Chapter- II

Indo-Arab Cultural Links and the Coming of Islam

India was one of the most sought after land for the Arabs, predating history. There were definite connections between the two lands. Much before the coming of Islam the Indo-Arab connection was conspicuous in History especially with the Malabar coast. During the long lasted interaction between Indo-Arab relations, the influence of Arab culture with Indian counter part and vice versa had been definite and most natural. The coming of Islam to India must be seen in this stage setting.

The word ‘India’ itself owes its derivation not to India. Until the Muslims came to South Asia none of the inhabitants of that region even thought of calling their country by such a name. The river Indus is known in Sanskrit as Sindhu. The Sindhu region, most of it now Pakistan, became a Satrapy of the Achaemianian empire of Iran under the name ‘Hindush’, the Indian ‘S’ becoming Persian ‘H’ by a regular sound shift
between the two languages. The Greeks, borrowing the word from the Iranians called the river ‘Indus’ and the country through which it flowed ‘India’. It would appear that for Herodotus, the Indus basin was the whole of India. Later the classical writers, though their geographical knowledge was very inaccurate regularly applied the term ‘India’ to the larger land mass which extended from the Himalayas to the sea. The Arabic ‘Hind’ and the Persian ‘Hindustan’ had the same connotation at a later date.

Long long before the advent of Islam, even as early as the third millennium B.C. India had cultural bonds with Mesopotamian civilization. The extreme antiquity of India’s trade with the Western world is an established fact. According to Sayes, the commerce by sea between India and Babylon must have been carried on as early as 3000 B.C. when Ur Begas, the first King of United Babylon ruled in Ur or the Chaldees.

Indian teak wood is believed to have been found in Babylonian remains of the third millennium B.C. and Hewitt is of the opinion that this wood must have been sent by sea from some part of the Malabar Coast. Herodotus informs that Babylonia imported precious stones from India. The Bavaru jataka speaks of the visit of the Indian maritime traders to the Kingdom of Bavaru (Babylon) which may refer to the Seleucid empire. An interesting side light is thrown upon the methods of Indian navigation by the reference to direction giving crow, ‘diśakāka’. In the days of Seleuces the Mesopotamian centres of commerce were
Babylon, Ctesiphon, Seleucia and Ossis. The main commerce between Seleucid empire and India was borne partly by land route, the northern one passing through Bactria and the southern through Gedrosia, Carmania, Persis and Susania and partly by sea route from Gerrha on the west coast of Persian Gulf. Also there were various river routes from the Persian Gulf towards southern Turkey through Iraq, Jordan and Syria. Though Egypt was directly accessible by sea, there was no direct trade between Egypt and India. Indian and Egyptian merchants used to meet halfway, probably at Yemen and Eden and transhipped one another’s goods. Like the Indian route to Egypt stretching along the Red Sea, the route through the Persian Gulf was controlled by powerful Arab Tribes engaged in trade between the Indian and Egyptian merchants. Very early South Indian trade with Phonicia has been traced from the fact that Peacock brought by Hiram’s ship to Solomon were called ‘Tuki’ derived from Tamil ‘Tagai’. In pre Islamic days Indian spices were imported in large quantities into Arabia and Indian wares were sent at the mart of Batene. Trade relations pre-suppose cultural relations and the development of trade culture exerted mutual influence on the inhabitants of the region. In the Rg-Veda age, Afghanistan and its neighbourhood were culturally a part of India and in the same age the ancient culture of Iran was hardly distinguishable from that of India. In the domain of myth and legend and of cult and ritual there were many features common to India and the Semitic world. This may be regarded as natural effect of Commercial intercourse.
Before the dawn of civilization, the Arabian Peninsula formed a wedge of semi barbarism between Egypt and Sumer. The topographic peculiarities of Arabia played particularly important part in determining the course of history of the Arabs. The geographical situation of India until the development of the Atlantic Board Countries was favourable for her to become the natural meeting place of different civilizations. This enabled her from the earliest times to play an important role in the transmission and diffusion of ideas. Alberunni rightly remarked:

“If a science or an idea has been conquered, the whole world, every nation appropriates a part of it; so also the Hindus”.

