case, Muslim influence on Indian culture in the south and west was limited and indirect. It was in the north, where the long series of invasions by Muslim Turks started in the tenth century and continued till the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the beginning of the thirteenth century, that Muslim culture had a profound and direct influence on every department of Indian life. In the next chapter we shall see where this Muslim culture had its origin, how it came to India and what role it played in the shaping of the cultural life of the country.

VIII. MUSLIM CULTURE BEFORE IT CAME TO INDIA

Islam as the Basis of Muslim Culture

The birthplace of Islam, Arabia, is a part of the bigger geographical region which is almost entirely surrounded by the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean. This region occupied a central position in the old world and was the meeting point of three continents. It was here that several great cultures arose and others, born in Asia, Africa or Europe, came in contact with one another. During the period when almost the whole trade between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean was carried by a land route, Syria, Palestine, Hedjaz and Yemen lay on this great road joining the East with the West. If there was a place in the old world where the idea of a universal human brotherhood could take shape it was this central region.

Islam, the new message of hope and faith which the Prophet of Arabia gave to the world, does not claim to be a new religion. It sets out merely to reiterate in a more complete form the eternal truth which the chosen messengers of God have been revealing to various peoples of the world from time to time. To explain this point the Quran uses the terms Din and Shariah. Din is the religious and moral ideal common to all religions but in which the Semitic religions are explicitly named, the others being referred to by implication. Shariah is the positive law through which a particular religion realises at a given time the common eternal ideal. Din has always been the same and will continue to be the same. But Shariahs have been different for different peoples at different times. Islam as Din recognises and confirms the eternal truth taught by all religions. But the Islamic Shariah cancels all previous Shariahs. The original source of the teachings of Islam is the Quran which was revealed to the holy Prophet Mohammed. The traditions of the Prophet
are regarded by most Muslims as a second authentic source.

The two fundamental religious concepts developed by the *Quran* are:

1. The concept of God, which is inferred from that of the universe.
2. The concept of the relation between man and God which determines the relations of men among themselves and their rights and duties as individuals and members of society.

An *'insight'* into the universe reveals to man order and harmony, purpose and design, pointing to the wisdom and providence of the Creator. The object for which He created the world is known to Him alone but its design provides for its conservation and shows proportion, beauty and justice leading us to the concept of a creator (*Khaliq*) and preserver (*Rab*) who is gracious and merciful (*Rahman* and *Rahim*).

The universe is subject to the law of causality; so is human action. Every action of man has a fixed recompense (*Jaza*) which he usually gets in this life. When the world comes to an end, there will be a day of judgement (*Yaum-ud-Din*) when men's whole lives will be weighed in the balance and lasting rewards and retributions will be announced.

So we see that the concept of the attributes of God in the *Quran* is associated with a particular concept of the world (*Weltanschaung*). The *Quran* visualises the world as one of reward and retribution which is based on justice tempered with mercy. But the life of man does not end with his departure from this world. There is another world where he will get the final reward or retribution for the sum total of his actions.

Contrary to the attitude taken by many other religions, Islam does not deprecate the value of this world and this life. As the 'field of action' and the 'farming-ground for the world to come' the present world is of great importance and value to man. As to the degree of reality the world possesses, from the point of view of absolute existence it does not interest the *Quran*. What it emphasises is that from the relative point of view of man the world has as much reality as he himself. For all practical purposes both are real. This affirmation of life and of the physical world is peculiar to Islam.

As we have seen, this concept of the world implies that its creator is the one Supreme Being, the Preserver, the Gracious and Merciful. These are the basic attributes of God from which many others are derived.

The *Quran* has dealt with the attributes of God definitely and comprehensively but it observes the greatest caution in discussing His Essential Being. The question of the essential nature of God and the world is the most delicate in speculative philosophy. Not only in theology but also in metaphysics, the concept of essence is generally more negative than positive. The *Quran* confines itself to emphasising the unity of God and His freedom from all conditions. The positive aspect of His nature is not discussed at all.

Very great stress is laid on the unity of God in the *Quran*. It forbids the sharing of any of God's attributes, let alone His Essential Being, in thought or speech. But as far as freedom from conditions is concerned, the *Quran* follows a middle path. It speaks of God being free from corporeality and other conditions to which finite things are subject, but does not carry the idea of the Unconditioned to such an extreme as to make it impossible for the limited human intellect to have any idea of God at all. It ascribes to God positive attributes but warns against thinking of these attributes as resembling human qualities. One is constrained to use the same words for Divine attributes as for human qualities, but it should always be borne in mind that the former are essentially different from the latter.

The love of and devotion to the Supreme One is the first and foremost duty of the believer. To induce the purity of heart and concentration of mind indispensable for true devotion the simple means of prayer, fasting and *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) have been prescribed. Real devotion, however, is not mere ritual but obedience to the will of God, following the Moral Law laid down by Him, identifying oneself with the purpose which He has assigned to the universe. This unconditional submission to the will of God is Islam in its literal as well as theological sense. This brings the life of man in harmony with the law of the universe which is the law of man's own nature.

The other implication of the unity of God which has been specially emphasised is that 'devotion' or unconditional submission should be offered to none but God and help should be sought from none but Him because He alone is worthy of devotion and He alone can help in the moment of need. For a man to submit unconditionally to or place unreserved trust in the help of a fellowman or any other finite
being is to lose his human dignity, the worst sin in the Islamic Shariah.

Some other corollaries follow from the doctrine of unity which are regarded as fundamentally important in Islam. The unity of the creator implies that of creation, leading to the idea that human society is like an organism whose members are bound to one another with vital ties. This is the basis of the concept of the universal brotherhood of man. The Quran regards man and woman, master and servant, the rich and the poor as fundamentally equal. No person is superior to another in respect of sex or race or colour or class or vocation. There is only one basis of distinction—Ta'wa, i.e. the fear of God, obedience to His law, service to Him and His creatures. The freedom and dignity of the individual is an important aspect of equality and the Quran has recognised the independent position and value of the individual. Every person has a direct relation to God. There is no intermediary between them. The Prophet is a leader or teacher, who through his precept and example shows the way to establish and maintain the proper relation to God. His is the perfectly developed personality which, according to the behest of the Quran, 'model your character on that of God', has succeeded in embodying in itself the human counterpart of Divine attributes and serves as an ideal to be followed by every person. But the individuality which the Quran wants everybody to develop has to be harmonised with collective life. The moral development and the spiritual perfection of the individual is possible only in society. The ascetic life of the recluse, which keeps him away from his fellow-beings, is completely rejected by the Quran which attaches such importance to the development of social spirit that it makes fundamental religious functions like prayers and the Hajj congregational, and gives priority to the duties which a man owes to his fellowmen over those he owes to God.

The concept of this Islamic state in the Quran is that sovereignty really vests in God. He delegates it to the Prophet and from the Prophet it passes on to the Khalifa or Imam. About the manner in which sovereignty is delegated to the Khalifa, there is a difference of opinion among interpreters of the Quran. One school believes that the Khalifa, like the Prophet, is appointed by God; but the majority of Muslims think that anybody who is accepted by the general will of the Muslim citizens of a state through oath of allegiance becomes a rightful Khalifa.

As far as legislation is concerned, the fundamental principles of the law (Shariah) which should govern the Islamic state have been laid down by the Quran. The Prophet, by applying them to the Arab society of his time, formulated the first positive law of Islam. For the future the interpretation of Islamic law according to changing conditions was left to Muftahids or competent scholars who are well versed in the Quran and the Hadith (the sources of the Islamic Shariah), as well as in the general learning of their age.

Under this theocratic state the Quran wants to build a society based on equality and fraternity, free from bonds of race or country or class, which affords to each of its members, within the limits of the Shariah and of collective welfare, full freedom for realising the greatest possible measure of material and spiritual values.

