Muslims came to India in three different groups as sailors, rulers and preachers. On all these encounters with the natives, there was some kind of cultural give and take between the Hindus and Muslims and both these groups were benefited in the process.

There were some compelling reasons for the migration of the Arab Muslims to India. Hajjad-bin-Yusuf of Iraq was ruling over the Muslim world then, as a Governor appointed by Caliph Abd-al-Malik Merwan. Persia, the mighty Shiaite domain, was also under the rule of the same Governor. Both the Sias and Sunnis were fed up with the bad governance of that whimsical ruler. That is why some enterprising sailors came upto India and settled down in the coastal parts of Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Some sailors, who did not bring their women folk, married local women. In this way, long before the Muslims established their kingdoms in India, Arab sailors came in contact with the Indian people and the first phase of cultural assimilation began.

Some Arab sailors married Jain women, living in the coastal towns of Karnataka like Bhatkal and the new generation of people came to be called 'Navayaths', the new comers. They developed a different dialect of Konkani, which was sprinkled with Arabic and Persian words. The Navayaths take their evening meals, even today, before the sunset, a typical Jain practice. The Arab women, who came to India later, picked up the dress and food habits of the Indian women and in turn the Indian women adopted the Pardah system from the Arab women.

There is one more historical event, which shows Arab contacts with other parts of the South India, much before the Muslims invaded this country.
Jamila Brajbhusan writes;

"Malbar' appears to have sprung from a Arabic word "Maa-bar" means crossing. The Arab traders used to halt along side the Kerala coast before they undertook their journey to the Eastern countries like China, Indonesia and so on. During their short stay, they married Nair girls and their children are called 'Moplas', meaning great child."¹

The famous historian, Ibn Batuta, wrote that the Arab women, who came to India, started wearing sari, an Indian dress, with the pallu on their heads. Their patterns of ornaments and methods of festivities also imitated those of the Indians. This cultural interaction between Arabs and Indians gave birth to another cross-cultural phenomenon namely, segregation of woman, which was little known to Indians.

In this way, the first group of Muslims who came to India, had no intention of capturing new territories, nor spreading Islam in India. They wanted to escape the cruelties of the Caliph of Baghdad. The Arab traders considered India a threshold between the East and West. Some Arab traders married locally and thus the cultural give and take began between these two races.

After this initial stage of coming together of these two cultures, there follows the second stage of a more emphatic impact on each other, that is, the period of the Sufi Saints.

Islam came to India and became popular with the common people, not because of the exclusivistic practices of the Ulemas (Islamic Scholars) and jurists, but because of the assimilative preachings and practices of the Sufi Saints. In fact, Sufism is a pantheistic, mystic cult of Islam, which preaches universal brotherhood. The Sufis spread to the length and breadth of India and established monasteries. They used local idioms to propagate god's love to man. A Sufi saint of Maharashtra, Shaikh Mohammad, titled his book 'Yogasanagrah'. Writing about him, Asghar Ali Engineer says,

"In fact, he uses those terms, used by Patanjali, Shankaracharya and other commentators of Vedant."²

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1. Brajbhusan, Jamila, Muslim Woman in Purdah and Out of It, (New Delhi, 1980) P31

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Another Sufi Saint, Ibn Arabi, preached the philosophy of 'Wahadatal Wajud', which corresponds to the Advaita doctrine, 'Aham Brahmasmi' (I am the Brahman) advocated by Shankaracharya. Similarly, 'Sule Kul' of the Sufis reflects the vedantin idea of 'Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam' (The whole earth is one family). Due to their preference to the Indian philosophy, their sympathies towards the local people and their love for local languages, which they adopted for preaching, the Sufis became friends and philosophers of the Indian masses.

Atindranath Bose writes,

> 'Then Islam knocked on the western gates of India and the Sufis, inspired by the Islamic idea of equality, came as torch bearers of Liberal, folk-philosophy. Their spirit was free from those superstitions and rigidities which caused stagnation among the classical Islamic and Indian schools'\(^3\)

In this way, the Sufis popularised Islam in India, but the Ulams, the traditional Islamic scholars, emphasizing the letter of Sharia, the Islamic tradition, and not the spirit of it, froze Islam spiritually. The Sufi movement and the Bhakti movement were the simultaneous occurings in India, but these movements were opposed by the Ulams and Pandits for their selfish gains. Nevertheless, the Muslims, supporting the Sufi movement, did not hesitate to adopt Hindu ways of life. Except the most essential religious rites and ceremonies, everything else was in imitation of the Hindu customs and traditions. Thus, during the first phase of Hindu-Muslim contacts, when Arabs came as sailors, only the social aspect of life was influenced, while in the second phase, during the period of the Sufi movement, the cultural and religious aspects of life of both the communities were influenced. One particular fact that disturbs our mind is, even the Sufi movement, which is more liberal in outlook, could not do much for the betterment of the Muslim woman. She remained the same isolated work-horse. On the other hand, the Bhakti Movement in India did a lot of good to Hindu women. Female saint Meerabai was respected on par with other male saints.

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During the third phase of the Hindu-Muslim contact, when Muslims came to India as rulers, there was a different scenario. There was a near total divide among the Indian Muslims on the lines of the urban and rural, and aliens and natives. The Muslim ruling class and Muslim nobility, occupying the northern part of India, considered themselves distinct because they were the descendents of the Central Asian Nobility. But the Muslims in the rural areas of the South, did not contribute to the Separate Muslim Identity Concept. The roots of separate identity were in politics than in religion.

The causes for the separate identity of the North-Indian Muslims could be traced back to Mughal history. Akbar adopted a liberal policy towards the Hindus. This was resented by the Muslim Nobility, especially by those of the Central Asian origin. They used to call themselves ‘Ashrafis’, people of ‘high social status’. Therefore, they did not like to have any truck with the Hindus or other Muslim groups than their own. They called the converted Muslims as ‘Arafat’, the people of ‘low status’. This dissension between the Hindus and Muslims and Muslims and Muslims continued for a long time.

After the consolidation of the British Power in India, a new power game began among the Hindus and Muslims. The urban Muslim elite of North India, which was the center stage of power-politics, began to assert itself in order to gain more and more power and recognition from the new rulers, vis-à-vis their Hindu counter part. The Muslim elite tried to create an awareness of separate Muslim identity among the common Muslims and to drag them to their side to demonstrate more numerical strength behind them. Until that time, the rural Muslims were living happily with their duel culture. Therefore, the call, to purge Islam of its Hindu influence, disturbed them.

This new wave of Islamisation and cultural separation damaged the social fabric of peaceful co-existence of the Hindus and Muslims, which was preached by the Sufi Saints. Rafiuddin Ahmed, while writing about the changes in the Islamisation movement, among the Bengali Muslims, says,

'The Nasihat names or honorifics written as late as the seventies of the nineteenth century, often referred to the creator as Sri Haq, Sri Allah, Sri Karim, changed to Arabic or Persian invocation such as Alla-hu-Akbar, All-hu-Ghanj.4

Similar changes took place among the Meos of Rajasthan and Haryana, who were the perfect example of a composite culture. The cultural separatism and Islamisation were not the internal parts of Islamic theology, but an out come of the socio-political struggle between the Hindu and Muslim elites. The rural community remained least affected by this turmoil.

Changes also took place in the Eastern and Southern parts of India. In Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Kashmir, there was a remarkable degree of cultural assimilation between these communities, in urban as well as rural areas. However, some urban pockets, where the fundamentalists of both the groups were concentrated, there was no cultural exchange. Common people not only shared the cultural values but also spoke the same language. In Kerala, Muslims call their marriage 'Mangalam', the auspiciousness, and in Kashmir, the Sufi saints are called 'Rishis', a Hindu name for seers. Thus, the contentious religious issues were largely neutralised by the Sufis and Hindu saints.

The advent of Islam was an epoch making event in the history of the world, as it exercised profound socio-cultural influence on India, as well as on other countries. The early invaders like Mohammad-bin-Qasim (711-712 AD), Mohammad Ghazni (1000-1027 AD), Muhammad Ghori (1175-1205 AD) clashed with the Rajaput kings in India. The entire process of confrontation in the beginning and of co-operation during Akbar's times, paved the path of the cultural history of the Medieval India. In the process of assimilation, the Muslims became part and parcel of the Indian society which was called the Indo-Islamic society.

In the beginning, the important constituents of the Indo-Islamic society were the stubborn Turks and Afghans, represented through their elite classes like Syed, Shaikh, Pathan and Mughal. They strictly adhered to the Islamic customs and traditions. Their women were kept in strict isolation. These kings and noblemen, guarded the chastity of their women and purity of their blood, as zealously as they guarded the frontiers of their kingdoms.
It was during the Mughal period that the two cultures came closer. There is difference of opinion among historians regarding the influence of the Hindus on Muslims and vice-versa.

Jadunath Sarkar highlights the negative impact of the Muslim rule on the Hindu society in the following words.

“The barreness of Hindu intellect and the meanness of the spirit of the Hindu upper caste are the greatest condemnations of the Mohammadan rule in India.”

On the other hand Ishwari Prasad, another eminent historian, refutes the charges saying

“During the reigns of Akbar and Jehangir, some of the greatest Hindus were born, great poets, great philosophers, statesmen and warriors who shed luster upon the epoch they lived in. Ramanand, Chaitanya, Tulasidas and Todarmul, disprove the view that Hindu intellect had become sterile under the stress of Muslim conquest.”

It would be erroneous to think that the Muslim conquest was an unmitigated disaster hurled on Hindu India. This conquest was not like the Norman conquest of England, which erased the characteristic distinctions between the English and Normans and brought about a fusion of the two races. Here, after the conquest, both the races stood apart. They did not submerge their identities to begin with, but at a later stage, there was some cultural give and take between them. Unlike King Philip II of Spain, who refused to rule over the heretics and Queen Elizabeth who persecuted the Irish Roman Catholics, Muslim rulers did not refuse to rule over the Hindus. On the contrary, the Muslim rulers like Shershah and Akbar, taught religious tolerance and mutual goodwill to their subjects.

