By K. M. Panikkar

HINDU SOCIETY AT CROSS ROADS
THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF DIPLOMACY
THE STATE AND THE CITIZEN
PROBLEMS OF INDIAN DEFENCE
IN DEFENCE OF LIBERALISM (In Press)

A SURVEY OF INDIAN HISTORY

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Kashmir to Cape Comorin, the worship of Shiva, Vishnu and the Devi prevailed and the background of philosophy accepted without question the main doctrines of Paramatma, Jivatma, Maya and re-incarnation in a society organised on the basis of caste and the Dharmasastras.

CHAPTER XII

INDIA ON THE EVE OF MUSLIM CONTACT

The most remarkable fact which has escaped the notice of historians is that for over five hundred years, that is, from Toramana to Mahmud of Ghazni, India was free from the threat of external aggression. Except for Sind, which was occupied by the Khalifs of Baghdad whose authority was confined to that inhospitable desert land, India enjoyed unbroken immunity from external troubles. No part of the known world has for so long a period been free from threats of invasion. The miseries to which the north-western areas and occasionally the Gangetic valley had been subjected by the Kushans, Sakas and Huns were not only forgotten, but people lived under a facile feeling that there was no question of their country being ever invaded. Eternal vigilance which is the price of freedom had weakened to a vanishing point and the Hindus of the seventh to the eleventh centuries had, as a result, lost completely the sense of patriotism and national honour which grows up only under the stimulus of danger from outside. The author of Vishnu Purana sang the glory of Bharata Varsha because at that time Bharata Varsha was something to be defended and fought for. To the authors of the period that followed Bana it meant but little for even the themes of literature had become parochial instead of the birth of the war-god, or the fight of Arjuna with Siva.

Another consequence of the absence of any external threat was the consuming arrogance of the Indian people. As Alberuni, surely the most observant scholar who studied Indian things, notes: "The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs." . . . "If they travelled and mixed with other nations they would soon change their mind," he adds, "for their ancestors were not so narrow-minded as the present generations." And he quotes from Varahamihira who says that Yavanas, though impure, should be honoured. Varahamihira wrote at a time when there was a wholesome fear of foreigners but the five centuries of security had destroyed it. Alberuni also alludes to the extremes reserve of
Indian scholars who refused to discuss science or literature. Surely much must have changed in the Indian of the eleventh century from the time when Yuan-Chwang, I Tsing and thousands of scholars wandered all over the country and were received with open arms. The foreigner was not looked down upon in the seventh century, and the arrogance of the Indian literati is not commented upon by any Chinese student.

A further comment of Alberuni is also worth noting. He observes that the Hindus did “not desire that a thing which has once been polluted should be purified and thus recovered.” Obviously this is very different from the time when even Huns could become Hindus and Greeks could be accepted into the Hindu fold as Hellenoros was, as worshippers of Vishnu. Hinduism had, through lack of contact which shook its system, crystallised a leaden outer crust which enveloped its gold.

There is nothing more dangerous for a country than the feeling that it was ordained by God to remain safe: that no foreigner could reach it. Such a feeling of peace will necessarily weaken the springs of national greatness, the rigidity of discipline, the desire to work together for upholding what is of value, the subordination of material interests to the idea of general good. This is what seems to have happened during the long period between the Huns and Mahmud of Ghazni.

Also it is important to realise that during this period India was isolated from the rest of the world. The overland contact with China had dried up as a result of changed political conditions in Central Asia. The sea route was controlled by the naval power of the Sailendra monarchs whose position astride the Straits of Malacca, while it gave them mastery of the seas, made free communications with China dependent on their good will. No known country was isolated from the rest of the world for so long a time as India was for three hundred years.

Completely insular in ideas, without any knowledge of what was happening in the rest of the world, the Indian people ceased to grow. Civilisation became decadent and inbred for lack of fertilising contacts with dissimilar cultures. Society became static and the systematisation of previous ages, which were more academic than real at the time of their conception like Chaturvarna—the four castes—and food and drink taboos came to be accepted as divine regulations and conformed to with a rigidity which would have surprised Manu and Yajnavalkya.

This decadence was visible in every sphere. In literature even Bana evidences a decay of taste which in later authors like Magha and Harsha became more marked. The kavya style degenerated into a vain parade of futile learning, while the restraint, poise and delicacy of Kalidasa gave place to extravagance in concit and artificialities in language which make the later kavya literature a unique creation of futility like Chinese puzzles and crossword competitions. The moral tone also degenerated so that long and sensuous descriptions of debaucheries were considered necessary even in the kavyas of poets of known personal purity. The position is no better in architecture. After the great impetus which created the Ellora, Khajuraho and Bhuvaneshwar temples in northern India, the taste seems to have degenerated and in place of the magnificent sculptures of the earlier temples we have the representation on stone of moral perversities which can only be accounted for by the utter demoralisation of the higher classes. In religion also, this degeneration was apparent. The great reforms of Sankara provided the moral strength which enabled Hinduism to survive as it provided the Hindus with a higher thought and Hinduism with a common philosophical background. He provided Hinduism with an enduring body of philosophic doctrines but he was unable to reform the grave evils which had crept into the practice of religion. The Left-hand Marga had taken deep roots and a nursery for it existed at Vikramasila, Kashmir and Bengal. The following incident which took place in the Vikramasila university will show how deep was the cancer that had eaten into the vitals of national life. A priest studying at the university was discovered with a bottle of wine. When asked, he stated that it was given to him by a nun whom he used to meet. The authorities of the university decided to take disciplinary action but on this the members of the university split into two factions and great troubles followed.

It was in fact the age of the Guhya Samaja—the secret congregation—which is claimed to be one of the most sacred books of the Buddhist Tantrics. In this amazing book Buddha is represented in acts of continuous debauchery with angels. The discipline of the Vinaya was deliberately set at nought in this book which is held to be canonical by the practitioners of tantra. Everything was permitted in this worship, flesh, fish, wine and women. Even human sacrifice was allowed. One passage would seem even to indicate that human flesh was also used in worship and consumed as Mahaprasada. Blood of men along with wine was also used.

The establishment of the great Mutt was one of the achievements of Sankara. The reorganisation of the Sanyasai Orders was also
undertaken by the great reformer. The Dasanamis, or the Ten Orders, trace their succession to him. The objects of both these reforms were excellent. The four great Mutts were founded with the object of providing learned teachers of religion who would watch over orthodoxy. The Sanyasis were no doubt meant to carry the message to the homes of all. For a short time the tradition of the great Master inspired these organisations. Soon, however, especially after the disappearance of Buddhism, the Mutts became centres of luxury like the great abbeys and the Sankaracharyas who presided over them assumed pontifical dignities. The heads of the smaller Mutts became even grossly licentious as in works like Kshemendra’s Narmamala they are held up to ridicule for their conduct. The Sanyasis became a burden on society. Their numbers increased; superstition fed them; common people paid them reverence. With the majority it became an easy method of life. This of course does not mean that there were not many genuinely holy men among the Sanyasis, then or at any other time in India. But the great majority of them were worthless men who concealed their preference for an indolent life under ochre-coloured robes.

The growth of the Devadasi system which can also be traced to this period shows the degradation to which even religion had fallen. In fact, side by side with the highest religious speculation Hinduism had always given shelter to the strangest practices. They existed in the time of Buddha; they flourished in the time of Sankara. The Pasupatins, the Kapalikas and the worshippers of every form of religion had their temples, all equally orthodox and the social validity of practices attaching to them was never called into question or taken into consideration.

