



MAJOR PRINCIPLES IN TRADITIONAL
COSMOLOGIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
METAPHYSICS OF IBN 'ARABĪ

BY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation applied the metaphysical-cosmological (*'ilm taṣawwuf – 'ilm al-kawn*) explanations with reference to the thoughts of Ibn 'Arabī in determining the fundamental major principles that influence and govern the cosmos. The study involved the esoteric dimension of the ontological concept of God and the cosmos, and the underlying inter-relationships of cosmos and Man with respect to God. The work on ancient and traditional cosmologies included Egyptian, Sumer-Babylonian, Iran-Zoroastrian, Hindu-Brahma, Tao, Greek-Hellenistic and Islam, with the latter acting to purify the Tawhidic principle of the various cosmologies. The discussion started with definitions on traditional cosmology and the symbols and signs embodied in the cosmic entities, which paved towards recognizing God as the origin of the cosmos and its creator. The study also established the original and eternal belief in the Absolute Divine unity within an archetype of a hierarchical cosmos, dual aspects of feminine and masculine principles, with Man (microcosm) placed into a prominent position amongst the cosmic entities (macrocosm), to manifest the full qualities of God. The explications of Ibn 'Arabī's thoughts described clearly the dual concept of the cosmos as opposed to the Oneness of God, with love and mercy as the basis of creations and existence. This study then used the cosmological-metaphysical aspects to look into the roles of men and women, in imitating the cosmic principles and establishing a polar and complementary relationship with each other, as opposed to the theories brought by feminism and post-modernism which are progressively destroying traditional religious values. This dissertation also highlights the importance of Man (*al-insān al-Kāmil*), in manifesting the hidden treasure of God and his servitude to Him, which established his worth as God's vicegerent (*khalīfa*) on earth, aptly the reason for creations and existence

ملخص البحث

البحث مناقشة علم التصوف أو علم الكون مستنداً على توضيحات افكار ابن عربي في تحديد المبادئ الأساسية الكبرى التي تحكم الكون. سعت هذه الدراسة الى بحث البعد الوجودي لطبيعة الكون و ما يشكل الأساس في العلاقات المشتركة بين الإنسان والكون و فيما يختص بالله من تلك العلاقة، والبحث في علم الكونيات التقليدية القديمة يضم مناقشة هذا الأمر كما جاء في الثقافات المصرية و السومارية البابلية و المجوسية الإيرانية و الهندوسية والتاوية و الهلينية اليونانية و الإسلام، و الى الإسلام يرجع السعي لعملية التنقية التوحيدية في مبدأ علم الكونيات المختلفة. بدأت مناقشة الموضوع بالتعريفات التقليدية للكون والرموز والعلامات الكونية المتمثلة في كياناتها، و هذا يقود الى الاعتراف و التسليم لله بأنه هو أصل الكون و مبدعه. وأشارت الدراسة أيضاً إلى أصل العقيدة الخالدة في الوحدة الإلهية المطلقة وهي وحدة الله كموجد لتراتب الكون، و كذلك كموجد للمظاهر المزدوجة كالأنوثة و الذكورة التي جعلت من الرجل عالماً صغيراً وذلك بوضعه في مرتبة بارزة بين الكيانات الكونية "العالم الكبير" ليبرهن صفات الله تعالى. و يقدم لنا تحاليل افكار ابن عربي بوضوح بأن مفهوم ازدوجية الكون معاكس تماماً لتوحيد الله القائم على أساس الرحمة والمحبة للإبداعات والوجود. لقد استخدمت هذه الدراسة نموذج علم الكون لدراسة الجوانب التي تبحث عن دور الرجل والمرأة في تقليد المبادئ الكونية لإقامة علاقات مركزية و متكاملة مع بعضها البعض، و هذا على عكس النظريات التي تبنتها الحركة النسائية العصرية و الحداثة التي تدمر تدريجياً القيم الدينية التقليدية. تبرز هذه الرسالة أيضاً أهمية الانسان - " الإنسان الكامل " - حيث يظهر الكنز الخفي من عبوديته لله، والذي حدد له قيمته كخليفة الله في الارض، فهذا أصلاً سبب الخلق و الوجود.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Norma Kassim

Signature.....