With the decline of the Babylonian and Egyptian civilizations, Indo Arab relations received much impetus and Arabia served as the highway of trade between India and the Hellenistic world. Indian and Arab ships came braving the winter with such luxuries as pearls, ginger and pepper. Besides, Indian ships carried black wood, ebony and teak to Roman market and with the latter built ships in the Persian Gulf.

The town of Siraf on the Gulf was entirely built of Indian teakwood. Black wood, one of the products of Punjab was also exported from Baryggza to Oman. Through land routes via Arabia, Indian commodities were exported to the western world. India remained the principal market for silk. Indian Precious stones, corals, amber, glass, gold, embroidered rugs, spices and perfumes were carried by the Arabs who sold them to the Romans and the Western people including Ethiopians.
The word ‘Kostos’ among the ancient ‘Kushtha’ Sanskrit word indicating aromatic was supplied by India.

The Indian Navy is recorded to have visited Libla near Basra which was known in those days as the gateway of India. During the Gupta period, Indian exports included precious stones, pearls, silver and gold as well as articles for day to day use. The Arab tribes were now settled and consequently their trade with India received a fresh impetus. The fact also finds an allusion in the Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry. The growing trade and commerce with India and China enriched the Arabs who developed economic and cultural institutions in their old cities. Mecca, the Prophet Mohammad’s birthplace, rose in eminence and became an important trade centre. Its importance in the subsequent times increased since it dominated the trade routes after the decline of the south and the decay of the Byzantine shipping in the Red Sea. Merchants from East to West met at this place and carried merchandise through this part of the world and in these transactions the Arabs acted as the active intermediaries. Besides, the Kingdom of Hadramaut conveyed Indian goods to the Nabateans that is the Arabs of the Suez and the North West. Arabia, who served as an intermediary between India and Rome exerted great influence on the Red Sea Coast upto Leucercome and also up to Euphrates along the borders of Syria and Arabia.

During the first two centuries A.D. Petra was the seat of commerce and an emporium of Indian commodities. The Indian commodities also included swords, iron, ivory, pearls, jewels, teakwood, cane,
bamboo, cords, Sindhu fowl, velvet, cotton and silk textiles, camphor and sandal wood. Indian swords of different varieties were variously termed Sail al Hind, Hindi, Muhannid, Hinduani and Handuwani. Likewise, Indian spears and light straight bamboos were very much adorned.

From time immemorial the Arabs had a great liking for scents and perfumes and they were enamoured of the Indian musk, henna and ood and these were popularly known as ‘Hindi’. There were certain goods which were Arabicised because of their common use, as Kafur (Kapur), zangbeels (Zanzbeer), fifil (pippal), saj (sagwan), qust (kustha), dazi (tari) and quran ful (karamphool), The Arab’s regard for India, derived out of frequent use of its products was so much that they used to name their favourite and fair daughters as Hind, Hinda and Saifi Hindi signifying their dream land, India.

Some of the Indian settlers in Arabia are recorded by Arabic History as Zut Meid, Siyabajab, Ahamira and Aswirah. There is evidence to show that the Jats joined the Iranian Army and later permanently settled in the coastal areas of Basrah and Bahrain. According to Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, they were employed by the Arabs as guards of their ship and boats. The fourth Caliph Ali appointed the Jats in charge of the entire Muslim treasury at the time of the famous battle of Jabal 9. It has been reported that Aisha, the beloved wife of the Prophet was treated by a Jat physician who cured her 10.

Siyabaga or Sibabaga were employed as the auxiliary force on
the Arab boats and merchandise laden ships during voyages on high seas. Lisam-al-Arab described them as “strong and brave Indians” \(^{11}\). Some of the Ahmara or Hantra ‘the red clad people from Sind’ so called, most probably due to their saffron coloured robes, were renowned commentators of religious philosophy. They engaged in scholastic pursuit and interpreted Budhist philosophy to the Arabs. The term Aswira was derived from the Sanskrit word ‘asvavara’ and meant cavalryman. They occupied high position in the Iranian Army and adopted Iranian fashions although they preserved their Indian identity. The Arab poets eulogized their courage and bravery. Indians formed a sizable population settled in different places including Yamama, Najran, Mecca and Medina.

