Sri A.C. Chakraborty has very vividly remarked of India to be "a land old and wide. It is thousands of years old; thousands of miles wide. And in this vast country during its long life many races have built their houses, many birds have migrated. No other country has been given such a training in the arts of living together. It has been nature's biggest laboratory to experiment with diverse stains of blood and diverse streams of thought".\(^1\) Whenever two different civilizations come into contact with each other, they are bound to have a mutual influence. "Living side by side for centuries together, the Hindus and the Mohamadan communities had borrowed each others ideas and customs".\(^2\)

Hinduism with its variegated attributes stood patiently before the onrush of the forces of Islam without losing its assimilative power. As soon as the gust of storm subsided, it embraced

\[^1\] Chakraborty, A.C. : Hindu and Musalman in India, Calcutta, 1933, p.151.

\[^2\] The Statesman, November 17, 1910.
into its fold the followers of Islam, and cast its influence over them. In the same way the influence of Islam also affected the Hindu society. With gradual increase in the number of the Hindu converts and with the disappearance of the feelings of bigotry from the mind of the masses, this process of assimilation drew the two communities closer and closer. "Apart from outward signs and symbols, rites and ceremonies, forms and exercises of religion and worship, people have known philosophers of both faiths who have dived deep into the mysteries of life after death, and who have proclaimed the same faith in the oneness of God, the immortality of the soul, the ephemeral character of all material things, and eternal value of things spiritual".  

The reconciliation between the two major communities dates back from the Bhakti Movement. The saints of the Bhakti cult regarded the spiritual basis of Hinduism and Islam as one. "Kabir was the embodiment of the process of Hindu-Muslim union in modern India. He advocated an universal religion to which no Hindu or Muslim could take objection".

Like Kabir, Guru Nanak also preached universal brotherhood. He was of the view that society could only improve if the conflicts among all the religions came to a dead end. In many respects, he represented the high water-mark of Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis and renaissance philosophy.

Chaitanya, a pioneer in the religious integration in Bengal, tried to weld the Hindus and Muslims into one fold through his philosophy of love. It is said that at certain occasions the Muslims were so engrossed with Chaitanya's philosophy of love that they even addressed a hymn to Saraswati, the Goddess of learning.\(^1\) On the other hand the Brahmans also on certain occasions consulted the Quran to find out an auspicious day.\(^2\)

The Sufis in India also helped to bring the Hindus and Muslims together. They were influenced by Indian thought especially in the 17th century when they were repelled by Aurangzeb's intense adherence to the letters of Islam. Drawn towards the vendetta, many muslim mystics declared that nothing was real except God, and everything was illusion. They even adopted the doctrines of "Karma"

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{1.} Dasgupta, Tanmosh : Aspects of Bengali Society from old Bengali Literature, Calcutta, 1935, p.103.
\item \textbf{2.} Ibid, p.103.
\end{itemize}
and the transmigration of souls.

The most authentic proof of the Hindu-Muslim unity was the mystical practices of the Sufis which had their parallel in Hindu philosophy. The "dikhi" of the Sufis had been derived from the "japa" of the Hindus. The "taabih" of the Sufis was equivalent to the Hindu "Mala". The "pasp anfas" has been derived from the yogic exercises of the Hindus. In the sect of Kabir, the Guru holds the same position, as in any other Sufi order. Dara Shikoh stands out prominently as the one "who harmonized Hindu-Muslim philosophy, abandoned dogmas, preached single faith founded on the love of God, and stressed the fundamental unity of faiths".²

Not only in the mystic philosophies, in the daily chores of life too, a distinct merge of the Hindu-Muslim culture is sighted. Several illustrations are found which display the mutual assimilation even at the age of the so-called orthodox Emperor Aurangzeb. Alawal, a muslim poet, translated the Hindu poem "Padmavat" and wrote several poems on Radha and Krishna in 17th century. In "Mansa Mangala" written towards the latter part of the 17th century, there is a passage which depicts that "in the steel chamber prepared for Lakhindra a copy of Quran

2. Ibid, p.52.
was kept along with other sacred charms to remove Mansa Devi's wrath".¹

Aurangzeb has been charged by several critics to be against Hindus and their code of worship. But there are several farmans to prove that Aurangzeb was not antagonistic towards his non-muslim subjects. It was only when a certain object disturbed his administration that he interfered.