Date.....

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Affirmed by Norma Kassim

.....
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.....
Date

To
My Parents and My Children

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

‘My Lord, Thou hast blessed, so increase by Thy bounty.’

Praise belongs to Allah SWT, Lord of the Cosmos, the One possessed of Majesty and Honour, the Loving One, the Light of the heavens and the earth, the Manifest and the Hidden, the First and the Last, to Him belong the most beautiful Names. Blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad, light of the lights, *al-insān al-Kāmil*, and bringer of good tidings from the All-Merciful. And blessings are upon his family and companions- the good, the pure, and the chosen.

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ARABIC TRANSLITERATION

ء	‘	ق	q
ب	b	ك	k
ت	t	ل	l
ث	th	م	m
ج	j	ن	n
ح	ḥ	ه	h
خ	kh	و	w
د	d	ي	y
ذ	dh	ر	r
ف	f		
ة	h	ة	t (in the case of construct state)
ال	(Article) al		

Long vowel

آ	ā
و	ū
ي	ī

Short vowel

_____a
_____u
_____i

Diphthongs

ـو	aw	ـو	uww (final form ū)
ـي	ay	ـي	iy (final form ī)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Background of Research

The mission of Mankind (*insāniah*) in the worldview of Islamic spirituality is the attainment to the highest level of servitude to God as His *khalīfa*,¹ which will enable Man to achieve the highest manifestation of the qualities or attributes of God. The spiritual embodiment of the qualities of God will then assist Man in the implementation of a moral and social order on earth, which will reflect the servanthood of Man to his Creator.² There is a Creator and we are the creations, thus there must be a reason for our existence. Accordingly, we find that we have attested to God, as our Creator, while still in the state of nonexistent, as is explained in the Holy Qurān:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِن بَنِي آدَمَ مِن ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى
أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا أَن تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا
عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ

“When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): "Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?"- They said: "Yea! We do testify!" (This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: "Of this we were never mindful” (Surah al A’raf : 172)

¹ Surah al Baqarah : 30 Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?- whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not."

Khalīfah is from the word *khalaf* – successor; assume responsibility from someone, substitute, to take the place of. The Hans Wehr dictionary of modern written Arabic, ed J.M.Cowan, 3rd edn, (Spoken Language Services Inc.:New York, 1976). Successor; succeeding one after another.

² Read Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam: a sourcebook on gender relationships in Islamic thought*, (Albany, USA:State University of New York Press, 1992) pp 15-16. Surah al-Hijr: 29, ““When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him.”

We have also attested to bear the responsibility described in the Holy Qurān as the “Trust”, which was refused by heavens and earth but accepted by Man.³ Traditional cosmologies describe Man as a microcosm, who is an embodiment of a small universe. The qualities of God are inherent in him, according to Islamic cosmology, undifferentiated but manifested in different degrees according to the individual make-up. God has also created Man, as the manifestation of His ‘image or form’ (*ṣūrah*)⁴ on earth, in the ‘best of moulds’ according to the Holy Qurān.⁵ Thus Man is in a unique position where he represents the cosmos on one hand, and on the other, he or she is the perfect representation of the qualities of God amongst the cosmic entities. Man exists in this world, not empty-handed but with tools, to carry out the roles and responsibilities, given by the Creator as a *khalīfa* on earth. Traditional cosmologies believe in the existence of the visible and invisible domains⁶ of the cosmos, with hierarchical ascending levels, towards the Origin, that is God. The cosmos is seen as having a dual principle, manifested by the pair (*zawjan*), showing a polar and complementary relationship and this is said to be present in the cosmological and metaphysical relationships of all creations; as evidenced in the like of the earth vis-à-vis the heavens, and of the Guarded Tablet (*al-luh al-mahfuz*) vis-à-vis the Pen (*al-*

³“We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof, but man undertook it; He was indeed unjust and foolish” (Surah al-Ahzāb 33:72)