The position of women was also better during this period. The Quran declares,

“La Ikra fid-din” (There is no compulsion in religion)”

6. (Ibid) P.512-3
7. The Quran, 4-121
If a Muslim marries a non-Muslim woman, he must provide some space in his house to his wife, to say prayers according to her religion. The Prophet of Islam not only preached this principle but himself practiced it also. Similarly, Akbar built a temple in his palace for his wife Jodhabai. That is why S.M. Jaffar writes,

'It is not always the rulers but their ambitious and enterprising followers who exploited the religious zeal. Islam, as a religion, has to be judged by its principles and not by the acts of those, who pretended to profess and mendaciously misrepresent in furtherance of their mundane motives.'

8. S.M. Jaffar, Some Cultural Aspects of Muslim Rule in India. (Oriental Series, New Delhi, 1927) P-182.
Most of the alien people, who came to India before the Muslims came, were culturally less advanced than the Hindus and were eventually absorbed into the Hindu system. For instance, the Bactrian Greeks, with their King Menander, the Scythians (second century BC) and the Huns (sixth century AD) had primitive cultures. By contrast, when the Muslims arrived in North India, they came directly from a matured cultural setting of the Middle East. The egalitarianism and staunch monotheism of Islam and the rigid caste exclusiveness and polytheism of Hinduism were incompatible and militated against the fusion of the two.

The incompatibility or disliking between these two communities was not associated with the Arab sailors who came to India long before the ruling class. The original Arabs were not called Mlenchas, a derogatory word for the people of alien origin. Mahmud Gazni and his soldiers were called so. The Arabs had good contacts with the Brahmins and Buddhists in India. In fact, they learnt the Eastern lore from them. Thus, the Arab elites formed a part of the cultural assimilation in the beginning stage of the Muslim contacts with India.

The fourteenth century, which covers the rule of the Khalji and Tughluq dynasties, forms the turning point in the socio-cultural history of India. Immigrant Islam and indigenous Hinduism finally shunned suspicion about each other and decided to live in peace.

When Muslims lived surrounded by vast Hindu majorities, then a state of perennial hostility towards them was just impossible. After some time, their mutual association led to mutual better understanding. After the first shock of the Muslim conquest, the Hindus and Muslims were trying to find out a ‘Modus vivendi’ as neighbors. Their search resulted in a composite culture, which was neither exclusively Hindu nor purely Muslim. Babur calls this composite culture.
Hinduism influenced Muslim rulers and noblemen, soldiers and philosophers, poets and saints. The Muslim rulers tried to function not as conquerors from outside but as the ones born in India. Akbar worshipped the Sun and Fire. On the full Moon of the month of Savan, he allowed Brahmin priests to tie Rakhi on his wrist. His son Jahangir celebrated Diwali with pomp and invited Hindu mendicants to dine with him on the 'Shivratri'. He also celebrated his father's 'Shraddha' (offerings to the deceased, a Hindu ritual).

Muslim nobility and landed gentry copied their kings. They dressed and ate as the Hindus did. If one looks at the eighteenth century paintings, one finds it difficult to distinguish between the Muslim and Rajput noblemen.

After the kings and their nobility, the third group of Muslims, which came under the influence of Hinduism, was that of the Ulemas or Theologians. That was an exclusive group opposed to Indianisation. However, some of the liberal minded Ulemas served as correctives to their orthodox kings. For instance,

'Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517 AD) made a formal enquiry of Qazi Shahabuddin as to whether he could pull down a temple at Kurukshetra and stop the Hindus bathing in the open in the Ganges. The Qazi forebade him to do so on the grounds that both acts would be un-Islamic'10

The fourth group, which was largely influenced by the Hindu culture was that of the poets and writers. The Urdu and Persian poets took themes, images and ideas from Sanskrit. Hindu mythology was another source of inspiration for them. Malik Mohammad Jaisi and Rahim were prominent among the Muslim writers in Hindi, who borrowed largely from the Hindu mythology.

Last but not the least, the Muslim masses, most of whom were converted from various Hindu castes, did not cast away their Hindu influence. In the North-West, the caste

groups of Rajputs and Jats became Muslims, often by clan decisions. These groups retained their traditional customs. Brahmin priests were called to perform ‘shraddha’ and the other Hindu festivals continued to be keenly observed by the converts. Acceptance of Islam did not imply, in their cases, an acceptance of the distinctive Islamic social behaviour, codified in the Sharia.

In Uttar Pradesh, the Malkhan community residing near Agra, Mathura and Mainpur is made up of he converts like Rajputs, Jats and Baniyas or traders. They still great each other with ‘Ram, Ram’. They also go to mosques, practice circumcision and address each other as ‘Miyan Thakur’.

Special mention must be made of the Hussaini-Brahmin Muslims, who derived their name from Imam Hussain, the grand son of Prophet Mohammad. They follow Atharva Veda and also observe fast during Ramzan.

Another curious meeting point of these two religions, was their saints and seers. Muslim saints and Pirs (spiritual guides) had Hindu followers and vice versa. Kabir had followers from both the communities. Chaitanya had many Muslim followers. In Bengal, the Hindu and Muslim ways of life were so intertwined that according to Rafiuddin Ahmed, Lord ‘Vishnu’ was called ‘Paigambar’ (the messenger of God). Ganesha became ‘Ghazi’, Indra was ‘Moulana’ and so on.

As there was a lot of good influence of Hinduism on Islam, there was certain amount of bad influence also. Untouchability and caste system, to whatever lesser degree they exist among the Muslim today, came from Hinduism. Muslim elites of Arab pedigree, treated the local converts as untouchables. Some classes of Muslims were forced to live separately, as they came from low ‘castes’, as was in vogue among the Hindus. Under the influence of Hinduism, even the widow marriages were also looked down upon among the Muslims.
The Muslim rulers were fond of luxuries and the Hindus were soon attracted towards them. Gambling, drinking, keeping many wives, music and dance and so on, which were the common vices of the Muslim rulers, were adopted by the Hindus. They also adopted the Muslim style of dressing etiquettes, religious ceremonies and social functions.

Islam helped shatter the concept of the Brahmanical supremacy, because Islam does not subscribe to the idea of one-up-manship in the society. Islam opposes intellectual, religious or any other kind of superiority of one class of people over the other. Learning is not the privilege of one particular class in Islam and the Muslims are prohibited to believe that a particular class of people are gods on earth and they are born to lord over others, while others should serve them ungrudgingly.

Simplicity of religious practices in Islam dealt a severe blow to the much complicated rites and rituals of Hinduism. Monotheism of Islam had a telling impact on Hindu idolatry.

In the south, the Brahmani kingdom was the nucleus of Muslim power. The kings of Bijapur, Bidar and Gulbarga welcomed Muslims from Iran, Iraq, Turkistan, Arabia and so on. Some of them were good artisans, poets, architects and historians. They were called ‘Afaqis’ and the southern Muslims were called ‘Dakhanis’. The immigrant Muslims brought many new ideas along with them and those ideas influenced the Dakhanis in many ways. This serum of composite Muslim culture, was injected into the Hindu society: Unlike in the North, the South Indian Muslims came closer to Hindus quickly. J.L. Mehta writes,

‘The entire range of Muslim dress, social customs, food habits, social behaviour, indoor games and taboos were absorbed by the Hindus without demur, except that they could not touch beef not eat in common utensils or kitchens with Muslims’

SYNTHESIS OF HINDU AND MUSLIM CULTURES

When these two cultures stood face to face in the beginning, there were some disbeliefs and misunderstandings between them, but in the course of time, the spirit of cooperation began to develop. As a result, three distinct areas of human experience became richer namely, art, literature and science. While commenting on the synthesis of fine arts, Dr. Srivastava says,

'The spirit of assimilation and synthesis between the Hindu and Islamic cultures led to the evolution of new styles of architecture and music, in which the basic element remained the old Hindu but the finish and outward form became Persian and the purpose served was that of Muslim courts. The results of the impact of the two styles was the birth of a new system of architecture, which may be called Indo-Islamic or Indo-Muslim architecture.'

Like architecture, Indian music was also influenced by the Islamic culture. Music has no place in Islam, but Muslims were very much attracted towards it, due to their close contacts with the Hindus. Muslim kings like Akbar and Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur patronised music to a great extent. Amir Khusru is said to have composed some ragas of the Hindustani classical music. It is common knowledge that Tabala and Sitar are Muslim contributions to Indian music. Music has played a significant role in the lives of some section of Muslim women. They had to survive on their art of singing.

Like architecture and music, the art of gardening is also a Muslim contribution to the Indian culture. Ferozsha Tughluq reared nearly twelve hundred gardens in and around Delhi. These gardens were the sources of abundant poetry and romances, written in Urdu, during those days and during the later period.

In the field of literature also, there was commendable interaction between the two groups. The beautiful language Urdu, which assimilates words from Sanskrit, Turkish, Persian, Arabic and the like, is a fine example of cultural synthesis. Gazal, the Persian form of poetry, became very popular in India. The Sultans of Kashmir and Bengal

12. Srivastava, A.L, Medieval Indian Culture. (Sterling Publishers, Delhi, 1983) P-146
encouraged Muslims to study Sanskrit and translate good books from Sanskrit into Persian. The Muslim scholars like Malik Mohammad Juyasi (Padmavati), Ghulam Ali (Bang-e-Darpan), Sheikh Qasim Daryabadi (Hans-Jawahar) and others wrote profusely in Hindi. Thus, Muslims contributed immensely to the field of Indian literature. Dr. S.C. Sen writes,

"This evolution of Bengali to a literacy status was brought by several influences of which the Mohammedan conquest was undoubtedly one of the foremost."¹³

In the field of science, there was enough give and take between the two groups. In mathematics, Muslims learnt the use of digits from the Hindu mathematicians. Many books on Mathematics, astronomy and medicine were translated from Sanskrit into Arabic and Persian. The Muslim kings, outside India, valued the knowledge of the Hindu scholars to such an extent that they invited, some of them, to their courts and honoured them. The famous Caliph of Baghdad, Haroon-al-Rashid, invited a Hindu Vaidya (doctor) to his court.

