepened the mistrust Dewsbury madrasa harboured and started to unfairly fear that if they did allow the press the opportunity of an interview it would probably be misinterpreted. Also there was little reason to even have a press-conference when the madrasa had nothing to do with Mohammad Sidique Khan, as he had never enrolled or even applied to study there. I believe Gilliat-Ray also needs to be aware of the ‘suspicion’ that

\textsuperscript{56} ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Personal observation
\textsuperscript{58} See Official Website: http://www.islamictarbiyah.com/
has been created in the minds of madrasa officials towards not only the media but also ‘the other’, which unfortunately includes the academics. Also the feelings that were present during colonised India left their marks in the mind of madrasa. The *muhtamin* (Principle) of contemporary Deoband still quotes the Lord General’s announcement, ‘We will establish such educational institutions within India that the students will remain *Hindustānī* (Indian) merely in colour and birth but will be *Angrez* (English) intellectually and internally’. So this lack of trust must be seen as a natural phenomenon coupled with lack of professional advice.

Secondly, focusing on Dewsbury markaz and their decision to remain aloof from the media and politics again goes back to the ‘*uṣūl* (principles) of the Tablīghī Jamā’at. In the 1960’s when Mawlāna Muḥammad Yūsuf Kāndahlawī (the second *amīr* / leader of the Tablīghī Jamā’at) went to Pakistan, the *Jamā’at-e-Islāmī* of Mawlāna Mawdūdī published a negative article in the papers against him. Nu’mānī felt he should respond and wrote to Kāndahlawī, to which he replied, ‘Do not respond to their article, because if you do then they will again respond with another negative article and reinforce the negativity with much greater force. Then when you respond again they too will write back a third time, hence the erroneous points written only once will in result be written two to three times and will be published with greater force’. He further stated that our effort is not a secret but it is more beneficial that it is not advertised on the media. However, despite the acceptance or refusal of this approach the Tablīghī Jamā’at made this a point of reference and submitted to it with full allegiance and *taqālid-e-shakhsī*. In further reinforcing my argument, I believe, this ‘lack of trust’ is not just merely due to the academics and observers being non-Muslims. Even in 2012 Tahir Alam, a student of the ‘Institute of Education’ and a practising Muslim, was refused entry into *Dār al-‘Ulūm* Kent and Bury. For Kent madrasa he was told that since the *muhtamin* allowed access to ‘the Daily

60 Interview: ‘*Darul Uloom Deoband* mohtamin’ accessed online [31.08.2012]: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YNCQV6D-Ec&feature=related [Urdu]


62 Ibid., p. 61

63 See Table 1, no. 6
Mail', as a result of negative and erroneous points published in the article they had employed a policy not to allow any ‘media’ or ‘public access’ to the madrasa.

I, however, took a different approach in gaining access to madāris for two reasons; firstly, as I have spent nine years in a madrasa studying the syllabus and having spent my teenage in the environment I did not see it useful to now have to go back to research the madrasa for a mere few days. Secondly, I believe it would be more fruitful to give a set questionnaire to fāḍils (graduates) of the Dewsbury madrasa, as opposed to ṭālibs, and also ask them further questions but in a relaxed environment. I feel the research that took place in the Madāris, such as that of Tahir Alam, do not fully reach the kernel of the matter. How can ṭālibs (madrasa students), who are spending seven years of their lives in the four falls of the madrasa and are yet to graduate and have had no significant contact with the ‘outside’ world, answer the following question of Alam: ‘How do you feel the education you are receiving will prepare you to tackle issues in the outside world’? Another reason for asking ṭālibs this question is the lack of a ‘careers department’ in madāris, and this is clear from the responses I received from fāḍils, that as far as practising and preaching and other aspects of piety were concerned the fāḍils were content with regards to ‘this-worldly’ affairs they felt the madāris needed to do more. When responding to piety, a fāḍil stated, ‘the ‘alimiyyah course has a phenomenal effect upon me with my day to day life as well as my career, and it helps to lead myself and the community towards the right path’. Another fāḍil stated, ‘It [the ‘alimiyyah

64 For full article in Daily Mail, See ’Inside the Muslim Eton: 20 hour days starting at 3.45am with the aim of producing Muslim elite of leaders‘. Accessed online [31.08.2012]: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1288053/Inside-Muslim-Eton-Their-day-starts-3-45am-goes-disciplined-20-hours-Their-aim-produce-Muslim-elite-leaders-.html
66 ibid. p. 136
67 See Appendix 1, Fāḍil 4
course] made me a better son, brother, husband and father’. One ḥāḍil, who recently graduated wrote the following response to my question, ‘What do you think is the effect of the madrasa (‘ālimiyah) course on your career and other aspects of your daily life?

‘I would say truthfully it has made me ‘helpless’ and ‘paralysed’ due to the lack of career opportunities and lack of recognised qualifications. I feel helpless and paralysed because I am unable to support my family. I went through so much to get into college. I had to redo my GCSEs because in madrasa not much focus is given to secular academic studies.’

I believe this kind of response can only be received from a ḥāḍil, especially a recent one who has just graduated from the madrasa, as opposed to a ṭālib, who is yet to experience the world. Hence, my research was well informed by ḥāḍil responses, madrasa sanads (similar to certificates) and an analysis of my experience, documented where possible. And I have specifically focussed my attention on a single madrasa – Jāmi‘at Ta‘līm al-Islām (Dewsbury madrasa) when closely analysing the syllabus and pedagogy because in the past gaining access to this madrasa has been deemed near impossible and secondly by analysing one the reader gains a significant understanding of the other madāris.

Before analysing the methodology, the texts and pedagogy of the madāris I thought it significant to begin with the understanding of ‘ilm (knowledge) and the basic question of ‘how do the ṭālibs define ‘ilm and how this influences the madrasa learning and educational process. There are many ways to approach this question but I come to this by analysing the text of ‘al-Mirqāt: fī al-Manṭiq’ written by Faḍl Imām Khayrābādī (d. 1825), who was from one of the major centres of Islamic learning in India and whose son, Faḍl-e-Ḥaqq Khayrābādī, was also influential amongst the Farangi Maḥallī ‘ulamā who later also fought the British in the mutiny of 1857. This book is studied in many madāris and even in Dewsbury madrasa. It is a book on the subject of logic and in the first chapter begins with the ‘diverse’ opinions of ‘ulamā, yet they all point towards the same notion:

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[68] See Appendix 1, Fāḍil 12
[69] See Appendix 1. Fāḍil 3
Introduction: Know that al-‘ilm (knowledge) is defined into a number of meanings: The first, the acquiring of the šūrat al-shay (the image or conception of something) in the ‘aql (mind/intellect).

The second of them: the šūrat al-ḥāṣilah (the acquired conception) from the šay in the ‘aql.

The third of them: ‘al-ḥādir ‘inda al-mudrik’ that which is present and exists within the mudrik (intellect). The fourth of them: the nafs’ (mind’s) acceptance of that šūrat (image/concept). And the fifth of them: al-‘idāfat al-ḥāṣilah ‘the acquired connection’ between the ‘ālim and ma’lūm (between the knower and the known).’

Here from Faḍl Imām’s illustration of the four different definitions of al-‘ilm – and giving preference to the third definition ‘al-ḥādir ‘inda al-mudrik’ – makes it clear that for them all, knowledge was the presence of or acquiring of šūrat al-shay’ (image or conception of something) in the mind and intellect as opposed to a creative or critical function. Then, for the ṭālib, knowledge is that which is acquired and present (as highlighted in the text of Mirqāt) within the heart and this understanding of knowledge explains the notion of hifẓ within the madāris.

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70 Imām, F. (1944). Mirqāt, p. 3
However, Rahman points towards the ‘concept of knowledge’ within the Madāris and critiques this notion and describes this as the most significant and fundamental weakness of medieval Muslim learning:

‘the fundamental weakness of medieval Muslim learning, as of all pre-modern learning, was its concept of knowledge. In opposition to the modern attitude which regards knowledge as something essentially to be searched and discovered by the mind to which it assigns an active role in knowledge, the medieval attitude was that knowledge was something to be acquired. This attitude of mind was rather passive and receptive than creative and positive’.71

It is important to understand that criticism of the madrasa’s concept of knowledge begins with modernist and reformists, who analyse the phenomenon in light of modern Western enlightenment. But the question is whether this approach to knowledge is causing stagnation overall, and whether this approach could be sustained forever. Sikand believes, following his observation and interview with late Hafiz Sharif in Dewsbury madrasa,72 that ‘it is likely that the access to duniyavi disciplines that the madrasa authorities have had to provide their students will have important consequences in time to come’.73 And I believe since, Sikand wrote this in 1996 this may well be the case now as I observe the responses of fāḍils. And further to that Gilliat-Ray observes, which we will later analyse further, that those fāḍils ‘who are able to span the worlds of the seminary and the higher education academy are perhaps an especially important group of people to support and empower within this complex debate’.74

In this section before analysing the methods of ḥifẓ and muṭāla‘ah-sabaq-takrār, I will briefly give an overview of the subjects and substance taught. I have no intention of going in depth in regards to the authors as this has been covered widely elsewhere. Below is a bar chart of five madāris – one from India and the other four situated in Britain: Jāmi‘at ta’līm al-Islām (Dewsbury madrasa – 1982); Dār al-Ulūm Da’wat al-Imān (Bradford madrasa – 2002); Jāmi‘at Riyāḍ al-Ulūm

(Leicester R. madrasa – 1997); Dār al-‘ulūm Leicester (Leicester D. madrasa – 1997); and Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband (1866) of India. However, when analysing the madrasa learning methodology and pedagogy I will suffice with an in-depth analysis of Dewsbury madrasa, as I believe the methodology in most traditional madāris is largely the same with a few differences.
I produced this chart by initially using a fāḍil’s nine years of exam results’ sheets so that no book was left as at times on madāris’ websites not all books detailed. I then listed each text, because in madāris there is a significant emphasis on text based study, and marked whether the text is studied as on a shashmāhi (six monthly / half module) basis or sālāna (full year / full module). I calculated from the ṭālibs exams results’ sheets and holidays per year that a ṭālib has approximately two hundred and twenty-two lessons per subject of a full module and one hundred and ten for a half module, and generally in madāris the daily syllabus and study of texts remains the same everyday. Therefore, the numbers on the side of the chart represent a lecture consisting of forty-five minutes, so if Dewsbury madrasas’ fiqh average is on nineteen hundred it would mean that a ṭālib of Dewsbury madrasa has had nineteen hundred fiqh lectures over their full stay at their respective madrasas. Some subjects are taught more than once a day, as is the case in the final year where the six authentic books of aḥādīth are to be covered. An interesting point of analysis when scrutinising this graph was that despite the dars-e-niẓāmī comprising of mainly humanities sciences, the subjects that form the core of critical analysis are below the rest of the sciences such as Uṣūl (principles) of ḥadīth, tafsīr and fiqh. Also the study of History and even ‘Aqā’id (beliefs) has not been given much space in the curriculum despite its importance. Also one notices the extra emphasis given to tajwīd in Dewsbury and Bradford compared to other madāris – even more than Deoband itself. Also contrary to popular belief that either ḥadīth or fiqh being studied more and being considered the apex of the curriculum is not the case and in fact the study of Arabic language (combining the study of ṣarf, naḥw, balāgha, literature and vocabulary) takes precedence. Lastly, from all the madāris listed, interestingly, contemporary Deoband is the only madrasa to provide ‘modern secular sciences’, which include sociology and journalism.

The study of the subjects mentioned above revolves around texts listed in Appendix 6, but two methods are used in studying those texts: ḥifẓ and the mutāla’ah-sabaq-takrār method. The notion of ‘acquired knowledge’, I believe, gives birth to the methodology of ḥifẓ and also influences madrasa pedagogy. When ḥifẓ is mentioned within the context of madrasa it could be understood in

75 For full list see Appendix 6.
two ways; firstly that of ḥifẓ al-Qurʾān, meaning the letter-for-letter memorisation of the Qurʾān and secondly the literal meaning of memorising, which could include putting to memory certain books and this approach is traditional in nature as in the medieval Islamic world there is much found in regards to the memorisation of large numbers of ḥadīth and even books such as ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. However, here I analysed from the pedagogy applied in Dewsbury that it is incumbent upon the ṭālib to memorise at least one book from each of the significant subjects. For example in Dewsbury madrasa for al-naḥw (Arabic grammar), the ṭālibs memorise ‘ilm al-Naḥw and for al-ṣarf or al- taṣrīf (Arabic etymology) they memorise two parts of ‘ilm al-ṣarf and in a final year of al-ṣarf they put to memory ‘ilm al-ṣīghah. And the manner that the ḥifẓ of initial books takes place is when the ʻustādh gives half a page of A4 or A3 or a set number of lines from the mentioned books and then the remainder of the day is spent by the ṭālib in memorising those lines. Alongside setting the sabaq (lesson – homework) the teachers spend 45 mintues in each class explaining that. From this I understood that the ṭalib is firstly taught a certain Arabic grammatical rule in Urdu and then he spends the day repeating those few lines to a page trying to commit this to memory, and in the process memorises and understands the sabaq. The next day each student in the class recites aloud the sabaq from memory.