⁴“*Khalāqa allāhu ādamu a’lā ṣūrah.*” *ṣūrah*, image or form, according to Imam al-Ghazālī means an intellectual and not a physical image and refers to attributes of the human soul that are derived from the qualities of God and His attributes. Imam al-Ghazālī, *The Mysteries of the human soul* from *al-madnun bihi ‘ala ghairi ahlihi*, translated by Abdul Qayyum Shafaq Hazarvi, (H Muhammad Ashraf:Lahore, 1981) pp 24-29. Also refer to: Muslim, Kitab al-Birr 115; Musnad Ibn Hanbal (2:244,251,315,323 etc. et al).

‘Beware of the face for God created Adam in (H)his form’; ‘When one of you beats someone, avoid the face, for God created Adam in (H)his form.’ Hadith Ahmad ibn Hanbal, al-Musnad, Beirut, n.d. 2:244. Some Muslim scholars do not agree with this interpretation. They contended that the word ‘his image or form’ refers to Adam’s full grown image as Man, as compared to his children who go through stages of development before attaining the full grown form of Man.

⁵“We have indeed created man in the best of moulds,” (Surah at-Tīn,95: 4)

⁶ These are the seen entities and aspects of the cosmos and the unseen entities and aspects of the cosmos, respectively. Refer to pages 167-168 of this thesis for discussions.

qalam). Rashid al-Dīn Maybūdī explained that, by “pair” (*zawjan*)⁷ is meant male and female among living things and the diverse kinds, that include among inanimate things for example, heaven and earth, sun and moon, night and day, winter and summer, light and darkness, sweet and bitter.⁸

Man is a multi dimensional, multi-layered entity with numerous natures, faculties and qualities, and yet a unified living entity characterized by wholeness and integrality; body and soul, especially chosen and honored among the creations, as Man is created with ‘both hands’ of God.⁹ This cosmological concept of Man is fully developed according to the Islamic spiritual and metaphysical understandings, which is a universal fact and embraced by most traditional cosmologies. Man is seen as the connection between the corporeal world and the spiritual world, with the Supreme Principle, which is God. God created the prototype Man, Adam and from him was created his female companion, Eve (*Hawwa*).

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا

“It is He Who has created you from one soul, and He has created from it its spouse that he might rest in her.” (Qurān, Surah Al-A’raf 7:189)

When a thing is created from one to become a pair, it is clearly dependent and incomplete without the other. Hence it is as shown by the first human pair, created

⁷ “And of every thing We have created pairs: That ye may receive instruction.” (Surah adh-Dhāriyat 51:49)

⁸ The physical seen world and the invisible spiritual world, respectively; read Sachiko Murata,(1992) 117

⁹ “He said: O Iblis! What hindereth thee from falling prostrate before that which I have created with both My hands? Art thou too proud or art thou of the high exalted?” (Surah Ṣad 75). Baydāwī (d. 700/1300) says that the two hands emphasize God’s power and the fact that He created Adam without an intermediary, a father and mother. Maybūdī suggested that Adam was singled out for creation with two hands to ‘honor’ (*karāmah*) him among all creatures. In *Latā’if al-ishārāt*, Sufī and theologian Abu’l-Qāsim Qushayrī (d 465/1072) writes “what God deposited in Adam is not found with anyone else, so [God’s] special favor (*khusūsiyya*) becomes manifest within him”(V263). Ibn ‘Arabī writes that, the two hands were attributed to Adam ‘to give him eminence (*tashrīf*) over everyone else.” (*Futūhāt* III 294) Murata, pp.81- 114

from one soul, one *fitrah* and *tabi'ah* (an inborn natural predisposition),¹⁰ equal in humanity (*insāniyyah*) with an abode originally in paradise. Procreation of mankind is made possible in the visible domain, from both of them later, when the earth is made as their abode. The Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) words, 'Your Lord is one, just as your father is one', according to Ibn 'Arabī, is significantly referring to the spiritual Adam and Eve (Hawwa), because the Blessed Prophet (pbuh) did not mention that our parents are two, as has occurred in the manifest domain.¹¹ Significantly, it is through a woman, in the visible domain, that the perfect form enters into existence.¹² She is the receptor of the spirit (*rūh*), also described as the Breath of the All-Merciful, and the source is from the Divine.¹³