".................And those (residents of the said dwellings i.e., Sadhus) while residing in them, remain busy in praying for the perpetuation of the Eternal Empire. But as some people interfere with the conditions of their life on account of escheatage they have a hope that a Farman will be issued from this seat of justice....an order which is carried out by the world, is being issued that in case of arising of such a situation it must be regarded as a rule, that no one should on this account interfere in the activities of this said people onward. So that they may live at peace and tranquility in the houses, and pray regularly for the perpetuation of the Eternal Empire........".²

2. Farman written on the 19th Rabi-uth Thani 27th R.Y.
The priests of Mahabaleshwar temple at Ujjain further support the attitude of tolerance sought by Aurangzeb towards the Hindus. In the chief temple of Shiva, a light called "Nandadeep" was lighted which required four seers of ghee. This has been provided from the remote past and the priests of the temple say that it continued in the Mughal period also and even Aurangzeb honoured this ancient tradition. Thus the Hindu subjects were protected and lived in peace and were in full accord with the Muslims.

By the Middle of the 18th century the process of mutual assimilation had reached its culmination. Nawab Shahmat Jung with Saulat Jung enjoyed the holy festival. After the treaty of Slyhaque (19th February, 1757) Nawab Sirajuddaulah proceeded to Murshidabad and enjoyed the holy festival in his palace at Mansur Jang. The Mohammedans offered "Puja" at Hindu temples as the Hindus offered "shirnee" at Mohammedan Mosques. The "Satyapir" of the Muslims are worshipped by the Hindus even to this day. There are large number of Muslim writers who have written in praise of Hindu Gods and their rich heritage.


2. Ibid, p.329.

These things clearly show that the two major communities the Hindus and the Muslims were all mingled together to form one big unit.

Bahadur Shah combined the qualities of faquir and king alike and incurred no harm. He had a genuine love for India. "He was a symbol and standard bearer of Hindu-Muslim unity. And it is a fact that during the short period of his nominal and ineffective rule, the Musalmans had abandoned cow-slaughter."

The fall of the Mughal Empire brought in its wake quick disintegration of the social and religious life and practically crippled the economic backbone of the Empire. The social evils enveloped the whole society. Caste took a prominent role, Sati and infanticide became the order of the day, and education as well as the conditions of the women in general went to doldrums. The Muslims also, living side by side for centuries could not escape the social taboos. Like the Hindus, the Muslims, also arrayed in the scheme of social gradation upheld by birth. Slavery also became a familiar feature of every respectable Muslim house. The Muslim, mullahs, alike the Brahmans held their offices by heritage.

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1. Hussain, Mahdi: Bahadur Shah II and war of 1857 in Delhi, Delhi, 1958, p. XX.
3. Ibid, p. 85
In society, the spirit of toleration was spared both by Hindus and Muslims alike. The religious life of the people were singularly free from violent symptoms of bigotry and fanaticism and communication on account of religion. "All accounts impress that inter-communal relations were healthy and antagonism of sects had melted into appreciations and tolerance".\(^1\) Stavornius, the Dutch traveller (1765-76) wrote about the life of the South-West Peninsula. "These three distinct nations, the Moors (Muslims), the Gentoos (Hindus) and the Parsees whose religions are widely different from each other, exercise the greatest toleration and indulgence in this respect towards one another; they may be seen together in and near the river, offering their prayers, each to that Being whom he adores, without any marks of seclusion or contempt being shown by any one".\(^2\) Thus there are similarities in the habits and customs of all, immaterial of any caste or religion. In rural areas, the women of rival faiths were in complete accord with each other. The entire atmosphere was one of peace and harmony. At holy places like Varanasi also the relations between the Musalmans and Hindus were peaceful.

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1. V.P.S. Raghuvanshi : Indian Society in 18th century, Delhi, 1969, p.126.