During my research I came across a ṭālib’s ‘Ilm al-Ṣīghah book which he had studied and was dated 30th of September 2000. Affixed to the inner cover was his handwritten ‘dawr tartīb’ – ‘revision arrangement’. It was a fascinating piece of paper in which the ṭālib had set out how he would revise the book 31 days prior to his exams. He set each day with a certain number of pages he

76 To be precise, this would differ from madrasa to madrasa, depending on what each madrasa deem significant.
77 A book written by Mawlānā Mushtāq Aḥmād Chahthāwalī, which is approximately 60 pages of Urdu explanation of Arabic grammar rules with Arabic examples. So the ṭālibs therefore spend approximately a year studying Urdu, which is problematic for the non-Urdu speaking ṭālibs, and thereafter these books become accessible to them.
78 Same as above but for the subject of al-ṣarf.
79 ‘Ilm al-Ṣīghah is a book on higher etymology (ṣarf), written by a Muftī ‘Ināyat Aḥmad (1813-1862) all from his ḥāfiẓah (memory) whilst imprisoned by the British on the island of Kālāpānī following the mutiny of 1958.
80 See Appendix 4
would recite to a friend by heart and also indications like ‘tamām māḍī kī gardānayn’ (Repetition and revision of māḍī ‘past tense’) point towards the notion of memorising all the Arabic tenses from different ‘abwāb’ (chapters). What I also found fascinating was the memorisation of ‘Arabiyy Šafwat al-Mašādir, a book of Arabic vocabulary with Urdu translation and tenses approximating 70 pages (See picture below). The ṭālibs are not only memorising the translations into Urdu but also the forms of the Arabic roots when moved into different tenses. A ṭālib recalled how one of the ustādh once told him the finest method of ḥifẓ. He said, ‘trying to memorise during the day is like carving into dried cement, but doing so in the early hours of twilight before the fajr prayer is like shaping into wet cement, which then dries and can never be wiped away’. He gave this example to elaborate the best time during the day to set aside for ḥifẓ, and if one was to walk into a traditional madrasa in the early hours of twilight they would surely find ṭālibs awake repeating aloud their sabaq (homework).

Fig. 3 - Pages 20 & 21 from ‘Arabiyy Šafwat al-Mašādir, compiled by Mawlānā Charthāwalī

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81 ibid.
82 Personal interview.
The problem with such a method of learning and pedagogy is the diversity within learning styles and how different people learn, which again is a more Western approach to the matter. However, the skill of ḥifż and memorisation could be employed in Higher education to a subject like Law. The learning method of ḥifż is employed during the initial few years of madrasa, and the reason in doing so is to give students a firm grounding in the introductory subject matter before they embark on a journey of close reading of ‘medieval’ texts, this also helps in understanding basic rules and key terminology.

What for the academics is defined as ‘medieval’ is in fact a ‘living’ text for the ṭālib. As the initial years pass and the ṭālib sits in front of the book, he does so to benefit from the author with upmost respect and piety as it is embedded in the ṭālib to even have performed wuḍū’ (ablution) prior to the study of these texts. Ḥāfiẓ Patel, the amīr of the Tablīghī Jamā’at in Britain and Europe and spiritual Head of Dewsbury madrasa, always gives the ṭālibss at Dewsbury the examples of piety of the previous ‘Ulamā that in order to read some of the writing which was upside down and sideways or between lines, they would not turn the book but rather go round the table (see figs. 2, 4,5 and 6 to see the notes between the lines and in the footnotes). Interestingly, it is also believed that at the graduation and finishing of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāriyy ‘du’ās (supplications) are accepted’.83 I feel this idea is somewhat comparable to the notion of ‘Torah piety’ in Judaism, where the purpose is to increase and intensify the relationship with God through Torah study and the manner in which this is done, according to Albertz, is through, ‘doing the Torah and learning the

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Therefore, for the ṭālib the study of texts is more than just an academic exercise but rather ‘textual piety’ (kitāboñ kā adab). Hence, the question of ‘reform’ and ‘critically analysing’ these texts would become hugely troublesome and problematic.

Fig. 5 - Pages 14 and 15 from Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhariyy, Vol. 1

Fig. 6 - Pages 370 and 371 from the Muwatṭa’ Imām Mālik

However, part of the pedagogy to ensure a deep understanding of the text is through a ‘triple process methodology’ of muṭāla’ah, sabaq and takrār. In simple

terms, for the ṭālib mutāla‘ah is where he carefully scrutinises the text of books before the ustādh lectures on it – some written over a millennia ago – which could range from a few lines to a page, and towards the end of the ‘ālimiyyah it could be several pages. Sabaq is the actual reading of the mutāla‘a seated in front of the ustādh coupled with the teacher’s explanation and interpretation of the text, which is noted down by the ṭālibs. This is then followed by takrār, where every evening – supervised by an ustādh – the ṭālibs of each class are split into ‘takrār groups’. The ‘takrār groups’ are groups of approximately four ṭālibs, where one ‘repeats’ the interpretation of the ustādh during the sabaq, whilst the others listen attentively and participate only when sharing a point from their notes. Then for the next book the ṭālib changes, so that everyone in the group has had at least one chance at explaining the sabaq to the others. For indeed it is believed by the students, ‘اذًا تكرر تقول في القلب’, ‘that only when something is repeated excessively that it is embedded in the heart’. So the ṭālibs study each page of the book utilising the methods of mutāla‘ah, sabaq and takrār to fully grasp its contents and then the following year a book on the same subject is studied but is more academically challenging for the ṭālib gradually increasing the isti‘dād (level of intelligence) and awareness of different opinions but within their own ḥanfī madhhb (See Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Ḥadīth</th>
<th>Fiqh</th>
<th>Tajwīd</th>
<th>Uṣūl al-Fiqh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>‘Arabiyy Awwal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tajwīd Mubtadī</td>
<td>Jamāl al-Qur‘ān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>‘Arabiyy Dowm</td>
<td>Nūr al-Īḍāḥ Al-Qudūriyy</td>
<td>Fawā’id al-Makkiyyah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>‘Arabiyy Sowm</td>
<td>Kanz al-daqā‘iq</td>
<td>Muqaddimat al-Jazariyyah</td>
<td>Jāmī‘ al-Waqf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>‘Arabiyy Chahārum</td>
<td>Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn</td>
<td>Al-Wiqāyah</td>
<td>Khulāṣat al-Bayān shāṭibiyya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>‘Arabiyy Panjum</td>
<td>Hidāyah 1</td>
<td>Hidāyah 2</td>
<td>Sirājiyy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>‘Arabiyy Shashum</td>
<td>Mishkāt</td>
<td>Hidāyah 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 - Showing the addition of texts each year subject wise.
Concerning this type of pedagogy, there is a lot of criticism from modernists and also some from within the ‘ulamā sector. The close scrutiny of texts could, for some students, be problematic and because this is the only method employed this would leave some ṭālibs out of the equation even graduating. One of the fāḍils also pointed towards this when responding to the question reform:

‘…provide students with more help in the way they learn. For example in my class I had a friend who was dyslexic and couldn’t read the words properly, but all the teachers would always say to him ‘why don’t you learn your sabaq?’.

However, due to a lot of pressure he left madrasa and went to college, where they recognised that he was dyslexic…’

It it also evident that the madrasa expects its ṭālibs to fit into the cycle of muṭāla’ah, sabaq and takrār. And secondly, the recognition and facilities for dyslexic ṭālibs is not available, but what is eminent is an eventual fall out from madrasa of such an individual.

I also noted from various discussions with fāḍils of madāris, which due to a thorough 6 – 9 years of following this set method and focusing on the close study of set texts leaves it difficult for them to critically engages with them. Therefore, it is noted when fāḍils do venture into the field of authorship it is difficult to find them doing anything but translating texts or writing commentaries upon them, as they have been so closely tied to the text. Mawlāna Imran Hosein, an eschatologist and Islamic economist, criticised the madrasa learning

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85 See Appendix 1, Fāḍil 8
86 Some madāris provide a six year ‘ālimiyyah course, for Dewsbury and Bradford it is nine years.
methodology in the lecture ‘Islam and the International Monetary System’ he presented in a Deobandī madrasa in Newcastle, South Africa:

‘...Where are the scholars of Islam? Where are they? The scholars of Islam have failed and failed miserably. One of the reasons why they have failed is because the educational system which has produced them has been inadequate ... the Muftīs are giving fatwā without knowledge of international monetary economics..... Our scholars today are failing partly because the institutions which are producing them are inadequate, they do not have a proper curriculum that teaches them what they need to do. But the failure is for a second reason as well: methodology. There is a methodology at work, which produces students who study this kitāb (book), this kitāb, that kitāb, that kitāb, and they repeat it over and over again from now until qiyyāmah. It is called ‘mechanical knowledge’...

It is interesting to note here that in order to understand a modern topic such as ‘monetary economics’ one has to go beyond a ‘mechanical study’ of texts. I believe, this style of learning is one which follows on from the ‘atomistic’ style of interpreting the Qur’an verse by verse, which is a recognisable feature of medieval exegetes. However, Hosein also pointed out that, ‘they do not have a proper curriculum that teaches them what they need to do’. This is in line with a graduate of Dewsbury, who also studied further at university, suggested that ‘there needs to be a serious revision of what purpose the Dār al-‘ulūm is there to primarily cater for’. And when asked if he thought the madrasa curriculum helps in facing challenges of modern life, he replied:

No, though it has the potential to do so. I believe the process of ‘preparing students’ for their post-graduation lives needs to be addressed. The curriculum per se is not sufficient and is deeply rooted in the classical approach to Islamic academia, which is evidently insufficient to prepare graduates. A healthy blend of ancient academic discourse, and discourses on the modern challenges of life, would go a long way in addressing this problem that Darul Uloom graduates face en masse.

Alongside this, a fāḍil from al-Jāmi’ah al-Islāmiyyah Dār al-‘ulūm in Bolton indicated his distastefulness towards what Hosein terms ‘mechanical knowledge’

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88 Appendix 1, Fāḍil 10
89 ibid.
and calls to be recognised as ‘humans’ and hopes for an educational system that is more natural as opposed to ‘mechanical’:

The saddest part is that the majority of students don’t have the opportunity to reflect. They are put through the same ‘brainwashing’ and ‘indoctrination techniques’ in order to create complacent followers who will in turn work to do the same, and worst of all, they are completely unaware of it. We are human beings. We are thinkers, dreamers, explorers, artists, writers, engineers. We are anything we want to be – but only if we have an educational system that supports us rather than holds us down. A tree can grow, but only if its roots are given a healthy foundation.90

The notion of a text based study another fāḍil felt could drift the mind of the ṭālib away from the actual subject itself, ‘…teach a more skills based curriculum as opposed to text based. This will keep students more interested and focused on their topic of study’.91

From these responses it becomes ever more important to ask the question: Is an institute such as the madrasa, being a transnational institution set up and influenced by the culture and environment of the Sub-continent compatible in the West? If they have survived in the Orient, will they flourish in the Occident? Is a text based study, and texts that are a hundred to a thousand years old, with the methodology explained going to resonate with modernity. It is difficult to understand how a close and focused reading of texts explaining medieval transactions and business laws could help a ṭālib in an ever-changing economy of the 21st Century.

However, an aspect of madrasa not fully analysed is the teacher and student relationship and the notion of ‘ālim bā ‘amal (a practising scholar). Indeed, the madrasa is where the ‘spiritual’ and ‘intellectual’ worlds meet. Dr Akram Nadwi – now a research fellow at the University of Oxford – describes his own experience in his madrasa (Nadwat al-Ulamā), ‘organised formal teaching was naturally of great importance at Nadwah. However, it was the interaction between teacher and student, and the scholarly circles and literary gatherings

90 See Appendix 1, Fāḍil 7
91 Appendix 1, Fāḍil 12
that provided so much of one’s spiritual and intellectual nourishment’. As Rūmī’s Fārsī poem is oft quoted in the madāris:

\[
\text{‘That by frequenting the company of the pious one becomes pious, and by keeping bad company the impiety rubs off’.}
\]

In understanding the notion of ‘ālim bā ‘amal Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī goes as far as stating that an ‘ālim not practising the dīn cannot in essence be called an ‘Islamic scholar’:

\[
\text{‘By Mawlawī it is understood to mean ‘Ālim bā ‘amal (A scholar, who acts) – you may also call him a ‘dervish’. If one is not likewise then he is not amongst the mawlawīs. We do not merely define a mawlawī as someone who knows Arabic; in Egypt and Beirut there are many Christians and Jews well versed in Arabic, so are we to call them ‘muqtadā-e-dīn (those who are followed in matters of religion – legitimate scholars of Islam). Mawlawī is indeed the one who is Mawlā wālā (Man of God), meaning that he possesses ‘ilm-e-dīn (knowledge of religion), is God-fearing and embodies praiseworthy manners and character’. Thānwī argues very clearly that at the kernel of madrasa pedagogy is not the ‘letter’ but rather the ‘spirit of the letter’ or better, a merging of both.}
\]

The famous complaint of Imām Shāfi‘ī made to his teacher, I believe, is apt in understanding the connection made by madrasa between ‘spirituality’ and ‘intellectuality’:

\[
\text{شکوتُ الی وکیع سوء حفظی - فاوصانی ال ترقی المعاصی}
\]

\[
\text{فان العلم نور من الاهی - و نور الله لا یعلی لمعاصی}
\]

\]

\]

\[94\text{ibid., p. 43}
\]

\[95\text{Mawlawī is a term that originated in the Sub-continent for an Islamic scholar, similar to Shaykh used in the Arab world, and literally means ‘my master’.
\]

\[96\text{Thānwī, A. A. (1425H). Tuhfa al-‘Ulamā (p. 41)\]
“I complained to Waki regarding the weakness of my memory. He prescribed for me the abstinence from sins. For indeed al-‘ilm [sacred knowledge] is a nūr (light) from my Lord. And the light of Allah is not bestowed upon a sinner”.

