Conclusion

Muslims have passed through many phases over a different period of time. They have ruled in India; they have constructed India; they have lived under British rule; fought against it along with the other communities of the country. Muslims have a number of cultural symbols; few of them have even gone to the extent of nation’s symbol like Taj Mahal etc. They have been in this land in different conditions in different ages, on the one hand, and differently in different regions on the other hand. They are homogenous in a few things and heterogeneous in a number of things.

The study has found probably one of the biggest fallacies of all time that the Indian Muslims are one large homogenous community. Not only are there numerous differences in belief systems, religious law, faith, and tradition, there are a number of differences caused by the varied history and origins of the different groups. Add to this the necessary geographical and local differences imposed by any land the size of this vast country, and it is not the least surprising that the Indian Muslims’ reality is one of such a range of difference. There are myriad colours and hues, much diversity, and a meshing and mixing of many influences. As a result of all these forces – social, historical, genealogical, political, religious, and economical – the Indian Muslim community is more a patchwork quilt of diversity and richness, rather than a single fabric of a single weave.

Study has also found that a wide range of basic Islamic tents are similar to those of Hindus. According to the arguments and findings, Islam and Hinduism have a much closer relationship than most people, either Hindu or Muslim,
think. However, these findings are suppressed, and have been neither publicized nor popularized. The actual knowledge of these facts remains limited to libraries and select intellectuals. The local social systems of a geographic location tend to colour the customs and traditions of any community living in that region. A study of Indian Muslim customs and traditions, therefore, should not be undertaken without considering their relations to this local religion.

The customs and traditions that crystallized in the beginning of Islamic rule in India are, more or less, unchanged and expected to remain unchanged in the centuries ahead. Though, some new changes have taken place during last fifty years or after independence with the advent of new Islamic movements and with the huge differences of Indian Muslims into the sects and groups. It goes without saying that in a vast area like India (including Pakistan and Bangladesh) many local customs were integrated with the basic forms of religious life; on the lower level, superstitions, magic, and various unorthodox trends can be observed in India and in other parts of the Muslim world, and the reformers in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries never caused attacking them.

In spite of overwhelming religious influences and rapid expansion of education and modern amenities, people in rural and tribal communities still retain an unconscious faith in animism. A sprawling banyan tree is forever a matter of awe and people will always avoid going under it at night as there might be jins, ghosts or other evils spirits lying in wait in the darkness of its foliages for a victim. Belief in jins and spirits is quite widespread.

We studied that the Muslims of India are, though, united in a number of their customs and traditions; they are extremely cosmic in some. Some are rooted to the religion on which the entire community is united and there are no
differences such as two popular Eids, Khutna, Ageeqa etc. Muslim society in India, as a whole, is still characterised by joint families and respect for women and elders and love and care for children. Old parents and elderly dependants are taken care of by the families of their sons or daughters or relatives as their good wishes and prayers are deeply valued as propitious for receiving God's kindness. Muslims greet their elders in the Islamic way with assalamu alaikum with the right hand raised to touch the forehead (as Hindus with namashkar accompanied by folded palms).

Many sects of Indian Muslim, at the same time, have wide differences on some religious rooted customs (as was studied in Chapter Three) such as Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi and Shab-e-Baraat etc.

Apart from the sectarian differences leading to the changes in customs, most of the Indian families, particularly during last fifty years have gone through other changes. In terms of naming their children, for example, now, they have started not taking care of their castes, clans and classes. They just find a name which sounds attractive. Some of them put their father's name at the end of their names as surnames. Farhan Akhtar, for example, son of Javed Akhtar. Being Farsi as the court language during the Muslim rule of India, most of the Muslim families adopted Persian names which is still continued. Some Muslims of India, ignorantly, adopted some names which belong to the Iranian Parsi such as Jamshed.

Some customs vary from region to region, particularly, the ones related to marriage. The exposition of the dowry is an important part of the festivity almost everywhere, What began as gifts of land to a woman as her inheritance in an essentially agricultural economy today has degenerated into gifts of gold,
clothes, consumer durables and large sums of cash, which has sometimes entailed the impoverishment and heavy indebtedness of poor families.

The wedding ceremony is preceded by several other rituals including mangni (engagement) to signify conclusion of negotiations and mehendi at both ends to put turmeric paste on the bodies of the groom and the bride, apparently for their skins to glow brighter. Gifts are invariably exchanged on these occasions. Payment of dowry or bride money is common to both Hindu and Muslim communities.

