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S. ABID HUSAIN

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S. ABID HUSAIN

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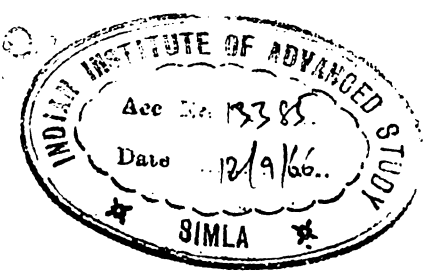

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Foreword

The vital role that general education can play in our universities is now being gradually recognized in academic circles. The Radhakrishnan Commission Report published in 1950, first emphasized the need for general education and made certain recommendations for its provision. The Ministry of Education organized conferences and seminars and drew the attention of universities towards its significance. A number of teachers and scholars drawn from various universities visited the United States and the United Kingdom to study the working of general education at various centres and to get first hand knowledge about the progress of various programmes of study. The University Grants Commission has now engaged the services of an expert to advise Indian universities on the implementation of general education programmes and fifteen universities have already made these programmes a part and parcel of their regular course of studies.

Aligarh Muslim University was among the first to adopt a full and integrated programme of general education courses. Experience showed clearly the need for reading material to be especially prepared for the purpose of this new type of teaching which differs from the traditional one in method as well as in content. When approached, the University Grants Commission entrusted Aligarh Muslim University with the task of preparing reading material suitable for general education courses at Indian universities.

The series here presented, like general education itself, may not find agreement among all concerned. It is not meant to serve as a text which would be completely digested, let alone memorized or crammed. On the contrary it is intended to arouse curiosity, stimulate thinking and broaden the outlook of our students. The selections and samples are expected to enable students to use their intelligence and widen their understanding and appreciation. They may lead to a sense of values urgently needed today.

Another important and accepted aspect of general education is its complementary character. In our country, there is a great and urgent need for more people who are properly trained and educated to earn a living through performing competently the many functions on which our society depends. It is equally important, however, that colleges and universities also impart an education which enables students to live a fuller and more rewarding life. To quote the Report of the University Education Commission (pages 118-119): "The interests and opportunities and demands of life are not limited to any few subjects one may elect to study. They cover the entire range of nature and of society. That is the liberal education which best enables one to live a full life, usually including an experience of mastery in some specialized field. . . ." To a student, "a general education course should be to open windows in many directions, so that most of the varied experiences of his life and most elements of his environment, shall have meaning and interest to him."

The task, then, in preparing reading material for general education purposes was clear as well as complex. On the one hand, the mounting walls between the ever-increasing number of compartments of specialized knowledge had to be disregarded so that fragments could be re-assembled into that unity of knowledge which exists in human experience. On the other hand, it was necessary to present only so much of content as students in all traditional branches of knowledge could be expected to manage and to understand as an integrated whole. For, as Whitehead rightly remarked, "a student should not be taught more than he can think about."

Furthermore there is agreement that integration cannot be achieved by providing students with readymade opinions concerning questions that arise in the course of general education. On the contrary, if they are to be encouraged to think for themselves and to seek their own answers, they have to be confronted with errors of the past or doubts of the present, with divergent judgments or open alternatives, as well as with the beauty of scientific proof or the force of moral conviction.

The complete scheme of this series will be found on page ii where a systematic list of the publications is shown. While it adheres to the traditional division into Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities, many of the expository volumes

straddle more than one field, and most of the source material touches upon problems not easily assigned to any one area only.

No student is likely to read and absorb all volumes; but every student will find instruction and inspiration in several of the volumes if he uses them properly under the guidance of his teachers. Large though the collection is, it cannot possibly aspire at complete comprehensiveness. Since "selection is the essence of teaching" (Whitehead) it had equally to be the principle of planning of this series. And since choice implies omission, many important disciplines had to be somewhat neglected, and others to be left out entirely. Unavoidably, what is here regarded as the result of careful consideration, may elsewhere appear as arbitrary.

The readers of these volumes, teachers and students alike, are the ones whom this publication wants to serve. From them, too, the authors, compilers, editors and advisers of this project hope to hear. It represents a co-operative effort in preparation and publication. Its success depends on further co-operation between "producers and consumers." Comments and criticisms are invited, to be addressed to: The Director, General Education Reading Material Project, Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. Since it is planned to translate the series into Hindi and Urdu, changes which may seem desirable, can easily be introduced when this is done.

In the end, the University acknowledges with gratitude the services rendered by the various contributors, reviewers, and the members of the Advisory Committee and all those due to whose keen interest and ready co-operation, the Directorate has been able to complete the Project. We are particularly grateful to the University Grants Commission who entrusted us with the task and assisted us liberally in this venture.

B. H. ZAIDI,
Vice-Chancellor

Aligarh Muslim University, 1962

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Introduction

We have read the fascinating story of the evolution of life, the emergence of man, and the development of human society.[1] We now know how life began in the form of one-celled living beings, how different kinds of animals and plants were evolved in the course of billions of years, until finally man appeared, a fine handiwork of Nature, endowed with reason, imagination and will, and how in association with others like himself, he has developed the present forms of political, social and economic life. In our last course, we reached the point where the mediaeval feudal society, after undergoing tremendous changes, took the shape of modern industrial society. This study of the process of social evolution was made with reference to European society for two reasons. Firstly, the only systematic and complete social history which we have is that of Europe, consequently no other society than the European is suitable for observing clearly the process of social evolution and the laws which govern it. Secondly we in India have modelled our political and social organization on the European pattern, and have adopted many European institutions. So for practical reasons too, it is necessary for us to undertake a survey of the social history of Europe and study the development of European ideas and institutions so that we may understand them well and make proper use of them in our country.

But howsoever useful the knowledge of European society may be for the understanding of our political and economic problems, the study of the history of our own culture is necessary for the correct appraisal and effective solution of the problems facing us. Politics and economics are largely matters of organization. No doubt they are related to the national character of a people but not so intimately as to be inseparable from it. A nation

[1] It is presumed that the present volume will be taken up after the books entitled, *The Earth We Live On*, *The Story of Life*, *Evolution of Society* and *Modern Industrial Society* have been gone through.

may borrow some political and economic ideas and institutions from others and adapt them to its own needs and conditions. But culture in the narrower and more specific sense, expressed in poetry and literature, philosophy, fine arts, and way of life including customs, morals and manners, is organically related to the basic character of a social group living in a particular physical environment. That is, it grows from the specific character of the group as a plant grows from the soil. So the extent to which one group can absorb cultural influences from another, with advantage to itself, is limited. No nation can adopt a foreign culture wholesale without losing its soul. That is why our young men and women who have to build a new national culture must study our own cultural heritage which has come down to us from the past as the foundation on which the new cultural structure will have to be erected. They should, however, acquire an understanding and appreciation of those elements of the western and other cultures which, after undergoing the necessary changes, can be introduced into our emerging cultural pattern.

So before studying the problems of modern Indian society we shall survey the growth of the national culture of India from its beginning to the point when the establishment of British government and the sudden impact of the western culture on Indian culture, disturbed the balance of our cultural life which we have got to restore now. The problems themselves will be discussed in the following discourse on *Modern Indian Society*.[1]

But it has to be remembered that Indian culture is a striking example of unity in diversity. We have here a number of diverse regional cultures and some based on religion. But side by side with these, there has always been a common national culture providing a basis of unity amid these diversities. It is this common national culture[2] which we shall study in these pages

[1] Another publication of the Project entitled *Modern Indian Society* is here referred to. The book deals with specific problems, political, economic and social.

[2] The present volume presents a particular viewpoint regarding Indian culture. This does not overrule other viewpoints or interpretations of our culture but is being presented with a view to stimulate independent thinking among students on this subject.

and not the various Indian cultures. Similarly in the following volume while discussing cultural problems we will deal only with the problems of the new national culture which we have to build up. This is the most vital problem of our national life, because our freedom, welfare and progress all depend on national unity which requires a strong and lasting foundation of a common culture.

In the end I must mention that for this short book which has been written for the Reading Material Project, I have drawn exclusively from my earlier book, *The National Culture of India.*

S. A. H.

Some General Features

THINK of a moonlit night in summer when everything seems to be wrapped in a mysterious silence. You have finished your day's work and have retired to bed. But having had a nap during the day you do not feel sleepy. The feeling of solitude, which is ever present in the dreary atmosphere of an Indian summer, has become deeper. You feel as if there is nothing in the great infinite universe except you and the star-spangled heavens. By living in such an atmosphere the capacity for contemplation grows stronger than other mental powers. All sense of difference or distinction between the various natural phenomena or of the duality of man and nature vanishes. One becomes conscious of the unity underlying the whole universe. The capacity for contemplation and the sense of unity in diversity are, therefore, the two most prominent characteristics of the Indian mind. Both these things point to a deep religious consciousness. It was under their influence that the people of India developed a strongly religious bent of mind and their whole cultural life became dominated by religion. The history of Indian civilization shows us that though the state and government became to some extent free from the dominating influence of religion at a comparatively early stage, yet moral life, social organization, science, literature and art were deeply imbued with the religious spirit.

One would expect that in a mind where thought dominates, passion and desires would not be very strong. But that is not the case with the Indian mind. Because on the one hand, in this physical environment hot blood courses through the veins, stimulating the emotions, and on the other hand, imagination with which the Indian mind is endowed in no less measure than with intellect fans the flame of passion further. So emotionalism and sensuousness are other essential characteristics of the Indian temperament. But as these tendencies are opposed to the basic

speculative tendency, there is always a strong effort to suppress them. If successful this effort leads more or less to austerity and abstinence, but if unsuccessful, to nervous disorder. But there is one field in which Indians give free scope to their feeling and imagination and that is the field of religion. Except a small class of learned men who are guided by philosophical speculation in their search for the ultimate truth, all Indians conceive of the Absolute Reality as a personal God whose love they regard as the path to salvation. Their emotions express themselves with full force and intensity in religious ritual and devotion as well as in religious poetry and art.

In India the heat is not so excessive and the dry season not so long as to parch the soil.[1] After three or four months of dry heat, dark clouds come and saturate the thirsty land with life-giving water. Owing to the mild climate in the greater part of the country the basic wants of the people were few and the natural resources for supplying them ample. The economic factor was, therefore, not as important in their lives as in colder countries. The mainstay of their life was tilling the soil and a good harvest depended on favourable monsoons which they believed to be subject to the will of the gods. So their talents and energy were devoted not so much to the invention of efficient ways and instruments of production as to the search for efficacious prayers and sacrifices. And if these failed to please the gods they had no alternative but to submit to their will. This indifference to economic effort and dependence upon divine will was at its best true contentment and at its worst sheer physical and mental laziness. But the result in both cases was the same. Economic values could not find their due place in the general pattern of Indian culture and the lack of a solid economic foundation made our whole cultural structure weak and unstable.

The fatalistic trend of the Indian mind can be explained by the influence of the physical environment in another way also. In most parts of the country there is, on the whole, a regularity in the changes of the weather. Each season begins at a fixed time, weather changes occur within fixed limits; events which

[1] For influence of climate on Man, please refer to *The Earth We Live On*, another publication of the Project.

disturb the normal routine of nature are rare. There are no volcanoes and earthquakes are mild and infrequent. No stronger natural calamities than storms and hurricanes of moderate intensity are experienced by the people. The most important effect produced on the Indian mind by the observation of the regularity and the continuity of natural processes is the feeling that the operation of the moral law is just as regular and continuous and the moral consequences of every action as definite and inevitable as the succession of seasons. The determinism or the so-called "fatalism" of the people of India is not based on the idea that man is a mere tool but on the belief that in initiating action he is free within certain limits, but once he has done something, a chain of reactions is started which is not in his power to stop or change. So he must accept with patience the consequences of his action.

The Indian people did not have to carry on a struggle for existence against the ruthlessness of nature. They had only to wait for the rain-bearing monsoon to come and pour rain upon their fields. "The rain, the rain, the welcome rain". This was another reason why they failed to develop vigour and vitality. Their philosophy of life did not aim at contending with nature to wring its mysteries out of it or to conquer and control its forces but to submit to its inscrutable ways, to be initiated into the spirit of the Reality permeating it and to live in harmony with it. Their ideal, in short, was not struggle but peace, not self-assertion but self-abnegation.

These are some of the common characteristics which we see in every picture of Indian life and culture which history reveals to us. In the new pattern of national culture which we have to build up, surface lines and colours may change but the ground is likely to remain the same. Even if the demands of the new age make a change inevitable it can only be one of form, not of essence or character.

CHAPTER TWO

The Beginnings of Nationhood and National Culture in Ancient India

Pre-Vedic Indian Culture

INDIAN history has so far been traced back to the Vedic Period which begins according to most historians about 1500 B.C. though some place it much earlier than that. The Rig-Veda is the oldest document and the Vedic Age the earliest period of our history. The time prior to it is the subject, not of history but of archaeology. Till recently we knew almost nothing about prehistoric India but the discovery in 1922 of Mohenjo Daro, coming within a few years of that of Harappa, has opened a vast field of investigation.

Archaeological research has shown that India, Mesopotamia, the Aegean Coast and Egypt were the homelands of peasants whose culture was matriarchal i.e., a culture in which women, and not men, were heads of families. This culture may have originated in this country and gradually spread westwards or vice vĕrsa. It was so far advanced that it had actually built up a number of city-states in the Indus Valley. The relics of two of these cities have been dug up at Mohenjo Daro and Harappa. The preliminary investigations of archaeologists show that in the whole valley of the river Sindhu (Indus) and the adjoining region covering the present Pakistan provinces of Baluchistan, North-West Frontier Province, part of the Punjab and Sindh, there was more or less the same type of culture reaching as far south as Kathiawar. Recent excavations have shown traces of this culture in the Indian part of the Punjab, Western U.P. and Rajputana.

