PREFACE

The History of Indian Culture and Society in the 18th century reached its culmination. India witnessed not only the territorial expansion of the Mughal Empire, but the brilliance of its art and culture. Hindus and Muslims welded together on the same platform through the Din-i-illahi of Akbar. The architectural magnificence of the Taj, the beautiful miniatures of the then era, all stood erect as a symbol of brilliance in the arena of the Mughal Empire. But with its zooming period, India also bore the marks of the disintegration and disruption of the mighty Mughal Empire. The arches and the beams of the Empire soon showed signs of cracks, so much so that the building began to falter. The states under the Mughals soon defied the Indian authority and asserted their independence, thus crippling the solidarity of India. The East India Company, soon took advantage of the situation, and the traders soon became the administrators of India.

The present study deals with the 18th century religious and social conditions of India. Several social taboos had crept
into the very core of society. Sati, caste, polygamy, infanticide to name a few had become the order of the day. But every darkness has a silver lining. India too witnessed several reformers who came forward to denounce the social evils. Since the reforms of a country cannot be limited to a certain period alone, I have dealt with the reformers from the Bhakti, Sufis to the reformers of the 18th century. This is to pacify the fact that reformers have tried to reform the society from very early times, but could not, or were partially successful.

With the advance of culture, several reformers boldly took up the gauntlet and mustered enough courage to denounce caste rituals, infanticide, polygamy, Sati to name a few. The religious reformers once again attempted to weld the Hindus and Muslims into a single fold and bring about the downfall of the British regime.

The 18th century also witnessed the emergence of a bold and a benevolent reformer in Shah Wall-Ullah who did not hesitate to criticise the Mughal rulers and their incapability in administering the affairs of the state. He boldly rebuked the military, artisans, Amirs, Sufi descendants and above all the common men, who were equally responsible for the disintegration of the Empire.
In the concluding chapter, I have tried to present a brief account about all the attempts being made by several quarters to bring about a national integration and unity of the two major classes, the Hindus and the Muslims. The 18th century did witness a mutual assimilation. It is true that the Partition of India took place, but that was due to certain misunderstandings among the then ruling power. In fact, Indian platform will always echo the sound of Hindu-Muslim unity.

In order to complete my Thesis, I have sought the help of National Archives, Delhi, National Library, and Asiatic Society, Calcutta. I am extremely grateful to my able guide Dr. Mahzar Hasan and Dr. Kamaruddin without whose guidance I could not have completed my work at the stipulated period.

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