Chapter One

Islam in the United States of America: An Introduction
Islam, as one scholar puts it, has become an American religion. Not in the sense that it has been 'Americanized', but in the sense that it has become highly visible in America through the activities and growing numbers of its adherents, both indigenous and immigrant. Islam is believed to be the fastest growing religion in the United States today. Besides African-American Muslims the number of Euro-American and Latino converts is also growing. Although there is no official count of Muslims in the United States and no single figure is accepted by the concerned scholars, it is commonly acknowledged that Muslims today are a significant minority in the United States, ranking close to Jews.

A study using immigration and census statistics from 1980 and an estimate of indigenous African-American Muslims, puts the number of Muslims living in the United States in 1980 at 3.3 million, which represents
1.5% of the 1980 US population.\textsuperscript{6} According to Haddad (1986a), American Muslim community will supersede the Jews, the second largest religious group, by the year 2015, if they continue to grow at the same rate.

Americans are increasingly becoming aware of Islam as a religion practiced by a large number of their fellow countrymen. Today one comes across mosques in almost all urban centres in the United States, and American people are also becoming aware of such things as Islamic holidays, and practices, values and symbols related with Islam.\textsuperscript{7} American media of late has also started taking note of the community and its activities, although scholarly interest is still limited and focused mainly on the Muslims living in the ‘Islamic world’.\textsuperscript{8}

Patterns of Muslim Immigration:

America is often called a “nation of immigrants.”\textsuperscript{9} The growing Muslim community in the United States is no exception in this regard. It comprises of a ‘variety of peoples from more than sixty nations who represent different linguistic, national, and racial backgrounds.’\textsuperscript{10}

Although it is said that Islam first came to America even before Columbus,\textsuperscript{11} the present lot of immigrant Muslims in America started pouring in in the latter part of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. While there were some
Muslims among the African slaves who were brought to work in plantations in the American South in the 18th and 19th centuries, very few of them could retain their Islamic identity.\textsuperscript{12}

Muslims immigrated to America in several ‘waves’, reflecting changes in American immigration policy as well as socio-political and economic environment of the places of their origin.\textsuperscript{13}

The first wave of immigrants came between 1875 and 1912, mainly from rural areas of present day Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine. The area was then part of the Ottoman Empire, and was known as Greater Syria.\textsuperscript{14} Most of these early immigrants were single men looking for better economic opportunities.\textsuperscript{15} The second wave of immigrants started just after the end of World War I and the demise of the Ottoman Empire, but a new US immigration law passed in 1924, which set immigration limits by instituting the ‘national origin quota system’ soon curtailed it.\textsuperscript{16}

Muslims from places other than the Middle East started arriving in the United States in good numbers during the third wave of immigration that lasted between 1947 and 1960. Unlike most of the earlier Muslim immigrants, those in this third wave were more likely to be from urban backgrounds, and they settled almost exclusively in major US cities like...
New York and Chicago. They were generally better educated and more westernised than the earlier Muslim immigrants.\textsuperscript{17}

The fourth wave of immigration started after 1965, when the system of quotas by national origin was replaced. Under the new system preference is given to relatives of US residents and those with special occupational skills needed in the United States.\textsuperscript{18} Consequently the proportion of skilled professionals, such as doctors and engineers, was bound to increase among the new Muslim immigrants. In the early 1990s there were an estimated six thousand Muslim medical doctors in the United States.\textsuperscript{19} This trend shall surely increase the leadership potential of the community.

\textbf{Institution-Building:}

The obvious and fundamental institution from Islamic point of view that the America Muslims developed is the mosque. 'The mosque traditionally has played an extremely important role in Islamic society'.\textsuperscript{20} Apart from its primary role as a place of worship, the mosque in Islamic societies has historically served as a centre of Islamic learning, and social and political activity. In the American context the mosque has also become a locus for maintaining the Muslim identity.\textsuperscript{21} It is 'considered
extremely important in and of itself in helping keep Muslim individuals and families within the fold\textsuperscript{22} of Islam.

