CHAPTER I
Chapter I

The emergence of the religion of Islam as a socio-political power.

The Arabs belong to the Semitic race. They are the descendents of the Prophet Ibrahim (blessings of God be on him) who had established his two sons Ismail and Isaq (blessing of God be on them) in the two different regions of the world, one in Arabia and the other in Syria respectively. They flourished in their own region with their centres at Mecca and Jerusalem. Since he had settled his son Ismail in a desert land he prayed to God to provide the necessicities of life for them. His prayers were granted. They were the guardians of the house of God Kaba at Mecca which is visited by the Muslims from all over the world every year in the month of Dhu - Al - Hijjah within a few years the children of Ismail spread all over Hijaz in the Arabian region. The were respected as the religious and political leaders of the Arabs.

The population of the Arabs was divided into two sections, one who lived in cities and the other who roamed all over the desert in search of food and water with their camels and sheep.

Prophet Ibrahim had preached the religion of Islam to them but with the passage of time they drifted away from his fundamental teachings to such an extent that they adopted themselves to the practice of idol worship. Our source of information about Arabic and its people is mainly the Holy Quran and the traditions handed down to us from people to people. Among the descendents of the prophet Ismail (blessings of God be on him) was one Fahr who was called Quraish. He lived in the third century of the Christian era. He was the head of the largest tribe of Arabia
and he was the most influential ruler of the tribe of Quraish. One of his descendents named Qussa ( ) gained power in the fifth century of the christian era. He rebuilt Kaba and constructed a palace for himself with a big hall called Daru Al-Nadva. It was during his days that the people of Meca started living in houses instead of living in huts.

They people of Arabia were the masters of their own who possessed unique qualities different from the qualities of the people of other regions of the world. They had long been established in their independence in the great desert peninsula. They continued to live in solitude almost cut off from the rest of the world. Great empires sprang around them, but they remained undisturbed free from foreign domination. The frontier cities were paying homage to the rulers of the great empires of Rome and Persia but nobody could touch them. Their desert and their valour kept out the invaders. It was till the seventh century of the christian era that nothing was known of the secluded people. The character of the Arabs is best displayed in their way of living which is depicted in their poetry.

It was in the sixth century of the christian era that a sudden change in the character of Arabs was witnessed. This was caused by the message of one man who claimed to be the Prophet of God. He was watching his people with whom he lived. He was neither educated nor a rich man with a high position in the society. But his piety, truthfulness and honesty in his dealings earned him the name 'Al-Amin ' 'The trustworth', by which he was called. He kept quiet up to his age of forty. His name was Mohammad. After he reached the age of forty. He was ordered by his lord the Christ of the universe to convey. His message to the people and to Preach Islam as religion of God. For thirteen years he worked in Mecca under very difficult conditions and stiff opposition from his own people, so much so that at last
they decided to kill him. Then he migrated to Madina and his followers there received him with open arms where he lived for ten years passing through the hard times facing three fierce attacks by the armies of the infidels of Mecca. The last of them was the "battle of trenches". 

). When, at last the Prophet (P.B.U.H) was able to occupy Mecca annihilating all opposition, he turned his attention towards the outside world to convey his message. The process had already started when he had sent the first army of Islam to Syria under the command of Zaid Bin Haritha (زير بن حارثة) in the month of jamdi-Al-ula of 8 Hiji. The second expedition was under his own command (in Rajab of the same Hiji) which is known as the battle of Tabuk (تبوك).

It was within ten years after the migration of the Prophet (P.B.U.H) to Madina that the whole Arabia was converted to Islam and there was no opposition from within the country. The Islamic state was firmly established and the religion of Islam was complete in all respects with the following verses revealed at the time of Hijjatu-Al-vida.

اليوم أتمّت الله دينكم أنتمت عليكم نعمة رزمنا
(الاسماء ذات الاعظم من عدة) 

Now this message was required to reach the outside world and for that his attention was focussed on entering the adjoining countries with the message of Al Quran. With that purpose the armies of Islam had started entering Syria facing the mighty power of the Roman empire. The process had already started from the expedition of Muta in the year 8 Hijra which was followed by the battle of Tabuk and now the army was ready to enter Syria under the command of Usama. But it was ordained by God that after
the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) had completed his mission it should be left to his companions to do the rest using their own talents to manage the Islamic state so much so that he did not nominate his successor and left it to the choice of his companions.