The development of what has been called temple prostitution had the effect of loosening moral codes. Books like Samaya Matrika and the Kuttini Matriam, both written by men of the highest social position and known for their pure life, dealing with the lives of prostitutes, give a clear picture of this dissolution of morals. Samaya Matrika of Kshemendra may be described as the autobiography of a prostitute. Kshemendra was perhaps the greatest educator of his day, a writer of popular abstracts of Ramayana, Brihadikatha, etc., and a person of encyclopaedic knowledge. In the Samaya Matrika, the heroine describes her adventures in every sphere of society, as a courtesan, as the mistress of a noble, as a street walker, as a go-between, as a false nun, as a corruptor of youth, and as a frequenter of religious places. The picture conveyed is one which would show that society generally had lost the sense of moral rectitude. Nor is this to be dismissed merely as imaginary. Kuttini Matriam, or the opinions of a go-between, by Damodara Gupta who was a minister to one of the Kashmir kings and itself a poet of extraordinary merit, corroborates the picture. The extreme obscenity of some of the tantric literature of the time as of the sculpture in many temples, perfections of modelling and execution though they be, tell the same tale. Ibn Batuta even makes the cautious remark that prostitution is not held in discredit in India.

In other words social life had crystallised. The rigours of widowhood were enforced strictly in higher class families. We hear no more about widowed princesses like Rajasri taking part in public discussions; on the other hand literary evidence in the eighth and ninth centuries show a hardening of attitude. It is of course to be remembered that among large classes of ordinary people like the Jat cultivators widow remarriage was permitted by custom, but the more orthodox and certainly the higher classes held firmly to the prohibition.

There was great disparity of wealth. We have recorded evidence of two hundred crores of rupees being spent by the brothers Vastupala and Tejapala in charity, of the immense fortune of Bimal Shah who built the marble temple of Abu, of the wealth of the Manigramam corporation which traded with the Indies, etc. But the ordinary villager was poor, though his poverty was probably less than what it is today as the pressure on land was not so great. The wealth of the rich was generally spent in charities, but it is noteworthy that charity had become limited in scope. The generosity of the merchants was displayed in the building of temples, in the adornment of places of pilgrimage, in grants to religious institutions.

Another noteworthy aspect of this generosity was the establishment of hospitals, well stocked with medicines and with a trained staff of doctors and nurses. In the Bodhi stena śāvadana kalpalata there is an interesting description of such a hospital. The king Punyabala, who established hospitals in every town laid special emphasis on providing trained nurses in these institutions, for, says the author, “Is not the trained nurse the first element in treatment. Rare indeed is a nurse, who has love, efficiency, patience and obedience to the doctor’s orders.” The author also makes the king exhort the nurses thus: “I have appointed good doctors and stored the hospitals with medicine. Now it is for you to restore the health of sick people, by applying appropriate remedies, strengthening the patients with suitable diet, removing their gloom by pleasant conversation and their ennui by recreation.”
Kshemendra in his Narmamala and Desopadesa has left us a description of the state of society which is particularly interesting. The bureaucracy in all its stages is described by him and this is particularly valuable as from other sources we have but little information about the structure of government. From Narmamala which is a satire on officialdom we see that the lowest rung of the official ladder was the village Divira (or what is known now as Patwari). Asthana Diviras or clerks of the court are also described. Next higher than the Divira was the Niyogi whose function was to supervise a district, check the accounts and generally see to the administration. The Niyogi’s tours in the districts with their attendant troubles for the villagers are carefully described and the description is as true today as in the time of Kshemendra. Above the district officers were Peripalakas or governors who were assisted by superintendents of finances. Peripalakas were very important officers with extensive powers. They had control over the entire administration of the provinces. A governor’s chief assistant was Lekhakopadhyaya who was in charge of all government records, and responsible for the issue of all orders. The Ganga Diviras or superintendents of finance were also provincial officers. The summit of the official structure was of course the ministry and the central secretariat.

The detailed description by one who was himself descended from Nagindra, the prime minister of Kashmir, and who was in his lifetime (990-1065) associated with the highest in the land is of particular value as clearly proving the existence of a regular bureaucracy, a hierarchy of officials in which promotion was according to ability. Kshemendra in fact describes the methods by which the officials rose to high dignities. The existence of an official hierarchy is corroborated from other sources also. The Vishnu Dharmastra in defining a public document says that it should be written in a public office by a Kayastha (a clerical official) and attested by the superintendent of the office.

The generic term used for officials was Kayastha, and up to the eleventh century the Kayasthas were an official class though in the works of Kshemendra and in Rajatarangini the word is used as signifying officialdom: for example, in Rajatarangini the Brahmin Sivaratha is described as a Kayastha. In numerous inscriptions dating from the middle of the eighth century we have mention of Kayasthas as officials.

The official classes were mainly recruited from among the Brahmans and certain castes included among the Sudras who had a tradition of education. The educated castes among the Sudras assumed naturally a higher social status especially in areas where Buddhist ideas were widely prevalent and the upward movement was clearly marked in the numerous castes outside the first three Varnas who had achieved high social position. They formed in fact the basis of all officialdom in India at least from the time of the Mauryas, though the higher officers at court, governors of provinces and judges and magistrates belonged to the Brahmans and the higher castes.

A bureaucracy with so long-established a tradition was bound to create its own forms and formulae, especially in a country where literary precision was so highly esteemed as in India. We know from the Hathigumpha inscription of the first century B.C. that Kharavela underwent training in the drafting of documents. We have in fact a Lekhapatadhi or standard form of writing of official documents in Sanskrit which has come down to us and which shows us the elaborate nature of the forms in use by the bureaucrats of ancient India. The Lekhapatadhi of the Gujarati kings gives us fifty-four different forms in use; and the abstract of Sukraniti, a late work on politics, contains what may be described as a secretarial manual.

All Indian kingdoms were organised on a semi-military basis, with large though inefficient armies, with fortifications in important places, with reasonable methods of transport and an inherited system of storage of grains. But except under warlike rulers, bent on conquest, their actual military strength seems to have been little, as even in case of defeat by a ruler claiming imperial authority, it was very seldom that a king was dispossessed or a State annexed.

The general picture we have of India at the end of the tenth century when it first came into collision with an organised Islamic kingdom may be summarised as follows. The Hindu social structure was firm and had undergone a reorganisation which made it capable of resisting external pressure. The Hindu religion had received a new and vigorous impetus with the gradual absorption of Buddhism, with new popular forms which satisfied the religious aspiration of the masses, and with a philosophic background which satisfied the more intelligent minds and united the different sects into one faith. Economic life was prosperous, with the accumulated wealth of five centuries of peace, commerce and colonisation. Against this, the political structure was weak. There was no sense of India. The ideal of Bharata Varsha as one country which dominated Hindu mind in the days of foreign invasion had been forgotten. Patriotism was wholly absent and even the idea of
unity to resist the foreigner was non-existent. The political structure of the states was based on a corrupt bureaucracy and united only by a dynastic interest. In itself often weak it was not strong enough when India had to meet the first shock of Mahmud's invasions. Southern India was in a measure different, for there the monarchies were national from the beginning and the State represented a people who felt pride in their kingdom. The Cholas, the Pandyas and earlier the Pallavas were, as stated before, national monarchies and received a loyalty and obedience which the fleeting empires of later times in North India were unable to enforce. Thus the area open to foreign attack was unprepared for a struggle for national independence.

