



**Comparative and Critical Study of Philosophical Systems of Religion Islam and Wahhabi Movement  
within Islam**

**KHWAJA AYUB ZICKRIYA  
THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE GOA  
INSTITUTION: GOA UNIVERSITY  
CURRICULAM: PHD (PHILOSOPHY)**

**“ABSTRACT”**

The Systems of Indian Philosophies have few common characteristics. Only system that differs on account of its promoting materialism is Chavakism. All systems emphasize that the philosophy must have positive impact on the human life. The main ends of human life such as artha, karma, dharma and moksha are collectively called as purushartha. And these are dealt with by the philosophical systems/movements. The philosophical systems should lead the mankind from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge. Reasoning and experience will constitute the validating agents.

More or less, all philosophical systems teach that man's suffering results from his ignorance and when man conquers ignorance and gains knowledge he would attain total freedom (moksha). On broader terms, a philosophical system is concerned with the understanding of the structure of the universe in order to facilitate a smooth transition to ultimate 'location' as in moksha. In Sanskrit the word 'philosophy' means 'tattva' which is concerned with the nature of reality. Therefore, philosophy is not restricted only to the intellectual pursuit but also is concerned with the revelations of the nature of reality or the vision of ultimate truth and reality - to be ultimately experienced by one's own self.

**Key Words: Revelations, Philosophy of religion, free will, Sunni and Wahhabi.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The comparative and critical study of philosophical systems and religion can be explained by using an old Indian tale of blind men who tried to describe an elephant. When few born blind men were asked to describe an elephant, but each one was presented with certain part of elephant. To one who was presented with head of the elephant said that elephant is like a pot. The blind man presented with a trunk said elephant is like a hose the man with ears said elephant is like a fan. Others said elephant is like a pillar, like a rope, like wall and so on. Then they quarrelled among themselves each one thinking that he is the only right in describing an elephant and others were wrong. The obvious truth was that it is only their ignorance that they could not grasp that the elephant is a unity of many parts and what they think was in isolation of this truth.

The similitude of the tale is reflected in world religious systems as we see that all of these systems operate in isolation and there is no synchronization to form a unity. This difference in systems in religions is the only reason why we are away from the possible right path for ultimate truth.

We can visualize another example of all the paths at the base of the mountain starts to meet at the peak at same point. All the philosophical and religious systems should look upon as same parts of the one spiritual elephant or as different paths leading towards the same destination.

Here three possibilities need to be evaluated:

- 1) It is important to know that as claimed by Christianity and Islam that they only would lead mankind to right path to God as they claim to have real elephant with them.
- 2) Other world religions are not the component of the same spiritual elephant in the tale.
- 3) Option to consider that all spiritual paths to God are wrong and is denied by our spiritual quest itself. The hunger for ultimate truth would be concluded as nothing but only human fantasy.

### **Philosophy of Religion:**

#### **Existence of God:**

Human knowledge is limited that they are unable to understand the laws of the universe, its origin and its creator. Philosophical researches try to determine whether or not God exist. Many metaphysical questions about the universe are in front of the philosophers. Having definite answers to these questions would have great consequence on all humanity. If the existence of God is testified and his existence on earth is proven and he is identified as a being with perfect morals and understanding than all the religious wars could end. This would answer as to which religion is most correct. We know that life on this planet exists for particular reason and it is not due to some freak accidental occurrence of nature. The universe therefore must be more organized and therefore it should have more organized natural law called God's law, which nobody would be able to comprehend. God's existence would hopefully enlighten all philosophers in general and mankind in particular and they would rather evaluate the reasons why God must have given human being a free will.

God must have created man and hence he has the responsibility to care mankind in some way. If he cares than he must have some purpose of morality. If God allowed mankind to understand his morality then he would not have given him free will. People would be starving hard to please God and may not like to disobey him. Proof of God may demonstrate that soul exists and there is life hereafter.