Collective welfare is the key to the attitude taken by the Quran towards political, social as well as other aspects of cultural life. In the economic field private property is recognised, but special care is taken to prevent the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few. Khums and zakat (forms of capital levy) which every Muslim is expected to pay and the law of inheritance, have been designed with this end in view. Private ownership of land (which in those days was the only source of production of wealth) was made subject to so many limitations that it was no more than a nominal ownership. Of the three forms of exploitation, which existed at the time, slavery, usury andcornering, the last two were practically abolished. Slavery was modified to a system of attaching prisoners of war to families as covenanted servants, with rights as well as duties, till they earned their freedom (though in the latter period of general degeneration the system lapsed into naked slavery). Usury and cornering were strictly prohibited. In short, Islam tried to stop exploitation not through mere exhortation but by law, thus setting an example of state control of economic life. Art and literature were also made subject to the larger interests of collective life; the unbridled, aimless phantasy of poets is condemned by the Quran, but creative, stimulating and exalting poetry is encouraged. The Prophet and his successors condemned those verses of pre-Islamic Arab poets which were obscene and full of barbarous, revengeful sentiments, but expressed their appreciation of more healthy romantic and heroic pre-Islamic poems which were among the finest examples of simple and effective verse. In music, stirring and inspiring tunes were preferred to depressing and doleful ones. In painting and sculpture images of living beings
were forbidden on account of their association with idolatory and the danger that images of revered leaders (for example those of the Prophet) may come to be worshipped like idols.

The Islamic State and the Muslim State

For a long time Muslim culture developed under a central theocratic state or Khilafat which passed through the following three phases:

(a) The rule of the Prophet and his four Righteous Khalifas.
(b) The Khilafat of Banu Omayyah.
(c) The Khilafat of Banu Abbas.

According to Muslim historians, the first saw the complete realisation of the Islamic concept of society—a society harmonising religious and secular life, reconciling the interests of the rulers with those of the ruled, a society free from all distinctions of race, colour, class and country. In the second phase Islamic society maintained a superficial unity but forces of disintegration began to work under the surface. Banu Omayyah set up a dynastic monarchy, thus creating a gulf between the rulers and the ruled, the state and its citizens and, what proved to be more disastrous, between the Arabs and the non-Arabs. The luxurious life of the court and increased prosperity began to have an adverse effect on the life of Muslim Arabs but on the whole they retained their enterprise and continued to serve their state as brave soldiers and their religion as zealous missionaries. The third phase opened with an aggravation of disintegrating factors because the Abbasi Khilafat gave up all pretence of ruling in the spirit of democracy. Pomp and grandeur and the personal authority of the Khalifa increased to such an extent that the only difference between him and an absolute monarch in a secular state was that he had to follow to a certain extent the Islamic law in the administration of justice. The first few Abbasi Khalifas managed to retain some measure of popularity on account of their personal qualities, but their incapable and weak successors lost the support of their Muslim subjects. Now the separation between society and state, between the Khalifa and the community was complete. He ruled with the help of his army, not with the goodwill of the people.

The suppression of the democratic principle of liberty and equality on which the Khilafat had been founded by the Prophet and his immediate successors inevitably resulted in the break-up of this great structure. Spain and Egypt were the first to become independent; others followed. The separatist tendency in the political field was reflected in cultural life. From the middle of the thirteenth century the common or international element in the cultural life of the Muslim countries became gradually weaker and the national or local element grew stronger. So the Islamic State and Islamic Culture in the strict sense lasted only for about half a century under the Prophet and the four Righteous Khalifas. The Khilafat under Banu Omayyah and more definitely under Banu Abbas was only partly Islamic in its political and cultural pattern. The so-called Muslim states which appeared after the dissolution of the Abbasi Khilafat in the middle of the thirteenth century were either dynastic states of Muslim rulers or national states of Muslim peoples and did not have in them the political or cultural spirit of Islam.
IX. THE CONTACT BETWEEN HINDU CULTURE AND MUSLIM CULTURE IN INDIA

As already noted, the Muslims first came to India as invaders in AD 712 and established their rule over Sind and Multan. As traders they had probably started coming to south India much earlier. From the eighth century they began to settle along the sea-coast from Sind to Kathiawar and Gujarat. So in a way, the contact between Islamic culture and Hindu culture had already begun in the eighth century. Reference has been made to the books of Hindu scholars on medicine, mathematics and astronomy, which went from Sind to Arabia and helped in the intellectual development of the Muslims. The impetus which the Bhakti movement among the Hindus received from Muslim ideas has also been mentioned. There are some indications of the influence of the dress, customs and manners of the Arab Muslims on the people in south India but as a scientific investigation of this has not yet been made we cannot venture any positive assertion on the point.

But by the end of the tenth century the Muslims had only touched the periphery of Hindu culture; they were yet far from its centre. The real contact between Hindu and Muslim culture began not even with the occupation of the Punjab and Multan by the Ghaznavides in the eleventh century, but with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. The invasions of north India by the Muslim began from Ghazni—the capital of a state corresponding to the bulk of what is now called Afghanistan—together with a part of its centre, which the Bhakti movement among the Hindus received from Muslim influence. But by the end of the tenth century the Muslims had only touched the periphery of Hindu culture; they were yet far from its centre. The real contact between Hindu and Muslim culture began not even with the occupation of the Punjab and Multan by the Ghaznavides in the eleventh century, but with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. The invasions of north India by the Muslim began from Ghazni—the capital of a state corresponding to the bulk of what is now called Afghanistan—together with a part of its centre, which the Bhakti movement among the Hindus received from Muslim influence.

As a matter of fact they wanted to establish in India the same type of Islamic state as existed in other Muslim countries, i.e. a dynastic monarchy limited by the Shari'ah and giving its non-Muslim subjects religious and cultural freedom but slightly fewer political rights. However, as we shall see, the attempt to make the Delhi Sultanate an Islamic state even in this limited sense did not succeed. It only had the unfortunate result of preventing the political unity of India from taking the shape of a new national unity.

But the very fact of Hindus and Muslims living together had begun the process of cultural understanding which bore fruit after three centuries. The Delhi Sultanate, far from turning this spontaneous process of unification to some purpose, could not even understand it. It was the Mughal Emperor Akbar who made a conscious effort, for the first time in the thousand years which had passed since the death of Harsha, to revive the national unity of India. In this he was greatly
helped by having before him the 300-year history of the Delhi Sultanate, its failures as well as its successes.

We have now to review this period from the point of the cultural ideal which the Delhi Sultanate tried to realise and its implications for the national unity of India.

The first half of the thirteenth century, when the Delhi Sultanate was taking shape, was on the whole one of distress and disintegration for the Eastern Islamic world. The decline of the Abbasi Khilafat, the disruptive activities of the Batini sects, the pressure of the European crusaders from the West and that of the Mughals from the East, had weakened the Muslim states and no rallying point was left for the cultural forces of Islam.

The rise of the Delhi Sultanate provided such a rallying point. Scholars, saints, poets, generals, statesmen were attracted by Delhi as iron filings by a magnet. So the founders of the Sultanate had no time to think what form they should give to the new state. After the reign of Qutubuddin Aibak which merely was a period of military occupation, and during the twenty-five year rule of Ilutmish, the Delhi Sultanate was almost automatically cast into the mould of the Eastern Muslim states of the period, i.e. it became, under the nominal sovereignty of the Khalifas of Baghdad, an independent monarchy professing to be limited by the Shariah (Divine Law). The nominal allegiance to the Khalifat of Baghdad was transferred after its destruction by the Mongols to the Fatimi Khalifas of Egypt and under the Syeds to Timur. The Lodi and Suri dynasties called themselves, as their coins show, simply the representatives of the Khalifas without naming any particular person.

Not only in relation to the Khalifat but in other respects also the Islamic character of the Delhi Sultanate was no more than a fiction. The Persian absolutist concept of monarchy, which had crept into the Islamic state after the four Righteous Khalifas, had become more defined in the states ruled by Persian and Turkish kings. But in the Delhi Sultanate this un-Islamic absolutism became still more pronounced. In the Persian and Turkish states the kings had deviated from the Islamic way only in the field of constitutional law and to some extent in the system of land revenue. In most other matters they had to follow the Shariah as interpreted by the Fuqaha (Doctors of Islamic Law). But in the Delhi Sultanate to follow or not to follow the Shariah depended on the sweet will of the Sultan in his private life as well as in the administration of the state. Specially in the field of Common Law the Sultan's right to legislate according to his will was acknowledged by all.

In economic matters also the Delhi Sultanate deviated more than other Islamic states from the line laid down by Islam. For example, the rent of agricultural land, which had been one-fifth of the produce (and less for inferior land) since the beginning of Islam, was raised considerably by the Lodi and Suris and once, under Aibuddin Khilji, had soared up to one-half. The concession of fifty per cent granted by Islam to Muslim cultivators does not seem to have ever been given by the Delhi Sultans. The Islamic law of inheritance was not strictly enforced. Converts to Islam were allowed to follow the local customs which in many cases meant disinheriting daughters in violation of one of the fundamental principles of the Shariah. Lending and borrowing money on interest, strictly forbidden by Islam, was common, at least among the Hindus.