In the 18th century worship of saints was a great unifying factor in the religious life of the masses, both Hindu and Muslims. Monuments of saints were spread all over North-Eastern India and were considered holy places since both Hindus and Muslims knelt alike in profound devotion to innovate the blessings of the saints. "In the history of the expansion of the Islam in India, the Muslim saints have played a very decisive role, and they also succeeded in bridging the gulf between the two great religions". Though "Islam held monotheism, yet it was very much influenced by the polytheistic elements of Hindu religion".

Although socially united the major castes were practically crippled as far as their economy was concerned. The remnants of the Imperial authority extended their favour to the Zamindars, and noblemen, so much so that unequal distribution of wealth was the ultimate outcome. The edifice of the Government which were to be based on economic and social prosperity had degraded themselves to a level of parasites so much so that they neglected

1. V.P.S., Raghuvanshi : Indian Society in 18th Century, Delhi, 1969, p.131.

2. Ibid, p.132.
every aspect of administration. At this juncture, a religious reformer, Shah Wali-Ullah took up the gauntlet, and promulgated the difficult task of integrating the whole structure of Islam, and to emerge them once again from the dark clouds to a clear sky. He wrote strong letters to the Caliph, Amirs, artisans, the military class, and the common people to abandon their vicious designs, and to follow the path of honesty and perseverance. Shah Wali-Ullah had a great courage and fortitude. He did not hesitate to speak the truth, and to expose the lethargy, lawlessness and dishonesty even of the ruling class. Thus with the gradual re-emergence of the Muslims, the latter woke up to the gravity of the situation, intermingled with the Hindu, whenever necessary, and eventually built up an united India, despite the diverse shades of culture, beliefs and practices.

Thus it can be safely asserted that the bulk of the inhabitants of India, irrespective of their caste and creed, had always united, and national integration always prevailed. There has been certain incidents which led one to believe that the secularism and unity on which the Indian edifice stood, was dwindling. The tragic circumstances which led to the death of our political leaders, were the work of certain miscreants and vicious elements, who were all set to tarnish the secular image of India. The Sikhs, or the warrior class, suddenly called themselves a separate clan, much to the surprise of all.
This clan was formed to distinguish the warrior class from the common man. This was made only for convenience sake, not to disintegrate the otherwise integrated India. But the miscreants of the modern age, sought advantage out of this distinction. They declared themselves an independent class, fought against the Indian Government and spoilt the peace and tranquility of the secular state. The Sikhs have recently disintegrated within themselves, and are vying against each other. They are killing each other, and the mass of the Sikh clan are utterly confused at the whole state of affairs. The "bomb scare" which has become an everyday affair, goes only to prove, that India has degenerated to such an extent, that it can even kill their own kith and kins without the slightest hesitation.

Inspite of all this, one must not forget that the percentage of the terrorists is much less, compared to those, who desire an united India. Several riots are an outcome of petty causes, but they are all passing phase. India has, and always will be an united one, whatever outcome they have to face. In the hearts of hearts, there is no ill feelings in any quarters. The unpleasant incidents are nothing but an outcome of vested interests who serve their own, at the stake of others.
It is indeed unfortunate that the partition of India took place but that was due to certain misunderstandings. Whatever be the reasons, it cannot be denied that mutual assimilation will still remain intact. Time and again, terrorists would create discomfiture, but that would be a passing phase. It would gradually die a natural death. The two major communities, the Hindus and the Muslims have not forgotten the important saying of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan who had said: "India is like a bridge which has got two beautiful and lustrous eyes - Hindus and Musalmans. If they quarrelled against each other, that beautiful bride will become ugly, and if one destroys the other, she will lose one eye. Therefore, people of Hindustan, you have now the right to make this bride either squint eyed or one eyed". ¹

Thus the river of national assimilation which had been flowing from time immemorial will flow with its usual grandeur and lustre.

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¹ Speech delivered at Patna 27th January 1883. The writings and speeches of Sayyid Ahmed Khan by Shan Mohammad, Bombay, 1972, p.159.