The Prophet of Islam (P.B.U.H.) had a peculiar charm in his personality and he was holding all his followers spellbound. His word was supreme, the word of God. The followers of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) could hardly believe that their teacher their master their benefactor and the saviour of mankind could ever die. They thought there was much to be done for him to establish the Islamic order and he will live for that purpose. But it is strange that just after he left this world without nominating his successor or giving any clear hint for the purpose there was confusion all around and at last when his senior companion Abu Bakr was elected to succeed him he had to face gigantic problems one after the other in succession. The towering personality of the commander of the faithful Abu Bakr (may God be pleased with him.) was equal to the task and it was only he who could face the situation boldly and resolutely. He subdued the warring sections of the tribes of Arabia and at the same time directed his attention towards the conquest of Syria and Iran which he almost accomplished during his caliphate and whatever was left undone was complete by his successor Omar the great whose regime as commander of the faithful is in fact the golden period of Islam after the Prophet whose Iron hand kept every body disciplined. He is remembered as ( Imam Al Adalien ) chief among the adminstrators of justice who would not hesitate in punishing the offender and rewarding the good doer.

After the assassination of Omar the other two caliphs were facing opposition from within and at last they themselves were the target of attack
by their opponents who managed to kill them. It was after the assassination of the third pious caliph that the gate of civil strife opened and then never closed. Now the caliphate assumed the form of monorchy and it was only the strong hand of monorchy that restored peace but it was temporary and after the death of Hazrat Muawiyah (may God be pleased with him) that the Islamic world was shaken different forces clashed and there was blood shed all round. The existence of the very Muslim state seemed to be in danger. Thousands died when Muslims were killing Muslims regardless of the teaching of the Quran and the Sunnah. At last God decided in favour of the Umayyad dynasty to rule. Piety and political wisdom do not always go together. The Umayyad dynasty, on the whole possessed wonderful ability to rule. No doubt they protected the Arab character of the Islamic regime. They extended the boundaries of the Muslims rule from the interior part of India to the borders of France in Europe after occupying Span. Their military achievements are wonderful and no doubt the family of Umayyad served Islam so well.

However inspite of the political and cultural achievements Islam under their rule suffered the loss of moral values.

The idea of equality in Islam and the criterion of nobility as prescribed by the Quran and the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was thrown to winds.

At last a popular movement against the Umayyad rule was well organised in the remote region of Khurason by a talented organiser a brave social worker and an able general. Abu Muslim Khurasani under the instructions of his masters the house of Abbas. This Abbasid propaganda made the already unpopular regime extremely unpopular. Another factor which was working against the Umayyads was the disunity of the family and fight for power among themselves. They were unmindful of the
conditions and the destiny was working against them. At last there was popular uprising of the people against the regime which was like a tide strong that it could not be checked by human force. It was as if the wrath of God had descended upon the ruling dynasty. No doubt their rule was very short lived but ws indeed a glorious one for the Arabs. The non Arabs who were subjugated by the Arab forces and who had lost their past glory and pride were experiencing humiliation at the hands of the Arab rulers inspite of their embracing the religion of Islam.

The second factor which was working agianst the Umayyad rule was the feeling of the shiate section that the house of Ali was always neglected by the Arabs themselves. In short there was great dissatisfaction among the people against the Umayyad rule. But no effective organised opposition could be organised all these years. The house of Ali had tried but failed. They were subjected to brutal treatment. They suffered for long on that account. The shrewd branch of the dynasty of Hashim the family of Abbas took advantage of the condition prevailing against the Umayyads. The atrocities committed by the Umayyad rulers against the house of Hashim were made public.

The tragedy of the massacre of the family of Ali at Karbala was the theme of the Abbasid propaganda. This act of cruelty was kept fresh in the minds of the people by demonstrating it specially during the month of Mohram every year, when this tragedy was enacted and also on opprpppriate occasions.

The Abbasids who assumed power after the downfall of the Umayyads had prepared the ground for them by launching a campaign against them which was wisely and tactfully managed by Abu - Muslim Khurasani. This is what is called Abbasid propaganda which was a
preparation for a great revolution in favour of the Abbasid dynasty but it became a popular movement.