CHAPTER XIII

ISLAM AND INDIA

The Arab conquest of half the known world within a period of fifty years (670: conquest of Persia—711: conquest of Spain) is one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of the world. In 711, ninety years after the Prophet left Mecca for Medina, the empire of Islam extended from the frontiers of China to the shores of the Atlantic. A military power such as the world had not witnessed ruled, with its capital at Baghdad, territories which were even larger than those of Rome at the height of its power and possessed a military strength which not only destroyed the empire of Persia but with one sweep annexed the north of Africa, conquered Spain and took the arms of the Khalif into the heart of France. The only country which was able to resist the attack of Islam during this great period was India. In 712, Mohammed Bin Kassim gained for the Khalif a foothold in Sind. The desert kingdom in the hands of minor local potentates was annexed and converted into a base. By slow degrees the Muslim power was extended to Multan, a great centre of trade and industry. There it remained.

With a sufficiently large advance base, and with absolute mastery of the sea, why the Khalifs—at the height of their power, when all over the known world their name was causing terror—were unable to push forward their advantage requires examination. The old idea that it was for lack of effort can no longer be sustained. We know that the governors of Sind made continuous efforts to extend their territory. In 725, we know that Junaid, who had followed Bin Kassim as Governor of Sind, made a great effort to conquer Broach, Gujerat and Malwa. The expedition, though successful to start with, failed to achieve its object. In 731, Junaid's successor Tamim decided to enter the Deccan as the attack on Malwa had proved too difficult. He landed with a large army but met with disaster at the hands of Pulikesena Chalukya at Navassari in 738. These reverses in no way affected the imperial power of the Khalifs and a new and greater effort was made when their armies reached as far as Ujjain. There the Gurjara king Nagabhata defeated them, as stated earlier, and the invader was
driven back. As Baladiya, the contemporary poet, says, “he crushed the mighty hosts of the Mlechhas, those foes of godly deeds.”

This victory saved India for over 275 years. There was no further attempt to conquer India in the days of the Khalifs when Islamic power was at its height, though one of the Governors of Sind, Imran Bin Musa, attempted the conquest of Kutch in 883 and was driven out by Mihira Bhoja. Actually, after Nagabhata’s victory, the danger from Islam disappeared till new conditions arose on the north-west frontier.

As a result of nearly three centuries of peace the menace of Islam was forgotten even in Gurjara country. The warring Hindu kings of the ninth and tenth centuries of North India had no realisation of the cloud that was gathering. To all outside appearance the period was one of prosperity under the Gurjara emperors of Kanauj. From them the empire of the Gurjara Desa had passed to the Parmaras of Dhar, of which dynasty Bhoja was the most magnificent and the most illustrious. It is unfortunate that the homelands of his empire were in the middle of India and his own territories were organised around Malwa, for the threat which the Hindu kings had not foreseen had arisen on the north-west, and no state of equal power was there on the Indian side to fight the hosts of Mahmud of Ghazni.

The area now known as Afghanistan had for long been one of the outlying provinces of the Khalif’s empire. But it was a neglected area. During the break-up of the Khalif’s power in Baghdad, Alaptijin who had been an officer of the Governor of Khorassan, Abdul Malik, established himself at Ghazni and governed the area as an autonomous State defying the authority of the centre. Ghazni however became an organised and important power only in the time of Sabaktijin who assumed authority in 977. A portion of modern Afghanistan was then under the rule of the Chahamans of Ajmer and the rulers of Kanauj and raised an army and marched to meet the menace in person in 991. The battle ended disastrously for Jayapal. Peshawar was occupied by Sabaktijin’s son and successor, Sultan Mahmud, one of the great figures of Islamic history. A just and wise monarch to his own subjects, a great patron of science and arts whose fame spread to all Islamic lands, a champion of orthodoxy and a pious Muslim, he was the pattern of Islamic kingship. It was a military state that he inherited, with a trained and powerful army accustomed to the rigours of warfare in mountainous Afghanistan and in the deserts of Khorassan. With Peshawar in his possession the routes to the plains of the Punjab lay open to him. Mahmud led a number of expeditions originally for plunder and with every successful raid his appetite for the accumulated riches of the states and temples of Hindustan increased. The Punjab was annexed to the Empire and converted into a base for further raids. Far into the Gangetic
valley, down south to Anhilapatan and Somnath in Gujerat, he led his warriors incited alike by the prospect of plunder and the fanaticism of destroying the temples of the idolators. Much destruction he inflicted on the prosperous towns of the Gangetic valley, on Thanesvar, Kanauj, the imperial city, Mathura, the city sacred to Krishna and for over a thousand years the centre of an unparalleled artistic culture. The description of the temples of Mathura left by Utbi, the contemporary historian, is worth quoting:

"In that place there was a place of worship of the Indian people: and when he came to that place he saw a city of wonderful fabric and conception, so that one might say this is a building of paradise. . . . They had brought immense stones and had laid a level foundation upon high stairs. Around it and at its sides they had placed one thousand castles built of stone. . . . And in the midst of the city they had built a temple higher than all to delineate the beauty and decoration of which the pens of all writers and the pencils of all painters would be powerless. . . . In his memoirs which the Sultan (Mahmud) wrote of this journey he thus declares that if anyone should undertake to build a fabric like that he would expend thereon a hundred thousand packets of a thousand dinars and would not complete it in two hundred years with the assistance of the most ingenious masters. . . ."

The cities of India were laid waste. The glories of India's architecture which called forth such reluctant admiration from the Sultan himself were razed to the ground, and an incalculable amount of wealth carried away. But Mahmud, apart from the annexation of the Punjab (1018), made no attempt to conquer any portion of India. His were merely raids of devastation, looked upon by the Hindus of the time as acts of God, like plague, before which they fled. It had but little effect on Indian history, except as a forerunner of the more ambitious and more successful efforts, hundred and fifty years later of Mohammed Ghori who displaced the successors of Mahmud of Ghazni.

The resistance which the Hindu monarchs offered is not alluded to by the court panegyrists of Ghazni. But at least in one case Mahmud met with such determined opposition that he had to retreat in haste suffering, even according to Muslim historians of the time, great hardships on the way. Mahmud descended on Somnath, the great pilgrimage centre in Kathiawad, in January 1026 marching across the deserts of Rajputana. He attacked the town of Somnath, captured it and plundered the temple, but according to the official historian he turned away in haste.

"From that place" says Ibn-ul-Athir, the Sultan's admiring historian, "Mahmud turned back and the reason was that Paramdeo who was the King of the Hindus was in the way and Amir Mahmud feared lest this great victory may be spoiled. He did not come back by the direct way but took a guide . . . and went towards Multan. His soldiers suffered heavily on the way. . . . Many animals and a large number of men of the Muslim army perished on the way. . . . The Hindu king who opposed Mahmud in Kathiawad was none other than Bhoja, the Parmara king of Dhar whose dominions at the time extended to Kathiawad. Bhoja of Dhar had come to the throne in 999, two years after Mahmud ascended the throne of Ghazni. As a great ruler and even as a greater scholar and patron of arts Bhoja's name is still cherished all over India. Of his greatness as a writer and patron of letters nothing need be said here. As a ruler he revived the glory of the Gurjara empire. At the time that Mahmud was raiding the Gangetic valley, Bhoja was consolidating his authority over central India, Gujerat and Kathiawad. It is this great ruler that Mahmud challenged by his raid on Somnath. Bhoja marched into Kathiawad and barred Mahmud's way of retreat. The Sultan of Ghazni fled in haste through the waterless regions and reached safely "at last after suffering great distress and hardship," as Ibn-ul-Athir himself states.