Here it is evident that at times the connection between the intellect and spirit is also viewed in a literal sense. That if a ṭālib sins, and opposes the notion of ‘amal, this directly affects his ‘memorising’ capacity. Al-‘ilm is considered nūr min ilāh (divine light) and not merely an academic exercise, and I believe the significance of this cannot be emphasised enough. With this nūr combined is a nūrānī ‘link’, the isnād – the link from a ṭālib through his ustādh to the author of the book and from the author ultimately to the Prophet.

The connection of ‘ālim bā ‘amal, a practising scholar, and the isnād is important to understand, as indeed a ḥadīth too is rendered weak on the piety of its rāwiyy (narrator). And the importance of isnād can be appreciated by the saying of ‘Abd-Allāh ibn al-Mubārak, that the notion of isnād is from the dīn, and if there were no isnād then indeed anyone would narrate whatever they desired. The example of a contemporary isnād is as follows – from an ijāzah of Saḥīḥ Muslim:

[Image of a certificate]

Picture from an Indian published Saḥīḥ Muslim studied in madāris

97 See Appendix 2.7 – Ijāzah / Shahādah (Certificate) for Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ.
98 See Appendix 2.4 – Ijāzah for Saḥīḥ Muslim
Here, starting from the ijāzah as arrowed above, the ustādh states that he himself studied from ‘al-ustādh al-shaykh Wājid Ḥusayn al-Deobandī … [followed by a list of ustādhs up to] al-Shāh Waliyullāh ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Muḥaddith al-Dihlawiyī. And then below the dotted line is the isnād from Waliyullāh all the way to al-Imām Abī al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayriyy al-Nisābūriyy, the author of the Ṣaḥīḥ. Following the contemporary isnād, which is presented to the ṭālib at graduation I have added a scan from Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, which then connects Imām Muslim to the Prophet. Here is a simple rendering of the sanad: al-Imām Abī al-Ḥusayn Muslim > Naṣr ibn ‘Aliyy al-Jahḍamiyy > Abū Aḥmad > Ḥamzah al-Zayyān > al-Ḥakam > ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Layla > Ka'b ibn ‘Ujrah > Messenger of Allāh. Here, there are two things to note; firstly that for the ṭālib he is now part of a spiritual link that ultimately concludes with the Prophet himself – interestingly the tajwīd isnād concludes with Allah, as He recites to Angel Jibrīl and Jibrīl to the Prophet – he must therefore not ‘breakaway’ from his predecessor in the asānid (pl. of sanad) to let in any ‘change’ or innovate in matters of faith. And it is for this reason the ‘ālimiyiyah certificate combines the notion, ‘to follow on the steps of the pious predecessors, and to avoid religious innovations’. And, for the fāḍil the disconnecting from the ustādh’s interpretation of texts opens the doors of innovation. And lastly, I believe it is through the isnād that the fāḍil gains legitimacy. It is an interesting point that the ‘Ulamā of Deoband disregarded Mawlānā Mawdūdī because he had not studied ‘under’ an ustādh with an isnād. Therefore, Mawdūdī lacks legitimacy to interpret Islam, and when he wrote his ‘Tafhīm al-Qur’ān (exegesis of the Qur’ān) the ‘ulamā of Deoband responded with Ma‘arif al-Qur’ān (the famous Deobandī exegesis).

The following is from an ‘ālimiyiyah certificate, which shows the difference between the secular and madrasa education, and again emphasises the importance of the notion of ‘ālim bā ‘amat:

99 See Appendix 2.2
This is the final part of the certificate, which is a reminder that shall always remain present in the mind of the ṭālib. The point, ‘to follow on the steps of the pious predecessors, and to avoid religious innovations, and to hold on to Islam as it was for centuries’ clearly sets aside any kind of ‘change’, ‘reformation’ or even ‘ijtihād’.

This merging of the letter and spirit of the letter I believe creates confidence and a ‘sound worldview’ in the mind and heart of a ṭālib which Sikand believes is not the case with modern education. Mukul Kesavan, an Indian historian following his experience of lecturing fāḍils in university, believes madāris help students make sense of the world. Interestingly, Sikand an academic all his life, who completed his Phd on the Tablīghī Jamā’at and was involved in further research regarding the madāris of India just last month stated the following:

‘The more I think of ‘modern’ education the more problematic it reveals itself to be. In fact, I’ll go so far as to say that it’s definitely one of the major malaises affecting contemporary humanity. It fails miserably as far as the ethical or moral development of students. And that is

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100 For full see Appendix 2.1 – The Shahādat of al-‘Alimiyyah in Islamic Sciences and Arabic Literature. And for translation see Appendix 2.2 – Translation of Appendix 2.1 prepared for admission to a University Masters’ degree.

something that even folks who aren’t interested in the extra-worldly realm or life after death ought to be worried about.  

When I compare this to the responses of the fāḍils and discussions I have had they all illustrated sound world views and felt that the madrasa environment was matchless in this regards. As opposed to what Sikand himself describes his current feelings, ‘I felt totally empty and bereft of any direction whatsoever. My life had lost all meaning and purpose’.  

A History of Criticisms and Calls for Reform

Criticism of madrasa pedagogy and the calls for reform have a history of their own. It is, however, unclear as to where and when ‘the idea first originated’ of a thorough decline within the medieval Madāris, where creative thinking had been buried away in the pages of commentaries on earlier works. Even prior to the formation of the dars-e-nizāmī the religious education imparted to Emperor Aurangzeb had, according to him, been unsatisfactory. Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb himself describes the kind of education he received in a speech addressed to his teacher:

‘What did you teach me? You told me that the land of the Franks is a small island where the greatest king had previously been the ruler of Portugal, then the king of Holland and now the king of England… Glory be to God! What knowledge of geography and history you displayed! Was it not your duty to instruct me in the characteristics of the nations of the World – the products of these countries, their military power, their methods of warfare, their customs, religions, ways of government and political policies?... it is true that for several years you worried my head about unnecessary and nonsensical questions quite unrelated to the issues of life… When I finished my education, I had no real knowledge of any science or art except that I could utter certain abstruse

102 Sikand, Y. (2012). ‘Modern’ (Mis-)Education: Ethical Concerns
Accessed online [29.08.2012]: http://www.countercurrents.org/sikand250712A.htm
103 Sikand, Y. (2012). My ‘Modern Education’
technical terms which confuse even the brightest mind and by which claimants to a knowledge of philosophy cover up their ignorance…

Criticism of the irrelevance of the syllabus to contemporary issues is now reaching new heights amongst the Muslims. What prevents madāris from reform? Mawlānā Waḥīd al-din Khan, himself a traditional scholar, argues that the conservative ‘ulamā see change not as a legitimate, evolving historical processes, which must be understood and faced, but of “conspiracies,” which have to be uncovered and resisted’. And clearly these are approaches which the madāris have adopted since British colonialism or simply see this as furthering the cause from pure piety.

Contemporary traditional ‘ulamā on the contrary argue for the separation of the religious and secular sciences. What I believe, in colonial India were genuine concerns of the ‘ulamā have now transformed into conspiracy theories as indicated by Khan. Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī wrote in a period when the British Raj was conspiring against the ‘ulamā and therefore he suggested:

\\(\text{The absence of secular (worldly) study in dīnī (religious) madāris is its very pride – Many Angrez (British) on high levels have written regarding the madrasa of Deoband that if secular knowledge merges with the dīnī knowledge then its true colours of pure piety will be faltered, which in essence is its source of pride.}\\)

He also quotes Mawlānā Ya’qūb during the graduation ceremony as saying that some people, after seeing our madrasa, think that there is no means of sustenance or a fruitful career for its graduates. He responded in the following manner:

\\(\text{That this [madrasa] is only for those, whom the worry of the hereafter has rendered them insane! I feel one can appreciate the concerns of the ‘ulamā in}\\)


107 Thānwī, A. A. (1425H), op. cit., p.110

108 ibid.
that period, but the notion of madāris still being the bastions of Islam and requiring fortification from the ‘outside’ culture and thought is one that now requires revision. This statement also indicates criticism of madāris and discontent with the system even then. Sikand, in a recent interview with Mawlānā Ṭāriq Rashīd Firangī Maḥallī, asked him the following question in regards to reform, ‘Some traditionalist ‘ulamā argue that the dars-e-nizāmī does not need any change. They claim that it produced good scholars in the past and so can do so today, too. As a descendant of Mulla Nizamuddin and one who knows the tradition well, how do you react to this argument,’\textsuperscript{109} to which Maḥallī replied, ‘I strongly disagree with this argument. It reflects a very strange mentality. So rigid are those who argue this way that they easily brand anyone who calls for change as an ‘apostate’ or an ‘agent’ of this or other ‘un-Islamic’ power. Mulla Nizamuddin did not certainly intend that the syllabus he formulated should remain unchanged forever. The point is that the ulema must be kept abreast with contemporary developments, which is not possible if one argues that the dars-enizami should remain unchanged. How can you be considered to be a real scholar, an alim, if you study books written eight hundred or five hundred years ago, which is the case with the dars-e nizami, and totally leave out modern books?’\textsuperscript{110}

Maḥallī, too recognises the ‘ulamā’s ‘response to change as one finding controversy and an insistence on the status quo ‘a strange mentality’. He also affirms the fact that Mullān Niẓam al-Ḍīn never desired this ‘untouchable’ status for the syllabus he set according to the particular needs of his time. The ‘ulamā must be in touch with contemporary issues. The criticism regarding the relevance of the dars-e-nizāmī is at the epicentre, but I feel there are other simpler problems that are to be dealt with – a professional and reputable career path.

In this year’s graduation ceremony (Bukhārī Khatam) of Dewsbury madrasa the ustādh and Shaykh al-Ḥadīth, of some of the major teachers, hinted towards his dislike of having the ‘ālimiyah certificate accredited by an external university:

\textsuperscript{109} For full interview see Appendix 3.5 – Yoginder Sikand’s Interview with Mawlānā Tariq Rashid Firangi Maḥallī.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., See Appendix 3.5 for full response.
Allah has bestowed dignity in this knowledge...which will give us salvation in this world and the next. Mawlānā Yūsuf once said in a gathering, ‘Oh brother, through the knowledge of dīn if you are to gain the high statuses of paradise and the great blessing of paradise itself, then how is it possible that through serving the knowledge you will not have a living?’ You shall not gain ‘rice’ and ‘lentils’? what kind of thought is this? That you will gain paradise – such a virtuous abode – but no ‘rotī’ (chapatti) or rice? Is this why we need a degree, for mere rice and lentils? This is ignorance! Hence, we have to serve this knowledge for the rest of our lives; bring it into our hearts; act upon it; and its purpose is to discover Allah’.

What I gathered from conversing with some young ‘ulamā and asātidhā of Dewsbury that they are pushing for change from within, and by change I mean simply having the ‘ālimiyah certificate accredited local universities, but are not being received by staff closely affiliated to this Shaykh which also further affirms the notion of taqlīd-e-shakhṣī overtaking all aspects of pedagogy. And one insisted that following this year’s graduation ceremony it will be a much strenuous task in convincing them. However, I feel there is a lot of pressure being built within the madāris to reform and Sikand foretold this from his observation and interviews at the Dewsbury madrasa in 1995:

‘Although the Tablighi madaris may not have cheerfully embraced the British legal requirement of compulsory secular education, it is likely that the access to duniyavi disciplines that the madrasa authorities have had to provide their students will have important consequences in time to come. Indeed, it is quite possible this might suggest to TJ grassroots level activists, if not the leaders, the need to move towards a recognition of the importance of addressing the this-worldly concerns of British Muslims if the movement is to survive’.

And I feel that many fāḍils who have not had reputable career opportunites, or had to work hard even after their graduation and criticisms regarding the

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relevance of the ‘
dars-e-nizāmī’
to modern contexts have meant an exploration of systematic reform.

Currently, there are different constructive reforms being paved from ‘external’ sources and an ‘internal’ reform is in process. By external I mean three models; the Cambridge Muslim College (CMC); the Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE); and the Ebrahim College model. The first two models appreciate the dars-e-nizāmī by some degree, and feel that courses provided by them will further equip the fāḍil with skills, modern sciences and some form of recognised qualifications to face the challenges of modernity. The CMC have developed a foundation diploma specifically for madrasa fāḍils and their requirements for entry are ‘the completion of an ‘ālim course at a recognised institution of Islamic scholarship and fluency in written and spoken English’.113

And the modules provided are of topics they believe are not taught in the madāris, a list of them is provided below:

Introduction to Western Intellectual History; Science in the World Today; Introduction to the History and Philosophy of Science; Science in the World Today; Understanding Contemporary Debates in Ethics & Science from an Islamic Perspective; British Islam Today; Modern British Political History; Effective Communication Skills; Islam & Gender; Islam and Religious Pluralism: Theological and Historical Perspectives; Modern British Intellectual History; Sacred Art & Architecture of the World; Introduction to Astronomy; Introduction to World Religions & Inter-Faith Dialogue; Introduction to the British State; Islamic Counselling & Dispute Resolution; Effective Community Leadership & Development; Introduction to the Social Sciences; Introduction to World History; and History of the 19th and 20th century Muslim World.114

For each topic specialist lecturers are invited from the universities of Cambridge, Oxford, London and various other universities. The MIHE model slightly differs as it is a post-graduate education provider with specialist teaching in Islam, and the way they cater for fāḍils is by accepting ‘ālimiyyah certificate as a valid qualification for them to then study at Masters level in Islamic Studies; Islamic Education; Islamic Finance and Islamic Law.115 MIHE is accredited by the

115 Accessed online (14.08.2012): http://www.mihe.org.uk/ma-islamic-studies
University of Gloucester, who are also trying other ventures in approaching the madāris.