All Muslim and Hindu marriages take place at the bride's house in the presence of elders and relatives of both parties. A Nikah Khwan, Qadhi or Maulvi (marriage registrar) conducts the ceremonies of a Muslim marriage, recording in writing all conditions of the contract after obtaining consent of the bride through a vakil and two witnesses. The contract usually allows either party to divorce under certain conditions.

Due to the broad cultural diversity in the Muslim world, Islam is a quilt of many colours rather than a monolithic faith etched in stone. The majority of Muslims have never considered Islam to be "straight and narrow" but rather "straight and broad." The word in Arabic for the sacred law of Islam, shariah, literally means "the broad path to water." The shariah, rather than being a rigid and inflexible law, is governed by a fluid and elastic set of principles, and Muslim legal theorists consider it rationally comprehensible and thus capable of being altered when the rationale is absent or the circumstances warrant.

A large number of Muslims believe in celebrating birthdays of death anniversaries while some others differ because, as they believe, there is no historical evidence that such was the practice of the Prophet. However,
similarly large numbers of Muslims do commemorate the birth anniversary of the Prophet on 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal of the Islamic lunar calendar year. For Muslims, this date marks the most important event in the history of mankind because the Holy Prophet Muhammad is regarded as the Chief of the Prophet, to whom the Holy Qur'an was revealed. The extent of the festivities, on this occasion, is restricted because of the fact that the same marks the death anniversary of the Holy Prophet as well. In this festival, there's wide range of sectarian differences among Indian Muslims.

Other difference of onion is on the celebrations of Muharram that occupy an important place in popular piety, though, restricted to only the Shia but are also commemorated by the Sunnis in recent times. Sermon meetings are held during the first ten days of Muharram. A special dish (rice and syrup in the Punjab) is cooked even in some Sunni houses on the tenth ('ashura) and already Amir Khusrau speaks of devotional books about the Maqtal Husain which were read during Muharram. In Shia circles special gatherings (majlis) are called to remember the events of Husain's coming to Kerbeli day by day. They were, however, not held in the mosque but in large imambaras, which became a special feature of Shia Islam. Miniature tombs, called in the Deccan tabut, otherwise ta'ziya, were prepared on a bamboo framework and covered with more or less precious material; they could reach a height of up to twenty feet. The ta'ziya stay under a canopy till the tenth, and Muharram fires were lighted everywhere; huge standards with crests such as the 'hand of Fatima' (which also symbolizes the panj tan, (i.e. Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain) or other religious symbols are carried. A white horse, representing Duldul, is led around with empty saddle. The popular beating of breasts and backs with chains is now forbidden in some areas. On the tenth the ordinary ta'ziyas are buried in a place called Kerbela, while the expensive ones are
renovated. In some cases the mourning goes on as in real death cases till the fortieth day (Safar 20 – second month of Islamic calendar). Women break their glass bangles and wear black clothes – S.H. Manto’s short story *Kali shalwar* tells of a prostitute who desperately needed a black *shalwar* for Muharram.

In some provinces the Muharram procession has changed into almost a kind of carnival and Hindus participate freely in the happenings, be it the buffoonery, or the ‘worship’ of the ‘alam, ‘flag’, by some low castes in Bihar. The tears shed in Muharram are sometimes collected because they are regarded as a cure and a help against the punishment of the tomb. The atmosphere is always highly charged with emotion so that outbreak of riots is not unusual during the first ten days of Muharram; and, although the Sunnis share the admiration and love of the Prophet’s family, the Muslim reformers unceasingly preached against the ‘mixture of pageantry with the deeply expressed and public exposure of grief’.

Major Islamic events have happened on *Yaum-Al-Ashura*, the tenth day of Muharram. It is believed that on this day Adam was created and entered the Paradise, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) was born, Prophet Isa (Jesus) was raised to the heavens and the people of Prophet Moosa (Moses) obtained freedom from the tyranny of Firaun (Pharaoh).

