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### Description of Module

Subject	Philosophy
Paper	Philosophy of Religion
Module Name/Title	Islam
Module Id	10.9
Pre-requisites	Preliminary knowledge of philosophy of religion
Objectives	To study various issues of Islam as a religion
Key words	<i>Allah, Mohammad, Mecca, Medina, Quran, Imaan</i>

## Islam

### Introduction

Islam is a monotheistic religion, founded in 7<sup>th</sup> century in the Hijaz region of the Arabian Peninsula. The 1400-year old religion is based on the idea that the universe is created by Allah; and man has been created to serve as His vicegerent on the earth. Humans on earth are under a test to exercise their will to serve the commandments of Allah in all aspects of life. Etymologically Islam means *to surrender*, obey, be sincere and be at peace; and Muslim is one who submits. Muhammad<sup>1</sup> is the prophet of Islam and messenger of Allah on whom Quran was revealed for the guidance of mankind. In Quran, the holy text of Muslims, Allah reveals to him, “(This is) a book (Quran) which We have revealed to you, (O Muhammad), that you might bring mankind out of darknesses into the light by permission of their Lord – to the path of the Exalted in Might, the Praiseworthy”.<sup>2</sup> Muhammad was born to Aminah in 570 AD. His father Abdullah had died two months before his birth and his mother died when he was a six-year-old child. Orphaned by both parents, he was raised by his grandfather and after his demise, by his uncle. He started going out with caravans for trade and business. At the age of 25, he got married to Khadijah, who was an elderly widow. He lived in Arabia throughout his life, a society based on the tribal system where clan affinity and tribal identity were of utmost importance. Muhammad himself belonged to the Quraish tribe, one of the most influential tribes of Arabia.<sup>3</sup>

### Arabian context and Semitic religions

Muhammad at the age of 40 encountered a mystic experience. In the cave of Hira, angel Gabriel appeared before Muhammad and asked him to ‘read’ and he replied that he was illiterate and could not read. The angel held him tightly to his bosom and repeated the words, ‘read’ three times, then made him recite the words; “Recite in the name of your Lord who created; Created man from a clinging substance. Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous; Who taught by the pen; Taught man that which he knew not.”<sup>4</sup> These are

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<sup>1</sup> Muslims usually suffix the name Muhammad with *Sallallahu-aliahi-wasalam* (SAW) meaning peace be upon him (PBUH).

<sup>2</sup> Quran, Chapter 14, Verse 1 (Quran 14: 1). Quran primarily is an Arabic text. However, for convenience its English translation is reproduced here. Some standard translations of Quran in English (especially the one by Marmaduke Pickthall) have been referred to in this paper. The reference here is given as the chapter of Quran followed by verse numbers (Quran chapter: verses). This is a universally accepted practice for referencing Quran. The reader can browse these translations on <http://quran.com/>

<sup>3</sup> Tariq Ramadan, *The Messenger: The Meanings of the Life of Muhammad*, Penguin: UK, 2008

<sup>4</sup> Quran, 96: 1-5

the first revealed verses of Quran. Muhammad, thereafter started preaching the religion of Islam, founded on the idea of *monotheism*. Monotheism is one of the primary links that Islam shares with the earlier Semitic religions—Judaism and Christianity. Muhammad argued within the lexicon and vocabulary of Abrahamic traditions. He endorsed all the Judaic and Christian prophets as righteously guided ones. He articulated that the present era of prophethood was in continuation with the series of prophets who had come earlier and he was *the last* in the sequel of prophets. All the earlier prophets like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses and Jesus, etc., had come to warn and guide a specific community for limited time periods, until rescinded by the next prophet.

Since earlier times Mecca was religious center of Arabia – a big cubical building, *Kaaba* exists there. It is known that Abraham and his son Ismael had built the *Kaaba*. It housed many idols and the rituals were full of pagan practices and idol worshipping.<sup>5</sup> Tribal society of Arabia was full of evil social practices like female infanticide, drinking, and slavery. It was torn by tribal wars, hence fighting was a skill nurtured to settle the clan feuds. Poetry was used to generate passion and glorify the warriors and keep the memories of war alive. This period prior to Mohammad's declaration of prophet-hood is referred to as the period of *Jahiliya* (ignorance) in Islamic history.