The Ebrahim College model differs from the above as it takes new ṭālibs firstly into their institute for instruction in Arabic and Islamic studies. After the ṭālib passes GCSEs and A Levels in Arabic and Islamic studies he completes a further four years of Islamic studies, which the college has described as ‘the ālimiyah program’. However, the college has introduced modern subjects and classes such as: English composition; Philosophy of Religion; Academic writing and research skills; Understanding World Religions; Understanding Muslim Sects and Groups; History of Muslim Dynasties; History of Britain; Muslims in Britain; Critical thinking; Women in Islamic Society; and Dissertation in English and Arabic. Following the four year course, which is in the process of being accredited by the University of Gloucester, the ṭālibs are then sent to Dewsbury madrasa – or a madrasa of their choice – for the final two years of dars-e-nizāmī. The teachers at the college are mostly fādils themselves, many of whom who have also studied higher education at universities. It is interesting to note that for the past two years two students being sent by Ebrahim college for their final two years have managed to come first and second in the madrasa examinations.

Gilliat-Ray, from her many observations and fieldwork in this sector, believes that fādils ‘who are able to span the worlds of the seminary [madrasa] and the higher education academy are perhaps an especially important group of people to support and empower. Interestingly from the fādil responses five out of twelve fell under this category of having had both madrasa and university educations. Certainly as one analyses these particular fādil - fādils 2, 7, 10, 11, 12 – responses they will discover a more consistent call for reform which reflects their post-graduation experiences and exceptional adeptness at articulating their minds. The career paths taken by these graduates too are more reputable who have their main careers and then alongside their careers as Telecoms analyst; healthcare and Olympic chaplain; Teachers of RE, Mathematics and Modern

116 For full four year syllabus see Appendix 5. Details accessed online [01.09.2012]: http://ebrahimcollege.org.uk/ebrahim/alimcourse/full-time/
Foreign Languages at state secondary schools, they also serve their religion. On the contrary I found from the responses and observations that the other fādīls were either working as full time Imāms, which mostly also includes teaching in makātib, or maktab teachers who were having to find other part time jobs such as working at retailers, B&Q, Asda, as Taxi drivers and interestingly one fādīl also included exorcist as one of his part-time professions. Fādīls 10, 11 and 12 laid out thorough ideas of how they thought madrasas should be reformed. Fādīl 11 stressed that British Government should seek to engage, encourage and facilitate future ṭālibs to enter the higher education system as it also helps fulfil their goals of preventing extremism, facilitating community cohesion and giving the Muslim community strong grounded academic leadership.¹¹⁸

This year – in 2012 – the way for an internal reform was paved by an external source to have the ‘ālimiyah certificate accredited. This came in the form of a project headed by Ron Geaves, ‘An exploration of the viability of partnership between dar al-ulum and Higher Education Institutions in North West England focusing upon pedagogy and relevance’ at Liverpool Hope University.¹¹⁹ In this project the aim was to explore various possibilities to collaborate between traditional madāris and universities in close geographical proximity and the area chosen for this initial task was ‘North West England’. The madāris involved were the Bury madrasa and Jāmi’at al-ʿIlm wa al-Hudā (Blackburn madrasa), Bury was more difficult to get through to but eventually through fādīl leads and overcoming certain issues raised by Blackburn madrasa Geaves’ project finally gained fruition. One such issue for the muhtamim of the Blackburn madrasa was the ṭālibs’ travelling to the university and the reason the problem had arisen Geaves describes, was the problem with permitting post-puberty males to travel alone into gender-mixed environments’.¹²⁰ And I believe this was the most

¹¹⁸ See Appendix 1, Fādīl 11
¹²⁰ ibid. p. 11
crucial part of the project, and it is here that Geaves won over the trust of the madrasa by understanding their concerns and finally after much effort orchestrated the meeting of the final two year ṭālibs of Blackburn and Bury madrasas in a third location accessible for both madrasa ṭālibs and lecturers who are to travel from local universities. This endeavour is to begin in October 2013. When I came across this project I instantaneously contacted the Dewsbury madrasa and told them of such a project, to which I was told that they had already contacted another party in regards to having their degree accredited but were still unsure if they were to go ahead. The young asātidhah were willing to discuss this further with me but hoped that the muhtamim and shūrā (madrasa council) too would allow this to happen.

Geaves concludes his project with the statement, ‘the challenges of fruition, that is, the creation of a validated programme of study ready for advanced dar al-ulum students in October 2013 to join a BA in Islamic Studies, will now depend upon the good will and the hard economic realities of University priorities in an unknown terrain’.121 A sample of the final year curriculum that is being prepared to be lectured by academics could be analysed under ‘Appendix 7’.

I started with a thorough analysis of the cultural and political context the madāris were shaped by and are influenced by till this day. Firstly, I traced India’s hanafi madhhab to 1258 and the migration of many Baghdādī scholars to India alongside their hanafi texts. I then began to reconstruct the syllabus taught in madāris of Britian to find out which text was introduced when and why. I analysed the four adwār (periods), the first laid emphasis on fiqh; the second stage saw the inclusion of texts such as Mukhtaṣar al-Ma‘āni, Sharḥ al-Aqāi‘d and Šarḥ Wiqāya on the request of students; the third period, witnessed Iranian influence on ma‘qūlāt but ended with Shāh Waliyullāh’s struggle in introducing Šīḥāḥ Sittah to the shores of India; and then the final stage saw the systemisation of Islamic knowledge by Mullān Niẓām al-Dīn’s dars-e-nīzāmī. By the end of the fourth period there were three major centres of Islamic learning in India: the Delhi of Shāh Waliyullah, Lucknow famous for its fiqh, and Khayrābād renowned for ma‘qūlāt. Till then I believe there was a natural evolution of the madāris of Hind with reform and change.

121 ibid., p. 14
However, British colonialism and the mutiny of 1857 was to change this natural process forever. It was to instil fear in the hearts of the Musalmāns and surround them in their ideological fortresses – the madāris. It was where Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband was to build high defensive impenetrable walls that would allow no ideological explosives to breach its fortifications. It was within its walls pedagogy was devised to protect Islam as opposed to allow its natural evolution through the ages as it had previously been. They achieved this through taqlīd and specifically through taqlīd-e-shakhṣī in order to systemise Islamic thinking to prevent innovation in time of great fitnah. With this spectrum came another, that of the Aligarh modernists who called for naught but change and modernisation.

Six years following the founding of Deoband the call for Nadwat al-‘Ulamā was seen as an initiative to take the ‘middle-path’ and reform the madāris system which they thought lacked the qualities required in ‘Ulamā.

The majority of Madāris in Britain – approximately 70% - are affiliated indirectly to Deoband. Rendering the Islam in Britain more influenced by Deoband and the influences it had of British colonialism, which always arises in modern context. I believe, if the majority of migrants were from Lucknow or its suburbs then Islam of Britain would have been significantly different, with the likes of Mawlāna Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Ali Nadwi and his student Dr Akram Nadwi who have worked as research fellows at the University of Oxford. As indeed the majority of migrants were from Deobandī backgrounds. Despite the migrants initial intent of returning to their native lands they stayed and brought with them their Madāris. The first such madrasa was established in early as 1975 and since they number more than thirty. However, we learn from the madāris’ response to visiting academics that these madāris brought along with them not only had native pedagogy but also the memories of colonialism.

(Not) accessing Deobandī madāris itself became a source for understanding them. The feelings of fear for the ‘other’ and the need to strictly guard one’s specific interpretation of Islam illustrated it. I looked at the case of how Dewsbury handled the 7/7 media at its doors and further discovered that affiliations to Deoband are very well and alive but closer affiliations started to have more impact on their responses to the other. Their decision to isolate
themselves was more an influence of the quietist nature of the Tablīghī Jamā’at, as an analysis of the contemporary Deobandī syllabus shows that even Deoband have started to teach subjects like ‘journalism’. Was this the beginning of a neo-Deobandi fringe, but I gathered that there are now new affiliations and notions such as taqlīd-e-shakhṣī that influence and determine decisions.

I then thoroughly analysed the pedagogy and methodology applied by the madāris. I did so by exploring what according to the texts in the madāris is understood to be the concept of ‘ilm. I discovered that the concept was more stagnant than creative and this resonated in the methodology of ḥifẓ, despite it being a useful skill for a subject like law. For all subjects an introductory book is memorised, which familiarises the ṭālibs with all new content and terminologies. However, the method of ‘muṭā’la’a-sabaq-takrār is beneficial for encyclopaedic learning but again does not fulfil the creative aspect of knowledge, which Rahman staunchly criticises. I also learned that coupled with this style of learning the notion of ‘textual piety’ increased the improbability of a critical engagement with the text that is so highly revered. In Madāris there were too things very different from modern education; firstly the importance given to acting upon what has been studied; and secondly the soundness of madrasa worldview.

Finally I analysed the history of criticism and calls for reform with the madāris and found that despite the madrasa not wanting to reform it was inevitable. Especially due to the ṭālibs’ concern for a reputable career, which is only possible with an accredited ‘ālimiyyah certificate, which is on its way. And it is at the Blackburn and Bury madāris that future research will be done on how madāris and universities can bond to create a new educational model that is to determine the future of Islam in Britain.
Appendix 1. Responses from Fāḍils (Madrasah Graduates)

Survey of UK madrasa Talibs.

Please confirm that you are over the age of 18:

1. At what age did you join the madrasa? For how many years?

2. What is your current profession/s?

3. What do you think is the effect of the madrasa (‘alimiyyah) course on your career and other aspects of your daily life?

4. Do you think that the madrasa curriculum helps in facing challenges of modern life?

5. What role has the madrasa played in developing your worldview – if at all? And has this changed since graduating and how?

6. What reforms do you think should be brought into madrasas?

Responses from UK madrasa Fāḍils

Fāḍil – 1

Answer 1.
20 years old (dada) 8 years

Answer 2.
Imam/ maktab teacher/tabligh/exorcism

answer 3.
Graduated as alim
Its helped me do kidmat of deen. What i wanted, it helps me to be strong in my a'amal, pray salah in masjid, it keeps me bussy doing younght programme/ tafseer/dars/talks etc i get alot time to spend with my family

Answers 4.
Madrasa’s aim is to teach us quran, sunnah, seerah and fiqh... Now lot of modern day problem could be easily dealt and tackled if madrassa looked into modern days challenges and provided solution or awareness lessons.

1) there should be career advice
2) there should be awareness lessons.

Answer 5.
I felt like i had to stay in the kidmat of odin in order to remain dindar and not to take another career route... Now i think that option of going in to different Line should be given to some and advised.. But since its proven to be harm for some so i dont think its for everyone.. Even i thought of doing teachers training course coz of narrow options in deeni kidmat but in the end chose to stay in imamat and maktab

Answer 6.
Career advice/options to work in halal field.
Modern days challenge media/firqa batila and solutions

Sent from my iPhone

Fāḍil – 2

1. At what age did you join the madrasa? For how many years?
i joined at 17

2. What is your current profession/s?
I am a healthcare Chaplain as well as an Olympic Chaplain

3. What do you think is the effect of the madrasa('alimiyah) course on your career and other aspects of your daily life?
The Alimiyah course has given me tools necessary in the chaplaincy field which I have shaped and developed further in my work. It has also equipped me to deal with my local community and has taught me that everyday is a learning curve and knowledge never stops for someone but in actual fact stays till the last moments of ones life.

4. Do you think that the madrasa curriculum helps in facing challenges of modern life?
It gives the tools but these need to be enhanced as one goes forward in their lives either through further studies or work experience. I think this goes across all sciences that once a person graduates, this is just the beginning for them and they use their studies as a foundation to build upon as they go along.
5. What role has the madrasa played in developing your worldview – if at all? And has this changed since graduating and how?
The madrasa has helped me understand the purpose of life and has put many things into perspective. Having said that, like I mentioned before, some aspects have changed as I have gained more experience in my local community and work experience.

6. What reforms do you think should be brought into madrasas?
I would like to see more scholars discussed from different sub-continents as this is very important for those who live in vibrant diverse societies such as London.

insha Allah, I hope the above is ok, please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Fādil – 3

1. At what age did you join the madrasa? For how many years?
i joined at 12 – for 9 years

2. What is your current profession/s?
Teaching Maktab / Studying Btec applied medical science in college (Level 3)

3. What do you think is the effect of the madrasa(‘alimiyyah) course on your career and other aspects of your daily life?
Daily Life: Manners and Akhlaq, good behaviour with Muslims and Non-Muslims. It has made me spiritually strong.
Career: I would say truthfully it has made me ‘helpless’ and ‘paralysed’ due to the lack of career opportunities and lack of recognised qualifications. I feel helpless and paralysed because I am unable to support my family.
I went through o much to get into college, I had to redo my GCSEs because in madrasa not much focus is given to secular academic studies.

