CHAPTER - 4

The Cultural Heritage of the Surma-Barak Valley and the Arabic Influence on it

The culture of a nation or a race is nothing rigid, fixed and determinate like a scientific theorem rather flexible and changeable like a social science due to the change of circumstances, gaps of time, intermixture of different nations, races and of different religious segments and also hired and shared.

This also happens in case of our culture due to arrival of the Muslims with a new religion, Islam.

This cultural relation in between the Hindus and the Muslims may be studied under the following heads.

I) Beginning of Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relation.

a) Hindu-Muslim Fraternity and Cultural Intermixture

b) Conflicting Nature of the Hindu-Muslim Culture

II) Cultural Heritage of the Surma Barak Valley.

III) Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relation in Different Fields.

a) Hindu Elements in the Muslim Administration

b) Arab Studies of Indian Sciences

c) Function

d) Marriage

e) Rites and Customs

I) Beginning of Hindu - Muslim Cultural Relation :

The Cultural relation of Bengali Hindu-Muslims is an old one. They are the two brothers having the same mother as because history proves that most of the Muslims of this country or of this region are converted from Hinduism. So, the cultural relation in between the two can not be different. Besides, history proves that in 1205-06 AD, the Koch and the Mich tribes of then Assam showed their admiration for the Muslims and they extended their helping hands to Bakhtiyar Khilji to attack the country as the first Muslim

conqueror, Mohd. bin Qasim was helped by the rulers of India to conquer Sind. During the middle of the 13th century, Ratan Dhajpal (1224-50 AD) & the Chutia kings maintained cordial relation with Gouda Sultan. The adoption of Islam by the king, Chakradhwaja Singh in 1474 AD made this friendly relation sweeter. The use of Khan Title by the Hindu officials and the use of Arabic words by the Bengali poets helped to popularize the Islamic culture in Assam before the invasion of Sultan Hussein Shah in 1502 AD, which is regarded as an important event in the history of good Hindu-Muslim relation. He established Muslim rule in Assam and it lasted for 5 years. He also created a colony of Afghan warriors, which is regarded as the earliest organized Muslim colony in Assam and it contributed to the growth of Islamic elements in the cultural life of the people of Assam.

Almost all the parts of Assam were made free by Suhungmung (1477-1539 AD) from the possession of Gouda Sultan and after the death of Hussein Shah; the Afghan Muslim warriors who were settled earlier were rehabilitated in different parts of Assam. The final stage of Hindu-Muslim relation was started when the Ahoms came into direct conflicts with the Mughal in 1614 AD and when the Mughal captured the Koch-Hajo of Kamrup region overthrowing its ruler, Parik Shinarayana. Since then the number of Muslims coming to this country increased considerably and they began to settle here and there in Assam. The Muslims who came here with the invading forces were either soldiers or craftsmen or taken as war-captives. Some of the early Muslims managed to marry the ladies from the local non-Muslim communities. The Muslims who lived in different parts of Assam came in close contact with the local Hindus and ultimately Hindu-Muslim relation received a momentum, which later increased from time to time.

During the Ahom rules the general relations among the Hindu-Muslims were friendly and may be characterized with mutual understanding, love, good will and toleration. They influenced each other and a common cultural ground was created. Sufism and the Bakhthi movement effaced the differences in creed to some extent. The general people comprising artisans, craftsmen, painters, engravers etc. came in contact with the people and their profession itself was a great force of contact. The Muslims along with the Hindus fought for the upliftment of the country and at the time during foreign attack the Muslims displayed their heroic strength and power like the local Hindus.

Shahab Uddin who came with Mirjumla in the latter's expedition to Assam in 1662 AD mentioned that the Muslims and the Hindus lived in perfect amenity and peace. He wrote, "As for the Muslims who had been taken prisoners in former times & had chosen to marry there, their descendants are exactly in the manner of Assamese have nothing of Islam except the names, their hearts are inclined for more towards mingling with the Assamese than towards association with the Muslims.[1] During the time, the Assamese Hindu did not feel to take the food cooked by the Muslims. [2]

During Ahom rule the Muslims did not suffer from any kind of loss or disability due to their faith on one Allah and on His messenger. Till the year 1772 AD the Ahom rulers appointed only the Ahoms to the important administrative posts. But after then the Muslims were appointed in different departments according to their capacity like minting of coins, carpentry, embroidery, sword making and the manufacture of gun powder. It is a fact approved by history that the Muslims taught the Ahoms the knowledge of firearms when they engaged in a war with Hussein Shah.