In Islamic cosmological discussions, as with most traditional cosmologies, there is the symbolic interplay of the dual principles, characterized by receptivity and activity, in both the seen and the unseen domains of the cosmos, also permeating and crystallizing into the psycho-physical 'constitution' (*mizaj*) forms of Man, male and female, who are acting out the rules of the cosmos. This dual principle is also

¹⁰Read Yasien Mohamed on the *Definition of fitrah*, extracted with slight modifications from "Fitrah: The Islamic Concept of Human Nature" TA-HA Publishers Ltd, 1996; extracted on 16th April, 2010. <http://www.missionislam.com/knowledge/DefinitionFitrah.htm> . According to Yasien, 'fitrah pertains to deep, common spiritual essence in Man. It is humankind's natural and universal innate predisposition for goodness and submission to One God.'

¹¹ Murata, pp.171-200

¹²"It is He Who has let free the two bodies of flowing water: One palatable and sweet and the other salt and bitter; yet has He made a barrier between them, a partition that is forbidden to be passed." Surah al-Furqan, 25:53. The unique comprehensiveness of the Perfect Man, whose form alone encompasses the full reality of being –spiritual and material realms, and the *barzakh* the imaginal world. Ibn al'Arabi, *The Meccan Revelations-Selected texts of al-Futūhāt al-Makkiya* Vol 1, ed Michel Chodkiewicz, translated by William C Chittick & James W Morris, (Pir Press: New York, 2005), 285. The abbreviation (pbuh) used for the Blessed Prophet, means, peace be upon him.

¹³ "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him." Quran, Surah Šad 38:72 "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him." Surah al-Hijr 15:29 . Ibn 'Arabī identifies this spirit with the 'one soul' (*nafs wāhida*) from which Adam, Hawwa and their children were created. (Surah 4:; 6:98; 39:6) Each person manifests its properties to the extent of his preparedness (*isti'dad*). "God says , in whatever form He willed He mounted you (82:8), so the human being comes to be according to the property of preparedness to receive the divine command." Futūhāt II 272.21. William C. Chittick, *The self-disclosure of God –Principles of Ibn al-'Arabī's cosmology*, (State University of New York Press:Albany, 1998) p 272.

explained according to Tao cosmological perspectives as *yang* that acts and *yin* that receives; *yang* represents the active principle and *yin* represents the receptive principle. There can be no absolutes when the two aspects depend on each other. The logic of comparability demands that each aspect resembles the other.¹⁴

God revealed the reason for creations in the Qurān with the following verse,

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“I have only created jinns and men that they may serve Me.”(Surah Adh-Dhāriyat 51:56.)

The words “to worship Me” explained by Ibn ‘Abbas r.a. meant “to know Me,” and we find a sacred Hadith Qudsi which describes God as a Hidden Treasure: ‘*I was a treasure but was not known, so I desired (loved) to be known; I created the creatures and made Myself known to them, so they came to know Me*’.¹⁵ This statement forms the premise or platform, according to the Sufi theosophists, concerning the creation of the cosmos, besides the Qurānic verse quoted above. Through the universe or cosmos, God comes to be known, and since there is nothing in the cosmos but created things including Man, they show the manifestation of God’s Names and Attributes, thus giving news of the Hidden Treasure.

¹⁴ Murata, 58. So it is said that, *yin* through its receptivity *acts* upon *yang* and *yang* through its activity upon *yin*, receives *yin*’s activity. The *yin/yang* symbol of Tao indicates this inter-relationship with the white dot on the black side and the black dot on the white side. This subject is elaborated in Chapter 3 under the sub-topic of Tao cosmology.