Not only the Arabs in general but also those who were new converts to Islam supported the movement wholeheartedly and when the time came the Umayyads were very easily ousted and a new regime was widely accepted. The Abbasids who captured power were different people. They did not observe the distinction between an Arab and a non-Arab. The Umayyads had not accepted non-Arabs in their administration while the Abbasids opened their doors for them also. Their policy was to keep the non-Arabs satisfied and wanted to take advantage of the administrative experience, knowledge, and culture which the non-Arabs possessed. During the days of Haroon Al Rashid it seemed as if non-Arabs were ruling the country. Yahya, his teacher and prime minister was so much respected by Haroon that he called him "my father". This state of affairs continued till the caliph himself realized the danger of his being inactive, with the result that J agar was killed and others of the family were ousted. Yet the policy of Abbasids did not change and the process of fusion of different cultures continued. The difference between the Umayyads and Abbasids is that Umayyads did not tolerate any non-Arab in their administration. They did not trust them and they did not offer them high posts. It is, therefore, that they could not buy the confidence of the non-Arabs.

Abu Muslim Khurasani who was a man of remarkable ability organised strong opposition to the Umayyad rule and it was because of his ability and his sincerity for the house of Abbas that the Abbasids captured power. The Abbasid rulers were aware of the power of the non-Arabs and they were wise enough to use them to build up the strength of their empire.
Saffah the killer who started his rule by killing the Umayyads and their supporters indiscriminately, did not live long to continue his atrocity and gave enough time to his talented brother Al - Mansoor to lay the foundation of the empire on sound basis.

It is an irony of fate, that the Abbasids who rose to power on the sympathy wave of the people for the house of Ali, considered the family their main opponents. The popularity of the house of Ali among the people was very great but God fulfilled himself in some other way. It was Mansoor who killed the descendent of Ali Nafsi Zakiyya so cruelly and suppressed the revolt of his uncle Abdullah brutally umindful of his services to his family. On the other hand he treated the Umayyads with kindness. However, we cannot blame Almansoor for what he did. He had to face many problems and had to take strong action against those who were a threat to his caliphate so much so that he had to eliminate his strong supporter Abu Muslim Khurasani, who had assumed threatening postures. The greatest danger to his power came from the descendent of Ali Al Nafsa Al Zakiyya (عليه السلام) and he had to spend many sleepless nights on that account.

Al - Mansoor was, no doubt, a great ruler the greatest among the rulers of his time. His achievements are manifold. He guarded the frontiers of the empire he suppressed the lawless elements with strong hand he established the rule of law he built the city of Baghdad he established educational centre and encouraged men of letters and men of sciences. He encouraged the translation work from Persian, Greek, Sanskrit and other languages into Arabic. When his son succeeded him the rule of equality for all was firmly established. There was no distiction between an Arab and non-Arabs. It was Islamic law of equality that was followed strictly for
administering justice to all people who belonged to different nationalities, tribes, race and religion.

After the death of Mehdi his two sons Hadi and then Haroon succeeded him one after the other. The period of Haroon Al - Rashid is regarded as the golden period in the history of Islam. Haroon Al Rashid was himself an accomplished scholar and a man of learning who gave new impetus to the efforts of promoting the cause of learning. It was during his rule that revolutionary development took place and the process of assimilating different cultures gained momentum. The period of Haroon Al Rashid was a period of great prosperity and expansion in every field of social life, Abbasid caliphs are rightly called the torch-bearers of sciences, education, civilization and culture.

