CHAPTER I

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India is the birthplace of four great religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism—and the affectionate home of Islam, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. The last major universal religion to have appeared in history, Islam, came into being in the early 7th century in West-Central Asia.

India came into contact with Islam some twelve hundred and fifty years ago. Islam was introduced in some pockets on the western coast of India in the wake of an Arabian invasion of Sind by Muhammad-bin-Qasim in 712 A.D. This event has been described as "an episode in Indian history, a triumph without results."¹

Even though the Arab influence is limited to a comparatively small part of the country, its commercial and cultural impact cannot be ignored. Muslim power gained in North-Western India only after 1000 A.D. under the Gana-vides.

¹Lenpoole, S. History of medieval India (Delhi, 1975) p. 15.
borne on the subsequent history of India, which domi-

nated the political and social scene in India for Centuries.²

In the last quarter of the twelfth century there
arose another power in the rugged mountains of Firomkash in
Afghanistan. Mohammad Ghori launched a series of military
campaigns against Indian rulers, both Hindu and Muslim for
thirty years. He and his generals conquered the whole of
Northern India and established the Delhi Sultanate in 1206
A.D. Within hundred and fifty years this Sultanate expanded
almost to the extreme south. Towards the end of the 14th
century, it disintegrated into a number of provincial states.³

In the sixteenth century the Mughals built up an ex-
tensive empire which declined in the eighteenth century and
survived in name till the middle of the nineteenth century.
Medieval India specially the Mughal period, can be compared
to any society in terms of richness of culture. The Muslim

²Zafar Imam; (Ed), Muslims in India- (New Delhi, 1975), p. 4.
contribution in the field of architecture, painting music, literature and science is fairly well-known. The Muslim culture of this period had a profound impact on the regional life and thought.

A reference to the Muslim advent in South India will be more relevant for this study. Malick Kafur, the general of Sultan Ala-ud-Din Khilji of Delhi invaded South India and in a sweep conquered four Hindu Kingdoms in 1311 A.D. The Hindu kingdom of the Yadavas of Devagiri, the Hoyaselas of Dwarasamudra, the Pandyas of Madurai and the Kakatiyas of Warangal were overrun, plundered and to a certain extent subjugated. Muslim governors were established even at Madura, the ancient empire of the Pandyas. Hindu rule in the South was finally extinguished in 1327 A.D. Thus the reign of Ala-ud-din was distinguished by the stamping out of the last embers of Hindu rule. As a practical Statesman Ala-ud-din never desired to annex the south with his empire. On the


contrary he tried to keep good relations with those of the rulers of the south, who accepted his suzerainty and agreed to pay annual tribute. However, Ala-ud-din's conquest of the south was neither complete nor permanent. The Hindus of the South attempted now and then to free themselves from the yoke of Delhi.

During the reign of Mohammed-bin-Tughlaq the southernmost frontiers were consolidated into the 23rd province of the Tughlaq empire. But his victories were short lived due to a variety of reasons. Unlike the North where the Mohamadan invaders had contented themselves with political conquests, they adopted a different policy in the south. It was dictated by circumstances. South was almost entirely populated by Hindus, who were more orthodox and religious minded than the Hindus of the North. They tried to impose their religion as much out of political necessity as their political zeal. This attitude produced reaction. As control of the central Government was weakened, some of the Deccan states declared their independence. The foundation of Vijayanagar, the

Bahamani kingdom and the Sultanate of Madurai are manifestations of this reaction. All the independent kingdoms were conquered by the Mughals in the 17th century. The British sway was established over them in the 18th century and continued till India became independent.

Impact of Islam on South India: The Muslims who came to India, as invaders or settlers adopted the country as their own. For more than a thousand years Hinduism and Islam co-existed in India. Therefore, they are bound to influence each other. The fusion of the cultural traditions of Hinduism and Islam produced the Indo-Islamic culture. During the early medieval or Sultanate phase and the later medieval or Mughal phase it bloomed as a common cultural heritage. Hindu and Muslim saints by their attempt to create a brotherhood between the two communities greatly helped in the cultural development. Artists, painters, musicians and men of letters also have contributed to its growth under the influence of several liberal movements in medieval India both in the North and the South. The Hindu and the Muslim Communities began to

imbibe each other's thoughts, traditions and customs. Even in regional matters the two influenced each other as is evident from the teachings of the Sufi saints and the doctrines of the Bakti saints.9

In the field of scholarship and literature the two communities had much to give and take. Muslim scholars studied Hindu philosophy and science such as the system of yoga, vedanta, medicine and astrology. The Hindus learned from the Muslim subjects like geography, arithmetic and chemistry.

