Chapter 1

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS BEFORE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

People belonging to different religions and social systems had lived together for many centuries in Hindustan before and after the seventeenth century. Looking at society in the seventeenth century Hindustan requires explorations into nature and kinds of earlier contacts between the followers of two main religious systems namely Hindu and Islam. During the course of time people interacted more than before as socio-economic and political reasons brought them geographically and socially closer. However, with their own set of values and social system which had been generated separately and independently on far off land, there were some hindrances and alterations in social relationship within and between communities. All these processes are required to be taken up in brief in this chapter to understand the centuries long background of Hindu-Muslim social relationship in Hindustan before seventeenth century.

The background developments of the long period before the seventeenth century can be identified by three phases of social interactions between followers of the two main religions. The ‘coming of Islam’ in Indian subcontinent is generally viewed to happen in three ways – first, through the traders and missionaries who came “to India’s southern coasts; second, in the expanding wave of the Umayyad conquests which carried them to the Phone, the Syre Darya, and the Indus; and, finally, like the Greeks, the Sakas and the Huns, in the more organized conquest-cum-immigration movement of the Central Asians, Turks and Afghans”.\(^1\) Although the communal historiography saw this process only as an invasion with fool proof plans of

\(^1\)Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, New Delhi, 1964, p. 77.
subjugating the Hindu population for centuries ahead. On the other 
hand, rational analysis suggests these processes as interactions between 
people of different socio-cultural identities and regional connotations. 
Despite the limitations of transport, means and mode of 
communications, medieval time had provided more dynamic 
opportunities for inter-territorial movement, in contrast to the modern 
restrictive nationalistic measures of passport and visa. Thus, it would 
be appropriate to maintain the idea in “[...]that we should not try to 
read back our present national sentiments into those of the people a 
millennium earlier, and feel awkward if these do not appear to have 
been shared by them”.2

Keeping in view the freedom to roam, subject to limitations and 
difficulties of travelling alone, we can alternatively regard these phases 
as interactions between neighbouring societies rather than ‘intrusion’ 
or ‘invasion’ of one society by another. However, the military intrusion 
or invasion is not ruled out but is posited as something different. Here, 
for simplicity’s sake, we are dealing with the post-invasion social 
interactions after the settling down of the dust of battles when people 
started living together.

The first missionary and emissary-type interactions (not intrusion 
as it was for some scholars), can be termed as far-distance social 
relations. The medium of such relations between two far distance 
communities might be by means of trade, travels, and transaction of 
knowledge or by temporary political sway over an area. Second type of 
social relations covers interactions between people living on 
peripheries of different cultural regions. Here, in our study, Sind and 
north-west regions of Indian subcontinent, particularly both sides 
across the river Indus, was an overlapping peripheral region of Arab 
and Hind’s cultural heartlands. And the third type of relationship may

2M. Athar Ali, “Encounter and Efflorescence: The Genesis of the 
Medieval Civilization”, Mughal India Studies in Polity, Ideas, Society 
and Culture, New Delhi, 2011, p. 15.
be termed as ‘living together’. It emerges through face to face live interactions in social space of daily life while living together by two different populaces. This type of interactions is made in the core of cultural heartland by melting together of two populations of different religions in urban and rural hinterlands of Hindustan for centuries.

**Far distance relations**

The history of commercial relations between various regions of Indian subcontinent and the countries like Arabia, Palestine and Egypt goes back to ancient times. There are so many references to trade, items of trade, ports; colonies of merchants. Roman coins may be seen as testimonial of the existence of commercial relations between various territories of Indian subcontinent with west and central Asian countries. These commercial relations were present even before the rise of Islam. People of Hira, a city founded by Arabs in the south-west of ancient Babylon, and later a vassal principality of Sassanids, watched the navigators coming from India and China in fifth and sixth centuries. Furthermore, fleets of Indian ships could be seen from Tigris to Obollah till the end of Sassanian Empire. It is stated that Persians had become masters of Indian markets, and the word *Tajik* used for a section of Indian astronomy attests to the influence and amplitude of Persian intercourse with India well before the emergence of Islam. The Arabs were also very active trade participants through the sea routes in this time. They had many entry points in their Arab territories and had been settled at Chaul, Kalyan, Supara on the western coastal areas of Indian subcontinent. In Malabar, the Arabs had influenced local people to the extent that they “had adopted the Arab religion (probably Sabaean)” before their own conversion to the Islam as Islam was yet to emerge in Arabia.

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However, Islam was not the first religion spread from Arabia but it was more effective than ever. The Arabs traders came first and settled down in western coastal parts of Indian subcontinent with their pre-Islamic culture and beliefs. They had been interactive with local people for a long time in due course of trade and commerce. As the Arabs had settled down in coastal areas of Indian peninsula well before the emergence of Islam, later embracing of Islam would have been noticed well in their settlements as Islam brought remarkable changes in the lives of Arab traders and they took “every opportunity to speak about it”.

These accounts suggest that the conquest of Sind by Muhammad bin Qasim in 712 AD was not first-ever contact between people of Arab, the land faraway from Indian subcontinent, including Sind. This conquest, which is often presented as the first ever mutual contact or breaking of a defence wall against the conscious efforts to evade or being aloof from Islam, or as an expansion of polities in the west of India, after becoming a military power and state, is a wrong perception regarding natural interactions of the people across the river Indus. Such presentations, which do not differentiate the military expansion and natural interactions between societies, do mix and present both the processes as one and same – something which is historically inaccurate. The references of Hindu traders who travelled in ships with Arabs, or the Jats of Sind who had served the Persians before

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Thomas W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, Lahore, 1956, pp. 409, 419 See for the role of Arab traders in spreading of Islam to their settlements; Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (610-1947)*, Delhi, 1998, p. 1; Saiyid Sulaiman Nadwi, *Arab aur Bharat ke Sambandh*, trans. Babu Ramchandra Verma, Allahabad, n.d. p. 17-21. During the time of Caliph Harun in the 8th century, an initiative taken by his ministerial family named Barmak (who himself was from Balkh and said to having an Indian ancestry and officialdom of a Buddhist temple) sent some scholars of theirs while inviting some in return from India to Baghdad. They made them the chief physicians of their hospitals and also ordered to translate books from Sanskrit to Arabic.
emergence of Islam and continued with them after the fall of Persians against Muslim Arabs, serving under the Caliph Ali or, serving the widow of Prophet as physician falls under cultural-historical continuation, seem impervious to the change in religious position of their masters – are some of the exemplary facts which show the process of interactions, between people of different region and religions, before and after the emergence of Islam. Thus, the aftermath of Islam and Arab religious unification provided “a tremendous impetus to the movements of expansion which was going on since pre-Islamic days”.

As regards the transaction of knowledge between India and Islamic Arab, there were two different modes and times of incorporating the Indian contribution towards the other side. First by transmission of knowledge direct from Sanskrit to Arabic; and, the second was from Sanskrit to Persian and then to Arabic, this way it reached Baghdad. The Arabs had “learned from Brahmagupta earlier than from Ptolemy”. For the same purpose Muslim scholars too, sometimes travelled back to India. Panchatantra, the story-book of morals and ethics was popular in many parts of Muslim world as Kalilah wa Dimnah.

Before the occupation of Sind, the nature and scope of relations with Arab and Persian countries were limited at large. However, this inertia later changed due to the expansion of Arab sway over Sind. The existence of such relations only could have ceased due to contraction of

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7Nadwi, Arab aur Bharat, pp. 10-11.
9Tara Chand, op cit., p. 31.
10Edward C. Sachau, Preface to Alberuni’s India, vol. I, pp. xxx-xxxi. This process took momentum in the period of Khalifa Mansur (753-774 AD) after the conquest of Sind by Arabs.
11Sachau, Preface to Alberuni’s India, p. xxxi. The influx in relations was seen during the period of Khalifa Harun (786-808 AD).
12Qureshi, The Muslim Community, p. 31.
sway or decline in trade. That is why, “soon afterwards, when Sind was no longer politically dependent upon Baghdad, all this intercourse ceased entirely”, afterwards there was “no more mention of the presence of Hindu scholars at Baghdad nor translations of the Sanskrit” works.\textsuperscript{13} However, the Indian scholars who went to Baghdad generally settled down and “they or their descendants were converted to Islam.”\textsuperscript{14} Nevertheless, the cease in political relationship between Sind and Baghdad cannot be seen as dying down of relations between Hindus, Buddhist and Muslims, they had to live together in Sind, with all their mutual associative or dissociative forms of relationships.

The subjugation of Sind in 712 AD under the rule of Muslim Caliph of Baghdad brought certain change in political domain. However, the question arises: could it bring changes in other aspects of life as soon and rapidly as had the change over the throne from Brahman ruler to Muslim ruler? Although, it is appropriate to say that the conquest of Sind by Muslim Arab troops under Al-Qasim certainly had affected political, economic, social and religious aspects of life. But, can this imply that it had affected and brought changes of equal magnitude for all the sections of society in Sind, is something to look at with investigative notion.