4. Do you think that the madrasa curriculum helps in facing challenges of modern life?
This is linked to the 3rd Question career wise. I feel the restrictive and segregated life have made it difficult. Also the ‘label’ of Mawlana keeps me restricted, e.g. I went to buy ‘halal’ sweets from a shop who sell ‘haram’ meat I was frowned upon by the community. Even walking with Female lecturers or even female classmates becomes problematic. And due to this I feel restricted in getting certain jobs, specially without A-Levels.

5. What role has the madrasa played in developing your worldview – if at all? And has this changed since graduating and how?
My worldview is a restricted and narrow one – that’s why I think they ask us to go for one year to explore the world.

Whilst in madrasa you don’t know what is going on / jaded masa’il etc

Whilst in madrasa newspapers are considered haram, and so is internet – maybe they should provide internet with many sites restricted as they are at college. Even sites like Facebook or even typing ‘games’ on Google is restricted. However, without knowing what happens in the outside makes one feel confined and institutionalised once graduated.

6. What reforms do you think should be brought into madrasas?

Secular Academic studies: GCSE / A-Levels and more to provide Career opportunities.

Have qualified school teachers

Many Talibs do not know how to teach children in Maktabs, they should have more experience before graduation and maybe courses.

Make the Alimiyyah course recognised!

Fādil – 4

I hope you receive this email in best of spirits and health.

Following are Answers to your survey, I hope you are successful with your survey and your goals are achieved.

I am over the age of 18.

1) I joint Madrasa at the age of 14, and i was in Madrasa for approximately 11 years .

2) My current professions are ;

   a) Imam @ Dunvale Islamic Society, Ireland
   b) Teacher of Islamic Studies, Arabic language
   c) Pastoral Care for the society
   d) Voluntary Chaplaincy @ the hospital.

3) The Alimiyyah course has a Phenomenal effect upon me with my day to day life as well as my career, it helps to lead myself and the community towards the right path.

4) The Madrasa curriculum does help to a certain extent in facing challenges of modern life.

5) Madrasa has played a vital role in developing my worldview, over the years after my graduation it has changed slightly when the reality of the world sinks in, but not to a considerate amount.
6) In the modern era I feel that the students should be trained to address the media, taught how to portrait Islam to people of other faiths, more extensive opportunities for other degrees, having said all this it's really important and vital that we don't lose the object of forming a Madrasa and the efforts, expectations of our pious predecessors.

Fāḍil – 5

1. I joined the madressa when I was 13 years old for 9 years.

2. I am a teacher in the Edmonton mosque where I teach boys the age of 11-13. I also work in HMC and used to work in retail at B&Q.

3. The effect of the madressa career has helped me a lot if I never studied and never became and aalim then I wouldn’t have been able to be a teacher in the mosque. It has made an major effect on my daily life as I am more steadfast in my religion ‘ISLAAM’

4. Yes, I do think the madressa curriculum helps in facing challenges in modern life. If these madressa curriculums weren’t made then we would have struggled in facing challenges in today’s modern life.

5. The madressa has played a big role in my daily life in various ways, it helps me where I go wrong and keeps me steadfast on my deen.

6. I think the way madressas are going now ere days is perfect I don’t think there is any need of any reforms to be brought in madressas.

Fāḍil – 6

1= joined at age of 16 for 8 years
2= minister of religion
3= yes the ilmiyyah course has helped me in reaching that position
4= those challenges which a person faces outside the 4 walls of madrasah a student wont know and though experience after madrasah he gets to know them
5= no changes
6= upgrade the syllabus
My thoughts on our Ulama and Madrasas

Generally speaking our so-called 'Ulama' are more of a clergy than intellectuals. They are no visionaries nor thinkers. They have no independent analysis. In-fact they are opposed to intellectual independence. They’d rather regurgitate ideas that are given to them via archaic books that they have memorised without question.

Most of our scholars are stunning simpletons. Many of them care only about how their religion looks on a superficial level, regardless of the problems causing to humanity. Others teach ethics of quietude and mimic laputans; a bit like the ‘Ents’ in the ‘Lord of the Rings’. As long as they could stay cloistered in study circles discussing their four schools of law and despising indifferences from a distance in vague syllogisms, they are content.

And our Madrasas seem to give an education that is not to spread enlightenment at all; it is simply to reduce as many individuals as possible to the same level of indoctrination, to breed and train a standardised following, to down dissent and originality.

Our motivational force ought to be truth seeking with a passion, but this is lost from the moment we step into a system that trains us, rather than inspires us. We are more than robotic bookshelves, conditioned to blurt out facts we were taught.

To think is to process information in order to form an opinion, but if we are not critical when processing this information, are we really thinking? Or are we mindlessly accepting other opinions as truth? Every one of us should be using our minds for innovation rather than memorisation, for creativity rather than futile activity, for rumination rather than stagnation.

The saddest part is that the majority of students don’t have the opportunity to reflect. They are put through the same brainwashing and indoctrination techniques in order to create complacent followers who will in turn work to do the same, and worst of all, they are completely unaware of it.

We are human beings. We are thinkers, dreamers, explorers, artists, writers, engineers. We are anything we want to be – but only if we have an educational system that supports us rather than holds us down. A tree can grow, but only if its roots are given a healthy foundation.

Furthermore, the relationship between scholars and the people should be like the relationship between teacher and pupil - not between leader and follower, not between icon and imitator; the people are not monkeys who merely imitate.
The pupils understand and react, and they try to expand their own understanding, so that someday they will not need the teacher. The relationship that the Muslims today seek and the so-called scholars encourage is one of master and follower; the master must always remain master and the follower will always remain follower. This is like shackles around the neck [i.e. eternal slavery].

In Islam we do not have a class of religious leaders. It is a development of historical Islam. The religious leaders teach that if you understand the Qur’an on your own merit, you have committed a sin.

My advice to all Madrasa students out there; ask questions, be critical, and create your own perspective. Demand a setting that will provide you with intellectual capabilities that allow you to expand your mind instead of directing it. Do not accept anything at face value. Ask questions, demand truth and scrutinise the evidence first hand.

\textit{Fādil – 8}

1. At what age did you join the madrasa? For how many years?
I joined at 16 for a total of 8 years

2. What is your current profession/s?
Teaching Maktab – it’s difficult to find somewhere to find a teaching job during the morning hours. Did Imamat / Admin / Maktab for 5 months

3. What do you think is the effect of the madrasa(‘alimiyyah) course on your career and other aspects of your daily life?
Daily: We learn how to live according to the shariah, we do not just study fiqh and aqaid but also ‘kitab al-buyu’. However, they could upgrade the teaching to include ‘modern finance and banking’. Maybe have more lessons in English.

I am facing financial problems due to lack of opportunities and mainly our madrasa degree noty being recognised as a formal qualification.

4. Do you think that the madrasa curriculum helps in facing challenges of modern life?
It does help out a lot, but they could do more dunyawi wise. They could perhaps work more on Career’s advice, hence we have started an organisation to help ‘ulama and huffaz after graduation to know how the system works e.g. ‘Tax Credits, filling in forms, paying bills etc through our org. ‘Khidma Station’
However, now the muhtamim has started giving advice on weekends to Bukhari class instead of shu’ba taqrir. And in this he explains how to run madaris and writing constitutions etc. But with our year he was very busy with other work for madrasa so I guess we didn’t benefit as much.

5. What role has the madrasa played in developing your worldview – if at all? And has this changed since graduating and how?
The madrasa has helped me understand the purpose of life and it has helped me out a lot.

6. What reforms do you think should be brought into madrasas?
Careers advice!
More English
9 years could come down to 6 like other madaris
Pedagogy: To provide students with more help in the way they learn. For example in my class I had a friend who was dyslexic and couldn’t read the words properly, but all the teachers would always say to him ‘why don’t you learn your sabaq’? However, due to a lot of pressure he left madrasa and went to college, where they recognised that he was dyslexic.
Madrasa Alimiyyah Course should become recognised. As it is internally understood to be equivalent to an MA in Islamic Studies.

Fādil – 9

1. At what age did you join the madrasa? For how many years?
Joined at 17, for just under 4 years.

2. What is your current profession/s?
Tajweed teacher

3. What do you think is the effect of the madrasa (‘alimiyyah) course on your career and other aspects of your daily life?
I didn’t do the alimiyah course, but doing the hifz has helped me learn basic Tajweed and alhamdulilah due to knowing people, slowly I’ve been able to teach more and more children and earn decent income for the hours I do.

4. Do you think that the madrasa curriculum helps in facing challenges of modern life?
I believe it is up to the individual. If with the teachings they can implement them in modern life then they will. However, from a practical point of view, there is not much influence in the modern society from the curriculum.

5. What role has the madrasa played in developing your worldview – if at all? And has this changed since graduating and how?
My view on world view has 0% influence from Madrasah. Everything I know about the current ongoings in the world is after coming out and being able to research more about this topic. There is very little importance given to the importance of worldview.

6. What reforms do you think should be brought into madrasas?

There's always room for improvement, however, one of the biggest things the madrasah needs to do is put more importance on English to help the graduates to defend Islam better when they come out and are faced with opposition about the religion from non Muslims. And secondly they should be taught the Human Rights, so they are not afraid of defending themselves.

Fāḍil – 10

1. At what age did you join the madrasa? For how many years?

I was 13; joined in 1998, completed six years of study in left the school in 2003. I had two years remaining in the 8-year course.

2. What is your current profession/s?

Telecoms analyst

3. What do you think is the effect of the madrasa (‘alimiyyah) course on your career and other aspects of your daily life?

I feel much of what I studied was academic and theoretical, and has limited impact on my day-to-day life. It played a small part in my current career path; I would say the GCSEs I undertook at the institution did more to pave the way for my career than my religious studies at Darul Uloom.

4. Do you think that the madrasa curriculum helps in facing challenges of modern life?

No, though it has the potential to do so. I believe the process of ‘preparing students’ for their post-graduation lives needs to be addressed. The curriculum per se is not sufficient and is deeply rooted in the classical approach to Islamic academia, which is evidently insufficient to prepare graduates. A healthy blend of ancient academic discourse, and discourses on the modern challenges of life, would go a long way in addressing this problem that Darul Uloom graduates face en masse. Part of the problem, I feel, is that teachers themselves are unaware of the students’ background, place of origin, and the challenges they would face post-graduation. Solutions need to be sought after in terms of vocational education during studies, rather than letting students ‘find their own feet’. Academic accreditation is also a major issue, which was dismissed (even criticised) in my time of study but which I now understand is being looked at by the administrative staff at the Darul Uloom.
5. What role has the madrasa played in developing your worldview – if at all? And has this changed since graduating and how?

To be honest, it developed in me a very narrow worldview vis-a-vis Islam. Much of the responsibility lies on the shoulders of teachers, who themselves - with all due respect - have not been exposed to wider social elements affecting Islam and Muslims beyond their ideological comfort zone. It goes without saying that my 'worldview' has changed since I left - I would dishonest if I said that I didn't harbour a degree of resentment to how my views were developed in Darul Uloom, as occasionally they came back to 'haunt' me, for want of a better word, in my later life experiences and interactions with other from divergent backgrounds.

6. What reforms do you think should be brought into madrasas?

1. There needs to be a serious revision of what purpose the Darul Uloom is there to primarily cater for. When I was studying, we were taught that (specifically) Dewsbury Darul Uloom is able to deliver on three counts: education, proselytism, and self-reform. Unfortunately, this is a hopelessly optimistic outlook and does not address the realities on the ground with students. Such rhetoric only serves to dilute students’ focus from what their real purpose at a Darul Uloom should be that cannot be catered for elsewhere: education in an academic environment. It should made clear that education is the primary objective.

2. There is a lack of focus on careers advice. A mechanism needs to be developed where pre-graduates know where they are heading post-graduation. Whether that is by setting up a dedicated careers advice facility, getting the Darul Uloom accredited so students know they can pursue studies in more recognised institutions.

3. Serious thought needs to be given on the academic studiousness of freshmen: students should be recruited on more merit-based standards rather than contacts and associations. An independent panel is advised for this. Students themselves are the main component in contributing to the general culture of the Darul Uloom, which can have a long-lasting effect on the institution.

4. Students need to be evaluated away from examination methods, such as appraisals.

5. Teachers must be evaluated to ensure the quality of teaching is maintained. This is to be done by an independent panel.

6. Written independent research (coursework) needs to be incorporated into higher-level studies in the latter half of a student's Darul Uloom life.

7. The embracing of technology is abysmal and needs to be redressed.
8. Last-year students should be given further responsibilities and should be allowed to take up positions as pastoral mentors for freshmen and early-year students. Selected students should also be allowed to teach various lessons.

9. The incorporation of specialist chosen subjects for students is a necessity that has been overlooked in favour of universal one-size-fits-all baccalaureates. Students should have a facility of choosing a field of specialisation.

10. Online connectivity, an expanded library, and an ability to travel for research (fieldwork), are all components in Darul Uloom that chronically suffer from limited availability.