No encounter between the opposing forces is mentioned in Muslim histories but the Udaipur prasasti of Bhoja claims that he defeated the Turks. And it is hard to believe that merely because Mahmud felt that "his great victory will be spoiled" he would have chosen a route through a waterless desert. Clearly Mahmud was unable to force his way, was either defeated or checked and in any case the great victory became an ignominious rout.

Mahmud's successors held to their Indian province, but it is noteworthy that in the time of Masud, his son, it was a Hindu general, Tilak, who was entrusted with the duty of restoring order in the Punjab which had risen in revolt under the Muslim governors.

From the death of Mahmud to Mohammed Ghori's invasion in 1191 for a period of hundred and sixty years India, apart from the Punjab, was undisturbed by Muslim invasions. With a foreign power established at Sirhind and holding the land of the five rivers
the danger to the Gangetic plain was indeed obvious, but the Hindu monarchs of the time did not seem to have realised the danger. Indeed, powerful states capable of offering firm resistance had come into existence. Jaya Simha Siharaja had revived the glories of the Gurjara empire, the northern portion of which based on Sakambhari (or Sambar) was under the powerful Chahamana kings who were united in alliance with the Gurjara rulers. Visala Deva Chauhan, the earliest of the dynasty of whom we have authentic record and whose inscription on the great iron pillar of Delhi records his achievements, was well established in Sambar and his territories extended up to the boundaries of the Ghaznavid province of the Punjab. His son Someswar, in alliance with Siharaja, strengthened the position of the Chauhans in the north and claimed semi-imperial sway over the rulers of Delhi and the northern territories. Someswar’s son was Prithviraj under whom the Chauhan power reached its zenith. A valiant and impetuous monarch capable of great acts of heroism, he was hardly the leader to organise a systematic defence against a determined enemy.

Apart from the Chauhan monarch of Ajmer, the most important monarch of North India was Jayachandra, the ruler of Kanauj. As the master of the imperial city and as the sovereign of the Gangetic valley, Jayachandra’s prestige was immense and was acknowledged by the princes of Hindustan. His power was also great. To an outside observer Hindustan was not ill-organised to meet the attack of the Muslims from the Punjab.

Mohammed Ghori displaced the dynasty of Sabaktijin in 1186. After re-establishing order in the Punjab he marched into India in 1191 and met the forces of Prithviraj in battle. The Muslim forces were defeated and Mohammed himself had to flee for his life. But he returned next year with an army better organised and superior in numbers and the rival armies met again in the same field. This time disaster overtook Prithviraj. The Hindu army was broken, Prithviraj himself captured and killed and the confederacy of Rajput rulers who had come to the support of the ruler of Ajmer scattered to the winds. The Sultan occupied Ajmer but he handed it over to a son of Prithviraj who accepted the suzerainty of the Sultan.

The history of the conquest of the Gangetic valley after this historic success can be summarised in a few sentences. Kutubuddin Aibak, whom the Sultan left behind as his governor, occupied Delhi which he made the seat of his government. Delhi, which had been founded by a local king in 933 A.D., was but a small provincial town but Kutubuddin by making it his capital, made it the centre of Mussalman power in India for the future. In 1194, Jayachandra was defeated and Kanauj conquered by the Sultan himself. By this victory the rich plains from Meerut to Banaras came under the Ghorii king. With his power thus established in the heart of Hindustan, expansion was easy. Bakhtiar Khilji with a small force reduced Bihar and among his achievements may be noted the wanton destruction of the university of Nalanda and its great and unique library which contained the acquisition of many centuries (1197). Two years later the same commander conquered Bengal whose ruler Lakshman Sen, a poet and scholar of distinction, escaped on hearing of Bakhtiar’s arrival. The Chandela Prince of Bundelkhand was reduced by Kutubuddin himself in 1202. Thus in a period of five years Mohammed Ghori, through his Governor Kutubuddin, ruled over an empire in India which included the Punjab, the Gangetic plains and Bengal. Mohammed died in 1206.

Kutubuddin was elected Sultan by the Turkish Amirs in the capital and became the first of a succession of kings, known very inappropriately in history as the “Slave Dynasty.” The succession of the first few Sultans of Delhi was by election by the Amirs and Generals, and, as in many cases the highest posts in the court, in administration and the army were held by the slaves of the monarch, the elected ruler had often started his life as a slave. Kutubuddin himself had been purchased in his youth. The new Sultan who had actually been responsible for the main conquests, consolidated the empire and established it on a firm basis.

The dynastic history of the Delhi Sultans from Kutubuddin’s death in 1310 to Babur’s conquest of Delhi in 1526 is one of dull monotony, of wars, of succession, murders of nobles and leading men and a few able men succeeded by weak and licentious potenates. The first or the so-called Slave Dynasty produced two rulers of remarkable ability, Iltamish (1210-1235) and Balban. Iltamish carried the Muslim rule up to Ujjain in Central India and also reduced the Khilji Maliks of Bengal who never actually accepted the authority of Delhi and were continuously in revolt. He is also credited with having built the Kutub Minar. Apart from the romantic figure of Rezab Begam, whose one weakness was, it was said, that she was a woman, his successors proved themselves incompetent and the Turkish Amirs again selected a soldier, Balban (1266), to succeed to the throne. He was able for a time to put down the recurrent revolt of the Khiljis of Bengal and to restore order; but the Sultanate had lost the momentum of invasion and was confined to the territories left by Iltamish. The successors of Balban were unable to hold the provinces together
and the Hindus of the hardly conquered areas of Bundelkhand and Central India asserted their independence.

A new and more vigorous dynasty now stepped in. The Khiljis produced one remarkable ruler who, though a megalomaniac, was able to carry the Muslim arms down to the extreme south of India. Allauddin reduced the great and historic kingdoms of the Yadavas of Deogir and the Chalukyas of Gujerat. The main opposition to his imperial pretensions came from the Ranas of Ranthambor who under Rana Hammir had now assumed the leadership of Hindu resistance, a position which they maintained up to the time of the Moghuls and, so far at least as heraldry goes, handed over to Sivaji who claimed descent from the rulers of Mewar. From the Hammir Mahakavya we know that the mission of Hindu renaissance was fully realised by the kings of Mewar who put themselves forward as the champions of Hinduism. The fight with the Rana was a victory for Allauddin who occupied Ranthambor, and he even captured the great fortress of Chitor. But Mewar was not conquered and the Sultan had to find his laurels elsewhere.

He turned his attention to the Deccan and his general Malik Kafur carried out a bold raid which took him as far as Rameshwaram. This sharp reminder of the existence of a great military state in northern India, which was powerful enough to overflow long established dynasties in a lightning-like campaign, had a remarkable effect on the people of South India. It led to the immediate reorganisation of the political system and we see, within the short period of twenty-five years, the establishment of a state powerful enough to withstand invasions from the north. Far otherwise was the case of Gujerat. The great kingdom which had thrown back the invasions of Islam four hundred years earlier fell at the first onslaught of Allauddin's generals. It never rose again though Gujerati nationalism, the product of centuries of independence, asserted itself vigorously later under its Muslim Sultans.