As far as the religious scenario is concerned, it is evident that at the time of this conquest there were two main prominent religions in Sind, as reported in the contemporary chronicles. One was Buddhism and the other was Brahmanism, a peculiar and distinguished system of faith and worshipping of God, nowadays identified as Hinduism. For easy differentiation from other religions, hereafter it will be called as Hinduism; even if, it might have not been recognised by contemporary people as it is.\textsuperscript{15} For the foreigner Arabs, the new incumbents in society

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\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{13}] Sachau, Preface to Alberuni’s India, p. xxxii.
\item[\textsuperscript{14}] Qureshi, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 32.
\item[\textsuperscript{15}] In the recorded accounts, only Alberuni used the word Hindu first time ever as name of the religion in his famous book \textit{Kitab fi Tahqiq}
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\end{footnotesize}
of Sind, the visual and conceptual differences between followers of both, *i.e.* Buddhism and Hinduism seemed blurred as they could not distinguish them ‘separate’ from each other. For it, they had to look into other type of differences. The ‘others’ for them were people who looked different in visual and cultural notions of daily life, and certainly were not following Islam. They could be Buddhist, Hindu or follower of any other local religious sect. Consequently, the author of *Chachnama* used the word ‘Brahmin’ so many times indiscriminately for a native priest, without making a distinction between Buddhist and Hindu priest.\(^{16}\)

Now, in this situation the question arises: can one consider this usage aroused due to a lack of knowledge on part of an Arab scholar who had come from a different cultural-region from a far off foreign land or the religious identities were so negligible to differentiate just on the basis of visual perceptions? Interestingly, the answer looks like somewhere between ‘no’ and ‘yes’. However, it was not due to any lack of knowledge or mutual understanding. If it gives that impression today, it can be because of the overshadowing of the contemporary facts under modern perceptions in modern historiography, instead of any lack of knowledge in contemporaries, but it was what they had seen actually, without going into minute contextual conditions.

The modern concept of ‘nation’ or of ‘foreign invasion’ is somewhat different in pre-colonial and colonial notions.\(^{17}\) Similarly, it seems correct that the people were more flexible regarding religious identity affiliations than in modern times. For example, the Brahman

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\(^{16}\)Qureshi, *The Muslim Community*, p. 32. The distinction can be made only on the basis of contextual references in the original text.

\(^{17}\)Athar Ali, “Encounter and Efflorescence”, p. 15. Suggests to readers that they should “not to read national sentiments into those of the people a millennium earlier, and feel awkward if these do not appear to have been shared by them” otherwise this situation forces one to be stuck one’s own modern notions of identity while reading history.
king of Sind Chach, was a Hindu, who was also well acquainted in all the four Vedas, (though we have no other fact or self-ascriptive word in this regard) on the other hand his brother and next ruler of Sind Chandar, acclaimed himself as a Buddhist; after end of his rule, Dahir, the king of Sind, was said to be a Hindu.\textsuperscript{18}

There are so many incidents available in Indian history presenting exemplary religious flexibility. But political life did not appear so indifferent with religion of ruler or ruled. The political matters could be strengthening force for political motives. The Buddhist chiefs were said to have advised the commoners of Sind (Jats) not to fight against Arabs as they were already in collusion with them in their bid for Sind.\textsuperscript{19} This Buddhist support to Al-Qasim was taken as their antipathy against the Hindu rule of Sind to which they had lost their political power of Sind and other parts of Indian subcontinent before seventh century.\textsuperscript{20} Similarly, efforts to dislodge Chandar, the heir of Chach, who was his younger brother and a follower of Buddhism, also seen as an attempt to strengthening Hinduism by the Brahmins. Hindu governor of Siwistan invited the king of Kannauj to dislodge the rule of a Buddhist Chandar.\textsuperscript{21} Yet it does not seem just a religious antagonism as the primary reason on the basis of account given in \textit{Chachnama}. It reads as that he went to king of Kannauj and said “Chach son of Selaij is dead and his brother Chandar, a monk (rahib), has succeeded him. However, he is a devotee (nasik) and

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Chachnama}, Delhi, 1919, pp. 17-18, 53 cf. Qureshi, \textit{The Muslim Community}, pp. 37-38. There are so many examples in ancient and medieval period where in a single ruling family, members followed different religions or sects. See Tara Chand, \textit{Influence of Islam}, p. 6 for Harshvardhana’s equal reverence and impartiality for both Hinduism and Buddhism.
\textsuperscript{19}Qureshi, \textit{The Muslim Community}, pp. 32-34.
\textsuperscript{20}Tara Chand, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 6; Qureshi, \textit{The Muslim Community}, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Chachnama}, pp. 50-52 cf. Qureshi, \textit{The Muslim Community}, p. 37. Qureshi cites Kuﬁ who saw religious reasons behind the occupation of Sind after the death of Chach on the pretext that the next ruler Chandar was a Buddhist.
spends his whole time with other devotees (nasiks) in his temple in the study of his religion. It will be very easy to deprive him of the kingdom.”

Here, in this passage, it is the religious nature of the then king of Sind and his devotion of time in the religious affairs instead of state-affairs which was seen as an opportunity to grab Sind not the religious affinity of the succeeding king as the sole reason to dislodge Chandar from the throne. However, it is evident from this passage that the region of Sind was geographically having a ‘in-between position’ between the mega regions of Arab and Hind which facilitated the relations and made interactions possible among different classes and among the neighbouring regional actors and factors. According to different political needs and concerns of various fractions, whether it was the ousted ruling segments of Buddhist affiliation or contemporary Muslim neighbouring aspirants of Sind’s throne; hooked their rope of hope in different directions. It was natural for them as they had to had some sort of relations with their neighbours – whether it was cooperation or competition, conflict or contradiction; or, in a holistic sense, one can see them as associative or dissociative processes.

In this situation, the polity and region of Sind itself happened to be ‘in-between’ vast regions having Hindustan in the east, and Arab in the west. Sind as peripheral region of these vast regions – of far-distant land, had diverse religious adherence, different socio-cultural, economic aspects and political structure, along with different regional attributes – but at the same time inter-connected too, despite all these differentiations in terms of influence rendered from these centres. Here, ‘centre’ does not mean a place from where any fountain springs flow towards periphery. Rather, it is like a geographical point, that can be specific to any region, which one can find between two different regions and hence, consequently, between two different cultural zones.

At the same time, the centre may happen to be a peripheral area in the sense of being at a far distance from dominant cultural zones.

Thus, the region of Sind (and also the whole region up across the river Sind) was the place of meeting of waves of different cultural currents and simultaneously, a centre for its peripheral developments, which had to affect and bring its bearing on the affairs of the Sind and its population. The composition of conquered people of Sind was not only different in term of religion but also on caste line. There were Brahmans, to whom the king belonged; Buddhists, who had lost their political sway against the Brahman rule; tribal people like Meds and Jats, traders, Thakurs and other segments of population. We can ask: did the Arab victory and change over the throne affected all sections of society equally? Again, Chachnama answers that only a Brahmin king was removed from the throne but Brahmans continued as revenue collectors; their mode of worship and sanctity of images was guaranteed, including the right of the priests to a share in tax collection remained intact. Even in social sphere, the special position of Brahmins in Hindu society was recognised, and the same tolerance was extended to the Buddhists. But common Jats remained under same humiliating restrictions as they were under Brahman rule of Sind. They could not wear soft clothes, or a headwear. They had to remain bare footed, they always required to accompany a dog with them so that they might be distinguished from other tribes. All this continued to be imposed even under the new egalitarian Arab Muslim rule. The Chachnama shows that the Arab conquerors did not practiced the egalitarian theory of Islam but easily slipped into the shoes of Brahman

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ruler of Sind. The new rule did not touch the discriminatory fabric of the society. Thus, Arab conquerors did not bring “any kind of liberation or even relief to the poor of the conquered lands”.

The change was quick and rapid only at the level of throne and in administration but not in the society. The old privileged got further privileges under the new rule and discriminations continued as they were before. The pre-existing hierarchical structure of the Arabs, well before the victory of Sind, led them to accept the Brahmans and Thakurs as their subordinate ruling classes, much in the same way they had already accommodated the rural aristocracy of Sassanid’s in Iran. In this sense, there appeared no big change in society, except for the unintended, long-term changes yet to come with its own pace and carriers i.e. by the social interactions, among and across the various sections and levels. In Chachnama we do not find any mention of any forcible conversion to Islam. However, conversions took place and surprisingly converts were not ‘unclean’ people like Jats – who remained ‘unclean’ not only for Hindus but also for new incumbents, Arab Muslims. The new early converts to Islam “belonged to high and middle nobility rather than the masses that remained unconverted for a much longer time.”