Fāḍil – 11

1. At what age did you join the madrasa? For how many years?
I joined Madrasah at the age of 17, half way through completing my first year of A level course. I studied at madrasah for 8 academic years. (Feb 1998 – Sept 2005)

2. What is your current profession/s?
   a) I am a teacher of Religious Education and Modern Foreign Languages (Arabic) in a state secondary school
   b) I am the Project Manager at The Abrahamic Foundation (www.abrahamicfoundation.org.uk)
   c) Freelance Imam – lectures, Jumuah’s, nikah, janaiz, teaching

3. What do you think is the effect of the madrasa (‘alimiyyah) course on your career and other aspects of your daily life?
   It has obviously impacted my career choices. I am an active grass root level Imam working with many communities, charities and groups of people. This has only been possible due to the Islamic knowledge and training I received from Jameah.
   With a further desire to make a change to young people’s lives, and in particular the Muslim community I undertook a PGCE in RE. I am now striving to help young people achieve their potentials through teaching in mainstream schools, role modelling, mentoring and impacting school ethos and policies for the betterment of pupils they serve.
In 2010 we set up The Abrahamic Foundation. It is a non denominational Muslim organisation that aims to primarily use Islamic education as a catalyst for positive change in society. We believe creating good Muslims will create good people.

We offer varied adult part time courses including Arabic language, tajweed and Fiqh
Weekly Islamic lectures as well as one day lecture series
Childrens structured weekday madrasah
One day intensive adult courses
Weekend Arabic School
Childrens Islamic Holiday Clubs
Tuition centre KS2 / 3 and 4 in maths English and science
New Muslim Support Services and Networking

We are looking to open a Mosque and a secondary school shortly, Inshallah.

**Effects on daily life**

It impacts 24 hours of my life, how I live on a daily basis and all the choices and decisions of my life are made upon the Islamic knowledge I have gained

**4. Do you think that the madrasa curriculum helps in facing challenges of modern life?**

Yes, the better and deeper a Muslim will understand his religion he will find a solution to all past present and future problems. To help further facilitate this I believe question 6 should be implemented

**5. What role has the madrasa played in developing your worldview – if at all? And has this changed since graduating and how?**

I think Islam has given me my world view and nothing else. Indeed this was imparted via my studies of Islam at the Jameah.

**6. What reforms do you think should be brought into madrasas?**

I must clarify that the reforms I am mentioning can only be achieved when the Jameah has the manpower and the funding. I fully understand that some of these changes are very difficult for the establishment at the moment.

Lessons should be taught mainly in English and Arabic. (this may not be currently possible due to lack of senior scholars able to speak English at an academic level)
More focus on western philosophy, history and culture to help further our understanding of Islam and how to adapt Islam to the west

A levels in Maths, English, Sciences, Arabic should be compulsory. An option to further these subjects could be offered over the course of 7 years such as R.E, Economics, LAW, ICT, Psychology etc.

More of the Islamic arts should be encouraged such as Sports, Art, Poetry and Islamic Music.

Extracurricular trips to help pupils understand foreign culture. Visits to Islamic sites to further inspire and encourage excellence in pupils’ studies such as Spain, India, Turkey etc

More parent involvement is needed. Most parents are unaware of what goes on in Jameah and what exactly their children are studying. Family events and in particular female family members should be facilitated.

Develop pupils to be able to critically analyse theories and concepts from an Islamic perspective. Jameah totally lacks this. We don't critically analyse our own actions.

A deep study of world religions should be made compulsory. At least those religions or isms that are more common in the UK such as Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Atheism, Secularism and Marxism.

Pupils from middle years of Jameah should be introduced to community groups and organisation they will have to work with i.e maktabs, mosques, charities, Jamaeh’s etc. This will give them an understanding of career opportunities and highlight weakness’s they currently may have in their studies.

A strong careers advice service with a push from the Jameah to encourage its pupils to go into roles that have greater impact on communities and encourage integration between Muslim and other communities i.e. teaching professions, counselling, journalism, law, social enterprise, chaplaincy etc

At the moment the only push I felt we got was to become an Imam or mosque teacher.

Should Jameah seek Uni accreditation?
To help Jameah students to enter further studies and in particular UK universities it would be helpful if Jameah could somehow get itself accredited.

This could be achieved in many ways such as seeking recognition via a British University. I think this may be a problem for most Jameahs as it requires too much change to the current system. A way to avoid this would be to seek accreditation from a foreign Muslim University such as Al-Azhar or Damascus University etc. This in return would be accepted by British Universities.
I however found entry into University not as difficult as I was a mature student at the time with plenty of experience under my belt, but I am aware that most Jameah graduates are turned away and deprived of such further opportunities.

On the other hand the British Government should seek to engage, encourage and facilitate future Muslim leaders (Jameah students) to enter the higher education system as it also helps fulfil their goals of preventing extremism, facilitating community cohesion and giving Muslim community strong grounded academic leadership which it currently lacks much of.

MOST OF THE ABOVE POINTS REQUIRE INVESTMENT IN STAFF TRAINING AND SITE FACILITIES. With the very little fees the Jameah charges I don’t think this will be possible and what the Jameah already achieves with its scarce resources is a miracle.

*Fāḍil – 12*

1. **At what age did you join the madrasa? For how many years?**
   Aged 16. For 7 1/2 years

2. **What is your current profession/s?**
   Secondary school teacher

3. **What do you think is the effect of the madrasa (‘alimiyyah) course on your career and other aspects of your daily life?**
   Extremely positive. The madrasah course made me an extremely focused and dedicated student. This helped me when pursuing my post graduate studies and career. It has made me a better Muslim/person. I am able to interact positively with people from different backgrounds and cultures. It made me a better son, brother, husband and father. A good role model for my community and society.

4. **Do you think that the madrasa curriculum helps in facing challenges of modern life?**

   Through the skills gained during the course - yes
   Directly tackling relevant issues - no

5. **What role has the madrasa played in developing your worldview – if at all? And has this changed since graduating and how?**

   Whilst at madrasah, our lecturers occasionally discussed local, national, international events.
I was slightly mature and aware than most students regarding world events. I had access to internet, TV and radio at home which further developed my worldview. Whilst studying I had the opportunity to travel through the madrasah to 4 foreign countries for da’wah. This was extremely beneficial and was one of the reasons I decided to pursue post graduate studies abroad.

I also had 2 older brothers in FE who were extremely supportive of my decision to study. They would also guide and inform me of relevant events which helped me grow as an individual.

Of course my view changed. I consider this though to be a natural change as one gets older, wiser and more experienced.

6. What reforms do you think should be brought into madrasas?
If madrasas want to make a greater positive contribution to society they need to
1) Have more selective admissions criteria based on age, academic performance and interest.
2) Based on point 1 – madrasas would be able to have a more extensive curriculum stretching students' capabilities during the length of the course or consider shortening the course so students have time to pursue post graduate interests and studies.
Extra-curricular activities could also be introduced which would add more depth and application to the curriculum
3) Teach a more skill based curriculum as opposed to text based. This will keep students more interested and focused on their topic of study.
4) Have a more rigorous assessment method.
5) Have a mission and Vision statement. This will help them to see if they are successful in their aims and targets.
6) Make Arabic and English the language of medium.
7) Have a fair staff recruitment policy
8) Employ teachers from varied backgrounds and specialities. This will positively impact students' understanding of their religion and better equip them for life in a multi faith/denomination society
9) Careers advice – In line with their ethos, students should be guided to post graduate activities and careers.
10) Technology – Students should be competent with basic IT skills. Which include word processing in English and Arabic. In this digital age, best practice of utilising social and mainstream media should be introduced.
11) Accreditation – if this ties in with the madrasas vision to facilitate post graduate studies in western universities – this should be looked at. Otherwise myself and yourself and proof that those wanting to pursue this avenue can still be successful without the accreditation.
12) As a significant number of graduates pursue imamat and teaching in maktabs, students should be trained with the relevant skills set required for those professions. These should include communication skills, management skills, teaching techniques etc.
Appendix 2. *Shahādāt, Ijāzāt and Asānīd*

2.1 | The *Shahādat of al-ʿĀlimyyah* in Islamic Sciences and Arabic Literature

[Image of diploma]

The Shahādat of alc'Ālimiyyah in Islamic Sciences and Arabic Literature is a significant event in the academic journey of students. The diploma is awarded after fulfilling the rigorous requirements set by the university, including the study of Islamic sciences and Arabic literature. This diploma signifies the completion of a high level of academic achievement and is a testament to the student's dedication and hard work.

The Shahādat is not only an academic recognition but also a cultural and religious achievement, symbolizing the student's commitment to the principles of Islam and the pursuit of knowledge. It is a source of pride for the students, their families, and the institution, reflecting the valor and integrity of the graduates.

The diploma is a symbol of the student's journey in the field of Islamic sciences and Arabic literature, highlighting the importance of excellence and the pursuit of knowledge in the Islamic tradition.
In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate
al-'Alimiyyah Certificate of Islamic Sciences and Arabic Literature

Logo: This is a reminder to those who follow the path of Allah
Logo: Institute of Islamic Education, Dewsbury, Britain

Praise be to Allah Who made the purifying sharī'ah a proof of the lawful and the unlawful, and made it clear to enlighten those who floundered in the darkness. He assigned intellectuals, philologists and wise men to protect the穆哈迈adian sharī'ah from misrepresentation, plagiarism and misinterpretation, those Islamic intellectuals shall not come to any harm from those who fail them, and they shall not take the blame for those who fail. Peace be upon Muhammad and his family and his companions, who was sent to establish the peaceful Hanafi communion, and to purify it from malicious blasphemy, he paved the way for the origin of shari'ah, and clarified its branches, making it fortified.

Moreover, the worthy, Mohammad Hamid Mahmood Assaleh s/o Ismail Abid D.O.B 08/07/1984, of a British Nationality, has enrolled in the Institute in 1418 A.H. / 1997 C.E. and completed his studies according to the assigned curriculum, and he passed his final exams on 13/04/1426 A.H. / 17/09/2005 C.E. with a

First Class Degree

after studying and reading the assigned books of Qur'anic exegesis, Hadith, philology, obligations and other Arabic studies. Accordingly, he deserved “al-'Alimiyyah Certificate of Islamic Sciences and Arabic Literature”.

The deanship of the Institute of Islamic Education, Dewsbury, Britain, is endowing him with this certificate, as a recommendation to follow the piety of Allah, and abide by the teachings of the prophetic traditions, and to spread the glory of the religious teachings, and to invite people to acquire the knowledge to believe in Allah heartedly, to follow on the steps of the pious predecessors, and to avoid religious innovations, and to hold on to Islam as it was for centuries, which was preserved by the righteous companions, Imams and intellectuals, may Allah bless them all, and bless all those who follow their steps until the judgment day. We entreat Allah to make him knowledgeable in His religion, and to make him benefit of its knowledge and all Muslims, and in Allah we trust.

Teachers Signatures
Muslih al-Din Ahmad
al-Baradawi al-Qasimī
al-'Abd Mūsā s/o Ahmad
Yūsuf Abdullah Darwān
Abu al-Qasim s/o Sulaimān
Yūsuf Sāchā
Yūsuf Māmā Patel
Khurshid Iqbal
Signed

Date: 13/08/1426 A.H. 17/09/2005 C.E.

Signature of the President
and the University Stamp
Signed
Hāfiz Mohammad Ahmad Patel

Translators Note: The D.O.B. on the original certificate was 10/01/1982. It has been changed to 08/07/1984 at the request of the certificate holder, as it was incorrect. We have confirmed the correct date of birth from his British Passport (No. 109149391) to be 08/07/1984.
2.3 | Sanad for all the ṣiḥāḥ sittah (Six authentic books of ḥadīth)
الإجازة المسندة برواية الصحيح لمسلم
قال عبد الله بن المبارك: الإسناد من الدين وولا الإسناد لم قال من شاء ما شاء.
(رواية مسلم في المقدمة)
أما بعد: فقول عبد الصابع يوسف بن عبد الله دروآن على عمه: إن الطالب الأخ في الله تعال
محمد أحمد也随之 صالح بن إبراهيم الحكيم في لندن. بريطانيا
المواليد 8/7/1984 م طلب من الإجازة بالرواية عن علي قاعدة السنف، فأجربته
حسب ما أجازني به مشايخ إجازة عامة وخاصة السيد المذكور، وقد قرأ على الصحيح لمسلم;
وقرأ على الأسنان الشريف واحد حسين الدويني، وقد حصل لي إجازة الحديث جميع
المرويات عنه فضل الله وكرمه، وهو يرويه عن العلامة محمد إبراهيم البلياوى عن الشيخ أحمد
محمد حسين الدويني عن الشيخ محمد فاضل الناياتي عن الشيخ الشهيد عبد الغني الدويني
عن الشيخ الشهيد عبد الحكيم الدويني عن الشيخ الشهيد عبد العزيز الدويني عن الشيخ الشهيد
الشاهد عبد الرحمن الحكيم الدويني.
ويرويه الشهيد عبد الرحمن الدويني عن شيخ أبي طاهر عن والده الشيخ إبراهيم الكردي المدئ عن
الشيخ السلطان بن أحمد المرازي عن الشيخ شهاب الدين أحمد بن خليل السكري عن عم المدين
محمد بن أحمد الغطي عن زين الدين زكريا بن محمد الأنصاري عن الحافظ أبي الفضل أحمد بن
علي بن حجر المشقوق عن صالح الدين بن أبي عمر المقدسي عن فهد الدين أبى الحسن علي
ابن أحمد بن عبد الواحد بن البجاحي عن أبي الحسن المدئي بن محمد الطوسي عن أبي عبد الله
 محمد بن الفضل بن أحمد الرابعي عن أبي الحسن عبد العالى بن محمد الباجي عن أبي أحمد
محمد بن عيسى الجلودي عن أبي إسحاق إبراهيم بن محمد الباجي على الإمام أبي الحسن
سلمان بن الحجاج الفشالي الباجي على ضياء الله.
وفي الختام أوصي نفسج أولا بتقى الله سرا وعلنا، وأسأل الله عز وحل
أن يسلط به سبيل العلماء العاملين، أمين.
الاريخ 1437/7/5
المواقي 1437/6/20

المنجز
2.5 | Ijāzah for Sunan Abī Dāwūd
2.6 | Ijāzah for Sunan ibn Mājah

الإجازة المسندة بسنن ابن ماجه
الشيخ موسى بن أحمد بدات البليشوري

رغم أن الطالب الأخ في الله تعالى محمد أحمد حمزة السالك في النور، طلب من الإجازة إلى الإجازة بالرواية على فهة السلف، فأجابه حسب ما أجازتى به مشابخ إجازة عامة وخاصة بالسند المذكور، وقد قرأ على سنن ابن ماجه، وقرأ عليه الأسانيد الشيخ كبير على الألفاظ، وهو يعود على الشيخ ذو الرتبة العالية من اللواء المجدد المحمود حسين الدين البليشوري عن الشيخ الشهاب محمد إسحاق الدين البليشوري عن الشيخ العالم عبد الغني الدعوسي عن الشيخ محمد قاسم الداثنوي عن الشيخ شهاب الدين عبد الغني الدعوسي عن الشيخ عبد الرحيم الدعوسي.