The history of the Khiljis told the same wearisome tale as that of the Slaves. The death of Allauddin was followed by civil wars in which the successful party put to violent death the princes and leading men of the last reign. Naturally conspiracies and revolts followed and the distant provinces threw off the yoke of Delhi. The imperial court became the scene of disgraceful orgies and in the case of one ruler, Kutubuddin Mubarak, it is said that "he often dressed himself in female attire and with his body dressed with trinkets he went out in the city in the company of harlots and danced at the houses of nobles." As a result, a new dynasty, the Tughlaq, was elevated to the throne, the third in the course of hundred years. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq (1220-25) was able to restore order in some of the provinces. His successor Mohammed Tughlaq, at whose court Ibn Batuta, the famous traveller, lived for a time, is one of those strange characters in history whose schemes were perfect on paper but led to absurd results and untold misery in execution. He succeeded to an extensive empire which was reasonably prosperous and left it utterly in ruin. It is vain to argue that the fault was none of his as his ideas which produced these results were excellent. One of his schemes was to issue stamped leather in place of coins, an idea which in the form of currency notes today dominates the whole trade, commerce and banking of the world. But in his case it led to the bankruptcy of the state treasury. Another of his ventures was to remove the capital to Daulatabad, the former Devagiri. He built a road for the purpose, arranged for the free feeding and accommodation of the population of Delhi on the march, but also ordered the compulsory evacuation of every man, woman and child from Delhi. Ibn Batuta says that the mad king even instituted a search to find out whether anyone still lurked in Delhi. The thorough search is said to have resulted in the discovery of two men, one lame and the other blind! Whether the story is an exaggeration or not, it is characteristic of the mad despotism of Mohammed Tughlaq.

Mohammed's reign is important as it enabled the surviving Hindu kingdoms to organise themselves. Chitor and Ranthambor were retaken by Mewar which state under a succession of able Ranas consolidated its power over Rajputana. In 1336, Vijayanagar was founded on the banks of the Tungabhadra and this mighty empire organised the Hindus of the South. Elsewhere also the revival of Hinduism was marked. In fact it may well be said that the anarchy of Mohammed Tughlaq's reign marks the re-birth of Hindu India, its rise from the ashes and its re-establishment as a political force in Hindustan.

The more settled portions of the Sultanate also did not survive the Tughlaq monarch's mad eccentricities. Bengal, never too serious in its dependence on Delhi, finally threw off the yoke in 1336. In the territories of Maharashtra, a new and independent kingdom was founded by Hassan Gangi, which under the name of the Bahmani monarchy achieved fame in Indian history. Gujerat continued in a doubtful vassalage. Imperial authority had broken down even in what may be called the home domains in the Gangetic valley.

Mohammed's successor Firoz was a weak and irresolute ruler, bigoted in his religion and unwarlike in his pursuits. But he
is honourably remembered as the only Muslim monarch of Delhi before Sher Shah who undertook any work of public utility. Firoz undertook extensive irrigation works which harnessed the waters of the Ghaggar and the Jumna for cultivation. His work is the predecessor of the great irrigation systems of the Punjab and is a most notable achievement, a worthy monument to the liberality and farsightedness of the Tughlaq king. Firoz's administration was weak and under his successors the Delhi Sultanate gradually broke up. A new and powerful kingdom was established at Jaunpur which exercised authority in Bihar. In Malwa, a Khilji Amir established a new dynasty and Gujerat which had so long been loyal also proclaimed its independence. By the end of the century the Sultanate of Delhi was confined to the Punjab and to the immediate appendages of the capital. When in 1398 Timur crossed the Indus, there was no opposition to speak of till he reached the very gates of Delhi. Delhi was occupied after a battle outside its walls and Timur with unusual ferocity allowed the soldiery to plunder the city and massacre a large number of its inhabitants.

Timur's invasion gave the coup de grace to the Sultanate of Delhi. After claiming imperial dignity for nearly two hundred years Delhi sank to the position of a provincial capital. The Sayyad and Lodis who ruled from Delhi exercised no imperial sway and though the Lodis produced one remarkable personality in Sikander, kings who ruled from Delhi exercised no imperial sway and though the Lodis produced one remarkable personality in Sikander, who founded the city of Agra which was soon to rival the glories of Delhi for over a hundred and fifty years, his time was mostly spent in reducing the rebellious nobles. But the disintegration had gone too far and the imperial sway of Delhi could not be re-established. Thus when Babar, the descendant of Timur, invaded India (1525) the opposition which the Afghan king of Delhi was able to offer was insignificant. The real opposition which the Moghul invaders met with came from the Rajput confederacy which during the hundred and fifty years following the misrule of Mohammed Tughlaq had attained power and authority over the vast area lying between Gujerat and Delhi.

In fact, after the decay of Turkish power under the Tughlaqs, the representative Muslim dynasties of India were no longer in Delhi. Muslim civilisation was represented not by the weak and dissipated kings who followed Firoz Tughlaq, but by the Sultans of Bengal, Jaunpur, Gujerat and Malwa. Indian Islam in the fifteenth century in the courts of the rulers of these states began to disclose characteristics which evidenced the synthesis of culture that was going on beneath the surface. The Delhi Sultanate, dominated as it was by Turkish Amirs and new arrivals from across the border, maintained its foreign character while the Muslim kingdoms of Bengal, Jaunpur, Gujerat and in a lesser degree Malwa developed tendencies which were to find their supreme consummation later under the Moghuls.

Gujerat had been conquered by Allauddin Khilji in 1297. After a hundred years of subordination Zafar Khan in 1401 formally assumed the title of Shah and proclaimed his independence. For the next century and a half Gujerat was one of the leading states of India, a centre of civilisation, culture and learning. The ports of the coast poured wealth into the country and the monarchy, dependent for its separate existence on the loyalty of the people and for its wealth on the merchants, both predominantly Hindu, followed a policy of reconciliation. Under Ahmed Shah (1411-1441) the city of Ahmedabad was founded and the king adorned it with beautiful structures which show marked influences of Hindu architecture. His successor Mohammed Shah was also a liberal patron of arts.

Characteristic of the changed times was the fact that the Hindu rulers of intervening territories were taking sides in the wars between the Sultans of Malwa and Gujerat. More, the territory of the Rajput princes lay between the two Muslim powers and under the leadership of the Ranas of Mewar the policy followed by them was to prevent a union between the Muslim powers. Gujerat, therefore, was constantly at war with the Ranas of Mewar whose power extended up to the Abu Pass and whose fortress at Achalgarh on the Abu hills marked the limit of Muslim authority.

The kingdom of Malwa which also assumed importance under its Khilji monarchs became independent in 1401. Husung Shah, its first monarch, transferred his capital to the historic city of Mandu built by Bhoja. Husung was a great builder and the architectural beauties of Mandu also bear witness to the interpenetration of Hindu and Muslim culture. It was however under Sultan Mahmud that Malwa became a really important state. Mahmud was an ambitious prince and led seven campaigns against Rana Kumbha of Mewar who in one campaign occupied Mandu and in another carried off the Sultan as prisoner and kept him for a short time at Chitor. Under Sultan Mahmud, Feristha says, "his subjects, Mohammedans as well as Hindus, were happy, and maintained friendly intercourse with each other." The relations between the two communities in the Malwa Sultanate were so cordial that in the reign of Mahmud II the Sultan requested the assistance of Hindu rulers to put down the turbulence of his own nobility. His own prime minister was a Hindu, Medina Rao.
The Sultanate of Jaunpur, short-lived though it was, has claims to remembrance. Under the successors of Malik-us-Sharq—or the Lord of the East—this kingdom became not only a great seat of learning but a centre of architectural revival. Under Ibrahim, eminent Muslim scholars from all over India flocked to Jaunpur especially as conditions in Delhi following the invasion of Timur and the breakdown of central authority had become altogether chaotic. Jaunpur architecture was perhaps the noblest combination of Hindu and Muslim ideas prior to the great days of the Moghuls.