On the other hand if the existence of God is disapproved, lack of God mean each human being defines his own purpose to live. Selfishness would easily be rationalized. Under all circumstances human would strive to survive and enjoy their lives. People would detach themselves as much as possible. It is therefore foolish to deny the possibility of existence of God. If God is all-powerful, he could cloak his own existence .There are many advantages to humanity not knowing if God exists? People who wish to believe in God can indeed find reasons for believing in him (faith).The universe has order as it does have some sort of organization. A truly omniscient God would understand the advantages of not revealing itself. If God exists, free will is not a mistake, for God cannot err, therefore God wishes humanity to be able to exercise their ability to make their own decisions. If God is uncertain, people would be able to make all decisions on their own. Morality would be the decision of the self. People who decide to find faith can find it (in God, morality, humanity or whatever they choose to find faith in). This allows “good” people to act good, while the “bad” will act according to their own morals (right or wrong). The morals that a person establishes for himself are a testament to his own goodness. This fact raises important issues about God’s “perfection.” If God is perfect, he does no wrong. Therefore God cannot act in an improper manner, as it is not an option for a perfect being. If God does no wrong, he lacks the same free will that all humanity has the ability to exercise (although humans have to deal with the consequences of their “wrongdoings.”

### **Comparative and critical study of Religion Islam and Wahhabi Movement**

The comparative study presented here is focused on the religion Islam and Wahhabi movement within Islam.

#### **Philosophical systems in Islam**

Islam is one of the three religions that preaches monotheism or the belief in single God. Islam means to surrender or submission and a follower of Islam-Muslim which means one who surrenders to God. Islam believes and worship the same God that is worshiped by Jews and Christians. Islam believes in one all-Powerful, all-knowing God who created the universe. The religious teaching that all human beings are equal in front of God make this religion more monotonous and focuses on collective sense of loyalty.

#### **The Teachings of Muhammad**

Muhammad, the last prophet of Islam, started preaching religion, Islam, which constituted a marked break from existing moral and social codes in Arabia. The new religion of Islam taught that there was one God, and that Muhammad was the last and most important in a series of prophets and messengers. Through his messengers God had sent various books and systems of laws for living, Quran is the holy book of Islam. Quran mentions the names of the Prophets of God who came before Muhammad. Quran mentions about the book revealed to Moses to David and to Jesus.

Islam also taught that the Christian Bible (which includes the Hebrew Bible as the Old Testament and an additional 27 books referred to as the New Testament), and the Quran were all holy books. According to the Quran, the two earlier Scriptures had been altered over time from their original forms given by God, while the Quran would remain perfect, preserved by God from such distortion. In addition to distinguishing itself from the Hebrew and Christian traditions, the new religion taught that the God of Islam had provided humanity with the means to know good from evil, through the prophets and the Quran. Therefore, on the Day of Judgment people will be held accountable for their actions.

Islamic faith is dependent on the core concept of practicing five religious principles called as pillars of Islam. The five pillars are each described in some part of the Quran and were already practiced during Muhammad's lifetime. They are the profession of faith (shahada), prayer (salat), almsgiving (zakat), fasting (sawm), and pilgrimage (hajj). Although some of these practices had precedents in Jewish, Christian, and other Middle Eastern religious traditions, taken together they distinguish Islamic religious practices from those of other religions. The five pillars are thus the most central rituals of Islam and constitute the core practices of the Islamic faith.

### **The Profession of Faith (Shahada)**

The absolute focus of Islamic piety is Allah, the supreme, all knowing, all-powerful, and above all, all-merciful God. The Arabic word Allah means "the God," and this God is understood to be the God who brought the world into being and sustains it to its end. By obeying God's commands, human beings express their recognition of and gratitude for the wisdom of creation, and live in harmony with the universe.

The profession of faith, or witness to faith (shahada), is therefore the prerequisite for membership in the Muslim community. On several occasions during a typical day, and in the saying of daily prayers, a Muslim repeats the profession, "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is his prophet."

### **The Five Daily Prayers (Salat)**

The second pillar of Islam is the religious duty to perform five prescribed daily prayers or salat. All adult Muslims are supposed to perform five prayers, preceded by ritual cleansing or purification of the body at different intervals of the day. The Quranic references also mention the acts of standing, bowing, and prostrating during prayers and facing a set direction, known as qibla.

Wherever Muslims live in substantial numbers throughout the world, the call to prayer, or adhan, is repeated five times a day by a muezzin (crier) from a mosque, the Muslim place of worship. Muslims are encouraged to pray together in mosques, but group prayer is only a religious obligation for the noon prayer on Friday. Women, travellers, sick Muslims, and those attending to the sick are granted license not to attend the Friday congregational prayer, although they may attend if they wish.