Hindu scholars also borrowed from Muslim intellectuals. According to Dr. S.C. Mujumdar, some Hindu astrologers and scholars, borrowed from Muslims the technical knowledge of calculating latitudes and longitudes. Some items of calendar (Zic) and one particular branch of horoscopy called Tazik, and the knowledge of metallic acid and lactro-chemistry, are Muslim contributions.

So, after the mist of suspicion prevailing at the initial stage was cleared, both the communities started interacting with each other in more constructive ways. There was synthesis in the field of art, architecture, literature, science and so on. After that, slow fall of Muslim society began, for two reasons: the Britishers liquidated the Mughal principalities and as a result the Nawabs and their followers became pleasure mongers and a bunch of non-achievers. Secondly, the patriarchal Muslim society, relegated its women folk to oblivion. No civilization can flourish, keeping half of its population in the dark.

¹³ Srivastav, M.P. quotes in Society and Culture in Medieval India, (Chug Prakashan, New Delhi, 1975) P-17.
Thus far, it has been observed that how two great cultures of the world came face to face with each other and to what extent the dialectal changes took place between them in various walks of life. Now, it would be equally important to know where the Muslim society went from there. One thing becomes obvious that the Muslim society, which kept its women folk within four walls or prohibited it from coming out in the open, not only through un-Islamic ways but anti-Islamic pretences, hurried through its decadence. It would be pretentious to say that only the patriarchal practices and polygamy were responsible for the downfall of Muslim society in general and Muslim woman in particular. The real cause of this decadence of Muslim society was an absence of the achieving instincts, which were found in the early stages of Muslim life in India. Absence of achieving instincts gave way to luxuries, nocturnal enjoyments, harems and concubinage, wine, gambling and what not. As a result, the Muslim society lost its earlier glory and the worst sufferer, in this context was, of course, the woman.

What are the causes of Muslim decadence? Perishing of the achieving instincts from among the Muslims, over a period of time, is the main cause for the decay. After three hundred years of rule, the Muslim empire was broken into small kingdoms or principalities. The first two generations of Muslims, as achieving men, zealously extended their political boundaries. However, the successive generations lost the instincts of achievements. Woman, who should have been a partner in the upward journey of man, as she did in the early years of Islam, was held in captivity and was pushed into oblivion. She was purchased and sold like a piece of property.

When man loses his interest in his upward growth and takes recourse to horizontal expansion, and prefers to crawl on earth than to soar in the sky, that should be considered the beginning of an end of the success story of a community. It is then called a non-achieving community. This stage comes in the life of every community and every civilization. At such a particular juncture, an alert community adopts new methods of thinking and acting. If a community allows fresh blood run through the veins of its ‘thinking’ and ‘acting’ men and women, then the catastrophe could be averted.
Many civilizations have eaten dust in the past, when they opposed renaissance and adopted discriminatory outlook regarding their women. Therefore, achievement is not only man's prerogative, woman also contributes substantially to this success of a community.

What is achievement then? According to Mazhar-ul-Haq Khan, achievement is:

1. Greater economic productivity, by better and more efficient means of work and organization;
2. newer creative thoughts, theories, inventions, discoveries in science, art, technology, literature, and
3. better social and political organizations, both in human and territorial sense.14

In short, achievement means anything that is thought, made or done, for the first time, in human life and history.

If the social conditions promote the individual or collective instincts to perform better, which might benefit not only the individual who does it, but also the entire humanity, that is called 'achieving society' and such people are called 'elites'. The elites are the products of three sets of habits.

1. Physical habits like industry, punctuality, endurance, self-reliance, adventurism and so on;
2. moral and intellectual habits like integrity, honesty of purpose, independence of thought, curiosity, impartiality and respect for truth and
3. social habits like empathy, tolerance, friendly behaviour, concern for social priorities.15

15. (Ibid) P.7
So long as these habits are successfully transmitted from one generation to another, with something new added from its own side at every transmission, that group or society remains an achieving society. If an atrophy of human energy creeps in and the transmission process is disturbed, then non-achieving parasites are produced in that society.

As we all know, human society is divided into two categories: the kinship society and non-kinship society. The kinship society is the one in which birth, blood relations are above all other considerations. The non-kinship society or open society, as it is sometimes called, is the society in which man and his achievements are respected, not his birth. The kinship society is a micro-social-community, because it considers caste, class, fraternity and the non-kinship society is macro-social-community or nation.

The patriarchal kinship society has no respect for women. They are treated as chattels or possessions of their patriarchal kinship group, to satisfy their basic physical needs like procreation.

The patriarchal society passes through two stages, the tribal stage and the feudal stage. In the tribal stage, the father's authority is supreme. The male child is allowed to mix up with the male dominant group. There he can learn the qualities like male ego, super god, protector of woman, pride of the tribe and other patriarchal postures. On the other hand, the female child is discarded and she is allowed to grow like a destitute. The Muslim society, which is a patriarchal micro-social group, did not change much over the period of time. It did not meet with renaissance in most parts of the world. That is why the values fostered on a desert society, are forced on a modern society, with disastrous consequences.

'In other words, the kinship society cannot evolve into more micro-social and dynamic society because it regresses again and again into micro-social bonds and kinship interests due to degeneration of its elite classes brought about by the polygamous family system and the restricted role of women. Only by breaking down those bonds can this society be disembedded and a new type of non-kinship society evolve in which both men and women are equal.'

The Muslim society which has remained a kinship-micro-society till today, embedded as it was, in the micro socializing agencies such as purdah and polygamy. Due to this characteristic degeneration and its stubborn spurning of changes, the Muslim society remained a society of non-achievers. Along with purdah and polygamy, building of big harems also came into practice. With the inception of the harem, unrestricted polygamy and servile concubinage, the degeneration of Muslim woman reached its nadir. Syed Amir Ali writes,

‘Generally, the noble picture of the free, courageous, independent, self-respecting and therefore respected Arab Matron and maiden disappeared from Moslem Society and its place is taken by that of secluded ladies.’17

The Prophet of Islam declared,

‘Any Muslim who plants a tree or cultivates a piece of land, such that human beings eat from it, does an act of charity.’18

In short, the real goal of Islam was to detribalise or macro-socialise the Muslim community and change it into an egalitarian and dynamic society. Doctor Ali Shariati and Bani Sadr, two eminent economists interpreted The Quran and Sunna (Islamic traditions) from the economic point of view. They write,

‘Mere prayer and fasting is not Islam. The present day generation would not stop at that. A just, classless and egalitarian society is the purpose of Islam.’19

In view of the fore gone statements, Syed Amir Ali’s statement that the noble picture of a Muslim woman gradually faded and in its place, we find a picture of subdued, secluded and sad Muslim woman is justified. This sorry state of affair continued till the middle of the thirteenth century. It means, in the first three hundred years of Islamic rule, the

18. Bukhari Sharif. 4-123
Muslim woman was as bold and courageous as The Quran, and the Prophet wanted her to be. Then onwards, she was denied freedom and gradually she was changed into a slave of the patriarchal Muslim society.

When the Muslim rulers, especially, the Mughals, came to India, they had already reached the feudal stage. Therefore, the first generation of Mughals were among the achieving people. Women enjoyed equality with men. The Mughals awarded titles to women, as they did to their men, like 'Noor Jehan', 'Light of the Universe' and so on. There were many women among the Mughals who took part in administration.

From ‘Baburnama’ it is very clear that:

‘Ehsan Daulat Begum helped Babur. Khanzada Begum assisted Humayun. Gulbadan Begum often deputized Humayun when the latter used to be on military campaigns. Similarly, Maham Anga, the chief nurse of Akbar, took active interest in his political affairs. In the South, Makhadum-O-Jehan ruled over the Bahamani kingdom.’

Though the Muslim ruling class and Muslim nobility granted freedom to their women, the other Muslim women remained secluded, superstitious and tradition bound. Of course, the poor and rural women did not face the problem of equality or otherwise with men.

The best way to understand the strength of a civilization and to appreciate its excellance is to study the history of its women. If women are considered slaves of men and are pushed into seclusion, such civilization or community cannot prosper.

During the last days of the Mughal empire, small Muslim principalities sprang up in North India. The ruling class had turned into a luxury hunting and non-achieving group. They maintained big harems with numerous wives, mistresses, maids, dancing girls and so on. Santosh Kumar Mukherji writes,

The Nabobs and nobility maintained harems as their status symbol. Many of the young beauties were recruited as slaves from Persia, America and Europe. Great demand for the blue-eyed Georgian girls. They were converted before the Nabobs and others took them.... Akbar had 5000 women.21

The obnoxious system continued and till the end of nineteenth century. We have historical accounts to show that the Muslim and Hindu Zamindars or landlords had their 'private' homes on monthly payments. After some years, these women and their children were on the roads.

After this stage of feudal lords, the final stage of the British rule in India began. Many individuals and institutions among the Hindus started working for the upliftment and education of women. D.K. Karve and Jyotiba Phule are two of them. Among the Muslims, this process was very slow. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was such a lone visionary at that time. He was harassed by the fundamentalists in the beginning. Asghar Ali Engineer writes,

'It must be admitted that Syed's was the boldest attempt in projecting the teachings of Islam in the light of liberal and humanitarian values. His essays published in 'tahzib-Al-Akhiaq', his commentary on Quran and several other writings, indeed constitute a great attempt at developing a modern theology of Islam.'22

On the one hand, Sir Syed attempted to modernise Islam by way of interpreting Islamic theology in the light of western education, while on the other, the traditional Islamic scholars like Sha Waliullah of Delhi and the Faraizi School of Bengal tried to over throw the British influence through their traditional teachings. The reformist movement was, unfortunately, restricted to the Urban masses while the revivalist movement came into action to oppose the western education. Aligarh Muslim University was considered a devil's instrument to take young Muslim boys and girls away from the path of Islam.