The Muslim had a high social position in Assam as well as Barak Valley. They were landlords and respected to every class of people. The Muslim saints and Sufis are honored and regarded as fathers even by the non-Muslims of Assam. Maulana Ahmed Ali Saheb of Baskandi Darul Ulum Madrasa, Maulana Abdul Jalil Saheb of Badarpur title Madrasa and many others like them were respected by every class of people of Assam and their advices were sought even by the political leaders. Even the non-Muslim leaders attended their funeral ceremonies. S.K. Bhuyan wrote in Sept. 1780 AD that Anwar Hazi Faquir met king Lakshmi Singha after his return from the pilgrimage of Mecca and was honored and granted revenue free land to build his maqam and was helped in its maintenance in Kamrup.[3]

In this regard mention may be made of J. P. Wade who stayed in Assam from 1792 - 1794 AD and said, "A Musalman of the name of Nawas was

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1. *Anglo - Assamese Relation, P.20*
   Bunyan, S.K.
2. *Sangamisranat Asamiya Sanskriti, P.14*
   A. Sattar
3. *Annals of the Delhi Badshahate p.15*
   Bhuyan, S.K.

gooro-general of his persuasion in Assam, from about the time of Roudra Singha. He had numerous attendants dressed in the high Musalman fashion. He resided at near the capital and frequented the durbar."[1]

Over and above these, the Muslim religious leaders and pirs who were encouraged by the rulers to settle here by granting revenue free lands known as pirpal lands used to visit Ahom -Court. Some of the Muslim leaders who have influence over the masses were appointed Dewans. The maqams and dargas of various Muslim pirs received liberal encouragement from the non-Muslim masses and the Ahom rulers. They were granted pirpal lands for the construction of mosques and maqams. There are many such maqams and mosques through out Assam including this part of it. For the sprit of religious tolerance mention may be made about the assignement of the perquisites of a few maqams in and around Kamrup to Anwar Hazi Faquir & the custom of sending annual presents from the royal court to the shrine of Poa-Macca at Hajo.[2]

It is a fact that the visitors and the contributors of Shrini and presentation to such maqams of the Brahmaputra & Barak Valleys of Assam are both the Hindus and the Muslims. They equally participated in the annual urus of such maqams with equal joy and gaiety.[3]

The Muslim rulers of Assam also paid interest in the improvement of the mosques and the places of the Hindu priests. It is known from a document possessed by a priest at Kamakhya temple that two bigas of land were granted to two pujaris of the temple in June 1667 AD. It was Allah Yar Khan and Hasan Kanduhari who made this grant on behalf of Aurangzeb when they were the Faujadars of Guwahati. Two plots of land were also granted to two pujaris of Umananda temple.[4]

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1. Ibid, P. 16
2. Anglo-Assamese Relation, p. 16
Bhuyan, S. K.
3. Social life under the great Mughal p. 77
Srivastava, M.P.
4. Anglo-Assamese Relation p. 18
Bhuyan, S. K.

The Arabic language, which was originally brought by the Muslim immigrants, became a popular language of the Muslims first and then borrowed by many others. Ultimately it played a major role in creating communal harmony among the people of various sections residing in India. The use of this language among the Muslims ultimately helped to mingle some Arabic elements in the Bangalese culture and in their language. The mutual contact of the Bengali Hindu-Muslims gradually emerged a linguistic synthesis. The official assignement of the Muslims especially in diplomatic services helped the Hindus to learn this foreign language to some extent.[1]

The Muslims settled here and there of Assam and came in close touch of the local indigenous people and thus influenced the local society and culture as their neighbors influenced them. The good relation in between the Hindus and Muslims and the royal attempt to bring about unity in between the two communities showing honour to the Muslim settlers laid the foundation of deep rooted secular outlook in the social life of the people of this region right from the 17th century.

The number of Muslim population increased in Assam from time to time after the prolong war between the Ahom kings and the Muslim rulers. The subsequent Muslim settlers in Assam came to be known as Mariyas.[2]

The Muslim immigrants in Assam included the prisoners of wars, technicians and artisans. The Muslim infiltration in Assam started from the Koch-Mughal alliance. But the increase of Muslim population to a large extent happened during the Ahom Muslim conflicts from 1614 - 1682 AD

a) Hindu-Muslim Fraternity and Cultural Intermixture :

The fraternity in between two or more religious sections of people may be of two types, sentimental and intellectual. The former denotes harmony in between two or more religious sections in matters of religion and the latter means mutual affections for the languages, literatures & culture of each other. Both of these kinds of interrelated aspects of communal harmony were found prevalent during Muslim rule in India.

