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## Historical Evolution of Islamic Thoughts and Its Dimensions

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**Abstract:** This research article comprehensively examines the historical development of Islamic ideologies and their various facets. Over the course of 1400 years, Islamic thought has experienced substantial changes, exerting a profound influence on the trajectory of human history and culture. Commencing with the initial Islamic era under the leadership of Hazrat Muhammad ﷺ, this study examines the establishment of the fundamental principles of Islamic jurisprudence and theology. It subsequently explores the Golden Age of Islamic Civilization,

characterised by significant intellectual contributions in the realms of philosophy, science, and arts, as exemplified by renowned scholars like Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. This paper examines the emergence and subsequent influence of Sufism, which represents the mystical facet of the Islamic faith. Additionally, it delves into the enduring effects of Sufism on both spirituality and society. The subsequent investigation explores the period of decline and colonialism, during which interactions with European powers posed challenges to conventional Islamic ideology and catalysed movements for reform. This article explores the intricacies of present-day Islamic ideology, delving into the multifaceted issues pertaining to politics, society, and intellectual discourse. This statement underscores the significance of movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Feminism, which have endeavoured to reexamine Islamic principles within the framework of contemporary society and the pursuit of gender parity. Furthermore, this analysis elucidates the dynamic relationship between Islamic philosophy and Western thought, showcasing the continuous amalgamation of Islamic and secular concepts. This investigation underscores the intricate and diverse characteristics of the Islamic intellectual heritage. A comprehensive comprehension of the historical aspects of Islamic thought is imperative in order to fully grasp its enduring nature and ability to adapt. This adaptability has played a significant role in facilitating intercultural and ideological dialogue within the context of an increasingly interconnected globalised world.

**Keywords:** Islamic thoughts; History and Dimensions of Islamic Thoughts; Early Islamic Age; Golden Age; Islamic civilization

**Introduction:**

The intellectual tradition of Islamic thought has exerted a significant influence on the trajectory of human history, culture, and civilization due to its richness and diversity. Over the course of more than a millennium, the intricate evolution of Islamic concepts has been characterised by

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vibrant exchanges with diverse cultural, religious, and philosophical systems (Bell, 2012). This research article endeavours to offer a comprehensive examination of the historical progression of Islamic thoughts and its multifaceted character, emphasising prominent individuals, intellectual movements, and philosophical schools that have played a role in its advancement.

The inception of Islamic thought can be historically attributed to the 7th century, during which Prophet Muhammad ﷺ received divine revelations that served as the foundational principles of the Islamic faith (Alam, 1993). The Islamic intellectual tradition was established during the early Islamic period, wherein the Qur'an and Hadith emerged as the principal sources of religious guidance (Nasr, 1996). During this period, the development of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and theology (kalam) commenced, leading to the emergence of various legal schools and theological discussions that would significantly influence the trajectory of Islamic intellectual discourse (Calder, 2010).

The era known as the Golden Age of Islamic Civilization, which occurred between the 8th and 14th centuries, was characterised by an exceptional surge in intellectual advancement. Islamic scholars, through their collaborative efforts with various cultures and intellectual traditions, have made substantial contributions to the fields of philosophy, science, medicine, mathematics, and the arts (Renima, Tiliouine, & Estes, 2016). Prominent intellectuals, namely Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), assumed pivotal roles in the conservation and translation of classical Greek manuscripts, as well as the progression of Islamic philosophical thought. This era was marked by theological debates between the Ash'ari and Mu'tazili schools of thought, which contributed to the enrichment of Islamic intellectual discourse (Simonton, 2018).

In the midst of a flourishing intellectual atmosphere, the prominence of Islamic mysticism, commonly known as Sufism, became evident as a significant aspect of Islamic philosophical discourse (Knysh, 2010).

Prominent Sufi intellectuals such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi undertook an examination of the journey towards attaining spiritual unity with the divine, placing significant emphasis on the role of love and devotion as the vehicles for accessing elevated spiritual realms. The influence of Sufism permeated various Islamic societies, serving as a source of inspiration for the development of literature, art, and the practise of Islam (Knysh, 2019).

Nonetheless, the waning of the Islamic Caliphate and the subsequent rise of diverse Muslim empires in subsequent centuries presented considerable obstacles to conventional Islamic ideology. The interactions between European colonial powers and the advent of modernity sparked discussions surrounding reform and the dynamics between Islam and the Western world (Nicholson, 2013). Intellectual movements such as the Salafiyya and Islamic modernism emerged with the aim of reinterpreting Islamic principles in order to address the challenges posed by societal transformations, thereby exerting a significant influence on the development of contemporary Islamic thought (Mamat et al., 2019).

