

Phenomenological Approach to Islam: A case study of Annemarie Schimmel's Approach to God (Tawheed)

Sharafat Ali Khan

*PhD Scholar, Department of Comparative Religion,
Faculty of Islamic Studies International Islamic University Islamabad
Email: sharafat.phdcr497@iiu.edu.pk*

Siddiq Ali Chishti

*Assistant Professor, Department of Comparative Religion
Faculty of Islamic Studies International Islamic University Islamabad
Email: siddiq.ali@iiu.edu.pk*

Abstract

In this article, the famous German Orientalist Annemarie Schimmel's phenomenological approach to Islam is synthesized and analyzed. Consequently, it discusses the phenomenology of religion and focuses on Annemarie Schimmel's phenomenological approach to Islam. A special attention is made in this article to the phenomenological approach being adopted by Schimmel in her famous book "Deciphering the Signs of God". This article also deals with the idea that how Schimmel has brought under discussion various phenomena highlighting them from the Qur'an, Prophetic narrations and mystical traditions. According to her, Islam has been misrepresented by its opponents and has been studied through social and psychological lenses rather than as a religion. So, the phenomenological study is the best-suited approach to study religion objectively with the perspective of actual practitioners of the concerned religious tradition.

Keywords: Phenomenological Approach to Islam, Phenomenological Approach, Annemarie Schimmel, Annemarie Schimmel's Approach

Introduction

In the history of human life, religion has always been crucial and in various historical periods, scholars have used a variety of methodologies to study religion. Before moving on, it is crucial to discuss the two distinct areas of studying religion: religious studies and religious education.

In Religious Education, some scholars approach religion with limited perception where they try to study and teach basic and important elements of a specific religion with personal devotion and affiliation. They attempt to present it as the only true religion at the expense of all else. While on the other hand, Religious Studies scholars approach religion keeping themselves distanced and trying to study religions objectively. This kind of academic study of any religion is more "neutral" in dealing with the essential ideas of a particular tradition.¹

The emergence of the Enlightenment Movement in Europe also made an impact on the approaches to the study of religion, resulting in paradigm shifts in this field of study. This is particularly true about the use of free-scientific inquiry and approaching religion as a social phenomenon of inquiry, not a sacred entity.

Present day history of religious studies in Europe begins about four authentic advancements: the innovation of the printing press, the protestant renewal, supreme investigations, imperial explorations and the development of enlightenment thinking.² Before the 16th century theologians were considered the intellectual elites within the religious communities. Religious studies as a discipline were limited to traditional theology. According to Professor Charles B. Jones two historical circumstances opened new ways for thinking about religion in modern European history: a growing awareness of religious diversity and the rise of rationalism and science. With time, religious studies were carried out systematically by adopting different approaches.³

The Enlightenment movement brought an abrupt change in the mind of scholars in the form of looking at new, more secularized fluxes of thought, and many writers began looking at religion through these lenses. Scholars, questioning the conditions under which this peculiar phenomenon had arisen, debated the origins of religion from different viewpoints. Most intellectuals of the Enlightenment period argued about religion as simple superstition. This not only brought a kind of paradigm shift in the study of religion, but it also affected the social, cultural and economic aspects of life. Thus, people started looking at various phenomena of life empirically. Their approach to defining and studying religion also changed and they started adopting new approaches to comprehending the phenomenon of religion.

David Hume (1711-76) was a radical empiricist who claimed that everything we know is gained through sense and experience. In his opinion no knowledge was built into our minds; instead, we learn it all. Hume denied the idea of instinctive knowledge. He considered miracles as a violation of the law of nature. He also rejected the idea of the design argument, a traditional argument for the existence of God.⁴

Later, the sociological approach adopted by famous scholar Auguste Comte (1798-1857), who lived at a time of great social and economic changes in France, was well received. Comte was one of the founders of Positivism. He promoted the theory of positivism that can be experienced, observed and described, without asking about its existence. His ideas were progressive. He felt that humanity was always inevitably moving forward. Comte applied this progressive view of human social history to religious history. According to him even though religion was bound to fail as a method of knowing the world, it still had a function to play in human society. Religion, as Comte

asserts provided rituals and means of relationship that helped clutch societies together. As religion became fragile through the increasingly indefensible nature of its teachings, it would also fail in its ability to bind society.⁵