The discovery of the Sindh Valley Culture has revolutionised our ideas about pre-historic India. Until recently we had supposed that before the Aryans and the Dravidians, India was inhabited by primitive people. But now we have reason to

believe that some 2,000 years before the coming of the Aryans, there was in one part of India an agrarian culture of an almost secondary level, which means that it must have existed for several hundred years and must have been developing continuously to reach that level. The Dravidians who were according to one theory the inheritors of land, according to another, the successors to the Indus Valley civiiization had built up another advanced matriarchal culture which, as we shall see later, underwent a profound change under the influence of the Vedic Culture and which in its turn, exercised great influence on the future development of the Indian national culture.

Vedic Hindu Culture

We do not know for certain when the Indo-Aryans came to India. Most historians now think, that about 1500 B.C. these cousins of the European Aryans began to settle in the area watered by the river Sindh and its five branches roughly corresponding to what is now called Western Pakistan.

The new-comers had belonged to nomadic patriarchal tribes and were vigorous, hardy, warlike people. Long before they entered the fertile valleys of the Sindh and its tributaries, the Sindh Valley culture had come to an end and its successor the Dravidian culture had been driven out of Northern and North-Western India by wild tribes. After a long and continuous struggle these tribes were subjugated by the Aryans.

The early history of the Aryans in India, presents a very interesting picture of a nomadic war-like people, gradually settling down in a new country and advancing from the primary to the secondary stage of culture.

As the holy Vedas (specially the Rig-Veda) are the only source of knowledge about the Indo-Aryans and as the language they spoke is called Vedic, so the early stage of their cultural life is called that of the Vedic culture and the later one that of the Vedic Hindu culture.

The Vedic Hindu culture was centred in a religion of which the main sources were the hymns of the ancient Rishis considered to be inspired or revealed and arranged in four collections called the Vedas. The earliest and the most important of them

the Rig-Veda has already been mentioned. Three others, the Sama Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda had, in course of time, been added to them and all the four were regarded to be equally sacred. Religion during the Vedic period was centred in direct personal experience expressing itself spontaneously in devotional songs and sacrifices. During the period of Vedic Hindu culture it became an elaborate system based, on the one hand, on the profound religious philosophy of the Vedanta or Upanishads, and on the other hand, a complicated mass of religious ceremonies and sacrifices which the priests alone could conduct. These priests now formed a hereditary class or caste called the Brahmins, the highest in the social hierarchy, followed by Kshatriyas, the warriors, Vaishyas, the traders, and the Sudras, or manual workers.

No doubt this social re-organisation put an end to the simplicity, freedom and equality that had characterised the Vedic Age, but, on the whole, it greatly increased efficiency. The new order began to extend in all directions, so that Magadh (in Southern Bihar), Bengal in the east, Gujrat in the west, and the whole of Maharashtra in the south, came under the influence of the Vedic Hindu culture. In South India, the Brahmins set up several colonies and propagated the Hindu religion among the Dravidians who had so far resisted the influence of Hindu culture in all spheres of life. Even the caste system had not been accepted by them.

Some idea of the enterprising campaign through which the Hindu religion was carried to South India and Ceylon, can be formed by reading the Ramayana. This is the second famous epic of ancient India in which the story of Rama and Sita has been told in a half-historical, half-mythological way. The Ramayana is also an important source of the general, as well as the cultural history, of this period.

Towards the close of this period, came the invasion of India by Alexandar, the Great, which had a two-fold importance. First, it was the beginning of a direct contact with the Greeks which continued as long as the independent states set up by Greek rulers in Syria, Bactria, and other neighbouring countries and, subsequently in the North-West of India, lasted. Secondly, it was probably one of the factors which contributed to the unifica-

tion of almost the whole of Northern India in the first national state under Chandragupta Maurya.

This contact with the Greeks was too short to exercise significant influence on any Indian culture. As for the rulers of Bactria and of the small Greek states in the North-West of India, which were once welded into a powerful kingdom under Menander, they were Greek only in name. Racially they were a mixed people and culturally they had been so long out of touch with the mother country that they did not have any real Greek culture to offer to India. On the contrary, the Greek rulers of the Indian states were themselves Indianised to such an extent that they accepted the Buddhist religion.

So there is no basis for supposing that ancient India was, in any appreciable degree, influenced by the Greek Culture. Even the hypothesis that the Greek theatre influenced the Indian theatre, has not been satisfactorily proved.

The greater part of India had now a common culture. But the common elements were only religious faith and ritual and the caste system. For the rest, each region stuck to its own way of living and to its own language.

This common culture had produced for the first time in the history of India a feeling of oneness in the minds of the people. Some European historians assert that throughout the ancient period, each part of India was regarded as a separate land. There was neither the idea of a common country nor a name for it, Aryavarta being used only for the valley of the Ganges. They quote the Chinese traveller, Yuan Chwang, "The People of Intu have a separate name for each part of their country." But may one ask where did Yuan Chwang find the word Intu which he uses for the whole country? Intu is obviously the same as Hindu (originally Sindhu) and one of these names must have been in common use in India when the Chinese traveller came here. Besides, Bharata-Varsha is also a very old name for the whole of India.

Chandragupta Maurya saved the country from the danger of Greek domination by defeating Seleucus, and welded the whole of Northern India into one state, and his grandson Asoka extended the frontiers of this state till it embraced the whole of India except a small region in the extreme south. Political

unity combined with cultural unity strengthened the feeling of oneness which was just beginning to grow, and the people of India could, in a sense, be called a nation.

There should be no misunderstanding about the sense in which the word nation is used here. It is not implied that more than two thousand years ago, India had anything like the national solidarity of a Western country today. But there is no doubt that in spite of the linguistic, racial and a good deal of cultural differences, the general religious and cultural unity and the consciousness of being the subjects of the same sovereign, must have produced a sense of oneness which could be expressed by the word "nationhood".

Rise of Buddhism

We have seen that in course of time the Vedic Hindu religion had become a complicated system of religious ceremonies and sacrifices which they could not perform without the help of the Brahmins. The direct relation between man and God which is the very soul of religion no longer existed. As a reaction to this the Upanishads had completely rejected all rites and sacrifices and presented a new religious system based on idealistic philosophy, which the masses could not understand. Moreover, the application of this philosophy to practical life was not clear. Its attitude towards action was explained in different ways. To most students of Upanishads it seemed that Karma which involved the soul in the endless chain of re-birth signified action in general, but that in order to attain Moksha one had to give up all action. So, long before Yoga was formulated as a philosophy, many deeply religious people had taken to an ascetic life. This asceticism not only meant an escape or running away from the responsibilities and demands of life, but it also made it impossible to express, in daily living with others, the sentiments of love and service. This caused a serious conflict in the minds of the religious people themselves.

One other thing against which the true spirit of religion revolted was that the caste system did not treat all persons as equal to one another. Those who define this system rightly point out that it was the first, and under the circumstances then prevailing, the best attempt to weld different races in different

stages of cultural evolution into a harmonious society, and though it gave to the conquered races an inferior position, it did not subject them to economic exploitation, as many exponents of social equality today are doing to what are called the non-self-governing territories, and so with the general progress of civilization the economic condition of the Sudras or manual workers improved considerably. But this was exactly what made these workers feel more strongly the unfair treatment meted to them. Those of the higher castes who were endowed with a true and deep religious spirit could not reconcile their conscience to the tradition which excluded the Sudras from participation in the higher religious life and which even forbade them to read the Vedas.

Then came Buddha, the man with a great soul who was full of love for all mankind and felt for every living creature. He opposed both the Vedic philosophy which the ordinary man could not understand and religious ceremonies based on superstition. He preached that we should have no prejudice against the people of other races and should not be unjust to the workers. We should sympathise with all and love all. We should lead a moral life and develop our best qualities. He started a new movement for the reformation of the Vedic religion, and the religion preached by him later developed into a world wide religion, with its followers in the whole of eastern and southern Asia, from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

But up to the middle of the third century B.C. Buddhism was only a side-current in the stream of Indian life. The main current was still represented by Vedic Hinduism. The area in which Buddhism mainly flourished was Magadh, where Hinduism had come comparatively later and had not yet taken as firm a root as in North-Western India. Though the spirit of love and service which permeated Buddhism, made a special appeal to the Indian mind, and though wherever Buddha's message reached, it found a ready response, yet due to the difficulties of communication and to political unrest, i.e., the constant fighting among petty principalities, it took long for new intellectual or spiritual movements to propagate themselves. So it might normally have been another century or two before the message of Buddha could reach all parts of the vast country. But the

conversion of Emperor Asoka to Buddhism and the real zeal with which he devoted himself to its propagation, accelerated the progress of the new religion. Its intrinsic attraction aided by the atmosphere of peace produced by Asoka's efficient administration and the resources of a great empire, which were placed at its disposal, enabled it to spread throughout the country in the course of a few decades. But religious toleration had become so firmly established as an inseparable part of India's state policy, that in spite of his unbounded zeal for his new religion, Asoka did not make any effort to suppress Hinduism. The latter still flourished more or less in every part of the country, especially in North-Western India. But for several centuries to come, its influence was eclipsed by that of Buddhism and in some areas even by that of Janism.

Buddhistic Culture (260 B.C.-300 A.D.)

Under Asoka and his successors, Buddhism exercised, as state religion, a great influence over all departments of life and changed the outward form and inner spirit of Indian culture to such an extent that it could be regarded as a new, essentially Buddhistic culture. The five and a half centuries from the conversion of Asoka to Buddhism to the rise of the Gupta empire, could in a sense be called the Buddhistic period in the cultural history of India. Though Buddhism as a religion never reigned supreme as the Vedic Hindu religion had done before it, because Hinduism, and for some time Jainism also shared its hold over the minds of the people in the social and cultural fields, it exercised a strong influence during this period, and during Asoka's reign it enjoyed the status of the national culture of India. After Asoka, his empire broke up. This had a bad effect on Buddhist culture. Hinduism, which received new life from new intellectual and spiritual movements, began to challenge Buddhism. Still, on the whole, almost to the end of this period Buddhistic culture held its own. Moreover, the new Hinduism itself assimilated some elements of Buddhism. In short, during this period the Buddhistic culture exercised so much influence over the Indian mind that when it was driven out from the country by the triumphant resurgence of Hinduism, it left its deep impression which could never be wiped off.

In giving a very brief account of the main characteristics of Buddhistic culture, we have to begin with the Buddhist state as represented by the empire of Asoka, which was different, to a considerable extent, from the Hindu state, as the Buddhist religious movement was different from Hindu religion. In form and scope it was not different from the Hindu state. It maintained the feudal-federal structure which Chandragupta Maurya had given it and continued to be a cultural state and also religious in the sense that the ruler, though giving full religious freedom to all, made his own religion the basis of law and order and of general moral policy. But unlike the Hindu state it excluded the priestly class from its counsels. The Bhikshus were never given the status of political advisers to the Rajah which the Brahmins had enjoyed in the Hindu state. On the other hand the Buddhist Rajah took to some extent the position of the head or at least the protector of religion.

The power of the Brahmins, during the Buddhistic period declined not only in the political but also in the social field. One of the great cultural contributions of Buddhism was that though it could not do away with social distinctions, it reduced their importance. By opening its doors to persons of all castes, the Buddhist Sangh shook the religious foundations of the caste system. Outside the Sangh, the castes persisted but the order of importance of different castes changed in practice, though not in law. The nobles who were generally Kshatriya and rich merchants who were generally Vaishya, came to be regarded as higher in the social scale. But it must be remembered that the social influence of Buddhism, like its religious influence, was mainly confined to the valley of the Ganges. Its influence on other parts of India can be regarded as slight.

Another important reform brought about during the Buddhistic period was that animal sacrifices, which Asoka had stopped by order, were later voluntarily given up by Hindus in general—except a few sects like the worshippers of Kali. But in checking animal sacrifice and meat-eating as well as in propagating the doctrine of Ahimsa (non-violence), Jainism played perhaps a greater part than Buddhism.

During this period, learning and education were as much influenced by Buddhism as state and society. Before Buddha,

the language of learning as well as of religion was Sanskrit. All the sacred books were in the Vedic and Sanskrit languages which only the Brahmins, and the Kshatriyas could read and understand. Religious instruction was confined to the higher castes. Another aspect of the spirit of universal equality and brotherhood, which inspired Buddha, was that instead of Sanskrit he chose the language of the common people to proclaim the truth which was in him, so that all could share it. The Eastern dialect of the Indo-Aryan language which was spoken in Buddha's home-land, was made by him the vehicle for the spread of his religion. Probably by the time of Asoka, this dialect which had become the religious language of Buddhism, had been carried by its followers to distant parts of India so that it was not quite new to the people in general. These must have been the reasons why Asoka chose this language for the edicts he caused to be carved on stone-pillars. These edicts, the oldest specimens of writing so far discovered in India, are in the Brahmi script which came from Semitic sources and from which the modern Indo-Aryan scripts, the Deva Nagari etc. are derived. Apparently writing had long been known in India and there were people in all parts of India who could read the Brahmi script, otherwise there would have been no point in getting these edicts carved on stone pillars. Later when the sacred Buddhist literature came to be written down, a language known as Pali was much more current in the Ganges valley and the surrounding areas than the Eastern dialect in which Buddha preached. That is why these books were written in Pali. In short, Buddhism, by making the popular tongues the language of religion opened the door of religious learning to the common people and thus dealt another blow to the caste system.

As far as learning is concerned, the interest of the Buddhists as such was confined to religious law. Scholarship in the strict sense, was still the special right of the Brahmins. The great systems of philosophy, religious law and political economy which were set up during this period, and the great epics composed towards the end of this period, were the works of Brahmins. Even the philosophical interpretation of Buddhism in idealistic

and speculative systems is ascribed to the Brahmins who had joined the Buddhist Sangh.

But the creative impulse, the vitality and vigour which Buddhism had released in the Indian mind by liberating it from "intemperate" asceticism expressed itself most conspicuously in art.

The flowering of Buddhist art is seen in the caves of Ajanta and their frescoes.[1] These paintings executed from the second century B.C. to the third century A.D. present the characteristics of the Buddhist art at its best. The first thing to be noticed is that the Ajanta painting is, from the point of view of artistic skill and technical perfection, of such a high standard that it must be regarded as the result of development through centuries. This can only be explained by linking the Ajanta art, through the Dravidian culture of South India to the Sindh Valley civilization, because the Vedic Hindu culture which prevailed before the Buddhistic culture in North India, is not known to have had any painting worth the name.