According to Islamic tradition, Adam, the first Man and Prophet, descended on Indian soil from Heaven and received the first divine message from God \(^{12}\). The Muslims also believe that Adam’s eldest son Shith is lying buried at Ayodhya. Besides, we find many similarities in the religious practice of Arabia and India. Sajda (prostration), Ihram (garb prescribed for Haj) and Tawaf (circumbulation) of Kaba have close resemblance to the mode of worship of the Indians. It might have been one of the reasons why the Prophet said:

> “From India comes the divine fragrance to me” \(^{13}\).

Muhammad, the Prophet was born in 570 AD in Arabia, after five years of death of Justinian, the great Byzantine emperor and the master of the Corpus Juris Civilis. Arab means arid. Three quarters of Arabia
consisted of desert, sparsely peopled by nomadic tribes. None in those years could have dreamt that within a century these nomads could conquer half of Byzantine Asia, all Persia and Egypt, most of North Africa and be on their way to Spain. The explosion of the Arabian Peninsula into the conquest of conversion of half of the Mediterranean World into Islam is the most extraordinary phenomenon in medieval history. Arabia is the largest of all Peninsulas 1400 miles in its greatest length 1250 miles in its greatest width. Geologically it is a continuation of the Sahara, part of the sandy belt that runs up through Persia to the Gobi Desert. The cities of Mecca and Medina are in the Hejaz District on the western side and Yemen District, the home of an ancient kingdom is in the southwest.

A Babylonian inscription approximately 2400 BC records the defeat of a king of Magan by the Babylonian ruler Naran-Sin. An inscription tentatively ascribed to 2300 BC mentions another Arabian Kingdom, Saba in Yemen. It is narrated in the Holy Quran that from Saba, Bilqis, the queen of Sheba, went into Solomon, the great and submitted her kingdom to him (about 950 BC). The Sabean monarchs made their capital at Marib, fought the usual wars of defense built great irrigation works like the Marib dam, whose ruins are still visible, raised gigantic castles and temples and subsidized religion handsomely and used it as an instrument of rule. Their inscription probably not older that 900 BC are beautifully carved in an alphabetical script.
The Sabeans produced the frankincense and myrrh that played so prominent a role in Asiatic and Egyptian rituals. They controlled the sea trade between India and Egypt and the South end of the Caravan route that led through Mecca and Medina to Petra and Jerusalem. About 115 BC another petty kingdom of South West Arabia, the Himyarite, conquered Saba and thereafter controlled Arabian trade for several centuries. In 25 BC, Emperor Augustus irked by Arabian control of Egyptian Indian commerce sent an army under Aelius Gallus to capture Marib; the legions were misled by native guides, were decimated by heat and disease and failed in their mission; but another Roman army captured the Arab port of Adana Aden and gave control of the Egypt India route to Rome 18.

In the second century before Christ some Himyarites crossed the Red Sea, colonized Abyssinia and gave the indigenous Negro population a Semitic culture and considerable Semitic blood. The Abyssinians received Christianity, crafts and arts from Egypt and Byzantine, their merchant vessels sailed as far as India and Cylone and several small kingdoms acknowledged the Negus as their sovereign. In the north, some minor Arab kingdoms flourished briefly. The Sheiks of the Ghassanid tribe ruled North Western Arabia and Palmyrene Syria from the third to the seventh century as Phylarchs or client kings of Byzantine. During the same period the Lakhmid kings established at Hira near Babylon a semi Persian court, famous for its music and poetry. Long before Muhammad, the Arabs had expanded into Iraq.
Aside from these petty kingdoms south and north, the political organization of pre-Islamic Arabia was a primitive kinship structure of families united in clans and tribes. Tribes were named from a common ancestor, the banu Ghassan, considered themselves the “Children of Ghassan”. Before Muhammad, Arabia as a political unit existed only in the careless nomenclature of the Greeks, who called the population of the Sarakenion, Saracens, apparently from Arabic word Sharqium- “Easterners”. Each tribe or clan was loosely ruled by a Sheik chosen by its leader from a family traditionally prominent through wealth or wisdom or war.

The Arabs took pride in the antiquity and fullness of their language. The poet was to the Arabs their historian, genealogist, satirist, moralist, newspaper, oracle and inspiration to battle. When a poet won a prize at the annual contest, the whole tribe felt honored and rejoiced. The winning poems were written down in brilliantly illuminated characters called the golden songs and were preserved like heirloom in the treasures of princes and kings. The Arabs called them ‘Muallaquat’ or Suspended. The prize poems inscribed upon Egyptian silk in letters of gold, were hung on the walls of the Kaba in Mecca. Seven such Muallaquat dating from the sixth century survive from the pre-Islamic days. Their form is the quasida, a narrative order, in elaborately complex meter and rhyme usually of love or war.