The month next to Rabi-ul Awwal (the month of Eid-e-Milad), comes Rabi’ uth-thani. On eleventh of this month, a special *Fatiha* is performed. Those connected with the Qadiriyya order celebrate the memorial of ‘Abdul-Qadir Gilani, the Pir-e-Dastgir, Miranji, or Mahbub-e-Subhani who, as tradition says, had ninety-nine names. In some folk tradition the whole month is often called *gvarahwin*, ‘eleventh’ because it is sanctified by this Memorial Day. Although, the order was introduced in the Subcontinent later than the Chishtiyya and
Suhrwardiyya. In Ludhiana ‘Abdul-Qadir Gilani’s toothpick is said to have taken root and to have grown into a tree near which an annual fair is held. In Srinagar, a memorial shrine for him exists, and numerous big trees in Sind are devoted to his name. In some cases people take out a large green flag with the impression of an outstretched hand made with sandalwood paste; or they put little flags and eleven lamps on the house to secure it from misfortune in times of plague. The large flag or a commemorative plaque of green paper might also be perambulated. Much popular poetry has been written in the regional languages in ‘Abdulqadir’s honour. In fact the first known _mangabat_, ‘poem in praise of a _Pir_ or Wali’, in Sindi, is directed to Pir Piran Dadshah, and its author, Jaman Charan (d. 1738), enumerates a long list of places where the power of the saint is operative. (Schimmel, Annemarie, 1980: pp. 121) And a Balochi tale about the Prophet’s ascension to heaven explains why the Pir-e-dastgir had claimed, “My foot is on the neck of every saint”: When Gabriel had to leave the Prophet alone before entering into God’s presence, ‘Abdulqadir offered his shoulder so that Muhammad could step on it and reach the Highest Presence, and he blessed the saint by putting every saint’s neck under his feet. (Longworth Dames, M., 1970: pp. 134) – It seems that the importance of the eleventh day is reflected in the Panjabi custom of distributing charity on the eleventh of every month.

How deeply this religious atmosphere affected all levels of the population is understood from the innumerable riddles which, from complicated Persian verse-riddles to conundrums in the regional languages, presupposed an amazing knowledge of Islam, combined with wit and intelligence. To solve them is one of the favourite pastimes of both princes and illiterate villagers.
For the Shia, the majlis in commemoration of Husain’s martyrdom is more important than the mauled, and various professions developed to give the gatherings a lasting effect – the reciters of hadith told movingly about Kerbela; the waqi-a-khwans narrated anecdotes, and eloquent marthiya-khwans recited long poems about the death and suffering of the Imams, while sozkhwans, groups of three accomplished musicians, sang in heart-rending tunes about the tragedy of Kerbela – a custom not favoured by the orthodox theologians.

A continuation of cults is typical not only for Indian Islam. Rather, it is found almost everywhere. However, in India the participation of members of the two great religions in the same places of worship is more conspicuous than elsewhere. Especially in the eastern and western border zones of the Subcontinent such a blending of religious forms seems to be not unusual: There are a number of Muslim shrines which Hindus used to visit; the very fact that the first, and some of the best, studies in India about Sufism haven been written by Hindus shows the cultural cross relations as much as the adherence of Hindus to Muslim pirs.

The reverence (or a kind of worship) of saints is still a living part of popular Islam in India. Numerous people are serving at the shrines in one way or the other, but due to the loss of the awqaf, the pious foundations, in India some of the once so glorious dargahs are decaying. In Pakistan they are under the supervision of the Awqaf Department that is supposed to look after repairs and upkeep; but when a dargah is still in the possession of the family they have to contribute much of their own income to the maintenance, and the noble duty of feeding thousands of visitors during the days of the urs may tax the finances of the sajjadanishin very heavily. One still sees in the villages that the visit of a Pir to whom the villagers have sworn allegiance is a great and wonderful event.
Everyone rushes to touch his feet, he is well fed, and the remnants of his table are given to the poor, while he, after counseling and blessing the people, will continue his way, heavily laden with gifts from his poorer, faithful followers.

There are lot of differences and controversies regarding the miracles and truthfulness of the Sufi saints. Wahabis come first to differ the Sufi ideology. It has been analysed in detail in Chapter Three.

Customs of Sunnis and Shias are also very much different. Wide ranges of customs are related to Sufism, which have been denounced by the Wahabi school of thought. Some costumes of Sufi saint have also been denounced by the Sunni non-Wahabi scholars such as Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan and Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi and likeminded Islamic scholars. We need not, therefore, be surprised that reformist Muslims, including Iqbal, wanted to do away with ‘Pirism’, which appeared to them as one of the reasons for the poverty and backwardness of the people; and the most powerful short stories of contemporary Indian writers attack the amassment of wealth at the shrines, contrasting it with the poverty of the masses. For was not faqr, ‘poverty’, the ideal of the Prophet and his true followers? And could not Islam boast of being a religion without an influential ‘priestly’ caste? That is certainly true, and yet the faith in the Pir and the visit to shrines may still offer the poor and the suffering some spiritual consolation which enriches their lives in a mysterious way. Commercialisation of shrines has also been criticised by the new age Islamic scholars.