Most of the mosques in the United States also function as classrooms, libraries, conference centres, bookshops, kitchens, and social halls,\textsuperscript{23} and are therefore also known as ‘Islamic Centres’. Some mosques offer specific services such as job counselling or instruction in English to the immigrant members in order to help them to adapt to American life and society.\textsuperscript{24} A number of mosques also work for a better understanding of Islam among the non-Muslim Americans.\textsuperscript{25}

The role of \textit{Imam} in US mosques also ‘takes on dimensions not normally present in Islamic world.’\textsuperscript{26} Their responsibilities range form visiting the sick and bereaved to providing family counseling.\textsuperscript{27} Counselling also involves ‘helping fellow Muslims learn to survive in a environment that is often unsupportive of Muslims ideals and values.’\textsuperscript{28} An \textit{Imam} is also supposed to carry the responsibilities of a \textit{Shaiykh} (religious leader), a \textit{Qadi} (judge), and an \textit{Alim} (a person learned in law and theology). Sometimes an Imam is also expected to appear on local radio and television programmes to talk about Islam.\textsuperscript{29}
Another aspect of institution-building associated with American Muslims is the formation of Muslim organizations. Over the years these organizations have been shaped and reshaped to cater to the changing needs of the community.\textsuperscript{30}

Since most of the early Muslim immigrants intended to return to their countries of origin after making enough money to support their families back home, they did not direct their minds towards institution-building. Besides most of them were illiterate and hence lacked the capabilities and skills necessary to organize the community and build institutions.\textsuperscript{31} Even when they organized it was largely 'in response to certain social incidents and pressures'. The aim of such associations was to keep the children from breaking away, and to provide a place for families to socialize, and for weddings and burials to be performed according to the Islamic rituals.\textsuperscript{32} A notable example of such an effort is the mosque built in Ross, North Dakota by a small Muslim Community at the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. It is considered the first mosque in the United States. Many such organizations, however, ceased to exist when the leadership passed to the next generation. For example, the Ross Mosque was demolished in 1979.\textsuperscript{33}
After the end of World War II, a new chapter started in the history of Muslim organizations in the United States. Muslims in the United States once again became interested in organizing themselves owing to the dramatic growth in their numbers following World War II. And this time around their efforts were national in scope, rather than local – as was the case with earlier Muslim organizations.

Although still relatively few in numbers and scattered all over the continent, the Muslims in America began to feel the need for an umbrella organization. The initiative in this direction was taken by Abdullah Ajram (Igram), the dynamic leader of Cedar Rapids Muslim community, who organized the first national Muslim conference in June 1952, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Four hundred Muslims from all over the United States and Canada attended the conference, and formed the International Muslim Society, with Abdullah Igram as its first president, to coordinate the activities of the Muslims of North America. In the third conference of the organization, in 1954 in Chicago, the participants decided to bring all local Muslim organizations under one umbrella, and the Federation of Islamic Associations of the United States and Canada (FIA) was formed.
Although FIA did little else than organizing its annual conferences, it, however, symbolized the increasing sense of identity and community among the American Muslims.\textsuperscript{38}

FIA was primarily an initiative of second-generation Arab Muslim immigrants. It was to a large extent a result of happenings in the Middle East, particularly the growing popularity of Gamal Abdul Nasser in Arab communities in America, and the pride that Arab-Americans began to take in their heritage.\textsuperscript{39}

Around the same time when FIA was holding its annual conferences, another development was taking place on the campuses of American universities that was going to have a far-reaching effect on the efforts of American Muslims to organize themselves. After World War II there was a dramatic increase in the number of Muslim students coming to the United States for higher education. It was partly a result of the rivalry between the United States and the USSR that led to the establishment of several educational programmes aimed at students from the newly independent Muslim states in Asia and Africa, and partly of the official policies of individual Muslim countries to send students for higher education to the developed Western Countries.\textsuperscript{40}
As more and more students arrived from the Muslim world, several associations of Muslim students sprang up on the campuses of American universities. By the early 1960s these students' organizations felt the need for a national student organization, and formed the Muslim Student Association (MSA) in their first national conference in Urbana, Illinois, in 1963. MSA worked in a systematic manner and organized an elaborate network with chapters in every major campus. These chapters would eventually serve as nuclei of an emerging professional class of Muslims in America. In fact the origins of many of the present Muslim organizations in the United States can be traced back to the Muslim Student Association.

Organizations like MSA helped in renewing the discussion among the Muslims in America about 'developments in the Islamic world and contemporary trends in Islamic thought.'

Gradually the MSA began to dominate community activities as a large number of recent immigrants found it most Islamically committed.