Thus, in the 18th, and 19th centuries, a major mind shift occurred in European society in which Western society would fall distant as religion collapsed. This required quick action to generate something that would be the practical equivalent of religion. To fulfil this need, Comte set out to create a new religion of “the Great Being”. He thought that society needed “spiritual power” to operate. He also said that modern positive science would not do so, because it lacked the effective and motivational nature of religion.⁶

Similarly, we see Karl Marx (1818-83) adopting a reductionist approach through which he declared religion as the opium of the people. He saw human history as a story of everlasting ‘class struggle’ between workers and owners. Superstructure elements could be adopted by owners to create an ideology which could be used against workers and religion was a part of this ideology. Religion according to him, assisted keep workers quiet and obedient and he further added religion could be used to rationalize the political order and the class structure.

Likewise, some other scholars such as Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) made valuable contributions to the development of a sociological approach to religion. He argued that religious behaviour was, first of all, social behaviour and so must have a social basis. He also declared religion “an eminently social thing.” Max Weber (1864-1920), an eminent sociologist, perceived religion as just one factor among many in a complex mix of social forces that formed social structures and functions. He assumed that religion affected society through its ideas and doctrines. Religion, as a system of symbols, did not just give people an understanding of the world but also gave them a moral belief, and an inclination to act in certain ways.⁷

Some other scholars like William James (1842-1910) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) contributed to the study of religion by adopting a psychological approach. James in his book *The Will to Believe* (1897), pointed out that religious beliefs are not logical conclusions derived from thorough argumentation but zealous convictions that we bring into being and appropriate by steep force of will. Similarly, in another book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), James set forth several religious types, based on the kinds of character they produce and the actions they motivate, which he then classified as healthy or pathological. On the other hand, Sigmund Freud explained religion by using the metaphor of psychological illness. He went against this and perceived religion as a Neurosis. Religion, Freud asserted, may be good for relieving the pressure caused by suppression, but we are ultimately better off facing our frustrations directly.⁸

Few scholars also adopted anthropological approaches to studying religions like Jam Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890-1915) and Rudolf Otto's *Das Hielige* (1916) are classic examples of anthropological approaches to religion.⁹

Similarly, with time phenomenological approach was developed, in an attempt to establish religious studies as a real discipline with its methods of investigation and analysis. Fries (1773- 1843), Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), and Mircea Eliade (1907-86) contributed to religious studies by adopting phenomenological approaches. Phenomenologist study religion and argue that religious phenomena could not be reduced to sociology, economics or psychology but need to be studied as religion.¹⁰

As, it has been discussed earlier that during the 16th century and onwards, religion was viewed in a different perspective by scholars hailing from the West. During this period, scholars developed different approaches to study religion for example anthropological, sociological, psychological and phenomenological studies of religion.

Likewise, various scholars have adopted different approaches to studying Islam in different stages of history but in the contemporary post-modern period particularly after 9/11, many scholars in particular and other people, in general, started to study Islam with a special focus.

This article is an endeavor to study the approach to Islam with special reference to Annemarie Schimmel who was a famous German Orientalist. She used the phenomenological approach to study Islam. This research work is a kind of investigation of how she has applied the phenomenological approach in the study of Islam.

Before we go further to deal with Schimmel's approach, it is appropriate to have a broader view of closely related existing literature. There are many scholars who have struggled for centuries with the topic of methodological approach to study and various approaches have been developed to address this issue, including historical, philosophical, psychological, sociological, and phenomenological approaches.¹¹

The phenomenological approach to religion is a methodological framework that focuses on comprehending religious experiences and phenomena from the perspective of individuals who engage in them. This approach highlights the subjective aspects of religion, highlighting the significance of personal encounters, beliefs, and rituals in shaping religious experiences. This approach focuses on the perspective of people who participate in the practice of religion rather than imposing external judgment and interpretations.

Thus, the phenomenological approach suspends biases and preconceived notions by objectively examining religious occurrences. Using this technique, scholars describe and evaluate religious experiences based on the meanings and intentions of participants.

In Eliade's "The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion", there are three elements of religion. The sacred time, space, and rituals of religion are examined in this influential work. In Eliade's opinion, religious occurrences transcend the profane. Rather than limiting religion to social or psychological issues, he emphasizes the importance of understanding it in its terms.¹²

A phenomenological approach to religion has been developed by researchers such as Rudolf Otto, Gerardus van der Leeuw, and Ninian Smart.