This hypothesis would account for the fact that these frescoes give as prominent a place to non-Aryan figures like those of the Nagas as to the Aryan ones. Another characteristic of these paintings, as of all Buddhist art, is simplicity and restraint, that is, the avoidance of elaborate decoration and ornamentation as well as that of excessive emotion, which can be regarded as the direct influence of Buddha's teachings. At the same time, the charming Bodhisatva Padampani shows that Buddhistic art combined with a deep spirituality and inwardness the capacity to take delight in physical beauty and grace.

Regeneration of Hinduism

Various causes have been given why Buddhism lost its hold over the mind of the Indian people. But the real cause probably was that the Hindu religion which had won the hearts of the people long before the birth of Buddhism, succeeded through continued efforts in removing the defects causing its temporary decline, and won back the Buddhists to it.

[1] For a detailed discussion, please refer to *Introduction To Indian Painting* by Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, another publication of the Project.

The main significance of the period of change from Buddhism to Hinduism is that while the loss of its position as a national or state religion put many difficulties in its way, it proved to be a blessing in disguise. Being now freed from political motives, Hindu culture could grow in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom and strike out new lines. So far, all Hindu thought had been centred round religion. Now various sciences began to advance more or less independently. They made no open declaration of independence and often used the name of religion to invest their words with authority, but in reality the process of specialization and secularization of knowledge had begun. In the field of philosophy new systems of thought were set up during this period.

The efforts for the rebirth of Hinduism, going on during this period, ceased to be purely intellectual and stirred emotions, releasing a powerful poetic impulse which found its expression in great epics. The stories of the Mahabarata and the Ramayana,[1] were retold in the second century B.C. with a new zest and vigour, so that the great deeds of the heroes of the Vedic Hindu age may impress the people with the glory of that age and inspire them with a new urge for life.

But all these achievements in the fields of philosophy, law, politics, economics and literature would not have succeeded in giving new life to Hinduism and helping it to regain its lost supremacy without a spiritual revolution or the rebirth of living faith. This was brought about by the Bhagwad Gita which forms a part of the Mahabharata and which gave an inspiring message of a new life of action, thus lifting the gloom which the negative attitude to life, based on the wrong explanation of the teachings of the Upanishads, had cast over Hindu society.

The Bhagwad Gita is especially important as a corrective to the inability of the Indian mind to move or act which had been increased by the wrong explanation of the doctrine of Karma. It uses the most powerful motive, that of the love of the Absolute Truth, to urge the Hindu mind to heroic action.

[1] Extracts from these have been included in *Selections From World Literature—Ancient*, published by the Project.

Puranic Hindu Culture

Though the Buddhistic culture did occupy the position of India's national culture for several centuries, it could never possess the whole of the Indian mind. In the some corner there was always room for Hinduism. In the first century of the Christian era, as the influence of Buddhism began to decline, Hinduism which had made daring experiments in various fields of thought and had carefully studied the trends of time and adjusted itself to them, began gradually to recover its lost position so that after the emergence of the Gupta empire, it again become the national religion and laid the foundation of a new form of Hindu culture.

The reshaping of Hinduism was mainly the work of the Brahmins whose interest as well as conviction had made them the strongest opponents of Buddhism. Individually many Brahmins had joined the Buddhist Sangh but as a class they adhered to their old religion. Though they had lost much of their influence as religious leaders and political counsellors, they were still highly respected as scholars and were employed to the high posts of court astrologers even by the Buddhist Rajahs. But during this period the most learned Brahmins probably lived a retired life in forests and meditated in solitude.

It was they who reconstructed the principles of Hindu life by striking new paths in the fields of religious philosophy, law and political economy, and revived the memory of the heroes of the Vedic Hindu age through the inspired and inspiring epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata. Though they had no formal organisation like the Buddhist Sangh, the sharing of common ideas and interest helped them to think and work together. By looking at the cultural history of five hundred years, one has the impression that their great reformative and missionary effort was according to some sort of plan. The message of Sri Krishna in the Bhagwad Gita and Manu's Dharmasastra reflect the religious and social ideas of the high caste Hindus of this period and show that Hinduism, partly influenced by Buddhism and partly profiting by the study of the causes of its rise and fall, was trying to evolve a balanced religious system and a comprehensive and practicable code of life. But it had to do something more to win the hearts of the common people

especially those of the Dravidians and other older inhabitants of India. These people had their own religious ideas which were deeply ingrained in their minds and their own traditions and customs which varied from place to place. For instance, they followed the image-cult and it had become more strongly entrenched by receiving the sanction of Buddhism. Without making concessions on these points it was not possible for Hinduism to attract them. Then the caste system, on which Hinduism was founded was another great obstacle. It was unknown in pre-Aryan India, so it was very difficult to make it acceptable to them. But the resourceful Brahmins succeeded in overcoming all these difficulties and by adjustment and compromise evolved a religious system which was more acceptable to the people of India than Buddhism and served as the basis of a Hindu culture, that possessed a fresh life, a new vigour.

The Puranic Hindu religion, which served as the basis of the new Indian culture, had been taking shape since the second century B.C. but its great opportunity to emerge as a complete and coherent system and to regain a national position came in the fourth century A.D. when in the atmosphere of political unity and stability created by the Gupta empire, and under its patronage, it extended its influence over the whole country. But it has to be noted that the new Hindu state, though religious in the sense that its functions included the promotion of the Hindu religion and the enforcement of the Dharmasastra as the law of the land was like the Buddhist state, free from the influence of the priestly class. Though the Brahmins were still attached to the courts as Purohits (priests), they were no longer political advisers to the kings.

To get some idea of the social conditions in the Puranic Hindu period, it is necessary to cast a glance at Manu's Dharmasastra which had the status or position of civil as well as religious law in the greater part of the country. Manu's Dharmasastra, as was remarked before, takes the caste system as the most essential feature of the social system. But the recognition of human reason and local custom as sources of law like Sruti (revelation) and Smriti (tradition), enabled the state to make secular laws and established the principle that along with the common social organisation which the Hindu religion wanted to set up, the

various groups and communities which had their own way of life, should be recognized and their cultural and social traditions should be regarded in law in the same way as Hindu culture and tradition. In the various parts of the country, especially in South India, therefore, there were big regions and communities which while accepting the main articles of Hindu faith, were able to preserve their own culture, their own language, social customs and traditions and local laws. For instance in the South, some Dravidian communities had the matriarchal social system which was radically different from the patriarchal Hindu system.

During the Buddhist period, art had to a certain extent become secular, but science and literature remained under the protection or guardianship of religion. In the Puranic Hindu period, religion continued to be the pivot of all cultural life, but people began to understand more clearly the difference between the functions of the state and of religion. The state had now assumed an independent position. It was the protector and promoter of religion but no longer subordinate to it. Under its auspices, literature and fine arts got the opportunity of stepping out of the narrow limits of strictly religious thought and feeling, and widening their scope to embrace or include all aspects of human life. The patronage of the Gupta court enabled secular literature to flourish side by side with religious learning, and to attain to the rank of the classical literature in other ancient countries of the world.

A factor which greatly helped the progress of literature was the increased circulation of books. The art of expressing their thoughts in the Kharoshti and the Brahmi scripts had been learnt by the Indians many centuries ago. In North India, books were written on thin barks of certain trees and in South India on the leaves of some varieties of palms. A medical book written in India in 356 A.D. has been discovered in Turkestan which suggests that possibly books were by that time commonly used in India and were even exported to other countries. Sanskrit which had suffered a temporary check during the Buddhist period had now again become the religious, literary and scientific language of India.

For higher learning there were universities at Nalanda and

other places where students received religious and secular education at the expense of the state. Among secular sciences medicine, mathematics and astronomy were the most important in this period. Along with medicine, students also learnt surgery. The researches of the great scholars of this period Arya Bhatt, Varahamihar and Brahmagupta in mathematics and astronomy, and of Charak and Susurata in medicine, guided scientists in other lands for centuries. They had a direct influence on scientific thought in Arabia and other Islamic countries and an indirect one on Europe. Literature also made extraordinary progress in all its branches — epic, lyric, drama, prose stories — specially fables. Kalidas and Bhavabhuti, the most prominent dramatists of this age, have been recognized as world figures in classical literature.

About the painting, the sculpture and the architecture of the Puranic Hindu period, we know very little because fewer works of art of this age are now in existence than those of the earlier Buddhistic age. As far as buildings are concerned the reason that no traces of them is left seems to be two-fold. First most of the structures were built of lacquered wood which did not last long and secondly the valleys of the Ganges and the Yamuna which formed the hub or centre of the Puranic Hindu culture had been overrun for centuries by wild Central Asian tribes, Huns, Gurjars etc. and most of the buildings had been destroyed during their invasions. Also one or two fanatical rulers of the Delhi Sultanate pulled down temples. The only relics of this age left in Northern India, are the iron pillar at Delhi and the Orissa temples of which the big Bhuvaneshwar temple has great religious and historic importance.

Throughout the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. the Puranic Hindu culture dominated under the patronage of the Gupta empire, the whole of Northern India and the Deccan. Like the state which gave it the position of national culture, Puranic Hindu culture was a sort of "federal" structure. That is, within the frame-work or structure of a common religious and social organisation, it allowed each region to maintain or develop its own language and literature, art and architecture, customs and manners.

South India throughout the ancient period, was culturally

influenced by, and itself influenced, the north to a very great extent. We have already seen that about a thousand years before Christ, the missionary efforts of the Brahmins had succeeded in spreading the Vedic religion over South India but under the influence of South India they included the ancient Indian gods Siva and Vishnu in the Vedic pantheon (temple for the worship of all gods), thus converting itself into the vedic Hindu religion. Similarly about 200 B.C. Buddhism conquered the greater part of the South but only after it had taken the elements of personal devotion and the image-cult from the Dravidian people of the south. In the Puranic Hindu period also, the north and the south continued to influence each other. The secret of the victory which Puranic Hinduism won over Buddhism was that it adjusted itself better to popular faith in the south as well as in the north. So South India in spite of being outside the Gupta empire, welcomed the new Hindu religion and culture which drove out Buddhism from its strong position in the south during the fourth and fifth century.

But the Dravidian people of South India, more than any other people, preserved the independence of their special cultures, and retained complete "local autonomy" in the "cultural federation" of India. They accepted Sanskrit as their religious language but in daily intercourse and business, poetry, literature and science, they used their own Dravidian languages and their own scripts. They enriched their vocabulary by absorbing Sanskrit words but not in such large proportions as to change its face or character. In fact, the higher concept of Hinduism was confined to the upper classes. The common people went on worshipping their own gods and "mother goddesses" and treating small-pox and other diseases as signs of divine wrath to be appeased by animal sacrifices. Some communities retained the matriarchal social system. The caste system had been accepted after adapting it to local conditions. The Brahmins were the highest caste, but the Kshatriya and the Vaisya castes were almost non-existent. Besides the Sudras, there existed a very large number of "untouchable" communities. Within the main castes many sub-castes had been formed according to vocations.

In the second half of the fifth century the Gupta empire began to show signs of decline and the close of the century saw its

end. The country as well as its culture broke up into pieces. The Gupta court was the centre where the best minds of India had been brought together, for dedicating or devoting themselves to the service of religion, philosophy and science. It was a centre for exchange of ideas as well as a laboratory for the great experiment of building up a harmonious Indian culture. After it ceased to exist, the high ideal of national, cultural, as well as that of political unity was lost. Outwardly the Puranic Hindu culture continued to dominate India for several centuries to come, but in reality, it had less influence over the lives of the people than regional and communal cultures.

In the first half of the seventh century, political and cultural life in North India again rallied for a short period round the court of Harsa Vardhana, who founded in 610 A.D. an empire with Kanauj as his capital. Harsha, who had been converted to, or was at least inclined towards Buddhism, rivalled the Gupta emperors in promoting learning and literature. Yuan Chwang, who visited India during the reign of Harsha reports how the classical culture of India once more burst into new life at the court of this great emperor before it again declined.

At the end of the seventh century the glorious period of the Puranic Hindu culture and with it the third phase of the national unity of India, came to an end. As this unity was based on Hindu religion, which had no independent organisation like the Buddhist Sangh, it required the existence of a national state to maintain it. After the end of the Gupta and the Vardhana empires, North India could not achieve political unity for many centuries. So the disintegrated cultural life could not be integrated into one harmonious whole.

The reason why North India specially Madhya Desh, which had been the hub or centre of the Puranic Hindu and in fact of all Indian cultures, could not for centuries build up a state strong enough to restore political and cultural unity, seems to be, that the upper classes which had been playing the role of intellectual and cultural leaders since the inception of Hindu society, had been worn out by two thousand years of responsibility and power and enervated by the life of ease and comfort which accompanies power. So they had no longer the will and the energy required for the difficult work of reconstruction.

This happens in the history of all people, but in other countries when decay has set in in the upper layers of society, there is a sudden social change or upheaval and a fresh layer of people from below rise up and creates a new, healthy and vigorous culture. But in India the caste system, fortified by religious sanction, had fixed the social strata so rigidly that such a change was not possible.

Later, new blood was infused into the ruling class. That is, those tribes from Central Asia whose depredations, destruction, and robbery had shaken states throughout India adopted the Hindu religion and were admitted into the Kshatriya caste. This heralded an age of chivalry rich in heroic deeds, but unfortunately the clannish spirit of the Rajputs was not conducive to national unity. On the contrary, their unending feuds aggravated the wasting disease of disintegration which was eating into the vitals of India.