و بروم الشاه ولي الله الدعوسي على الشيخ أبي طاهر محمد بن إبراهيم الكردي المدني، وقيل الشيخ إبراهيم بن حسن الكردي المدني عن الشيخ مصطفى الدين أحمد بن محمد الفياني، عن الشيخ أبي الموتاي أحمد بن علي ابن عبد القادر الشناوي عن الشيخ شمس الدين محمد بن أحمد بن محمد الرزلي عن الشيخ زين الدين زاوية أبي أحمد الآصاري عن الحافظ أبي الفضل أحمد بن علي بن حجر الممتلكي عن الشيخ أبي الحسن علي عبد الرحمن محمد بن رفيق السمح الامام، وعلي ابن عبد الرحمن بن عبد الرحمن بن إبراهيم بن محمد الكردي المدني عن الشيخ مصطفى الدين أحمد بن محمد الفياني.

وفي الحمام أوصي بنفسه بالله في السر والعلن، وأسأل الله عز وجل أن يوفقه باتباع السنة السنية ومسلك العلماء الصالحين. ولي الله رحمته.

الإجازة: 1426 ل. ه.
الصدوق: 8/7/1426 م.
Ijāzah / Shahādah (Certificate) for Mishkāt al-Mašābīḥ
2.8 | Diagram of isnāds from different denominations and schools leading back to Shāh Waliyullāh
Appendix 3. Excerpt from Abdal Hakim Murad’s Lecture on ‘Our Mosques, Our Future’.

‘The question of Leadership in the UK: ‘Young people in particular do not just need a dome over their heads as they pray, and they don’t just need a youth club. They need also role models and particularly religious role models, who represent a form of life perhaps they themselves would want to occupy in twenty or thirty years time. And here I think British Islam has been rather unsuccessful. When compared for instance with Islam in America, there are three times as many Muslims in America than there are in England but they have generally not had the kind of suicide bombings in their cities produced by local Muslim communities that we’ve had here. I think one reason for that – obviously there are other variables – has to be the fact that their leadership actually seems to be more accurate, particularly in English.

In Britain we have not produced leaders of the calibre of Sirāj Wahhāj, Zaid Shākir, Hamza Yūsuf, ‘Umar ‘Abdullāh and other significant people who have huge followings not just amongst the intellectual or aesthetic elites, but at the grassroots of the community. There is no single person in British Islam who really stands shoulder to shoulder with these people as far as I can see. And that must mean something is wrong with the madrasa sector. It is an interesting fact that there are twice as many Muslim training as Imams in this country as there are Christians of all denominations training for Christian ministry. It’s kind of an over population.

There are at least twenty institutions now as far as I can see that are doing it, but as yet we have not found the one leader, who can lead cheering crowds in Trafalgar Square, who can galvanise teenagers and lead them in the direction of something that is mainstream, normative and convivial Islam – that individual has not yet appeared. So something needs to be done in that sector as well if we are going to build this thing we want which is the positive outwardly oriented 21st century Mosque.

Now the training of leadership is particularly difficult because of their entrenched denominational interests at work and very often the institutions are outlets of metropolitan institutions in the Subcontinent, which control the syllabus and which are effectively unreachable. Instead, I suspect that the solution has to come not so
much as a kind of eyeball rolling problematizing of the Mullah curriculum, but rather should be more positive. You recognise the traditional madrasa curriculum (the dars-e-nižāmī) and allied curricula are in fact extraordinarily brilliant articulations of Islam in a particular civilizational mode’.

Appendix 3.5 – Yoginder Sikand’s Interview with Maulānā Tariq Rashid Firangi Maḥallī.

39-year old Maulana Tariq Rasheed Firangi Mahali is a ninth generation direct descendant of Mulla Nizamuddin Firangi Mahali, who framed what is known after him as the dars-e nizami, the basic syllabus that continues to be followed by the vast majority of Islamic madrasas in South Asia even today. He is one of the few remaining members of the renowned Firangi Mahali family of Lucknow who carry on with their family’s centuries-old tradition of Islamic scholarship. A graduate of the Nadwat ul-Ulema madrasa in Lucknow, he is presently Director of the Islamic Society of Greater Orlando, Florida, in the United States. In this interview, he talks about his family’s scholarly tradition and its decline and reflects on the dars-e nizami and madrasa education in South Asia today.

Yoginder Sikand: Could you briefly describe your family’s tradition of Islamic scholarship?

Maulānā Tariq Rashid: We trace our descent from a companion of the Prophet Muhammad, Hazrat Abu Ayub Ansari, in whose house in Medina the Prophet stayed following his migration from Mecca. Our family has, over the centuries, produced leading Islamic scholars. In the early eighteenth century, the Mughal Emperor granted Mulla Qutubuddin, one of our ancestors, a mansion in Lucknow, the Firanghi Mahal, which was earlier used by a European or firangi merchant, and hence its name. Mulla Nizamuddin, son of Mulla Qutubuddin, prepared an outline for studies, which came to be known after him as the dars-e nizami or the ‘Syllabus of Nizamuddin’. This was, for its time, a very relevant syllabus, and soon became so popular all across India that almost all the madrasas that were later established adopted its pattern. And even today most madrasas in South Asia claim to follow the dars-e nizami and so are called Nizami madrasas.

YS: What was so special about the dars-e nizami?

MTR: For its times, the dars-e nizami provided a well-rounded education. It included subjects such as Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine, Philosophy, Logic, Geography, Literature, Chemistry and so on, as well as the Quran, the Prophetic Traditions or Hadith, Islamic Jurisprudence or Fiqh and Sufism. Those who passed through this course of study went on to assume a variety of careers, not just as imams and qazis, but also as bureaucrats in the courts of various princely states. And this is why even Shia and Hindu students studied with the ulema of the Firangi Mahal family. It was not like today, when, in a climate of increasing sectarianism and narrow-mindedness, madrasas are associated with one sect or the other, and often play a key role in fanning inter-sectarian conflicts. They are now unwilling to tolerate each other. What a contrast this is to the ecumenism that characterized the early ulema of Firangi Mahal!

The dars-e nizami, as Mulla Nizamuddin developed it, was not intended to be a hide-bound, fixed and unchanging syllabus, as it is sometimes made out to be today by some maulvis. This is evident from the fact that although Mulla Nizamuddin authored several books, he did not include even one of these in the syllabus that he framed. The syllabus was flexible enough to allow for the inclusion of new or better books. In place of bookish learning, which is characteristic of many madrasas today, Mulla Nizamuddin did not teach entire books to his students. Rather, he taught them only some chapters of each book, and encouraged them to study the rest of these books on their own, so that they could thereby enhance their critical capacities. This was unlike in most madrasas today, where questioning is strongly discouraged.

YS: How did the tradition of learning based in Firangi Mahal develop after Mulla Nizamuddin?

MTR: Mulla Nizamuddin did not establish a madrasa in Firangi Mahal. Rather, students would come to him from different parts of India to learn from him in his house in the Firangi Mahal. There was no regular, fixed course of study or examinations, as in the case of madrasas today. Students would stay in mosques in the neighbourhood or else rent a place close-by and regularly meet with and study various books from Mulla Nizamuddin or other members of his family. He was also a spiritual instructor for many of them, because he was a Sufi, and a disciple of the noted Qadri saint Shah Abdur Razak Bansavi.
This system of informal learning at Firanghi Mahal was then carried on by several generations of our family. Basically, students came from Muslim elite or ashraf families. The system was a product of the feudal period, and our family, like many other scholarly families of that time, was patronised by the Muslim feudal elite. It was only in 1906 that Maulana Andul Bari Firanghi Mahali, who was a noted Islamic scholar of his times and one of the founders of the Jamiat ul-Ulema-e Hind, established a madrasa, the Madrasa-e Nizamia, inside the Firanghi Mahal. The madrasa continued to function till the Partition, in 1947, when Maulana Abdul Bar's son and successor, Maulana Jamal Miyan, migrated to Pakistan.

YS: The once-grand Firanghi Mahal structure is today in a state of almost complete ruin, despite the fact that several members of the family are well-off. Why this neglect?

MTR: Partition hit our family very badly. Around half of the Firanghi Mahali family migrated to Pakistan. From there, many of them settled in Europe and America. Most of them, like the rest of the family who remained in India, gave up the tradition of Islamic scholarship and took to Western learning. The family was bereft of feudal patrons in the new set-up, and that was also a major cause for the decline of our scholarly tradition. And then those who are the legal heirs of the structure where the Madrasa-e Nizamia once stood are not interested in refurbishing it, although I tried to do so some years ago. Consequently, the structure is now in ruins, in a state of complete neglect.

The various branches of the Firanghi Mahal family had, over the centuries, accumulated several thousand books and manuscripts. Many of them were taken to Pakistan by those of our family who shifted there. We were unable to preserve the rest, so we donated them to the Aligarh Muslim University's library, where they are safely kept.

Presently, only a few members of our family are carrying on with our centuries-old family tradition of Islamic scholarship. These are Maulana Hasan Miyan, my cousin, who studied at the Nadwat ul-Ulema, Lucknow, and is now teaching there, my younger brother Khalid Rashid, who has established a new Madrasa-e Nizamia and an Islamic Centre at the Eidgah in Lucknow, and myself.

YS: Some traditionalist ulema argue that the dars-e nizami does not need any change. They claim that it produced good scholars in the past and so can do so today, too. As a descendant of Mulla Nizamuddin and one who knows the tradition well, how do you react to this argument?

MTR: I strongly disagree with this argument. It reflects a very strange mentality. So rigid are those who argue this way that they easily brand anyone who calls for change as an 'apostate' or an 'agent' of this or other 'un-Islamic' power. Mulla Nizamuddin did not certainly intend that the syllabus he formulated should remain unchanged forever. The point is that the ulema must be kept abreast with contemporary developments, which is not possible if one argues that the dars-e nizami should remain unchanged. How can you be considered to be a real scholar, an alim, if you study books written eight hundred or five hundred years ago, which is the case with the dars-e nizami, and totally leave out modern books? Of course, the Quran and Hadith texts and so on remain the same. They cannot be changed. But the dars-e nizami is overloaded with books on antiquated Greek logic and philosophy, or what are called ulum-e aqaliya or 'rational sciences', much of which is quite irrelevant now. They should be replaced by modern 'rational' subjects, such as English and social sciences, so that would-be ulema know about the present world. Without this knowledge how can they provide appropriate leadership to the community, as 'heirs of the Prophets'? How will they be able to answer the questions that people in the streets are asking? How will they be able to properly deal with new jurisprudential issues (fiqhi masail) if all they learn are issues that the medieval ulema discussed in the books that are still taught in the madrasas that claim to follow the dars-e nizami?

So, this argument that the dars-e nizami should not be revised, on the lines that I have suggested, is completely absurd. I think it should be revised every thirty to forty years in accordance with changing conditions if it is to retain its relevance.

I think a certain hostility to change is deeply ingrained in the mentality of many of our traditionalist ulema. For instance, when I was a child, loudspeakers had just been introduced in India and Mufti Atiq ur-Rahman Firanghi Mahali issued a fatwa declaring their use to be unlawful. Some other ulema also reacted the same way, but later the ulema were forced to change their position. Many
traditionalist ulema somehow automatically assume that anything new is haram or forbidden, but, actually, in Islam the right attitude is that everything is permissible if it is not forbidden.

The hostility of some ulema to any significant change in the dars-e nizami has also to do with a fixation with a certain understanding of what Muslim culture is. So, even in North America, many madrasas that have come up insist on keeping Urdu, rather than English, as the medium of instruction, although few young North American Muslims know Urdu, their language now being English. As if Urdu has some special sanctity attached to it! The ulema who run these madrasas might fear that if they were to use English instead, the students would lose their Islamic identity or be secularised, but this attitude is wrong because, needless to say, all languages, including both Urdu and English, are ultimately from God.