In the field of morality the personal life of the king had in practice been above all checks since the end of the Righteous Khalifas, but Ihisab (moral censorship) in public life, which had been more or less strictly in force in some Muslim states was so lax under most of the Delhi Sultans as to be practically non-existent. The aristocratic class was on the whole subject to moral restraints but they were not exercised by the state but by public opinion inspired by the religious spirit of the common people.

In short, the Delhi Sultanate was not an Islamic state even in the limited sense in which this word is used for other medieval Muslim states. Nor was it a national state of the Muslims. No doubt the Muslims, as coreligionists of the Sultan and forming the bulk of the army on which he depended, were on the whole treated better than the non-Muslims. But even the Muslims were subject to discrimination, the nobles being regarded as superior to the commoners and Muslims of foreign origin to the local Muslims. In relation to the king, however, all classes of Muslims as well as Hindus were mere subjects and had no voice in shaping the policy of the state. So we cannot call the Delhi Sultanate anything except an absolute-monarchy under various Muslim dynasties.

But the important question in which we are interested is the relation of the Delhi Sultanate to the Hindus who formed the
majority of the population and its implications for Indian nationhood. We have seen that from the beginning of the ninth century to the end of the tenth most of north India was under the rule of Rajput princes and under the influence of the romantic age of chivalry. From the point of view of national unity it was a period of utter disintegration. The division of Hindu society into castes and sub-castes had passed all reasonable limits. The leading classes, that is the Rajputs and the Brahmans, had also been divided into castes and gotras. Among the Rajputs the tribal spirit was so strong as to lead to unending feuds. Nobody could work for the unity of India in such an atmosphere.

It was this disintegration which gave the Muslim invaders the opportunity of conquering India. No united front was ever presented to Mahmud Gahznavi. Against Muhammad Gori a last minute rally by Rajput rulers was attempted but it was not complete. The powerful raja of Kanauj did not join it and no more than a small fraction of India's power of resistance was used.

The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate produced the same feeling among the Hindus as the conquests of the Gurjars and Huns had done. Physically they yielded to the conquerors but their souls entrenched themselves in racial and religious self-sufficiency and aloofness in such a way that no intercourse between them and the Muslims seemed to be possible. The term malechcha, originally coined for the Gurjars and Huns was now used for Muslims.

If the antipathy of the common Hindus to Muslims was mainly emotional, that of the higher classes to the Muslim state was due to more concrete reasons. The Hindu rajas and local chiefs were afraid that the Muslim rulers would annex their territories. They could have tolerated a central government, even of foreigners, if it merely levied tribute and for the rest left them to themselves. But a unitary government trying to seize their territories was repugnant not only from the point of view of self-interest but also on principle as it was contrary to all Indian tradition.

The Brahmans suffered no less from the change in the political constellation. Though the Delhi Sultanate had given complete religious freedom to the Hindus, recognised their personal law and appointed Brahmans to help the judges in administering it, it could by no means make up for the loss of social and economic advantages which the Brahmans as a class had to suffer. Formerly, they were employed as purohits (priests), astrologers and judicial officers, and administered charitable departments of the state (which had now been replaced by the Delhi Sultanate); their privileges had been recognised by law, their security guaranteed by the state. But now the political upheaval directly hit their official status and privileges and indirectly undermined their social position and influence. Besides, the example of Muslim society, which had no priestly class, may have influenced Hindu society to attach less importance to the Brahmans.

As for the generality of the common people, their relations with the ruling power became, in course of time, fairly good though not very close. After the initial phase of resentment and mistrust they began to cooperate with the new government because they had no particular reason to be dissatisfied with it. On the whole, the Muslim kings maintained peace and order, ruled justly and gave religious and cultural freedom to their Hindu subjects. No doubt they had changed civil and criminal law and introduced some provisions of the Islamic law. But in India it was nothing new that rulers should enforce their own law on their subjects professing another religion. Both the Hindu and the Buddhist rajas had done it. Of course, interference with the Dharmashastra in the field of religious and personal law would have been intolerable to the Hindus. But this the Delhi Sultans scrupulously avoided. On the contrary, they were considerate enough to appoint pundits in the central as well as provincial courts to help in deciding cases of Hindu personal law as well as those which concerned the religious life of Hindus.

But though the Delhi Sultanate had given political unity to India as the Hindus could not regard it as their own state because the rulers, with the exception of Sikandar Lodi and Sher Shah Suri, made no positive attempt to bridge the gulf between themselves and their Hindu subjects. In fact, they widened it by imposing a poll-tax (Jizya) upon the Hindus with the misguided motive of justifying the name of being an Islamic state. As we have shown, the Delhi Sultanate was not an Islamic state, and even if it had been one, it had no right to impose the Jizya because the latter was meant by the rulers of the early Islamic state to be the price of exemption from compulsory military service which no longer existed. Though the Jizya introduced by the Delhi Sultans was only a nominal amount and was not regularly realised, it hurt the self-respect of Hindus. Moreover, they were in practice, though not in theory, discriminated against in the matter of state service. Mohammad
Tughlaq was the first ruler who pursued a conciliatory policy towards the Hindus. By the end of this period, under Sikandar Lodi and Sher Shah Suri specially, religious discrimination in state service had practically disappeared. Hindus had begun to learn Persian, the court language, and to get some of the biggest and most responsible posts. The smaller Muslim states, which had made themselves independent of the Sultanate, e.g. Bengal and the Bahmani kingdom of the Deccan, or which had not yet come under the sway of Delhi, e.g. Kashmir (during the reign of Zainul-Abidin) had almost from the very beginning a much more equitable policy and had won the affection and confidence of the Hindus.

But long before Hindus became reconciled to the Muslim rulers their relations with the common Muslims had improved considerably. As soon as they saw that Muslims made India their home, that they were practically free from racial prejudice and their religious bigotry and feeling of superiority as conquerors was gradually diminishing, they began to relax their hostile attitude. One of the most powerful factors which contributed to this reconciliation was the historic mediating role played by the Muslim Sufis and Hindu saints of the Bhakti school.

Most of the Sufis in India conceived of and preached divine unity in terms of idealistic monism. The Hindus found their ideas very similar to those of Vedantic philosophy and were naturally attracted by them. But the greatest attraction for the lower castes of Hindus was in the social organisation of Islam which was founded on the basis of equality and fraternity, and still retained something of these qualities. Quite a large number of Hindus embraced Islam and, even those who did not were now better disposed towards the Muslims. The Hindu converts to Islam were at first ostracised by their own people but gradually came to be tolerated and served as a connecting link between their brothers in blood and their brethren in faith.

Another great force which created a general atmosphere of religious harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims was the Bhakti movement. Bhakti was popularised in northern India by Ramananda, the famous saint of the Ramanuja school who probably lived from the end of the fourteenth to the middle of the fifteenth century. He made its appeal stronger and wider by substituting as the object of devotion Ramanandaraji, the Avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu, for the god himself, for Rama's fascinating personality was much nearer to human imagination. Ramananda threw open the doors of his circle to all the four castes, men and women, and even to Muslims. His gifted disciple Tulsidas used the magic of his poetry to win the hearts of millions of people for Ram Bhakti. Another great disciple of Ramananda, Kabir (who lived from some date in the first half of the fifteenth century to the end of that or the beginning of the next century) started a movement of his own which attracted not only Hindus but many Muslims as well.

The song of love and devotion sung by Kabir is a symphony of the deepest notes of the religious feeling of the common people of India—Hindus, Muslims and others. Kabir's concept of God is a purely mystical one. In fact God is to him not a concept but an experience beyond the grasp of the intellect. When attempts are made to interpret this experience in intellectual terms the results are conflicting, even contradictory. According to Kabir each of the contradictory concepts is true in its own way but each is incomplete, expressing only one aspect of the truth. So, he regards the spiritual foundations of Hinduism and Islam as one and finds equal inspiration in both, but is revolted by the superstructure of dogma and ritual which both had built on this foundation. He strongly condemns the distinction of caste, colour and country. Like other exponents of Bhakti, he was averse to systematising or writing down his ideas but expressed them in songs which were sung in his lifetime but later compiled in several books.

More or less contemporary with Kabir was the renowned saint Guru Nanak (born AD 1469) who founded a new religious movement by blending the concept of the unity of God which was closely allied to the Islamic concept with the Hindu doctrine of rebirth. Along with mystical experience as the basis of religion he greatly emphasised moral action. His movement of spiritual purification and moral reform of both Hindus and Muslims later developed into a separate religious sect.