The presence of Islam in Sind attracted the attention of people and aroused curiosity about the new religion which triggered a process of mutual relationship. In this course, Quran was translated for a Hindu ruler in his native language whose kingdom was somewhere to the north of Sind; references of debates between Hindu, Muslim and Buddhists scholars also mentioned to be held in the region of Sind and even in Baghdad. The setting up of a bilingual inscription, in Arabic

28Athar Ali, “Islamic Background” p. 9; see also Al-Baladuri cf. Qureshi, The Muslim Community, p. 36.
29Qureshi, The Muslim Community, pp. 36-37.
(Kufic) and Sanskrit (Sharda), on a pond constructed by Arab Governor Fayy ibn ‘Ammar in 857-58 in Tochi Vally, starts with *Om*. It shows the open-mindedness at the level of religious discourse and further developments in this peripheral area.

One another aspect was the presence of various sects of Islam in the Sind and Multan. One of them was Carmathians of Multan (*Ismaili Shi’ahs*) who tried to convert people from Islam and Hindu folds alike. They considered Ali as an incarnation of Vishnu. Some other developments also attracted attention as the outcome of long interactions among Muslim and non-Muslims of the Sind and Multan. The ethnicity of Sumara tribe/clan of Sind and their debatable lineage to Arab or Hindu origin was such a point. Today one can debate whether *Khojahs*, who identify themselves as *Ismaili Shi’ahs*, were Muslims or not as “neither the orthodox Muslim nor Hindu” believe them as their “co-religionist” due to their mixed obligatory observations and religious practices. But what all appear conclusive is that all this inter-mixing would have happened only as an outcome of interactions between belief of *Ismaili Shi’ahs* and Hinduism. Without such “creative ferment that arose either from conflicts within Muslim communities over issues of doctrine or practice, or from encounters between Muslims and non-Muslims who lived along the frontiers of moving Muslim societies”, the interactions and mixing of different faiths would have not occurred.

31Qureshi, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
Besides the mingling of philosophical thoughts, verbal and visual expressions too became synthesized as a similar outcome. The Arab traveller Ibn Hawqal noticed and wrote of this change in languages and dresses of Muslims and non-Muslims alike in the areas of Multan. Muslims, soon after coming into close contact with locals, “adopted the dress[es] of the Hindus which was in accordance with the fashion of the day i.e. a trouser and Kurta. 

Coming close on peripheries

Three centuries had elapsed since the Arabic conquest of Sind by Al-Qasim which brought and shaped some changes in the areas of Sind and Multan till 10th century and before the rise of the Turks in Central Asia. The emergence of Turks, triggered new political developments in the north-west part of Indian subcontinent and adjoining regions of modern Afghanistan and this further led to some new socio-political developments as it happened in early Islamic history during the course of its expansion of Islam. In this development, the Muslims moved and interacted beyond the Arab world and, as Eaton informs, encountered people who were “non-Muslims in Iran, Sind, or Malabar, or as Persian speaking Muslims encountered non-Muslim Turks in Central Asia” and later, “Muslim Turks encountered non-Muslim people of Punjab and the Gangetic Plain.” These political developments brought people of different ethnicity and religious backgrounds closer under the political domain of Muslim rulers and this aroused the curiosity, on both sides, to know

34 Ibn Hawqal as quoted in Qureshi, The Muslim Community, p. 40.
35 Jafri Begum, Muslim Society in India 712-1200 A.D., New Delhi, 2002, p. 19 quotes Syed Abu Zafar’s Tarikh-i-Sind.
36 Andre Wink, Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World, vol. II, New Delhi, 1999. pp. 43-78. See first two chapters specially ‘The Coming of the Turks’ for historical background of the events and politics of Middle east and Central Asia that caused emergence of Turks as political power in the region and for India specific references.
37 Introduction to Eaton (ed.), Islamic Traditions, p. 25.
and be known to the others. The fanatic antagonism was not a feature of social relations. The Indian history, and, in particular, the north-west region of Indian sub-continent, had witnessed that people of this region sometimes had been ‘linked’ and ‘integrated under one rule’ and later divided and separated under various states.\textsuperscript{38} At times, people became followers of one religion like Buddhism, and on some other time, they adopted an altogether new religion. Thus, this process of adopting and moving beyond a classical religious practice (which is a feature of modern times) drew the line which distinguished them as ‘we’ and ‘they’ at the same time. Now, again, it was time when people came in touch with myriad religious movements due to political developments in the region. This interaction is termed as “the fusion of frontier and settled society”\textsuperscript{39} as it witnessed the establishment and consolidation of political power and organizational structure by former nomadic people \textit{i.e.} Turks and rural communities of Hind.

The form and nature of far distance Arab-Sind relations prior to the eighth century, as we have seen in the preceding discussion, were understood as earliest Hindu-Muslim relations. However, such specific relations cannot be taken to be similar in nature and scope as full-fledged interactions between two different societies. The earlier relations were more economic and political in their nature, devoid of any passion for the heaven. Social scientists suggest that there can be many forms of associative and dissociative interactions between people of different social and cultural backgrounds, beside political relations. This way, the nature and forms of relationship after the eighth century, in the region of Sind and Multan had become different from the earlier relations, since both the Hindus and Muslims came to know about each other, in rural and urban areas of the Hind after establishment of Delhi Sultanate in early years of thirteenth century. Afterwards, the process

\textsuperscript{38}Wink, \textit{Al-Hind}, vol. II, pp. 50, 52. For the geopolitical uniqueness of Central Asia, that kept major civilizations away from each other on its peripheries.

\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 42-43.
of mutual exchange between different cultures accelerated in the peripheries of north-west Indian subcontinent. Hence, the period from 10th to 13th century seem appropriate to study social interactions and cultural synthesis in its initial stages. Kitab fi tahqiq ma lil Hind which is thought to be an ‘act of recognition’ and “intercultural communication” thanks to the efforts of Alberuni who analysed the causations behind the events or actions, helps us in this matter. Alberuni studied as an Indologist, people living side-by-side in the regions of Sind, Punjab and the suburb area of Kabul, through textual and personal observations of the philosophical and practical aspects of daily life of different civilizations and followers of divergent religious systems with all their peculiarities, and presented the facts in an analytic descriptions as “a simple historic record of facts” with the hope that it will “help to those who want to discuss religious questions with them, and as a repertory of information to those who want to associate with them.”

As a scholar, he observed and wrote in the very first chapter of his work on India, the cultural and social differences of people at the border. He wrote that the “Hindus entirely differ from us in every respect” and these difference were caused by “barriers” between people “beyond the frontier of Kabul and the river Sind”. Despite many reasons for repugnance, of which some had roots in distant past and some were of recent origin, he did not attribute this feeling as a unique between Hindu and Muslims only but adds that “we must confess, in order to be just, that a similar depreciation of foreigners not only prevails among us and the Hindus, but is common to all nations."

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40 Athar Ali, “Encounter and Efflorescence”, p. 18 M. Athar Ali borrowed the adjectives with due acknowledgment to the review of Needham’ work.
41 Preface to Alberuni’s India, p. xxiii. The mixed Muslim and non-Muslim population were the expected readers who had been living in Sind, Punjab and to the extent of Kabul’s suburb area.
43 Ibid., vol. I, p. 17, 22.
towards each other.” Disliking between two different nations is a normal thing to a certain degree, but “the expulsion of Shamaniyaa (Buddhists)” was a historical reason behind the “existing antagonism between Hindus and foreigners”; though the Buddhists “hate the Brahmans” but were ‘nearer to the Brahmans than to the others’ who in past, first lost their land against Zoroastrianism, and, in consequence, banished from Iran and other countries and had to emigrate to the countries east of Balkh. This development increased the “already existing antagonism between Hindus and foreigners”; and “then came Islam” which enhanced the repugnance which gradually “increased more and more when the Muslims began to make their inroads into their country”, as by Al-Qasim in Sind and three centuries later by Mahmud Gaznavi, was the crux of the antagonism which emerged due to political and religious sources, observed Alberuni.

Hindus of this period seem to be strictly uncompromising in sharing their world-view with ‘Others’. Most likely, it appears to be a psychological effect of the Muslim conquest of the North India, which was perceived as the defeat of the local ruling religion – Brahminism, as well as an effect of the centuries long social distinctions of caste which forbade sharing of knowledge with the lower-castes and similarly excluded foreigners, who were theoretically outside the caste hierarchy. Alberuni confirms this, when he finds that ‘the Hindus’ are very disinclined in communicating whatever they knew “and they take the greatest possible care to withhold it from men of another caste among their own people, still much more, of course from any

44 Alberuni’s India, p. 20.
45 Shamaniyaa derived from Prakrit form of Sanskrit word ‘Sramana’ see Annotations in Alberuni’s India, vol. II, p. 261.
46 Alberuni’s India, vol. I, pp. 21-22. Alberuni specifically mentioned the invasion of Al-Qasim on Sind and his inroads to India ‘proper’ in 8th century and later by Mahmud Ghaznavi in 11th century which increased the hatred towards the foreigners.
foreigner” and this attitude was amass with the rider of self-pride.\textsuperscript{47} This description clearly refers to Brahmans and their attitude of self-appointed sole ‘keepers, preacher and teachers’\textsuperscript{48} of knowledge in the society, with whom Alberuni had to interact and whom he found filled with superficial knowledge and deep self-pride which, he thought, was due to a lack of exposure and non-acquaintances to the latest knowledge and developments in the world. As late as the arrival of the British, most Indians thought sea-voyages were anti-religious. Alberuni felt that “if they travelled and mixed with other nations, they would soon change their mind”.\textsuperscript{49} This rarely happened, and if it did, such people came out from the very castes or ideologies which were considered ‘untouchable’ or ‘challenging’ towards the caste-order, such as the Nathpanthis, who might have had imparted yoga to sufis of Central Asia through their travels au pair. Through these descriptions, Hindu society looks to be very conservative and closed-doors in terms of interactions with the neighbouring foreign societies, and even within itself. Thus, the attitude and social system of caste was the “greatest obstacle which prevents any approach or understanding between Hindus and Muslims”.\textsuperscript{50} The notion of Brahmanic purity and superiority, social hierarchy and \textit{Varnas}, seemed opposed to open mindedness, and was supported by religion.