¹⁵ Murata, 26. The abbreviation r.a. (*radhiallahu ‘anhu*) means May Allah be pleased with him. This hadith qudsi is considered suspect by specialists in the science of hadith, but as Ibn ‘Arabī remarks, it is ‘sound on the basis of unveiling, i.e. mystical vision, but not established by ways of transmission. William C Chittick, *The Sufi path of knowledge: Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysics of imagination*, (Albany, USA: State University of New York, 1989) 391. Read Suhaib Hassan, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq: Introduction to the Science of hadith*, (Al-Quran society: London, 2008). Ibn Taimiyyah says, “It is not from the words of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), and there is no known isnad for it, neither sahih nor da’if”; al-Zarkashī (d. 794), Ibn Hajar, al-Suyūti and others agreed with him. Al-Qari says, “But its meaning is correct, deduced from the statement of Allah, I have not created the Jinn and Mankind, except to worship Me, i.e. to recognise/know me, as Ibn ‘Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both) has explained.” These statements are mentioned by al-’Ijlouni, who adds, “This saying occurs often in the words of the Sufis, who have relied on it and built upon it some of their principles.” Extracted on 24th July, 2010. <http://siislam.muslimpad.com/category/uncategorized/> .

The universal principles embraced by most traditional cosmologies, resort to using symbolisms to communicate their connection and origin with the Divine. Signs and symbolisms of the cosmos are speechless languages that reveal meanings, to be deciphered in the continuous collaborations of the cosmic entities, to constantly remind Man, the chosen entity and successor (*khalīfa*), of his origin and Center that is God. Man, who lives in the world of forms, is the being who is “created to transcend himself and to seek the Transcendent as such,”¹⁶ will always quest to seek for the Center and imitate the qualities of the Divine.

1.1.2 Statement of Problems

Equality to rights and status between men and women started to become political and social issues in the western world as early as the 16th Century and which later spread to the Muslim world as early as the 17th Century. The issue of gender equality in the Muslim world which started as appendage to that of the west, gained momentum as social changes began to take place in the Islamic world, (i.e. with the colonization of the Muslim world, the defeat of the Uthmaniah Caliphate, the emergence of nation-state, industrialization, modernization and globalization) and the influences brought upon the Muslim minds by the Western Feminist movement. These factors have also been invigorated by the added values and concepts of modernism and post-modernism. This subject of gender equality has attracted a lot of controversial views that have not abated since. In elevating the status of women as opposed to the traditional second-class citizens, adopted from the Greek Classical Age, the West has also created and introduced new images of ‘emancipated’ women and men, with equality of status and rights in every sphere of life and relationships for both gender,

¹⁶ Frithjof Schuon, *The essential writings of Frithjof Schuon*, (Warwick, N.Y.:1986),39

accompanied with the adoption of post-modernist thoughts.¹⁷ This has created a lot of confusion concerning the primary roles of both women and men, even to the extent of blurring the gender identities between them as laid down by most religious traditions.

The influences, interpretations and adoptions of feminists and post-modernists theories and values, have threatened and are progressively destroying most traditional religious values and traditional communities, including the Muslim Ummah, that are related to the sacredness of life in general. Contemporary society in the 21st century has transformed into a social and moral chaos, with further disregard and disenchantment in the rules and regulations laid down by all traditional revealed religions, the purpose of which is to guide Man to his Center and Origin.¹⁸ Using post modernist ideas introduced by Jacques Derrida¹⁹ concerning power in language and the reading of text using female centric thought, some Muslim feminists have called for a reinterpretation of the Holy Qurān, using the ‘Islamic female hermeneutics’ instead of andocentric readings, while engaging in social criticism and social action.²⁰

¹⁷1. Read Betty Friedan, *Feminine Mystique* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books,1986), which paved the gateway to second-wave feminism. Mary Daly in her book, *Beyond God the Father: towards a philosophy of woman's liberation* (Boston:Beacon Press, 1973), challenged patriarchy and its construction of gender and went on to say that women can never be liberated unless God is dethroned from the consciousness of man and woman.