From an Islamic perspective, the religion Islam was not founded or revealed by Muhammad. Rather all earlier Semitic religions followed Islam, but they differed in *Shariah* (law and customs). The only difference is that the earlier prophets were sent to specific communities and nations for specific durations of time. Whereas, Muhammad was sent for whole humanity and he is the last prophet till the Day of Judgment. The word Muslim also does not refer to the followers of the Prophet alone but stands for the believers of Allah. All prophets and their communities were 'Muslims' meaning submitting to Allah. The word Muslim has no particular connotation to Muhammad, as Quran talks about the Moses as; "And Moses said, "O my people, if you have believed in Allah, then rely upon Him, if you should be Muslims."<sup>6</sup> Muslims believe that all Prophets were human beings chosen by Allah to warn and guide people. They were to enlighten the progeny of Adam towards the righteous path as ordained by Allah. Prophets were guided by Allah and they educated people to worship Allah alone and not to associate anyone with Him and prevented them from going astray. They got inspiration and revelation from Allah through revelations known as *Wahay*. All the Semitic religions including Islam explain that human life on earth has a limited dimension and there is a *life after death*. "Every soul will taste death, and you will only be given your [full] compensation on the Day of Resurrection."<sup>7</sup> The status of afterlife will be decided on the basis of actions

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<sup>5</sup> See Reza Aslan, *No God But God: The Origins, Evolutions and Future of Islam*, Arrow Books, London, 2006

<sup>6</sup>Quran, 10: 84

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. 3: 185

one does in this worldly life. All these religions share a common structure and paradigm related to the idea of divine creation of universe and its end. In addressing Jews and Christians (people of Book), Quran invokes the Abrahamic legacy. This was to remind both the groups that if they consider Abraham as the father and claim to follow his religion, then they should not oppose Muhammad's message because he also calls towards the monotheism of Abraham.<sup>8</sup>

### **Muhammad and new community of Muslims: a brief portrait**

Islam grew from a few followers of family members and friends of Muhammad to a movement within a span of three to four years, once he openly started calling people towards Islam. In Mecca, an opposition grew towards his ideas; especially the idea of monotheism and worshipping of the Allah alone with no associates. Muhammad was known by the titles of *Sideeq* (truthful) and *Ameen* (honest) throughout Mecca. He had a reputation for humbleness, truthfulness, and one who helped poor and destitute. His call for *Tawheed* and abdication of *Shirik*, incited an opposition to such an extent that he had to face persecution. Due to forced persecutions and executions, he along with his followers migrated from Mecca to a nearby city of Yathrib (Medina) in 622 AD. The emigration, known as *Hijrat*, marks the first year of the lunar calendar of Islam.

Medina hosted a sizeable population of Muslims. Host Muslims were known as *Ansar* (helpers) and newly migrated ones were known as *Muhajirs* (migrants). In order to make Medina a city of peace, the Charter of Medina or *Meesaq-e-Medina* was drafted. This marks the political phase of Prophet's life where joint defense of Medina and mutual respect towards the customs is agreed upon. A new community known as *Ummah* is formed. Arbitration is recognized as the way to resolve conflicts. The first external threat Medina faced was from the pagans of Mecca. In 624, the battle of *Badr* took place. In this battle Muslims were outnumbered by pagans of Mecca, but miraculously the pagans were defeated. This victory gave a sense of confidence to Muslims and strengthened their position in Arabia. A new chapter of war humanitarianism was opened, bodies of dead were not mutilated, and prisoners were given good treatment and released for compensation. Next year the battle of *Uhad* took place, in which Muslims faced a lot of reverses. In 628 AD, the peace Treaty of *Hudaybiyyah* took place. It was a ten-year no-war pact with the pagan Meccans. It created a peaceful atmosphere for spread of Islam and as a result, many came into the fold of Islam. Most of the societal laws governing the Islamic society were revealed in Medina, which is

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed survey of Abraham's relevance for Judaism, Christianity and Islam, see *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths* by Bruce Feiler. He calls Abraham "the shared father of Jews, Christians and Muslims."

commonly known as *Shariah*. In the year 632 AD at the age of 62 Prophet Muhammad died. By then almost whole of the Arabian Peninsula had accepted Islam.