Education, held a primary importance, and like most other things, it too was divided into Hindu and Muslim, and on caste and non-caste basis. Religious education was held supreme over other forms of knowledge – a view which resulted largely from the

\textsuperscript{47}\textit{Alberuni’s India}, vol. I, pp. 22-24. Alberuni himself witnessed this attitude that no one anywhere in the world had the knowledge or science “whatsoever” Brahmans had. However, learned Brahmans were surprised to see his proficient knowledge and they called him \textit{Sagar} i.e. ‘the sea of knowledge’ when he solved some astronomical problems in different ways.


\textsuperscript{49}\textit{Ibid.}, vol. I, p. 23.

\textsuperscript{50}\textit{Ibid.}, vol. I, p. 100.
sectarianism of the ruling class and castes, and which later on produced the illusion that the Indians were philosophically inclined. This early bifurcation of higher education along religious line also paved the way for much enmity among the higher classes belonging to both the religions, and to a certain kind of cultural solidarity among the lower classes (comprised of Sufis and travelling mendicants). On the basis of classical theory of creation of four Varnas, created from the bodily parts of Brahmma, Brahmans, Kashtriyas, Vaisya and Sudras were the names of Varnas in descending order of social hierarchy. However, there were also other people further below the status of Sudras and out of the ambit of Varna system, there were people called Antyaja, who were not reckoned in any of Varna but formed eight classes. Hadi, Doma, Chandala and Badhatu were not reckoned in any of Varna but considered simply as one sole class of degraded ‘outcastes’.51

Basing his historiography on Alberuni’s observations, Mohammad Habib notes that “[the caste system entailed] the degeneration of the oppressor and the degeneration of the oppressed, priest-craft, king-craft, idol-worship with its degrading cults, the economic and spiritual exploitation of the multitude, the division of the people into small water-tight sub-caste groups resulting in the total annihilation of the any sense of common citizenship or of loyalty to the country as a whole.”52 However Antyaja and outcaste people had to indulge in their ‘dirty work’ like cleansing village, inflicting judicial punishment as their occupation. The society seemed more complex in cataloguing hierarchy of people and works.

A feature of this period is the development of class-peasantry and serfdom, much along the lines of what Marc Bloch has suggested

about Western Europe for the same time. Brahmins had the privilege of receiving alms, teaching (the Brhamana and Kshtriya pupils) and trading; nevertheless, they were not liable to pay any taxes. If Vaisya and Sudras desired to have a better fortune and conditions of life, they had to born again, and for rebirth they had to commit suicide by burning themselves which “no man of distinction does, but only the Vaisyas and Sudras.” As regards marriages, the custom of polyandry and its reverse polygamy, both were in practice; and the number of wives was dependent upon the caste (Varna). However, marrying to a woman of a ‘superior’ caste was not allowed. Despite, the Antyajas could intermarry freely within their classes except the fuller, shoemaker, and weaver as they were out of Varna system and “no others would condescend to have anything to do with them.” Alberuni also destroys the myth that among the Hindus, polygamy was not practised. In fact, the higher the caste status, the higher the number of wives allowed. The Varna could determine the number of wives but the caste of offspring was to be determined by the caste of mother: it was applicable only when a man of upper Varna married to a woman of lower Varna. Though, in theory, the Brahman was allowed to marry a woman of any Varna, yet Alberuni wrote, it was not in practice in 11th Century. Parents married off their children at a very young age.

55 Ibid., vol. II, p. 170. Suicide by burning was forbidden for upper two Varnas sparing widows.  
58 Ibid., vol. II, p. 155. A man can marry four women at a time. The number seems maximum for Brahman as it reduces one each in subsequently lower Varna.  
59 Ibid., vol. II, p. 156; vol. I, p. 101. If a man of upper varna marry to a woman of lower Varna it was applicable otherwise not. And such offspring, in ancient times, considered like illegitimate children.
Dowry was brought about from the means of woman’s share by inheritance but after marriage, she had no ‘income’ in her father’s property. There was no system of divorce – only death could separate a couple; if the husband died, woman had to “choose between two things: either to remain a widow as long as she lives or to burn herself; and the latter eventuality was considered preferable, because as a widow she was ill-treated as long as she lives,” although the heir of “deceased husband had to provide her with nourishment and clothing as long as she lived”. The practice of burning the wives i.e. Sati was much customary in the royal families as “they make an exception only for woman of advance years and for those who have children” and the sole way to get exemption from being burned alive was through the son as he was thought to be a responsible protector of his mother. Although, the woman had lesser shares in inheritance, she was reckoned even below the Sudras and treated more or less like a separate Varna; she was burned to save the family honour; nevertheless “in all consultations and emergencies they take the advice of the women but again the attitude towards women is something in question as “when a child is born people show particular attention to the man, not to the women.”

The socio-religious laws and precept derived from ‘Rishis’ were abrogable. Though some people believed, says Alberuni, that social laws were not static or intact though, at all the times, they were

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60 *Alberuni’s India*, vol. II, p. 154; p. 131 a Brahman was supposed not to marry a girl above 12 years.
61 *Ibid.*., vol. II, p. 164 Woman’s share by inheritance was one fourth to the share of a son.
65 *Ibid.*., vol. I, pp. 106-107 Originally Laws were derived out from Rishis not from Prophet i.e. Narayana who sometimes come in human figure.
supposed to be in the scriptures. There had been so many alterations or modifications in them since the time of Mahabharata. However, these laws were discriminatory in nature for different Varnas. If one thing was forbidden to one Varna, the same could be allowed for others whether it was dietary habit of inflicting punishment for a crime. Meat eating was not allowed to Brahmans. However, for the taste of meat, people in every country and religion, tells Alberuni, “have the desire” and people “always fling aside every order to the contrary”; in Hind, these norms seem applicable only to Brahmans as they were thought to be the guardians of the religion, and because it forbids them to give way to their lusts. Drinking of wine was allowed to Sudras but dare not sell it, as they were also not allowed to sell meat. However, Brahmins were exempted from sentence after murder: “if the murderer is a Brahman, and the murdered person a member of another caste, he is only bound to do expiation consisting of fasting, prayers, and alms giving;” and if a Brahman murdered another Brahmin, then he was not allowed to do expiate because expiation wipes off the sin from the sinner” whilst he “has to answer for it in a future life” but if a man of lower Varna than Brahman, kills a man of same Varna he must be punished “in order to establish an example”. Among all the crimes, in case of adultery, the law seems strict and indifferent to the consideration of Varna in case of women as they had to straightforwardly be “driven out of the house of the husband and banished “on the other hand any punishment for men – whether they were liable for the same or not, is not mentioned.66

Since caste seems to be a dominating feature in every sphere of someone’s life from birth to death, what happens to a ‘loser’ of such an important identity? To Alberuni’s query about the way of expiation to regain the ‘lost caste’, the Brahmins responded as “no expiation possible for such an individual” and such a person was never “allowed to return into those conditions of life in which he was before.” The

66Alberuni’s India, vol. II, pp. 151-152, 162.
upper *Varnas* of the society looked like engaged in maintaining purity and privileges for themselves, instead of maintaining egalitarian approach to other *Varnas*, Antyaja and outcastes. On the one extreme of the social hierarchy, the Brahmins appear as the receiver only. They did not depart from or shared whatsoever, they had in their possession. There were a great number of festivals and festive days, with the customary part of alms being given to Brahmans as an obligation.\(^67\) Besides the celebration of festivals, people would also occasionally performed ‘*yatra*’ *i.e.* pilgrimage, to various sacred idols, rivers, sacred region or cities like Puskarā, Thaneshwar, Mathura, Kashmir, Banaras, Prayag and, before the invasion of Al-Qasim in Multan, “anchorites wandered to it and stay there forever, as the dwellers of the Ka’ba stay forever in Mecca. They want to live there to the end of their lives, that their reward after death should be the better for it.”\(^68\) Temples had not only religious significance but economic values and their contribution in the thriving of the cities was also important.\(^69\)

The description of customs and manners of Hindus was not only based on scriptures but personal observations too. He examined and understood the subject under observation in terms of rational. It shows how people took each other’s peculiarities in early phase of interactions. For example, Alberuni noted that the “strangeness of a thing evidently rests on the fact that it occurs but rarely, and that we

\(^67\) *Alberuni’s India*, vol. II, pp. 178-184. Three festivals per month come as average number of festivals to be celebrated. The total number of all festive days is around 100 in a year. Festivals to be celebrated exclusively by women were eight but it will be difficult to assume that women could have spare themselves from cooking and other preparations. Whether it was *Pitrīpaksha* or *Hindoli Caitra* women had to participate. But the other important feature of these festivals was giving the alms to the Brahmans.