In contemporary times, Islamic intellectual discourse remains engaged in addressing a wide range of challenges, encompassing political ideologies, socio-cultural transformations, and the ramifications of globalization (Corbin, 2014). Movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic feminism have endeavoured to tackle present-day challenges while maintaining a foundation in Islamic principles. Moreover, Islamic philosophy actively interacts with Western thought, with the objective of cultivating a harmonious integration of Islamic and secular concepts within the framework of a continuously evolving global milieu (Rouzati, 2018).

#### **Early Islamic Period (7th - 11th Century):**

During the Early Islamic Period, spanning from the 7th to the 11th centuries, Islamic thought underwent a formative phase, drawing inspiration from the teachings and guidance of Prophet Muhammad

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(PBUH) and the revelations of the Qur'an. During this historical epoch, there was a notable process of solidification of the Islamic faith, accompanied by a scholarly endeavour among Islamic intellectuals to delve into diverse aspects of theology and jurisprudence (Saeed, 2006). The discipline of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) originated as a methodical framework for the interpretation of Islamic law, drawing upon the primary sources of the Qur'an and Hadith. Prominent jurists, namely Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, Imam Ash-Shafi'i, and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, established their individual legal schools, which have maintained significant influence in contemporary times (Corbin, 2014). This era witnessed a significant contribution of fiqh to the formation of Islamic legal principles and practises, thereby establishing a solid legal framework that has undergone adaptation and evolution throughout history (Calder, 2010).

In this era, the emergence of Islamic theology (kalam) occurred in conjunction with the advancement of Islamic jurisprudence, serving as a notable intellectual endeavour. The focal point of theological discussions revolves around matters pertaining to faith, encompassing topics such as the essence of God, predestination, free will, and the characteristics ascribed to God (Zaini, 2020). Prominent theologians, namely Al-Ash'ari and Al-Mu'tazili, played pivotal roles in the establishment of divergent theological schools, namely the Ash'ari and Mu'tazili schools of thought, correspondingly (Watt, 2017). The Ash'ari school, which derives its teachings from the scholar Al-Ash'ari, placed significant emphasis on the congruity between reason and revelation, with the aim of reconciling Islamic doctrines with logical tenets (Siddiqov, 2022). Conversely, the Mu'tazili school, under the leadership of Al-Mu'tazilah, placed significant emphasis on the value of rational investigation and the concept of free will, highlighting the role of human agency in ethical decision-making (JAMALI & WAHEED, 2020). The theological discussions that took place during this period established the foundation for the advancement of

Islamic theology and exerted a long-lasting influence on subsequent intellectual dialogues within the Islamic realm (Thahir, 2020).

**Golden Age of Islamic Civilization (8th - 14th Century):**

This period represented a zenith of intellectual and cultural accomplishments within the Islamic world. During this particular era, Islamic intellectual discourse experienced a notable surge, characterised by the substantial scholarly contributions made across a wide range of disciplines, encompassing philosophy, science, medicine, mathematics, literature, and the arts (Thahir, 2020). Drawing upon the intellectual foundations laid by ancient Greek scholars, notable Islamic philosophers such as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, and Ibn Sina (Avicenna) actively participated in the process of translating and safeguarding classical Greek manuscripts, while concurrently formulating their own philosophical concepts (Renima et al., 2016). These intellectuals endeavoured to harmonise Islamic doctrines with the principles of rational investigation, while also delving into metaphysical inquiries, ethical considerations, and the fundamental nature of existence. The philosophical works of Ibn Sina, namely "The Book of Healing" (Roudgari, 2018) and "The Canon of Medicine," (Hosseinzadeh & Nassiri-Asl, 2013) were highly influential and significant in the realms of philosophy and medical science. These works left a lasting impact on European scholars during the Renaissance period. During this era, there was a notable emergence of sophisticated mathematical and scientific theories. Prominent mathematicians such as Al-Khwarizmi (Lim & Brezina, 2016), recognised as the progenitor of algebra, and Omar Khayyam (Cotesta, 2021), renowned for his contributions to geometry, significantly contributed to the progression of mathematical understanding. Astronomers such as Al-Battani (Chandio) and Al-Zarqali, also known as Azarquiel (Safiai, Ibrahim, Jamsari, Nasir, & Ahmad, 2017), made notable contributions to the field of astronomy and the comprehension of celestial motions. Islamic scholars made significant contributions to the preservation and dissemination of

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ancient knowledge, which ultimately facilitated its transmission to mediaeval Europe and played a pivotal role in the subsequent European Renaissance. The Golden Age of Islamic Civilization serves as a testament to the intellectual inquisitiveness, receptiveness to knowledge from various cultures, and the spirit of investigation that defined the Islamic realm during this period, resulting in a lasting impact on the advancement of human understanding (Renima et al., 2016).