The Period of Political and Cultural Disintegration

In the history of Northern India the period of three hundred years from the beginning of the eighth to the end of the tenth century lies concealed behind a thick curtain. From the little we know, it appers that the whole of North India was divided into numerous little states and this had narrowed the outlook of the people. In religious and intellectual life, tradition was blindly followed. The Sivite and Vaishnavite sects of the Hindu religion had practically become barren as it had lost freshness, depth and force. Religious writing was on the whole confined to appendices to the Puranas and reproductions of the Smiritis etc. Ideas were taken on trust from predecessors and style was bound by inflexible rules. This was also true of poetry, drama and other branches of literature. All the juice was pressed out of them by the rigours of technique. There was very little of creative literature. Most of the books written were on prosody and other branches of literary technique, which laid down detailed rules from which writers could not deviate to the slightest degree, or commentaries on old philosophical and grammatical works, Puranas, Dharmasutras, Dharmasastras, epics and dramas. Even for the commentators there were precise rules which they had to follow at every step.

South India was, on the whole, free from this stagnation following too long a period of easy prosperity, as well as from foreign invasions. Consequently it enjoyed a greater degree of political stability and cultural activity. Apart from regional cultures which made considerable progress during this period the national Hindu culture, too, showed signs of a new life under the inspiration of great leaders.

The new era of reilgious revival was announced by the coming of a group of Sivite and Vaishnavite saints called Adyars and Alwars respectively, who preached the Puranic ideal of personal devotion to the deity in Tamil poems which expressed immense enthusiasm. The Alwars played an important part in creating a new wave of religious movement called Vishnu Bhakti. This movement became much more popular than its sister cult of Siva Bhakti as well as the rivals of Hinduism, i.e., Buddhism and Jainism. Later, Ramaunja gave Bhakti the status of a philosophical religion by reconciling with the teachings of Upanishads and investing it with a charm which won the hearts of all classes of people from the south to the north.

From the south too rose, towards the end of the eighth century, the great religious teacher and controversialist who tried to link all the various beliefs and philosophical theories of Hinduism into one integrated system. He revived the declining faith in the Vedanta through his commentary on the Uttara-mimansa. Sankaracharya's[1] philosophy, which is called Non-dualism (Advait), is the best known interpretation of the characteristic approach of Hinduism to religious truth——the way of knowledge.

It achieved great popularity among scholars and has deeply affected the thought, and to some extent the life of the Hindus from the nineth century onwards. The way of action (i.e., moral duties and prayer) was recognised by him but placed on a lower level. The third way, the way of love and devotion, was entirely ignored by this embodiment of pure intellect. That is why his movement did not attract common people. What they understood and enthusiastically accepted, was the way of devotion or Bhakti represented by Sankaracharya's contem-

[1] For an original extract of his writings, refer to *Readings In Philosophy*, another publication of the Project.

poraries, the Adyar and Alwar poets. In the tenth and eleventh centuries several Sivite and Vaishnavite Acharyas (religious teachers) opposed Sankaracharya's teachings and tried to place the Bhakti cult which was originally the spontaneous outburst of feeling in the verses of mystic poets, on a philosophical basis. The most important of them, who made Bhakti into a real religious movement, was Ramanuja.

Like Sankaracharya, Ramanuja also based his teaching on the philosophy of the Vedanta or the Upanishads, but his idea of this philosophy was quite different. He rejected Sankaracharya's theories of monism and Maya and interpreted the doctrine of Unity to provide scope for the emotions of love and devotion which filled the minds of the Indian people.

Muslim Arabs had come and settled in large numbers in South India between the seventh and the eleventh century and had won the respect of the Hindu Rajas and their subjects. They had been given complete freedom not only of faith and worship, but of propagating their religion and they took full advantage of this freedom. The zealous Muslims of this early period exercised wherever they went, in addition to direct religious influence by propagating their faith, a healthy influence by re-awakening the religious spirit of the people among whom they lived. So it is very likely that the Bhakti and the Vedanta movements were to a considerable extent the result of the general religious awakening produced by contact with Islam.

Now we have to see what influence the revival of religious life through the teaching of Sankaracharya, Ramanuja and other acharyas had on the national life of India. The first thing to be noticed is that these movements dealt a death-blow to Buddhism, first in the south and then in the north. Jainism was also gradually pushed back till it was confined to a narrow circle of the trading class. The philosophy of the Vedanta as interpreted by Sankarcharya and generally accepted by the intellectual classes, by emphasising the unreality of life, tends to repress the expression of the active impulse in man. When turned into a charming verse by mystic poets and sung by wandering Sadhus, it produced a general atmosphere of quietism and inaction in the whole country. But apart from this indirect effect, the direct influence of Sankaracharya's teachings was

confined to the limited circle of the intelligentsia. The common people went on worshipping personal gods, but this worship now took the higher form of Bhakti though the image-cult was also widespread.

That no synthesis of the different religious trends was attempted in Madhya Desha, the original home of the Vedic and Puranic Hinduism, was mainly due to the political and general conditions prevailing in North India at that time.

When the mist which had enveloped the history of India for three hundred years, clears in the beginning of the eleventh century, we see a completely changed picture. If we want to express in one sentence the change which had come over India we can say that it had passed from the Ancient Age into the Mediaeval Age. But it must be mentioned that in Indian history the characteristics of the Mediaeval Age were, to some extent, different from those in European history. Here religion, though still dominating social life, had now little or no influence over the state. Knowledge and fine arts were now no longer subordinate to religion but had made themselves independent. Sanskrit was losing its monopoly as the only learned language and regional languages were slowly coming up. The country was divided into a large number of tiny states and the very idea of political unity seemed to have been lost. The vast majority of the people had the same religion but as it had no organisation of its own like the Roman Catholic Church in Europe, it had ceased to act as a binding force for the purpose of national unity. Among the castes, only that of the Brahmins was more or less intact and, in spite of losing its political influence, had preserved and even increased its hold over the social life of the people.

The Kshatriya caste had annexed a new clan of people called the Rajputs but it was so strongly dominated by tribal spirit that it could hardly be called a caste or class. Old Kshatriyas had been divided into sub-castes and had lost the feeling that all their little *gotras* once formed a homogeneous whole responsible for ruling and defending the country. It was the same with the Vaisyas. With the exception of the Rajputs, the status of the Kshatriyas, and of Vaisyas was only a little higher than that of the Sudras.

But the culture flourishing in the Rajput period was the culture of soldierly knights which, from the individual point of view, looked full of poetry and romance, but from the point of view of collective good and national unity, left much to be desired. The chivalrous feats of the Rajput men dying to uphold their honour, women burning themselves alive to escape dishonour—were no doubt signs of high-mindedness. But what was the aim which served as a motive for these heroic deeds? Nothing but the desire for individual or family glory. They knew no higher object of human action. Clannish spirit was so strong in them that they had no feeling even of caste or class solidarity, to say nothing of national unity. This clannishness had pervaded the whole society and it had divided the four castes into numerous sub-castes which never looked beyond their own *gotra* or clan.

The most vivid and complete picture of the social and intellectual life of this period has been drawn by the great Muslim astronomer and physicist Alberuni (who came and lived in India during the time of Mahmud of Ghazni as a student of Hindu thought and life) in his Kitab-ul-Hind (The Book of India). It gives the impressions produced by the Indian culture of those days on a keen, unprejudiced, objective observer and shows that even at this first contact between the Muslim and the Hindu mind, both proved to be so near to each other that a Muslim who was an utter stranger to India, could understand and appreciate the complicated Hindu life much more easily than Europeans, specially British writers on India.

North India was in this state of political disintegration when the long series of Muslim invasions from the north-west started, ending with the setting up of the Delhi empire in the first decade of the thirteenth century. It was the beginning of the permanent contact between the Hindus and the Muslims which had such a deep influence over Indian life.

For understanding the cultural life of India in the coming centuries, it is necessary to look for a short while outside India and to see what this new factor of Islam and Islamic culture was which, from the thirteenth century onwards, played so important a role in shaping the cultural history of India.

Muslim Culture, its Origin and Advent in India

We have seen that the Muslims had settled down in India by the end of the 10th century. But they were small in number, and did not possess enough political power to make a deep impression on the social and cultural life of the country. The effective impact of the Muslim culture on Indian society began early in the 13th century when the Muslim Turks established the Sultanate of Delhi. But before we speak of the advent of Muslim culture in India and the effects which it produced we should state briefly what it was and whence it came.

Like all the other Semitic cultures of Western Asia, Muslim culture was also imbued with religious spirit. The religion from which it drew its inspiration was Islam. The birth-place of Islam, Arabia, is a part of the geographical tract 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 and Europe came in contact with one another. During the period when the whole trade between the Mediterrenean Sea and the Indian Ocean was carried on by a land route Syria, Palestine, Hedjaz and Yemen lay on this great road joining the east and the west. If there was a place in the world where the ideas of universal brotherhood and of an international society could take shape, it was this central region. In all the Semitic faiths which had their origin here we find something of these ideas. But the fullest and most complete expression was given to them by the prophet of Islam who expressly addressed himself to all mankind and made a deliberate effort to build up an international culture.

Islam does not claim to be a new religion. It presents in a more adequate form the eternal truths which the chosen messengers of God had preached to various people of the world from

time to time. But the special feature, which distinguishes it from other religions is that it regards the whole mankind as one community and tries to put before them a new interpretation of the religious truth which could serve as the foundation of an international society. The original source of the teaching of Islam is the Quran which was revealed to Muhammad, the last prophet. The traditions (or sayings) of the prophet are regarded by most Muslims as the second authentic source. The Quran has adopted a special method for the communication of religious truth. As religious sense cannot be induced by rational arguments but comes naturally to man when he looks at and ponders over the world of nature and the history of man, the Quran makes use of familiar facts of nature and history to illustrate and drive home the fundamental truths of religion.

The most fundamental religious and moral concepts developed in the Quran are:

1. The concept of God
2. Relation between man and God
3. Relation of men among themselves

A careful observation of the world of nature reveals to man order and harmony and gives him an idea of a creator who has designed the world for some purpose and who has provided for its preservation. Besides preservation, provision has also been made for proportion, beauty, love and justice (in the wider sense of the word) which shows that God who created the world is merciful, compassionate and just.

The universe is governed by the law that every effect has a definite cause and every event a definite consequence. Human action is subject to the same principle. Everything that a man does is followed by its inevitable result usually in his lifetime. When the world ends there will come the day of judgment when all the actions of a person done during his or her lifetime will be weighed in the scale of justice and lasting rewards and punishments will be dispensed. The Lord of the day will be God who has laid down the laws governing rewards and puishments.

The Quran thus thinks of the world as one endowed with order, purpose and beauty, and governed by the law of recompense based on justice tempered with mercy. The life of man

does not end in this world. There is another life in the next world in which he will get the ultimate reward or punishment for the sum total of his actions. But we should not think that this world or this life are of no significance. As the field of action which determines the ultimate end of man, the world has the highest importance for him.

The first and foremost duty of man is the love and worship of the Highest Being, the creator and preserver of the world and the fountain-head of love, justice and beauty. Devotion to God requires purity of heart and concentration of mind which come from prayer, fasting and Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca). But devotion does not mean merely praying to God. Its essence lies in obeying His will, following the moral law laid down by Him, and accepting the ultimate purpose for which He has created the universe. This unquestioning submission to the will of God is called Islam. It enables man to live in harmony with the divine law of the universe which is also the law of his own nature. At the same time the Quran emphatically enjoins that man should pray to none but God and ask none but Him for help. To offer his devotion to another man or to rely too much on his help is to lose his dignity as a human being which Islam regards as the greatest sin.

There are several implications of the principle of unity which are of fundamental importance in the teaching of Islam. The unity of the creator implies that all creation is one and every man is to be regarded as a part of the same collective body. This very idea is the source of the Islamic conception of universal brotherhood. Similarly the belief that all men are equal is a direct consequence of the doctrine of unity. The Quran gives the same status to all — men and women, rich and poor, young and old. Nobody is superior to another on account of sex, race, colour, class or profession. The only basis of superiority is righteousness. He who fears God more, follows the law of Shariat more zealously and renders more useful service to the community, ranks higher than others. The importance and freedom of the individual are also greatly emphasized. Every man has a direct relation to God. There is no intermediary. The prophet is the guide who shows through his precept and

example the way which leads to God. He deserves the highest respect and reverence but not devotion or worship.

The importance which the Quran attaches to the individual is given to him as a member of society. His moral and spiritual development is possible only in society. The life of an ascetic living aloof from society renders spiritual growth impossible and and is consequently forbidden by the Quran. The cultivation of the social spirit was considered so essential that Muslims were required to perform religious duties like Namaz (prayer) and Haj in groups and the duty which one man owes to other men was given priority over that which he owes to God.

The concept of the Islamic state according to the Quran, is that the sovereignty vests in God and is delegated by him to the prophet. From the prophet it is transferred to his successor called the Khalifa or Imam. The idea of the Khalifa in the Quran is interpreted in different ways by different schools of Islamic thought. One school believes that he is appointed by God. But the majority view is that if the oath of allegiance to a ruler is taken by the Muslims, he acquires the right to function as Khalifa.

As for legislation, the principles governing laws have been fixed by the Quran. The prophet applied the principles to the conditions prevailing in his time, and made laws which are collectively called the *Shariat*. The interpretation of the Shariat in the changing conditions of the future was left to the Ulema, who understand on the one hand the spirit of the Shariat and, on the other hand, the spirit of their time.

The attitude which the Quran has adopted towards social, political and cultural life as a whole is based on the consideration of collective welfare. In economic life, the right to private property has been recognized but provisions have been made to prevent the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few individuals. Similarly, the laws governing inheritance were laid down, as also those governing *Khums* and *Zakat* (forms of wealth tax).

In those days capitalism in its present form did not exist. Land was the only means of production. Islam made the ownership of land subject to so many restrictions that it became only nominal ownership. Before the advent of Islam there were

three forms of exploitation—slavery, usury, and the cornering of grains and other commodities. Of these slavery was changed into a system in which prisoners of war were put under the care of Muslims more or less as members of their families till they earned the status of free citizens. The other two forms of exploitation were totally abolished. In short, in enforcing social justice Islam did not confine itself to moral preaching but resorted to legislation, thus setting the example of the regulation of social and economic life by the state.

Literature and fine arts were also governed by the principle that they should minister to collective welfare. The unrestrained and aimless effusions of poets were condemned but real creative poetry was encouraged. In music, melodies which awakened and stimulated the mind were preferred to those which induced langour and melancholy. In painting and sculpture, the making of images was forbidden, as it had from the oldest times been associated with idol-worship.