\(^68\) *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 142, 146-148; 170-171, 178. For various places and veneration attached to the places and meaning of *yatра*.

\(^69\) *Ibid.*, vol. I, p.116 Al-Qasim after conquering the Multan noticed the importance of temple *Aditya* in flourishing the city and accumulation of treasures due to pilgrims. See also, vol. II, p. 157 for temples as a source of income for kings by lavying fine and taxes.
seldom have the opportunity of witnessing it”, and when “such strangeness reaches a high degree, the thing becomes a curiosity, or even something like a miracle, which is no longer in accordance with the ordinary laws of nature, and which seems chimerical as long as it has not been witnessed”. He further observes that “many Hindu customs differ from those of our country and of our time to such a degree as to appear to us simply monstrous. One might almost think that they had intentionally changed them into the opposite, for our customs do not resemble theirs, but are the very reverse; and if ever a custom of theirs resembles one of ours, it has certainly just the opposite meaning.” It is a remarkable example of his impersonal, logical approach, dealing with a problem in the style of mathematician.

What appeared strange and opposite in meaning was gathered from personal hygiene to wearing styles, use of ornaments by men and women alike; eating singly one by one and not making any use of meal leftover in the plates and of earthen plates, as being thrown away; eating pan, drinking wine before meal using the cow’s stall but not meat; washing from feet to face, upward; keeping the shoes fastened before starting walking, use of dung; riding horse without saddle, if saddled mounting from right side and it was preferred if somebody rode from behind; fastening the dagger on right side and wearing the yajnopavita left to right side of the waist, to the taking of women’s advice in all emergencies, or giving attention to the father rather than the mother of newly born baby – are some observations which he found strange and opposite to or in contrast with the others. Further, one can see that this type of reversed manner in ‘handing over a thing to another by throwing it like a thing to the dogs; shaking hands by grasping the hand of a man from convex side; not taking permission while entering a house but on leave asking for it; sitting cross-legged in meetings; not considering presence of elders as mark of respect while

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71 Ibid., vol. I, p. 179.
spitting out and blowing noses or cracking lice before them; or even consider the creptusventris (fart) as a good omen, sneezing as a bad omen’ were noted as opposite in terms of meaning and etiquettes of social gatherings. Similarly, considering the weaver as unclean by Hindus was another strange thing for a foreigner like Alberuni, who observed it beyond textual readings, adding that “the cupper and the flayer, who kill dying animals for money either by drowning or by burning” thought to be cleaner than a weaver. He observed, being a man of letters, that writing by white substance on black tablets by children in schools was strange, along with the custom of not writing the title at the end of book with other grammatical differences.\(^\text{72}\)

In nutshell, the contemporary social system of Hindus was by and large, hierarchical. Besides normal variances, there were so many divisions and separations on the basis of Varnas – occupation, obligations attached with caste, privileges and deprivations on the basis of gender, customs and rituals in thought and beliefs – and also ways of expression through language between educated and the commoners. In terms of economic conditions, there were wide gaps in the society.\(^\text{73}\) The differences in the various socio-cultural aspects of Hindus appeared so much upside-down to him that he thought that “[the Hindus] had intentionally changed them into the opposite”.\(^\text{74}\) Alberuni thus identified Hinduism as incompatible with a normal sense of life.

Now, it would be interesting to see what type of changes occurred after the reciprocal interactions of these two different social systems. It would also be important to see in detail these two peculiar socio-cultural systems, where one was hierarchical on the basis of Varnas and the other was said to be egalitarian\(^\text{75}\) in their outlook: one

\(^{72}\) *Alberuni’s India*, vol. I, p. 179.


was deeply rooted and the other was in initial stage of rooting itself in the new land. One seemed stagnant and passive to the developments in the field of knowledge, whereas the other had been in active interactions with new knowledge. Thus, the subsequent discussion would be oriented towards the process of evolution of mutual influence of these two cultures.

We have seen that the people of Hind, as per Alberuni, saw them as “devil’s breed” and the stories about their dressings were used to “frighten their children”. The question thus arises: were Muslims called Muslims in that period? What do the contemporary records suggest about the identity of “foreigner” or the immigrant? What were the words to refer to the ‘invaders’ and their religious identity? Did they call these people *Musalamana* i.e. “one who submits to Allah” and looked them as propagating Islam by way of holding Quran in one hand sword in the other. Was it same as we claim to know or something else? The answers which may be suggested apropos these questions seem to contradict Alberuni’s idea. Although the term ‘Musalman’ was well-known in its usage to designate people of a particular faith, the newcomers were designated with their ethnic or tribal names: *Tajika, Turuska, Gauri, Mudgala, Turuti (Turbati), Pathana*.

Thus, the religious identity of a newcomer took backseat to the geographical or tribal identity; in fact, it was rarely referred to at all. The *Tajika* were given high posts under Rashtrakutas of Deccan and their names were Sanskritized – this fact reveals that although the terms *Mlecchas* and *Yavanas* were still used; later on, “the term which assumes increasing importance is Turuska” and the “Sanskrit texts, which style themselves as *Mahakavyas*, often refer to the Yavanas, *Parasika* was connected with pre-Islamic Persia and *Tajika* was thus of Indigenized for West Asian origin.

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76 Alberuni’s India, vol. I, p. 20.
78 Chattopadhyaya, “Raiders and Rulers”, p. 101-103 The term *Parasika* was connected with pre-Islamic Persia and *Tajika* was thus of Indigenized for West Asian origin.
Mlecchas, Turuskas interchangeably”. The word Musalman was not used at all and it was not due to a lack of familiarity with specific “terms and concepts connected [of] Islam”. However, the popular trend to see these processes is centred around three personalities only i.e. Al-Qasim, Mahmud Gazhni and Muhammad Ghori. These three have been presented in text books as flag bearer of Islam during eighth to 13th century.

**Living Together for Centuries (13th to 16th Century)**

Till the establishment of Delhi Sultanate in the first decade of thirteenth century, Hindu-Muslim people had undergone various forms of interactions first through far distance relations, and then by coming close on the peripheries. This ‘coming’, ‘spreading’ or ‘expansion’ of Islam which was seen as a gradual unfolding of the planning for centuries ahead without any mistake by some of historians in the context of Indian subcontinent by applying modern connotations to medieval time rather than as seeing them as processes of interactions between people of different cultural, ethnic or regional identities. We have seen people’s movement in those times was freer then in modern times. Keeping into consideration this freedom to roam, we have seen the processes of interactions between neighbouring societies by way of trade, travels, and transmission of knowledge; or by virtue of temporary political embassies or sway over any area but yet to see daily live interactions between two communities. The medium to facilitate this type of interactions primarily can be a political sway over a different country and then living together on a same land, and having a live, person-to-person interaction on daily basis while living on the orbit of a cultural heartland and gradually melting together in rural and urban areas of Hindustan for centuries. These can be seen as a third and continuous process of interactions in society. Here, we are dealing with

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the post-invasion social interactions, after the settling down of the dust of battle grounds.

Till fourteenth century, some broad changes were noticeable in India. Interactions within the Indian sub-continent and foreign countries had increased. Indian and foreign merchants were living in each other’s countries. Local shaikh’s veneration could extended in faraway country; and a cathedral mosque could equally venerated for the seafarers of any country, irrespective of their own religion; an Indian salve might be noticed so far from the far most boundary of India, like in Constantinople; and king of other country could wish to be compared with the king of India\textsuperscript{80} can be taken as some examples of earlier mutual interactions. People often converted to Islam from their earlier faiths like the people of Sind – on their own will.\textsuperscript{81} Delhi Sultanate had been established long ago, and the throne of Delhi Sultanate was in the hands of Tughlaqs, whose origin itself reveals the story of interaction between Hindu and Muslims at their lower strata.\textsuperscript{82}

Above all, till this time the ‘\textit{mlechha}’ of yesteryears had become ‘Hindustani’,\textsuperscript{83} a name itself given by non-Indians to the people of the

\textsuperscript{80}Ibn Batuta, \textit{Rehla}, p. 110; Indian merchants in Yemen p. 229; foreign merchants in Camby p. 97; Shaikh of Kazarun was venerated in China and India equally 234; Hilli, a town of Malabar treated venerated by both infidels and Muslim seafarer on account of its cathedral mosque 158, 94; Abu Ishaq of Shiraz wished to be compared with Indian King. Battuta did not give name of the king.