In Bengal there were several Bhakti movements counting both Hindus and Muslims among their followers, but the most popular was the Krishna Bhakti of the great saint Chaitanya (1486-1533). In Maharashtra Namdeo (born in the early fourteenth century) and Tukaram (seventeenth century) raised Bhakti above the level of a mere popular movement and exercised a deep influence on intellectual circles as well as on the common people.

These great and pure souls, some of whom are named above, tried to divest religion of its trappings, taking the pure spirit of Hindu...
mysticism and that of Islamic *Tasawwuf* and blending them into a religious movement which would unite the whole of India in love and devotion to one God. But unfortunately pure mystical experience is not enough to constitute a religion. So these religious movements soon crystallised into separate sects with all the adjuncts of positive religions. Still, this does not mean that their efforts were wasted. Though they could not free religion from the bonds of ceremony and ritual, they broke down the stagnation of religious consciousness and gave it a new movement, flow, freshness and life. They could not merge the currents of Hinduism and Islam on the surface, but they showed that the springs which feed them do meet somewhere below it. They created an atmosphere of religious harmony in India which was not to be seen anywhere else in the Middle Ages.

In aesthetic consciousness, which is deeply influenced by the physical environment, Hindus and Muslims came still closer to each other. Two of the fine arts, painting and music, had been subjected to severe limitations by Islam and generally did not prosper in Muslim countries. In India, during this period painting seems to have been discouraged by the Muslims but Indian music captured their hearts. Apart from the common people who were generally converts from Hinduism, many Muslim nobles and kings, specially those of Bijapur and Jaunpur, were very fond of music. Sultan Hussain Sharqui of Jaunpur is said to have invented a new musical style called ‘Khayal’ which became equally popular among Muslims and Hindus. ‘Dhrupad’ the classical Hindu style was much liked by Muslims of refined taste. Ibrahim Adil Shah, the king of Bijapur, was a great connoisseur of music and wrote a book on the subject, *Nauras*. The Muslim sufi adored music. In short, music was one of the forces which caused the hearts of Hindus and Muslims to beat in unison.

Architecture was the main field in which the Muslims gave expression to their love of beauty and which afforded the greatest opportunity for the Muslim and Hindu minds to influence each other. Among the rulers of India during this period the Muslim kings had the largest resources and could indulge their desire for fine buildings, but they generally had to employ Hindu architects and artisans. The conception of a building born in the mind of a Muslim king could not be unaffected by the Indian environment. Further, when it was designed and executed by a Hindu architect it was recast in the mould of the Hindu mind. So the process of blending, which in spite of the conscious efforts of some great mystics could not be carried out in the field of religion, was effected almost unconsciously in architecture. In the very first century of the Delhi Sultanate, a Hindu-Muslim style of architecture had come into being which was adopted in the fourteenth century with various degrees of modification by the independent Muslim kings of Bengal, Gujarat and the Deccan and also by the Hindu rajas of Bundelkhand and Rajasthan.

What now remains of the first great buildings of the Delhi Sultans, such as the Jama Masjid of Ajmer and the Quwatul-Islam mosque near Delhi, proves that from the very beginning the Islamic conceptions of architecture had to be adapted to the available resources. Fergusson has pointed out that the design of the Jama Masjid in Ajmer has been taken from the Jain temple on Mount Abu! As for the Quwatul-Islam mosque, it was actually built on the site of a temple and from its debris. The magnificent Qutab Minar, which was a part of this mosque is Islamic in its general conception but in its execution one can clearly see a resemblance to the pillars of the Gupta era and the *shikhars* of the medieval period. Moreover, the decorative work shows the direct influence of the north Indian Hindu and Jain styles. The images of human beings and animals have been avoided but scattered flower wreaths and baskets are eloquent testimony of the source from which they have come, and the way they have been harmoniously blended with the Arabic text in the Kufic style of calligraphy has produced a beautiful effect.

The Muslim states which had seceded from Delhi adopted this style with local modifications more in keeping with the Hindu styles. Specially in the buildings of Gujarat, all the elements except the dome and the pointed arch are Hindu. The mosque of Muhafiz Khan, built in the fifteenth century and the mausoleum of Abu Turab, built in the sixteenth, are fine examples of this style.

There was much more intimate intercourse and harmony of feelings and ideas between Hindus and Muslims in the smaller Muslim states which made themselves independent towards the end of this period than in the Delhi Sultanate. These states, specially those of Bengal and the Deccan were in a purely Hindu environment, far from the centre of Muslim power and in asserting their independence against Delhi had to depend on the goodwill and support of their Hindu subjects. In their small spheres their rulers were nearer to the people and understood and respected their feelings...
and desires. They generally abstained from displacing local chiefs and simply levied a tribute on them. They associated Hindus with the administration of the state, freely appointing them to small and big posts. So they were more successful in establishing contact with their Hindu subjects and winning their affection.

Among the kings in Bengal, Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493-1518) and his son Nasiruddin Nusrat Shah (1518-33) won great popularity by among other things patronising the Bengali language and enriching it with translations from Sanskrit. At the instance of Husain Shah, Maladhar Vasu translated the *Bhagwat Gita* into Bengali. The *Mahabharata* was translated under the patronage of Nusrat Shah. Another Muslim king had the *Ramayana* translated by Krittvi Das.

In the Deccan states, relations between the Muslim rulers and their Hindu subjects were even more intimate and cordial. The founder of the Bahmani kingdom had got his throne through the efforts of his Brahmin friend Gangu. Out of gratitude and love the king not only made him his Vizier but adopted the name Gangu as the nickname of the royal dynasty. During the Bahmani period Brahmins and other Hindus generally had a large share in the administration of the state. The five Muslim kingdoms which were built on the ruins of the Bahmani Sultanate continued this liberal policy. Their kings were patrons of the local languages and some of them were good Marathi and Urdu poets. Urdu was a dialect of western Hindi and came to the Deccan as the *lingua franca* in which the Muslim rulers and their Hindu and Muslim companions from the north conversed with one another. It was in the Deccan that it grew to be a literary language serving as an intellectual bridge between the local people and the immigrants (Hindu as well as Muslim) from the north.

But the greatest success in the effort to create harmony between Hindus and Muslims was attained during this period by Sultan Zainul-Abidin, the king of Kashmir. His name is honoured and loved not only by history but in legends known to every child in Kashmir. He was a great king in all respects but his greatest title to fame is that he was completely free from religious prejudice and did not make the slightest discrimination between Hindus and Muslims. When he ascended the throne in 1427 he called back the large numbers of Hindus, specially Brahmins, who had left Kashmir on account of the cruel treatment meted out to them by his predecessor Sikandar. He won their hearts through sincere regard and affection. State service was open to Hindus in Kashmir even before his time, but he put an end to all distinction of race and faith. He got many Sanskrit books translated into Persian so that Muslims could study the Hindu religion and the ancient Indian culture. He was a great patron of the arts and crafts, specially of music, and great musicians from distant lands were attracted to his court. When more is known about the history of Kashmir during this period it will probably be found that the task of creating a nation performed by Akbar had its prototype in the work done on a smaller scale by Zainul-Abidin in Kashmir about a hundred years before Akbar.
X. THE THIRD CONFLUENCE: THE HINDUSTANI CULTURE—1

During the Rising Phase of the Mughal Empire

In 1494 the ruler of Farghana, a small state in Turkestan, died and his son Babur succeeded him at the age of twelve. Babur was the descendant of two great conquerors. On the paternal side he was descended from Timur and on the maternal side from Chengis Khan. Inspired by their example he set out on an adventurous career from the very beginning of his rule. In 1504, after many ups and downs he conquered Kabul, made it his capital and began to dream of conquering India. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Delhi Sultanate had become a tribal state of the Afghans and their mutual feuds had sapped its strength. Ibrahim Lodi, the nominal Emperor, was hated by his nobles and his kinsmen. There could be no better opportunity for a foreign invader. So Babur opened his campaigns of conquest against India and in the fifth invasion in 1526 defeated and killed Ibrahim Lodi and occupied Delhi. Thus was founded the Mughal national Empire which under Babur’s grandson Akbar developed a healthy and predominantly harmonious secular culture. When Babur came to India he brought with him this Mughal-Islamic culture and, more valuable, the experience of blending cultural elements of different origins into one harmonious whole. Both Babur and his son Humayun had the breadth of vision and the imagination to set about the great task of creating political and cultural unity in India; but they had very brief reigns. It was given to Akbar who succeeded his father Humayun at the age of fourteen and ruled for fifty years to build up a new national state and national culture in India.