"One of the results of the intercourse was the use of the lingua franca known as urdu or the 'camp language', which is a form of western Hindi with a large admixture of Persian and Arabic words."10

Many Muslim rulers married Hindu women. The presence of Hindu women in the Muslim households proved to be another factor which brought about cultural fusion between Islam and Hinduism. Consequently, a spirit of synthesis and harmony

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9 A.L. Srivastava, Delhi Sultanate (Delhi, 1980), p. 201.
led to the growth of a new composite culture, which was neither purely Hindu nor entirely Muslim, but a happy fusion of the noblest elements of both. Akbar’s reign was the high water-mark of this fusion.11

RELIGION

Islam today must be counted among the major religions of South India. But during the many centuries before the middle of the 14th century, Islam did not possess any political base. In fact, it did not come as an aggressive force to South India before the days of Malik Kafur. The trade contacts of Arab and Persian merchants with South India were mostly confined to the coastal districts and did not affect the society or the faith. The arrival of Arabs on the South West Coast and their marriage with local women leading to the Moohila community of Malabar was perhaps the only significant area of Islamic contact with South India.12

11Abdul Fazal, Akbarnama (Translated by Beveridge) Vol. II (Calcutta, 1912), p. 421.

It will not be out of place in this context to refer to some of the basic tenents of Islam. Literally, "Islam" means submission to or acceptance of the will of God. The Muslims believe that the 'Quran' is the true word of God transmitted to mankind as an ultimate revelation through the medium of His Prophet and messenger Muhammad. Although the term was used in early periods in the more limited sense of 'submission' and seems to have been generally equated with 'belief' (Imam) the meaning today to Muslims and non-Muslims alike is that of the definite name of a specific religion. The practitioner of the faith is a 'Muslim'.

The basic doctrines of Islam are few and simple. The basis of Islam and the heart of Muslim belief and thought lies in the Holy Scripture, the 'Quran'. The simplicity of the doctrine as enshrined in the Kalimah or profession of faith is "There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah." The Muslims have to believe that there will come the last day, when God will judge all mankind and give to each person the reward or the punishment due to his actions. The basic commands of Islam are

prayer, fasting, charity, pilgrimage to Mecca, performance of all that is enjoined and abstinence from what is forbidden and 'jihad' or striving in the way of God with all the resources at one's disposal. The social percepts of Islam include observance of the principle of equality and brotherhood among Muslims, of generosity and charity towards those in need and of earning the livelihood through personal labour. Exploitation, hoarding and profiteering are condemned and trust in God inculcated. The totality of the belief and practice is called the 'Shariah' (path) of Islam.\(^\text{14}\)

The coming of the Muslims to the Deccan in the 14th century is a significant event that changed the trends of Indian culture. It was a period of confusion and fear in the sense of wholesale looting of wealth and destruction of Hindu monuments. However, the process of assimilation intensified.

If the Hindu religious leaders and saints endeavoured to synthesize Hindu-Muslim thoughts, the Sufi saints of the Muslims, the writers and poets adopted Hindu doctrines and followed many of their traditions. Ideas of Islamic philosophy

and mysticism began to be disseminated. The healthy spirit of mutual toleration found expression in the growing veneration of the Hindus for the Muslim saints, particularly of the Mystic school, and the corresponding Muslim practice of venerating Hindu saints. This led to the common worship of the satyapir (the true saint). The Hindus offered sweets at the tombs of Muslim pir or saints and listened with reverence to the recitation of the Quran. Several were the Muslim festivals and rituals that brought the Hindus closer. Muslim kings in the provinces liberally endowed the Hindu temples and shrines.