\textsuperscript{81}Ibid., p. 185 fn. Perhaps the clan of Samaria embraced Islam and become the master of lower Sind called Janani. See also \textit{Alberuni’s India}, vol. I, p. 21. For the early conversion at the time of Al-Qasim’s invasion in the Sind in 712 A.D.

\textsuperscript{82}Tughlaq was a name of individual who belongs to Turk clan. Interestingly the word Turk has two meanings; one is peasant, derived from their occupation peasantry. The Tughulaq got married to a Jat woman, an equal in social status and occupation as the word Jat also has same meaning in Punjabi language. \textit{Tarikh-i-Frishta}, trans. Briggs and Ali, 1831, vol. I, pp.130-131.

\textsuperscript{83}Ibn-battuta, \textit{Rehla}, p.48 See \textit{Alberuni’s India}, p.19, for foreigners beyond the Indus being called as ‘\textit{Mlechha}’ i.e. unclean in earlier centuries.
Hindustan region and after some time adopted the same by mlechhas themselves. Prima-facie, getting the tag as Hindustani by Muslims, was involving a process of adopting, developing and establishing themselves in a way different from Muslims of different countries. It is what Ibn Battuta recorded as his experience of a funeral ceremony. The “Indians [in Arabic – Hindustanis] have a funeral ceremony even more admirable” – and for him in this admirable ceremony, was the adoption of indigenous rite of prohibition of betel leaf [Pan] eating by the family of dead till Qazi himself gave it to be eaten by the heir of the deceased as the mark of ending the mourn period. The chewing of betel leaves was very popular among Indians even before the invasion of Mahmud Gaznavi, which, in course of time, became equally popular among the Muslims – shows the process of indigenization. Till now, it had become a mark of respect to the guests among the higher sections of Muslims like nobles, princes and Sultan. Drinking of wine by the Indian Muslims, despite prohibited and punishable offence in Islam, also represents a similar process.

The chain of interactions had so many openings. Like we now we see Jogis, who had access to the Sultan’s private apartment; Muslim merchants were living at the court of Hindu king; or taking drinking water from Ganga for the Sultans despite that it had no religious significance for Muslims are some examples. The burning of a widow alive with her dead husband was a Hindu custom but such woman who was going to be Sati was followed by crowd comprising both Hindus and Muslims. Whereas, Hindus were performing a religious ceremony, the Muslims simply performing their social obligations as their obligations.

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85 Alberuni’s India, vol. II, p. 152 Alberuni gives a hypothetically reason of chewing betel nuts.
86 Ibn-battuta, op. cit., pp. 71,114. A gift of betel was thought to be greater than money if given by Sultan; prince or notable.
87 Ibn-battuta, op. cit., p. 128
88 Ibid., pp. 226; 229; 184, 52, 193.
89 Ibid., p. 191.
neighbours who would be living together for a long time.\textsuperscript{90}

Even then, there was not everything to be shared just by the virtue of living together for a long time. One thing among what was not shared (by the Hindus) was the food – we just have to understand Battuta’s dissatisfaction that Hindus and Brahmans, “never [made] friends with Muslims, and never [gave] them to eat or drink out of their vessels, although at the same time, they neither acted nor spoke offensively to [Muslims] them.”\textsuperscript{91} The reason behind Battuta’s disappointment was his unawareness of food habits of the Hindus depending upon caste.\textsuperscript{92} It is why he could saw them giving respect to a Muslim but not food.

Regarding the women and their position, in some region of Daulatabad, it seems that women did not observe Parda in general.\textsuperscript{93} Burning the widow was in practice to gain reputation and prestige by the family of dead – although burning the widow was not compulsory but at times it was forced. Once decided, she was prevented to commit any attempt of retreating by putting heavy wood on top of her on pyre, even then it would be a lesser misery than remaining alive dressed in white and cursed with stigma of lack of fidelity.\textsuperscript{94}

In other traditions, pilgrimage to river and drowning oneself therein was in custom.\textsuperscript{95} Expiation was possible, for someone who

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\textsuperscript{90}Ibn-battuta, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 193 Battuta’s participation in the concourse seems a traveller’s curiosity to see a burning widow alive. It made him almost feint but for Hindus as well as local Muslims it didn’t seem much dreadful.\textsuperscript{91}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 96.\textsuperscript{92}\textit{Alberuni’s India}, vol. II, p. 134; vol. I, p. 180, l02. For antiquity and peculiarity of food behavior of people of different regions.\textsuperscript{93}Ibn-battuta, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 227.\textsuperscript{94}\textit{Ibid}, pp. 191-192.\textsuperscript{95}\textit{Ibid}, pp. 52,184, 193; \textit{Alberuni’s India}, vol. II, pp. 170-171. Sacrifice of life in the name of religion, jumping from a \textit{Vata} tree on the bank of river Ganga and then let themself drown in the river.
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accidentally lost the purity of caste.\textsuperscript{96} Brahmanas were at the top place in social hierarchy and were seen as “chiefs of the Hindus”.\textsuperscript{97}

The statistics of demography also had been changed. Hindus, divided into different castes, were not the sole inhabitants of Hindustan. The Turks, non-Turks and some other ethnic groups of foreign origin also shared different regions along with the new converts to Islam. Sometimes, they acted divided and sometime they acted united. Nevertheless, the most admirable thing about the people was their awareness of the needs and requirements of the other and knowing what type of attitude they had to maintain in an affair, article or body irrespective of their caste and creed.\textsuperscript{98}

Nicolo Conti, a Venetian merchant travelling and visiting some interior parts of Hindustan, saw charming villas, gardens and famous cities like Mathura by sailing in Ganges or by land.\textsuperscript{99} The priests abstained from all animal food, particularly the ox, because of its use in agriculture.\textsuperscript{100} Description of caste system is not given, but Brahmans were, as usual, superior and distinguishable due to their occupation and appearance among all the castes. They looked like philosophers, engaged in astronomy and prediction of future, and exhorting widows and others for the sake of religion.\textsuperscript{101}

People usually had only one wife, however, in several parts of

\textsuperscript{96} Ibn-battuta, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 96 Expiation by eating cow dung. See also \textit{Alberuni’s India}, vol. II, p. 163 provision of expiation however Brahmanas denied him for any such provision.

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Ibid}, p. 191. The superiority of Brahmans among the Hindus was intact as observe by Ibn-Battuta.

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Ibid}, p. 233.

\textsuperscript{99} R.H. Major, \textit{India in the Fifteenth Century}, Delhi, reprint 1974, p. 21; 10 Mathura is identified as Maarazia in Conti’s account by Major p. xiv and it also reveals the fact that he travelled along Yamuna too.

\textsuperscript{100} Major, \textit{Fifteenth Century}, p. 25 Indians used the ox as a beast of burden.

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Ibid}, p. 25; 24; 27. Here priests called \textit{Bachali} were Brahmans as they alone could perform priestly duties.
India, polygamy was the general practice.\textsuperscript{102} It was compulsory for the wife of dead to become Sati. Men married more women to enhance the honour of their death and make their last rite splendorous.\textsuperscript{103} The question of self-will or consent was ignored aside: if any widow showed timidity – that happened frequently – after seeing other women burning alive in the pyre, spectators threw her into the fire.\textsuperscript{104}

People had so different languages and dialects confined to their local regions\textsuperscript{105} but Sanskrit was confined to caste \textit{i.e.} Brahamana whereas Hindawi was the spoken language of common people of India.\textsuperscript{106} The Ghaznavid conquest of north India brought Gazna and Nishapur nearer to Lahore and Delhi, and formed a united whole allowing free and profuse interactions between different parts of Persia, Afganistan, Transoxiana, Khorasan and Punjab through Persian, which was the same in all these regions.\textsuperscript{107} As interaction are always a two-way process, so when indigenous people came into contact with the Persian spoken they acquired knowledge of Persian\textsuperscript{108} and, on the other hand, one among the earliest Persian poets wrote a \textit{diwan} in Hindi.\textsuperscript{109} Moreover, Amir Khusrau, born in a family of migrated Turks is regarded as the first poet of Hindi. The Sultanate court and the courtiers had so many chances to be influenced by indigenous

\textsuperscript{102}Major, \textit{Fifteenth Century}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{103}\textit{Ibid}, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{104}\textit{Ibid}, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{106}Khusrau, \textit{Nuh-Sipihr}, pp. 69, 74, 75. What Khusrau claimed language of peasants was Hindawi, a language spoken around Delhi and also known as \textit{Delhvi}.
\textsuperscript{107}Mirza Mohammad Wahid, \textit{The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau}, Delhi, 1974. The author is of the view that present day distinction did not existed at all.
\textsuperscript{108}Khusrau, \textit{Nuh-Sipihr}, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{109}Wahid, \textit{Life and Works of Khusrau}, p. ii, Masud-i-Sad wrote three \textit{diwans} in Arabic, Persian and Hindi. It shows the equal popularity of these languages in the literary circles.
influences, as can be seen in the case of Amir Khusrau. He proudly declared himself an Indian and a believer in its cultural greatness. Indian and Persian styles of songs were sung in the courts; and new experiments by mixing both were also tried. Hindu mythological thoughts and Brahmanic self-conceit had entered in the hearts of some Muslims. The religious recommendation was not always enough to make up one’s mind. Wide social interactions took place not only in the literacy spheres of social and culture life; they were also reported in state functioning. Khusrao complained that owing to the incompetence of Hindu officials, his revenue settlement was not being assigned. The poet sought protection from the oppressor, hoarder and profiteer petty revenue [Hindu] officers and almost cursed them calling like a serpent on sandal i.e. on treasury. However, these complaints could not change anything in state affairs.