## Allah

What is the form and content of Allah? The fundamental assumption in Islam about Allah is that He is an ahistorical entity – infinite, impersonal and boundless. He has no form or shape, which a human mind can imagine or conceive. He is sovereign, omnipotent and omnipresent; above anthropomorphic characteristics. “Say: He is Allah, the One! Allah, the eternally Besought of all! He begetteth not nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him.”<sup>9</sup> According to Quran, light is the closest metaphor, which explains the nature of Allah, “Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon light. Allah guideth unto His light whom He will.”<sup>10</sup>

## Creation Plan and the Notion of *Iblees*

Quran lays out the imagery about Allah and His creation plan. How Allah created the universe and human beings and what is the purpose they are to serve? The purpose of creation according to Quran is to ‘worship Allah’: “I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me”.<sup>11</sup> This is stated in a different way at other place: “Who hath created life and death that He may try you which of you is best in conduct; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving.”<sup>12</sup> For Allah creation is a matter of intention and an act of utterance of command, i.e. He commands a thing *to be* and it is. “Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, “be”, and it is!”<sup>13</sup> Allah created the universe much before the creation of human beings. And, this act of creation is *ex nihilo*—out of nothing. Can a dichotomy be established between the creation and the creator, when creation is in itself a manifestation of the creator? A major debate in Islam is about the relationship between these two. Two philosophical responses of *WahdatulWajood* and *WahatulShahood* have come into being.

There are broadly two categories of creations: one, creations which have a soul or Spirit and two, which are devoid of it. Soulless category includes all the things which exist as mere matter like stars,

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<sup>9</sup>Quran, 112: 1-4

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 24: 35

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 51: 56

<sup>12</sup> Quran. 67: 2

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 36: 82

galaxies, animals, trees, etc. In the category of creations with soul, there are three types of creations: angels, humans and *jinnns*. The soul is the essence of these three, but as per the texture of their physical being they are made from different types of ingredients and matter. Angels are specifically made from light (*niir*), humans from clay (*teen*) and *jinnns* from fire (*naar*). The soul is like the command of Allah, which is infused in bodies to make creations aware of their existence. Quran talks about soul as: “And they ask you, (O Muhammad), about the soul. Say, “The soul is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little.”<sup>14</sup> This soul forms the foundational basis of these creations. However, the souled creations are further categorized into two: one those who are given will and free choice, and the others who are not. Humans and *jinnns* fall in the first category, while Angels fall in the second. Humans have been given free choice to choose the lifestyle they prefer, be it in obedience or disobedience, and simultaneously they are provided with the divine guidance to follow the divine path. Allah does not force obedience out of people. “There shall be no compulsion in (acceptance of) the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong”.<sup>15</sup> Now it is up to humans to exercise the choice to acknowledge the transcendental.

Quran mentions the conversation between Allah and angels, about the creation of Adam — the first man created out of clay according to the Semitic belief. “And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth, they said: Wilt thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee? He said: Surely I know that which ye know not.”<sup>16</sup> The question that angels raised was about the possible outcome of ‘free will’ and ‘choice’ that a viceroy or vicegerent would have. Angels supposed that, if Adam is given free will there would be corruption and bloodshed, and consequent disobedience to Allah. In order to prove to angels that their assumption is based on the ignorance and lack of complete knowledge, Allah asked both angels and Adam about the names of some things. “And He taught Adam the names —all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, “Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful.”<sup>17</sup> Angels surrendered and accepted their ignorance instantly and then Adam was made to reveal the knowledge that Allah had taught him. “He said: O Adam! Inform them of their names, and when he had informed them of their names, He said: Did I not tell you that I know the secret of the heavens and the earth? And I know that which ye disclose and which ye hide.”<sup>18</sup> This presents two positions. One, for angels, ‘free will’ meant a state where an individual could explore everything from his cognitive and rational faculties. This was disastrous

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid. 17: 85

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 2: 256

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 2: 30

<sup>17</sup>Ibid. 2: 31

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 2; 33

according to their opinion. Two, from the perspective of Allah, it meant a system where free will is accompanied with both knowledge and guidance.