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1. Ibid, P. 56

2. Census Report on Assam, 1891 P. 87
Gait, E. A.

One of the characteristic features of the Indian people is the inner habit of acceptance and assimilation. The great force of acceptance of the Indian people absorbed by the by whatever truth and creed comes to them. This resulted to a great assimilation of Hindu-Muslims culture and civilization during the medieval ages. From the heart-core, Indians are ready to receive whatever truth arrives knowing no barriers of caste and creed or source from which it comes. This can be better represented and manifested in the Hindu-Muslim cultural intermixture in medieval India. The great Muslim reformer and saint, Makhdum Saiyad Ali at Hajwiri, originally an inhabitant of Ghazni is equally honored by the Hindus and Muslims of India even to day. Moin Uddin Chisti (1142 - 1236 AD), one of his disciples brought both the Hindus and Muslims together in search of their supreme soul. As a result of this intermixture in between these two creeds many Rajput and Brahmins are found to follow some Mohammedan practices though they follow mostly the Hindu customs and rites as the Imam Shahi, a sect of the Muslims are found to follow some of the authorities of the Athor-Va-Veda. The great saints and Sufis like Nizam Uddin Aulia, Farid Uddin Shakarganj, Karim Shah, Shah Inayat and Shah Kalandur were either initiated to religious life by Hindu saints or they themselves initiated a large number of Hindus to religious life, as a result Hinduism or Mohammedanism mattered nothing to them. Baba Fattu, the famous saint of Kangra was a disciple of Gulab, a Hindu saint. He was equally honored by both the Hindus and Muslims of Punjab. The Hinduism had a tremendous influence on the Khajas and the followers of Musa Suhag and the Piran Panthins worship Niskalanka. One of the great devotees of Krishna was Taj, the Muslim lady who wrote many songs on his admiration as a Supreme Soul. Thus, we find a great synthesis in between the Hinduism and Mohammedanism especially in spiritual life, Hindus being the disciples of Muslims and vice versa. Care for truth and Sadhana is only to find out internal truth of religion and not for external superfluities of religion. Thus, it is the time of new saints like Satyapeta who may be worshipped by both the Hindus and Muslims. It is the time to abhor and violate the caste system.

The followers of the Alvars worshipped Andal, a woman of low caste in the south. Chaitanya in Bengal, Sankar Deva in Assam, Tuka Rama and Nimadeva in Maharastra and similarly other great religious leaders never cared for caste system or bothered about distinguishing between Hinduism

and Mohamedanism.Ravi Das, a shoe maker, Sena, a barbar and Kabir a Mohammedan weaver were from among the famous pupils of Ramananda. The mission of Kabir's life was a synthesis between Hinduism and Mohammedanism. His noble percepts were translated by many like Nanaka Dadu, Jivana Dasa, Prema Dasa, Bijli Khan & Rajjab Bari Saheb - whether Hindu or Muslim all took up one great mission viz. unity between the Hindus and Muslims in religious as well as social life. Even the women came to the frontline of religious rejuvenation. Nanibai and Mata bai (daughters of Dadu), Mira, Jana Bai, Dayabai, Ksema, Taj and many others may be mentioned in this context.

The inner spur for brotherhood in between the Hindus and the Muslims, the two main communities of India became manifested in literature as well. The Dohas of great religious personalities both Hindus and the Muslims are the source of inspiration and devotion in religious life of the people of both the communities. The internal urge for a true religious life irrespective of caste and creed enriched Bengali much in particular. A large number of Mohammedan writers, some of whom were poets of high order, contributed substantially to Bengali literature. Krishna cult as preached by Sri Caitanya inspired them mostly. They wrote on many other subjects too. Sri Caitanya disdained social and racial distinction. As a result many even from the rulers like Hussein Shah became attracted to him. The Muslims of Bengal not only enjoyed the Padavalies but they themselves became the votaries of the Muse. Nasir Mahmud, Fakir Habib, Saiyed Martuja Fatan, Candkaji etc have sung many songs in the admiration of Krishna and Radha as gracefully and religiously, as enthusiastically and sweetly as possible. Aliraja Akbar Saha, Kabir Sekh Bhikhan, Sekh Jalal etc. are also poets of great order. They have written on various moods and types of women as described in the Alamkara and Kama Sastras with particular reference to Radha and also on Krishna as supreme soul and Sri Chaitanya as an incarnation of God.

The Muslims- many in number helped on the one hand to spread the Hindu culture and civilization by honoring the religious sentiments and ideas of them, by following many of their rites and rituals and by patronizing and contributing to Sanskrit literature. On the other hand, many Hindu devotees and scholars were the torch-bearers of Islamic culture and civilization by preaching the inner most truth of Islam and paying homage to the prophet Mohammed (SM) and Muslim saints by observing many Muslim practices and by patronizing and contributing to Perso-Arabic literature.