Some ulema might feel that including English in the madrasa syllabus will cause their students to be attracted to the delights of the world and to stray from the path of the faith, but I do not think so. English is now the global language of communication, and if the ulema are to address the younger generation or people of other faiths they must know the language. And if they include English and the basics of modern subjects in their curriculum, they may succeed in attracting students from economically better-off families, too. At present, however, madrasas are largely the refuge of the poor, while middle-class parents prefer to send their children to ‘secular’ schools because there they learn subjects that would help them get a good job in the future. If the madrasas were to include such subjects in their syllabus, at least to a certain basic level, they would attract these students too. And then, after they finish a basic course that includes both religious as well as ‘secular’ subjects, their students can choose which line to specialise in.

YS: Some maulvis dismiss even the most well-meaning suggestions for reform as a reflection of what they claim is an ‘anti-Islamic’ conspiracy, alleging that these are a means to secularise madrasas and rob them of their Islamic identity. What are your views on this?

MTR: Different people might have different motives when talking about madrasa reforms, but surely the sort of reforms that some younger generation ulema like us, who are genuinely concerned about improving the madrasas, are calling for cannot or should not be branded as a ‘conspiracy’! We are not calling for the secularisation of the madrasas or suggesting that they should teach secular subjects to such an extent that their Islamic identity is threatened. Far from it. But surely there should be a revision of some aspects of the dars-e nizami that are no longer relevant and the inclusion of basic English, Social Sciences and so on, while making the Quran and the Hadith the centre of the curriculum, which they were not in the case of the traditional dars-e nizami, which gave more stress to the then current ‘rational’ sciences. Surely, even many ulema themselves recognise the need for this sort of change or else they would not be sending their own children to English-medium schools or even abroad to study if they can afford it.

YS: The ‘mainstream’ media often depicts the ulema in a very negative light. Ulema such as yourself are rarely, if ever, mentioned by the media. Why is this so?

MTR: Yes, unfortunately, there is this tendency on the part of large sections of the ‘mainstream’ media to portray the ulema as if they were some archaic, monstrous creatures. Part of the reason lies in deeply-rooted historical prejudices. And then there are weird people in every community, and the media often picks on some weird mullah who issues some sensational and irrational fatwas and presents him as speaking for all the ulema, which is, of course, not the case. So, part of the fault also lies with such mullahs. I feel that one way to solve this problem is to encourage what is known as collective ijtihad, through which ulema and experts in various ‘secular’ branches of learning work together to provide proper responses to people’s questions. Only then can the problem of outlandish fatwas, which have given the whole class of ulema such a bad name, be put an end to.

I strongly think that reforms in the curriculum and methods of teaching are essential to help madrasas relate better to others, including non-Muslims, the media and the government, and also to counter misunderstandings that many people have about them. Only then will people come to realise that madrasas are constructive, not destructive, institutions. For that we also need to encourage tolerance for other points of view, for other understandings of Islam and for other religions and their adherents.

YS: There is also considerable debate about the need for introducing vocational training in the madrasas. Some traditionalists are fiercely opposed to this. What do you feel?
MTR: I think vocational training is very important. Ideally, although this is not always the case, one should choose to become an alim not for the sake of a job but as a religious calling. In other words, ideally, imamat in a mosque or delivering sermons should not be a paid profession. It should be an honorary, voluntary thing. This is how it was in the distant past. For instance, Imam Abu Hanifa, whose school of law most South Asian Sunni Muslims follow, was not a professional alim he earned his livelihood as a businessman. Today, however, the general feeling is that large sections of the ulema live off the donations of others. If one is dependent on others how will one earn the respect due to him? The ulema can gain proper respect only when they are seen as providing benefits, in terms of proper leadership and guidance, to others, rather than, as now, benefitting from them. And, for that, financial independence of the ulema is a must, and hence the need for introducing vocational training in the madrasas.

YS: As the head of an important Islamic Centre in America, what do you see as the major challenges before the ulema in the post-9/11 world?

MTR: The most pressing need today is for the ulema to act as a bridge between Muslims and other communities, rather than to add to ongoing conflicts. We have tried to do this in our own small way in the United States. After 9/11, in a climate of increasing hostility towards Muslims and Islam, we began outreach programmes with Christians and Jews, speaking on and answering questions about Islam in colleges, universities and other public places. We also helped establish a group to promote dialogue between Muslims and Jews, which is called “Jews, Arabs and Muslims”, or JAMS for short. We plan to have our first big gathering this coming February, and expect some 10,000 people, Muslims, Jews and others, to attend it. Our purpose is to state that the American Muslims are indeed willing to live peacefully with their Jewish compatriots, despite the differences they have.

I think 9/11 came as a major wake-up call for us in America. We are much more active now in inter-faith dialogue and outreach work than we ever were before. Earlier, we adopted the same approach that the ulema in India continue to adopt we were satisfied living in our own little cocoons and not making the effort to reach out to people of other faiths, to listen to them and to speak to them. This is what 9/11 forced us to wake up to. And, based on my own experiences in the field of dialogue in the last few years, I must say that the vast majority of Americans are indeed tolerant and willing to listen to what we say, if approached properly.

YS: Some Muslims argue that America is an ‘enemy of Islam’. How do you react to this?

MTR: I think this is pure hypocrisy. Many of those who make this claim would be the first to migrate to America if they were provided with an American passport or visa! There are numerous fiercely anti-American Muslims, including even some mullahs, whose own children live comfortably in America! I may not agree with some aspects of the foreign policy of the present American government or the attitude of sections of the American media, but nor do millions of non-Muslim Americans. You cannot equate the American government with the American people. The average American on the street cannot be said to be anti-Islam. We have over three thousand mosques in America and enjoy freedom to practise our faith.

I think all of us, Muslims and others, urgently need to shed our parochialism, and seek to reach out to each other if the world is to be saved from catastrophe in the name of religion. Needless to add, there are well-meaning people in every community and in every country, America included, and our task is to work together with them for the sake of our common humanity.

Appendix 4. Picture of a ṭālib’s ‘ilm al-ṣīghah and affixed to the inner cover his handwritten ‘dawr tartīb’ – ‘revision arrangement’
Appendix 5. THE ALIMIYYAH PROGRAMME / FULL TIME at Ebrahim College.

Tables accessed online [01.09.2012]: http://ebrahimcollege.org.uk/ebrahim/alimcourse/full-time/

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| English composition | Intro to Philosophy of Religion |

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Appendix 6 – List of Books currently studied at the Dewsbury madrasa.

Hadith
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhāriyy

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

Sunan Abī Dawūd

Sunan ibn Mājah
Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥāmmad ibn Mājah ibn Yazīd ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Rib‘ī al-Qazwīniyy (824-887 C.E. / 209-273 A.H.) was born in Qazwīn (Iran). He was Shafi‘ī / Ḥanbalī.125

Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī

123 ibid. pp. 116-123
124 ibid. pp. 123-136
125 ibid. pp. 136-144
Abū ‘Īsā Muḥammad ibn ʻĪsā ibn Sowrah ibn Mūsā ibn Ḍaḥḥāk Sulamiyy Tirmidhiyy Bowghiy (824-892 C.E. / 209-279 A.H.) was born in a village called Bowgh near Tirmidh (Uzbekistan).  

**Sunan al-Nasa‘ī**

Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad ibn Shu‘ayb ... al-Nasa‘ī (829-892 C.E. / 214-303 C.E.) was born in Nasā’ a place near Sarkhas (Khurasān / Turkmenistan). By maslak, he was Shāfi‘ī / Ḥanbalī.  

**Sharḥ Ma‘ānī al-Āthār**

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Salāmah ibn Salamah ... Azadiyy Ḥijriyy Ṭaḥāwiyy Ḥanafiyy (843 or 853 – 933 C.E. / 229 or 239 – 321 A.H.) was born in a small village ‘Ṭaḥṭūṭ’ close to Ṭahā in Egypt, and preferred to be called Ṭaḥāwiyy after Ṭahā. He was initially Shāfi‘ī but then accepted the Ḥanafi maslak. In this book he provides aḥādīth to prove the ḥanafi mazhab, however he is more famous for his book ‘Aqīdat al-Ṭaḥāwiyyah.

Muwaṭṭa’ Imām Mālik

Muwaṭṭa’ Imām Muḥammad

Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ

Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn

**Arabic / Literature**

**Şarf**

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126 ibid. pp. 144-152
127 ibid. pp. 152-159
‘Ilm al-Ṣīghah (ḥifẓ)
‘Ilm al-Ṣarf (ḥifẓ)
Tamrīn al-Ṣarf (ḥifẓ)

Naḥw
Sharḥ ibn ‘Aqīl
Hidāyat al-Naḥw
‘Ilm al-Naḥw (ḥifẓ)
Tamrīn al-Naḥw (ḥifẓ)

Balāgha / Literature
Mukhtaṣar al-Maʿāniyy
Dīwān al-Ḥimāsah
Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīriyy
Naḥḥat al-‘Arab
Safīnat al-Bulaghā’ we Talkhīs al-Miftāḥ

Arabic Vocabulary
‘Arabiyy Ṣafwat al-Maṣādir (ḥifẓ)

Arabic
Sharḥ miat ‘Āmil
Mu’allim al-Inshā’
Miftāḥ al-Qurʾān
Durūs al-Lughat al-‘Arabiyyah

Fiqh
Hidāyah (awwal ilā rābi’)
Sharḥ al-Wiqāyah
Kanz al-Daqāʾiq
Al-Mukhtaṣar al-Qudūriyy
Nūr al-Īḍāḥ
Sirājiyy ma’a Muʿīn al-Farāʾīḍ (ḥifẓ)


**Tafsīr (Qur’anic Exegesis)**
Jalālyn Sharīfayn
Tarjuma-e-Qur‘ān 1 / 2 / 3

**Tajwīd**
Sirāj al-Qārī al-Mubtadī wa Tidhkār al-Muqrī al-Muntahī
Muqaddimat al-Jazariyyah
Khulāsāt al-Bayān
Fawā’id al-Makkiyyah
Jāmi’ al-Waqf
Jamāl al-Qur‘ān
Tajwīd Mubtadī (*ḥifz*)

**Uṣūl al-Fiqh**
Al-Ḥusāmiyy
Nūr al-Anwār
Uṣūl al-Shāshiyy

**Sīrat / Akhbār**
Hayāt al-Ṣahābah
Qiṣaṣ al-Nabīyyīn
Raḥmat-e-‘Ālam
Sīrat-e-Khātam al-Anbiyā’

**Manṭiq**
Sharḥ Tahdhib
Mirqāt (*fī al-manṭiq*)
Taysīr al-Manṭiq (*ḥifz*)

**‘Aqā’id / Kalām**
Sharḥ ‘Aqā’id al-Nasafiyyah

**Uṣūl al-Qur‘ān**
Al-Fawz al-Kabīr
Tārīkh – Islamic History
Durūs al-Tārīkh al-Islāmiyy

Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth
Nukhbat al-Fikr
## Appendix 7 – A Sample of the Final Year Curriculum to be set by Modern Academia for Jāmi'at alḤ'Ilm wa alḤHudā.

**Masters in Arabic and Islamic Sciences (MA) – Level 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Subjects</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Assessment Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qur'an Exegesis</td>
<td>M301: Commentary on the Qur'an (1-30)</td>
<td>Students will use their foundation in Arabic to read and interpret the Qur'an and Hadith.</td>
<td>On completion of this year, students will be able to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aqā'id</td>
<td>M302: Islamic Theology</td>
<td>Students become familiar with the principles and authoritative citations that underpin Shari'ah; they also learn about the Laws that govern.Reduct.</td>
<td>- Analyse the diverse philosophical approaches to the Holy Qur'an and to locate the differing types of exegesis inherent in each (25%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiqh</td>
<td>M303: Islamic Inheritance</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Demonstrate knowledge of and an ability to use the main methods of exegesis including historical and comparative analysis of the Holy Qur'an along with aspects of different religious and philosophical studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science of Hadith</td>
<td>M305: Nomenclature of Prophetic Traditions</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Explain and assess the origin and historical development of philosophical discourse in Islam; in particular, the interdependence of theological and philosophical concepts, including the nature and attributes of Allah, creation, good and evil, human freedom and responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science of Qur'an</td>
<td>M306: Linguistic and Philosophical perspectives</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Describe the foundational beliefs of Islam and different philosophical approaches to religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prophetic Traditions</td>
<td>M307: Hadith Literature</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Describe the foundational principles of the science of prophetic traditions and methods of authentication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M308: Research project</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Describe the laws of inheritance and intestacy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 3 of the Masters in Arabic and Islamic Sciences consists of 4 modules covering 8 units in each. On completing Level 3, the maximum credits which can be achieved are 180 credits.**

**Entry Requirements**
- Successful completion of, minimum of 400 credits each from levels 1 and 2, of the Masters in Arabic and Islamic Sciences.

**Progression**
- Successful completion of Level 3 requires a minimum of 400 credits in total and will enable students to progress towards Level 4 of the Masters course.

**Assessment**
- All courses are assessed through terminal examinations except for four research project assessments, one within each module, which are assessed through a investigative essay.

**Duration**
- 1 year
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For various madrasa graduation certificates see Appendix 2

Interviews / Surveys

Responses from Fādils (madrasa graduates): See Appendix 1

Yoginder Sikand’s Interview with Mawlānā Tariq Rashid Firangī Maḥallī. See Appendix 3.5


Projects / Fieldwork


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For Transcript of excerpt see **Appendix 3**

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