2. Third wave feminism is made up of diverse elements of feminism that include Gender feminism and Postmodern feminism. Gender feminists promote the abolition of biological reproduction and family. Judith Butler, *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (New York:Routledge, 1990), argues that, gender is actually constructed and not the result of sex..gender should be independent from sex so that woman will be liberated from gender roles which are constructed by society. Helene Cixous applied Derrida's notion of ‘difference’ in her writings, contrasting feminine with masculine writing-the need to develop non-phallogocentric language and thought, producing “*the kind that may have existed before Adam was given the power to name the animals; to determine the beginnings and ends of things..*” Read Zeenath Kausar, *Women's empowerment and Islam* (Kuala Lumpur:Ilmiah Publishers, 2002) pp 81-88 . See also Rosmarie Tong, *Feminist thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*, (London:Routledge, 1992)233.

¹⁸ Frithjof Schuon, *The essential writings of Frithjof Schuon*, (New York: Amity House, 1986).

¹⁹ Homa Hoodfar, 'Bargaining with Fundamentalism: Women and the Politics of Population Control in Iran' in *Reproductive Health Matters, Women and Islam – critical concepts in sociology*, ed by Haideh Moghissi (New York:Routledge,1996)Vol 8, Nov 30-40.

²⁰ Amina Wadud, *Quran and woman*,(London:Oxford University Press, 1999)

The inherited patriarchal culture is cited as one of the reasons for the bad treatment meted towards women²¹ in most traditional societies.

Following the trend of arguments raised by western feminists and post-modernist advocates, which originated from a totally different ideological and philosophical perspectives compared to Islamic and other traditional religious values, the confusion especially suffered by the Muslim world is further fueled with an apparent neglect by the Muslims over the centuries, in diligent fulfillment of the duties specified in the sacred text of the Holy Qurān for both men and women, and the correct understanding of the roles and responsibilities expected of them. This upsets the objectives of justice (*'adl*) and the assigning of hierarchical rights in the social order and the family system, which form one of the core bases of the Muslim Ummah. Some Muslim feminists blamed on the influences of Aristotelian and Greek mythological ideas about women, deemed to be adopted by the early Muslim philosophers. It is to be noted however, that injustices suffered by women are however, a universal occurrence existing in most communities of the world and not only confined to the Muslim Ummah. The communities which are practicing different religious traditions are also facing the same issues and challenges, though in different degrees, but nevertheless highlight the similar misconceptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of Man on earth, towards his fellow human beings, other cosmic entities and his Creator.

Another point of contention is the strict literal interpretations of the Shariah aspects of Islam and a perceived closed-door to '*ijtihad*' within the four main schools

²¹ Asma Barlas, *Believing women in Islam: Unreading patriarchal interpretations of the Quran*, (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2002). Also read Norma Kassim, *The Influence of feminist movement and establishing of women's rights in Islam*. Proceedings from the International Conference on the status of Muslim Women in contemporary societies, Volume 7 (International Institute for Muslim Unity, IIUM: Kuala Lumpur, 2007)

of thoughts of the Sunnis after they were codified.²² These factors are however, also accompanied, by the continued adoption of some prevalent indigenous cultural practices, that seemingly do not comply with the true spirit of the objectives of the Islamic religious injunctions, on the responsibilities and roles given to both men and women in the various Muslim community.²³ ²⁴ Contemplations and inner, metaphysical understandings of the objectives of the creation of Man, relating to their roles on earth and the cosmos as a whole, are not given their due consideration. Spiritual, cosmological and metaphysical interpretations with explanations behind the revealed laws are given less emphasis, which do not promote interest, to the understandings in the hidden messages of God's revealed words. Literatures, scholarly reviews and opinions on the literal and exoteric meanings of the Holy Qurān and the hadith of the Blessed Prophet (pbuh), Islamic jurisprudence and the Sharia'h are normally given preference and emphasis. They are in abundance, as compared to those that discuss and analyse the esoteric interpretations (inner meanings) of Islam. The same goes in the fulfillment of the Islamic obligatory rites, where literal interpretations and the physical accomplishments of the ritual exercises are stressed, without the same emphasis and attention given to their inner understandings.