We cannot close the topic without mentioning here the family Barmak and their services to the Islamic state. Their contribution to the prosperity of the empire by their efficient administration is in no way meagre. When the Abbasids created the post of minister it was Khalid Bin Barmak who was selected for this job whose family had vast administrative experience in the past. He had come Iraq with his brother and had settled in Basra. It appears that they were involved in the Abbasid movement for overthrowing the Umayyad dynasty. After the establishment of Abbasid rule he was rewarded for his services and was immediately appointed to the post of chief of Diwan Al - Jundi - Wal - Khiraj. Then he was appointed Governor of Tabrastan where he suppressed a revolt. He served as Governor of Iraq also. Though he was not actually appointed to the post of minister but he enjoyed the privileges of that post. His son Yahya was appointed as tutor of Haroon in the year 163 A.H. during the caliphate of Mehdi, Haroon respected his teacher so much that he called
his my father. When Mehdi died and Haroon Al Rashid succeeded him he raised the position of his teacher and appointed him minster with unlimited powers. He enjoyed this position for seventeen years and this period is called Barmakid period by the historians since he was head of all the departments of the state during these years. Yahya's two sons Fazl and Jafar were also very close to the caliph. They were given important posts. Jafar was so close to Haroon Al Rashid that the members of the family of Abbas were afraid of him. They were waiting for an opportunity to pull them down. At last the opportunity arose when Haroon Al Rashid became jealous of the powers of the family and all of sudden the tables turned against the family of Barmak. The causes of this sudden downfall have been discussed in many ways and there are different versions that came down to us. Here we are concerned with the result only and not with what happened behind the curtain. Haroon beheaded his fast friend Tatar and arrested the family. He confiscated their property and wealth. Now Haroon Al Rashid was the supreme ruler of his empire. It was all done in 184 A.H. after Haroon returned from the Hajj pilgrimage. People were bewildered to see the fate of the family. Jafar's body was hanged in Baghdad and Yahya and his son Fazl was sent to jail where Yahya died.

After removing the family of his minster from the office, Haroon al Rashid became active to perform his duties as head of the state.

Now Haroon Al rashid wanted to settle the question of succession to the caliphate after his death. Acting on the advice of his wife Zubaeda and her brother Isa Bin Jafar he appointed his son Amin to succeed him. After seven years he appointed his other son Mamoon to succeed his brother Amin as second in line of succession. He also appointed his third son Qasim to succeed Mamoon.
Haroon Al Rashid died in the year 193 A.H. - 809 A.D. When his son Mamoon was in Marw as Governor of Khurasan. Amin was with his father in Baghdad where he was sworn as the head of the greatest empire of the world which had given new religion, new outlook on life and new civilization and culture to the satisfaction of all. It was doubtful from the beginning whether Amin was equal to the task he was entrusted with. Acting against the desire and will of his father Haroon Al Rashid, he took a dangerous step by appointing his son as crown prince and dismissing Mamoon from the governorship of Khurasan. This resulted in a conflict between the two brothers. Amin was defeated and he was killed by the Iranian soldiers. Now Al Mamoon was recognised as the ruler of the Ismalian empire and Baghdad was waiting for his arrival. But despite this victory Mamoon would not leave his place Marw since he was engrossed in his pursuit of knowledge. He lived in a different world there and wanted to rule from Marw only. This decision created problems for him and civil strife continued for six years. It is criminal for the head of the state to be engaged in pursuit of knowledge when the public is crying for efficient administration with law and order. His minister Fazl Bin Sahal who had all the power and wanted to rule in his place kept him dark about all that was happening in his empire. The caliph was all the time reading nooks and discussing religion and ethics with scholars of his court. Things were going from bad to worst. In Syria Nisar the supporter of Umayyad family revolted against the caliph and he kept the royal army engaged for five years. In Kufa the situation was so grave that Ibn Tabatabe called upon the people to administer the oath of allegiance in favour of the house of Ali for the office of the caliphate. He had defeated Fazl Bin Sahal of Iraq. One of Imam Jafar’s sons was elected caliph in Hijaz. The situation was that of chaos and
confusion since the civil war had spread from the borders of Iran to Yamen. When the people of Baghdad were fed up with the mismanagement of the government they refused to take orders from fazi Bin Sahal. At last Mamoon came to know about the dangerous situation he had to face, and he shifted to Baghdad in 204 A.H. 819 A.D. and was able to restore law and order by crushing the rebellion. The instability had lasted for over ten years in Baghdad. After the death of Mamoon his brother Mutasim assumed power. He organised his own army which was chiefly made up of Tarkish soldiers. He relied on this army for his safety because his mother came from the same people. She was a Turkish lady. This proved disastrous for the caliph. Later on this army became so powerful and assumed such dangerous postures that they were considered the real king-makers. This proved to be one of the chief causes of the downfall of the Abbasid dynasty.