21. Mukherji, Santosh Kumar, Prostitution in India, (Inter India Publication, New Delhi, 1986) P-70.
22. (Asghar Ali Engineer, Islam and Liberal Theology), P-203.
Some parents did send their daughters to Sir Syed's University, not because they were interested in his revolutionary programmes but for the domestic reasons: Educated girls were preferred in marriages. Secondly, the educated girls had employment opportunities that might augment the meager family income. Thirdly, educated girl was a status symbol of the entire family in those days.

In spite of these efforts, the number of school drop outs among the Muslim girls was alarming. According to a survey conducted by Shivani Ray, only 60.80% girls reached VII standard. Among college going Muslim girls, 53.85% came from the middle class families. The aristocrats gave formal education to their girls and married them off at an early age.

'It is heartening to know that 11.84% Muslim girls become sports persons and 3.80% became doctors.'

This survey was conducted in Uttar Pradesh where Muslims are fairly well off and give preference to learning. In other states, this picture is likely to be very dismal.

There are three important events in the history of Modern India which are connected with the welfare of the Muslim woman. Western education in general and establishment of Aligarh Muslim University in particular, industrialisation which provided employment to them and finally, the freedom movement of our country which brought some of the Muslim women out of their hide outs.

The western education provided Muslim women information about the conditions of the women in the west. Secondly, the best literature in English was made available to Muslim women.

Industrialisation brought changes in the family set up. One such happy change is the widening of the woman's role in the family. The earning woman did command respect in an orthodox family also. In the beginning, there were petty problems arising out of

the hurt male ego, but looking to the financial relief, the female employment brought to
the family, men learnt to swallow their resentment. Some times, the husband had to
quietly swallow his hurt feelings when his wife excelled him in office and others praised
her for her abilities. Fiction writers like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandeya and others
have beautifully presented such characters in their fiction.

The working woman is not a rare species in a Muslim family today. Moreover, the
reservation policies of the state and central governments have provided a shot in the
arm for Muslim women. According to Shibani Ray, nearly 43.70% Muslim families have
working women in Uttar Pradesh.

In today's world, the Muslim woman is trying to recover the position her sisters had
enjoyed in the early days of Islam. Muslim women, all over the World, have very well
understood the fact that The Quran contains revolutionary ideas about the status of
woman in the society. Therefore, instead of being swept off their feet by the gusto of
the Western wind or the feminist movements, if the Muslim woman gets what The
Quran has assured her, she will be more liberal than most of her liberal sisters in the
west. That is why; there is no 'new woman' or 'angry daughter' in Islam.

Among the Muslim women of other countries, the movements like 'Go back to Islam',
'Go back to Quran' are spreading fast. The Bakri and Manzalvi families in Egypt; Mrs
Atthallah of Turkey, are leading this global movement of 'Go back to Quran'. Herself
reading The Quran carefully, the Muslim woman of today, has come to know that what
God has given her, man has taken it away. That is why, she prefers to study The Quran
by herself and demand equality as has been amply promised in the Holy Book.

It all sounds quite attractive on paper. In the event of clash between man and woman,
the Muslim Shariat Courts have to be approached. As the clergy and religious bigots
heavily man these courts, no justice to woman could be expected from these courts. If
women are also appointed judges, in equal numbers, in such institutions, then only
justice could be done to the feminine cause. This needs extensive awareness
programmes to be planned and executed to train Muslim women. There are some
individuals and institutions that are fighting for this cause.
'Khudamul Kaba' is a global association working for the welfare of Muslim women. It is a platform for Muslim women to express their views on the conditions of women in their countries. Among the Muslim women, who got inspiration from the agenda of this organization and who took to writing as an instrument to create awareness among the Muslim women of India, the Queen of Bhopal, Lady Nazli Rafia, Lady Abbas Ali Beig, Alia Fyzee Rehman, are famous. Their lead was followed by hundreds of young and talented Muslim women, coming forward to help create more awareness among their sisters regarding their rights granted by The Quran. It is unfortunate that these young talents did not receive encouragement from their own men. That is why, other community people taunt that Islam did not produce women intellectuals.

In India, some Muslim men felt insulted to know the humiliating conditions of their women. In order to bring them out of their dark houses, they founded literary and science associations to create awareness among them and to kill the superstitions cob-webbed in their minds. Abdul Lateef of Bengal founded ‘Mohammadan Literary and Scientific Society’ in Calcutta, in 1863. He opened a branch in Madras also. Amir Ali started the ‘National Mohammadan Association’, in 1878 to bring political awareness among young Muslim men and women. Political leaders like Badruddin Tyabji and Moulana Azad attracted Muslims towards the Congress. All these efforts affected only the Urban Muslim women.

Freedom movement of India provided an occasion for Muslim women to come out of their age old seclusion and do, whatever they could, for the freedom of their country. Princess Hamidullah of the United Provinces, the King mother of the Nawab of Bhavalpur, Begum Shaid Hussein Kidwai were some of the women from the aristocratic families who were actively associated with the freedom movement. Besides these women, innumerable middle class women also participated in the said movement. Kulsum Sayani, Anisa Kidwai, Bibi Amtul Salam, Begum Hamid Ali, Nawab Sultan Jehan Begum worked with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru and earned praise from them.

In this way, from the day the first Arab-Muslim sailor landed in Zanzibar to the day the last British emplaned to England, for nearly thirteen hundred years, Muslim women had
to brave all types of weather. These are different stages in the social and cultural life of the Muslim woman. In the first stage, she had enough freedom. In the second stage, when political power was concentrated in the hands of Abbasid and Ummayad Caliphs of Iraq, the Muslim woman underwent the worst sufferings. Pardah, polygamy, lechery, luxury, corruption and other vices entered the Muslim ruling class.

In the last stage, one notices the migration of Muslims to India in three different capacities as sailors, preachers and rulers. During the first two hundred years, the Muslim woman remained in chains. It is during the period of Mughals that she is seen freely moving about. She even helped her father, brother and husband in day to day administration. The Mughals had already passed the tribal stage when they reached India. So they granted liberty and to some extent equality to their women.

When the Hindu and Muslim women came in contact with each other, after initial hesitation, there was a lot of give and take between them with regards to food, dress and mannerism. Except entering the kitchens of each other and eating from a common plate, everything else was influenced on both the sides. Literatures, arts, architectures and systems of medicine had their influence on each other. But a question to be asked is when the Christian woman, also with the 'Book', came in contact with the Greek and Roman women, she was liberated from the dogmas and was relieved of the dead weight of the past. This did not happen to the Muslim woman in India when she came in contact with the Hindu woman. It may be due to the alleged fear of the Hindu woman that she might lose her religion if she came in close contact with the Muslim woman.

When the Mughal empire was broken into small principalities, the status of Muslim community had touched its lowest rung. Once again, woman was badly treated by man here. The army of dancing and singing girls, seen in these days is enough proof for this. The curse of non-achievement could have been averted if fresh thoughts and new ideas had been allowed. However, Muslim community, in general, is opposed to Renaissance.

Having studied all that is available on the status of Muslim woman in India, one is forced to come to the conclusion that she was very little benefited by this cultural confluence. It is rather surprising that the Muslim woman, who came in contact with the world's oldest
and richest culture, remained the same, of course, with some marginal gains. She is still un-educated, superstitious and introvert. She is ready, even today, to accept the willing slavery of man and act like a biological automation.

The main question is, why was Muslim woman not been able to throw off her yoke of slavery? It is believed that the religions with revealed ‘Books’, always go by the diktats of the book and never have the liberty to change or modify their life style according to the changing times. It is considered blasphemy. Islam, Christianity, Judaism are such religions with Books.

Christian woman also has the ‘Book’. When she came in contact with the more liberal Greek and Roman civilizations, she was able to liberate herself from the dogmas and to throw off the dead burden of the past. This did not happen in the case of Muslim woman. Why? It is because the Hindus are an egalitarian society. They don’t hesitate to adopt changes in their religious or moral codes, according to the changing times. For instance, they permitted widow marriages and abandoned the ‘Sati’ system as per the compulsions of the changing times. They welcome criticism on any aspect of their religion. They never act like an introvert group. This elasticity has given the Hindus an edge over the Muslim community which is basically conservative. The Muslim community follows the diktats of their religion without grumbling. It is so fast tradition bound that it has always shun renaissance. Muslims are afraid that if they act contrary to the fundamentals of the ‘Book’, they might lose their religion. This fear withholds them from free interaction with Hindus or with any other liberal community. That is why, the Muslim woman did not gain much from her proximity with her Hindu counterpart. The western scholars, who have studied Islam for several years, unanimously agree that Islam is a dynamic religion, but its clergy went on restricting the social behaviour of the Muslims by issuing Fatwas (Proclamations) in their individual wisdom, over looking the freedom granted by The Quran to Muslim community. So, the Muslim society has remained where it was.
In the first part of this chapter, 'Muslim Woman in Cultural Confluence', the historical background of the cultural confluence between the Hindus and Muslims has been seen. In the second part of the chapter, corresponding examples from the literary works like novels, short stories and so on are taken to illustrate various points mentioned in the first part of the chapter.