These were the cultural ideas realized in practice under the prophet and his first four successors. The culture which developed in this golden age of Islam is known as *Islamic Culture*.[1]

Islamic culture flourished under the fostering care of a central Muslim state or Khilafat which extended from Central Asia to Egypt and at one time to North Africa and Spain. It was from the seventh to the eleventh century of the Christian era an international culture in the true sense of the word and surpassed all contemporary culture both in material prosperity and intellectual achievement. Though the central Khilafat of Banu Abbas became very weak after the middle of the 9th century, yet Al-i-Buwaih first and then Al-i-Saljouk who ruled over vast empires paid nominal homage to the Khilafat and helped to maintain, at least, its spiritual sovereignty. So even during these 250 years when the Khilafat was gradually losing its political power it could maintain, to a great extent the cultural unity of the Islamic world. In 1092 A.D. when the

[1] Again the term Islamic Culture is a controversial one. Some scholars contend that cultures are never based on religious concepts but on national characteristics. In this case, though the influences of Islam on various national cultures will have to be accepted, the term Islamic Culture may not be wholly acceptable to these scholars—Editors.

Saljouk King Malik Shah died and his empire was divided among his sons, the Khilafat, which had no longer a big power to support it, lost its importance as the centre of the world of Islam. Since that time the international character of the Muslim society has diminished and in each country the community has gradually acquired a local national character.

Among the states set up by adventurous Turkish Chiefs was Ghazni comprising Afghanistan and some parts of Iran. Subuktagin the ruler of Ghazni began (986-87 A.D.) a series of incursions into India in order to expand his territories. These invasions continued during the reign of his son, Mahmud. Peshawar and a large part of Western Punjab was conquered by the Ghazni family who ruled it for about 150 years. In 1770, Muhammad Ghori who had succeeded the last king of this family as the ruler of Ghazni began a new series of invasions which continued until he had conquered the whole of Northern India.

When Muhammad Ghori died in 1206, his general, Qutbuddin Aibak, set up an independent state in India with Delhi as its capital. During the 320 years from Qutbuddin Aibak to Ibrahim Lodi a number of Muslim dynasties ruled over the Sultanate of Delhi.

With the establishment of the Sultanate, Muslim culture became the culture of the ruling race. The first reaction of the Hindus was that they surrendered to the conquerors but kept themselves aloof and remained securely entrenched in a stronghold of racial and religious separateness. It seemed that they would never mix with the Muslims. For a considerable time no attempt was made by the Muslim rulers to bridge the gulf which separated these two communities. Muhammad Tughluk was the first Sultan who pursued a conciliatory policy towards the Hindus. During the last phase of the Delhi Sultanate, Sikander Lodi and Sher Shah Suri ceased to discriminate between Hindus and Muslims in making appointments to state services. Many middle class Hindus learnt the Persian language and were appointed to high posts in the revenue department. Others persisted in their distrust of the Muslim rulers but their relations with the mass of the Muslims were quite cordial. When they saw that the Muslims had come to make India their per-

manent home, they overcame their racial prejudice. Their religious prejudice also gradually decreased and they began to get over their distrust for the new-comers. An important part was played by the Muslim Sufis and later by the leaders of the Bhakti cult in bringing the two communities nearer each other.

The Sufi saints presented the Muslim creed of the unity of God to the Hindus in terms of *monistic theism*. It attracted them because it had a certain resemblance with their own philosophy of the Vedanta. But still more attractive was the social order of Islam based on equality and brotherhood. So many Hindus accepted the Islamic faith and most of them overcame the antipathy which they at first had towards the Muslims. For some time the Hindu converts to Islam had to face the hostility of their own community but in course of time the Hindus were reconciled to them and they served as a link between the immigrant Muslims and the Hindus.

As soon as the walls which separated the two communities were removed and Hindu and Muslim cultures came freely into contact with each other, a new impetus was given to every aspect of life. The first and foremost was the impact of Muslim culture on religious life which took the form of Bhakti movement. The Bhakti creed regarded love and devotion as the essence of religion and created an atmosphere of spiritual harmony among the followers of various religions. It had first appeared in the south as an indirect result of contact between the Hindus and the Muslims. In the beginning of the 13th century, when the Muslims had settled in Northern India and the religious ideas of the Muslim Sufis and Hindu saints had a direct impact on each other, a more favourable atmosphere was created for the progress of the Bhakti movement. In the first half of the 15th century Rama Bhakti spread all over Northern India, thanks to Ramananda, the famous saint of the order of Ramanuja and his disciple, Tulsidas, and attracted not only Hindu men and women of all the four castes but also a number of Muslims. But the credit for starting a new cult of Bhakti which was as popular among the Muslims as among the Hindus goes to Kabir, another distinguished disciple of Ramananda.

The song of love and devotion sung by Kabir is a symphony of the deepest notes of religious feelings of the common people

of India—Hindus, Muslims and others. Kabir's conception of God is a purely mystical one. In fact, God is to him not a conception but an experience beyond the grasp of 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 conceptions is true in its own way but each is incomplete—expressing only one aspect of the truth.

In short Kabir thinks that the fundamental principles of Islam and Hinduism are the same but he rejects with equal vehemence the systems of ceremonies and prayers which each of them has built. Another great spiritual leader, Guru Nanak, founded a new religious movement based on a synthesis of the mystical ideas of Hinduism and Islam. Like Kabir, he condemns outward pomp and show of religion. But he does not regard mere inner experience as the whole of religion but gives great importance to moral action.

The new movement of religious awakening reached Bengal in the form of Krishna Bhakti. The spiritual harmony which the teaching of Namdeo had created among the Hindus and Muslims of Maharashtra was achieved in Bengal in the beginning of 16th century by Chaitanya and other saints whose followers included Muslims as well as Hindus.

These pious souls did not succeed in bringing about religious unity throughout the country. Still they created a new religious awakening among both the communities as well as a general atmosphere of tolerance and goodwill.

The creative impulse released by the meeting of two cultures could be seen even more clearly in the fine arts. Owing to the restrictions imposed by their religion, Muslims took little interest in painting or music. In India, painting did not flourish much in those days, but music being a necessary part of divine worship was universally popular and it soon captured the hearts of Muslims. Beside the mass of Muslims who were mostly converts from Hinduism, the Sufi saints, some Muslim nobles and kings like those of Jaunpur and Bijapur were keenly interested in music. Sultan Husain Sharqi, a king of Jaunpur is said to have

invented a new style of music which is known as *Khayal*,[1] which was equally popular among Hindus and Muslims. Adil Shah, the King of Bijapur, was a patron of music and himself a master of this art. Muslim Sufis were no less fond of music than Hindu Bhakts and the great poet Amir Khusru is said to have invented new forms of music as well as of poetry.

But the main medium through which Muslims expressed their sense of beauty was architecture and it offered a larger scope for the Hindu and the Muslim mind to influence each other. This process which started with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate enriched both styles of architecture.

From the very beginning, the Islamic conception of architecture had to be adapted to the available resources. Fergusson has pointed out that the design of the Jama Masjid in Ajmer had been taken from the Jain temple on Mount Abu. As for the Quwatul-Islam mosque it was actually built on the site of a Jain temple and on its debris. The magnificent Qutub Minar which was a part of this mosque is Islamic in its general conception but in its execution one can clearly see the resemblance to the pillars of the Gupta era and the *Sikhars* of the mediaeval period.

This was the new Hindu-Muslim architecture[2] which was adapted with minor modifications by Muslim Kings and Hindu Rajas. The Muslim states introduced local variations so that each had a distinct style of its own. But in all of them Hindu elements were very prominent. In the buildings of Gujrat everything except the dome and the pointed arch is in Hindu style. The mosque of Mahafiz Khan built in the fifteenth century and the tomb of Abu Turab built in the 16th century are very bold examples. Those buildings which were erected by Hindu Rajas during this period also clearly show the influence of the new Hindu-Muslim culture. The Ranpur Temple in the State of Jodhpur built in 1439 is on a high square plinth and its walls are without any decoration except a few horizontal borders. The surface of the domes is bare and the pillars are

[1] For a note on khayal, please refer to *An Introduction to Hindustani Music*, another publication of the Project.

[2] Detailed discussion on artichetural styles will be found in *An Introduction to Indian Architecture*, another publication of the Project.

like those of a Mosque. These features are not found in any old Hindu or Jain building and point to the changing style of the period. The cultural contact between Hindus and Muslims was much closer and deeper in those independent Muslim states which had emerged during the decline of the Delhi Sultanate than it was in the Sultanate itself. Therefore, the creative impulse and the spirit of national unity and cultural harmony were more evident there. In these states, local languages and their literatures were encouraged by the Muslim Kings and they flourished side by side with Persian, which was the official language. In Bengal, Alauddin Husain Shah and his son, Nusrat Shah, gave a great impetus to Bengali which was the common mother tongue of Hindus and Muslims in the state and enriched it with translations from Sanskrit. The Bhagwad Gita was translated by Maladhar Basu at the instance of Husain Shah. Nusrat Shah got the Mahabharata translated into Bengali. The translation of the Ramayana by Kritvidas was also sponsored by a Muslim ruler.

In the states of the Deccan, the relations between the Muslim ruler and his Hindu subjects were still more cordial. The founder of the Bahmani Empire had found his way to the throne with the help of his Brahmin friend Gangu. He had so much affection for Gangu that he not only appointed him his Prime Minister but also made his name a part of his own, calling himself Hasan Gangu. The Bahmani Empire and the five Muslim kingdoms which succeeded it gave great encouragement to local languages. Some of their rulers were good poets of Marathi and some of Dakhni. The spoken language of Delhi which came to the Deccan with the Bahmani kings and their Muslim and Hindu soldiers and civil servants had come to be known as Dakhni. It was adopted as a literary language by the great Sufis who began to write prose and poetry in it. Later it flourished under the patronage of the courts of Bijapur and Golconda and served to strengthen the bonds of unity between Hindus and Muslims. But the greatest contribution made to the cause of cultural unity between Hindus and Muslims was that of Kashmir King Sultan Zain-ul-Abedin. He made Persian the common cultural language of Kashmir and got many Sanskrit books translated into it so that Kashmiri Muslims could get

acquainted with Hindu culture. The policy initiated by him led to a great measure of unity in the life and thought of the Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir and a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim cultures on a small scale.

So during the three hundred and twenty years of the Delhi Sultanate, we find a new movement and a new creative impulse in the cultural life of India which was the result of the first contact between two great cultures. A trend towards synthesis was to be seen in all departments of life especially in music and architecture. But the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate had neither the desire nor the competence to take advantage of this trend and to promote national and cultural unity in the country. This was achieved by their successors the Mughal emperors especially by Akbar, the Great.

CHAPTER FOUR

Hindustani Culture

(1526 A.D.—1773 A.D.)

THE attitude of aloofness which Hindus had adopted towards Muslims and their culture had changed considerably by the beginning of the 16th Century. Hindu Bhakts, Muslim Sufis and the rulers of independent Muslim states had created a general atmosphere of cultural understanding and the process of the blending of Hindu and Muslim cultures had started below the surface in North India and Central India. But the Turkish, Khilji and Afghan rulers of the Delhi Sultanate had neither the political insight to recognize this trend nor the intellectual capacity to direct it. This, however, could not be said of the Chughtai family of Babur which now came to rule India. With its long traditions of conquest and government it was fully competent to perform this task. By blending the sturdiness and hardiness of the Turks and the refinement and elegance of the Persians with the spiritual depth and moral discipline of Islam it succeeded in creating a new culture full of grace and beauty, life and vigour. Babur and Humayun were fine embodiments of this Muslim Mughal culture which had found its way into India and at the same time tolerant and broad-minded enough to appreciate the goodness and greatness of Hindu culture. If they had ruled for a longer period they would have probably seen the undercurrent of cultural understanding which had for some time been flowing under the surface in Indian life and made a conscious effort to build up a common culture. But Providence had chosen for this task Humayun's son and successor Akbar, the Great. Akbar combined in himself the daring spirit of enterprise of a Chughtai, the broad-mindedness of a Sufi and the liberalism of a philosopher and he was fully qualified for the task of bringing into existence a common Indian nationhood and culture which the spirit of the age demanded.

The most outstanding characteristic of the new Hindustani culture, was that it was not centred in religion but in a secular state. This secular and non-communal concept of the Mughal state was clear in the mind of Akbar and his trusted adviser, Abul-Fazl.

In a letter to Shah Abbas Safvi of Persia, Akbar said: "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 wrote in his famous book *Ain-i-Akbari*: "The king should be above all religious differences and should see that religious differences 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 up to this principle. He abolished the Jizya (Poll tax) which had been imposed on Hindus long ago, threw open to them every office big or small in the civil and military services of the state and admitted some of them with a few chosen Muslim nobles into the inner circle of his advisers. He entered into matrimonial relations with Rajput rulers which was regarded in India as the best proof of friendship and harmony. But even more important than this was Akbar's edict that no resident of India, whatever his caste or creed, could be made a slave. This was no less than a solemn declaration that the Mughal state recognized the equality of status of all classes and communities in India.

Following the Islamic as well as the ancient Indian traditions, the Moghul state performed in addition to other functions, those of dispensing charities and initiating moral and social reforms. Under the rulers of the Sultanate of Delhi, the state had been responsible for the cultural patronage and social reforms of Muslims only. Akbar's policy in this field was the same as in other fields of life, namely, that of equal treatment to all communities. This policy under which Hindu Pundits and Sadhus

enjoyed State patronage as much as Muslim scholars, was continued by Jehangir, Shahjehan and to some exent by the ascetic Aurangzeb, and Hindu temples were given land grants as liberally as Muslim mosques. Akbar imposed restrictions concerning drinking, gambling and prostitution on all his subjects, Hindus, Muslims and others. He went so far as to prohibit some purely Hindu customs like the Sati at the risk of being accused of interfering with the Hindu religion.

