Introduction

Pluralistic traditions have been the hallmark of Indian civilization. Various religions, faiths and creeds existed here from ancient times. Islam too has formed an important part of its history, culture and environment. Many notable Hindu scholars and intellectuals have acknowledged the contributions of Islam in India. Moreover, Hindus have produced work on the various aspects of Islam. A few also did an over-all study of Islam. Many also attempted a comparative study of scriptures of Islam and Hinduism. These authors employed several sources to study Islam. Some utilized primary sources viz Quran and the Sunnah, however most often these have been read with the help of translations. Others learnt through works of accepted scholars and some others from unreliable sources too. There remains on entire corpus of materials, unnoticed by Hindu and Muslim both. This work aims to present a systematic and structured study of the works produced and comments made by Hindus about Islam. This effort of understanding Islam by Hindus must be brought to the notice of Indians.

In any pluralistic society, a correct understanding and appreciation for ‘others’ can be developed only through proper knowledge and awareness of their faith and philosophy. Consequently a harmonious relation at linguistic, social, financial and political levels can be achieved though
admiration by one community of the contribution of other communities in
the garb of democratic values and respect for human rights. Till now a
few analysis of this effort has been produced. But they have been
confined to a few personalities. Sheila McDonough analyzed “Gandhi’s
responses to Islam”, Rita Bagchi enquired about ‘Gandhi and
Ambedkar’s views on Islam’. However a detailed study of the Hindu
perception of Islam is not undertaken.
I have collected the discussion and observation made by Hindus in
Modern Times. Modern period is selected for its relevance with the
contemporary times. Moreover, this was also the time of a fresh
orientation between the Hindus and Muslims of India due to the
important historical events of this period, viz. the freedom from the
colonial rule and the partition of India. Many fresh enquires and efforts
were made to acquaint about Islam and Muslims.
Several Hindus have studied, analyzed and worked on numerous aspects
of Islam. It is out of scope of the present work to examine each and every
writer as well as the works done in all the spheres. I have selected a few
notable writers who have worked on a considerable portion of Islam and
have studied and analyzed Islam as a whole. Few others are selected for
the detailed analysis of the issue in question that they have produced.
Some others who have neither studied Islam as a whole, nor produced
any detailed and engaging study on an aspect of Islam are included for
their importance in forming a Hindu opinion in Indian and world context. I have selected these authors to present various possible shades of Hindu understanding and tried to present their own words without my interpretation to intervene in between. The discussion and findings on a topic are arranged in order beginning with works based on research and gradually shifting to comparative study till ending with the critical and polemic studies. At the end of every investigation an evaluation or reflection is deliberated. Reflections incorporate study and scrutiny of the author’s views and the methodology and sources that they applied. Further, those aspects are discussed which are pertinent due to their place in Islam and will help in getting at the overall view of Hindu understanding in Indian context.

An important question is what makes a perception a Hindu perception? In order not to deviate from the objective of this work by taking the task of defining a Hindu, which could well be researched independently, I have taken a broader perspective and selected those who do not profess to any other religion like Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Sikhism and also have never repudiated their identity as Hindu. These writers belong to the different school of thoughts and have their own approach. It would be erroneous to assume any community or culture or people to be homogeneous. There are diverse levels of affiliation present within every religion and community and Hindus are no exception to this. The aim is
to take note of one representative author and his writing and discuss it to some detail. The authors could be broadly classified in the categories of historians, philosophers, scholars, political writers, religious doctors, social thinkers, anthropologists, Vedantists and even zealots of Hindutva and propaganda literature.

Ramkrishna Srivastava, Nitin Vyas, Malik Ram Baveja, N. K. Singh B. N. Pande, and Tarachand’s works are based on research and enquiry. Pandit Sunderlal and Bhagwan Das worked on the comparative study of religious scriptures. Ram Swarup, Suhas Majumdar, J. G. Tiwari, V. S. Naipaul, D.S Golwalkar, Arun Shourie and K. S. Lal’s works can be classified as critiques. The Marxist line of argument is employed by M. N. Roy and I. Samanta. Agehananda Bharati provides anthropological view. M. K. Gandhi, S. Radhakishnan, Swami Vivekananda are included for their relevance and influence to the Indian context. Authors like Champat Rai Jaim, K. D. Bhargava, Pandit Mahadevshastri Divekar, T. L. Vaswani, K. Ranjan Qanungo are included for their elaborate interpretation of the issues in question. Swami Dayanand Sraswati’s work comprised of polemics.

First chapter includes a discussion on fundamental articles of faith like concept of God, Prophethood of Muhammad (SAW), Quran as a divine revelation, and the concept of the akhirah in Islam. In the understanding of Islam, next to faith is worship and ways of devotion. The second
chapter discusses the four established forms of worship viz. *Salah* (prayer), *Zakah* (charity), *Sawm* (fasting) and *Hajj* (pilgrimage). The next portion of this chapter deals with *tasawwuf* which is generally regarded as the essence of the Shariah.

In the next chapter values in Islam are analyzed. This discussion too is divided into two parts. First part encapsulates the ethical and moral values of Islam and the last portion discusses social values of human equality and brotherhood, peace, tolerance, slavery and the position of women in Islam.

In the fourth chapter the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim and the question of *Kafir* is discussed. Concept of Jihad has been analyzed in the last part of this chapter.

An assessment of the contribution of Islam and Muslims to Indian Culture has been recorded in the fifth chapter.

Finally, the conclusion includes a resume of the entire thesis and the analysis that how far is the Hindu understanding based on the true ideals of Islam and how far does it drift away and is coloured by the author’s individual thoughts, ideologies, social background and religious attitudes. An enquiry about what kind of interactions and factors led to the selection of a particular view amongst the several notions available will also be included.
Apart from the aim of presentation of works produced by Hindus about Islam. This analysis can be utilized by Muslims to diminish those practices and values, which they have acquired from sources other than Islam and are a cause of discord with their countrymen. It will be helpful for Muslims in locating areas that have assumed flawed notions and need better presentation.