Chapter Three

Methodological Approach
Research is a process of refining human knowledge for being embodied in the stock of knowledge. A research particularly a nomothetic one, follows obvious steps such as collection of data, neat filtration and examination of the facts collected under the prescribed procedures and codes of making conclusions. Great sociologist Wallace has said that research methodology seeks to deliberately annihilate the individual’s standpoint with regard to the impressions about the world. It is constituted by roots whereby an agreement is reached of the specified version of the world under observations. The major purpose of research is to search for truth. Truth regarding human existence, the physical world around him, spiritual aspects of life, human relations, human reactions to the environment, human motivations and behavioural patterns etc. these are several aspects where efforts are laid to understand truth. In "Theology" it is said that..."Which affirms being as they are, is error. Religions treat “God as the first and foundation of truth”

The aim of the present research was to study the religious and social development of Muslim community during the period of 19th and 20th century. This is a historical evolution in which the dynamics of religious and social aspects of Muslim community in the United States of America is aimed to be studied. In order to ascertain whether the nature and dynamics of religious and
social life of the population during specified period has any difference with the
people of contemporary period, information will be gathered through collection
of data by administering a questionnaire. Therefore, in order to find out the
answers of our research questions, two parallel methods will be taken up. The
first is a historical review leading to relevant conclusions and second is collection
of data and its analysis. Both the methods will aim at fulfilling the objectives of
the present research. A detailed account of both the strategies has been given
bellow.

1. **Historical Review:** primary purpose of this research is to evaluate the
religious and social condition of Muslims living in the United States of
America within a specified period of time i.e. during the 19\(^{th}\) and 20\(^{th}\) century.
For this purpose a critical review of historical facts will be connected in our
thrust area. There would be a chronological arrangement of studies and facts
which briefly introduces the evaluation of Muslim community within the
territory of United States of America and leading to a critical evaluation of the
religious and social condition of Muslims during 19\(^{th}\) and 20\(^{th}\) century. This
activity would ultimately seek answers to the research questions evolved on
the basis of exploration of available literature which has been analytically
presented in the introductory chapter.

2. **Development of a research questionnaire:** In accordance with the
requirement of the study one of the tasks which faced the researcher was the
construction of an appropriate questionnaire to study the religious and social condition of Muslims in the present scenario. Since the goodness and reliability of results would depend upon whether the questionnaire gathered desired information or not, it was necessary to undertake this work cautiously and seriously. Therefore, in the construction of questionnaire we adhered to proper prescribed procedures.

Researchers have suggested three strategies for construction of a research questionnaire\textsuperscript{126, 127}. These methods are: 1- Rational Theoretical strategy. 2- Empirical strategy and 3- Factor analytic strategy.

The rational – theoretical approach was found most appropriate in the context of present study. According to Wiggins\textsuperscript{128}, rational – theoretical approach is the existence of one-to-one correspondence between verbal response and the hypothetical internal state. In this system, the researcher, in the light of his previous knowledge and experiences, conceptualises appropriate items and categorises the response of these items in terms of their ability to elicit responses which would reflect the phenomenon under study. The genesis of items or statement, their responses and their further processing, takes into consideration some conceptual system.

In order to design an appropriate questionnaire by following rational theoretical approach, a pool of items was prepared. These items enquired about the current status of religious and social life of the respondents. The items were
largely based on two areas viz. Religious area and Social area. In religious area items represented five basic fundamentals or Arkaan of Islam. Items enquired about the knowledge of concept and practise of these Arkaan. In the social area, items enquired about knowledge and practice of social rules and values in the context of United States of America. Such items had their prepared response sets which were either in two points or four point rating system. These rating responses aimed at eliciting information regarding existence of knowledge or level of practice of any religious fundamentals or social value.

Initially, a pool of one hundred and twenty items (questions with objective response sets) was prepared with the help of empirical studies and available literature. Each item reflected a religious or social factor that was under study. These items were subjected to scrutiny by the experienced researchers. These experts belonged to the societies of India as well as the United States of America. Their comments were incorporated, further adjusting the construction and wording of statements. In this process, items were reduced on two criterions: first, items of no value or low value were eliminated and secondly, superfluous items were eliminated. Finally, fifty questions with alternative responses were retained.

A socio-demographic questionnaire was also developed to supplement the main questionnaire. This questionnaire intended to strengthen the analytical approach in our main data.
Web version of the main questionnaire and the socio-demographic questionnaire in combined form was developed and uploaded on the internat. An explanation of the purpose of study and instructions to the respondents were also added. In this explanatory statement, respondents were assured of the confidentiality and security of their personal information given to the researcher. They were also assured that the data will be used for research purpose only.

**Sample:** The sample comprised of American Muslims aged sixteen years or above. These respondents were males as well as females representing various categories viz. state of residence in the USA, country of origin (if immigrant), the generation in which they stand, ethnicity, professions, levels of education etc. The sample was drawn in terms of subjects' accessibility but it was ensured that no bias was involved in selection of sample. Furthermore, the attempt was made to ensure that equal number of respondents from different categories be included in the sample. However, ultimately there was disparity in this sense because the sample was based on convenience method.