Arab Muslims came to India, rather escaped to India, fearing the wrath of the Caliph of Baghdad and to search new pastures, where they could lead a peaceful life. They settled down in the coastal areas of Kerala, Karnataka, Sourashtra and so on. Some of the Arab sailors, who did not bring their women along with them, married the Nair women in Kerala. In such conditions, a lot of cultural give and take took place between them. The Nairs in Kerala are a matriarchal community. Therefore, their children were strictly brought up according to the Nair customs and traditions. This point is very well explained in Bhagwan Gidwani's novel,

'Ayaz had come a long way. He was the son of Ashila Banu, the famous courtesan of Calicut. Ashila on her part, whispered to every one that the father was none other than the Zamorin (the king of Malbar). Ayaz was brought up by Alisha Banu as an orthodox Hindu Nair.' 1

Till the end of the first eight years of his life, Ashila Banu brings her son up according to the Hindu customs. She thinks that when the weak Zamorin dies, Ayaz should ascend the throne of Calicut. However, the Hindu citizens and the courtiers, loyal to the king, understand the game plan of Ashila and Ayaz. With the fear that the Nairs would kill him, Ayaz changes his loyalty and has secret connivance with Hyder Ali. After the assassination of king Zamorin, Hyder Ali wants to make Ayaz the ruler of Calicut but the latter denies the offer.

'Hyder offered Ayaz the realm of Zamorin. Ayaz fearing that the Nairs, his erstwhile compatriots, would suspect treachery, pleaded that he saw greater glory in being by the side of his master.'²

By these examples, it is clear that the Hindu women, who were converted and married Muslims, did not give up their first religion easily and it was not possible also for them. Their children learnt more about Islam. Every succeeding generation had more and more closer study of Islam. Except in the five fundamentals of Islam like Kalma (reading from The Quran), Namaz (prayer), Roza (fasting), Zakat (offering money to the needy) and Haj (pilgrimage), other social customs and traditions remained the same.

When the Hindus and Muslim stayed together, not only their religion and philosophy were affected but also their food and dress habits. Some section of women in Malabar did not cover their bodies above the waist. It was their age old tradition, but to a pious Muslim king like Tipu Sultan, this half naked condition of women pained very much. His religion did not allow woman to expose any part of her body to the sight of the strangers. Therefore, he thought that such an inadequate dress system should be stopped. He wrote a letter to his governor of Malabar, in 1785, to persuade those women to cover their whole body. He also warned his deputy not to hurt their religious sentiments, while doing so. Tipu did not exhibit a king’s command but a father’s or brother’s concern.

"It pained me to see some women of Malabar going about with their breasts uncovered. Such a spectacle offends the sight and aesthetics; certainly it is repugnant to good taste and morality. It is a question of immemorial custom or it is a question of poverty of the tribe? If it is the latter, I would like you to supply their wants, that their women should be decently draped. If, however, it is a question of time honoured custom, I would like you to try and use your influence with the religious leaders of the tribe to see if such a custom can be done away with."³

The Sultan is shocked to know the disparity in the dress habits because it is only the woman who is to follow that custom, not man. That is why the Sultan asks the Governor in an agonised tone, whether those tribes have imposed similar conditions to men to

2. (Ibid) P.28
3. (Ibid) P.226
keep half of their body un-covered. If not, the Sultan feels, such restrictions on women alone, are contrary to the principles of natural justice, hence discriminatory.

In places like Surat, Kutch and such other parts of Gujarat also, there was an intense interaction between the Arabs and Indian traders. Despite their coming very close to each other, they did not abandon each other’s religion or seek conversion. When the Muslim sway was irresistibly strong all over Gujarat, the Hindu traders had to think in some other ways.

For a businessman, money is his religion and customer is his god. By that time, Gujarat had come under Muslim rule. Therefore, the Hindu traders in Saurashtra and its adjoining areas embraced Islam because it would increase the inflow of money and soften their trading practices. Though the Hindu traders embraced Islam, their Hindu customs and traditions continued with them. The Arab men, who saw neat house-keeping and clean cooking exercises of the Hindu women, were so impressed that they started demanding such house-keeping from their women. There is a beautiful picture of an interaction between the Arab and Hindu traders in the novel 'Immigrants'.

‘Arvind belonged to a class of traders who flourished in western India. Before the British came to India, his people traded with the Arabs through the port of Surat. Later, they did the same with the Portugese. When their country was ruled by Muslims and the power of Islam held sway over the land, they found a way out easily. In considerable numbers, they embraced new religion and carried on the same as before.

Those who changed their religion held fast to their old customs, their language, their caste and those who could not bring themselves to bend as much as their brothers, took not the slightest exception to what had been done. 4

In this way, during the first stage of Muslim contact with India, there was profuse cultural give and take, but both the people did not go beyond the lines of their original religions, even after their conversion. During their first encounter, there were conversions and

4. Jamila and Reginald Massay, The Immigrant. (Hind Pocket Book, Delhi, 1973) P-68
marriages between the Hindus and Muslims. House-keeping and cooking of the Hindus influenced the Muslims and monotheism of Muslims influenced the polytheism of the Hindus.

In the second stage, Muslims came to India in the form of preachers. Islam came to India and won the hearts of the common people, not because of the exclusivitic attitudes of its Ulemas (the traditional Islamic Scholars), but because of the assimilative characteristics of the Sufi saints. The Sufis ate and dressed like common man and even used common man's language. In other words, the Sufis discarded the aristocratic ways of living while preaching Islam, instead they adopted simple means to propagate their religion. The word 'Sufi' does not seem to have any metaphysical connotation. One popular interpretation of the word 'Sufi' is 'making thread of wool and cotton'. These saints were so called because they used to wear hand-made clothes of cotton or wool. Due to their simplicity and genuine concern for humanity, they brought Hindus and Muslims a little closer. In fact the 'Sufis' is a glorious chapter in the cultural history of India.

The novelists, writing about the cultural past of India or about the strong ties of brotherhood that existed between the Hindus and Muslims, must make cognizance of the role played by the Sufi saints.

A character, in 'Delhi' by Khushwant Singh, tells of what makes him to go to Khwaja Nizamuddin, the Sufi dervish of Ghiaspur.

'I Musaddi Lal, son of Lala Chagan Lal, Hindu Kayastha of Mehrauli in the city of Delhi herewith record some events of my days upon this earth. May Ishwar who is also Allah and Rama, who is also Rahim, bear witness that what I have written is true, that nothing has been concealed or omitted.'

Saint Nizamuddin Aulia was respected by both, the Hindus and Muslims. He is active among all classes of people, preaching them universal brotherhood and peaceful co-existence. This is not liked by the Ulemas. Some Muslim fundamentalists carry takes

to Ghiasuddin Balban against Nizamuddin Aulia, saying that the Sufi saint considers both Hindus and Muslims as brothers and also that his followers resort to dance and music while propitiating the Almighty, which is against Islamic traditions. The ruler summons the Faqir to his court. Musaddi Lal describes the scene graphically. The Great Sultan is on his couch, flanked by his Abyssinian bodyguards with drawn swords. Hundreds of bearded Turkish generals on one side of the king and on the other, five Uelmas, dressed in fine silk. Facing this awe-inspiring pageantry, stood a young man, a very incarnation of confidence. He is Nizamudding, the Sufi Dervish of Ghiaspur. The King enquires,

"Dervish, the Ulema have complained that you make no distinctions between Mussalmans and infidels, that you pose as an intermediary between God and Man.... That your followers indulge in music and dancing in the precincts of the mosque and thus contravene the holy law of the Shariat.*6

The Saint replied:

"O Mighty Sultan, it is true that I do not make any distinction between Mussalmans and Hindus as I consider both to be the children of God. I believe that the best way to serve God is through love of his creatures. The Ulemas know not that God often manifests himself in his creatures. They also do not know that Allah cannot be understood through knowledge of books or through logic. When Allah's grace enters one's person, it manifests itself by making that person sing and dance with joy. If this be a manifestation of being possessed by Allah, I say Ameen."7

This simple, straightforward deposition makes Sultan to appreciate the Aulia's courage of conviction and his humanitarian concerns. He dismisses the charges of the Ulemas and then never troubles the saint.

After this incident, Musddi Lal becomes a staunch follower of the Aulia. On the next occasion, he goes to the langer (the community kitchen) and eats along with his wife.

6. (Ibid) P.56
7. (Ibid) P.56-7
She has some reservations about eating the food cooked by Muslims in their kitchen, but the next event changes her mind.

The same evening, the saint comes out of his cell and Musaddi Lal falls at his feet.

'The dervish put his hand on my head. I felt a tingling sensation run down my spine. Abdulla, my son, you live near the Mousoleum of Hazarat Qutubuddin Baktiar Kaki. Go there every morning and recite the ninety-nine names of Allah. Your wishes will be granted.'

Musaddi Lal is quite surprised as to how does the saint know that his Muslim friends used to call him Abdulla. Ram Dulari, Musaddi Lal's wife, also falls at his feet and the saint blesses her with a child which come true.

In an effort to study the influence of the Sufi movement on the contemporary society, two characters from this novel have been chosen. The first is of the Khwaja himself and the second is of Musaddilal. Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia, irrespective of class and caste distinctions, blesses his devotees and guides them on the path of spiritualism. As has been seen, even the might of the King cannot deter him from his chosen path. The Sufi movement in India strengthens the 'One God' and 'I am the Brahman' philosophy, which was advocated by Shankaracharya. In other words, the Sufi saint of Delhi preached that there is one god and both the Hindus and Muslims are His Children and that every individual is part and parcel of the Supreme Soul. The Sufi teachings of finding god in man, did not find favour with the ruling class and the Islamic clergy. Hence, the latter charged the Khwaja as the saint of common man's weaknesses.

Musaddilal is only a symbolic representation, showing that Khwaja's was a classless and casteless Kingdom. Some Hindu characters in the novel blame Musaddilal and his wife for having stooped too low. It is an example of hurt ego, and it does not diminish the importance of Musaddilal's character.