In this way a great synthesis of Hindu-Muslim culture and civilization is found in India during the Muslim rule of it. It was the credit of the individuals of different learnings and capacities of those days to follow the creeds and pursue the course of studies, which suited them best without any social bar or binding and communal bias. Otherwise we might not find so many Hindu disciples of Muslim saints and Muslim devotees of Hindu Pandits. When this assimilation and admixture is found in India during the Muslim rule of it there should not have any reason of being strange to see the Hindu-Muslim harmony, co-operation and co-existence as well as social and cultural assimilation and influences in between them today.[1]

b) Conflicting Nature of the Hindu-Muslim Culture

For long twelve centuries Hindus and Muslims have been living side by side. They were confronted by each other. They had on the one hand differences in belief, their communal aspiration and its preservation, Hindu-Muslim religio-cultural tensions and on the other hand, mutual understanding and harmony cum composite development of culture and civilization.

Islam is a very antithesis of Hinduism in most of the religio-cultural matters.Hinduism is a large aggregate of beliefs that developed in a period of many centuries having sacrificial hymns of the Vedas, speculations of the Upanishads, the discipline of Yoga, the subtleties of Vedanta and the devotion of Bhakti.

On the other hand, Islamism is an austere central discipline bound to revolve round the Quran and the Hadith and whatever external is adjusted with these two primary sources of religious authority. Hinduism is melancholia, sentimental and philosophical while Islam is ardent and austere.[2]

Islamic civilization is a combination of Arab, Persian and Turkish varieties that developed in India in a different geographical and climatic environment and mortal challenges of nature teeming with life. This influenced the Hindu-minds and shaped the course of much of Hindu religion and mysticism. Islam in India continued to retain its original forei...

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1. Muslim Patronage to Sanskrit Learning Pt-II, Delhi, 1942 P. x,xv
Choudhury Dr. Jatindra Bimal

2. Mutual Influence of Mohammedans and Hindus in India,
Cambridge, 1892 P. 12 , Thomas, F.W.

new Indian environment and ethnic influences.[1]

He preserved as much of the original intellectual and psychological heritage of the original form of his culture as he could. He considered himself as a member of the Muslim Umma, the great Muslim community. It is his main unifying religio-political factor amid the diversity of Muslim people.

The exclusiveness of the Muslim Umma is party religious and partly instinctive. It is ijma through which the instinct of self-preservation is channeled in the Muslim Umma. Ijma is the consensus of the community based on the evolution of opinions of the community over a long period of time and not on the counting of votes. It may also be a spontaneous group decision in hostile surroundings and moments of crisis.[2]

Hinduism, on the other hand assimilates other faiths absorbing them in to its own. Hinduism can absorb new ideas and can even if need to find room for new gods. Besides, Hindu sacred books can be interpreted figuratively. So, it is possible for different Hindu schools to draw its different meanings and hold diametrically opposed doctrines without any serious antagonism.

But Islam can not adapt or compromise. Of course, the lapse of time and co-existence of both the Hindus and Muslims overcame all the barriers in between the two and compelled them to forget their religious differences and brought them in a common table in mist of their socio-cultural matters.

II) Cultural Heritage of the Surma Barak Valley:

In the epical period when the Aryan culture developed with the culture of the Pre-Aryan period and the Bengali culture still then Mongolian and Austric cultures were found to exist in the Surma Valley. During the course of time in the beginning of the historical period, Aryans from West Bengal, Dacca and North India began to come and settle on the fertile land of the Surma Valley and along with the spread of plough-based Aryan culture,

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1. A History of Aurangzab, Calcutta 1912-25 pp. 487-8

Sarkar, Jadunath

2. Modern Trends in Islam, Chicago 1945 P.11

Gibb, H.A. R.

Bengali language of the valley developed and spread. But due to the confinement of Aryan philosophical life its inner facts did not spread among the masses rather the old life of them remained as it was before the arrival of the Aryans in this valley.

Before the arrival of the Turks and the Afghans, the culture of the Surma Valley was almost the changed form of local Bengali culture. After the conquest of Bengal by the Turks Surma Valley culturally became a part of Bengal. As because at that time a large number of Brahmins and high blooded Bengali of West and East Bengal began to live here permanently. At the beginning of the 14th century AD when the Karimganj along with Sylhet district came under the rule of Turks Sultans the influence of Bengali culture became more acute in this region.

But the Sufis who came along with the Turks brought a new turn and newness in the Bengali culture. The newness is found in Surma and Barak Valley too. Hazrat Shah Jalal and his disciples spread Islam in this valley. The change brought by the Sufis through out India is also brought in this region. The religion of Sri Chaitanya had a great impact in Bengal and its neighboring regions but the Hindu Dimasa kings were not influenced by it rather they continued their Baishnab religion.

In the cultural tradition of Barak, Bengali became as an established language. So, in the Mughal period local documents of Sylhet and during Dimasa regimes their language of official business was Bengali only.