On the foundation of the Moghul State which had won the allegiance of all classes and communities, Akbar began to erect the edifice of a national culture. A common culture is always rooted in a common language. Before the advent of the Muslims, a language of common intercourse, which afterwards came to be known as Urdu, had developed in the region around Delhi. The immigrant Muslims conversed with Hindus in this common language but among themselves they used Persian. Persian was also their literary and state language. During the reign of Sikandar Lodi educated Hindus, especially the Kayasths, had begun to learn Persian in order to be eligible for higher posts in government office. But as accounts were kept and much of the official works done in local languages, knowledge of Persian was not necessary for lower grade services. During Akbar's reign his finance minister, Todar Mal, issued a circular to the effect that all official work should be done and all accounts kept in Persian. The result was that all Hindus in Government service whose number had now considerably increased lost no time in learning Persian. Moreover, Hindu nobles of the imperial court and Rajput rulers who had now to attend upon the Emperor in ceremonial court, private audience, tours, hunting parties and to accompany him to the field of battle had perforce to master the Persian language. Thus as the contacts of the Hindus with the king grew closer, they acquired greater mastery of the Persian language.

Another important reason for the wider propagation of Persian was that Akbar, perhaps for the first time in the history of India, opened a large number of government schools, with Persian as the medium of instruction. In these schools, which were scattered all over the country Hindu and Muslim boys were educated side by side. So Persian became gradually the literary

and academic language of the entire educated class without any distinction of religion.

A common system of education helped not only to create a common language but also the sharing of common ideas. The curriculum in all schools except religious seminaries was the same and consisted of, besides Persian literature and calligraphy, all the physical and social sciences of that age as well as philosophy and logic. Formerly, there had been very little provision for education and that too had been confined to religious learning. This had resulted in the development of the minds of Hindus and Muslims on separate lines. Now for the first time they were brought up together in secular schools imparting to both their common heritage. With this object in view Sanskrit works were translated into Persian. Of these the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Atharva Veda, the Bhagwat Purana, the Lilavati, the Bhagwad Gita and the Yoga Vaishishta deserve special mention. These translations were, in most cases, done jointly by Hindu and Muslim scholars.

Similarly, original writing in Persian was shared equally by Hindus and Muslims. Among the historians of the age the names of Bindraban Das, Sujan Rai Bataevi, Chandra Bhan Brahman, Bhim Sen and Ishar Das are as well-known as those of Abul-Fazl Nizamuddin Ahmad, Abdul Qadir Badaoni, Ghairat Khan, Inayat Khan, Mohammad Salih and Khafi Khan. All of them follow the same pattern of writing. Regarding the personality of the king as the focal point of history they tell the story mostly of political events in a simple and realistic way, with passing references to social conditions and intellectual movements.

Mastering a foreign language to the extent of making a contribution to its creative literature is a very difficult task but the educated Hindus of the Moghul age proved equal to it. Mirza Manohar Tausani, Chandra Bhan Brahman, Salim Kashmiri and Banwari Das Wali are counted among the prominent poets of the period. As for literary letter-writing it had become the special field of Hindus. With the exception of Abul-Fazl and Alamgir, generally acknowledged to be by far the best writers of epistles, there was hardly a Muslim who could be compared with Hindu writers like Munshi Harkaran, Chandra Bhan Brahman, Munshi Madho Ram, Munshi Lal Chand and Munshi

Avadhe Ram. Chandra Bhan was regarded to be the master of the simple and direct style and Madhoram of the rhymed and ornate prose.

Thus the national state infused into the people new life and vigour and the Hindi dialects spoken in the larger part of North India, such as Avadhi and Braj Bhasha, began to make rapid progress. The renowned noble of Akbar's court, Abdur-Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, was a great patron of Hindi poetry and was himself a noted Hindi poet. There were others in the court like Narharia, Ganga, and Akbar's intimate friend Birbal. Akbar extended his patronage to all of them and is said to have composed some Hindi verses himself. Great Hindi poets like Keshav Das, Bihari, Deo and Ras Khan, flourished in his reign. Of these the last named was a Muslim.

In architecture, attempts at the synthesis of Hindu and Muslim styles had begun during the Sultanate period. But the process was completed by the Moghul kings. Babur and Humayun had purely Persian tastes in building and had brought with them Persian architects. So what remains of the buildings of their time e.g., the mosques in Panipat and Sambhal built by Babur and the one in Fathabad Hissar built by Humayun were designed after the buildings of Isfahan. The most imposing edifice of the early days of Akbar which was built under the supervision of the Persian architect, Mirza Inayat Khan, is in the same style. But, later, Akbar tried to blend the Turko-Persian elements with the Indian. This was the beginning of the charming and graceful style which is regarded to be the finest legacy of Moghul Culture. The general design of the Jama Masjid in Fatehpur Sikri was the same as that of a mosque in Isfahan. Its majestic Baland Darwaza is a reflection of the classical simplicity of Persian architecture. But its domes show the influence of the Jain style; so do the domes of the Jama Masjid in Agra. The tomb of Akbar in Sikandra has, in spite of its Muslim arches and domes, the general pattern of the Buddhistic Biharas or that of the Chariots in Mahabalipura. In Itimad-ud-daula's tomb, the central roof is purely Indian in design.

Under Shahjehan, the Moghul architecture reached its highest development. He sent for new masters from Persia and other

Muslim countries, who brought with them a new wave of Perso-Islamic influences which, to some extent, moderated Hindu influence. But during the reign of Akbar and Jehangir, Hindu elements were so intimately woven into the Moghul pattern that it was not possible to isolate them.

A new development in Shahjehan's time was the use of marble on a large scale. The use of this fine stone which had to be handled with great care, skill and restraint, resulted in considerable improvement not only of ornamental details but also of the general design of buildings. To bring out the full bright effect 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 mosaics of multi-coloured stones. The arches could now be made in various shapes and the pillars fashioned in various designs. The use of curved lines made it possible to introduce beautiful new patterns both in the building and in the ornamental work. In short, thanks to marble, the art of the builder could compete with that of the painter in grace and delicacy and Moghul architecture acquired new qualities which neither the Persian nor the old Indian styles had ever possessed. The various elements which were used in this style of architecture were cast in the mould of their Indian environment and Indian material. "The dream in marble known as the Taj Mahal, whether it was built by an architect from Shiraz or Italy remains the conception of the mind of an Indian king, a memorial to Indian love, built in Indian marble and the embodiment of purity, peace and pathos of the Indian soul."

In painting, as in architecture, the blending of the old Hindu with the Turco-Persian styles resulted in a new style which combined the best features of both. Under the Delhi Sultanate religious restrictions had prevented paintings from coming into vogue among the Muslims. But the Hindus kept alive the traditions of Ajanta. Painting also flourished at the court. Generally the art was used in illustrating religious books.

The subjects of these pictures were, as a rule, taken from Hindu mythology e.g. the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata, legends about the life of Sri Krishna and the

representation of ragas and raginis as living persons. Nature was depicted in them with charming directness and simplicity.

The descendants of Timur had been keen patrons of painting even before they came to India. It was under their fostering care that Persian art made amazing progress. One of the rulers of this dysnasty patronized Behzad, who carried the Herat style of painting to perfection. Two pupils of Behzad, Syed Ali and Khwaja Abdus Samad Shirazi, had come to India with Humayun. Their work shows the domination of Turco-Persian influence. Their lines are too fine and delicate. The portraiture is so elaborate and ornate that it ceases to be true to life. Akbar who loved the simplicity and realism of the Indian style wanted a new style to be developed by blending Indian realism with Persian delicacy of touch. So he assembled Persian and Indian artists at his court and founded an academy of painting. The Persian masters, Syed Ali and Abdus-Samad initiated their young pupils, most of whom were Hindus, into the subtleties of the Persian style and the finer points of colouring. For theoretical study there was a library with a collection of books on art and the masterpieces of old masters. Akbar himself frequently visited the studio to see the artists at work. Among the graduates of this school the best known are Farrukh Beg Daswant, Basavan and Sanvala. They followed the old Indian tradition in illustrating books. But the books chosen for this purpose were not religious but secular e.g. Dastan-i-Amir Hamza, Babar Namah, Timur Namah etc. At first their work was elaborate and ornate after the Persian model. But gradually they acquired the liveliness, flow and force of the Indian style. The Moghul school had by the end of Akbar's reign developed a distinct style of its own.

Jehangir was not only a patron of the art of painting but himself an artist. Under him this art reached its zenith. Farrukh Beg, Nadir, Mohammad Murad, Abdul Hasan, Mansur, Bishan Das, Manohar and Daulat were the most outstanding artists of this period. They no longer confined themselves to the illustration of books but handled all subjects taken from human life or nature which interested the king or his nobles.

Shahjehan was less interested in painting than in architecture. Still his nobles and princes like Dara Shikoh patronized the art.

But painting had succumbed earlier than other arts to the degeneration which is a natural consequence of the abundance of wealth leading to a life of luxury. There was much more emphasis on colouring and ornamentation than on the finer artistic qualities. No picture was considered complete without a broad border of minute ornamental work in gold. Anup Chandra, Chitra Mani, Muhammad Faqir Ullah and Hashim Ali are the most famous artists of the period. But none of them could stand comparison with Abdul Hasan, Mansur or Manohar. Painting did not flourish much during the reign of Aurangzeb. After him it declined as an art with the decline of the Moghul empire.

As far as music is concerned, a harmony of taste and sentiment had already developed between Hindus and Muslims during the period of the Delhi Sultanate. Under the Moghuls, the indigenous and imported styles of music underwent a fusion so complete that it was no longer possible to make any distinction. During Akbar's reign music attained the highest point of its progress. Vocal music with its numerous ragas and raginis, some of which have now been forgotten, was especially cultivated. Instrumental music, too, received due attention. The imperial court had attracted masters not only from all over India but also from Central Asia. The greatest of them was Tansen who is still held in reverence by Hindu and Muslim musicians alike. Music is a medium for the direct and spontaneous expression of human feeling without the help of the intellect. The community of musical sense which has been evident among the Indians of all castes and creeds from the Moghul age to this day is the best proof that all Indian hearts beat in unison.

The influence which the Hindu and Muslim communities exercised on each others' social life and the similarity in their ways of living which resulted from it were remarkable in view of the fact that the social institutions of both the communities were closely related to their religious beliefs which were considerably different from each other. As Dr. Tarachand remarks in his valuable book *The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*:

"It is hardly possible to exaggerate the extent of Muslim influence over Indian life in all departments. But nowhere else

is it shown so vividly and picturesquely as in customs, in intimate details of domestic life, in music, in the fashions of dress, in the ways of cooking, in the ceremonial of marriage, in the celebrations of festivals and fairs and in the courtly institutions and etiquettes of Maratha, Rajput and Sikh Princes. In the days of Babur, the Hindus and Muslims lived and thought so much alike that he was forced to notice their peculiar Hindustani Way. His successors so gloriously adorned and so marvellously enriched this legacy that India might well be proud today of the heritage which they, in their turn, have left behind."[1]

The Hindustani Culture which developed during the reign of Akbar and his successors and which was closely associated with the Moghul empire began to decay with the decline of the Moghul empire. But the process of cultural disintegration was neither so extensive nor so rapid as the political one. After the death of Aurangzeb, the country was soon divided into a number of more or less independent states. Delhi lost its position as the cultural and political centre of India. The Moghul invasions from the North-West which had been kept in check for about 200 years started afresh. European traders who had come to India during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for commercial purposes, specially the British traders of the East India Company, exploited the civil war among Indian states to increase their political power, and began to play an important part in Indian politics. In short, politically, the country was in a state of chaos similar to that which had prevailed in India before the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate.

But Hindustani culture had enough vitality to serve as the bond of unity between the various social groups in the country. It is true that owing to disturbed political conditions this culture had lost its freshness and vigour and was more or less in a state of stagnation, but as far as its sphere of influence is concerned, instead of becoming smaller it grew much larger during the eighteenth century. From the new centres at Lucknow, Hyderabad and Murshidabad it spread far and wide. Though by the end of the century within the territories of the East India Company the Hindustani culture had to face a powerful rival

[1] *The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* by Tara Chand, Allahabad, 1954, pp. 141-42.

in Western culture yet until 1857 it was accepted as the common culture of India.

Persian which had till then been the common language of Hindustani culture was used increasingly and over a wider area as an official, academic and literary language. Not only in the Moghul empire but also in the new independent states e.g. the Deccan, Bengal and Oudh many Hindus occupied major as well as minor posts in Government service and they all had a good knowledge of Persian. Of all the civil departments, Bait-ul-Insha or Dar-ul-Insha (Imperial Secretariat) was the one which required the highest standards of literary ability, and this department was manned mostly by Hindus, so that during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries the word Munshi (expert in literary letter-writing) was a common epithet for Hindus well-versed in Persian. Even in Hindu states like the Maratha empire with the Moghul pattern of administration the official language was Persian. The East India Company too formally recognized Persian as its official language till 1829, and in practice Persian was used long after this date. For academic and literary purposes too educated Hindus and Muslims used the Persian language. Even ordinary correspondence was carried on in Persian.

As far as learning, scholarship and serious writing are concerned this was a period of general stagnation. Though the number of books written in Persian was perhaps even larger than before, they were of a lower scientific and literary standard. Creative thinking and originality, inquiry and research were almost extinct. The highest ideal which the scholars of the age had before them was to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors and to preserve their heritage.

Side by side with Persian, the Urdu language which flourished during the period gradually gained in popularity till, by the end of the period it faced Persian as a rival. When the East India Company established the Fort William College for the education of its employees, Urdu found a place in its syllabus along with English and the western science. The college got together some of the best writers in Urdu for writing or translating from Arabic and Persian books of general interest in simple and chaste Urdu which was called Hindustani. Some translations in

which difficult Persian and Arabic words were replaced by Sanskrit words were published in the Dev Nagari script.

Though the official language of the East India Company was Persian by statute till 1829 and in practice til 1844 and was later replaced by English yet the impetus which it (Urdu) had once received, quickened by its inner dynamic force, made it go far, pushing Persian into the background. In the North-western provinces, (or the present U.P. excluding Oudh and including a part of the Punjab), Urdu had the status of an official language along with English.