The knowledge and guidance from Allah along with the freedom of choice placed Adam at a higher pedestal than angels. Allah commanded them to prostrate before Adam. "And when We said unto the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam, they fell prostrate, all save *Iblees*. He demurred through pride, and so became a disbeliever. Here, another character is introduced in the scene, *Iblees*. He refused to obey the command of Allah; became arrogant and hence was destined to burn in the hell.

[Allah] said, "O *Iblees*, what prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with My hands? Were you arrogant [then], or were you [already] among the haughty?" He said, "I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay. [Allah] said, "Then get out of Paradise, for indeed, you are expelled. And indeed, upon you is My curse until the Day of Recompense." He said, "My Lord, then reprieve me until the Day they are resurrected." [Allah] said, "So indeed, you are of those reprieved Until the Day of the time well-known." [Iblees] said, "By your might, I will surely mislead them all<sup>19</sup> Except, among them, Your chosen servants."<sup>19</sup>

### Fall of Adam

Allah placed Adam and Eve in the Heaven, "And We said, "O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat there from in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers".<sup>20</sup> *Iblees* misled both Adam and Eve, and made them to eat from the prohibited tree. Adam and Eve were removed from heaven and moved to earth as a place of settlement and provision for a time. They repented for the disobedience and Allah forgave them. Islam does not entertain the notion of 'original sin' but presents a view of compassionate and ever-forgiving Allah. Islam also propagates the view that every child is born as a Muslim. It is the context of his family and the socialization that makes him a Christian, Jew, Pagan or Muslim. For Al-Ghazali, the interwoven complexity among free will, rationality and social conditioning presented a complex problem of determinism. How does free will affect the decision to follow a particular religion is what he tries to unravel in his spiritual autobiography *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 38: 75-83

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 2: 35

<sup>21</sup> Ghazali, Al. *Deliverance from Error*. Trans. RJ McCarthy. Boston: Twayne (1980).



Will and choice are the central categories in human existence. That is humans are free to choose either to act as per their *nafs* or subject their *nafs* to the Will of Allah. *Nafs* is the conglomeration of soul within the framework of body. The material and organic body has its existential necessities for its survival, the drives and urges of a body constitute the essence of *nafs*. The imprisonment of soul within the body gives rise to *nafs*. The ‘will’ to subordinate the *nafs* to the Will of Allah or not is central to human autonomy. The *Iblees* too had this autonomy, and he chose to disobey the command of prostrating before Adam. The human *nafs* has three categories; *nafs-i-amarah* (The inciting *nafs*), *nafs-i-lawamah* (The self-accusing *nafs*), and *nafs-i-mutmainnah* (The *nafs* at peace). The *nafs* at peace is the ideal stage (the *ought*) where one overcomes the confrontations of evil and devout and is firm in one’s faith.

### **Faith (*Imaan*) in Islam**

*Kalimah Shadaah* is the first article of faith: *La ilahail-lal-lahuMuhammadur-rasulul-lah* (There is no God but Allah. Muhammad is His messenger). It relates the concepts of *Tawheed* and *Risalat*. Islam argues that God is one and is neither preceded nor succeeded by anyone else. *Tawheed* is to accept Allah as a singular entity, to affirm Him by all His Names and Attributes and accept all of His Commands. *Risalat* is the faith that Allah has sent messengers and prophets from time to time for guidance of humanity, beginning with Adam and concluding with the Muhammad, who is the last messenger of Allah.

Quran gives a qualification for the rightly guided people as, “Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them”.<sup>22</sup> There are several other unseen aspects on which a Muslim needs to have faith in, like – angels, *Jinns*, life after death, etc. To acknowledge the existence of that which is absent from the sensory comprehension is constitutive and integral part of the *Imaan*. It entrenches the foundations of belief system in Islam. It encompasses the domain of *Qalab* (heart) and needs to be endorsed by the conscious mind through contemplation and imagination. *Imaan* in a person’s life is like a seed which remains hidden from the naked eye, beneath the soil, and sprouts into the tree of Islam – submission. Any deficiency in the seed will impact the growth of the tree.