First of all Sylhet and thereafter Cachar or Barak Valley included in the East India company rule along with its socio-cultural and traditional heritage. The influence of the 19th century revolution began to spread the modern life in the cultural life of the Bangalese of Bangladesh as well as the Barak Valley.

III) Hindu- Muslim Cultural Relation in Different Fields:

As mentioned earlier Hindu - Muslim cultural relation is an old one. They are virtually two brothers from the same parents having relation not only in their cultures and customs but also in their blood. They have unity in different fields and relation in different spheres of their lives in spite of diversity and differences in some others. This is because of the fact that the most of the Indian Muslims are converted from Hinduism and so by nature there is a genealogical basic relation in between them even after their

conversion on the one hand and the arrival of the Muslims as well as Islam and the rule of the foreign sultans for decades after decades brought something new and influenced the Indian Hindus on the other hand. Thus, the Indian Hindus accepted something new from the Muslims so also the Muslims grasped some thing new from the Hindus, which ultimately evolved cultural relations in different fields of their lives. These relations may be better represented through the following heads.

a) Hindu Elements in the Muslim Administration:

The Arab occupied Sind and maintained a policy of retaining as many features of the local form of administration as practicable in their administrative outlook. Muhammad bin Qasim, the first governor of Sind allowed many features of Hindu administrative system to continue and the civil and revenue administration remained either in the hands of Hindus or converts from Hinduism. He appointed Siskar, the former minister of vanquished Raja Dahir as his advisor of course after his acceptance of Islam.[1]

Sultan Mahmud's administration targeted images and not the people. He sacked Hindu temples but at the same time he mobilized three Hindu divisions in his forces. Three Hindu generals Sunder, Nath and Tilak were posted in high position in the Ghaznawid army. [2]

When the whole of North India came under Muslim dominion the Hindu framework of administration was accepted and retained everywhere. In the army though not Hindu generals, at least converted Muslims had a considerable share in stabilizing the Delhi Sultanate. Malik, Anbar etc. were most distinguished of them who extended the Khilji Empire deep into the Deccan. Ibn Batuta testifies the employment of Hindus in Muhammad bin Tughluq's administration, one of whom became the governor of Sind.[3]

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1. Chach Nama, pp.164-7,

English translation by K.Fredunberg, pp.57-58

2. Nizam- al-Mulk, Siyasat Nama, PP.92-93

Nizam- al-Mulk

3. Azaib-al- Asfar, PP.105-6

Ibn-Batuta

The finance and revenue departments of Firuz Tughluq continued to be run by the Hindu officials though they could not rise to a post of high responsibility. [1]

The Hindus mainly ran the revenue system and the trade of the country during the reign of Babar. Though Sikandar Lodi personalized the administrative works, the revenue records were kept in Indian languages, except at the head quarter. This implies that a large number of Hindus were appointed in the revenue departments some of whom were paid by the state and some others by the cultivators.[2]

The enlistment of Rajput chiefs was one of the greatest administrative achievements. From Prithvi Raj to Rana Sanga offered stiff resistance to the consolidation of Muslim power in India. They served their best for the stabilization of this power by the simple process of integration and liberalization. It is remarkable that within one generation the Hindu warrior- caste of the Rajputs was completely won over. Akbar took some revolutionary steps for the purpose such as inter-marriage with the Rajputs, the appointment of a Rajput to the high rank among the mansabdars before a Muslim was raised to that rank. Raja Man Singh was made commander of 7000 horses, the first to hold that rank in Akbar's reign. A Hindu Raja, Todar Mal was given the highest revenue post in the state.

Hindu generals continued to serve and extend frontiers of the Mughal Empire during the reign of Jahangir too. Udaji Ram played a significant role in the Mughal campaigns in the Deccan. Of course, Shah Jahan reversed Akbar's policy to some extent, giving Muslims preference in service, but on the whole he did not dislodge the Hindus from public service even during his reign. The list of these Hindu mansabdars is very impressive. His personal bodyguard and his most trusted servant was a Hindu. Mahesh Das stood behind the throne of the emperor where the weapons were kept and followed him wherever he rode. The importance of Rajput troops is more obvious in

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1. A Review of the Reign of Firuz Shah, P.258 , Riazul Islam Barani, PP.572-77

2. The Religious policy of the Mughal Emperors, 1940 P.27 Sharma, S.R

the context of Mughal rivalries with Safavid Persia over Qandahar and Mughal ambitions in central Asia. Persian nobles could hardly be trusted if there was a conflict with the Safavids nor could the Turanians be trusted with an expedition against the Uzbeks. Central Asia campaign of Shah Jahan in 1646AD though commanded nominally by the princes, Mordant Aurangzeb and actually by the Persian noble, Ali Mardan Khan but the Rajput force under Raja Jagat Singh was its backbone.[1]

The consolidation of the power of Aurangzeb and his success against his brother was due to the loyalty of the Rajput general, Jai Singh at least to some extent. He also led the first Mughal expedition against Shivaji and secured his submission for a short period of time. Besides, Jaswat Singh was raised to the highest rank among the mansabdars making commander of 7000 horses and was twice appointed the Governor of Gujarat by Aurangzeb. He was also nominated with prince Muazzam to lead the Mughal forces to meet the invasion of the Safavid, Abbas-II and was made commander of the Mughal army in 1671 AD to pacify the Afghans in the north- west frontier area.