We have said that the rulers of the independent Muslim states in Bengal, the Deccan and Kashmir had brought Hindus and Muslims politically and culturally nearer each other and even the later Sultans of Delhi like Sikandar Lodi and Sher Shah Suri had adopted a more liberal attitude towards the Hindus. But this was an almost unconscious and, therefore, very slow process of adaptation to the needs of the day. During the 300 and odd years which had elapsed since the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, no Muslim ruler had the insight to look under the superficial current of history at the inner current striving to come to the surface, to see the soul of unity struggling to realise itself behind the outward diversity of Indian life. It required an Akbar, in whom the adventure and enterprise of a Chagtai, the large-hearted toleration of a Sufi and the liberal rationalism of a philosopher had combined, to produce the courage and strength to free India from the shackles of the past and strike the path of a new life.

The most important characteristic of the new Indian nation which Akbar brought into being was that it was based not on the community of religion but on the citizenship of the same state. The early emergence of this modern idea in India, where the modern age finally began as late as the middle of the nineteenth century is not as surprising as it appears at first glance. In Europe the need for making the state instead of religion the binding force in social life, arose after the Reformation which put an end to uniformity of religious belief; the idea originated much earlier in India when the Muslims
came with quite a different religion and the population was divided into two opposite, and at first hostile, camps. The state should have taken the place of religion as the basis of collective life soon after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate but the might of tradition was so great that this necessary change could not be brought about till the rise of the unorthodox Mughal dynasty. The latter had broken away from the tradition of acknowledging the sovereignty of an Arab Khalifa long before moving to India, and in India produced a ruler like Akbar with an original mind.

It may be asserted that Akbar who had formally declared himself to be the religious head of the Muslims of India should rather be called the founder of a religious state of the Muslims than of a secular national state. But every student of Indian history knows that Akbar’s claim to religious leadership was merely a political stratagem to break the power of the Ulema and make his own doubly strong.

That the concept of a secular and non-communal state was quite clear in Akbar’s mind is reflected in the following extract from his letter to Shah Abbas Safavi of Persia:

The various religious communities are Divine treasures entrusted to us by God. We must love them as such. It should be our firm faith that every religion is blessed by Him, and our earnest endeavour to enjoy the bliss of the ever-green garden of universal toleration. The Eternal King showers His favours on all men without distinction. Kings who are shadows of God should never give up this principle.

Abul-Fazl who was Akbar’s ‘friend, philosopher and guide’ writes in his Ain-I-Akbari:

The king should be above all religious differences and should see that religious considerations do not come in the way of the duty which he owes to every class and every community. Under his all-embracing care everyone should find peace and happiness so that the benefits conferred by the shadow of God are universal.

Akbar acted sincerely and consistently on this principle. As soon as he had the reins of government firmly in his hands, he abolished the pilgrim tax and the Jizya in 1563, thus putting an end to the invidious distinction between his Hindu and Muslim subjects. But even more significant was the edict issued in 1564 that no resident of India whatever his caste or creed, could be made a slave. Seen against the background of medieval Asia this was a solemn declaration of the fundamental policy that the state recognised the sanctity of individual liberty and the equality before law of all its citizens without any distinction of class or creed. Further, he threw all state services, civil as well as military, open to Hindus and appointed many of them to the highest posts in his realm. Matrimonial alliances between the Imperial family and some Rajput princes were an effective symbolic expression of the new spirit of brotherhood which Akbar wanted to create between Hindus and Muslims.

But we should be quite clear about the limitations of the nationhood and national state which Akbar’s policy brought into being. In the introduction to this book the minimum condition for nationhood was said to be the acceptance of a common constitution by all sections of the people living in a country. In Akbar’s time the sense of nationhood was still more limited. In those days the binding or cementing force in a political community or nation, in the absence of a written or unwritten constitution or common ideal of government, was the attachment of the people to the person of the king or his dynasty. Obviously the allegiance of all his subjects was enjoyed by that king alone who was on the whole good and just to all without distinction, and was shown to his successors only as long as they followed this general policy. At that time the feeling of a common nationhood was not as deep and lasting as in these days of more or less permanent constitutions expressing the general will of the people.

It seems that Akbar was quite conscious that the solidarity of the state founded by him depended on the degree of attachment of the people to the person of the king. That was why he laid much more emphasis on direct contact with the people than any Muslim king had ever thought of doing. His practice of giving darshan (public audience) to the masses by sitting in the balcony of his palace revived the memory of old Indian rajas and won the hearts of his subjects.

Other important traditions of the old Indian state were revived by the Mughal state under Akbar. Public charity and moral reform, which the Delhi Sultanate had handled only perfunctorily in the limited field of Muslim society, were now carried on systematically...
NATIONAL CULTURE OF INDIA

and their scope extended to cover all citizens without distinction. Hindu pundits and sadhus were supported by the state more or less like Muslim Ulama and Figaras (learned men and ascetics) and in many cases mandirs were given grants like masjids by Mughal Emperors. Akbar imposed restrictions on drinking, gambling and prostitution equally on all sections of the people. At the risk of being accused of interference with religion he even put down some specifically Hindu customs like Sati (the burning alive of widows).

Akbar's great-grandson Aurangzeb made the unsuccessful attempt to turn this secular Mughal state into a Muslim religious state, with the result that it was shaken to its very foundations and after his death reduced to a shadow of the great empire that it had been for a hundred years.

The task of building a national culture round the Mughal state which was in a limited sense a national state, was also begun by Akbar and continued with an interruption during the reign of Aurangzeb, to the end of this period. As we have seen in the preceding chapter the wide gulf between Hindus and Muslims in the early period of the Delhi Sultanate had been gradually bridged by many forces including the spirit of love and harmony fostered by Hindu Bhakts and Muslim Sufis, and the two communities had begun to influence each other's cultural life specially in the aesthetic field. The process of the blending of Mughal-Islamic or rather Iranian-Islamic culture with Hindu culture which had been automatically going on was quickened by the conscious and to some extent planned efforts of Akbar. This resulted in the creation of a common culture centred on the court but spread far and wide throughout the Mughal dominions.

The root of a common culture is always a common language. In the thirteenth century the mixture of Persian with a dialect of western Hindi spoken in and around Delhi had produced a lingua franca known as Hindavi, Hindi or Hindustani, which later on came to be called Urdu. This was now the general medium of intercourse between Hindus and Muslims but had not yet acquired the status of a literary language except in the Deccan. In northern India Persian had been the court language as well as the language of literary expression and conversation among the Muslims. Hindus in government service had started learning Persian during the reign of Sikandar Lodí but, as state accounts were still kept in Hindi, it was not compulsory for Hindu employees to learn Persian. Now Todar Mal, who was Akbar's Finance Minister, ordered that all accounts throughout the Empire be kept in Persian and all correspondence be carried on in the same language, with the result that all Hindus in the service of the state, whose number was now very large, learnt Persian. Moreover, Hindu noblemen and Rajput chiefs who now had daily contact with the Emperor in open court as well as in private audiences and who accompanied him in hunting-parties and military expeditions, found adequate knowledge of Persian indispensable. So with the increasing contact between the Emperor and his Hindu subjects the Persian language became more popular among the Hindus. But the direct and most effective cause of Persian becoming the common language of Hindus and Muslims was that perhaps for the first time in the history of India, Akbar opened a large number of government schools in which Hindu and Muslim children were taught together through the medium of Persian.

This system of common education for all citizens of the state helped not only in creating the community of language but also that of ideas. Apart from religious schools which were denominational, all secular schools had the same syllabus for all people without distinction of caste or creed. According to Abul Fazl this syllabus comprised: Persian literature, composition and calligraphy as general subjects, and ethics, arithmetic, book-keeping and office work, agriculture, mensuration, geometry, astrology, domestic economy, political science, medicine, logic, physics, mathematics and history divided into grades and compartments. The policy of having common schools with a purely secular syllabus was specially designed to create a favourable intellectual atmosphere for national unity.

This educational policy promoted cultural understanding on a higher level. Hindu and Muslim scholars were encouraged to translate standard works from Sanskrit into Persian and to write books on past and contemporary history.