A point of contact between Hinduism and Islam destined later on to produce far-reaching results was established through the influence of the Persian Sufis. The Bakti cult, though not a direct result of the impact of Islam and Hinduism, was nevertheless influenced to some extent by the presence of Islam. Hindu reformers preached the fundamental equality of all religions and the unity of Godhead. The eastern variety

of Sufism is an off-shoot of Hindu Vedanta. A Muslim weaver named Kabir condemned caste system and formal rituals, laid stress on the unity of Godhead and the brotherhood of men. His followers, the Kabir panthis had a profound impact on the religious trends of the Deccan. 16

**SOCIETY**

In the beginning the Muhammadans, with their strongly marked religious seal remained apart without mixing with the local population. They lived as a garrison in a hostile country, holding little or no intercourse with the subjects. But it was inevitable that as time went on, those barriers should be gradually relaxed, though they were never entirely broken down. Marriages between Muhammadans and the women of the country became more and more frequent and the children adopted many of the customs of their mothers. Conversions to Islam were common among the lower orders on account of the tyranny of the caste system, the prospects of escape from the poll tax and other social advantages. But the converts re-

tained their Hindu mode of life to a great extent. The Hindu society also was affected by the social customs of the new rulers. The system of excluding women unknown in early days was adopted by the higher classes. Muslim dress and ceremonial came into fashion. Local habits of food were adopted. More note worthy was the introduction of new social ideas of the Islamic society. 17

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

As a result of the Indo-Islamic contact there gradually emerged a linguistic synthesis. 18 Urdu is the off-shoot of the mingling of Persian, Arabic and Turkish words and ideas with languages and concepts of Sanskritic origin. Hindu and Muslim writers and poets exchanged ideas and expressed their thoughts in the vernacular. Muslim scholars wrote on Hindu-life, culture and religion. Hindu writers wrote in Persia, on muslim ideas and literary traditions. 19

17Ibid., p. 244.

18Dr. M. Abel, "Historical process and Trends in the Turn of the Century" - Chairman's Address to Indian Social Science Congress, Mysore, 1987.
Though Indian and Islamic systems of art and architecture differed fundamentally in their ideals and techniques, they were blended together giving rise to a new type of Indo-Islamic architecture. The Muslims added to the Hindu architecture, the special characteristics of spaciousness, massiveness, majesty and width. The Muslim rulers introduced the Mehreb or arches, dome, minar and Tomb to the indigenous architecture. They enriched the design and beauty and adopted the use of coloured stones and glazed tiles. The design of the golden 'Kalash' on the top of the 'sikha' of Hindu temples was adopted by the Muslims. Hindu temples such as the one in Vrindavan assimilated the Mughal style of architecture.

In paintings, the Mughal school considerably influenced the Hindu ideas, techniques, and forms of art. Indian Music appealed to the Muslims so much that the Muslim society took keen interest in music. Muslims adopted the musical instruments like sitar and tabla from the Hindus. Muslim courtiers patronised music. The celebrated singers and

20 Edwards and Garrets - Muslim rule in India (Delhi, 1972), p. 75.
musicians composed and introduced new varieties of rages. The close association of Hindu and Muslim musicians was a special feature.

For over three hundred years after the political advent of the Muslims in 1318 A.D. in Deccan, almost the whole of the Peninsula north of the Tungabhadra remained under the control of the Muslim rulers. There were two important groups in Muslim aristocracy, the Deccanis and the Afaqis. The Deccanis being sons of the soil considered the king and the people as their own. Many of them had migrated from the Northern India and settled in Deccan. Their loyalty to the state was undoubted. The Muslim society in the south as elsewhere in India, consisted of Government officers, ulema or religious leaders, traders and the slaves. Excepting the slaves the other classes were well off. 21

Geographically the Muslims of the South were isolated from Northern India and politically they might not have known about the early Muslim invaders of North India. But

They had witnessed the Anglo-Carnatic wars, the Anglo-Mysore wars and the struggle of Tipu Sultan. Some distinctions between the Northern Muslims and Southern Muslims are discernable. The Southern Muslims appear to be mild and sober while their Northern counterparts by virtue of the political turmoil which they have witnessed, seem to be aggressive in nature and fanatic in their religious spirit. Difference between the two groups are noticeable in language, dress, manners, customs and habits. The political participation of the southern Muslims also have been limited. These stereotypes have gained currency and persisted in contemporary literature, providing a substrate of bias and prejudice.  

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