The masses belonging to both communities seem to be influenced by each other’s customs and values. Muslim women who died before their husband were decorated with paste like Hindu women. Sacrificing her life by a Hindu woman after her husband’s death was praised by Khusrau, although it was not allowed by Islam.

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110 Amir Khusrau was born in 1253 A.D. in a family of migrated Turks and his family was closely related with the court. Khusrau started poetry at the age of eight. Afterwards, he wrote several diwans and poems in which he praised India and Indian and had a sense of pride to be an Indian. This process of Indianisation just took half a century after establishment of Delhi Sultanate. See also I.H. Qureshi, “Muslim Indian Before the Mughals”, eds. P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton and Bernard Lewis, The Cambridge History of Islam, vol. 2A, Cambridge, 2008, p. 33.

111 Khusrau, Nuh-Siphr, p. 28; for Khusrau India was the land of his birth since time immortal; p. 59. Khusrau’s attitude seems close to Brahmanic attitude observed by Alberuni as ignorant’s pride. See, A.S. Askari, Amir Khusrau as a Historian, Patna, n.d., p. 21-22. Patriotism and love for one’s country is an article of faith.

112 Askari, Khusrau as Historian, p. 160; Khusrau, Nuh-Sipihr, p. 115.

113 Askari, Khusrau as Historian, pp. 99; 103,127.

114 Ibid, p. 57.

Woman was respected only as mother; the veil appeared as a standard of respect for women.\textsuperscript{116} Birth of male child was welcomed and marriages were to be arranged by the parents.\textsuperscript{117} Everybody did not adhere to the principles of religion, including some Ulemas, who were expected to show some responsibility to follow the ideals of a pure life, used to drink wine in Sultan’s secret drinking party.\textsuperscript{118} Similarly, at lower strata, the milkman was selling water mixed milk at the rate of pure milk, goldsmith was stealing gold pretending to purify it, the washer-man could found garbed in the clothes of his customers, and the poor Tambulie i.e. betel-leave seller wished to be tipped-off after offering betel to a man of position.\textsuperscript{119} These observations show moral degradation among Hindus and Muslims equally according to their social status. Some strange believes and customs too were in practice. A professional called Murda-Khwan recited the Quranic sutras over the dying and the dead, and people sang ‘Hindustic’ songs in grief while carrying the pyre of an old person. Muslims and Hindus believed in superstitions and to avert misfortune and calamity of evil eyes hanging a black raven was common thing.\textsuperscript{120}

Towards summarising the long interactive centuries, it may be noted that conversion to a new religion does not convert people into unknowns. Getting proselytized does not mean becoming completely delinked from or unfamiliar to the people with whom the converts have been socially interactive. For example, Buddhism was a new religion in comparison to Hinduism but people those adopted it were from the same social background as it was of non-converts. Similarly, the emergence of Islam was new but people who accepted it remained the same old, known and interactive people to their immediate

\textsuperscript{116}Askari, \textit{Khusrau as Historian}, pp. 61, 35 and pp. 142-143.
\textsuperscript{117}\textit{Ibid}, pp. 57-58.
neighbouring societies in different regional peripheral areas, in much the same manner they were before the emergence of Islam.\textsuperscript{121}

Thus, if someone from a community accepts a new religion or a sect, then to think that they have become unknown to people living around them, defies logic. Going ahead on this argument, phrases like ‘coming’, ‘intrusion’ or ‘conquest of Islam’ – similarly gives an impression of happening something like a sudden catastrophe or a miraculous event rather than a socio-historical transition that originated and later spread from one society to the other. The emergence of a new religion in any society cannot be taken as akin to a biologically making of new species at all. In other words, no social or religious change can ever make its entire background as \textit{tabula rasa}. If people found something novel, say a new religion or a thought-system, they would accept or borrow it by way of interaction with this new set of people. Thus, a full or partial acceptance of new system by people cannot mean this new religion simply came and established itself. The strange description of the spreading of a religion, in a manner akin to the spreading of fire in wood, does not hold too much water. It incorrectly suggests something like a sudden rupture or break, akin to a natural calamity. It depicts the followers of two different religions from two neighbouring societies as strangers. Thus, their identities, mutual recognition and social interactions were ignored by historians. Religious identities have been historically emerged, developed and also get blurred. If we compared with the shift identities of modern times, it appears too loose and flexible. The word Hindu, in terms of religious identity is an example of this process. In medieval period, it indicated those who were living across the eastern side of River Indus. However, later it became popular as a name of a religion of the people living in this region.\textsuperscript{122} This process of getting acquainted with the new cannot

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{121}Saiyid Sulaiman Nadwi, \textit{Arab aur Bharat ke Sambandh}, Hindi trans. Babu Ramchandra Verma, Allahabad, n.d.
\item \textsuperscript{122}Jha, “Hindu Identity”, pp. 4-6.
\end{itemize}
mean a total obliteration of the conditions of life as such, especially when there is an absence of revolutionary change in material culture accompanying this spiritual shift.

A religion in its time of origin may have marked the beginning of a new era, like Islam marked the evolution of communal life into urban life in Arabia, but after the initial fervent dies out, it simply became one of the spiritual systems. History tells that there had been certain strong forms of social communication, even between faraway societies, despite the limitations of mean and mode of communications during ancient and medieval period, implying that India and Arab had contacts much before Islam arose in the latter.

**Hindustan on the eve of seventeenth Century**

Between the two periods of medieval history – when Alberuni wrote in the eleventh century that Hindus often frightened their children by donning the dresses of Muslims, and called them “Mleccha, i.e. impure and forbid having any connection”\(^\text{123}\) and later when Ibn-Battuta wrote that he was told in Alexendria that he would meet in Hind a Sufi named Dilshad Hindustani\(^\text{124}\) or when he recorded his observation of a funeral ceremony and admired it saying that the “Indians have a funeral ceremony even more admirable”, and the heir of the deceased lasts his mourning by accepting a betel by the Qazi – the Muslims must have undergone a considerable process of assimilation\(^\text{125}\). Their ways of funeral and ceasing of the mourning period clearly shows the influences of indigenous rite that made their community distinct from others of the same religion. Chewing the betel leaves was an indigenous habit\(^\text{126}\) which became a common and integral

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\(^{124}\) Ibn-battuta, *op. cit.*, p. 48. An ascetic of Alexandria told Ibn Battuta that he would meet in Hindustan an another ascetic Dilshad who had ‘Hindustani’ as his last name.

\(^{125}\) Ibid., pp. 71-72.

part of the low or high strata of Hindustanis *i.e.* converted Muslims, and if the Sultan himself offered it to any of his guests, it was considered the highest honour for them.\(^{127}\) A low-class practice became enshrined as an aristocratic sign – such was the nature of transformation.

The Mughal empire was founded by Babar in 1526 AD, were new entrants in a scenario built after centuries-long cultural synthesis. Mughals were new for the people of North-India, their religious identities notwithstanding. If we take the court as a site of interactions between the ruling elite and the rest of society, then we find it promoting a “culture [that] stood in splendid isolation from the rest of society, though supported by it, somewhat like a film of oil on water; and in some very profound ways, the two merged with each other and became inseparable”.\(^{128}\)

From the times of Amir Khusrau a sense began to develop among the Muslims that they belonged less, culturally speaking, to the world west of India and more to the south Asian culture.\(^{129}\) This sense arose out of numerous inter-connected cultural and political processes. On the one hand, Islam began to get Indenisation, so much so that by the time of Akbar’s reign, we get a reference from a high-placed observer like Badauni, who describes the widespread negative perception associated with divorce, which was legally and morally widespread in Islam. On the other hand, the Islamic influence upon Indian culture expanded further and inspired a whole series of innovations in music, philosophy, theology, poetry, art, architecture and various aspects of daily life. Apart from these horizontal processes, another significant event that took place, in the centuries succeeding

\(^{127}\)Ibn-battuta, *op. cit.*, pp. 71, 114. A *pan* offered by Sultan, prince or any notable to a person of own status or lower than was a great honor to the recipient.


Alberuni’s, was the establishment of Islamic court culture over the pre-existing elite culture of India.