Quran provokes an individual to contemplate over the text of the divine book. To reflect on the universe and over his own self; and through the contemplation arrive at the truth that there is a creator of universe. “Then do they not reflect upon the Quran? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction.”<sup>23</sup> It assures the individual that there are a lot of *Aayat* (signs)

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<sup>22</sup>Quran, 2: 3

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 4: 82



which would guide him through the journey of cultivating faith. So, *Imaan* is not merely an act of blind following but it has to be realized through cognitive and spiritual exercises. *Imaan* is an ever-expanding process, where an individual consciously endorses the existence of Allah and the Islamic system of faith and practice. To be a Muslim is an act of coming within the fold of Islam and to have *Imaan* is a process of spiritual recognizing and associating with the Divine. Quran narrates an incident of a group of people who had accepted and converted to Islam; they called themselves as ‘faithful’, Allah corrects them as “The bedouins say, “We have believed.” Say, “You have not (yet) believed; but say (instead), ‘We have submitted,’ for faith has not yet entered your hearts. And if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not deprive you from your deeds of anything. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”<sup>24</sup>

### Five pillars of Islam

The *Ibadat* (worshipping) in Islam has two interrelated categories which work in a synchronous manner. One is *Haqooqul-Lah* and the other is *Haqooqul-Ibad*. The first aspect is related to Allah and second is within the relational domain as ordained by Allah i.e. how to conduct relations with fellow humans and other creations in the world. The commonly known five pillars of Islam are constituted around two categories.

The five pillars of Islam are: to have faith in Allah, to offer Salah five times a day, to give Zakah to poor, to fast during the month of Ramadan and to perform Hajj at least once in one’s life time (*Tawheed, Nimaz, Roza, Zakat, and Hajj*). Faith on Allah encompasses the monotheistic notions as discussed in the previous section.

*Salah* (*Nimaz* in common parlance) is a compulsory obligation for every Muslim five times in a day; it is the performative activity which a Muslim has to undertake. All Muslim men and women are obliged to offer *Salah* every day at the fixed times. *Salah* has to be offered by facing in the direction of Kaaba, and the words uttered in it have to be in the Arabic language. The five *salah* are; *fäjr* (dawn prayer), *zühr* (noon prayer), *äsr* (afternoon prayer), *magrib* (dusk prayer) and *isha* (night prayer). Quran mentions several spiritual benefits of *Salah* and necessitates Muslims to perform it regularly. It is performed in the *Mosque* collectively as well as individually at homes. The collective *Salah* is led by the *Imam* in a mosque followed by other people as his *muqtadis*. Mosque is the structure built by Muslims for such collective religious activities. Generally women don’t go to mosque for *Salah*. But this is a later practice; during the

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<sup>24</sup>Quran, 49: 14

time of the Prophet women too accompanied men in Masjid.<sup>25</sup> Muslims offer special congregational prayers every Friday at noon time.

Regarding fasting, Quran says “O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous.”<sup>26</sup> Fast starts from sun-break to sunset; food and water are prohibited during this time. It is meant to purify the *nafs* of an individual and make him righteous. It is meant to give the believers a feel of hunger and make them pious through disciplining of body and its desires, its urges, its *nafs*. Fasting during the month of Ramadan is compulsory except for those who are sick, mad and women during their periods. Pregnant women, travellers and breast feeding mothers have to compensate the missed out days later. At the end of the month of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate *Eid-ul-Fitr*. It is considered as a day of reward for fasting. Another festival of Eid is in the Islamic month of Zil-Hajja known as *Eid-ul-Zuha*. On this Eid, Muslims offer sacrifice of animals in remembrance of sacrifice offered by Abraham of his son Ismael. On both Eids, a special congregational prayer is offered in some open space as a gratitude to Allah.