To take translation first. The Atharva Veda and Ramayana were rendered into Persian by Mulla Abdul Qadir Badaoni in cooperation with a Hindu pundit. Later, several translations of the Ramayana were made in Persian prose and poetry by Hindus. The Mahabharata was translated by a board of Hindu and Muslim scholars of which Mulla Abdul Qadir was a member. The great poet Faizi rendered Litanai, the classical work on mathematics into Persian. Other Sanskrit books on mathematics and the natural sciences were rendered into Persian by Hindu translators. During the reign of Shahjehan,
Prince Dara Shikoh who was passionately interested in Hindu philosophy and mysticism, made the invaluable treasures of Hindu thought, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagwad Gita* and *Yoga Vashistha* available to Muslim readers in Persian, and himself wrote a book, *Majmu-ul-Bahrain* (The Meeting Place of Two Oceans) which is a comparative study of Hindu and Muslim mystic philosophy.

In history, the works of Hindu writers Brindaban Das, Sujan Rai, Chandra Bhan Brahman, Bhim Sen and Ishar Das are no less important than those of Abu! Fazl, Abdul Qadir Badaoni, Khafi Khan and other well-known Muslim historians of the period. The study of these books shows that, apart from personal idiosyncrasies, there is a remarkable similarity in the point of view and the way of presentation of Hindu and Muslim historians. They have a common attachment to the Mughal state, not wholly based on personal interest, and have made a sincere effort to present a true and fairly objective picture of the period; their writings concentrate on the king as the central figure but have occasional revealing touches about social conditions and cultural life.

Persian poetry was also cultivated by Hindus along with Muslims. Mirza Manohar Tausani, Chandra Bhan Brahman, Banwari Lal Wali, though not to be classed with the great masters Faizi, Urfi, Naziri, Kalim and Qusdi, were better poets than many Muslim contemporaries who could claim Persian as their mother tongue. Chandra Bhan Brahman's best verses are a fine example of how a Hindu could, in a short time and to an astonishing degree not only make the Persian language but the spirit of Persian poetry his own. It was a period of transition for Persian poetry in India. The graceful classical simplicity of Khusrav was gradually giving place to a romantic intensity of emotion and uncurbed flights of imagination reflected in Urfi’s works. The verses of Hindu poets are also marked by this dawning romanticism.

As for letter-writing as a literary art, it had become the preserve of Hindu writers. With the exceptions of Abu! Fazl and Alamgir (Aurangzeb) who are regarded as masters of Persian prose, no Muslim writer in this particular branch of literature could be compared to Munshi Harkaran, Chandra Bhan Brahman, Munshi Madho Ram, Munshi Nihal Chand and Munshi Avadhde Raj. Two styles of literary letter-writing were current during the period—the simple direct and forceful style of Alamgir, reminiscent of the early heroic life of the Mughals and the heavy academic, magniloquent style of Abul Fazl reflecting the complexity and grandeur of the Imperial Court. Among Hindu writers, Chandra Bhan was an exponent of the first and Madho Ram of the second style. As long as letter-writing in Persian was in fashion in India, the published collections of the letters of Chandra Bhan and Madho Ram served as models for Hindu and Muslim writers. Though practical considerations led Akbar to make Persian the court as well as common literary language of the state, he did not neglect the promotion of the indigenous tongues: Braj Bhasha, Avadhi, etc., known under the generic name Hindi. Like other local languages these had begun to develop before Akbar’s time. Avadhi had produced a great poet, Malik Mohammad Jayasi, the author of *Padmavat*, during the reign of Sher Shah. Under Akbar the elan generated by national consciousness favoured the growth of Hindi which made great progress through the joint effort of Hindus and Muslims. Surdas, the famous bard of Krishna Bhakti was a Hindi poet of a high order. The collection of his songs inspired by love and devotion to Sri Krishna is known as *Sur Sagar*. Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan, a pillar of Akbar’s court, was himself a good Hindi poet and a great patron of Hindi poetry. Other Hindi poets of Akbar’s court were Ganga, Nawi and the favourite friend of the Emperor, Birbal. Akbar himself is said to have composed verses in Hindi. Later, Keshav Das, Bhari, Dev, and Ras Khan (a Muslim) carried Hindi poetry to great heights. Bhushan wrote epics to immortalise the glory of Shivaji and Chataral.

In architecture the process of blending Hindu and Muslim elements had already begun in the earlier period of the Delhi Sultanate but its consummation in a perfectly harmonious style required the originality of mind and breadth of vision of the Mughal Emperors. Babur and Humayun had brought with them a purely Persian taste in architecture as well as Persian architects. The few buildings of their times which are extant, e.g. the mosques at Panipat and Sambhal built by Babur and that at Fatehabad, Hisar built by Humayun are in the style of the medieval buildings of Isfahan in Persia. So is the best architectural achievement of Akbar’s early reign, Humayun’s tomb in Delhi, designed by the Persian architect Mirza Inayatullah. But later on, Akbar attempted in this field as in the political and intellectual, a synthesis of the Turco-Persian Muslim conceptions with the Hindu-Indian and thus created the graceful Mughal style, pleasing to the eye and restful to the mind. The general design of the Jama Masjid in Fatehpur Sikri is taken from that in Isfahan; its
imposing lofty gate is characteristic of the classical simplicity of medieval Persia. But its domes reveal the influence of the Jain style and so do the domes of the mosques on Mount Abu. In Jehangir’s time the Hindu influence seems to have increased. The tomb of Akbar at Sikandra shows, in spite of its Muslim arches and domes, the general pattern of Buddhist viharas or of the rathas of Mahabalipuram.

During the reign of Shahjehan, which carried Mughal architecture to the height of perfection, architects were brought from Persia, and other countries and a fresh wave of foreign influences tended to weaken the indigenous Hindu style. But the latter had by that time so completely fused itself into what was called the Mughal style that it was impossible to resolve this organic whole into its constituents. A revolutionary step taken by Shahjehan was the use of marble on a large scale. The handling of this soft and fine stone required great care, restraint, skill and delicacy of touch so that not only the detailed work but the general design of buildings had to be considerably modified. To bring out the full luminous quality of the marble it was necessary that the floral work should be fine and delicate and large marginal surfaces should be left blank.

The ornamental effect was largely achieved by beautiful designs worked in a mosaic of multicoloured stones. Arches could now be cut in various geometrical shapes and pillars fashioned in novel and subtle designs. Domes could be made symmetrical with narrow delicate necks. Both in the designs of the buildings and in the ornamental work, new, fine and beautiful effects were produced with curved linis. In short, the use of marble made it possible for the architect’s work to compete with that of the painter in grace and delicacy and the Mughal architecture acquired new qualities which neither the Persian nor the old Indian styles had ever possessed. The cooperation of the Indian mind with the Persian and the bold experiment with Indian material created a new style in which the various elements are so completely blended into a harmonious whole that now their analysis into Indian and foreign, even if it were possible would make no sense. The ‘dream in marble’ known as the Ta’ Mahal, whether it was built by an architect from Shiraz or Italy, remains a conception from the mind of an Indian king, a memorial to Indian love, built in Indian marble and the embodiment of the purity, peace and pathos of the Indian soul.

Painting also developed a new style during this period through

the blending of the Turco-Iranian with the old Indian style combining the charms of both. As said earlier, religious restrictions did not allow painting to flourish at the Muslim court during the Delhi Sultanate. But art was developed by Hindu painters and mostly used to illustrate books. The traditions of Ajanta had changed with the times giving place in India to different medieval Indian styles, such as the Rajput style which had made great progress under the patronage of the Rajput courts. The subjects of the Indian painters were often taken from Hindu epic mythology—the stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the legends about Sri Krishna, the personifications of musical tunes (ragas and raginis)—but rarely from the lives of the common people. Their paintings present nature, in its myriad moods and colours simply but effectively. Complex and abstract motifs were avoided.

The descendants of Timur were great lovers of painting even before they came to India. It was under their patronage that Persian art had gradually developed, and the Herat school of painting reached perfection in the art of the great master Bihzad. Mir Syed Ali and Khawaja Abdus Samad Shirazi, the pupils of Bihzad, came to India with Humayun. Their pictures show some Indian influence but the Turco-Iranian element prevails. Akbar who was an admirer of the realistic and forceful simplicity of the Hindu style wanted a new style to be created by combining the simplicity of the Hindu and the delicacy of the Persian schools. So he founded something like an academy of painting at his court where Indian and Persian artists worked together. The Persian masters Syed Ali and Abdus Samad initiated their young pupils, mostly Hindus, into the intricacies of Persian drawing and colouring. For theoretical education a library was provided which had a collection of books on art and the masterpieces of old artists. Akbar himself visited the academy very frequently to see the artists at work. Of the products of this school the most famous are Daswant, Farrukh Beg, Basavan and Sanvala. They followed the old Indian custom of illustrating secular and not religious books. In the beginning their style was like its Persian model—ornate, elaborate and stiff, but gradually it acquired the liveliness, flow and vigour of the Indian style, so that by the end of Akbar’s and the beginning of Jehangir’s reign an independent Mughal style had developed.