Annemarie Schimmel is one of the most distinguished scholars associated with the phenomenological approach to religion.

Annemarie Schimmel (1922–2003), a German scholar of Comparative Religion and Islamic Studies, made significant contributions to the field of religious studies. She is known for her research on Islam and Sufism's mystical and poetic aspects. Using phenomenology, Schimmel studied the subjective experiences of religious believers.

Annamarie Schimmel was a passionate and hardworking researcher who dedicated her life to academia. In her opinion, Islam's opponents had misrepresented it. In her teens, she began learning Arabic and Persian, two oriental languages. She was nurtured by her parents and studied and worked hard during World War II. An autobiography she wrote, *Orient and Occident*, illustrates her involvement in education. Her personal life is never mentioned in this book. According to this study, she was an expert in the phenomenological investigation and applied it to Islam. In her view, scholars didn't study religion as a religion, but rather through the lens of economics, psychology, and society. A phenomenological study of Islam was made by her, and she presented Islam as peaceful, arguing that Islam's opponents had misrepresented Islam. Tasawuf, the mystic of Islam, held a special place in her heart. The author highlighted the achievements of Muslim Sufi figures such as Rumi (1273), Iqbal (1938), Shah Abdul Latif Bitahi (1752), and Mir Dard (1785). Her dedication, sincerity, and hard work in academia have earned her numerous prizes and degrees. Over five honorary PhD degrees indicate her academic success. According to her autobiography, her life can be divided into three stages: her early life in Germany, her professional life as a professor, and her later life as an independent researcher. She travelled the world solely to learn and research. After earning her second PhD, Schimmel became a full professor of religious history at Ankara University in Turkey. During her five years there, she worked as a secretary. For two years, she taught Islamic languages at Marburg University, and for nine years, she taught at Bonn University. Following this, she spent 25 years as the newly created Chair of Indo-Muslim Cultures at Harvard University USA.¹³

Sufi Islam was the subject of her studies in Turkey. Eventually, she studied Iqbal's Sufism after becoming fascinated by Rumi's contribution to Islamic literature. At Harvard University in the USA, she studied religion using phenomenology. Her work is therefore recognized by other authors as well. A Journal of Islamic Studies article by Qamar ul Huda describes Schimmel as one of the few scholars who understood Islam, philosophy, theology, poetry, mysticism, languages, history, and literature.¹⁴ In Webology, Dr Annemarie Schimmel's "And Muhammad Is His Messenger" was critically analyzed. According to them, it is an orientalist's magnificent contribution to the Sirah of the Prophet peace be Upon Him. In her subsequent life, she demonstrated that she believed in hard work and was content with her contributions to academia.¹⁵ When discussing her life, she quoted Friedrich Rocker, her favourite Orientalist poet: If tomorrow I should die - I have worked enough. If I had a century, I'd try—there's enough work.¹⁶

Using phenomenological approaches to religion, Schimmel scrutinizes religious texts, poetry, and mystical literature to gain a deeper understanding of religious practitioners' daily experiences. Through the analysis of these sources, she believed that religious traditions' essence and deep impact on people's lives could be revealed.

Her notable work, "Mystical Dimensions of Islam," examines the mystical aspects of Islam, particularly Sufism, through a phenomenological lens. In this volume, she explores the experiences of Sufi mystics, their poetry, and their search for a direct personal relationship with the divine.¹⁷ According to Schimmel, Sufism represents a mystical path that emphasizes devotion, love, and reflection to achieve unity with God. Using Sufi mystics' experiences and expressions, Schimmel reveals the rich spiritual dimensions of Islam.

In Schimmel's phenomenological approach, she emphasizes empathy for her religious subjects and immersion in their experiences. When describing religious experiences and the unfathomable divine, she emphasizes words, poetry, and symbolism. As a result of Schimmel's scholarship, cross-cultural dialogue and appreciation of other religious traditions were fostered.