### **Almsgiving (Zakat)**

The third pillar of Islam is zakat, or almsgiving. A religious obligation, zakat is considered an expression of devotion to God. It represents the attempt to provide for the poorer sectors of society, and it offers a means for a Muslim to purify his or her wealth and attain salvation.

### **Fasting (sawm)**

The fourth pillar of Islam is sawm, or fasting. Clear Quranic references to fasting account for the early introduction of this ritual practice. The Quran prescribes fasting during the month of Ramadan, the 9th month of the 12-month Islamic lunar year. The month of Ramadan is sacred because the first revelation of the Quran is said to have occurred during this month. By tradition the month starts with the sighting of the new moon by at least two Muslims. For the entire month, Muslims must fast from daybreak to sunset by refraining from eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse. Menstruating women, travellers, and sick people are exempted from fasting but have to make up the days they miss at a later date.

## **Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)**

The fifth pillar requires that Muslims who have the physical and financial ability should perform the pilgrimage, or hajj, to Mecca at least once in a lifetime. The ritual of pilgrimage was practiced by Arabs before the rise of Islam and continues from the early days of Islam. The hajj is distinct from other pilgrimages. It must take place during the 12th lunar month of the year, known as Dhu al-Hijja, and it involves a set and detailed sequence of rituals that are practiced over the span of several days. All of the pilgrimage rituals take place in the city of Mecca and its surroundings, and the primary focus of these rituals is a cubical structure called the Kaaba. According to Islamic tradition, the Kaaba, also referred to as the House of God, was built at God's command by the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham).

## **The God of Islam**

Islamic doctrine emphasizes the oneness, uniqueness, transcendence, and utter otherness of God. As such, God is different from anything that the human senses can perceive or that the human mind can imagine. The God of Islam encompasses all creation, but no mind can fully encompass or grasp him. God, however, is manifest through his creation, and through reflection humankind can easily discern the wisdom and power behind the creation of the world. Because of God's oneness and his transcendence of human experience and knowledge, Islamic law forbids representations of God, the prophets, and among some Muslims, human beings in general. In modern times the restrictions on creating images of people have been considerably relaxed, but any attitude of worship toward images and icons is strictly forbidden in Islam.

Before Islam, many Arabs believed in a supreme, all-powerful God responsible for creation; however, they also believed in lesser gods. With the coming of Islam, the Arab concept of God was purged of elements of polytheism and turned into a qualitatively different concept of uncompromising belief in one God, or monotheism. The status of the Arabs before Islam is considered to be one of ignorance of God and Islamic sources insist that Islam brought about a complete break from Arab concepts of God and a radical transformation in Arab belief about one God.

## **No belief in original sin**

According to Islamic belief, in addition to sending prophets, God manifests his mercy in the dedication of all creation to the service of humankind. Islamic traditions maintain that God brought the world into being for the benefit of his creatures. His mercy toward humanity is further manifested in the privileged status God gave to humans. According to the Quran God appointed mankind as his ambassador (caliph) on earth, thus entrusting man with the grave responsibility of fulfilling his scheme for creation.

The Islamic concepts differ from Jewish and Christian interpretations of the fall from Paradise that underlie the Christian doctrine of original sin. In the biblical account, Adam and Eve fall from Paradise as a result of disobeying God's prohibition, and all of mankind is cast out of Paradise as punishment. Christian theologians developed the doctrine that mankind is born with this sin of their first parents still on their souls, based upon this reading of the story. Christians believe that Jesus Christ came to redeem humans from this original sin so that mankind can return to God at the end of life. In contrast, the Quran maintains that after their initial disobedience, Adam and Eve repented and were forgiven by God. Consequently Muslims believe that the descent by Adam and Eve to earth from Paradise was not a fall, but an honour bestowed on them by God. Adam and his progeny were

appointed as God's messengers and ambassadors, and were entrusted by God with the custodianship of the earth.

### **Other principle beliefs of Muslim**

a) **Believe in Angels:** According to Islamic tradition believers of Islam must believe in the existence of angels. Islam believes that angels were created from light. An angel is an immortal being that commits no sins and serves as a guardian, a recorder of deeds, and a link between God and mankind. The angel Gabriel, for example, communicated God's message to the prophet Muhammad. In contrast to humans, angels are incapable of unbelief and, with the exception of Satan, always obey God.