Jehangir was not only a patron of art but was himself an artist and during his time Mughal painting reached its zenith. Farrukh
Beg, Nadir, Mohammad Murad, Abul Hasan, Mansur, Bishen Das, Manohar and Daulat were the foremost artists of this period. Their scope had now extended far beyond the illustration of old tales and legends and included actual battles, hunting, love, the courts of kings, Sufi monasteries, pictures of men, animals, plants and flowers—in short all aspects of human life and nature which interested the Emperor and his nobles.

Shahjehan was less interested in painting than in architecture. Still, some of the princes and nobles patronised the art. But though painting had not lost its popularity, it had begun earlier than the other arts to show signs of degeneration which seems almost an inevitable result of excessive wealth and luxury. More emphasis was laid on superficial embellishment and decoration than on deeper artistic qualities. No painting was regarded as complete without a broad gilt border covered with fine, elaborate decorative work. Anup Chitra, Chitramani, Faqirullah and Hashim Ali are the outstanding artists of the time of Shahjehan but none of them can be ranked with Mansur, Abul Hasan and Manohar. Aurangzeb's religious austerity proved very discouraging to the art of painting and after him it deteriorated with the decline of the Mughal Empire.

As far as music is concerned, a perfect harmony of taste and sentiment between Hindus and Muslims had already developed during the period of the Delhi Sultanate at the courts of the smaller independent states and the monasteries of the Sufis. So the Mughals found a common or national musical art an accomplished fact and had nothing more to do than to foster and promote it through their generous patronage. Music is the medium in which the deepest human feeling and experience express themselves without the help of intellectual concepts. The community of musical feeling which was evident among Indians of all castes and creeds showed that the hearts of the people of India were now beating in unison and the unity of a fundamental cultural consciousness as a permanent basis for a common culture was assured.

As for uniformity in general social life—in customs and manners, food and dress, enjoyments and amusements—which developed during this period, it is now so evident in the daily life of millions of Hindu and Muslim families that the theme needs no elaboration here.

XI. THE HINDUSTANI CULTURE—2

Politically the Mughal Empire reached the height of its glory during the first half of Aurangzeb's reign and then the process of decline began. Aurangzeb's wars of conquest in the Deccan emptied the treasury. His narrow-minded policy alienated the Rajputs, who had been the most loyal friends of the Empire since the time of Akbar, and raised three other hostile forces—the Sikhs, the Marathas and the Jats. As soon as the powerful personality of Aurangzeb disappeared from the scene, these four agencies, specially the Marathas, shook the foundations of the Empire from one end to the other. At the Mughal court the rivalries among the Turanian, Persian and Afghan parties weakened the central government to such a degree that provincial governors became practically independent. Foreign invasions from the north-west, which the power and prestige of the Mughal Empire had prevented for about two centuries, began anew. European traders specially the East India Company of London who had come to India during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries exploited the unrest in the country to acquire partly by conquest and partly by political intrigues, large territories in India and began to play an important role in Indian politics.

Naturally, Hindustani culture reflected the degeneration which had set in, but it continued to occupy the position of the common culture of India and even increased its sphere of influence. A new factor had, however, emerged in the cultural life of the country—the influence of Western culture through European and specially British traders, which, imperceptibly at first, began to show itself in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The Hindustani culture which had developed during the reign of Akbar and his successors was essentially bound up with the Mughal Empire but its decay was slower than that of the Empire and even during the period of political disintegration it continued to be the
connecting link between different cultural groups and regions. No doubt it had lost its freshness, force and vitality and begun to show signs of stagnation or rather deterioration, but the sphere of its influence became wide. It worked from new centres like Lucknow, Hyderabad and Murshidabad, and served as the common culture of large sections of the people throughout the country till the cataclysm of 1857 dealt a death-blow from which it never recovered.

The Persian language, which was its medium of expression, spread during this period to new regions. Not only in the shrunken Mughal dominions but also in the virtually independent states of the Deccan, Bengal and Oudh, Persian was used in government offices where very large numbers of employees were Hindus. The department requiring special literary skill known as the Dar-ul-Insha (secretariat) was predominantly manned by Hindus, so much so that in the eighteenth century the word ‘Munshi’ had acquired the special sense of a Hindu who could write good Persian. Even in Hindu states like the Maratha Empire, which had modelled its administration on the Mughal Empire, the official language was Persian. The East India Company had Persian as the official language till 1819 when it was declared to have been replaced by English. But in practice office work was done in Persian till long after that date. For literary and scientific purposes educated Hindus as well as Muslims used Persian and even ordinary correspondence was carried on in that language.

From the point of view of literary and scientific progress it was a disappointing period. Though the number of books written was by no means less than in the preceding period, their general level was much lower. The creative impulse as well as the spirit of enquiry was almost exhausted. The highest objective of scholars was now to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors and to preserve what they had left behind. Their main activities were to compile dictionaries or omnibus lives and anthologies of poets. In the latter, Hindu writers had an equal and in the former a larger share than Muslim writers. Among the anthologists the best known are Ghulam Ali Azad and Lachmi Narayan Shafiq and among lexicographers Tekchand, the compiler of Bahar-i-Ajam, Anand Ram Mukhlys of Mirai-ul-Istilah and Sirajuddin Khan Arzu of Siraj-ul-Lughat.

The numerous collections of literary epistles in Persian written in this period are almost all by Hindu Munshis. Their command over a once foreign language is astonishing. That there are deviations from the Iranian idiom is natural and excusable. What is really unfortunate is that they follow the artificial and bombastic style of Madho Ram instead of the simple, chaste and racy diction of Brahman or Alamgir.

History and biography show the same increase in quantity and deterioration in quality. Yet there are some honourable exceptions like the historical writings of Ghulam Ali Azad, Lachmi Narain Shafiq and the Siyar-ul-Muta-akhhhirin of Ghulam Hussain. Works on philosophy, astrology, astronomy, mathematics and the other sciences sometimes show erudition but seldom originality. In many fields the contribution of Hindus is as important as that of Muslims. The numerous translations from Sanskrit into Persian were done exclusively by Hindus.

In pure literature the glut of weird, extravagant romances which take the place of the epics of the time of Akbar reflect the degenerations of taste. The sensuous, fantastic imagination of the people eager to escape from the realities of life had to be catered to by ingenious elegant nonsense like the Bostan-i-Khayyal. The Hindus seem to have been less infected by this unhealthy trend as they wrote comparatively few stories and most of these were historical tales or folktales. The poetry of the period is also a sad comment on the intellectual and aesthetic decay which had set in. The romanticism of Urfi and Naziri had lacked simplicity and realistic substance, but at least it had the force of passion and the freshness of imagination. Now Bedil carried the subtlety of conceit and the extravagance of fantasy to such extremes that poetry was reduced to a kind of intellectual gymnastics. But it must be pointed out that though the generality of Hindu and Muslim poets followed Bedil, there were a few like his own pupil Anand Ram Mukhlys, and masters like Azad, Arzu and Shafiq who did not succumb to the prevailing fashion.

It was in this period that Urdu made rapid progress and became, at least in the greater part of northern India and the Deccan, a rival to Persian as a literary language. The East India Company paid tribute to its popularity by including it, along with English and the Western sciences, in the syllabus prescribed for Fort William College, which was set up for the education of its civil servants. Urdu writers were employed to write books of general interest and made translations from Arabic and Sanskrit in a simple and chaste language
which was named Hindustani. Some of these books were written in Devanagari characters using a few Sanskrit words instead of the more difficult Arabic and Persian ones. This helped in standardising high Hindi. Though the interest that the East India Company had taken in Urdu did not last long and the language of its administration continued to be Persian till finally replaced by English, the impetus which Urdu had received carried it forward by its own dynamic power so that it was made, along with English, the official language in the north-west provinces comprising the present U.P., a part of the Punjab as well as in many autonomous states.

Architecture and the fine arts also suffered from the decline of the Mughal Empire. The court of Delhi, a prey to political intrigue and struggle, had neither the inclination nor the resources to extend its patronage to the arts. The smaller independent states did in their small way encourage them, but they could not inspire artists to do anything more than copy the old masters.