This was a period of Jahiliya, that is ignorance. At the time of the rise of Islam, there were only seventeen persons in the entire tribe of
Qureshi who were able to write. The Prophet’s counsel ‘to seek knowledge even if it were in China’ inspired them to travel and meet people of knowledge. The Prophet further said “whoso ever goes forth to seek learning is in the way of God; until he returns home blissfully, the angels spread their wings over him, even the fish in the water”. Finally travelling became a craze. The foundation of Muslim civilization, its learning and science were laid by these travellers in search of knowledge (Fi-talabil –ilm). Its development was deeply influenced by Syria, Mesopotamia, India and Greece and the knowledge and advancement of these ancient civilizations provided the foundation. The Arab conquest of Persia in the middle of the seventh century marked the ascendancy of Persian influence which had far reaching consequence. Sir William Muir in his “Life of Muhammet and History of Islam” writes

“with the rise of Persian influence, the roughness of Arab life was softened; and there opened an era of culture, toleration and scientific research”

Iran by its very name, was the land of ‘Aryans’ and then included Afganistan, Baluchistan, Sogdiana, Balkh as well as Iraq. ‘Persia’ anciently the name of the modern province of Fars was but a south eastern fraction of this empire, but the Geeks and Romans careless about “barbarians” gave the name of a part to the whole.

The Arab modern civilization that soon ensued, resulted in the founding of a paper manufacturing plant at Baghdad (AD 794). The great translation Bureau and scientific academy ‘Baitul Hikmah’ (House
of wisdom) was established at Baghdad under Harun-Al-Rashid whose learned scholars and translators of all nationality and religions were employed for rendering books on scientific subjects into Arabic. The writings of the ancients were collected from all countries regardless of caste and traditions and were paid their value in gold that was equal to the weight of the Books. Among the translators were two well know Indian scholars namely Manka and Ibn-I-Dahan who rendered valuable services for translating Indian scientific works into Arabic. It was Indian astrology which flourished in the court of Baghdad. Muhammad bin Musa al Khwarizmi at the instance of the Caliph, translated Brahmagupta’s Sidhanta dating as far back as 425 BC, subsequently Yaqub bin Tariq incorporated in his Tarika-al-Aflak, principles of Indian Astronomy. A little later, Arya Bhata’s and Varahamihira’s works on astronomy were also studied and incorporated into the Arab’s scientific literature. This had prompted Al Beruni (973-1048 AD) for his theory of the movement of earth. Mathematics, Arithmetic’s supplying Arab numerals adopting zero from India, Chemistry, medicine, philosophy, history, geography, linguistics, poetry, art, literature, music, Sufism, mysticism and theology produced novel ideas and developed into new horizon.

In India King HarshaVardhana had died in the middle of the seventh century leaving behind the golden period which marked the visit of the famous Chinese traveller Hieum Tsang who remained in India for eight years (635 – 643 AD). The political disintegration that followed
in India was a process parallel to the rise of Islam. The Islamic conquest of Persia brought the Zoroastrian sect fleeing into India for sanctuary. The bond between India and Persia was an ancient one. During the time of Darius-I, Shah of Persia, a part of Sind was one of the twenty satrapies of the Persian Empire. The Magi, the Persian priestly class were highly respected and many of them had settled down in western India. The ancestry of a class of Sun worshipping Brahmins can be traced to the Magi of Persia.

The earliest Muslims in the Indian sub continent were Arab Sea farers and merchants who settled as compradors on the Malabar coast under the protection of the Hindu Rulers. It is evidenced that the spread of Islam had been through commercial relations between the Arabs and the Indians. Jawaharlal Nehru in the ‘Discovery of India’ states that:

“This frequent intercourse inevitably led to Indians getting to know the new religion Islam. Missionaries also came to spread this new faith and they were welcomed. Mosques were built. There was no objection raised either by the state or the people nor there were any religious conflicts. It was the old tradition of India to be tolerant to all faiths and forms of worship. Thus Islam came as a religion to India, several centuries before it came as a political force”.