It is also not common and not as easy to find Islamic literatures on cosmologies and metaphysical explanations on the subject matter, that we have been

²² Shah Abdul Halim (Chairman of Islamic Information Bureau Bangladesh), *Stagnation of thought – the way out*. http://www.shahfoundationbd.org/halim/stagnation_of_thought_the_way_out.html Extracted from the internet on 2nd September, 2010. Also read Muhammad Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Bengali tr. *Islamey Dharmiyo Chintar Punargathan*, (Dhaka:Allama Iqbal Sangsad,2003) Fourth Edition.

²³ Ziba Mir-Hosseini, *Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: Between Islamic Law and Feminism* from Critical Inquiry (Chicago: The University of Chicago, Summer 2006). Extracted from Internet on 2nd September, 2010 <http://www.smi.uib.no/seminars/Mir-Hosseini/Questforequality.pdf>

²⁴ Read Mohammad Akram Nadwi, *A glimpse at early women Islamic scholars, al-Muhaddithat: The women scholars in Islam* (London and Oxford:Interface Publications, 2007). This book documented the extensive scholarly contributions made by Muslim women over the centuries, dispelling doubts about the purportedly muted scholarly activities of women in the Islamic world.

discussing above, for the consumption and understandings of the laypersons. This is maybe an irony considering that, it is largely the inner knowledge of religion (*ma'rifah*), theosophical (*al-hikmah al-falāsifah*) and theological (*kalam*) teachings of the Sufi masters including Imam al-Ghazalī and Ibn ‘Arabī, who were responsible for introducing Islam to the world of Malay-Nusantara, the Indo-Pakistan and many parts of the world.²⁵ Thus this inner dimension of Islam is not totally alien to the Muslim community, but is not given the proper consideration and ample attention.

Contemporary Man may have been too preoccupied and engrossed with the material world and amassing wealth, rather than be in contemplation of God and His creations. However, cosmological and metaphysical studies of the cosmos need the acts of *fikr* and *dhikr*, to understand and decipher the meanings of creations and the cosmic signs. Man in ancient traditional societies is known to hold nature and everything around him as sacred, acknowledging the presence of an intuitive feeling of connection to his origin. The existence of universal principles in the cosmos shared by most of the traditional cosmologies is evidenced, with the influences and similar interpretations in the symbols of cosmic signs, observed amongst them. Thus it makes sense for us to study the traditional cosmologies, with a special reference to the metaphysics of Ibn ‘Arabī, which will also act as a guide,²⁶ for us to understand the fundamental universal principles underlying the cosmos and Man, in relation to the Creator. Hence on this note, we will discuss our objectives for this research in addressing the issues that we have raised above.

²⁵ SM Naquib al-Attas, *Preliminary statement on a general theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesia Archipelago*, (Kuala Lumpur:DBP,1969). Read Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical dimensions of Islam*. (USA: University of North Carolina Press, 1978)

²⁶ Ibn ‘Arabī (1165-1240) writes extensively on the esoteric dimension of Islamic scholarship, ‘best known in his own day as a religious scholar and student of hadith,’ through a life-long process of spiritual intelligence (*tahqiq*). He gives a central role to the scriptural symbolic language of the Holy Qurān and Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh), and including among others, scriptural discussions and allusions to cosmology and cosmogenesis.

1.1.3 Objectives of the Research

In this research, we attempt to use a metaphysical-cosmological approach to study the major principles of traditional cosmologies commonly present, with a special reference to the metaphysics of Ibn ‘Arabī. The following objectives that we have identified are expected to answer the issues raised previously:

- i. The ontological concept of God and the cosmos.
- ii. Cosmos and Man as the self-manifestations of the Divine qualities or attributes.
- iii. The major principles of the cosmos in traditional cosmologies.
- iv. Man in his role as the *khalīfa* or successor on earth.