One may think of it as a custom brought within the fold of Muslims by converted people who did not cease their indigenous practices even after conversion. The Sultan was not converted; then why did he adopt it in the same manners? It is a question that answers the process of Indenisation. A close scrutiny of historical sources shows that since the beginning of Sultanate period, “the age-old co-existence had brought the Hindus and Muslims together, both of them rubbed shoulders in the government service and competed with one another in trade and commerce” and in this way, they adopted many customs and values of each other. It was the fusion of cultural traits of two cultures that influenced not only converted masses, but also the ruling elite. Various ethnic groups of Muslims were also this influence, despite their best efforts to preserve their distinct identities. This also shows that it is not always the culture of the ruling class that flows downward to the common folk rather; it may, inversely, be the folk culture itself that may influence ruling class. In the same way, Akbar when he lost his ways in a jungle, heard a song in praise of a Sufi saint. From here he came to know about Shaikh Aulia of Ajmer, and became his famous follower. This very episode tells how a popular belief impressed the Emperor so much that he later on visited the shrine on foot. Harbans Mukhia rightly remarks on this process saying that “cultural production and diffusion is [too much] complex, inclusive and universal a phenomenon to follow a straight path from the top down to the bottom; a great deal of interactive nuancing becomes integral to the entire process.”

We have seen how, first, Arab and Persians called the region east of Sind and later adopted the same noun for themselves i.e. Hindustani in next centuries. Those who see the whole of medieval

\[130\] Mukhia, Mughals of India, p. 157.
Indian history through the religious identities of Hindu and Muslim, would find that these ‘Hindustanis’ proved strong enough, soon after the establishment of Delhi Sultanate, to attempt to grab the Delhi Sultanate which was called a “Hindustani outbreak”. However, the majority of these Hindustanis were converted Muslims who were seen by Barani as “a perverse burlesque of society”. Islam, which was scripturally and spiritually ruthlessly egalitarian, so much so that the first Caliphs themselves lived in poor huts [Umar], when arrived in Indian sub-continent, it accepted the basically ‘in-egalitarian’ society. It encountered and adjusted to the reality to suit its hierarchal organizations. That is why; Barani regarded converted Muslims lower then Turks – a notion formed on the basis of birth, very much similar to Hindus who had that notion against lower caste. However, despite believing in Turk superiority, Barani denounced rebellion and the self-declaration of Uzbek Tughril Khan as King in 1255 AD; his marching against Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud was denounced by Barani. Now, he finds it worthy to mention that this act of Tughril Khan’s defiance was condemned by “all the people of Hindustan”: he widened the basis of social disapproval by further categorically stating that not only Muslims but Hindus too disliked this attempt.

Putting aside the narrow thoughts and remarks passed by people like Barani, which we find in chronicles, the Sultans of Delhi utilized Hindustanis in army and other administrative aspects as per their potentials. Subsequently, we find their gradually increasing number and influence – something testified in Isami’s statement that the “Hindus were given high offices” by Muhammad Tughluq: “We hear of Ratan, the governor of Siwistan (Sind); Bharan or Sharan, the governor of Gulbarga; Kishan, ‘the market-man of Indri’, the governor of

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131 Raziuddin Aquil, *Sufism, Culture, and Politics Afghans and Islam in Medieval North India*, New Delhi, 2007, p. 11.
132 Aquil, *Sufism, Culture*, p. 11.
Awadh; and Dhara, the *naibwazir* of Deogir*. It shows that the then ruling class was not confined to the followers of a single religion in practice, and that too had happened fairly long before the official proclamation of Akbar’s inclusive policy, for evolving a policy in which “Muslims and Hindus together, serving a ruler who, whatever his personal beliefs, was not merely a Muslim or Hindu”.

The significant change which was emerging on the eve of seventeenth century can be seen between difference of inclusion of some individuals who happened to Hindu and the assimilation of Hindu motifs and ideas in state function: in other words, it was between incorporating Hindu personnel without incorporating their values or with their values about social and religious life. Till this time not only we see increasing number of Hindus personnel than before, simultaneously we see the assimilation of values and ideas of Hindu origin. The very material presence of the Mughal *darbar* was in fact a deviation from the Islamic pattern of kingship. Till the end of sixteenth century, non-Muslims had paid obeisance not due to the might of state but due to the spirit of new ruling ethics. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, by eliminating the Zizyah, “the sign of the subordinate status of non-Muslims in society,” and also substituting subordination by concepts like *Sulh-i-kull* along with “*jharokha darshan*”, the weighing ceremony and the pattern of *darbar* – incorporated Hindu patterns fit enough to make Mughal kingship recognizably familiar to Hindus*. The adoption of such indigenous customs and rituals strengthened the “ties between the ruler and his officers”. This process was significantly different from just inclusion of some non-Muslim officers in state service of Delhi Sultanate, to the

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135 Athar Ali, “Encounter and Efflorescence”, p. 19. Thakkura Pheru was an officer in charge of mint, and another Hindu officer Sadharana had worked under Alauddin Khalji.
137 Streusand, *Formation of Mughal Empire*, p. 152.
138 Ibid., p. 152.
extent that Douglas E. Streusand observed that in less than thirty years after accession, “[the throne of] Akbar and his advisers had transformed the political face of Hindustan”\(^{139}\) and it was passed over as a legacy to the seventeenth century.

What was major development in political and administrative spheres at Mughal darbar did not find equal appreciation outside, as “in the village and localities, perhaps, the change meant little.”\(^{140}\) However, the reason behind this ‘little change’ is understandable through the “easily slipping into the shoes”\(^{141}\) by the Muslim rulers of India who did not replace the Brahmans and other Hindu servants who were working as revenue collectors at lower level i.e. village and country side, since the conquest of Sind in eighth century. It remained same during the Sultanate and Mughal period. This fact explains two things: firstly, the change over the throne did not bring broad changes at the lower level in the realm of administration. Secondly, there were broad changes at the level of elite ruling class, where Hindu ruling elites had been replaced by Muslim ruling groups. The Sultans and Mughals exercised the same structures of exploitation throughout medieval period and the same Hindu zamindars and headmen, “collected the revenue from the peasants, transformed it into cash, and transmitted it to the more distant recipient”.\(^{142}\) That is why, the broad historical changes felt as ‘little change’ at village level.

This ‘little change’ cannot be attributed at a lower level, as the scope of change after centuries long Hindu-Muslim interaction was high. In this aspect, there was faster assimilation and mutual


interaction at the level of common folks serving under Muslim rulers. We have a classic example of Kayasths and Khattris, who had been established as Hindu castes of ‘inborn abilities’ for clerical jobs after continuously serving under Muslim rulers and nobles in different parts of the country. Consequently, they not only developed the “same political self-perceptions and expectations as the Muslim bureaucrats”, but eventually became “Persianized in everything but religion”.  

It was an obvious outcome of working within a cultural set-up, and becoming an integral part of it. This process was not restricted to few castes only, but it was related with the perception of self-identity for society as a whole. A process similar to but opposite in direction was the perception of Mughals in Rajput folks: derived from oral traditions and literature, the Mughals were perceived as Rajputs. According to medieval Rajput cultural estimation, Muslims as Turk and later as Mughal ruling elites fitted in the Rajput psyche and mentalité soon after earlier confrontations, in the traditional setup of Hindu caste system. This self-convincing idea emerged out of the interaction between deep rooted beliefs regarding obligations and ethics traditionally supposed for a caste, and the given political setup which was entirely different in an earlier stage. Interaction between these found a justification for itself, as “service for the Muslim sovereign or one [of his] subordinates was thus no different from the service for a local ruler or thakur”. However, every Muslim did not have the

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145 Siddiqui, “Life and Culture”, p. 186; Ziegler, “Rajput Loyalties”, p. 235. The death of Raja Bikramajit Tomar of Gawalior while fighting against Babar is an evidence of sharing the aristocratic values being a
privilege of being considered as Rajput as it covered only the “warriors and [those] who possessed sovereignty and power equal to, or greater than, the Hindu Rajput”, putting aside the religion of Master that did not seem an issue in the antagonism of the ruling Monarch and the clan.146

Both examples discussed above explain the processes of assimilation and adjustments of values and adjustment in earlier notions. This process not only integrated Hindu and Muslims in state service but also brought some socio-cultural changes. Akbar’s policy of recruiting Rajput chiefs into his service had some far-reaching effects. Akbar not only recruited Rajput chiefs but he incorporated their sentiments too. By serving Mughal empire under Akbar, Rajput chiefs got transferred in various parts of Empire. This way they came into contact with other people with whom they could not interact before, and it shifted the vision of Rajput chiefs from “local to larger bureaucratic ambitions”: “class interests underlay the growth of a composite polity under Akbar”, well before the concept of ‘nation’ in modern terms, it was the “a step forward” taken and handed down as a legacy, “in the process of imparting a political entity to the geographical concepts of India”.147

joint ruling class. Rajputs and Muslims ruling elites fought together against their common foe, Babur in the first battle of Panipat.
146Ziegler, ‘Rajput Loyalties’, p. 235; Siddiqui, “Life and Culture”, p. 186-87; See also, Baaburnama, p. 590-591 for long standing Hindu-Muslim relations.