The considerable Muslim population of Malabar remarked upon by the Arab traveller Ibn Bthutha (1304-78) had grown under non-Muslim power. It appeared that it was through an indigenous society, that Islam was introduced into India, a land of already developed civilization defined by agriculture, urbanization, organized higher religion,
spirituality and political regimes of complex nature. The Islam professed by Indian Muslims developed over a span of almost thirteen centuries contemporaneously with its spreading in the lands of its origin. It has grown in India hand in hand with Hindu religion either adopting some of its rites and custom or clinging to pristine Islam of Arabia, Persia or Turkey.

There is little doubt that the rise of Islam in Kerala is contemporaneous with the spread of the religion in the Arabian Peninsula though some historians are sceptical about the fact. The Pre-Islamic Arabs such as Sabeans and Hadramauthians were having busy trade with the Malabar coast. It provided fertile ground for the easy and smooth penetration of Islam around those ports. They obviously received patronage from the local chieftons who were greatly benefited by the international trade carried on by the Arabs. The Arab settlers and indigenous Moppila community which flourished through intermarriage with native women became a prosperous and influential community during the first eight centuries of Islam in Kerala. In Calicut under the Zamorin, Muslims were given a place of honour in the sovereign durbar and were his chief admirals and managers (Shabandar) of the port.

This synthesis of Islamic faith with Indian faith system had been a natural one. This synthesis was actually facilitated by philosophy, Indian logic or more specifically Indian knowledge system. I had already mentioned the Indian approach to Nature. Nature is uniquely plural and
multiple. Each single blade of grass is unique and there is no other blade of grass like this one from the past, present and also of the future. This tremendous variety with the Nature had gone into shaping Indian knowledge system. The same knowledge system ultimately shapes Indian world view towards spirituality, religion, faith, rites as well as rituals. Beyond the multiplicity and plurality of Nature which are only apparent and temporary, the Nature still remains uniform. Irrespective of differences in time space and knowledge systems, the Reality remains the same which is realized through the approaches, different languages, different techniques as well as different descriptions. This is why the Indian wisdom states “Ekam Sat; Vipra Bahudha Vadañti”.

The multiple faith system were understood by the Indian epistemology as variety with only peripherical significances. Thus, the Indian mind was able to transcend differences in faith systems to think in terms of one ultimate reality. When it comes to Advaita Vedañta of Śaṅkarācārya discussion about this ultimate reality becomes ‘unqualified monism’. Here the ultimate reality cannot be ascribed any qualities (Nirguṇa) or shape (Nirakāra). This simply demonstrates that ultimate reality is beyond qualities, beyond shape and beyond being described.

Given this attitude towards religion it is only natural for Indians to welcome any new faith from any distant land. Thus, the Islamic faith and the religion itself just got amalgamated in the Malabar Coast with their existing religious conception. Naturally, the new religion attracted
many inquisitive minds who started following Islamic faith retaining their own Culture and Tradition. Subsequently Islam through generations became an Indian religion like Buddhism and Jainism and acquired a unique status.

It is in this background that we must look at the King of Chera Emperor adopting Islamic faith and proceeding to Mecca for Haj, the pilgrimage.

Tuhfatul Mujahidun, a work composed in the sixteenth century AD, reveals that Cheraman Perumal the last king of Chera empire embraced Islam, travelled by Ship to Arabia and landed at Shahr from where he went to Jiddah and visited Prophet Muhammad, accepted the name Thajudeen and married the sister of Arabian king Habibuddin and stayed there five years. T.W. Arnold in his “the spread of Islam in India- The preaching of Islam”21 states among others, about the building of the first mosques at Cranganore, Madayi and Quilon at the instance of Malik ibn Dinar and his nephew Malik ibn Habeeb the first Islamic missionaries to Malabar under whose inspiration the Raja proceeded to Mecca.

The LekshaDeep where the majority of the people speak Malayalam as mother tongue are totally Muslims. From the accounts of Abdulla Ibn Muhammad, the tentative date of entry of Islam in the island of Lakshadeep is A.H.41. It is believed that the first Khalifa Abudbacker’s grand son Ubaidulla sailed and reached these islands, married a local woman who was the first convert. Gradually the resi-
dents of all other islands embraced Islam.