The majority of these recent Muslim immigrants were university graduates - "part of the 'brain drain' of persons who have joined the ranks of American professionals." Although economically integrated into the American middle class, many of them have shown a greater commitment
to Islam than their predecessors, and a greater concern about maintaining an Islamic identity in a non-Islamic society.\textsuperscript{46}

As MSA grew more popular, its student and campus-oriented structure proved inadequate in the new situation. Finally in 1981 the MSA and its affiliate organizations formed a new organization by the name of Islamic Society of North America (ISNA).\textsuperscript{47}

ISNA (and its predecessor) has since come a long way from where the FIA left off. However, ISNA differs from FIA in two crucial aspects. One is its assumption of a firm ideological structure and commitment to Islam. And another is its non-ethnic nature reflective of the diversity and internationalism of Islam.\textsuperscript{48} Unlike the FIA, which is perceived as the organization of the descendents of Arab Muslims from Lebanon and the Fertile Crescent, the new organizations, such as ISNA, are led and financed by immigrant Muslims, though many second-generation Muslims have joined their ranks.\textsuperscript{49}

The Muslim students in America started organizing themselves at a time when Islamic "revival" or "resurgence" was a strong theme in most of the Islamic world. Islamic movements and their suppression by the
respective governments was strongly etched in the political memory of most of these students coming from different parts of the Muslim world.

It is important to understand the background against which the Muslim students in America started their organization-building activities. Around the time when the MSA was being founded many significant events were taking place in the Islamic world. In Iran a struggle for power was going on between Khoumeini's supporters (mostly students) and the Shah's regime. Khoumeini was eventually expelled from Iran, in the same year in which MSA was formed, after his students staged a bloody uprising. In Pakistan the Jamaati Islami, an Islamic party committed to the formation of an Islamic state, was banned and its leader and founder, Maulana Maududi, sentenced to death. Ikhwan supporters were incarcerated in Egypt and its leader, Syyid Qutb, was arrested and executed. In Indonesia the Masjumi Party was banned and its leader, Nassir, jailed. The Algerian revolution was nearing its final stage.50

This phenomenon did not leave the Muslims living in the West, including the United States, untouched. It generated among them a renewed interest 'in deepening their own faith,' which led to their
increased participation in religious activities. Islamic identity took precedence over identities of occupation, national origin etc.\textsuperscript{51}

Many recent immigrants perceive Islam as a complete way of life, which has its own code of conduct on things like marriage, sex, dress, diet, hygiene, worship, work, charity etc. The function of the mosque and Muslim associations for them is not merely to provide a space for Muslims to socialize, but as a means to create an ‘ideal community’. Their priority is spiritual growth rather than ‘cultural preservation.’ \textit{Dawah}, ‘defined as providing an Islamic witness or engaging in missionary activity,’ is the central theme of many of the new Muslim organizations.\textsuperscript{52}

One can infer the changing perception of the appropriate role of Muslims and their institutions in North American society by a comparison of the mottos of the two umbrella organizations – FIA and ISNA. While the former – the Quranic injunction to “hold fast to the rope of God all together and do not disperse” – reflects a concern for cultural survival, the latter – the Quranic injunction that “you are the best community raised up for humanity, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong” – promotes the Muslim community as an example that shall offer the cure for the ills of the American society.\textsuperscript{53}
Black Muslims:

Parallel to the developments in the immigrant community and mostly isolated from it, a section of African Americans assumed a Muslim identity for themselves as part of their fight against racism in American society. Taken as a whole Black Muslims are the largest group of Muslims in the United States. They constitute some 30 percent to 40 percent of the American Muslim Community. Since “African American Islam,” in its many forms, developed without any substantial links to the historical Islamic world, it developed a variety of Islam faith, which the immigrant Muslims judged as ‘deviant’, ‘based more on their leaders’ understanding of social justice than on an orthodox interpretation of Islam.’

Taken up by such charismatic leaders as Noble Drew Ali, founder of the Moorish Science Temple in 1913, and Elijah Muhammad, founder of the Nation of Islam, during 1930s, Islam became a source of pride and self-knowledge for Black Americans burdened down by a history of slavery and a life full of struggle against prejudice, humiliation and hatred. Gradually conversion to Islam became an important factor in the history of Black Nationalism in America. It also became ‘a means of rejecting Christianity, which was perceived as a racist religion belonging to white people.’ It was Noble Drew Ali who first propounded the theory that
Islam is the religion of the Moors and the Asiatics while Christianity is the religion of white peoples. Marcus Garvey, the founder of the International Negro Improvement Movement, on the other hand initiated the 'black to Africa' movement. Islam for some African Americans thus stood for the lost African heritage.