1.1.4 Outline of Research

This dissertation is made up of six chapters with two parts in the first chapter. The preceding pages, research methodology and literature review make up the first part of this chapter, and the second part will be devoted to an analysis of what constitutes the traditional school of cosmology, which will also include some literature review.²⁷ It will define the meaning of cosmology and explain the primordial origin as the premise of the traditional schools, which include almost all of the eastern traditional cosmologies, speaking a similar language of cosmic signs in the symbolisms, where God is the Divine source of the cosmos. We will discuss in detail the meaning of the ‘science of the cosmos’ as understood by the other traditional scholars and the Muslim scholars. We will also list and discuss some of the major principles of the cosmos that most traditional cosmologies conform to and comprehend. These principles will then be discussed in detail under the rest of the chapters.

²⁷ René Guénon, *The reign of quantity and the signs of the times*, (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books Inc. 1972)

The second chapter will introduce and discuss the meanings in the symbolisms of the cosmic signs (*āyāt*), which form one of the major principles of cosmology. The definitions of signs and symbols are given in detail according to the general traditional thoughts, other traditions and particularly according to Islamic perspectives. The symbolic character of the signs (*āyāt*) will include an indepth discussion on the dual principle in the cosmos. The dual principle will be traced to the Divine origin, His Qualities or Attributes and will be explained in detail using Islamic cosmology, as Islam provides the most comprehensive understanding on this subject. This chapter will also explain what is understood by the proposed terms, feminine and masculine principles of the cosmos.

The third chapter will elaborate on some of the eastern ancient mythologies and traditional cosmologies which include ancient Egyptian, Sumer-Babylonia or Mesopotamian, Iranian-Zoroastrian, Hindu-Brahmanism, 'far-eastern' Taoism and Greek-Hellenistic mythologies and cosmologies. The discussions will show the universal and primordial understandings that exist in the cosmos and Man, as well as the interplay of the dual principle in the traditional cosmogonies and cosmologies, tracing back its origin to the Divine.

The fourth chapter will analyse solely on the Islamic cosmological principle, which is the culmination of all the previous primordial traditions, and acts to purify and confirm the true Divine revealed messages that were brought by Prophets and messengers, since Man is made to inherit the earth. It will discuss the understanding of the cosmos, verses of the Holy Qurān and the soul of Man as sign (*āyāt*), in which the 'perfect' Man, *al-insān al-kāmil*, serve as the complete self-manifestation of the Divine attributes, being a microcosm representing a small universe within it. This chapter will also explain the various cosmological principles according to the Muslim

metaphysicians and philosophers that serve to show the inherent existence of the dual principle in the cosmos, which owe its origin to the One God.

The fifth chapter is a short yet in-depth study on the metaphysics of the classical Sufi-mystical master, Muhyī al-Dīn Muhammad Ibn ‘Alī Ibn al-‘Arabī, who is one of the foremost that Islam has produced, in the study of Islamic esotericism and Sufism. We will discuss the major themes in the metaphysics of Ibn ‘Arabī which include the Names of God; *wujūd* or existence in relation to the cosmos; concepts of *tanzīh* and *tashbīh*; modes of gaining knowledge according to Ibn ‘Arabī; human perfection created in the ‘form’ of God; the *Barzakh* and the world of imagination. The next section under this chapter will discuss the metaphysical principles in the cosmology of Ibn ‘Arabī. We will analyse in detail, the cosmos and its signifiers according to Ibn ‘Arabī and the dual manifestation of the aspects of Divine attributes as manifested in the cosmic entities. The dual manifestation in the cosmic entities will include the simile of cosmic manifestation of the Qurānic description of the ‘two feet’ and ‘two hands’ of God; the dual manifestations in the cosmology of the Qurān; the Pen and the Preserved Tablet; heaven and earth; spirit and nature.

The final chapter is the conclusion to the research subject on the metaphysical-cosmological reality in traditional cosmologies that will show the Divine origin of the cosmos, the role of Man in relation to the cosmos and as the successor (*khalīfa*) of God on earth, and the major principles shared by the traditional cosmologies. The conclusion will also include a sub-topic to address issues we have discussed earlier concerning Man and the disparity between the genders, which is approached using the cosmological understandings of the metaphysical interplay of the dual principles in cosmic reality.