### **Islamic Mysticism (Sufism):**

Islamic Mysticism, commonly referred to as Sufism, gained significant prominence and depth within the realm of Islamic intellectual discourse, particularly during the period spanning from the 9th century onwards. Sufism, originating from a spiritual pursuit for firsthand experiential comprehension of the divine, aimed to enhance the individual's connection with the divine through expressions of love, devotion, and an inward transformative expedition (Knysh, 2019). Prominent Sufi scholars such as Al-Ghazali, who is commonly recognised as the "Proof of Islam," (Ismail & Uyuni, 2019) and Ibn Arabi, renowned as the preeminent figure in Sufism referred to as the "Greatest Master," have made noteworthy intellectual and spiritual advancements within the mystical framework of this tradition (Dagli, 2016). The author's works placed significant emphasis on the notions of divine love (ishq) and spiritual union (wahdat al-wujud), positing that the ultimate objective of human existence resides in the pursuit of closeness to the divine and surpassing the confines of the physical realm (Dagli, 2016).

The impact of Sufism transcended the boundaries of Islamic theology, permeating diverse facets of Islamic societies. Sufi orders, also known as tariqas, emerged as spiritual fraternities that adhered to the distinctive teachings and practises propagated by esteemed Sufi masters. Sufi adherents utilised various artistic mediums, such as music, poetry, dance, and art, as means of expressing their profound spiritual longing and unwavering devotion to the divine. The poetry authored by Rumi, Hafez,

and other poets associated with the Sufi tradition has consistently served as a source of inspiration for individuals from various cultural backgrounds (Nasr, 2020). This enduring appeal can be attributed to the universal themes that permeate their works, namely love, unity, and the quest for personal enlightenment. Moreover, the approach of Sufism towards Islamic spirituality exhibited a sense of inclusivity that surpassed sectarian divisions, thereby promoting interfaith dialogue and solidarity among Muslims with varying theological orientations. The enduring impact of Sufism can be attributed to its capacity to provide a deep and individualistic spiritual connection with the divine, appealing to individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and spanning across centuries. Furthermore, Sufism has contributed to the richness of Islamic intellectual discourse by incorporating poetic forms of expressing divine love and the concept of unity (Ebstein, 2020).

**Decline and Colonial Era (15th - 19th Century):**

This period was characterised by notable difficulties and changes experienced by the Islamic world. This period was characterised by the dissolution of the Islamic Caliphate and the emergence of multiple Muslim empires. The presence of internal divisions, conflicts, and political instability played a significant role in the decline of intellectual pursuits and a reduced emphasis on philosophical and scientific endeavours. Furthermore, the encounters with European colonial powers brought forth novel ideologies and political frameworks that posed a challenge to conventional Islamic ideologies. The advent of colonialism resulted in significant transformations within Muslim-majority regions, encompassing the realms of social, economic, and political domains. These changes had a disruptive effect on pre-existing cultural norms and institutions (Manj et al., 2021).

The expansion of European colonial powers resulted in the encroachment upon the autonomy and authority of traditional Islamic centres of learning. The proliferation of colonial educational systems frequently



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resulted in the marginalisation of Islamic education, thereby diminishing the significance placed on Islamic intellectual endeavours in favour of knowledge rooted in Western perspectives. The perception of Islamic thought and religious institutions as being incongruous with the concepts and practises of modernity brought forth by colonial powers experienced a notable rise. During this period, there was also an emergence of reformist movements such as the Wahhabi movement in Arabia and the Sanusi movement in North Africa. These movements aimed to purify Islamic practise and restore what they believed to be the authentic teachings of Islam. The reformist movements, although aimed at addressing the challenges brought about by colonialism, also played a role in generating internal divisions within the Muslim world. Consequently, they influenced the intellectual and political environment of the region, leaving a lasting impact that can still be observed in present times (Awan, Khokhar, Akram, & Akhtar, 2021).