No great architecture could be produced during this period but the modest palaces, tombs, places of worship which were built show the general characteristics of the Mughal or Hindustani style. The palaces of the Rao of Jamnagar and the Raja of Chatarpur, the memorials to Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore, Maharao Umrid Singh in Kotah and Maharaja Bakhtawar Singh in Alwar, the Visheshwar Mandir in Banaras and the Golden Temple in Amritsar, are all examples of this. Even the private residences of Hindu and Muslim noblemen which escaped the ravages of time have exactly the same designs as the houses built during the reign of Shahjehan.

In painting, beside the proper Mughal style which flourished at the courts of Oudh and Hyderabad, the Jaipur style, and those prevalent in Jammu and several states of the Punjab hills, which were considerably influenced by it, continued to develop. In music the classical Hindu and new, mixed styles which had developed during the Delhi and Mughal Sultanates, were equally cultivated by the Hindu and Muslim states, and this art continued to give eloquent proof of the inner harmony of the Indian mind in spite of all the outward signs of discord.

The general uniformity in social life, food, dress, customs and manners which the Hindustani culture had produced among upper class Hindus and Muslims, continued more or less undisturbed till the end of this period. Accounts of Indian life written by British or other Europeans refer to a common Hindustani culture along with regional and sectional cultures. Much of the imposing super-structure built during the time of Akbar and his immediate successors was destroyed but the foundations were still intact.

Whatever cultural influence the British had on Indian life during the period began after 1773, when the functions of government exercised by the East India Company came under the general control of the British Parliament and the Company began gradually to acquire the character of a civilised government; up to then it had been no better than a band of ruthless commercial brigands to whom culture was an unknown commodity. Some of the unjustified hatred against the British which the Indians entertained until Mahatma Gandhi dispelled it through his message of love was perhaps a psychological survival of the terrible days of political chaos when the East India Company had a free hand to suck the blood of the helpless people.

Under the first Governor-General, Warren Hastings, the Company’s administration was completely overhauled and the arrival of a better type of civil servant made cultural contact between the Indians and British possible. Warren Hastings himself was an enlightened, broad-minded and cultured man. He was the first British administrator to feel that his countrymen should know something of the culture of a land of which fortune had made them rulers and should help in preserving and promoting it. At his instance Ghulam Hussein wrote the Siyar-ul-Muta-akhkhirin which is the most authoritative history of the eighteenth century. Warren Hastings not only had a thorough knowledge of English and the European classics but also knew Sanskrit and Persian. He so enjoyed the delicacy and sweetness of the Persian language that he once wrote to a friend suggesting that Persian be included in the syllabus of Oxford University and made part of the education of an English gentleman. He had the Muslim and Hindu religious laws codified and translated into English with the help of maulvis and pundits. Under his patronage the Calcutta Madrasah was established in 1781 and the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal for research in Oriental studies in 1784, under the presidency of Sir William Jones.

The establishment of the Calcutta Madrasah and the Banaras Sanskrit College was the first step taken by the East India Company to encourage education in the area under its administration. After
that it set up Fort William College for the training of its civil servants but paid no attention to public education for some time. In 1813, under the renewed charter which the Company received from the British Parliament, it was bound to spend Rs 1,00,000 every year on public education, but for the next ten years nothing was done as the controversy about whether this amount was to be spent on Oriental education or on the teaching of English and the Western sciences, could not be settled. In 1823 the Company's administration decided to make official provisions only for Oriental education. So a committee on public instruction was set up to establish colleges for the teaching of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit, to publish textbooks and to translate books on the modern sciences into English into the Oriental languages. Under this scheme two new institutions, Agra College and Delhi College, were set up.

But this scheme met with little success. Many orthodox Indians hesitated to send their children to government colleges as they were afraid of undesirable influences on their religious ideas. As for those who were prepared to have their sons educated, they were dominated by the motive of securing government service for them and thought that the government colleges which did not teach English would not serve their purpose. They had, with the help of a noble-minded Englishman, David Hare, already established Hindoo College (1817) in which English was taught along with Persian and Bengali. Now Babu Gour Mohun Audrey set up another institution of the same type, the Oriental Seminary. These two institutions were packed to capacity while very few students attended the Oriental colleges. In 1829, when English was declared the official language, the Oriental colleges received a further setback. In 1835 the old controversy was again revived and Lord Macaulay, the chairman of the Committee on Public Instruction wrote his famous note which is a remarkable achievement of brilliant advocacy, sparkling rhetoric, crass ignorance of Oriental culture and extreme narrow-mindedness. However, the Governor-General laid down what proved to be the permanent educational policy of the British in India, that the Government would hence-forward promote the learning of the modern sciences and that English would not only be a compulsory subject in schools and colleges but the medium of instruction. The Company's administration did not concern itself at all with primary education in spite of the fact that many old Maktabs had been closed down during the period of political unrest and economic distress. Christian missionaries and some socially conscious Indians opened a few primary schools in the area round Calcutta but these did not meet even a fraction of the general need. Industrial and vocational education was completely neglected, probably under the general policy of suppressing native handicrafts and industries. Medical education, however, did receive some attention and in addition to the medical schools in Calcutta (1807) in which the medium of instruction was Hindustani, the Calcutta Medical College (1835) and the Bombay Grant Medical College (1845) were established with English as the medium of instruction.

So we see that the educational activity of the British during this period was so limited and unorganised that it could not have any influence worth mentioning on the cultural life of India.

Much more important as an educative influence during this period than the establishment of a few colleges was the introduction of the printing press and newspapers. Printing in English had probably been started soon after the coming of the British but the first newspaper appeared in Calcutta in English in 1760 under the title Hick's Gazetteer. Among the Indian languages Bengali was the first to have a newspaper, The Bengal Samachar in 1816. By the end of this period a number of newspapers in English and in the principal Indian languages appeared, helping to widen the range of information of the Indian people and occasionally introducing new ideas.

As far as the fine arts are concerned the contribution of the Company's Government and Anglo-Indian society of the period seems to have been very meagre. The commercial mentality of the bulk of this society had no other values than material profit and physical pleasure. Aesthetic sense was confined to a small circle of the better type of civil servants who could not do more than adorn their drawing-rooms with copies and occasionally an original painting of Sir Joshua Reynolds or Northcote. Some Indian princes, specially those of Oudh, occasionally commissioned European artists to paint pictures for them, but this was not enough to give the necessary impetus to the progress of art in India. Amateur music, dance and drama were cultivated in Anglo-Indian society but they could not possibly be of a high level. The court theatre of Wajid Ali Shah, the Nawab of Oudh probably followed the stage arrangements of the English theatre.
In architecture till the beginning of the nineteenth century the East India Company continued to copy the Portuguese style which was current in the European settlements in India. In the second half of that century many public buildings were modelled by English engineers on the buildings of London and other English cities built in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The front of the Calcutta cathedral (completed in 1787), is said to have been copied from St Stephen's Church at Walbrook, designed by the famous English architect Wren. Similarly, Government House (completed in 1802) is modelled on Keddleston Hall in Derbyshire. Most of the buildings of the first half of the nineteenth century are poor copies of the Renaissance style, with classical frontages, spacious verandas, low rows of columns and gigantic porticos. Occasionally Indians also built their houses in this style but the blending of the European and Indian styles had not yet taken place. However, the Lucknow buildings of the Asaf-ud-daulah period, specially the Imam Bara and Rumi Darwazah, owe their simple and well-proportioned design to the influence of Western architecture.

But the real and significant influence on Indian life was exercised by the technical aspect of Western civilisation. Modern armaments and methods of military organisation which helped the British gain political domination in India made a deep impression and every Indian state acquired them as far as its resources allowed. Steamship service which started in 1823 or 1824 made travel by sea easier and encouraged Indians to visit foreign lands, and this helped them to broaden their views. Towards the end of this period gaslight, the railways and telegraph were introduced into the country. The first railway line was opened between Bombay and Thana in 1853 and between Calcutta and Raniganj in 1855. A telegraph line began to operate between Calcutta and Bombay, Madras and Attock in 1854.

In short, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century Western culture had begun to exercise some influence in a limited area on a certain section of Indians, but it was not enough to bring about any appreciable change in the general cultural life of the country. The people of India had no opportunity yet to look into the spirit of Western culture. What they had seen of it was brought by Christian missionaries or trading rulers and it appeared to them dangerous for their religion, their political freedom and their economic welfare. So their attitude to Western culture was much the same as to the political and economic domination of the British and their intense aversion to this culture was one of the causes of the Revolt of 1857.