In 1670 AD Aurangzeb appointed a Hindu general, Raja Ram Singh as commander of 5000 horses and gave a jewel turban to his son. In actual practice he appointed more competent Hindus as higher mansabdars in the interest of sound administration.[2]

The policy of the Deccan kingdoms in regard to the appointment of Hindus to the high offices of the state was even more liberal. For a time in Bijapur, Hindi and Marathi were used as official languages either in stead of or along with Persian. This liberal tradition was continued by the Nizams of Hyderabad whose first noble, the peshkar used to be a Hindu and was often also the chief Minister of the state.

Some of the Hindu communities like Kayasthas, the Khatriyas and the Pandits of Kashmir and the Amils of Sind adopted Muslim culture, cultivated Muslim languages and literature, participated in Muslim administration effectively and even moulded their domestic life to the Muslim way of

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1. Ibid, PP.466-7

2. Mir at-i-Ahmadi, 1927 PP.270-71, Khan, Ali Muhammad

3.The Religious Policy f the Mughal Emperors, 1940 PP.99-100 Sharma, S.R.

Apart from their religion the members of these communities were hardly distinguished from the Muslims, whereas in some Muslim cultural stronghold they went to the extent of adopting some secondary Muslim religio-social practices, such as writing elegies or marthiyas on the martyrdom of Hussein.[1]

Some of them adopted part Muslim names like Firuz Chand, Mahbub Karan or Jawaharlal. The most remarkable of these communities is that of the Kayasthas. Their origin can be traced in the literary and epigraphic records to the later half of the ninth century. From the eleventh century individuals of this caste began to rise to high administrative positions.[2]

There are many theories as regard their origin. In some parts, Brahmins regard them as equal to Kathriyas, though generally they are considered a mixed caste like Shudras.[3]

The chief festivals of the Kayasthas is the celebration of the day sacred to Saraswate, the Hindu goddess of knowledge and eloquence, when they worship the ink stand or dawat-puja writing in taboos among them on that festival day and the next day they begin the use of new pen and ink. Kayasthas were probably the first among the Hindus to take up the studies of Persian introduced in schools in the reign of Sikandar Lodi and then under the Suris.[4]

Of all the Hindu castes, they came into closest contact with the Muslims compared to other Hindu communities. They were less observant of the orthodox rituals and under Muslim and Bhakti influences less conscious of caste distinction.[5]

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1. Ibid. P. 82

2. The Struggle for Empire, P. 477

U.S.Ghoshal and Majumder

3. The Kayasthas, 1927 PP.455-8

Yusuf Hussein.

4. Adabiyyat-e Farsimen Hinduwa ka kissa, Delhi 1942 P. 233

S. Abdullah,

5. The Kayasthas, 1927 PP.465-7

Yusuf Hussein

By the time of Akbar they mastered Persian and from seventeenth to early nineteenth century they enriched the Persian literature written in India with Hindu sensitivity embedded in Muslim tradition, while in certain field such as diplomatic and official letter-writing or insha they became specialists.[1]

The Khaitryas adopted first the Muslim culture as Mughal mansabdars, Muslim civil and revenue co-administrators and military commander in arms. Some Rajput chiefs even at the end of the nineteenth century continued to retain Muslim culture by employing Muslim tutors for their children, having their food killed according to Muslim customs and participated in Muslim festivals and prayers.

During the reign of Sultan Zaynal-Abidin, some of the Kashmiri Pandits especially the Sapru clan took up the study of Persian.[2]

Their sharp intelligence and their taking up Muslim culture distinguished them in their land and just up to Akbar's annexation of Kashmir they became influential figures in Mughal court and administration. Some of these Pandits adopted externals of the Muslim way of life under the influence of Persian in intellectualism. The Amils of Sind are a hereditary caste of Govt. servants as they adopted Islamic culture soon after the Arab conquest of it.[3]

After the incorporation of Sind in the Delhi Sultanate, they began to study Persian and became indispensable both to the lower and higher administration of Sind.[4] Their contribution to Sindhi literature remained integrated with the Muslim tradition and they continued to write Sindhi in the Arabic script.