*Zakah* is a type of charity, which is like tax imposed on gold, silver, merchandise, cattle and other valuables. It is compulsory on every propertied Muslim. It is given to poor and is considered to purify the wealth. It is calculated at the rate of 2.5% on the wealth. Besides wealth, agriculture and allied sectors are also charged with *Zakah* in prescribed manner. The percentage is usually one-tenth of the net production or one-twentieth of the agriculture. The *Zakah* is specifically spent on following eight categories as Quran mentions:

As-Sadaqat (here it means Zakat) are only for the Fuqara' (poor), and Al-Masakin (the poor) and those employed to collect (the funds); and for to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam); and to free the captives; and for those in debt; and for Allah's Cause (i.e. for Mujahidun - those fighting in the holy wars), and for the wayfarer (a traveller who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allah. And, Allah is All-Knower, All-Wise.<sup>27</sup>

Thus *Zakah* is part of the Islamic economic system where social security and welfare of downtrodden and needy is taken in to consideration. Islam prohibits interest taken on money and commodities. Besides this, Islam has focused on the distribution of wealth and has laws on inheritance of

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<sup>25</sup> For furthering understanding of gender debate in Islam, see Amina Wadud, *Quran and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> Quran, 2: 183

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 9: 60

property. It has given women right to property where they can inherit property from parents, husband and children.

Hajj, the pilgrimage to Kaaba around the time of *Eid-ul-Zuha* is compulsory for every Muslim once in the lifetime, whoever can afford the travel to Mecca. Hajis abandon their families and wear an unstitched white cloth known as *Ahram* for the Hajj period. They circumambulate the Kaaba, visit Medina and perform other activities like a symbolic stoning of *Iblees*, doing *ramal* (small run between Safa and Marwa mounts). They collectively assemble at Arafat, where the Prophet had delivered the last sermon, perform sacrifice of cattle and shave their heads. Islam shows a practical way which aims that individual should reproduce the unity of idea and action both in existence and consciousness. Islam does not promote renunciation of world for spiritual purification. It is simply a programme of life according to the rules of nature, which God has decreed upon His creation.<sup>28</sup>

### **Quran and Texts in Islam**

Quran is considered to be Allah's direct word which was revealed upon Muhammad, over a period of 23 years in bits and pieces. It was carried by angel Gabriel to Muhammad. The sequence of revelation of Quran is quite different from the way it stands compiled. It was compiled by Prophet in an order as per Allah's command other than the order of its revelation. It is divided into 114 chapters and the length of each chapter varies. There are long Surah's like *Baqarah* having 286 verses and short ones like *Al-Kwather* with just 3 verses. Quran was later written down in a book form by second *Khalifah*, Umar and its dialect was standardized by third *Khalifah*, Usman. As per the era of revelation, Quranic Surah's are divided into two groups; Meccan and Medinan i.e. whether the particular Surah was majorly revealed during the stay of the Prophet in Mecca i.e. pre-Hijrat period or in the Medina after Hijrat. The compilations of the sayings and doings of Muhammad are known as books of Hadith – Buhkari, Muslim, Tirmidhi and IbnMajah.

Besides Quran as a divine text, Muslims also believe that earlier texts like Torah (Jews) and Bible (Christians) too are heavenly books. They were revealed on the Prophets, Moses and Jesus for guidance of people respectively. However, these texts were later interpolated by the people. Several new ideas were inserted and deleted from them by people thus nullifying the whole divine schemata.

According to Islamic jurisprudence, Quran is considered the primary and basic text. After Quran, the second place is to Hadith and tradition of the Prophet. If an issue has no precedence in these two sources, then the practice of four *Khalifahs* (Abu Bakr, Umar, Usmaan and Ali) is taken into consideration. *Ijma*,

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<sup>28</sup> Assad, M. *Islam at the Crossroads*, Adam Publishers and Distributors: New Delhi. 2011

*Qiyas* and *Fiqah* are other sources of Islamic jurisprudence. But, they work within the boundaries of Quran and Sunnah. *Qiyas* is to take analogy of any argument of Quran and practice of Muhammad. *Ijma* is to have consensus of Islamic scholars on an issue and *Fiqah* is the knowledge to reflect on a new and contemporary issue of law, society, economy, and polity. *Ijtihad*, which means to exert and struggle to solve the new problems faced by Islam, is another source.