Bengal, the other independent Muslim kingdom in Hindustan, had, even from the time of its first conquest under Bakhtiar Khilji, yielded but a shadowy allegiance to the Sultans of Delhi. Practically every one of the Delhi Sultans had to lead an expedition to the great province of the east to reduce it to submission. The final separation of the province came under Firuz Tughlaq. The glory of the independent kings of Bengal began however only with Hussein Shah whose dynasty continued in authority till Bengal was conquered by Akbar and annexed to the Moghul territories in 1576.

Examined in the light of what has been briefly sketched above, it will be seen that the period between 1210 and 1525 separates itself into two equal halves: the period of conquest when the theory of empire was still in the air, and the period of dissolution when the great national monarchies came into existence. The period of conquest was also a period of destruction and loot. In fact the public finance of the Turkish Sultans of Delhi seems to have been based on the assumption that its expenditure should be met from the accumulated treasures of other kingdoms. Allaudin's instructions to Malik Kafur when the latter attacked Telengana are significant. “If the Rai consented to surrender his treasure, his jewels, his elephants and his horses and also to send treasures and elephants in the following year” he was to be let off lightly. Kafur sent the booty on “a thousand camels groaning under the weight of treasure.” In the latter period, when Delhi shrank into a local sovereignty, though still possessing the rich province of the Punjab, the monarchies which were established in Gujerat, Malwa, Jaunpur and Bengal became settled governments interested in the arts of peace and in the welfare of the people. The real greatness of Islam during this period is not in Delhi, but in Ahmedabad, Mandu, Jaunpur and Laknauti. For an appreciation of Islamic contribution to India at this period this distinction should be carefully borne in mind.

The pre-Moghul contribution to Indo-Muslim architecture has not receive adequate and general recognition. The glory of the Taj Mahal and other Moghul masterpieces has eclipsed the greatness of the architecture of the first period and yet it is clear that Indo-Islamic building art originated and developed and produced some of its masterpieces in the fifteenth century. The Jamii Musjid of Jaunpur, the mosques and palaces in Mandu and Ahmedabad demonstrate the truth of this observation. The Indo-Muslim architecture which these kingdoms developed was a harmonising of Hindu and Muslim traditions. As Sir John Marshall has pointed out "when the Muslim architect, who had inherited a vast wealth of rich and varied designs particularly from the Sassanian and Byzantine empires, saw the great buildings in India, a new vision was opened to him and he at once gauged their vast possibilities and set about taking the fullest advantage of them." The Indo-Muslim style is a complete harmonisation of the artistic spirit of Hinduism and Islam and nowhere does it become more clear than in the mosques at Ahmedabad and Jaunpur. The architects were no doubt Muslims but the master-builders and craftsmen continued to be Hindus. The fame of Hindu craftsmanship was such that, according to the Zafarnama, Timur assembled several thousand craftsmen in Delhi and reserving the best for himself distributed the rest to his Amirs. He had formed the design of building a great mosque in Samarkand and "he now gave orders that all the stone masons should be reserved for this pious work."

In architecture and building early Islam made a noble contribution to India, the same cannot be said in the field of learning, sciences or poetry. During these three hundred years Indian Islam produced no outstanding divine, scholar or scientist. No Averroes or Avicenna, no Tabari or Masudi is there to illumine the pages of Islam in India. In fact the period between 1210-1525 is one of general barrenness in Islamic history when the great cultural traditions of earlier Islam were overborne by the barbarian invasions of Turks and Seljuks. The college at Jaunpur, which Hassan Shah endowed, might have in time led to notable contributions but it existed for too short a time. In the field of literature the only outstanding Muslim name is that of Amir Khusru whose Persian poems shed glory on the period. Probably the reason is that Indian Islam had not evolved a language of its own and was tied to the thought and literature of Persia. Muslim rulers however seem to have encouraged local talent for we know Maladhar Vasu's translation of the Bhagavata was undertaken by order of Nusrat Shah and Kavindra Parameswar's translation of
the Mahabharata was undertaken at the command of Parangal Khan, a general of Hussein Shah. If Islam's direct contribution to literature at the time is negligible, its encouragement of poets and writers deserves special appreciation.

Indo-Muslim architecture, glorious in its harmony of Indian and Islamic traditions, did not at this period materially affect Hindu architecture. The great Hindu temples and buildings of this period even in northern India continue to be in the orthodox style of Hinduism. The Konarak temple of Surya (1285) is an outstanding monument of the time. Chitorgarh in Udaipur designed by Mandana is perhaps the supreme example of Hindu architectural achievement in northern India after the Muslim invasions: but it bears no trace of Islamic influence. Fergusson describes it as a pillar of victory like that of Trojan at Rome but in infinitely better taste as an architectural object than the Roman example. Of the temple architecture of the period Rampur is perhaps the most notable. The magnificence of its conception, the beauty of its execution and the "endless variety of perspective and play of light and shade which results from the disposition of the pillars and the domes" make it one of the great masterpieces of Hindu architecture.

Naturally at a time of war and strife much of the building work was concentrated on fortresses. The Rajput revival in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries covered the hilltops of Rajasthan with forts which are themselves monuments of the military architecture of the period. These show no influence of Islam. Thus Indo-Muslim and Hindu architecture developed side by side during this period.

We shall get a very inaccurate and altogether false view of the situation of the Hindus during the first period of Islamic Empire in Hinduism (1210-1370) if we depend on the court chroniclers and annalists of Delhi. Historians like Barani were primarily anxious to picture their heroes as the patterns of Islamic orthodoxy and virtue. The stories of temples desecrated, idols demolished and Hindus converted or massacred which they relate must therefore be read in the light of their desire to show to an orthodox Islamic world, for which they wrote, the glory of these monarchs and their zeal in dealing with the kafir. In the period of conquest the Hindus had no doubt to undergo great miseries. They were deprived at one stroke of all political power in large areas. Their religion was held in contempt and their places of worship were constantly being destroyed. But all the same after the first enthusiasm, the structure of economic life in the country forced even the most zealous and fanatical of kings to moderate this policy. The Muslim invaders brought no cultivators with them. It was an army that occupied Delhi and destroyed the Hindu monarchies in the Gangetic valley. It was impossible for the Muslim kings, had they even desired it, to have the lands cultivated by the soldiers. Lands could only be given in jagir to the great Amirs, but the cultivating classes remained Hindu. Nor was conversion on such a scale as would displace the Hindu Zamindar and cultivator ever carried out or even attempted as is demonstrated by the fact that even today in the Doab which was continuously under Muslim rule for seven hundred years the Hindu population is in an overwhelming majority. The land system in fact did not change and therefore the Hindus in general in the countryside led fairly the same life as they had led before.

Nor is it to be understood that commerce and trade changed hands to any considerable extent. The Muslim invaders were military adventurers who looked down upon trade and to whom the elaborate system of Hundi and credit on which Indian business was based was a mystery. The commercial classes were no doubt mulcted heavily both by the imperial government and by its local officials but the Hindu bania remained then, as now, a necessary element in the structure of society.

Even in regard to religion the idea that Hinduism was always held in contempt by the early Muslim rulers would not bear examination. In fact we have ample evidence that even under the most bigoted kings, like Allauddin Khilji and Firoz Tughlaq, the Hindu religious leaders received honour and recognition. From Jain sources we know that Allauddin held religious discourses with Acharya Mahasena who had to be brought from the Karnataka country for the purpose. It is also said that the Digambara Jain, Purna Chandra of Delhi, and the Svetambara ascetic Ramachandra Suri were in favour with the same Sultan. Ghiasuddin Tughlaq had two Jain officers who exercised great influence over him, while Firoz held in high honour the poet Ratnashekhar.