In case of Christian missionary we experience en masse as well as enduring efforts to religious conversion as ongoing. Often times, this has political support from the rulers. The Christian missionaries had long evolved very systematic machineries to make Christianisation scientific. They used all state as well as social apparatus to this end. On the contrary Islam does not have any organized missionary program. It is interesting to note that wherever people became Muslims it was not through any scientific techniques of conversion.

In most of India the appeal of Islam was relatively restricted. What was remarkable, however, was that Islam gained its greatest and most lasting missionary triumphs in times and places where its political power has been weakest, example South India and East Bengal. The Muslim emphasis upon loyalty to the ruler, patron client relations and virtues of service and honour were consistent with Hindu political ideas. Muslim recognition of the hierarchy of ranks validated the recognition of the Hindu society. It was very natural and spontaneous for the Muslims to co-exist with the Hindus. First of all both Muslims and Hindus were the same people but with difference in faith systems. These differences, as we saw earlier are absolutely not a new phenomenon to the people of India. For them they are simply different ways to the same goal.

All my efforts right from the very beginning had been to understand culture, religion, religiosity and spirituality. I had been trying to
say that changes in faith do not affect or alter culture. Culture continues
to be what it is in spite of alterations in faith or ritualistic, religious
practices. At this point it becomes important to understand what pre-
cisely culture can mean.

We find Budha speaking about two types of culture and he terms
them as Saṅkāras. Indeed, Saṅkāra shall be the Pāli counter part of
Saṁskāra in Sanskrit. For Budha there is RāgaSaṅkāra as well as Dvēṣa
Saṅkāra. Budha teaches that Rāga Saṅkāra should be received and Dvēṣa
Saṅkāra avoided.

When it comes to Saṁskāra of Saṅskrit, which could be synonym
for the English word ‘Culture’ an understanding becomes far more seri-
ous and complicated. The very name given to Saṅskrit language itself is
worth thinking about. Let us remember that Saṅskrit was never any one’s
mother tongue. It was a language used by scholars only. All process of
imparting as well as receiving knowledge was done through this lan-
guage. All discussions or intellectual endeavours were through this
medium of Saṅskrit language. It is also interesting to note that there is
not any abusive words in Saṅskrit. This is natural because the language
of Saṅskrit was not used by people who has the frequent requirement of
abusive language. Indeed this is because Saṅskrit was not mother tongue
to anyone, or common language of the market or in use at the streets.

The name given to the language of Saṅskrit (cultured) itself sug-
gests that the language Saṅskrit is a refined or perfected version from
yet another mother tongue language which may be Pali, Pākkṛt or both. Sanskrit is called Sanskrit because it is refined, purified and perfected through an unknown process of ‘sputikaraṇa’.

Let us construct our understanding of culture on the basis of the example through Sanskrit language. A cultured person is refined person, purified person or perfected person. A cultured person may be minus negative human qualities. He may have only positive human qualities. Undoubtedly culture is a quality concept like the concept of ‘Ārya’, ‘Brāhmaṇa’, etc.

Unfortunately Western historians like Max Muller and McCauley had changed the meaning of Āryan concept to fit into their own purposes. This of course, is revealed through latest researches. An ‘Āryan’ is a cultured person. In other words a cultured person is who we call Ārya. RgVeda says that “Praji Ārya Jyōtiragrah” (RgVeda VII-33.7). This means that the people who could be called as Āryans ‘Seek light and are also led by light’. ‘Light’ here means enlightenment; which in turn is culture in its highest form. Some people wrongly believed that acculturisation or Āryanisation is meant only for the Brāhmaṇās or atleast the Vedic people of the old. This is a huge mistake. By virtue of one’s acquiring or attaining qualities one becomes an Ārya or Brāhmaṇa. When a person loses culture he immediately becomes ‘Anārya’ or ‘Mlecha’. Manusmriti very clearly and categorically says this. (Manusmriti Chapter X, Verses 43 to 45). Manu speaks about how the Paundrakās, Drāvidās, Kāmbōjas, yavanās, Pahllawās and Chinās etc., gradually lost
their culture and became Anāryās. Maharshi Valmiki described Rāma as an Ārya and instructs who could be called ‘Ārya’. (Ramayana I:1-16).