### **Death of Muhammad and New Contention**

Muhammad passed away and left a huge legacy. A major social and political, religious and spiritual, economic and legal revolution had dawned in Arabia. The uncivilized Arabian tribes were now part of a large Empire and civilization of Islam. Right after the death of Muhammad, Ummah (community of Muslims) faced new challenges and problem. Sectarianism with self-righteousness became a major concern. Two major sects – Sunni and Shia – emerged over the question of rightful succession to prophet to lead the *Ummah*. The Sunni thought claims that Abu Bakr was the rightful person to succeed Muhammad as he was closest to prophet since the beginning of Islam. According to Shia thought, Ali was rightful person because he came from the family of prophet; he was prophet's cousin and son-in-law. Historically, Abu Bakr became the first Khalifah of Muslims and was succeeded by Umar, then Usman and later by Ali. There was no prophetic model of choosing a person as the leader of Muslims like the prophet himself was. Muhammad was chosen by Allah and hence no other person could claim to have such legitimacy. Similarly, both Sunni and Shia have further sub-sects: there are four major schools of thought in Sunni Islam based on Fiqh (jurisprudence) – Hanafiya, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafiye. Whereas, Shia Islam has several schools of thought based on question of Imamat (leadership) – Ithnā'ashariyyah, Zaidiyya and Ismaili.

Prior to the advent of European colonialism, Muslim Empires and kingdoms flourished across the world, like Ottoman Empire in Turkey, Safavid dynasty in Persia and Mughal dynasty in India etc. Their demise provided base for a new intellectual movement in Islam which looked at the question of relationship between modern state power and Islam. In this regard several categories in Islam came to be rethought, whether like European renaissance there should be separation of power between state and religion or not? Should political economy of modern states be separated from the religious morality and ethics? Two quintessential socio-political and religious movements took place in 20th century. Both espousing a doctrine that Islam is not only a religion – a way of practicing the ritual aspects of worshipping and praying; but it is a complete way of life, encompassing all aspects of life. Maulana Maududi in South Asia and Hassan al-Banna in Egypt established Jamaat-e-Islami and Iqwanul Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood) respectively. They popularized the terms like Deen (Islam as complete way of life), Jahiliyah (A system

based on Non-Islamic principle historically either prior to Islam or devoid of Islam) and Islamic state vis-à-vis establishment of Khilafa.

Political Islam considers politics as an essential component of Islam – where religion cannot be restricted to the private sphere of an individual, but overarches all aspects of individual's life, thereby diminishing any public-private distinction. Islam encompasses and regulates political, economic, social and cultural aspects of individual and community. In order to achieve it, Muslims need to strive and wage a campaign of self-purification, which will help them to establish the all-encompassing system of Islam. A motivation to fight both internal and external inhibition is what jihad is needed for. In the contemporary world, Muslims reside in two types of nation states; one where Muslims are in majority and other where they are a minority. Political Islam movements are in a struggle to establish the shariah laws in Muslim nation states and simultaneously to get personal laws assured in other non-Muslim, secular states. However, in the contemporary times, the debate on political aspects of Islam has been reduced to issues of Jihad and fundamentalism along with extremism. It has stereotyped the fate of around 1.5 billion population of Muslims and has a major ramification for the world order. While on one hand the actually existing Islamic State champions itself as the sole representative of Islamism, on the other hand Muslim philosophers such as Hassan Hanafi argue against the “introduction of a kind of “State Islam.”<sup>29</sup> State Islam, according to him, cannot resolve the tension between religion and politics, as is portrayed by Islamists.

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<sup>29</sup> Hassan Hanafi, “From Velvet Spring to military despotism,” Interview with Moncef Slimi, (<http://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-egyptian-philosopher-hassan-hanafi-from-velvet-spring-to-military-despotism>). A critical survey of Political Islam and its proponents is not within the scope of this paper as it is more aimed towards an introductory understating of the complexities of Islam as a religion, than on its interpretations—political, social or cultural. However, we have attempted to introduce and touch upon all the necessary perspectives that are relevant for our understanding of Islam today.