In the publication *An Introduction to Islam* Schimmel provides an introduction to the Islamic religion, employing a phenomenological approach to emphasize the diversity of Islamic religious experiences. She investigates the fundamental beliefs, rituals, and devotional practices that define the Muslim way of life.¹⁸

Annemarie Schimmel is one of many scholars who contribute to *Sufi Martyrs of Love: Chishti Sufism in South Asia and Beyond*. This book focuses on the spiritual quests of Sufi saints, their poetry, and their experiences of Chishti Sufism's mystics.¹⁹

In addition to Schimmel's earlier contributions, Sang-e-meel publication has also published *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*. In this comprehensive

study, Schimmel explores the various religious practices, rituals, and cultural expressions of the Islamic tradition in the Indian subcontinent. Using a phenomenological approach, she illuminates the unique religious experiences and interactions between Islam and indigenous cultures in the region.²⁰

In her book *And Muhammad His Messenger the Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* the author has discussed different phenomena related to veneration to the Prohpeht Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him.

According to Schimmel, Islamic literature provides a rich material for phenomenologist of religion and psychologist the highly interesting examples of loving religious zeal to Prophet that all can agree that the personality of Muhammad has more important place in Islam beside the Quran as the Prophet who always remains “the beautiful model” (Sura 33:21) for Muslims but the Western scholars have given less attention to study the expression of veneration to Prophet Muhammad by Muslims in poetry as she says:

“However, none of these authors has devoted themselves to the study of the area in which love of the Prophet is expressed most beautifully and most eloquently in the poetry by Muslim people. Not only is poetry in the classical languages of Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish worthy of Islamic languages. These are the poems through which children imbibe the love of the Prophet from early childhood poems that have helped to form and shape the image of the beloved Prophet, the Intercessor on doomsday and luminous seal of Prophets in hearts of Muslim masses”²¹

A phenomenological approach to Islam is explored in Schimmel's influential Gifford Lectures (1994), in which Heiler's categories of "Forms of manifestations and the essence of religion" are applied to a particular religion and so a phenomenological introduction is presented to it.²²

Schimmel used a phenomenological approach to study Islam and her book "Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam," published in 1994. The book focuses on how the Islamic tradition interprets and comprehends the divine's signs and symbols. Using phenomenology, Schimmel investigates Muslims' subjective experiences, as well as their perceptions and interactions with the manifestations of God.

Schimmel discusses the relevance of Islam's symbols when it comes to connecting to the divine. Through calligraphy, architecture, poetry, and rituals, she explores divine communication.

According to Schimmel, phenomenological approaches to religious experience reveal the diversity of Islamic religious experiences and various ways people interact with the divine.

She refers to the Qur'anic verse “We put signs into the horizons and themselves” (41:53), where the creation of the universe and all things created

by God are the signs of God. Reflection on creations will surely lead one to understand and know the Creator. As the renowned Persian poet Saadi Shirazi²³ symbolizes that the green leaves of trees are the open book of the Supreme Being.

برگ درختان سبز در نظر پوشیار
برورقش د فتریت معرفت کردگار

Following this notion, a school of thought emerged during the course of Muslim History that made this approach its official code of faith commonly Known as Wahdat ul wood and almost Schimmel builds on the same notion by highlighting this approach as a common model of understanding the concept *Tawheed*.

Annemarie Schimmel's Gifford lectures have been recorded systematically as under:

- [Sacred Aspects of Nature and Culture](#)
- [Sacred Space and Time](#)
- [Sacred Action](#)
- [The Word and the Script](#)
- [Individual and Society](#)
- [God and His Creation; Eschatology](#)
- [How to Approach Islam?](#)

Annemarie Schimmel examined, in her Gifford Lecture on the sacred aspect of nature and culture in Islam, the profound relationship between Islam and the natural world as depicted in Qur'anic verses. Her contributions show the Qur'an on perceiving the signs of God's creation in nature, fostering a profound spiritual connection and appreciation for the natural world. Schimmel discussed numerous verses from the Qur'an that emphasize the majesty and significance of nature. For instance, Surah Al-An'am (6:99), Surah Ar-Rum (30:50), and Surah Al-Mulk (67:34) invite believers to contemplate the intricate design, order, and harmony of the natural world. These verses serve as a reminder of God's presence and draw attention to the signs of God's creation that surround us.²⁴