8. (Ibid) P169
On the same ground, it can be concluded that Musaddi Lal’s character is also not a stereotype description but an authentic creation. Musaddi Lal is a typical Kayastha of medieval India, around Delhi. He prostrates before the saint and he and his wife eat from the Langar (community kitchen) of the Muslims, which was not to the liking of his relatives. They scolded him of being half Muslim and half Kayastha. All this and more flows with the narration of the story and is woven into the texture of the novel.

Therefore, one cannot isolate such events and individuals, who are part of history, and question their authenticity.

Miracles do happen in the lives of saints. In fact, ‘miracle’ is the necessary characteristic of an Aulia or a Prophet. One such incident occurs in the life of Hyder Ali and his queen Fakr-un-nissa in Bhagwan Gidwani’s novel, The Sword of Tipu Sultan.

The royal couple is sad because they have no son. The queen decides to approach a Sufi saint, Hazarat Tipu Mastan Aulia, who is also called ‘Mast Khalander’ (intoxicated mendicant). He is a strange person because nothing is sure of him, his coming and going and his days and nights. Both the Hindus and Muslims are his disciples. Fakr-un-nissa desires to have blessings from the saint. She approaches the shrine and wants to plant a garden around it to make it look beautiful. When she starts planting creepers and plants, the Aulia sends a word that a woman is forbidden to do anything around the shrine, but her son can do so. The queen says,

‘But I have no sons’

‘I know, but you will. You will have more than one son. Go now, but what is the use of having sons, only to have them mown down in battle’

‘No, no,’ cried Fakr-un-nissa, ‘grant me that they shall live.’

‘You will promise to deliver your first born to God’s service’

In this way, the role played by Sufism, in the cultural confluence of the Hindus and Muslims in India is really laudable. Both the communities came to believe that the ultimate aim of all religions is one and the same, ‘Moksha’ or liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

9. Gidwani, Bhagawan The Sword of Tipu Sultan PP.49-50.
There are certain common characteristics in the lives of these two Sufi saints. They are strange and quite un-concerned with the material world. Both of them have Hindu and Muslim followers, and the point to be noted with care is both want to keep the woman away. In fact, Tipu Mastan Aulia does not like Fakr-un-nissa come near the shrine nor lay a garden there. However, her son can do it. It is unfortunate that the people who hold torch to the whole world, exclude the woman from their ‘world’ or when they hold torch to the ‘male-world’, woman is expected to walk in the shadow of man.

Then comes the third stage, the Mughal period in the Hindu-Muslim cultural confluence. It is necessary to know what kind of society it was and what were the salient features of the medieval society? What were the attitudes of the Mughal aristocracy, the middle class and the common people towards the cultural affinity that was fast developing between Hindus and Muslims?

The medieval Indian society was religion dominated, albeit, from the social and cultural point of view, the barriers between two religious communities had been broken down and all of them behaved as Indians. The process of Indianisation of the once foreign immigrants – Arabs, Persians, Turks, Mongals and others was over by the end of the sixteenth century. The Indians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries displayed a unique sense of socio-cultural unity in diversity.

The Mughals, when came to India, had already crossed the tribal stage and reached the feudal stage. That was why their women were more liberal than the Rajput women in India. For instance, Nur Jehan, the first lady of the realm, set the standards in socio-cultural values for the aristocracy of her time.

‘She was treated as a model of fashion, who revolutionized male and female dresses, and brought about innovations in the designs of gold and silver ornaments, house-hold furnishings, decorations and what not. She enhanced the beauty of the imperial court, prescribed elegant dresses for the courtiers. The world of fashion owes the inventions of the otto of roses either to Nur Jehan or to her illustrious mother.’

10. Mehta, J.L. History of Medieval India. (Sterling Publications, New Delhi, 1983) P-268
The Mughal aristocracy was composed of the Muslims as well as Hindus. The said aristocracy rolled in wealth and enjoyed all the luxuries of life. There was one more reason why both Hindu and Muslim aristocrats were bent on reckless spending of wealth on all the known and un-known luxuries of life, because their wealth was position based. As long as they held government positions, they were free to enjoy life. That is why they built mansions and maintained big harems. Special care was taken to segregate the women's quarters, which were called 'Zanana', from the main building, where men have their baithaks or sit-outs. A graphic picture of the zanana appears in *Twilight in Delhi*.

"In zanana, things went on with the monotonous sameness of Indian life. No one went out anywhere. Only now and then, some cousins or aunt or some other relation came to see them. Mostly life stayed like water in a pond, with nothing to break the monotony of its static life. Walls stood surrounding them on all sides, shutting the women in from the prying eyes of men, guarding their beauty and virtue with millions of bricks. The world lived and died, things happened, events took place, but all these things did not disturb the equanimity of the zanana." ¹¹

The zanana system was not very popular with the Hindu masses. Except for some aristocrats, the rest of the Hindus preferred monogamy. The static life in the zanana system created living-dead Muslim women. This is an ugly face of male dominance over women.

In contrast to this picture of Muslim zanana, with its static, prison like life, there is Lalaji's house in *The Nature of Passion* by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, which is full of life and activity. Lalaji, the Punjabi merchant thinks,

"A family was not a family, a home not a home, unless there was women's quarter, in which women could lead their own lives. Demure daughters-in-law, stern mothers-in-law, widowed aunts, pounding spices, sifting, scolding servants, washing babies, the stone jars of rice and lentils, the vat of boiling milk, quarrels and occasional songs or plaintive hymns, winding round the ceaseless kitchen noises, these constituted the necessary background of man's life." ¹²

There are two pictures here, one of the Muslim zanana and the second of the Hindu zanana. The din, the noise, the grumbling servants and scolding masters, all these are common in both the zananas. But one thing to be noted carefully is the fact that both these female quarters represent two opposite ways of life or two different worlds. The Muslim zanana is ‘walls stood surrounding them on all sides’, ‘shutting the woman in and the world lived or died it did not disturb the equanimity of the zanana’. It was like a prison or a concentration camp which never gets disturbed.

On the other hand, the zanana in the house of Lalaji, is a private chamber or retiring room for elderly ladies. Most of the time of these women is spent in this part of the house. Orders to the servants are issued from here and guests and intimate friends are also received here. Women are free to go to the ‘baithak’. They can go to temples in the evening. This is a very humane face of this zanana.

There is one more picture of the Hindu zanana in Rama Mehta’s Inside the Haveli, which is more suffocating than the previous ones. Geeta, an educated girl from Bombay, marries Ajay Sing of Udaipur. The atmosphere in the Haveli is so much charged with the past, that the present loses its count. When Geeta thought of her future,

‘Two big round tears dropped on Geeta’s cheeks. The rooms seems to suffocate her. She felt trapped in the Haveli, with its traditions and its unchanging patterns. Six generations of the family looking down on her. She was filled with rebellion and her stiffened. She was determined not to be crushed by Haveli.’

She decides to send her servant-girl Sita to school. There was a big upheaval in the Haveli and in the servants’ quarters also. Geeta seeks the permission of her father-in-law, Bhagawant Singji. The old man agrees but defers the final decision. In spite of all the hurdles, Geeta manages to send Sita to school. Ajay, her husband, a Professor of Physics at Udaipur University, encourages his wife in this adventure. He says,

You did a right thing; I am proud of you. It is time for new ideas to enter the Haveli. I am now back and will support you in every way possible. These old maids are little tyrants; don't be frightened by them. They don't realize that my mother's generation will die and with it, the traditional way of life of Purdah too. It is time you taught them something new.14

The present picture of zanana or purdah, turns out to be more dangerous than the previous two, because this zanana is about to take a toll of an educated and kind hearted woman like Geeta. The Haveli is not just a building but a cave of the dreadful past of six hundred years. Geeta is the torch-bearer, an ultimate savior of the oppressed womanhood in the Haveli. Had she been defeated, the very purpose of the novel would have been defeated too. The message is loud and clear, if any one wants to do away with the anachronistic customs and traditions, education is the only means. Geeta understands this and acts boldly. Moreover, she has the encouragement from her husband.

The three pictures of zanana and their atrocities on women have one common answer. Woman should get education and secondly, it is the duty of her husband also to help his wife to revolt against this oppressive practice.

The Mughal nobility was, thus, wasting money on zanana and other luxuries of life. This prestigious personal establishments of Mughal aristocracy, once developed, could not be cut size thereafter. It ultimately led to the deterioration of character and martial qualities of the Mansabdars, who constituted the steel frame of the Mughal empire. Their demoralisation adversely affected the discipline and standard of efficacy of their military skills, which became one of the major causes of decay and down fall of the Mughal empire. In this way, the Mughal aristocracy, mostly constituted of Afghans and Turks, gradually lost its achieving instincts and was engaged in futile exercises like maintenance of purity of blood, prestige of family, caste and class systems and so on.

If this was the fate of aristocrats in the Mughal courts, the middle class had different problems. The Mughal middle class consisted of junior mansabdars, judicial hierarchy, landlords, merchants, bankers, writers, artists and so on. Social stratification of the

14. (Ibid) P-112
Hindus found its way among the Muslim also. Islam does not recognise class, caste, status or any such division of the society. Nevertheless, the Muslims also tended to determine social status on the basis of birth and racial considerations. For instance, Mir Nihal, in *Twilight in Delhi* does not allow his son Asghar to marry Bilqueece, the girl of his choice, because,

"Not only her father was a Mughal, but because somewhere in her line, someone had married a prostitute or a maidservant."\(^\text{15}\)

One cannot miss to notice the futility of this argument that 'some one' in the girl's family 'somewhere in the line' married a prostitute or a maidservant. Nothing is definite here. Neither the person nor the place nor the procedure. Such hearsays are detrimental to the vital institutions like family and marriage.

If Mir Nihal is unhappy about Biqueece's family for the reasons mentioned above, Mrs Nihal despises their blood.