Elijah Muhammad (born Elijah Poole) was influenced by both Noble Drew Ali and Marcus Garvey, though he attributed his teachings to a 'mysterious' figure named Fard Muhammad. Fard was deified by the members of the Nation of Islam, and was in some sense a god-figure and Elijah Muhammad was the messenger.

Elijah Muhammad, however, succeeded in forming a very strong organization by the name of 'Nation of Islam'. His teachings appealed primarily to the urban lower class Negroes, who had migrated from the South of America where racism was the strongest.

Some of the main features of the Nation of Islam were: A charismatic and centralized leadership; a well-organized militia, the Fruit of Islam (FOI) - consisting of ex-servicemen and charged with protecting the community and its institutions; a business organization comprising of a bank, a fishing company, and a chain of restaurants; highly disciplined
educational institutions called universities of Islam (now renamed as Sister Clara Muhammad Schools); and a national network of temples.63

The Nation of Islam reached its pinnacle of popularity with the entry of Malcolm X, also known as El-Hajj Malik El-Shahbazz. It was Malcolm X who first made his doubts known about the authenticity of Elijah Muhammad’s version of Islam.64 He was expelled from the party in 1963 and assassinated in 1965 ‘in a mysterious way’ while beginning to deliver a speech at New York.

However, it was Werith Deen Muhammad, son of Elijah Muhammad, who transformed the Nation of Islam into a mainstream Muslim Community.65 He ascended to the leadership of the organization after the death of his father in 1975. At an earlier stage he had been expelled from the movement but later rehabilitated and declared successor by Elijah Muhammad before his death. In 1976 Imam Warith Deen Muhammad declared that his father was not a prophet and thus started the process of bringing the ideology of the Nation in tune with the theology of orthodox Islam.66 The organization was renamed the ‘World Community of Al-Islam in the West’, and later in 1980 the American Muslim Mission. Black Muslims were now called Bilalians after the
African companion of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The mouthpiece of the organization, Muhammad speaks, was renamed as Bilalian News and latter as The Muslim Journal. The places of worship and assembly of the Nation of Islam, which were earlier known as temples, were renamed as mosques. The leadership of the organization stopped preaching racial hatred against the white man and the FOI was disbanded.

However these changes did not please many in the organization and they separated under the leadership of Minister Louis Farrakhan and retained the old name, teachings and form of the organization.67

**Muslim Leadership in America:**

The leadership of the Muslim community in the United States has been mainly in the hands of ‘lay volunteers’ motivated by their concern about the ‘maintenance of their heritage’ and the need to keep the next generation within the fold of their faith.68 They have established several printing presses, book distribution centres, and magazines to guide the faithful. Besides radio and television broadcasts on Islam, audio and video tapes of sermons are also distributed through national networks.

In the last several decades first-generation South Asian Muslim Americans, many of whom are skilled professionals, have taken a lead in
the development of Muslim organizations and in lay leadership of mosque committees. Indian Muslims, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis share a history of political struggle with white colonial rulers. And apart from their impressive command of the English language, they come to the United States with different degrees of experience in democratic practices, particularly student politics. Some regional studies conducted in the United States have also shown that Indians and Pakistanis are ahead of Arabs (the other largest immigrant Muslim group in the US besides South Asians) with respect to education, occupational level, and household income. This overall position of privilege gives South Asian Muslims an edge in leadership potential in religious and temporal matters.

There are now mainly three different types of people involved in the task of institution-building among American Muslims: the first are those (mostly immigrant) Muslims whose activities are rooted in the MSA heritage. The second are the African-American Muslims led by Imam Warith Deen Muhammad, leader of the American Muslim Mission (formerly Nation of Islam). And third are those small orthodox Muslim groups that already existed in the African-American Muslim community well before Warith Deen Muhammad’s transformation of the Nation of Islam.
Challenges before the Community:

American Muslims today face a variety of challenges. Many of them are similar to those faced by other minority communities in America, whereas some are specific to Muslims, owing to the special character of Islam. Some of these challenges have a precedent in the Islamic history, whereas some are unique to the American context.

It has happened very often in the Islamic history that Muslims have found themselves living in a non-Muslim majority state or society in different parts of the world where they were not the dominant group. So a number of concepts have developed over time that determine the response to such a situation. The most important of them are Hijra (migration), jihad (holy war, or more broadly struggle), and Da’wa (missionary work). One can see from the activities of the Muslim organizations in America that most of them have taken Da’wa very seriously.