The decline of the Moghul empire gave a set-back to architecture, painting and music. Until that time these fine arts were intimately connected with the court and were directly affected by its changing fortune. The imperial court of Delhi which had, by virtue of its central position and traditions attracted great artists from distant parts of the world in the beginning of this period had now become the hot-bed of intrigues and strife. No art could flourish in such an atmosphere. The puppet emperors had neither the taste nor the means for such luxuries. The patronage of some small independent states and some nobles did what it could to keep the fine arts alive but it was unable to protect them from the effects of general degeneration. On the whole, the arts confined themselves to imitating the style which had developed in the early Moghul period.

No masterpiece of architecture was produced under the later Moghuls but the palaces, tombs, and places of worship built during this period show the general characteristics of the Moghul or Hindustani style e.g. the palace of the Rao of Jamnagar and the Raja of Chatarpur, the tomb of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore, the Visheswar Mandir in Banaras and the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Even the private residences of Hindu and Muslim nobles which have survived the ravages of time have exactly the same designs as the houses built during the age of Shahjehan.

In painting, in addition to the main Moghul style which flourished at the courts of Hyderabad and Oudh, its variants, of which the Jaipur and Kangra styles are the most famous, continued to develop in the Hindu states of Rajputana and the Punjab.

In music, the classical Hindu strains and the mixed new strains invented during the Muslim period were equally popular among Hindus and Muslims and proved the inner harmony of the Indian soul.

Uniformity in the general way of living, in food, dress, customs and manners which the Hindustani culture had produced in the greater part of the country was preserved till 1857. The English or other European writers who have written about this period speak not only of regional cultures but also of a common Hindustani culture and admit that even though the country had lost its political unity, its cultural unity was still intact. At the same time, the cultural influence of the European settlers had begun to increase with their political influence and far-sighted people could see that India was about to pass through another cultural crisis.

CHAPTER FIVE

Impact of Western Culture

(1857 A.D.—1947 A.D.)

About the end of the fifteenth century India came into closer contact with Europe. Trade with European countries had been carried on through the Arabs since the beginning of the fifteenth century, or even an earlier time. But direct relations with the continent of Europe date from 1498 when Vasco de Gama discovered the new sea-route to India round the southernmost tip of Africa. For about a hundred years all trade between India and Europe which was now carried on by sea remained in the hands of the Portuguese. But in the closing year of the 16th century the British and the Dutch and later the French also set up joint stock companies to carry on trade with India.

The British East India Company was established during the reign of Queen Elizabeth in 1600 A.D. In 1612, it defeated the Portuguese in a naval battle, opened a trade centre at Surat on the western coast of India and began gradually to expand the sphere of its activities. In 1619, Sir Thomas Row brought a message of goodwill from James I, king of England, to the Mughal Emperor Jehangir and used his diplomatic skill to get many concessions for the British traders. During the 17th century their activities were confined to peaceful trading but when Sivaji overran the Deccan and the neighbouring regions, the Maratha armies invaded their factories. Since the Moghul Government failed to protect them, they had to build forts, recruit armies and fight for their defence. In 1640, they founded the township of Madras on the east coast and a little later put up a settlement in Hoogly which gradually developed into the city of Calcutta. In 1628, the British King Charles II leased the island of Bombay, which had come to him as a part of his wife's dowry, to the East India Company and this grew in course of time into a third important trading centre.

About the middle of the 18th century, the policy of the East India Company underwent an important change. Affected by the rivalry between England and France which was very keen in those days, this Company came into political conflict with the French and was involved in the internal politics of the country. This led to a clash with the Moghul Subedar of Bengal. Because of clever and unscrupulous tactics used by the adventurous British Governor Robert Clive, the Company's political influence increased day by day. In 1757, it defeated the Moghul Subedar in the battle of Plassey and put the political supremacy of the British on a firm basis. Another most important date in the history of Indo-British relations is 1773, when the British Parliament took the control of the Company's administration into its own hands and made it obligatory for the Board of Directors to keep the Parliament informed about its commercial as well as administrative activities. Warren Hastings, who was now appointed by the Company the Governor-General of all its Indian territories, effected reforms in all departments of administration and laid for the first time in the history of the Company the foundation of an organised and civilised government.

Until that time the British had played in India the role of ruthless and unscrupulous predatory traders. So they had not been able to evoke in the minds of the Indian people any sentiments except those of fear and hatred towards themselves and their culture. But now they appeared as responsible rulers and removed the aversion which Indians had for them. Real cultural contact between them and their Indian subjects now began. Warren Hastings was an enlightened and broadminded man and his policy was that the British should make themselves familiar with the traditions and culture of India and help in their preservation and progress.

The British had no intention until that time of imposing their own culture and the cultural policy of Warren Hastings had raised in the mind of the people the hope that the British Government did not want to destroy Indian culture but to give it a new life by introducing into it the scientific and practical spirit of modern Western culture. If this policy had continued to be pursued, Indian and British cul-

tures would have influenced each other in a normal way and blended harmoniously into a new common culture. But in 1835, Lord Macaulay, a member of the Governor-General's Executive Council wrote his famous note in which he condemned oriental learning and culture as absolutely worthless. Under his influence Government changed its cultural and educational policy and decided to give no encouragement in future to oriental learning and culture imparted through the indigenous type of education but to promote the teaching of Western sciences and to make English the medium of instruction.

Though some distinguished Indians themselves welcomed this policy, its general effect was to cause great agitation in the country. As a matter of fact, the people of India had had the experience of western culture being introduced into India through the activities of proselytising Christian missionaries and trading rulers whom they regarded as a threat to their religion, their political freedom and their economic welfare. So they were naturally incapable of taking a just and unprejudiced view of this culture. The mutiny of the Indian soldiers in the British army in 1857 (which Indians now call 'the war of freedom") was motivated no less by patriotism than by cultural, political and economic factors. With the collapse of the popular revolt and the proclamation of direct British rule over India, the cultural as well the political supremacy of the British was established in all its awe-inspiring majesty. We shall now tell in some detail the story of the struggle between the Indian and western cultures and the final triumph of the latter.

The first noticeable influence of western culture over India was exercised through those orientalists and British scholars who brought the modern scientific spirit to bear on oriental studies and taught Indians the modern methods of research. Among the blessings conferred on India by Warren Hastings, besides patronage of learning, were the codification of the Mohammedan Law and the Hindu Law, the opening of the Calcutta Madarsah and the establishment of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal for research in Oriental studies. The first president of the Society was a judge of the Supreme Court of Calcutta, Sir William Jones, who was not only a specialist in classical studies and law but well-versed in Oriental and European languages. After

coming to India he studied Sanskrit and translated Kalidasa's Shakuntala and the Hindu Dharma Shastra into English. Colbrooke, who entered the service of the Company in 1872, wrote the first book on Sanskrit Grammar in English and did pioneer work in the study of the various schools of Hindu philosophy especially the Vedanta school. On his return from India in 1923, he founded the Royal Asiatic Society in London. Another scholar, Charles Wilkins, translated into English the Bhagvad Gita. Moreover, he opened a new line of historical research by translating into English many old inscriptions found in Bengal.

The first educational measure adopted by the Company was the establishment of the Calcutta Madarsah and the Banaras Sanskrit College. Then they set up a temporary institution, the Fort William College, for the education of their civil servants. But for a long time little attention was paid to public instruction. In 1823, the Company decided that their Government should make itself responsible only for oriental education. But some enlightened Indians like Ram Mohun Roy regarded the English language and the modern sciencies to be essential for the intellectual development of their countrymen. They had managed with the help of a kind-hearted Englishman David Hare to start a private institution called the Hindu College in which English was taught along with Persian and Bengali. In 1823 Babu Gaur Mohan Audrey established a similar institution under the name of the Oriental Seminary. But when the Government changed their educational and linguistic policy declaring English as the official language in 1829, and decided in 1835 to encourage the study of modern sciences with English as the medium of instruction, the number of students in oriental Colleges began to fall, while those teaching English and the modern sciences were filled to capacity. Christian missionaries too collaborated in promoting western education and established the Mission College in Calcutta in 1833, followed by other such institutions all over the country.

Technical and vocational education was also generally neglected. But, for the teaching of medicine and engineering the Calcutta Medical College was established in 1895, Grant Medical College in Bombay in 1854 and the Thomson Engineering

College at Roorkee in 1847. Thus the educational achievement of the English during this period was very limited and unsystematic and could not exercise any profound or lasting effect on Indian culture.

A far greater influence on the general intellectual life of India than formal school education was exercised by the setting up of printing presses, and the publication of newspapers. Printing had been introduced sometime earlier. The first English newspaper, Hick's *Gazette*, was published by an enterprising Englishman. Newspapers in Persian, Bengali and Gujarati followed shortly after. The first Urdu newspaper was published in Delhi in 1837.

In the sphere of the fine arts, the contribution of the Company Government seems to have been poor. Love of art was confined to a few civil servants of higher grade who went in for copies or occasionally an original painting of Reynolds. Some Indian princes especially those of Oudh now and then commissioned some European artists to paint a few pictures for them, but that was not enough to give the necessary impetus to the progress of art in India. Amateur music, dance and drama were popular in Anglo-Indian society but they could not possibly be of a high standard. Probably the court theatre of Wajid Ali Shah, the king of Oudh, followed the stage arrangements of the English (or French?) theatre.

In architecture, the East India Company followed, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Portuguese style which had been common in European settlements in India for three hundred years. In the second half of the eigteenth century a number of public buildings were designed by English engineers. The designs were generally copies of those of the seventeenth or eighteenth century buildings in London or other English towns. The Cathedral in Calcutta has a front eactly like that of St. Stephen's Church in Walbrook. Similarly, the Government House is a copy of Keddleston Hall in Derbyshire. Most of the buildings of the first half of the nineteenth century are bad copies of the Renaissance style with classical frontage, spacious verandahs, long row of columns and gigantic porticos. Occasionally, Indians also built their houses in this style. However, the Lucknow buildings of the Asaf-ud-daula period,

specially the Imam Bara and Rumi Darwaza owe their simple and well-proportioned design to the influence of western architecture.

The greatest influence on the lives of the common people in India was exerted by the technological aspect of western architecture. The modern armaments which were imported from the west were so popular that each Indian State started using them as far as it could afford it. The steamship service, introduced in 1823-24 A.D., made travel by sea easier and enabled Indians to broaden their mind by visiting foreign countries. By the end of the period under discussion i.e., between 1853 and 1856, gaslight, railways and telephones had made their appearance in India.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the influence of western culture began to be felt to some extent in the limited areas administered by the East India Company. But it was not strong enough to change the general pattern of Indian culture or the medieval mentality which had produced it. There was an undercurrent of modern trends but people were not yet aware of it.

After 1857 there was a dramatic change. The realization of their utter political impotence gave such a terrible shock to Indians that their faith in their own culture was shaken. On the other hand, the new generation of Englishmen, sincerely believing in their cultural superiority and their imperialistic mission, came to India and saw the whole country benumbed with terror. There was no doubt in their minds that they had to deal with a depressed people whom it was their sacred duty to uplift through western education and culture. Among Indians themselves there were people who thought that their Medieval Indian culture was now out-of-date and could not meet the economic, political and intellectual demands of the present age, so India had to learn from the rulers something of the modern western culture which had helped them to their present prosperity and power. So the British Government in India had no reason to revise its educational and cultural policy which had been one of the reasons of the Revolt of 1857 but decided to enforce it more thoroughly and systematically with the help of a large section of Indians.

The new educational and cultural policy had a superficial resemblance with that of Akbar insofar as it envisaged a uniform culture making for political unity based on a common loyalty to the state. But the fundamental difference was that the state for which Akbar wanted to train loyal citizens was one in which the people had, under the absolute sovereignty of the king, equal status and equal rights without any distinction of race or religion. No doubt the ruling family had come from a foreign land but it had settled down in the country and made it its home. Akbar and most of his successors did their best to establish direct contact between the king and his subjects and make them feel that they were embodiments of their sentiments and aspirations. But the "State" round which the British wanted to rally Indians was, (strictly speaking) not a state at all, but a dependency of the United Kingdom, a subject country nominally ruled by the King-Emperor, but actually by the British parliament, that is by the whole British nation. This meant that Indians now owed allegiance not to one person or one dynasty but to a whole nation — a nation which knew nothing about their history, culture, their aspirations and sentiments, which lived at a distance of several thousand miles, and could not be approached or influenced by them. The representatives of this ruling nation in India had made themselves now almost equally unapproachable by breaking off whatever social relations they had so far had with the subject people. The social gulf which divided them grew wider day by day.

This political policy, naturally, led to an attitude of domination rather than compromise in the field of culture. Unlike Akbar, the Enlish made no attempt to blend their own culture with that of the Indians, but tried, as far as possible to impose purely western education and culture on India so as to wake the people of India from their medieval sluggishness and lead them along the modern path to progress.

The intrinsic merit of western culture, apart from the glamour that everything associated with the ruling nation has for a subject people, lay in the modern scientific attitude of mind and practical efficiency. But the way in which the fresh blood of modernism was transfused into the anæmic body of Indian society allowed just these vital ingredients to be lost and on

the whole did more harm than good. One of the main reasons why Indians could not properly assimilate western culture was the attitude of racial pride and social aloofness adopted by Englishmen. When the rulers elated by their superiority complex regard any social relation with the ruled to be beneath their dignity, no close intellectual contact between the two is possible. So when Indians tried to look at English culture as it was reflected in the life of Englishmen in India they could only see its outward and superficial aspects like dress, food, their general way of living, their unsociability and what appeared to be their religious scepticism and materialism, and in all these things the devoted cultural disciples tried to follow their masters. The basic qualities of the English character, self-respect, self-control, strength of will combined with adaptability, moral courage, the spirit of the sportsman and the gentleman and those characteristics of modernism which the English shared with other western people — like the scientific spirit of inquiry and the will to harness the forces of nature into the service of human happiness, remained hidden from the eyes of most Indians and had no influence on their life. Lord Macaulay's hope, that education in English language and western science will produce a class which will be "Indian in appearance and English in outlook," was not fulfilled. What actually happened was that in dress and outward life educated Indians became caricatures of colonial Englishmen but in intellect and morals they were either uninfluenced by Englishmen or there was a negative influence which made them adopt the worst traits of the English character.