"Money is not everything. It is blood that matters. Their blood and ours can never mix well. The good-blooded never fail, but the low-blooded are faithless. They are Mughals, and we are Sayyads. He (her son) will marry the girl I like and not a girl of his choice."\(^\text{16}\)

Begum Waheeda, the widowed mother of Biqueece, sends proposal of her daughter's marriage. At that time, a lot of talk goes on about the purity of blood and high status of families and so on. In fact, nearly half of the novel is devoted to 'blood testings'.

When this was the picture of the middle class Muslim society during the medieval period, the picture of the low-class was very different. The aristocracy and the middle class, together formed the fifteen percent of the total Muslim population. The lower classes included, among them, the peasantry, soldiers, menials, artisans, shopkeepers, craftsmen and so on. The general standard of their living was low. There was better understanding between the Hindus and Muslims of these classes of people.

\(^{15}\) Ahmed Ali, *Twilight in Delhi*, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1966) P.34

\(^{16}\) (Ibid) P.60
higher brackets of the society, the Hindus and Muslims could not come closer due to political reasons, but in the lower class of people, there was no inhibition of any kind. As people had nothing to gain or lose from politics or any other institutions, they lived like brothers in natural environment. There are many examples of friendship and brotherhood, between the Hindus and Muslims, scattered in novels and short stories.

A beautiful example of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood can be found in Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Line. Sometimes the religious relics play a very significant role in human life. It is well known that the Hazaratbal Durgah in Kashmir enshrines the holy hair of the Prophet of Islam. This holy relic is instrumental in bringing the Hindus, the Muslims and Buddhists closer. The novelist writes,

'It is said that the sacred relic as the Mu-I-Mubarak, believed to be a hair of the Prophet himself, was purchased by a Kashmiri Merchant called Khwaja Nur-ud-din in Bijapur (near Hyderabad) in the year 1699 and was installed at the picturesque Mosque Hazaratbal. Muslims, Hindus, Sikh and Buddhist would flock to Hazaratbal on those occasions when the relic was displayed to the public.'

When the holy relic disappears on 27th December, 1963, there are huge demonstrations in the Kashmir valley in which people of all castes and classes participate. The author claims that in the

'whole of the valley, there was not one single recorded incident of animosity between Kashmiri Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. So thick is our belief in the power of syncretic civilization.'

Like the Hazaratbal Mosque in Kashmir, the Ayyappa temple in Kerala and an adjoining Muslim shrine are also instrumental in bringing the Hindus and Muslims nearer. Before visiting the temple, every devotee must pay respect to the Muslim shrine. This is a good example of cultural partnership.

It is unfortunate that in recent times, some of the famous Muslim monuments like the Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar, Fatehpur Sikri, Durgah in Gulbarga and others are allegedly claimed to be the Hindu monuments. One finds answer to this problem in Khushwant Singh's novel Delhi.

18. (Ibid) P-226
'As we pass the Qutub Minar', she remarks, 'I believe that the latest research has proved that this is a Hindu monument.'

'So is the Taj Mahal and Red Fort,' I added and continued,

'Where did you pick up this bull-shit. All these buildings have the names of the builders and the dates of completion inscribed on them in Arabic. You've been reading Hindu fascist propaganda.'

Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, is a novel which contains profuse examples of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood. In one place, he writes,

'The Hindus and Muslims in village are living close to each other that one would have to go round with tweezers, through all the villages to separate the Muslims from the Hindus.'

In *Train to Pakistan*, one finds Imam Baksha, a Muslim priest, and Bhai Meetsing, a Sikh priest, living like brothers in the village Mano-Majra. At the time of partition, the peaceful co-existence of the Sikhs and Muslims is destroyed. When Sikh militants are after the lives of Muslims living in Mano-Majra, Bhai Meetsing challenges them,

'What have they done to you? Have they ousted you from your land or occupied your houses? Have they seduced your women folk? What have they done?'

The sentiment of brotherhood is not wanting among the Muslim men and women also. Chaudhary Barkat Ali, in *Azadi* regards himself a good Muslim, that is why he can be a good Sikh, a good Hindu, in fact, a good human being. He says,

'There is not a single Ayat, a single verse, in *The Quran*, which preached otherwise than the brotherhood.'

21. Sing, Khushwant, Train to Pakistan, (Ravi Duggal Publishers, Delhi, 1988) P-144
22. (Nahal, Chaman, Azadi) P-76
When Abdul Ghani, a Hindu baiter, speaks ill of Arun’s lost sister, Barkat Ali shouts in rage calling the offender ‘shaitan’ (devil) and as ‘blot on the name of Islam.’

The Moulvi Saheb in The Immigrants is so much committed to the peaceful co-existence of the Hindus and Muslims that he considers it no less than a prayer to God. One should live and one should allow others to live, this principle in life is as important as prayer to God. The Moulvi Saheb declares,

‘We have always lived peacefully in this village, doing no harm to any one and asking no one for anything. Allah has been good to us. Not one of our sons has dishonoured his father’s name.’

Such feelings of universal brotherhood and peaceful co-existence, give much importance to any individual or institution. However, when such qualities are found in kings, they rise very high in the esteem of their subjects. Tipu Sulatan is such a ruler. He believes that the Hindus and Muslims are like his two eyes. His reverence towards the Hindu religion and his large donations to the Ranganath temple at Srirangapattana and also to other temples and Maths, confirm one point strongly that the Sultan is a man of cosmopolitan outlook. A Moulvi from Muscut complains to Tipu, against his liberal donations to temples than to Mosques. Tipu Sultan, with all the humility of a tolerant ruler, replies,

‘Let me finally say that I am born of this soil which has given birth and nurtured many religions. What do these religions teach me? That all men are brothers. I have a Prime Minister, Purniya, who is a Hindu. My father appointed many Hindus to high posts... I have read with respect the Hindu system of philosophy, their vedas, their shastras. The Quran, I believe, teaches me like-wise. Tell me, have I misunderstood The Quran?’

The Moulvi warmly embraces Tipu Sultan, saying that he has correctly understood the teachings of The Quran. The noble soul, the Moulvi of Muscut, stays seven more days in Srirangapattana and donates the purse of one thousand pagodas, which was given to him by Tipu Sultan, to the temple of Lord Ranganatha. Such benevolent kings and commoners have made India great.

23. (Reginald & Jemila Massay, The Immigrants) P-8
24. (Gidwani, Bhagawan, The Sword of Tipu Sultan) PP 213-214.
There are other fiction writers, who have taken a wider view of India. To them, India appears like a mosaic of people. Some class of politicians may not stomach this philosophy, but one should not refuse to learn from history. One particular group of people or one particular race, cannot build a nation. People belonging to various classes, castes and races together build a nation. Kailas Vrind in This Time of Morning speaks out,

'But India was more than the Hindu saga. It was the great mosaic of peoples and tongues, faiths and philosophies, the sanctuary no seeker ever had been denied. It had been the home of Christian and Jew since the first century. Muslims since the eighth. India simply did not tolerate religion. It nourished the very spirit of religion and in this, it was unique.'\(^{25}\)

In this way, ‘coming closer’ of Hindus and Muslims, during the Mughal period had done real good to both the communities. One can observe the different degrees of assimilation of these two groups in their various social units like the aristocrats, the middle class and also among the common people. But where does the Muslim woman stand in the panorama of the Hindu-Muslim cultural confluence during the Mughal period? It has been seen that though the upper class and ruling class women got some liberty and they were not treated like slaves, but the over all picture of the Muslim woman remains the same. It is also seen that even the Sufis could not do much to liberate Muslim woman. On various religious occasions like Basant, Holi, Diwali, men from both the groups mixed with each other, but they never allowed their women that liberty. Muslim jealousy of their wives is proverbial. They showed scrupulous regard to the privacy of their women’s apartments.

Polygamy was almost universal among the aristocrats and upper middle classes of both the Hindus and Muslims. Divorce and re-marriage were common among the Muslims but the Hindus abhorred these practices. Child marriage was common among both the communities. The Indian woman was completely dependent on man, whether father, brother or husband. She was not allowed to go out in the society alone, but she enjoyed respect and position in her household.

\(^{25}\) Sahagal, Nayantara, This Time of Morning, (Victor Gollanz London, 1965) P-42
The position of the Hindu woman was better than that of her Muslim counterpart. Normally, both of them have similar duties like maintenance of household, rearing of children and so on. However, the Hindu women moved about freely and they used to take part in socio-cultural activities in association with their men.

After the breakdown of the Mughal empire, there was a big vacuum in the lives of Muslim nobility and Muslim aristocrats. Having lost power, money and status, the Muslims were like an old lion bereft of teeth. They had lost their achieving instincts also. In the absence of this achieving instinct, a kind of material and spiritual rot had set-in in the Muslim society. Women, who should have been their friends and philosophers, were pushed back by men. Women were not in a position to complain against their plight. They accepted slavery as their destiny.

In *Death of Hero*, there is a typical woman character, Begum Sahiba, who accepts her pathetic condition as God’s decree, without grumbling. Begum Mehatab Jilani says,

'I was born a woman. So it was no use my protesting against fate. I had to accept but acceptance brought contentment. I decided to obey him. He ruled me but I ruled the household.'

If one observes this statement carefully, some interesting points, regarding Muslim female psychology, come to light.

That, she was born a woman (as if, it is a sin),

That, her backwardness is her destiny, hence she cannot protest against it (like the theory of Karma, the theory of destiny has also done enough harm to humanity),

And,

That, acceptance brings contentment (it is a dangerous stage of psychological stupefaction, where a person loses courage to raise his voice against injustice)

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Between husband and wife, who should obey whom, need not become the point of controversy. This adjustment must be like the one, that appears between two companions, rather than like the one between master and his servant. However, in the present case, one must observe how the feeling of helplessness is filled in the mind of the Begum and how readily she accepts it as her final destiny.