There are, however, certain challenges, which Muslims are facing in America, no Muslim community anywhere in the Muslim world has faced before. Most of them are related to the problems of adjustment to the conditions created by modernization and globalisation, such as industrialization, secularisation, urbanization, and individualism. In fact
not only Islam, but also all the ‘traditional religions,’ especially in the first world, face these challenges. Some people have gone even so far as to say that there is an inherent contradiction between ‘traditional religions’ and modernity, while others say that these religions need to be significantly altered before they can adjust to the needs of the modern society.  

However, between all this the Muslim community and its institutions continue to thrive in the United States. There are over 1,200 mosques and Islamic centres in the United States today.  

One of the biggest and foremost challenges faced by American Muslims is the question of identity, as maintenance of identity is one of the most crucial elements in the history and development of any social group. For the American Muslim community to maintain its identity meant to maintain the Islamic way of life in a predominantly non-Muslim secular country.  

Since racial prejudice in America was particularly severe in the era before the civil rights movement of 1960s, the response of many Muslim immigrants was to hide their religious identities. They would often change their names and refrain from dressing in a way that would make them appear ‘different’ from other Americans. But as the Muslim
community became larger, more educated, and more articulate, it became more assertive and proud of its religio-cultural identity. To consolidate its identity the community developed various institutions such as the mosque, Muslim organizations, publishing houses etc. Today one can see Muslims pray in government offices, in the offices of corporate firms, and other places where they are employed in America. This reflects the growing self-confidence and sense of security of the American Muslims.\textsuperscript{80}

Muslim intellectuals and leaders have also played an important role in consolidating the Islamic identity of American Muslims by providing an appropriate theoretical framework for this purpose. They have been able to interpret Islam in a way that is relevant to the life in the United States as well as the modern world,\textsuperscript{81} which made it easier for the American Muslims of all backgrounds to relate to Islam. Prominent among these men were people like Ismail Al-Faruqi, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Fazlur Rahman to name a few. These people became a significant part of the American academic scene at a time when the Muslim community in the United States was taking the challenges of living in America head on, and was in search of sophisticated and relevant interpretations of Islam. Their ideas also reached the Muslim world through students returning back home, often to take key positions of leadership in their countries.\textsuperscript{82}
Related to the question of identity is the challenge of building bridges within the ethnically and racially diverse Muslim community in the United States. American Muslims are 'neither racially homogenous nor ethnically monolithic,' and therefore it becomes necessary for them to take concrete and conscious steps towards the integration of the community and thereby enhance their bargaining power in the American socio-political set up. Most immediate is the need to bring the immigrant Muslim community closer to the native African-American Muslims, the largest Muslim group in America, and spare the American Muslim community the tragedy of racism. This is not an easy task considering the fact that the two communities have historically developed in near isolation from each other. And since the two communities have a, by and large, different set of problems, and perhaps also different perceptions about similar problems, their response to some of the challenges facing the Muslim community in America has also been different. However, there have been some positive developments in this regard lately. Warith Deen Muhammad in particular has played a leading role in bringing the two segments of the community together, both physically and psychologically. He has encouraged the association of Back Muslims with other Muslims in America. He has also sent their delegations to Mecca and other parts of the
Islamic world. These days one can see 'Bilalians' at Friday prayers, Eid prayers, and in the functions of different immigrant-run Muslim associations in America.

After identity and internal cohesion of the community the most important challenge before the Muslim community in America is the negative image of Islam and Muslims as portrayed by and reinforced though the all-pervasive mass media. Things like Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the oil crisis of 1973-74, Iranian Revolution, and terrorism as reported by the media have largely shaped the perception of American public about Islam and its adherents. Although almost all of this news is 'foreign news,' not concerning the Muslims living in the United States, it is heavily tilted towards the depiction of violent events and actions. Unfortunately, when a Muslim commits a crime his religion is duly emphasised by the media. Moreover, media package news 'in ways that make Muslims look bad.' The negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims portrayed in news and movies continue to dog American Muslims. The news media blindly and falsely accused Muslims for the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in April 1995, which resulted in a rash of anti-Muslim attacks. American moviemakers also find it acceptable to characterize Muslims in bad light. Muslims are generally
depicted as terrorists, plane hijackers etc. In their depiction of Muslims and Arabs the American movie producers have almost exclusively focused on conflict and violent activity. The violent events of September 11, 2001 have only added fuel to the fire. These events were certainly a blow to the image of Islam in America. Unfortunately the media again managed to establish a link between Islam and terrorism. As results of these negative portrayals, a number of mosques have been subjected to attacks and threats in times of crisis.

