

## **BOOK REVIEW**

***Islamic Studies: Tasavvur, Soorat-e-Haal aur Mustaqbil [Islamic Studies: Concept, Present Scenario and Future]*** (Ed.), Prof. Mohd. Fahim Akhtar (Gachibowli, Hyderabad, India: Directorate of Translation, Translation Studies, Lexicography and Publications, Maulana Azad National Urdu University [MANUU], 2022), 184 pp., ISBN: 978-93-95203-58-6; Paperback; Price: 225/-

### **REVIEWER**

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The history of Islamic Studies, both in the West and East, is centuries old. In the West, it has passed through different stages/ phases (beginning with ‘Arabic Chair’ and Orientalism). In the East, including the Indian context, its history dates back, to speak from the academic/ teaching point of view, to the early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century. A number of works, including Azim Nanji’s *Mapping Islamic Studies: Genealogy, Continuity and Change* (1997), Richard Martin’s *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (2001) and Clinton Bennet’s *Bloomsbury Companion to Islamic Studies* (2013) have described its genesis and genealogy. Orientalism, literally the study of the Orient/ East, is here taken specifically to mean the study of Islam and Muslims. It is an agreed fact that the discipline of Islamic Studies has passed through different stages/ phases in the Western academia before it got this specific name, as become evident from the above-mentioned works to name a few: Orientalism, Theology, Religious Studies, Areas Studies and Islamic Studies. The concept of Islamic Studies as a social science discipline has a long journey in contemporary world and has thus gained different meanings and perspectives in different geographical-cum-cultural settings, ranging from Arab world to the Western world. Thus, the history of subject is both ‘extensive and complex’, as it has passed through different stages, and has transformed, especially in the past few decades, tremendously. Keeping in view the significance of the subject, its long history in the academia and considering the fact that it is subject of utmost importance in India too, there have been many attempts to narrate and recount its journey. Though most of these attempts have been made by the Western scholars with a focus on its evolution, emergence and development within the western perspective; however, there are few attempts by the Muslims of India too to recount the journey of this discipline, at global level in general and in the Indian context in particular. The work under review, which is a compilation of the selected papers presented in a two-day national seminar organized by ‘Department of Islamic Studies’ (DoIS), MANUU and Henry Martin Institute, Hyderabad (HMI) on April 24-25, 2019, is one such latest example.

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The objective of this Seminar was “to elaborate and examine the achievements of Islamic Studies in recent past, and to chalk out the action plan for future.” In this seminar, a total of thirty-two (32) papers (both in Urdu and English) were presented by senior and young faculty members and researches of the subject—from Kashmir to Kolkata. Out of these, eighteen (18) Urdu papers have been compiled in this edited volume, which are preceded by ‘Message’, ‘Preface’ and ‘Introductory Remarks’, respectively by the Vice Chancellor, Director of Translation and Publication Division, and Head of Department, DoIS, MANUU, and ends with Seminar Report (by Dr. M. Irfan Ahmad) and ‘Suggestions and Recommendations’ (by the senior and young paper presenters).<sup>†</sup>

Compiled by Prof. Akhtar (Head, DoIS, MANUU), *Islamic Studies: Concept, Present Scenario and Future* consists of eighteen (18) chapters and are divided thematically under three (3) parts: Part-I, “Islamic Studies: Concept and History” (chapters 1-4); Part-II, “Institutions of Islamic Studies in India and their Contribution” (chapters 5-10); and Part-III, “Islamic Studies: Curriculum, Contemporary Relevance and Future (Prospects)” (chapters 11-18).

The main theme of the chapters 1 and 3 (written by Prof. Fahim Akhtar and Mr Mujtaba Farooq, respectively) in part-I and chapters 11-15 in part-III (written by Prof. Iqtidar Mohd. Khan, Prof. Obaidullah Fahad, Mr. Abdul Rashid, Dr Waris Mazhari, and Dr Samina Tabish, respectively) is the discipline of Islamic Studies at the global and national level, its genesis and development in East and West, transitions and transformations of the subject from early stages to the current times as well as contemporary relevance, challenges, and future prospects of this discipline.

Few chapters threw light on the journey of the subject from ‘Orientalism to Islamic Studies (chapter 3 by Farooq), contemporary issues/ trends in research to be explored in Islamic studies (chapter 12 by Prof. Fahad) and Chapters 2, 4 (by Dr Mohd. Irfan and Dr Mohd. Arshad), 5-10 (in part-II) and 16-18 (written by Ms. Zeshan Sara, Dr Mohd. Usama and Mr Mohd. Salahuddin, respectively) discuss the teaching and research, curriculum and contribution of various departments/ institutes of Islamic Studies, spread throughout India, like *Jamia Milia Islamia (JMI)*, *Aligarh Muslim University*, *Aliah University*, *MANUU*, *Osmania University*, *Lucknow University*, contribution of Zakir Hussain Institute of Islamic Studies (JMI) and Islamic Studies through the Distance Education at MANUU as well as a general survey of the development of the subject in India, since 1920.

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<sup>†</sup> The English papers too have been published now. For details, see Mohd. Fahim Akhtar and Zeshan Sara (eds.), *Islamic Studies: Concept, Present Scenario and Future* (New Delhi: Genuine Publications and Media Pvt. Ltd., 2024).

Many chapters also provide comparative analysis and evaluation of the curriculum taught at various universities (chapter 17 by Dr Usama) as well as content analysis of selected courses like ‘Islam in India’ (chapter 16 by Ms Sara).

All in all, *Islamic Studies: Concept, Present Scenario and Future* is a valuable and significant contribution which will prove helpful to the students and researchers of Islamic studies not only to know genesis and genealogy of the subject at global level and in Indian context but also to know about the curriculum, teaching and research in this subject, while not overlooking its challenges and future prospects.

In sum, it makes a substantial contribution to the (already available literature) on narrating and describing the history of the discipline of Islamic studies as a social science subject at the local, national and global levels. It will prove helpful in knowing and understanding the genesis, genealogy, growth, approaches, challenges and prospects of Islamic Studies as an academic discipline.