Schimmel studied different phenomena and relates them to divine nature. She begins with non-living materials like stone, water, sun moon stars etc. Historically, people looked at stones with awe and considered them to be symbols of power. In Islam, the black stone (Hajr-e-Aswad) has been significant in the religious life of Muslims for centuries, and the tradition will continue until the day of resurrection. Mythology speaks of a green rock that lies deep under the earth and is the basis of the vertical axis that goes through the universe, whose centre is the Kaaba. In Mecca, a black stone located in the southeastern corner of the Kaaba is the point believers seek to kiss during pilgrimage since the mystical tradition states "The Black Stone

represents God's right hand".²⁵ It is also mentioned in the Quran the stoning of disobedient people. Sura: (105: 4). And, stoning Satan during the pilgrimage in Mina is referred to as Rejjim means stoning. That happens during the time of pilgrimage. Though before Islam some people had thought as mountains are the seats of deities but Islam rejects such concepts, as the Quran says these mountains are to keep the lands stable and will be like cabbed wools or like clouds on the Day of Judgment. (27:88, 70:9). In addition, the Quran mentions Mount Senai, which shattered after witnessing the manifestation of the Lord's grandeur (7:143). Mountains, as well as rocks and stones, are nothing but signs of God's Omnipresence; like other creatures, they prostrate themselves before Him (sura 22:18). In light of the discussion above, it can be concluded that the stone as a symbol has been used, and thus the stone itself is not believed like in other religions.

In Islam, caves are sacred locations. In Islamic culture, the cave symbolizes holiness and spiritual refuge. Mt. Hira's cave was the site of Muhammad's first revelation, highlighting the value of seclusion and meditation in Islam. The Prophet hid in another cave on his way from Mecca to Medina. Mystics also went into caverns to meditate like the Prophet. Arba'in, or chilla, meditation in restricted settings stresses God's closeness. The author examines Islamic cave symbolism and sacred force. Humans and animals cannot approach the cave, making it safe. But when one lives on the plains, the sacred space has to be separated from the profane environment by an enclosure (one remembers that the Latin term Sanctus is derived from sancire, 'to limit, enclose', and hence 'make sacred'), so the cult takes place in a spot removed from the ordinary space, which keeps animals and, as was thought, demons away. Lonely prayer places in Sind and Balochistan are surrounded by simple thorn hedges (as are some desert shrines), and it is probably not too far-fetched to think that the border of the prayer rug also serves as a kind of enclosure that marks the praying person's inviolable "sanctuary"—even though the whole world.

Religious traditions have also used water as a symbol and source of purification in addition to external purification. There is no doubt that water plays a central role in the Holy Quran, as there is a verse that says, "We have created everything through water" (Sura 21:30) and "He has sent water down from the sky. . ." (Sura 13:17).

According to legend, Zamzam gushed forth near Kaaba when Hagar left little Ismail alone with it because he was thirsty. It is said that the earth rests on water, as does the all-encompassing ocean, but the Quran provides several references to the ocean being a danger to travellers (Sura 14:32) and to those who do not remember God in times of danger (Sura 17:67). In Sura 13:17, the world is compared to foam-flecks. Sufis view the created universe as a small, pretty fleck of foam in the vast ocean of God.

Furthermore, Schimmel has discussed in her book that rain can also be viewed as a metaphor, as it has been for Prophet (Peace be upon him). For rain was sent down to quicken the dead earth (Sura 41:39) and it is still called *Rehmat* 'mercy' so it is easy to find the co-relation between the rain and mercy and mercy for the world. For which the Quran says *Rehmatu-lilAlamin*. (Sura 21:107).

Several Sufi poets, such as Shah Abdul Latif (d. 1752), Mirza Ghalib (d. 1869), and Mohsin Kakorawi (d. 1905) used rain as a metaphor for Prophet (Peace be upon him). In the same way that rain is a blessing for all humans, the prophet is as well.

Another aspect of rain was discussed by Baghdadian Sufi Abu'l Husain an-Nuri (d.907). He probably described, for the first time in Arabic literature, the two types of spiritual rain that can fall upon the garden of human hearts, either to quicken it or to destroy it in the form of awful hail (Sura 24:43). Human hearts are too narrow to hold all of the blessings of God's grace and love. It is mentioned several times in the Quran that paradise is "Gardens under which rivers flow" (Sura 48:17). In a similar way, the Quran mentions *kawthar* and *salsabil* springs.

It has been said that fire is a sign of God, but its role is negative. In the Quran, fire is used as a negative power. Almost without exception, it refers to hellfire. There is no doubt that God can transform a burning pyre into a rose garden, as he did for Abraham when he made fire 'cool and pleasant' (Sura 21:69). According to the Quran, sinners will be thrown into Hellfire if they commit offences.