‘All that happens is due to the fate ordained by Allah! Say five prayers a day, keep the fasts and dies in the process.’ 27

Keeping fasts, among Muslims, is not a strange idea, but the psychology that since she is a woman, her destiny warrants that she must pray, keep fasts and die one day, is dangerous.

If this is one picture of woman’s willing slavery and accepting everything as her destiny, there is another picture of one more Begum, who is shrewd to see through the game plan of man to put woman in perennial slavish conditions. Begum Sahiba, in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s story How I Became the Holy Mother, was to attend the marriage ceremony of her nephew, but she was not allowed to go because her absence might cause inconvenience to her husband. It is an overall picture of how a husband imposes his will on his wife and compels her to accept what he tells.

Khan Saheb is a famous singer. He cares for his fans and guests more than his wife’s urgent needs. He does not allow his wife to go to her nephew’s marriage, because he has his music conference and his wife is required to look after his guests. This makes the Begum to lose calm of her mind,

‘You want only one thing, to take every thing you can, away from me. To leave me with nothing that is only your happiness and joy in life... for you what I am except a servant to keep your house clean and cook for your guests.’ 28

At last she cancels her journey to her brother's house because her husband so desires. She also accepts it as her destiny and reconciles with it.

Sometimes destiny, sometimes religion and some other times the caste or the class that compel man or woman to eat dust. These are the signs of a decadent society. In its own limited sense, religion may be good but it should not be used to determine all our worldly needs. This intervention of religion in every sphere of human life, including one's life of emotions and sentiments, will create acute tension in our lives.

In *Confession of a Lover*, Lalla Acharajmal is the 'Panchayat' of the coppersmith community of Lahore. Originally, the coppersmiths are the followers of the Agakhan, later on they were converted to Hinduism. They are very orthodox and become very angry with the very mention of the word Islam or Muslim. Their community boy, Krishen, has friendship with Muslim boys like Noor, Latif, Abdul Hamid and others. The 'Panchayat' cannot tolerate humiliation done to Hinduism by an educated boy like Krishen. A punishment is given to the boy's family to come clean of their son's Muslim contamination.

>'Call seven Brahmins and have fire burnt with a mound of ghee to purify the household and give a feast to the brotherhood.'29

Krishen, the young rebel, does not take the Panchayat's decision seriously. He pleads that caste and religion and other such considerations are good only in our homes.

Moreover, such outdated phenomena should not be allowed to take upper hand in our social life, lest they sow the seeds of communal disharmony. He finally taunts the elderly men, who assembled to try his case.

>'They did not mind the Musalman milkman who milked the buffalo, touching the utensils, all these days.'30

30. (Ibid) P-86
Thus, the micro-kinship society is opposed to progress. It puts more premium on religion, caste, family and so on, rather than good qualities of individuals. Such micro-kinship societies, among the Hindus and Muslims, have done more harm than good. Every group thinks very high of its religion, caste and so on and develops a ‘frog in the well’ attitude towards its social life. Such attitude towards life produces only social parasites. This is an attempt to show that as the Muslim society turned into a group of non-achievers, the Hindu society was also not far behind. This was the condition of the Muslim society, before the first shot of war of independence was fired by Mahatma Gandhi and others.

After the liquidation of the Mughal empire, the aristocracy and nobility were involved in an unpardonable waste of time and money. The Britishers, who took complete command over India by then, first targeted Muslims, because they felt that the Muslims were responsible for the 1857 uprise. Loss of power on the one hand and political oppression by the British on the other, the Muslims were battered from all sides. Then a miracle happened.

'Then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air, that made to stretch ourselves and take deep breath. Like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes, like a whirlwind that upsets many things but most of all, the working people’s mind.'31

In the Indian society, which was infested with many diseases like religious superstitions and economic and political disparities, a doctor of the Mahatma’s stature was necessary to cure them all. The Indian society, then, lay like a cold lump of amoeba. Gandhiji filled the people with courage, self-respect and strong will to achieve freedom. In Inquilab, Gandhiji declares,

'The British rule in India has brought about the moral, material, cultural and spiritual ruination of this country. I regard this rule as a curse. I am out to destroy this system of government.'32

31. Nehru, Jawaharlal, Discovery of India, (London, 1946) P-256
With this determination, Gandhiji strived to unite people. The Hindus and Muslims, who could not see eye to eye, for many reasons, came closer and closer under the leadership of the Mahatma. This proximity among the Hindus and Muslims has been well expressed by Dr. Aziz in Passage to India.

"India shall be a nation. No foreigners of any sort! Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and all shall be one! Hurrah! For India." \(^{33}\)

Though Passage to India is not an Indian English novel, it is quoted to show how the strength of Hindu-Muslim cultural unity has been shown by other novelists also. After centuries, even today, one finds such a healthy cultural confluence between the Hindus and Muslims. Political compulsions serve only a catalyst.

Not only Muslim men like Abul Kalam Azad, Doctor Ansari, Badruddin Tyabji, Zakir Hussein and hundreds and thousands of them participated in the freedom movement, but many Muslim women of royal families and middle class families also participated.

The magic of Mahatma Gandhi had gripped the female psyche so strongly that they were not afraid of the lathis and beatings of the police. Raja Rao describes this defiant mood of women in Kathapura, when they are beaten by the police,

"After all it is not bad, after all it is not bad and our bangles break and our saris tear, yet we huddle and move on. Then, once again, Rangamma shouts, 'Gandhi Mahatma ki jai! and we all rush forward and the crowd behind us." \(^{34}\)

M.K. Naik also supports the agitation,

"This was unique in the entire history of India, the spectacle of hundreds of women taking part in political mass movement, picketing the liquor shops, marching in demonstration, courting jails, facing lathi charges and bullets." \(^{35}\)

\(^{33}\) Forster, E.M. Passage to India, (London, 1945) P-138  
\(^{34}\) Raja Rao, Kanthapura, (Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1971) P-186  
\(^{35}\) Naik, M.K. A History of Indian English Literature, (Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1982) P-122
For the first time, a leader or saint or philosopher was calling women to come out of their homes and join hands with their men-folk to fight for their country. None had the guts to say no to the Gandhian magic. Otherwise shy and docile Indian women came out to fight against the enemy. Mira in *This Time of Morning* tells what the Gandhian movement has done to women.

'It took the participant by guts and steel every nerve and fibre of the individual. It trimmed and toughened you. And while it had finished with you, it said, now, cry, if you dare.'

But none cried. Not that tears were not welling into their eyes, but they were too proud to shed them. Thus, everything preached by Gandhi was 'a baptism of fire'.

It is unfortunate that neither the Muslim nor the Hindu novelist created a Muslim woman character, who took a leading part in such a great national event. Nevertheless, some Muslim women like Laila, in *The Sunlight on a Broken Column*, are shown indirectly connected with these great national events. One very much wishes to see Muslim women characters speaking and acting like Suhagi and Mohini of Bhabani Bhattacharya as,

'Gandhiji touched our spirit as if slept. Wakened we became equals of our men-folk. Proud, chins up, we marched in a column... Quit India, we shouted to the Engrez alien in one big voice.'

In another novel, by the same author, a woman tells her companion.

'Don't bow down to the world. You are New India.'

As the Muslim woman is under represented in the fiction based on India's freedom movement, some of the novelists have ridiculed Gandhiji's efforts towards Hindu-Muslim unity. The Muslims were not happy with the British government, because they were not consulted at the time of Bengal partition and they did not support the Sultan of Turkey in

36. Sahagal, Nayantara, *This Time of Morning*, (Orient Paperbacks, Delhi, 1965) P-45
the ‘Balkan War’. This led to the Khilafat Movement in India. Gandhiji, with his shrewd calculations, supported the Khilafat Movement and attracted Muslim men and women to the main stream of the freedom movement. This event gave impetus to Hindu-Muslim unity under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Some of the fiction writers have exploited the situation rightly. Barakat Ali and Lala Kanshi Ram in Azadi are such an example.

‘From today, let each Muslim accept one Hindu as his brother and the Hindu that Muslim as his brother.’39

This unity effort of Gandhiji was mocked at as ‘Ram-Rahim’ approach. Some people felt that Gandhiji tried to plaster only the outward breaches, without caring for the internal cracks. Debi Prasad, in A Bend in the Ganges, observes,

‘The Hindus and Muslims are traditional enemies. They would never be able to live together.’40

A.B.Shah, who wrote extensively on the Hindu-Muslim problem, points out the root cause of this dissension.

‘The lack of individualisation of the Muslim mind and basically individualistic mind of the Hindus are responsible for this. The gross collectivism naturally cuts across the individual development of the Hindu mind.’

Shah continues,

‘One important thing to be noted is that the Muslim in any part of the world has not met with the renaissance of its own.’41

41. Shah, A.B. ‘Gandhi and Hindu Problem’ Quest, Jan, (Bombay, 1970) P-120
A.B. Shah also enumerates the shortcomings of the Hindus, which obstruct Hindu-Muslim unity.

1. The individualism of the Hindus made them narcissists.

2. The caste system came in the way of developing civic virtues indispensable for social life.

3. The arrogance of self-righteousness made the Hindus blind to the features of the Muslim politics, which the hard-headed English could easily understand the exploit.  

Let the theoreticians build their theories about Gandhiji's failure in his 'Ram-Rahim' approach and let them tell the world that Gandhiji could not gauge the issue of Hindu-Muslim disunity properly and hence failed in his attempts, but the behaviour of the mythical characters like Gandhiji are beyond human logic. With one slight gesture of fasting, Gandhiji brought the Hindu-Muslim riots in Bengal under control. The work, which an army could not have done, Gandhiji did single-handed. That is why; Lord Mountbatten called him 'one man border security force'. Such was the personality of Gandhiji. At his call, hundreds of Muslim women, as said earlier, came out of their homes.

This is, in brief, the cultural journey of the Muslim woman in India. We have to see how the Hindu and Muslim fiction writers have depicted the Muslim woman in their fiction.

42. (Ibid) P-120