However, American Muslims now understand the need to communicate about their religion and their community in order to present a positive image of Islam and the Muslims in America. Most of this communication is done through prominent Muslim organizations such as Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), Muslim American Society (MAS) of Warith Deen Muhammad, and by some major educational foundations such as IQRA, and publishing corporations such as Kazi in Chicago. There are certain Muslim organizations that are especially devoted to improving the image of Muslims in America, such as Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and Muslim Public Affairs Council of California. In addition there are groups focusing exclusively on media like Islamic Media Foundation
and Islamic Information Service (IIS). Some Muslim groups have also established websites and mailing lists accessible to journalists seeking information about the Muslim community.97

Participation in mainstream American politics is another issue that evokes strong responses from different sections of the American Muslim community. While the African-American Muslims stayed away from politics in America because of their distrust of the white society and its controlling institutions, the early immigrant Muslims remained aloof from politics for entirely different reasons. Coming from countries with little or no democratic culture, they remained apathetic to politics in the United States.98 However, things started changing in the 1980s. After a decade-long debate ISNA decided to engage in political activities in North America in 1986. Same has been decided by the followers of Warith Deem Muhammad.99 American Muslim groups that focus on US politics are the American Muslim Alliance (AMA), American Muslim Council (AMC), Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), and Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). Together these four make the American Muslim Political Coordinating Council (AMPCC), which among other things encourages Muslims to run for electoral office.100
Another challenge before Muslims in the United States is to establish amiable relations with members of other organized religious groups, especially the various American churches. In fact there has been some substantial progress in this direction of late. More and more American churches have recognized the right of the Muslim community to freely practice their religion in America.\textsuperscript{101} Besides, in most major American cities, Muslim associations and individuals have been included in interfaith groups, or new ones have been created for this purpose.\textsuperscript{102} American Muslims in turn have emphasized the closeness of Islam to Christianity and Judaism, especially the former. They point out that both religions are monotheistic in nature and that Jesus holds a place of great respect among Muslims. In this way they also counter the ignorance of Americans about Islam.\textsuperscript{103}

Muslims in America also face some day-to-day problems due to the obligations and responsibilities that the practice of Islamic faith involves. For example, there is the problem of trade in goods prohibited (\textit{haram}) in Islam such as alcohol, pork etc. The question of interest in financial transactions is a bone of contention between the rigidly orthodox Muslims and those who would like to make certain adjustments to the American society and thereby avoid financial and social marginalization.\textsuperscript{104}
And then finally there is the challenge of teaching Islam to the younger generation. There is great enthusiasm among young American Muslims to learn about Islam. They learn about Islam not from the all-pervasive social context but mostly from textbooks, which are taught in an American social context. Young American Muslims rely heavily on books, videos, cassettes, and Internet to know about Islam. Several hundred weekend schools have also been established for this purpose. There are also some 200 full-time Islamic schools in America, which are preferred by a quarter of immigrant American Muslims.

**Studying American Muslims:**

Interest in American Muslims has grown in academic circles due to the dramatic increase in their numbers over the last couple of decades and due to the development of their distinct institutions across the United States. And also because ‘Muslims are an increasingly important part of the socio-political landscape in the United States.’ Moreover, Muslim communities in the West make an interesting subject of study as they are among the pioneers who are trying to reconcile the principles of their faith with the reality of living in industrially advanced and pluralistic societies. It is almost certain that owing to the growing industrialization of the third
world countries, including the Muslim ones, and the rapid globalisation of the world economy resulting in large-scale transfer of capital and labour between the nation-states, other Muslim communities living in traditional Muslim homelands will face similar problems, as experienced by American Muslims today, in a not so distant future. Since the transformation of societies due to industrialisation and modernisation inevitably raises moral, and therefore religious, questions American Muslims shall serve as an example, or at least a reference, to other Muslim communities who will face these questions later on. Indian Muslims in particular can gain a lot from such studies. They are a significant minority living in a multicultural country that is rapidly moving towards modernisation, industrialisation, and globalisation.