Āryavarta is the name given to that portion of land where people are superiorly cultured. Culture makes a person Ārya. Differences in culture segregate society into four varnās. Acculturisation can be through many ways. Through education (Vijñāna) one can get himself refined and become cultured. The same thing is possible through Śādhana and Samyōga with great people. In a word, culture is the contribution from society as well as individual families enabling one to refine and make the individual members better and perfect.

According to Oxford Dictionary, Culture means 1(a) the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively (b) refined understanding of this (2) the customs, civilization and achievements of a particular time or people.

The ethnographic definition of culture espouses either a materialist or an ideational perspective. “The Classic materialist interpretation of culture focuses on behaviour. In this view, culture is the sum of a social group’s observable pattern of behaviour, custom and way of life. The most popular ideational definition of culture is the cognitive definition. According to the cognitive approach, culture comprises the ideas, beliefs and knowledge that characterize a particular group of people. The second and currently most popular definition specifically
excludes behaviour 22.

In his charter definition of the anthropological concept of culture. E.B.Taylor, British anthropologist stated in 1871.

“Culture or civilization taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morale, law custom and any and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society” 23.

The definition, which is really an enumeration has sometimes been compressed into the statement that culture comprises all kinds of learned behaviour and in practice the distinguishing feature of culture is often said to be that it is concerned with customs and ways 24. Cultures have developed through centuries and they present a rich variety of types. The Hellenic and Hebraic types, for example differs in their background, outlook and ideals. The one looks for the joys and pleasures of life the other shuns them for the sake of the joys and pleasures of the soul. Every system of religion has built around itself consciously or unconsciously a system of culture and civilization which appears like its halo: Cultures and civilization are the expression of the collective mind of people in differing moods and depths.

Every nation, every race, has raised its own magnificent structures of thought, adorned by the bright and beautiful blossoms of the various arts. They have enriched civilization by their treatises on law and polity, they have expressed their joy of life not only in the melody of music but also in the rhythm of colour; they have wrought poetry not
only in prose and verse but also in silver and gold, in marble and tapestry in the language of the soul crying for God and its rhapsodies 25.

In 1916, Clark Wissler, an American Anthropologist, distinguished between Culture in general and the separate cultures of individual groups of people in particular. He also stated that Culture has to be learned. During the 1920s A.R.Radcliffe and his contemporaries emphasized the fact that each culture is an integral whole, like a living being. According to Margerat Mead:

“Culture is an abstraction from the body of learned behaviour which a group of people who share the same tradition transmit entirely to their children. It depends not only on art and services, religions and philosophies, but also the system of technology, the political practices, the small intimate habit of daily life such as the way of preparing or eating food or housing a child to sleep as well as the method of electing Prime Minister or changing the constitution”.

When the people of one culture meet that of another as groups grow, they usually exchange ideas and products. The impact of one culture on another is called acculturation.

The term culture literally means cultivation. In the context it demands all cultivated practices of people which in a very broad sense refer to the complex aggregate of morals, normative values, conventions, customs, rituals, laws, beliefs, arts and knowledge- probably all aspects of human life. Its meaning is too diffuse to be specific in the lexical sense. ‘Culture’ is a metaphor. As an object of knowledge it de-
notes two different things; one what the people uncritically accept and the other, what historians validate. In popular minds culture of a land is what its people uncritically accept as their proud heritage 26.

Culture is a unique human reality. Civilization is a union of soil and soul- the resources of the earth transformed by the desire and discipline of men. It emanates from the unity of human kind in nature; but it situates itself as a meta natural reality. Culture gives meaning to our relationship with the other as it also forms our subjective identity. Culture, therefore, enters into the process of social change in many forms and at various levels. It defines the quality of social change as its indicator with all its institutional pervasiveness; it has a core, which acts as a filter or a moderator to the outside forces of cultural contact and change. This also explains why in each mainstream culture one may find existence of subcultures and counter cultures.

Culture has its roots in the Munomenology of species. It is deeply anchored in the existential aspects of human reality and one cannot go far in understanding culture or the relationship that culture has with the society without locating in the existential milieu. There are, however, certain elements in the human reality which go beyond the existential; those are cognitive symbolic and mental 27.

Culture consists of pattern explicit and implicit and behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the
essential core of culture consisting of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may on the one hand be considered as products of actions, on the other as conditioning element of further action 28.

There are no absolute units or natural boundaries for cultural historical studies. The lines of demarcation of any cultural unit chosen for description and analysis are in large part a matter of level of abstraction and of convenience for the problem at hand 29.