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1. Linguistic Survey, P. 45

Grieson

2. Gulzar Kashmir by Abdullah quoting Kirpa Ram

P.167

3. Sindu Culture, Bombay 1959 P.56

Thakur, U.T.

4. Ibid, P. 38

b) Arab Studies of Indian Sciences:

The Arab traders and merchants brought Islam first on the Malabar Coast of India. But the cultural relation between the Arabs and the Indians established first through the Arab empire headed and ruled by the khalifas with their capital in Baghdad of Iraq. The khalifas like Harun al-Rashid and his son, al-Mamun encouraged the study of Indian art, science and culture and ultimately absorbed these in to the main stream of Arab culture. This shows their great respect for the Indian culture in the long past.

During that time many Arabic words passed in to the Indian languages as the many Indian words found their way in to the Arabic language. The Arab studied the Indian literature long before they became acquainted with the Greek thought. When Sind became first a Muslim Province under the caliphate of Baghdad for a period of about a century from 718 to 800 AD, some Sanskrit works directly rendered in to Arabic.[1]

Some other Sanskrit works rendered in to Arabic were the ethical writings of Chanakya or Shanaq and the Hitopadesa and the Indian Sanskrit work, Panchatantra better known to the Muslim world as Kalila Wa Dimna translated from Persian in to Arabic by Ibn Muqaffa then from Arabic it made its way to the western world. The interesting story of Sindbad which later took place in the Arabian Nights was partly of Indian origin. Besides, from among the Indian religious epics, some parts of Mahabharata were translated in to Arabic by Abu Salih ibn Shuayb and later by Abul Hasan Ali Jabale.[2]

In Baghdad, Barmaks the House of Wisdom became centre of thoughts and learning. Indian Physicians were highly honored for their reputation and knowledge in this regard. They were invited to Baghdad. They set up not only hospitals but also medical schools in Baghdad.[3]

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1. Essai Sur les Origines du Lexique Technique de la Mystique musalmane, Paris, 1922 P. 164

Louis Massignon

2. Elliot, PP. 100-2

3. Arab U Hind Ke Talluqat, Allahabad, 1950

Nadv, Suleiman

The medical treaties of the Indian physicians like Susrta and Charaka were translated in to Arabic. An Arab physician, Ibn-al Tankui visited India in the ninth century to study medicine. A number of Sanskrit treaties on medicines, poisons and snakes were-translated in to Arabic. Al- Knidi's account of India was partly based on the evidence of the convoy sent by Yahya al- Barmaki to India to procure Indian medicines and to report on Indian religion and customs.

The Arabs were indebted to India in astronomy greatly. They translated many astronomical works in to Arabic. The most famous of them is Brahma Gupta's Siddhanta translated by al-Farazi and Ya'quab Ibn Tariq in collaboration with a Brahmin scholar and then they named it Sindhind in Arabic. The other works on Indian astronomy were Brahmagupta's Khandkhyaka and the Aryabhata. The Sanskrit works on astronomy was the subject of constructive controversy between two Spanish and Arab scholars, Abdullah ibn Ahmed of Sargossa (d.1046) and Ibn Sa'd al-Andalusi (d.1021)[1]

The Arabs detected the position of stars only after the study of Mathematics from India. They learnt the decimal system and the concept of Zero from India and then it passed on the western countries. During the reign of Al- Mamun ibn Harun al- Rashid (813-833), al- Khwarizmi (780-840), a mathematician adopted Sanskrit numerals to Arabic orthography. Indian influence on Mathematics can be assessed from the work of al- Nasawi. Besides, some mathematical and astronomical terms were borrowed into Arabic from Sanskrit.

(c) Functions :

Functions are of different kinds in nature. Some are religious functions while some others are cultural functions and so on. Each of the functions has its own speciality and importance. Of course, every religion has its own principle according to which it observes it and celebrates.

In this context a few words suffice to say about the restrictions and limitations imposed by Islam.

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1. Early Relation between Arabia and India 1973 PP.178-9

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It is in a real sense, a religion of not only peace and tranquility but also a religion of gravity, weighty thought and merriment. It does not allow lightness in dealing with a person or observing a function or exaggeration of any kind. It also prohibits spending lavishly and uneconomically. The Quran itself says, "Those who spend lavishly are the brothers of devils." Thus there is no scope of unnecessary expenses in Islam. It believes in peace, in reality as well as frugality. It is against any kind of over enjoyment and laughter and this is why ablution goes in vain when one laughs loudly after ablution. It only allows functions having some meaning in true sense of Islam with limited enjoyment.

So, decoration, lightning, showiness, video Audio cassettes, songs, marriage-party, birth day party, tea-party get together of any ill motive and the likes are forbidden and illegal in Islam.