A more important factor which helped to keep Hindu society intact was the undoubted fact that the lower ranks of the bureaucracy had of necessity to be Hindus. India had, as emphasised in an earlier chapter, an ancient and elaborate bureaucracy with its own forms and procedure. While the higher officials were all Muslims the lower rungs of officialdom had of necessity to be
Hindus. The patwaris, the accountants, the treasurers and others in the districts were invariably Hindu while the governors and even district officials were Muslim. Only judicial administration was taken over by the Islamic rulers and the Qazis administered Muslim law. It is the existence of this bureaucracy which enabled Iltamish and Allauddin Khilji to restore order in a short time and to build up an imperial structure. Again it is the same bureaucracy which gave opportunities to provincial governors to establish states with but a small Muslim army at their command, as in the case of Bakhtiar Khilji who when he invaded Bengal had but a small raiding party with him.

The despotism of the Sultans fell mainly on the Amirs and nobles of the court. The activities of the rulers so minutely chronicled by the annalists will be seen, if examined closely, to relate to party factions among the nobility, when they did not deal with campaigns against other states. These party factions led to massacres and atrocities which were gruesome enough. But they were against Muslim nobles themselves. Then again the continuous revolts of governors which were put down with a heavy hand, as for example by Ghiasuddin Taghlaq in Bengal, were campaigns against Muslim nobles and armies. The despotism of a court affects in the first place the courtiers and the terrible deeds of the later Tughlaqs hardly affected the general public, except in the sense that the central government weakened and as a result the rural population was left a great deal more to themselves.

The Hindus in the conquered areas were no doubt depressed. Political power which gives a people dignity and self-respect had gone from them. They were excluded from high offices, were treated as being not in the same as the rulers, were subjected to differential taxation; but there is no reason to believe that their life was too hard. As Barani says, humility and obedience were to be expected from them. A Qazi when asked about the true position of Hindus replied—as quoted by Barani—"they are called Khiraj Guzars (payers of tribute) and when a revenue officer demands silver from them, they should without question and with all humility and respect tender gold. If the tax collector chooses to spit into the mouth the latter must open his mouth without hesitation. The meaning of doing such a thing is that the Hindu in acting this wise shows his meekness and humility and obedience and respect." This was no doubt the theological position and the exposition of the doctrine in this picturesque form might have pleased Allauddin. But from the annalists themselves we know that the big landholders of the Doab were often in revolt and the theological doctrine could hardly be enforced without a much larger army of civilian officials which the Sultans of Delhi could not create except on the basis of the employment of the old Hindu bureaucracy.

The surprising fact which emerges from the history of the first hundred and fifty years of Islam's conquest of North India is the strength of the Hindu religion. Everything was open to a Hindu who changed his religion and accepted Islam. There was no post or dignity which was not open to a Hindu who accepted Islam. Khusrau, an outcaste slave from Kathiawad, even ascended the Delhi Throne for a short time under the title of Nasiruddin. With the short-cut to prosperity and power so clearly marked out for them, it is remarkable that Muslims today number only 14 per cent in Uttar Pradesh which was continuously under Muslim rule for six hundred years. Hindu religion withstood the shock, and the evidence is incontestable that forcible conversions were few and the lot of Hindus could not have been exceptionally hard.

The depression of Hindus did not last very long. It is the undying glory of the Rajputs and their main claim to India's gratitude that the resistance to foreign invasion during the days of conquest was organised by them and kept up with continuous heroism for a period of four hundred years. When the Chauhan arms met with disaster in the battle against Mohammed Ghori, the Rajput States lay disorganised and helpless for a short time. But a new family claimed the leadership and this was the Guhilot dynasty of Mewar. The area between Abu and Ranthambor was organised into military confederacy and even Allauddin at the height of his power found it hard, as Akbar was to find at a later time, to humble the pride or break the spirit of the Mewar rulers. The great Hammira whose glory is sung in Hammiravijaya was able for a long time to stand up to the might of Delhi. Kheta, his son, even occupied Ajmer and by the end of the fourteenth century the Mewar rulers had risen to the position of one of the major powers of North India, constantly at war with Malwa and Gujerat. Under Lakha Singh the Mewar army even invaded the Gangetic valley. But it was under Maharana Kumbha, one of the most notable figures of medieval India (1433-68), that the Mewar kingdom attained the height of its power. The Sultans of Gujerat and Malwa were defeated and held in check and Hindu power was established over large areas of North India. The glory of Kumbha and his successors was that they were the champions of a Hindu revival which, apart from saving large areas from Muslim conquest, also put heart into the Hindu people of...
other areas of North India. The claim to be Hindu or Surya or the Sun of the Hindus was fully sustained by the descendents of Bappa Rawal from Hammira to Pratap.

Nor was Hindu resistance only in Rajputana. Elsewhere also Hindu influence began to assert itself and by the fourteenth century even in the Gangetic valley the great landholders had come to have sufficient influence and authority to rebel against the centre when it became weak. We hear continuously of the revolt of Zamindars which the rulers in Delhi had to put down with a strong hand.

The great culture of Islam could hardly be represented by the Turks and Afghans who entered India in the wake of Mohammed Ghor. They no doubt represented the religion of Islam, but the civilisation associated with the Muslim empires of Baghdad or Cairo or Cordova found no echo in the hearts of the Turkish Maliks in whose hands political power was vested. The religion of Islam was itself the main contribution of these dynasties of Delhi. Apart from its doctrinal aspects, Islam also introduced into India a conception of human equality, a pride in one’s religion, a legal system which in many ways was an advance on the codes of the time. In the fields of culture the Turkish Sultans introduced new styles of architecture and buildings of which the Tughlaq monuments with their Central Asian domes and glazed tiles are perhaps the best examples. The strongly egalitarian character of Islam and the pride of the Muslim in his religion had their repercussions which we shall notice later. It is sufficient to emphasise here that the new spirit which the Hindu monarchs of Rajputana and of the Vijayanagar dynasty displayed as champions of Dharma and the upholders of religion was a direct result of the contact with Islam. Even the most orthodox kings of ancient times, the Bharasivas and the Guptas in the north, and the Pallavas and the Cholas in the south never claimed to be the champions of a creed or the upholders of a society. While they were orthodox believers, the idea that it was their duty actively to support and protect religion was foreign to them. To Hammira and to Kumbha, no less than to Krishnadeva Raya and to Rama Raya this was the main function of the state. Religious faith became an active factor of policy with Hindu kings as a result of Islam.

The main social result of the introduction of Islam as a religion into India was the division of society on a vertical basis. Before the thirteenth century, Hindu society was divided horizontally, and neither Buddhism nor Jainism affected this division. They were not unassimilable elements and fitted in easily with the existing divisions. Islam, on the other hand, split Indian society into two sections from top to bottom and what has now come to be known in the phraseology of today as two separate nations came into being from the beginning. Two parallel societies were established on the same soil. At all stages they were different and hardly any social communication or intermingling of life existed between them. There was of course a continuous process of conversion from Hinduism to Islam; as against it there was also a continuous strengthening of the Hindu social body, both by the rise of new doctrines and sects as well as by defensive feeling of security. In fact one of the most remarkable factors in the India of this period is the revival movements in Hinduism. The Vaishnav movement with its great devotional figures from Jayadeva to Mirabai, Ramananda and Kabir in the north, Namadeva and Jnaneswara in Maharashtra and Gujarat, the rise of the Lingayats in the Karnataka, all these vital movements belong to this period. Gita Govinda, written at Puri, attained such wide popularity that its standard commentary even today is the one by Maharana Kumbha, the hero of Rajputana. Ramananda's great movement, which is related to the earlier religious doctrines of the Tamil country, had its centre in Banaras and to his influence can be traced the eclectic teachings of Kabir, and the pietic mysticism of Nanak, and the devotional ecstasies of Chaitanya.