Mutasim had constructed his palace and also barracks at his newly built city Samare. The result was that the political stability was very much affected. After the death of Mutasim, his son Wathiq Billah succeeded him. His reign brought prosperity to the empire. He was also patronising the Turks at Samare. After his death his brother Mutewakkil assumed power. He enjoyed life as it came to him. But he was against the faith which Mutezalities professed. They were all removed from the state positions they held. Their property was confiscated. The old faith of the Muslims regarding created Khalqi Quran was restord as the religion of the state. He was dead against the house of Ali. At last he was eliminated by his own bodyguards. His son Muntasir who assumed power proved to be a good ruler. He tried to repair the damage his father had done. He treated the house of Ali with kindness and bestowed favour on them. But unfortunately he ruled for six months only after which he died.
The Abbassid period is full of civil wars which started from the days of Mansoor and continued for a long time. However the accession of the Abbasids to power represents a period of cultural revolution which is in fact a social phenomenon with astounding achievements in every fields of learning in which entire elite of "Abbasids society took part from caliphs, civil servants, military leaders, scholars, scientists and even merchants to common men who were all involved in the process. It was not the work of any particular group. All groups of elite society were associated with the task of furtherance of their cause.

It was the scholarly zeal of able people of learning which advanced the cause of learning in its many branches. It was, in fact, the social attitude of the early Abbasid society and the public culture of the period which produced such astounding results. With the destruction of the Umayyad dynasty the geographical expansion of Islamic domination had almost halted. Now was the period of the expansion of Islamic culture, Islamic learning and Islamic sciences which comprised all sciences of life, since Islam is a religion which teaches the art of living to the humanity at large.

This cultural revolution was the work of scholars who had the religious zeal of carrying on the work with rigorous methodology and strict philological attitude. It was by needs and tendencies in the Abbasid Society that the cause of learning flourishing so quickly in its every field. It was a popular cause for which the entire elite society of the early Abbasid society period was working which can not be said to be the result of the scholarly zeal of a few learned people. In fact the prose books which came down to us in the form of translations and other works of science and literature were chiefly the result of the active support of the Caliphs like Al-Mansur
Haroon al-Rashid and al-Mamun in particular. The policies of the early Abbasid Caliphs have much to do with the expansion of learning during their rule.

Since the Abbasid rule was the result of a civil war between different factions of the tribe of Quraish, the task before the second caliph of the dynasty Al-Masur who is considered the real founder Abbasid rule, was to reconcile not only the former rivals but also other different groups that worked for the change in favour of the house of Abbasid. This reconciliation was to be effected at the political and ideological level. At the same time it was necessary to satisfy the main groups that were instrumental in bringing the dynasty to power and which included the Persianized Arabs who had migrated to this region during the pre-Islamic days, the Persians who had converted to Islam and also the Zoroastrian Persians who had accepted the Arab rule. They tried to satisfy all sections of the society in one way or the other so much so that they incorporated Sasasian culture which was the culture of the vast population of East of Iraq by bringing this culture into mainstream of Arab culture.

Al- Mansur the second caliph of the dynasty is rightly considered the founder of the Abbasid dynasty because it was his farsightedness and his policies that ensured the longevity of the Abbasid rule and which had its far-reaching results, political as well as cultural. Al Mansur's sagacity with his political wisdom is responsible for laying the foundation of all round development. He deviated from the policy of the Umayyad with regard to the relation with non-Arabs who were now made part and parcel of his administration. The process of involving Arabs and non-Arabs cultures in one another speeded up as a result of this policy of the ruling dynasty. Al Mansur was taking personal interest in all matters, administrative, military.
literary and even in construction work of the city of Baghdad. In the process of the development of Arabic prose we can not overlook the part played by the translators who enriched the language by adding to its literature valuable information in different branches of learning. Till the prose writings in Arabic flourished as original works, these translation works served as a substitute for widening the scope of our knowledge with regard to its different branches. The translation works from Greek into Arabic which were initiated lasted for over two centuries and by the end of the third century, Hijra such topics as physics, mathematics, astrology, medicine, philosophy and logic were all translated into Arabic. This made the Arabic prose literature richer and richer, while side by side original prose works were coming up in other branches of learning with astonishing rapidity, the details of which have discussed separately.