Culture, a uniquely human attribute is something which man interposes between himself and his environment in order to ensure his security and survival. As such culture is adaptive.

Leslie A. Whitl (1949) speaks of culture as a “Specific and concrete mechanism employed by a particular animal organism in adjusting to its environment.” 30 Ralph Piddington (1952) holds that “culture is essentially an adaptive mechanism, making possible the satisfaction of human needs, both biological and social” 31. As this attitude has gained currency, cultures have ceased to be treated as unique constellation of traits, each the fortuitous product of history. A culture is now more frequently thought as the resultant of a parallelogram of forces-forces whose identity can be ascertained and whose effects can be weighed.

The social life is not something mysterious or capricious but that like technology it is adaptive, has long been appreciated by biologists. The ecologist Augushoodburry (1954) recognised that social life is an
adaptation for efficient use of time and space upon the earth. The existence of social life, he thought, was forced upon members of a group by their need to co-operate in order to succeed in the struggle for existence.

A question that remains to be answered are how cultural adaptation is related to cultural evolution. The two are not synonymous: adaptation is the adjudication of a society to its external and internal conditions of existence while evolution is a change by which a society grows larger, more heterogeneous and more coherent.

Culture change is the conceptual formulation that refers to the many ways in which societies change their pattern of culture. Internal factors such as new inventions may lead to an increased food supply and population growth or external factors such as conquest by another society may bring about culture change. We know from the records of pre-history and history that the pattern of culture of every human society are constantly changing. The rate and type of change may be slow and gradual, as it was during the Paleolithic age or fast and drastic as it has been in contemporary societies.

In this context, it is to be stated that, ‘Indian Culture’ which amalgamated into itself the vital contributions made by Islam from the very date of its inception till today, could endure the test of time and sustain its uniqueness’.
References:

1. **Dr. Basham, A.L.** “From the Introduction to Cultural History of India”.


3. **C.F. Mookergi.** “His Hbneil Lectures for 1887– Indian Shipping”. P-83.

4. Ibid P-86

5. Ibid, Ref: Cowell


15. Holy Quran- Surah Naml or the Ants (27), verses 20 to 44 deal with the story of Solomon (Sulaiman) and the queen of Sheba, Bilquis, Solomon knew the speech of ants, birds and so on in the animal world and had hosts of jinns and men. The queen of Shiba whose religion consisted in the worship of heavenly bodies- the sun, the planets and the stars went to Solomon and submitted her kingdom with the conviction to the wisdom of Solomon and the kingdom of God.

16. Saba city in Yemen was at a distance of about 50 miles from the city of Sana. A recent German explorer Dr. Hans Helfritz, claims to have located it what is now Hadramaut territory. The famous dam of Maarib made the country very prosperous and enabled to attain a high degree of civilization. The Queen of Shiba therefore rightly held up her head high until she beheld the glories of Solomon – commentary by Adbulla Yusuf Ali on the Holy Quran.

17. The Queen of Sheba, by name Bilqis in Arabian tradition came apparently from Yemen but she had affinities with Abyssinia
and possibly ruled over Abyssinia also. The Habasha tribe after whom Abyssinia was named came from Yemen. In the 10th-11th century BC there were frequent invasion of Abyssinia from Arabia and Solomon’s reign of 40 years is usually synchronized with BC 992 to 952. The Sabean and Himyarite alphabets in which we find the South Arabian Pre-Islamic inscriptions, passed into Ethiopia, the language of Abyssinia. The Abyssinians possess a traditional history called “The Book of the Glory of Kings” (Kebra Nagast), which was translated from Ethiopic into English by Sir E.A. Wallis Budge (Oxford 1932). It gives an account of the Queen of Sheba and her only son Menyelik-I, as founder of the Abyssinian dynasty- commentary by Adbulla Yusuf Ali on the Holy Quran.


24. Ibid.


26. **Dr. Rajan Gurukkal, General Editor.** “Cultural History of Kerala from the earliest to the spread of wet rice”. Chapter-I, Perspectives, Page-3.


28. **A.L. Krober and Clyde Kluckholm.** “The pattern theory of culture- Critical review” International Encyclopedia. 1952, P- 81,

29. Ibid

30. Ibid

31. Ibid