**Collection of data:** Respondents were contacted though email and internet version of the questionnaire was supplied to them in the form of a hyper-link. A user friendly method was followed so that respondents could fill out the questionnaire and submit it just by clicking a submit button. In the primary data collection, as many as two hundred primary contact persons in U.S.A. were identified. They were requested to fill out the questionnaire and to forward it to
other American Muslims also with whom they are acquainted with. They were requested to avoid any reservation / biasness and to forward it to all those American Muslims to whom they know. In this way a data of as many as five hundred forty American Muslims was obtained. After scanning all the respondents' profiles it was found that many a respondents filled out their questionnaires with errors or uncompleted. Finally 270 questionnaires were retained and processed for further treatment.

**Analyses of data:** the data obtained from the respondents was organised and tabulated with the help of MS Access computer software. Since the data was categorical in nature and provided discreet information, therefore appropriate methods of analyses were used. Analyses techniques viz. frequency analyses, percentage and cross-tabulations were followed to find out the answers of our research questions. All the statistical operations were performed using SPSS 13 research software.

On the basis of the analysis of the available research and historical literature, some research objectives were formulated so that the present research could proceed in a direction. These research questions aimed to explore religious status, social life and impact of certain socio-demographic factors on certain religious and social aspects of the Muslims living in the United States of America. These research objectives have been organised in three separate sections which have been stated below:
Research objectives:

Section 1: Research objectives related to socio-demographic status of the respondents:
- To study the distribution of age, gender and level of education amongst the respondents.
- To study the distribution of the respondents of study across different states of United States of America.
- To study that to which generation of their immigrated ancestors our respondents belong.
- To study that to which country our respondents or their ancestors belong (if they are immigrants).
- To find out the ethnicity of our respondents.
- To identify the number of respondents to have been converted to Islam.
- To identify the number of respondents who are descendents of those who were converted to Islam.
- To find out the major reasons of immigration amongst those respondents who themselves or their ancestors immigrated to the United States of America.
- To study the preference of neighbourhood amongst the respondents.
- To identify the number of respondents who occupy personal home.

Section 2: Research objectives related to religious status of the respondents:
- To study the status of knowledge of the concept and purpose of Tawheed.
- To study the level of importance given to the recitation of Tawheed by children.
- To study the status of knowledge of purpose and functions of Salaah.
- To identify the number of respondents who practice (offer) Salaah.
- To investigate that how many times in a day respondents practice Salaah.
- To study the level of importance given to Salaah by the respondents in their spiritual life.
- To study the level of importance given to Salaah by the respondents in their health and well-being.
- To study the respondents' opinion on fasting (Rozah).
- To study that whether respondents have clear knowledge of concept and method of Zakwaah.

- To study the level of importance given by the respondents the payment of Zakwaah.

- To investigate that whether our respondents know who deserves to receive the Zakwaah.

- To investigate that whether our respondents pay Zakwaah regularly.

- To investigate that to whom our respondents prefer to pay Zakwaah.

- To study the status of knowledge of the concept and significance of Hajj (pilgrimage).

- To study the level of importance given to the Hajj (pilgrimage).

Section 3: Research objectives related to socio-cultural and political life of the respondents:

- To study the status of knowledge of the concept and purpose of Halaal.

- To study the level of importance given to abstinence from non-halaal food.

- To study the level of importance given to assimilation in the American culture.

- To study the level of importance given to the maintenance of family relations with American families who belong to other religions.

- To investigate respondents' approach towards dating preference amongst their children.

- To find out whether respondents send their children to non-Islamic schooling system.

- To find out whether respondents permit their children to watch anything on TV.

- To find out whether respondents teach their children to judge and watch TV programmes.

- To find out whether respondents discourage their children to watch US programmes on TV.

- To study the level of importance given to higher education for women.

- To study the level of importance given to celebrating Islamic festivals.

- To find out whether respondents do not take their children to Eid prayers because of their schools.

- To find out whether schools of respondents' children recognise Eid holiday.
- To find out whether schools of respondents' children close on Eid holiday.
- To study the level of importance given to marrying a Muslim.
- To find out whether respondents think that a Muslim should marry a Muslim of the similar ethnic background.
- To study the level of importance given to keeping in touch with the people of mother land.
- To study the level of importance given to teaching mother tongue to children.
- To find out whether respondents can use the language which their ancestors used.
- To study the level of importance given to keeping abreast the developments in the native country.
- To investigate the major focus of the respondents when they keep abreast the developments in their native country.
- To study the level of importance given to participation in the American political process.
- To find out whether the respondents vote during the four yearly presidential elections.
- To identify the major reasons if the respondents do not participate in the four yearly presidential elections.
- To find out whether the respondents vote during the off season elections held every two years.
- To identify the major reasons if the respondents do not participate in the off season elections held every two years.

Section 4: Research objectives related to the impact (contingent effect) of socio-demographic factors on religious and socio-cultural dimensions
- To study the impact of respondents' gender on the importance given to role of Salaah on the spiritual life.
- To study the impact of respondents' gender on the importance given to role of Salaah on health and well-being.
- To study the impact of respondents' gender on their knowledge that to whom they should pay Zakwaah.
- To study the impact of respondents' status of conversion on importance given to abstinence from non-halal food.
- To study the impact of respondents' status of conversion on their attitude towards marrying with a Muslim.
- To study the impact of respondents' status of owning a house on sending their children to non-Islamic schools.

- To study the impact of respondents' status of owning a house on importance given to the participation in the American political process.

Appropriate statistical analysis were carried out in order to fulfil our research objectives. The obtained results have been reported and interpreted in chapter 4 that follows.