A thunderstorm, lighting, and thunder are also manifestations of power and a 'sign of God'. According to the Quran, 'the thunder praises Him', while Ibn-e-Arabi considered light to be an expression of the Divine Essence. The existence of human beings would not be possible without water, which is also a sign of life. Muslims have a great tradition of extending gratitude after having water or other edibles for the blessings that have been bestowed upon us. As a result of these signs, we should be able to realize the blessings that God has bestowed upon us. As a result of these signs, we should be able to realize the blessings that God has bestowed upon us. Though light plays a central role in all religious traditions, and Islam, it has been symbolized as *Nur*. According to the Qur'an, Allah Almighty is also the light (*Noor*) of the heavens and earth. Early Quranic interpretations interpreted Muhammad as the 'niche' of the light verse, the divine light being transmitted through him, and also called him *Siraaj Munir*, or the 'shining lamp' (Sura 33:45-46). "O Prophet! Truly, we have sent thee as a Witness, a Bearer of Glad Tidings, and Warner, and as one who invites to Allah's (grace) by His love, and as a lamp spreading light." So, he was

given the responsibility to lead people from the darkness of infidelity toward the light.²⁶

According to Sura 41 verse 37, God says, "Among His Signs are the Night and the Day, as well as the Sun and the Moon." Do not prostrate to the sun and the moon, but prostrate to Allah, who created them, if it is Him ye wish to serve." Allah Almighty Himself has cautioned in the above-cited verse by acknowledging that the objects are the signs of God but they are not meant to worship. So, Worshipping Allah involves understanding His power and majesty through His signs.²⁷

Numerous visitors, including Rudolf Otto, S. H. Nasr, Martin Lings, Frithjof Schuon, and others, have emphasized the 'sense of the Numinous' when standing in one of the great mosques of North Africa or Turkey.

As they perceived it, these structures were perfect expressions of the emptiness waiting to be filled with divine blessing; this is the experience of the impoverished human in the presence of the Ar-Rahim, al-Ghani.

Similarly, the author has highlighted Macca, Madina, Naja, Karbala, Mosques, Dargah, Shrines Mausoleums the Sufi practising places khanqahs and Jamat khanas as sacred places.²⁸

Talking about the sacred time The Holy Quran was revealed in Ramadan, making it the most sacred month. Paradise opens, and Hell closes. The laylat al-qadr, the Night of Might (Sūra 97), is "better than a thousand months" and is likely the twenty-seventh odd night of the month. Thus, many pious people spend the latter 10 days of the month in seclusion or at the mosque, and even those who don't fast may try to fast on the first and last ten days for blessing. A few privileged devotees see light in the Laylat al-qadr.

Our actions are manifestations of our thoughts and intentions. The concept of Jannah (heaven) and hell is associated with human action. A reward will be given for good actions, while a penalty will be imposed for bad actions. Thus, actions have been categorized as sacred, good, and bad. The ultimate purpose of humankind's creation is to perform sacred actions. Quranic injunctions should guide the action, which will benefit both individuals and society. In the Holy Quran God says: And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily in that are Signs for those who know. (Sura 30:22)

In Islam, God's word and His will are emphasized. Specific recitations, however, that emphasize the sacredness of the word remove the word from daily life and its confusion.

The long-drawn-out call Huuu (meaning "He") at the culmination of a dervish ceremony like the Mevlevi samā' moves body and mind. Listening to such sounds, one realizes why "sound" is Creative Power and why Islamic musical therapy with sacred, baraka-loaded sounds was popular and is still practised by some Sufi communities.

In light of the importance of precise sound patterns and recitations, it would be surprising to not apply unique recitation styles to the Quran, which should be enhanced by human voices. Sound patterns and meaning in the Quran are intertwined, which is why it would lose its unique sounds and authenticity if translated into another language. The techniques of Quranic recitation *tilāwat*, *tajwīd* or *tarāl*, intentional cadences, and *tardīd*, rhythmical repetitions—are highly developed, and every year Quran reciters from around the world compete. Even without psalmodizing, there are standards to follow to show the Divine word's beauty.²⁹

Discussion and Conclusion

The advent of modernity, enlightenment and reformation brought a paradigm shift in the study of religion. A variety of approaches started to emerge to study religion like anthropological approach, Sociological, psychological and economic perspectives.

