INTRODUCTION

A civilisation depends for its perfection more on the quality of mind which is brought to bear on the facts of life than on more material achievements, more on how it behaves than on what it possesses. A refinement in human relations is the true test of culture.

Within two decades of the Prophet's death, the Arabs had conquered Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Persia. Naturally they turned their eyes towards India thereafter. Under the Caliphate of Umar (634-44) & Usman (644-56), land approaches to India were discovered. During the time of Caliph Walid (705-15), Hajjaj bin yusuf, who was Governor of Iraq, sent his nephew and son-in-law, Muhammad bin Qasim, to conquer the Indus valley. This young enterprising general brought Sindh and Multan under the overlordship of the Caliphate in the year 712 A.D.

By the end of the 7th century, before the occupation of Sindh, traders had in a good number settled on the Malabar Coast. By the middle of the 8th century, they spread over the whole of the Western Coast. Sheikhs and Darweshes made their appearance. The Hindu King of Malabar was converted to Islam. By the 10th century, the Eastern Coast on the South had a noticeable Muslim population. By the end of 14th century, Islam had permeated all parts of India, and the process was fully under way which led to the conversion of a large section of the Indian population to Islam and resulted in far-reaching cultural and spiritual changes outside the Muslim society.

At the time of Muslim invasion, India was torn with the conflict between Buddhism and Hinduism. The poignant theoretical controversy that was raging between Pundits and Priests on both sides overflowed into the fields of action. Throughout the country, there were constant feuds and fights and bloodshed was not rare.

The unity that India looked to was that of a common mental outlook. What India took care about was that she might be "a University of Culture", Comprising many and diverse racial habits, linguistic
orbits, geographical bounds and local politics and interests. She was not only not disturbed at her diversity of people but offered them opportunities for their unfoldment trusting in her genius that she would be able to knit them together into a beautiful whole.

Islam maintained a distinctive position of its own, in spite of its deeper identities with the essentials of Indo-Aryan religion. Islam brought with it vigour of a new faith that supplied the springs of adventure in life and the gift of a rich culture.

The culture brought into India by the Arabs or the Turks or later on by the Mughals was not such as would seriously disturb the Hindu tradition. Neither was it of a kind that the Hindu would reject off-hand nor did it create any sudden break in the continuity of the history of the Indian people. The underlying motif of the two cultures, Islamic and Hindu, was much the same. The difference lay only in their technique. When, therefore, the two met on a common soil, the action and reaction between them broadened the basis of both and led to a unity of outlook and interests. The masses of the two communities began to feel the want of a new order of creative life, of co-operative effort for peaceful living.

The caliphs were lovers of learning. Between Arabia and India was established a kind of comradeship. Hindu works on astronomy, astrology, mathematics, medicine and philosophy began to be translated into Arabic. Sanskrit learning was admired and even readily patronised.

From fashions and festivals down to the very preparation of food, in social or in the household affairs, their habits were cast in moulds nearly alike. In the matter of dress too, the two styles continued to evolve a new costume, the Sherwani, the tight fitting Pyjama and the Turban, in which we can hardly detect any Arab or Central Asia influence. The court etiquette became uniform for both Mughal and Rajput. With the evolution of new social factors and common economic interests, the distinctions amongst the Hindu and Muslim masses gradually faded.
The Sufis acted as a great social force in moulding the character of medieval Indian society. There is a tradition of the Prophet in which he says "God has laid so much stress on the rights of a neighbour that the later almost holds the status of a relative". Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya often referred to this tradition and then add. "the right of a neighbour, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, is that you should advance him a loan, when he required it, help him when he is in need, visit him when he is sick, comfort him when he is involved in trouble and attend his funeral when he dies. He is not a true believer who annoys his neighbour". The sufistic definition of a half Muslim and a full Muslim is also interesting. According to the Sufi, "He is a half Muslim who is so pious that he acquires even the magical power to spread his carpet in mid-air to say his prayers, but a full Muslim is one who gets up early in the morning, says his prayers, goes about his daily work, earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, eats half the bread and shares the other half with the needy and the poor. The sharing of the fruit of his labour after earning it in a righteous manner makes him a full Muslim".

This doctrine of Sulh-i-Kul, or Universal brotherhood had a great humanistic appeal behind it, which crossed all religious barriers, developed fellow-feeling between the two communities and electrified the process of Synthesis between the ancient culture of India and the one brought by the Muslims from Arabia, Iran and Central Asia.

Religious movements, which arose in the 15th and 16th centuries, are generally characterized as variations of bhakti. A long line of saints ...... Prototypes of Nanak, Kabir and Chaitanya of the North .... arose in the South and preached to both Hindu and Muslim a simple religion based on bhakti, or love of God. Their teachings reached every nook and corner of the country and gave it a shaking such as it had never received before.

The Sufi and Hindu mystic likewise met on the common platform of ecstatic communion with the Divinity, a state in which communal division finds no place at all. The cultural life of the common people took on the same colour in time, they were more under the influence of saints and
mystics than that of Pundits and Maulavis. In music, painting, architecture, as well as in economic deals, the two communities evolved a common outlook. Above all, there was the inexorable need ... the downright necessity ... of making a common home for both.

Though the Turko-Afghan rulers were Muslims and their religion was Islam, they made no attempt to impose their religious faith on the Hindus. They attempted to attract the common Hindus with their philosophy of equality of human beings. The door for Government services was open to all; personal merit was the only recommendation for appointment and promotion. The Hindus were not forced to give up their age-old traditions. No interference were made in the observance of their religious rites. This went a long way in winning the hearts of the Hindus for the Muslim rulers.

Living side by side and sharing in each other's joy and sorrow for a period over centuries was bound to change the respective manners and social behaviour of the two peoples. This process of invisible interaction between the members of the two religions, in due course led to the emergence of the Indo-Muslim Culture.

The topic of my thesis "Development of Indo-Muslim Culture during the Delhi Sultanate" (1206-1556) was allotted to me by the Ph.D. committee in the department of Arabic and Persian, Calcutta University, Calcutta. I have studied the subject in Six Chapters. The study is based primarily on original Persian sources, but I have made free use of works published in English, Urdu, Bengali and Hindi also. I have also made use of articles published in learned Journals in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Wherever Ibid has been used in the footnote in this thesis it always refers to the first work mentioned in the earlier footnote, in case more than one authority are cited there.

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