Despite these traits, Islamic doctrine holds that humans are superior to angels. According to Islamic traditions, God entrusted humans and not angels with the custodianship of the earth and commanded the angels to prostrate themselves to Adam. Satan, together with the other angels, questioned God's appointment of blood shedding humans to the respectable position of khalipha. Satan disobeyed God and refused to prostrate himself before anyone but God. For this sin, Satan was doomed to lead human beings astray until the end of the world. According to the Quran, God informed the angels that he had endowed humans with a knowledge angels could not acquire.

b) **Hadith:** As the second source of authority in Islam, hadith complements the Quran and provides the most extensive source for Islamic law. The ultimate understanding of the Quran depends upon the context of Muhammad's life and the ways in which he demonstrated and applied its message. There is evidence that Muhammad's sayings and practices were implemented by his companions to answer questions about Islam. In addition to the laws pertaining to the five pillars, Islamic law covers areas such as dietary laws, purity laws, and marriage and inheritance laws, commercial transaction laws all of which are derived from the teachings of prophet Muhammad terms as teachings of hadith.

c) **Belief in hereafter:** According to Islam, the present world is not an eternal abode. The Quran tells us that man is placed here only temporarily, so that his moral structure may be tested in terms of his obedience to God's will. He must always remember that there will be the life hereafter. There is a time limit to mortal existence. Death marks the end of the testing period for all human beings. But death only means a change of abode, for the soul never dies. Man returns to the realm whence he came, so that he may wait for Judgement Day. That realm, the life hereafter, is the eternal world. Thus man's life is divided into two parts: a brief stay in this world and an eternal life in the next world. God created human beings and made them responsible for their actions by granting them freewill. If there were no Afterlife in which the good were rewarded and the bad punished, there would be no justice; in which case, it would appear meaningless to create people with a conscience and a sense of responsibility. But God is just and always acts justly. Hence it is the absolute demand of justice that there should be a Day of Judgement on which everyone is brought to book.

### **Wahhabi Movement**

#### **Origins of Wahhabi Movement**

Muhammad ibn Abdul al-Wahhab was the first modern Islamic fundamentalist and extremists. Wahhab made the central point of his reform movement the principle that absolutely every idea added to Islam after the third century of the Muslim era was false and should be eliminated.



Muslims, in order to be true Muslims, must adhere solely and strictly to the original beliefs set forth by Muhammad.

The reason for this extremist stance, and the focus of Wahhabi's reform efforts, was a number of popular practices which he believed represented a regression to pre-Islamic polytheism.

These included praying to saints, making pilgrimages to tombs and special mosques, venerating trees, caves, and stones, and using votive and sacrificial offerings.

These are all practices commonly and traditionally associated with religions, but they were unacceptable to Wahhabi. Contemporary secular behaviours are even more anathema to Wahhabi's successors. It is against modernity, secularism, and the Enlightenment which current Wahhabis do battle — and it is this anti-secularism, anti-modernism which helps drive their extremism, even to the point of violence.

### **Wahhabi Doctrines**

In contrast to popular superstitions, Wahhabi emphasized the unity of God (tawhid).

This focus on absolute monotheism led to him and his followers being referred to as muwahiddun, or "Unitarians." Everything else he denounced as heretical innovation, or bidet. Wahhab was further dismayed at the widespread laxity in adhering to traditional Islamic laws: questionable practices like the ones above were allowed to continue, whereas the religious devotions which Islam did require were being ignored.

This created indifference to the plight of widows and orphans, adultery, lack of attention to obligatory prayers, and failure to allocate shares of inheritance fairly to women. Wahhab characterized all this as being typical of jahiliyya, an important term in Islam which refers to the barbarism and state of ignorance which existed prior to the coming of Islam. Wahhab thus identified himself with the Prophet Muhammad and at the same time connected his society with what Muhammad worked to overthrow.

Because so many Muslims lived (so he claimed) in jahiliyya, al-Wahhab accused them of not being true Muslims after all. Only those who followed the strict teachings of al-Wahhab were truly Muslims because only they still followed the path laid out by Allah. Accusing someone of not being a true Muslim is significant because it is forbidden for one Muslim to kill another; but if someone is not a true Muslim then killing them (in war or in an act of terrorism) becomes licit. It would be hard to underestimate the importance of this principle to modern terrorists and extremists.