### **Islamic Thought in the Modern Era (20th Century - Present):**

Islamic thought in this era has been influenced by a dynamic interaction between traditional and modern elements. During this historical era, there was a notable resurgence of Islamic activism and political ideologies, alongside intellectual movements that aimed to confront the various challenges posed by the modern world . The Muslim Brotherhood, which emerged in Egypt during the 1920s, espoused the establishment of Islamic governance predicated upon Islamic tenets. Islamic political parties and movements have emerged in a multitude of nations with Muslim-majority populations, thereby making significant contributions to ongoing deliberations regarding the involvement of Islam in matters of governance and societal affairs (Jung & El Zalaf, 2019; Watt, 2017).

Simultaneously, Islamic feminism emerged as a prominent movement, aiming to contest patriarchal interpretations of Islamic scriptures and promote gender equality within the context of Islamic teachings. Islamic feminists have endeavoured to engage in a reinterpretation of religious

texts through a lens that is sensitive to gender, with a particular emphasis on advocating for women's rights and their active involvement in the public sphere (Corbin, 2014). Consequently, this gave rise to a dynamic discourse surrounding women's concerns within the framework of Islam, thereby making a significant contribution to the ongoing discussions regarding the harmonisation of Islamic principles with contemporary notions of gender equality (Cotesta, 2021). Moreover, Muslim scholars and intellectuals actively participated in the discourse surrounding the intersection of Islamic ideology and Western philosophical concepts. Their aim was to harmonise Islamic principles with the complexities presented by secularism, democracy, and the concept of human rights (Nasr, 1996). The aforementioned intellectual pursuits sought to establish a harmonious integration of Islamic ideologies and Western principles, while concurrently safeguarding the fundamental tenets of Islamic heritage. The development of Islamic thought in the present era is characterised by its ongoing evolution, which is a result of the intricate nature of the Muslim world and its varied reactions to the intricate challenges posed by the current global context (Mirza, 2017).

#### **Contemporary Islamic Philosophical Trends:**

The present-day Islamic intellectual discourse remains engaged in addressing the challenges posed by modernity, secularism, and pluralism. Islamic philosophers and scholars actively participate in the discourse of Western thought and philosophy, with the aim of establishing a harmonious integration of Islamic and secular concepts. Muslim scholars and intellectuals engage in an examination of the congruence between Islamic ideology and current philosophical and scientific frameworks, aiming to navigate the points of convergence and divergence between traditional beliefs and modern perspectives (Ali, 2018). A significant element of modern Islamic philosophy entails the continuous engagement with Western intellectual traditions, as scholars endeavour to reconcile Islamic and secular concepts while upholding the integrity of Islamic

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principles. Moreover, contemporary Islamic philosophical discourses place significant emphasis on matters pertaining to ethics, social justice, and environmental stewardship (Othman Elkhosht, 2019). Muslim intellectuals are actively engaging with the ethical dilemmas that arise from the processes of globalisation and technological progress. Furthermore, the investigation of Islamic metaphysics, ontology, and epistemology continues to be a dynamic field of study, providing novel perspectives on the essence of existence and understanding within the context of Islamic philosophy. Contemporary Islamic philosophical trends play an active role in enriching the broader philosophical discourse and promoting intercultural dialogue between Islamic intellectual traditions and the global community (Jassim, 2021).

### **Conclusion:**

Islam, a prominent global religion, has exerted a significant influence on the course of human history and the development of various cultures. A comprehensive grasp of this extensive intellectual legacy is imperative in order to fully comprehend the enduring strength and flexibility of Islamic ideology, which persists in promoting cross-cultural communication and making valuable contributions to the worldwide intellectual conversation. This research article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex trajectory of Islamic ideas, examining their significant influence on human civilization and their continued relevance in the modern era. The historical progression of Islamic thought has exhibited a dynamic trajectory, characterised by a multitude of dimensions and intellectual movements. Islamic thought has demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt and evolve throughout its history, starting from its origins in the Arabian Peninsula and extending to its current worldwide influence. This adaptability is a direct response to the ever-changing societal and intellectual challenges that it encounters. A comprehensive comprehension of the various facets of Islamic thought is imperative in order to fully acknowledge the abundant intellectual legacy of the Islamic

tradition and promote intercultural discourse within an ever more interconnected global context.

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