In this regard, David Hume (1711-76), Auguste Comte (1798-1857), Karl Marx (1818-83), Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), Max Weber (1864-1920) William James (1842-1910) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Jam Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890-1915) and Rudolf Otto's *Das Hielige* (1916), Fries (1773- 1843), Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), and Mircea Eliade (1907-86) contributed in the development of various approaches to the study of religion.

Following the phenomenological approach to the study of religion developed by Mircea Eliade *Hielige*, Annemarie Schimmel studies Islam.

After going through the literature review on the phenomenological approach and Annemarie Schimmel's approach to Islam we can analyse that Schimmel has wonderfully studied the various phenomenon of Islam and tried to study them through the lenses of Muslims. It can be a kind of conclusion that in the past religion was not studied as a religion rather it was studied using different approaches like sociological, psychological and economic.

The e above discussion makes it clear that the phenomenological approach is best suited to study any religious tradition as in this approach religion is studied through the perspective of the persons who practice that religion.

The article examines Annemarie Schimmel, a well-known German Orientalist who used phenomenology to explore Islam. A phenomenological approach to religion emphasizes the subjective nature of religious experiences. In this approach, religious events are objectively examined based on the meaning and intent of their participants. The phenomenological research Annemarie Schimmel conducted on Islam and Sufism helped her understand religious adherents' subjective experiences. According to her, Islam has been misrepresented by its opponents and should rather be studied as a religion rather than a sociological or psychological concept.

"Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam" explores Islam using Quranic passages and Hadith. Schimmel studied Islam's mysticism and poetry, notably Sufism. For a deeper understanding of religion, she studied religious texts, poetry, and mystical literature. When empathizing with her religious subjects, she stressed the importance of words, poetry, and symbolism in conveying religious experiences and the unfathomable divine. In his religious studies, Schimmel has promoted interfaith dialogue and understanding, particularly regarding Islam. "Mystical Dimensions of Islam" and "An Introduction to Islam" explore the diversity of Islamic religion. Further, she studied the spiritual quests and poetry of South Asian Sufi saints, as well as the theological and cultural expressions of Indian Islam. The phenomenological approach to Islam developed by Annemarie Schimmel has advanced religious studies in general. The author has illuminated Islam, particularly Sufism, and corrected misconceptions by analyzing religious experiences and phenomena from a believer's perspective. Annemarie Schimmel studied Islam using phenomenology in her book "Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam.". The book is based on Quranic verses and *Ahadith*, making it a valuable resource. Schimmel argued that Islam has been misconstrued and distorted by its opponents, and that phenomenology is necessary to understand it. Schimmel's work fits into the phenomenological approach of religious studies. As opposed to sociology or psychology, Fries, Rudolf Otto, and Mircea Eliade studied religion through the lenses of phenomenologically because phenomenology emphasizes the subjective quality and personal experience of religion.

Schimmel used phenomenology to study Muslims' subjective experiences. The purpose of her studies was to gain an understanding of Islamic traditions and their profound effects through texts, poetry, and mystical literature. The way she explored Islam's spirituality was through empathy and absorption in the lives of Muslims. Among Schimmel's most renowned publications, "Mystical Dimensions of Islam" examines Islam's mystical traditions, particularly Sufism. Her research focuses on Sufi mystics, their poetry, and their quest for direct communion with God. According to Schimmel, Sufism is based on devotion, love, and reflection to reach God. By sharing the experiences and sentiments of Sufi mystics, she reveals the spiritual depths of Islam. As a result of Schimmel's approach to Islam, a greater awareness of other religions and a better appreciation of them are promoted. Through her works, she fosters empathy for religious believers and creates a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of Islam by overcoming cultural barriers. "Deciphering the Signs of God" is a work by Annemarie Schimmel that contributes to the study of religion through the phenomenological

method she uses to analyze Islam. By focusing on individual experiences and beliefs, she illuminates the rich and varied Islamic tradition.

Finally, it can be concluded that the author has brought under discussion a huge literature related to Sacred Aspects of Nature and Culture, Sacred Space and Time, Sacred Action, The Word and the Script, Individual and Society, God and His Creation; Eschatology, How to Approach Islam? The primary source of Islam like the Quran and *hadith* and literature relate to mystical traditions.

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