So the modern culture by which the higher and middle classes were influenced was a common but not a national culture. What it gave to educated Indians was not a spirit of unity but a veneer of uniformity. Still it did them good in so far as it shook the Indian mind out of its medieval stagnation and imparted to it something of the life and activity of the modern age.

But it must be mentioned here that beside the common type of Indians with modern education which we had to depict in such dark colours, there was another and better type, consisting of the few fortunate people who were not carried away by the craze for westernization but tried to blend in their education

as well as in their life the best elements of the cultures of the East and the West. It was they who gave a lead to Indians in various departments of life and did not allow their intellectual and moral levels to sink to the depths to which their political subjection tended to bring them.

As far as the national Hindustani culture was concerned its sphere of influence was now a comparatively limited one. Still in the larger part of northern and Central India, especially in the Indian states and to some extent in the rest of the country, the Hindustani culture existed side by side with the English culture though it had to adapt itself to the new conditions by changing to a considerable extent its form and character.

The most conspicuous change in Hindustani culture was that its language was no longer Persian but Urdu. We have already said that by the beginning of the nineteenth century historical forces had helped Urdu to become a rival to Persian. After the upheavals of 1857, Urdu completely routed Persian from the field. But, for achieving this success Urdu had to give up the elaborate and ornamental style of the later Moghul period for the simple and direct form of expression generally adopted by modern writers of English. Their love of pure and fantastic imagination gave place to a healthy realism.

This realistic trend in Urdu and other Indian languages was a sign of an intellectual revolution which transported the Indian mind from the medieval into the modern age. The beginning of drama and novel also had the same inspiration. Though early plays and and novels in Urdu were advertised as works of art, yet they showed that our ideas of life and literature were changing with our political and economic conditions. The conception of life as a complex of subjective and objective reality and the art of portraying man in the setting of his physical and social environment in realistic proportion and natural colours were the characteristics of classical literature which our Indian literatures had completely lost in the medieval period, especially in its later part. Their restoration in a richer and wider form was a sign of the spirit of the modern age.

In Urdu language, the Hindustani culture found a foothold on which to stand and face western culture. It took much from the west, but by free choice and not by slavish imitation. That

is, it assimilated only those elements which were in keeping with its spirit and character. Supporters of the Hindustani culture among Hindus and Muslims studied the English language and western sciences not only because they had to, but also because they were eager to do so. But they made Urdu the vehicle of educating their minds and the medium of expressing their deeper feelings and thoughts. For the cultivation of their aesthetic taste they used their own heritage of fine arts, submitting only to such western influences as they regarded to be necessary for investing Indian art with a new life.[1]

In architecture, western influence led to economy of space, especially through the use of straight lines, as well as to the consideration of modern hygiene, in music to the combination of harmony with melody, and in painting to the emphasis on perspective and proportion. Then there were many modifications in articles of daily use like furniture, dress and food which were, on the whole, healthy and contributed to efficiency though not to beauty or efficacy of life.

Though Hindustani culture had now lost state patronage and had fallen in the estimation of the upper classes of society so that all the avenues of progress or expansion were closed to it, yet it had enough vitality to adjust itself to the new circumstances and still exercised its influence on the lives of a large number of people. But the impact of western culture had another dangerous result. It created a rift within the Hindustani culture group and it seemed as if it was going to dissolve.

The growng influence of western culture after 1857 alarmed both Hindus and Muslims. Some of them, especially Muslim divines, rightly thought that in order to re-inforce their moral and spiritual power of resistance against the domination of the English culture, they should look back at the sources of their religious and cultural consciousness and draw new strength and inspiration from them. In this they succeeded. But this throwing back of the mind into the distant past had the undesirable effect that the near-past and its fairly valuable heritage lost its significance in their eyes and they began to

[1] What has been said about Urdu is also true to a great extent about Hindi literature of this period.—Ed.

dream of going back to the point where they stood a thousand years ago.

Among the Muslims the revivalist movement had already been initiated by Maulana Sheikh Ahmed Sarhindi (1564-1614 A.D.) during the reign of Akbar and Jehangir. About the same time Shah Abdul Haq Dehlavi (1551-1642 A.D.) tried to re-stimulate religious feeling by promoting instruction in the traditions of the prophet. But the greatest contribution to the movement of reviving religious consciousness among the Muslims was made by Shah Waliullah and his family.

Shah Waliullah translated the Quran into chaste Persian and wrote several books on Quranic studies, thus leading the Muslims to the fountain head of Islam. His literary work was continued by his illustrious sons, specially Shah Abdul Aziz, while the practical realisation of reforms proposed by him was attempted by Maulana Syed Ahmad of Bareilly, his distinguished disciple, Maulana Abdul Hai, his son-in-law, Maulvi Mohammad Ismail, the nephew of Shah Abdul Aziz. These three militant reformers, with the help of an armed force of volunteers, wrested western and the North-West-Frontier region from the Sikh Government with the intention of turning it into a model Islamic state (1815). But differences with the Pathans weakened the hold of the reformers on the conquered territory and after a few years they were defeated by the Sikhs at Balakot. Maulana Syed Ahmad and Maulvi Mohammad Ismail fell in the battle field and the Islamic State came to an end.

But the movement of religious education and social reform started by these leaders continued. A small circle of "non-conformist" Muslims was formed and tried to live the simple and austere life of the early days of Islam. Opposition to the English government continued to occupy the minds of these people and they played an important role in the upheaval of 1857.

Influenced directly by the Waliullah movement, the religious seminary at Deoband established about 1867 became the centre of religious revivalism and of political and cultural opposition to the English.

On the other hand, the school at Aligarh founded by Syed Ahmad Khan in 1875 represented liberalism in religion,

modernism in social life and co-operation with the English in politics and helped in producing a fairly big class of Muslims with English education.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the sentiments of political liberty were intensified in the minds of the Deoband circle and of the Muslim religious class in general. But these sentiments were still vague. It was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who gave them a definite shape and direction. Through his efforts the Deoband movement entered into an alliance with the movement of national freedom under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

This at once received re-inforcement from an unexpected quarter. Between 1920 and 1925 even the English educated Muslims who were regarded as the supporters of the British Government and of western culture, were temporarily affected by the wave of general discontent which was running not only throughout India but throughout the eastern world. They had organized themselves along with Muslim masses into the All India Khilafat Committee which aimed at freeing Muslim countries from the clutches of western imperialism and uniting them under the Khilafat of the Osmani Turks. The Khilafat leaders had realized that unless India which served as a stronghold of British power became independent it was not possible for Muslim countries to win their freedom, so they decided to make common cause with the religious class of the Muslims and the Indian National Congress.

In the case of the Hindus it is quite clear that all movements of revival and reform arose as a reaction to the dominating influence of western culture and the basic difference between this two is that the reform movements like those of the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Sarvajanic Sabha, the Deccan Education Society had, on the whole, an attitude of compromise with the British Government and the western culture which it represented, while the revivalist movements were opposed to both and wanted to take India back to her glorious past after freeing her from foreign rule.

The most vigorous of the movements of the latter type which had in 1907 swept the National Congress along with it was started under the leadership of Lokmanya Tilak. His politi-

cal objective of Swaraj was an undefined concept of independence but his cultural objective was definite and clear. He wanted the Hindus to re-establish a living relation with their distant past, to understand the true spirit of the ancient Hindu culture and to realise it in their individual and collective life. He was a great Sanskrit scholar and his two books in English *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* and *Orion* and his famous *Commentary on the Gita* in Marathi supplied the revivalist trend of the Hindus with a firm intellectual basis. This trend was strengthened by the social and religious movement of the Arya Samaj started in 1905. The philosophical and mystical ideas of the Theosophical movement introduced in India by Mrs. Annie Besant also helped in awakening in the minds of the Hindus the love of their spiritual heritage and in stimulating their revivalist zeal.

These movements of revivalism were essentially the outcome of a resurgence of the desire for self-assertion in the Hindu mind to which the romantic atmosphere of the period had lent a religious colour. Religious awakening in the strict sense of the word, which flows from purely mystical experience, and a direct apprehension of the Truth came to Hindus through Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda and Shri Aurobindo Ghosh.

In the intellectual movements among the Hindus we find two different trends, a conservative one and a liberal one. The conservatives were strongly opposed to the British Government and devoted to the cause of Hindu nationalism. The liberals, on the other hand, pursued a policy of compromise with the British Government as well as with western culture. They were generally known as Moderates. For some time these two groups fought each other on the platform of the National Congress. In the beginning of the twentieth century the conservatives succeeded in dominating public life and the liberals were reduced to the position of a small group of leaders without any followers. No doubt the conservatives were zealous fighters for the cause of national freedom but their concept of nationalism was a narrow one, being mainly confined to the Hindu community.

But fortunately three great national leaders — a poet, a phiosopher and a moral teacher — broadened the minds of many

Hindus so that they could make a common cause with the nationalist-minded among the Muslims and other religious communities to build a united Indian nation.

The poet Tagore has expressed his views in his book *Greater India*. The gist of his argument is that India's history is not made by Hindus alone. Centuries ago, Muslims arrived with their cultural heritage and became a part of her history. Then the British came with the cultural treasures of the west. New India is not the monopoly of any one creed or race. Here different religions and cultures have to contribute to a harmonious life of peace and love. The philosopher Radhakrishnan exhorted the Hindus to give up their revivalist ideas. While emphasizing the need of maintaining the vital link with history he warned them against the vain attempt to reverse the course of history. The ideal he placed before them was to deduce, from an intelligent study of the national traditions, the enduring norms and values and to make them the basis for building up a new life, using new forces to meet new needs and circumstances.

But to translate the ideas of the poet and philosopher into action, to realize words in deeds, to widen the movement of high caste Hindu Nationalism into that of Indian Nationhood embracing all castes and creeds, was a task which the moral teacher the greatest after Buddha was destined to perform.

Mahatma Gandhi taught that the ideal of human life was the realisation of Truth through Love or Non-Violence and Truth could be realised in every sphere of life, political, social or economic — by achieving good ends through means which were equally good and pure. The main obstacle in its way was every kind of uncontrolled passion which according to Gandhiji could be overcome with the help of non-violence. The seeker after Truth should adhere to non-violence in thought, speech and action.

Gandhiji did not confine his message of Truth and Non-violence or his call to fight for the freedom of the country to Hindus alone. He was large-hearted enough to regard all minorities including the Muslims just as much his own people as were the Hindus and was far-sighted enough to see that India could not win and maintain her freedom without incorporating

the biggest and the most dynamic minority, the Muslims, into the national organism.

Through the efforts of Gandhiji, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Mohammad Ali, the revivalist movements among Hindus and Muslims which had arisen in the nineteenth century as a reaction to the cultural domination of the English joined hands with the freedom movement of the National Congress. But this alliance was confined only to the political field. The policy of bringing about cultural harmony between Hindus and Muslims which Gandhiji wanted to establish in order to strengthen the basis of political unity did not really find favour with the revivalists of both communities though many of them, for Gandhiji's sake, made a show of supporting it.

The focal point of Gandhiji's cultural policy was Hindustani as the national language. Gandhiji knew that Hindustani (simple form of Urdu and Hindi) was the mother tongue of millions of people in Northern and Central India and was understood by many millions in other parts. So in order to give the whole country a common language which could serve its various regions as a medium of communication with one another, he persuaded the National Congress to declare Hindustani in both Dev Nagri and Urdu scripts as the national language. This was really a gesture to show that the future cultural development of the nation would not follow the revivalist line but an attempt would be made to build a common national culture with Hindustani culture, which has envolved in the course of the last four centuries through a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim cultural elements, as a base.

But the revivalist and separatist tendencies among certain classes of Hindus and Muslims were so strong that they could not maintain even a pretence of supporting Gandhiji's cultural policy for long. With the very first instalment of self-government in 1937, separatist tendencies emerged with renewed vigour and were exploited by the opponents of the freedom movement to stir up communal strife. The real motive behind these communal movements among the Hindus and the Muslims was not religious but political and economic. They wanted to carry the lower middle class with them, but they knew that it had no sympathy with their reactionary economic and political ideas.

To inflame its passions they raised the cultural question. Hindu communalists cried for a uniform cuture through the country, that is the ancient Hindu culture. Muslim communalists replied with the two-nation theory and the demand for Pakistan. At the time of the political ferment in 1946-47 these communal slogans set the whole country aflame with communal riots which spread wider and wider, so that in 1947 when the British Parliament conceded independence to the country it had to be divided into the two separate states of India and Pakistan.

Even in the now independent India the cultural problem has not yet been solved. But as the government of the country is now in our own hands, there is every hope that we will give our best consideration to every aspect of the problem and with wisdom, patience and courage find a satisfactory solution. The present form of the question and the possibilities of solving it will be discussed in the next course dealing with problems facing Indian society to-day.[1]

[1] Refers to the volume which is to be published under the title *Modern Indian Society*.

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INDIAN CULTURE—a striking example of unity amid diversity, is the theme of this short book. The author accepts that in India there are a number of regional cultures and some based on religion. But side by side with these, there has always been a common national culture providing a basis of unity amid diversity.

The book surveys the processes which made this national culture possible and points out how all culture-developments in the future should be based on this common ground between regions, communities and religious affiliations.

It begins with a description of general features of Indian culture and takes the reader in stages through pre-Vedic Indian culture and the beginnings of nationhood; Muslim culture, its advent and impact; the composite Hindustani culture and the influence of Western culture on India.

Though the book was primarily written as a text for the General Education Reading Material Project of the Aligarh Muslim University, it will nevertheless, or rather for this very reason, provide an ideal introduction to the subject for general readers—both Indian and foreign.

In preparing the present volume, the author has drawn liberally from his earlier and longer book, *The National Culture of India,* also published by Asia Publishing House.

Rs. 5

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