Generally speaking it will be noticed that the religious movements of the period were non-ritualistic and based on Bhakti. The doctrines of the Bhakti school are undoubtedly ancient in India, based on the teachings of Pancharatra and Bhagavata schools, but their sudden popularity at this period can be explained only by the feeling of escapism which dominated the Hindu mind as a result of the conquest of its sacred places by Islam. Bhakti yoga is preached in the Gita and its final message is the abandonment of all to the Supreme, but the doctrine of the Gita is not one of mysticism of devotion in the way that Mira and Chaitanya understood it. The vigorous and strenuous life preached by the Gita finds no echo in the Krishna and Radha worship which became the symbol of the Bhakti cult in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

One thing is clear. Islam had a profound effect on Hinduism during this period. Medieval Hindu theism is in some ways a reply to the attack of Islam; and the doctrines of medieval teachers, by whatever name their gods are known, are essentially theistic. It is the one supreme God that is the object of the devotee's adoration and it is to His grace that we are asked to look for
embodied in this monumental work which earned for its
himself west. Nor was Sanskrit less patronised in Rajputana. Apart from
a:'d of Sanskrit associated with Hemachandra Suri and the
ceased to be cultivated. We have in Gujerat the great resurgence
more and more a cause of the common people. Literature tended to become less the monopoly of the learned, and
In fact due to the crisis brought about by Islam, religion and
of Muslim rulers as in Bengal was also the work of this period.
It would, however, be untrue to say that Sanskrit literature ceased to be cultivated. We have in Gujarat the great resurgence of Sanskrit associated with Hemachandra Suri and the magnificent and learned court of Viradhavala whose minister, Vastupala, himself a poet of eminence, revived the traditions of Bhoja in the west. Nor was Sanskrit less patronised in Rajputana. Apart from

Prithviraja Vijaya of Jonaraja and Hemvira vinjaya of Allauddin's
time, we have the outstanding figure of Kumbha whose court was a
centre of learning and culture. Kumbha himself was the com-
mentator of Gita Govinda, author of Sangitarastr, an encyclopaedic
work on music, and numerous other poems in Sanskrit. What
presumably happened was that with the conquest of the Gangetic
valley, scholars and poets took refuge in the courts of Hindu rulers
in distant areas and this would perhaps explain the sudden
efflorescence of Sanskrit literature in places like Mewar, Khalimj
and Gujarat.

Unconnected with the influence of Islam but contemporaneous
with it is the great revival of Jainism. The religion of Vardhamana
had been eclipsed for long by the success of Buddhism. But from
the Harihumpala inscription of Kharavela we know that the
Kalinga monarch was a follower of the Tirthankaras. It seems to
have had also a considerable vogue in the south in the first six
centuries of the Christian era, as we know from Pallava records
and South Indian literature. In Gujarat it had at all times a
glorious, if restricted, life. In the twelfth century however when
Kumarpalap comes to power it suddenly rises into prominence.
An Acharya of outstanding ability, scholarship and wide vision,
comparable only to Sankara, arose among them. Hemachandra
Suri, ascetic, lexicographer, epic poet and teacher is indeed a
unique personality, one of the greatest that India has produced.
His main contribution to Jainism may be generally described as
a very successful attempt to combine the Aryan culture with Jain
thought. In his Lives of Great Men—the Purusha Charita
—an epic in many volumes—Hemachandra popularised in a Jain
garb the entire mythology of the Hindus. The stories of the
Mahabharata and Ramayana and the great traditions of the past
were all embodied in this monumental work which earned for its
author the title of Kalikata Vyasa. Hemachandra is one of the
makers of modern Indian mind and takes his place with Valmiki,
Vyasa and Sankara.

Hemachandra wrote in Sanskrit and the impetus he gave to
the language was no doubt responsible for the great amount of
Sanskrit literature produced at this time in Gujarat. Balachandra
Suri (Vasanta Vilas, 1296), Yasapala (author of Maha Maha
Vijaya), Ramachandra Suri (Nala Vilasa), Vastupala himself
(Naranarayanija), to mention but few, are among the prominent
Jain authors of the thirteenth century who contributed to the
richness of Sanskrit. Jainism after Hemachandra took its place as
a great vehicle of Sanskrit culture.
Nor was the Hindu mind of the time in North India limited to the cultivation of literature and arts. Social reconstruction which Islamic invasions necessitated could only be based on Smritis. Devala, writing in Sind, and Medhadhiti, writing at the time of the Muslim invasions, had both of them to deal with the problem of social adjustment. Devala was faced with the problem of conversions, of higher castes who had been made slaves, etc. The Prayaschitta section of the Smritis assumed more and more importance. Defensively, the Smritis were strengthened in order to make apostasy difficult; at the same time provision had also to be made for taking back into society those forcibly removed from it. Consequently in the social thought of the time there is a double and apparently contradictory process. There is the tendency of all societies on the defensive to be more rigid in their rules, to be more violent in their reactions towards non-conformity, in fact to be more reactionary. On the other hand, there is the tendency to find solutions for problems which the original lawgivers did not have in mind.

The number of commentaries and nibandhas (or digests) produced by Hindu India during the period between 1200-1500 is indeed voluminous. The great Mitakshara of Vijnaneswara cannot be placed earlier than the twelfth century. Kalluka, the most famous commentator of Manusmrut, lived early in the fourteenth century in Bengal. Chandeswara, who belonged to Bihar and who wrote numerous digests of Smritis, claims that he was a minister and had himself weighed in gold in 1314 A.D. (in the time of Allauddin Khilji). It is also noteworthy that Danaratnakara mentions him as having rescued the earth from the flood of Mlechhas. In fact this period was the heyday of writers on Smriti for the reason that the adjustment of social relationships had become an important problem.

From what has been stated above it will be seen that there was no domination of the Hindu mind by Islam. Such influences as became apparent in the field of thought were in religion and here the ancient Bhakti philosophy merged harmoniously with the Sufi doctrines of Islam. It is difficult to recognise much difference between the mystic songs of Ramananda, Kabir and Mirabai and the Sufi saints of Islam and the influence of the one on the other cannot be definitely claimed or established.

The growth of vernacular literature as evidencing the resilience of Hindu mind and the influence of Islam has already been alluded to. A comparison between the Sanskrit and vernacular productions of this period would show that while Sanskrit under the weight of its immense literature was becoming more and more unreal, ornate, technical and unrelated to life and the aspirations, spiritual or social, of the people, vernacular poetry was showing a naturalness and beauty which reflected a living faith. It is not only in the devotional songs of Vidyapati, Kabir and Mira that we find these. The love-songs in the vernacular have a freshness which the erotic poetry of the Sanskrit stylists lack. But the importance of Sanskrit did not decline. It alone united the Hindus. From Travancore to Kashmir the language of scholarship and thought of the Hindus continued to be Sanskrit. Without the continued cultivation of Sanskrit the Hindu people would have lost all sense of unity. But at the same time Sanskrit had become totally divorced from the life of the common man. It was only by tying the vernaculars to the thought-forms and traditions of Sanskrit that this dilemma was overcome and this is also an achievement of the period under survey.