Of course, functions--social, cultural, religious or traditional having some good sense may be performed but with no merriment or limited merriment without any thriftlessness. But in practice Muslims nowadays do many functions with full social gaiety and spend on lightning and decorations as their Hindu brothers do under the compulsion of social influences. In fact, they could not avoid the influences of other communities and the over enjoyment and expenses that is prevailing in their neighborhood though it should not be.

Thus society, neighborhood, showiness, arrogance as well as traditions are the some factors, which off and on overcome religious principles and cannons. It becomes a status in the society and people are found to maintain this status of showiness in spite of their hardship and inability by borrowing or even by selling their paternal property.

Now the Muslims are influenced by their non- Muslim brothers and they not only participate but also spend lavishly in social, political and other functions with full endeavor and enthusiasm like their non-Muslim brothers. They are now no way backward and out of dated in upholding a social function.

(d) Marriage:

Marriage is a social bond of the bride and the groom backed by the religious principles. Of course, this differs from society to society, religion to religion, region to region, community to community and even status

to status.

According to the Islamic principles, it is not only a bond but also a contract between the bride and groom in the presence of at least two witnesses who are faithful and believers. Fixation of Mohr is also obligatory preferably done before marriage but not a pre-condition of it and may be fixed and paid later on comparing to that of their relatives or that of those who are equal to their status.

All the other things related to Muslim marriage other than the contract and Mohr are only social effects, customary influences and Hindu influences. The Muslims are co-related; blood-related, socially related and neighborly settled and co-existed with their Hindu-brothers. Hindus besides all these, are majority almost everywhere directly or indirectly and Muslims minority are therefore, bound to be affected and influenced by the majority. Nowadays Muslims inquire about the bride, her beauty, character, family status and all and so also the bride party all these about the groom. When this chapter of inquiry satisfies informally or via media they want to know the consent of each other and only when it satisfies they fix a date for the settlement of the marriage in the presence of the guardians and close relatives of both the parties and discuss and settle all other social conditions and terms if either of the parties or the both has or have. This day is named socially as Challishi means 40 days before the marriage following the Hindu custom called Choturto Mongol. It is called so because 40 is a significant number to the Muslims. In this day all the terms and conditions especially Mohr is fixed along with other demands if any as the Hindus do. But the marriage virtually takes place on the day fixed in Challishi, which may be before or after 40 days.

On the day of marriage, contact of marriage is uttered and confessed by both the bride and groom in front of at least two evidences according to the Islamic principle. Thereafter marriage deliberation is delivered and prayed to Allah for the well being of the bride and groom both here and hereafter as the prophet SM did.

Other than these many things are done like arrangement of special feast, decoration of the houses, lightning of the streets, blusting of the bombs, singing of the marriage songs, merriment of the relatives...all like these are Hindu and social influences.

Dowry system has no relation with Islam. But the Muslims of today like their Hindu-brothers now demand dowry, which is no doubt bad, unreasonable and should be abolished.

The day after the marriage relatives of the bride go to the house of the groom to attend the party called by him for his relatives and friends as the Hindus do. Then the bride party invites the groom party for fira like the Fira Jatra of the Hindus.

This way in Muslim marriage system we find many things irrelevant to the Islamic principles following the Hindus, their marriage system which is also hereditary and traditional in most of the cases.

(e) Rites and Customs :

The Bangalese give great importance to the rites and customs followed by their predecessors. They maintain their traditional rites and customs like their forefathers with sincerity.

The Hindus in general hold up these and spend liberally for these. They never neglect a custom either religious or social. They spend a lot to maintain it buying new dresses. They purchase sweets. They decorate houses, streets and pandals. They compete in decoration, lightning, and adornment and so in order to maintain it. Their beautification of the pandals, houses, streets and the so are matters of attraction to the visitors.

The Muslims here are mostly converted Bangalese as proved by history and thereby they can not but uphold it with enthusiasm and religious gaiety though Islam does not permit it. They also decorate houses, streets and beautify them as a social compulsion. They also dress themselves with new garments beautifying their houses decorating their streets and so as their Hindu brothers do.

The religious ceremonies as well as the social functions of both the Bengali Hindus and Muslims are bound to follow the tradition of their predecessors with their whole strength and stemina. Besides, they are influenced by one another too. There is a kind of concealed competition in between them to display their monetary and social ability. If a Hindu- brother spends say, one lakh rupees to maintain a tradition of his forefather his Muslim neighbor does not lag behind to show his capability and so spends this much and sometimes more than that. This is applicable not only in case of

traditions, rites and customs but also in all kinds of social and religious functions. This kind of competitive attitude of the people sometimes and in some particular regions creates new problems, vices and even murderous zeal of the people. This also creates the problems of have and have not and the differences in between them.

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