Obviously, Wahhabi religious leaders reject any reinterpretation of the Quran when it comes to issues settled by the earlier Muslims. Wahhabis thus oppose the 19th and 20th century Muslim reform movements which reinterpreted aspects of Islamic law in order to bring it closer to standards set by the West, particularly with regards to topics like gender relations, family law, personal autonomy, and participatory democracy.

Wahhabi movement began its emergence in the Arabian Peninsula in the 18th century with the fall of bloodshed and many casualties. The followers of the Wahhabi claim that their purpose is solely to purify the tawhid. Tawhid have been mixed with for what they call as shirk and superstition.

Wahhabism is a specific phenomenon, which must be considered as a separate school of thought or sect of its own.

Day by day, Muslims are increasingly experiencing problems that attack the very foundation of their faith. With Wahhabis, the main issue lies in the issue of monotheism, in which they divide.

Characteristics of a highly rigid Wahhabism has come to kill the tradition of dialectics that characterizes the Islamic civilization for centuries. Concrete example can be found in Mecca and

Medina. It is unfortunate that the Haramain (Two mosques of Mecca and Madinah) who had been for centuries the centre of the intellectual world of Islam, in the hands of Wahhabi ends. There's hardly anything left except the institutions that preach Wahhabism is absurd given the label of the University. Whereas intellectual activity determines the development of civilization of a nation.

### **Sunni vs Wahhabi**

The major difference between them is that Wahhabis believe that Prophet Muhammad should be praised only as a human being whereas Sunnis show extra special care and respect towards the Prophet of Islam.

Sunni Muslims celebrate the birthday of the Holy Prophet and arrange Meelaad. Meelaad is a form of gathering in which the Sunni Muslims get together and praise the Holy Prophet. The birthdays of Sufi saints are also celebrated with much dedication and enthusiasm. The day of their deaths are commemorated in the form of Urs. Wahhabi Muslims do not believe in celebrating and practicing all these events which are very strongly rooted in Islam. Wahhabis call these practices of events as unlawful and wrongful innovations. Wahhabis also believe that this is as close as to shirk or polytheism and say that Sunnis follow the ways of infidel Hindus.

Sunni Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad is Noor and still present in this world. Whereas Wahhabis do not believe in using pious individuals as intermediaries when asking Allah as they consider it shirk or polytheism. Sunnis believe in the saints and mysticism whereas Wahhabis do not believe in mysticism, intercession and prostration as well. Sunni Muslims visit the tombs of the saints and perform tawassul for the blessings of Allah whereas it is the greatest sin for a Wahhabi.

Sunni Muslims believe in four imams of fiqh or Islamic laws such as Hanafee, Hambali, Maliki and Shafi whereas Wahhabi does not follow an Imam in Fiqh. Wahhabi Muslims are a group of fundamentalists and have an orthodox version of Islam. Wahhabis in Saudi Arab do not allow their females to work side by side with their men and they also are not allowed to drive a car. The women are treated as third rate citizens and they are bound to wear a long abayaa or garment to cover them from head to toe. Sunni Muslims are moderate and believe in the equality of women as suggested by Islam.

There are many differences present in their rituals of praying, marriage ceremonies, dresses etc. Wahhabi Muslims have separate mosques and schools. Wahhabi Muslims are followers of Mohammed ibn Abdul Wahhabi in the 18th century in Arabia, and his movement came up against a lot of opposition from the Indians Sunni Muslims. Members of the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia believe their role as a restorer or reformer to free Islam from negative deviances, heresies, innovations, superstitions and idolatries. Wahhabis prefer to eliminate music and listening to songs. They are against watching television and drawings of living things which contain a soul.

### **Summary**

1. Wahhabi Muslims are followers of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab present in the 18th century in Saudi Arabia whereas Sunni Muslims are followers of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.
2. Sunni Muslims believe in intercession and mysticism whereas Wahhabis call them as deviants and wrongful innovations in Islam.





3. Sunni Muslims strictly follow one of the four schools of thoughts or madhabs of fiqh or Islamic jurisprudence whereas Wahhabis follow their sheikh.

4. Wahhabis do not observe annual Sufi festivals, events or the birthday of Prophet Muhammad.

5. Sunni Muslims believe in healing powers and in visiting tombs or shrines of saints unlike Wahhabis who call it a shirk

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