

IMPACT OF ISLAM ON HINDU SOCIETY DURING THE MEDIEVAL TIMES

Author: Sarah Garima Tigga, 1 year of B.A.,LL.B.(Hons.) from Symbiosis Law School (Pune)

Abstract

This article is related to the impact of Islam on Hindu society during the medieval time. The article throws light upon the advent of Islam brought along with it several changes. One can observe the influence of Islam in almost every aspect of life. From the way, we dressed to the way we communicated all got influenced by the religion of Islam. Around the 7th century one of Muhammad prophets' companion Malik bin Deenar, reached India's western coast, the mosque was built around 629 CE. For trade India was visited by Arab traders, they travelled from place to place exchanging goods. The spread of Islam exposed the harsh reality of the demerits of the rigid caste system that prevailed in those days. This article discusses the journey of how Arabs from being travellers and traders ended up ruling over India. The gradual changes like Hindu laws becoming rigid, women losing their political rights and started following the purdah system, the introduction of new kinds of taxes by the Arabs is also discussed in the article. The article also throws light upon how the setting up of various factories and industries by the Arabs led to economic stability. The setting up of factories not only aided in economic stability but also led to the strengthening of the bond shared by neighbouring countries. At last, the article talks about how the seed of hatred and enmity was sown between the Hindus and Muslims.

INTRODUCTION

Around the seventh century, Malik bin Deenar who was one of the prophets Muhammad's companions reached the western coast of India. He built a mosque in 629 CE which is still standing to this very day. The Arabs were traders and visited India for trade. They used to trade and travel from place to place and country to country exchanging goods. But the one fateful event of damaging their ship and refusal of the king to take responsibility for the same ignited the spirit of revenge in the hearts of these Arab people. It started with a fight against the king to teach him a lesson. The fight was led by a seventeen-year-old boy named Mohammad – bin – Kasim. Slowly and gradually when the Arabs realized the weak internal unity among Indians and the submissive nature of Brahmin kings they started conquering more and more parts of India. Sindh was the first to experience Islamic rule followed by

Multan and gradually Islamic rule spread throughout the continent of India. The rule of Islam not only introduced the religion of Islam in India but also a significant transitional shift was observed in the culture of India. Language and literature were also influenced to a great extent by them Urdu was introduced. The new form of art and music was also brought by the Arabs Sufi music and Shayari was introduced by them. Even food and architecture were influenced under Islamic rule. Hence one can conclude that there was a blend of fusion and mixing as well as interchanging of culture, tradition, art – form, literature, ideology and lifestyle between Hindus and Muslims. From Namaste to As – salamu Alaykum, from saree to burkha, from tying hair in long ponytails to covering them under the veil, from dhoti kurta to sherwani and caps it was not just a mixing of culture but was mixing of the way of living.

Impact of Islam in Various fields

Impact on the food

As mentioned earlier Arabs were traders who travelled from place to place exchanging goods. Because of their trading practices in India, they introduced Indians to new kinds of spices. Ingredients such as pasta, coffee and even asafetida (hing) were brought to our country by them. Several cuisines were also introduced by the Mughals. Mughals were experts in cooking delicate rice dishes. They often cooked rice along with meat, veggies, nuts and almonds. Even the fried potato filled, maida roll which is commonly known as Samosas were brought by them. Indian people also got a chance to relish upon the mouthwatering kababs and Kachhembers.

Impact on clothing

Hindu women before Mughal rule wore sarees. After the invasion of Mughals and the establishment of their rule, the fashion department of those times got deeply influenced. Women started wearing Kurtis, salwar and achakan. Men started wearing kurtas with pyjamas. Men even started wearing caps.

Impact on social life

If one goes back to 500 year BC, women's overall status was fairly good; they used to take part in politics. In ancient scripts of those times, one can find the description of women being allowed to participate in law courts. When Arabs started ruling in our country women lost

their equality, when it comes to social status. Women were subjected to rape and meted out with ill-treatment. Hindus even adopted the Muslim lifestyle of gambling and wine-drinking. Even in courts and Durbars, they adopted Muslims way of sitting.

Purdah system

If one goes back to the year 500 BC, this custom of the Purdah system was not there. Even in fields, women used to work without any form of purdah. The literary works of those times depict women's freedom. Even in old Vedas and other religious texts, no trace of the Purdah system can be found. As per Rig Veda during a Hindu marriage ceremony, husbands are asked to look at their going to be wives. As per Dharma Shastra's page, number 336 for the Purdah system is mentioned for the first time in Mahacab, but it was limited to only a few royal families. Even in the epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana Sita as well as Kunti, neither of them is observed under Purdah. In some of the tales of Jataka, women are depicted to be under the veil. Even in the caves of Ajanta and Khajuraho, the inscribed statues of women figures are not observed having Purdah. But When Muslims began to rule in India, the Purdah system started. Dharmshastra's page 337 gives two main causes of the onset of the Purdah system. The first reason was to protect Hindu women from evil practices. The second reason was to protect them from the evil eye.

Impact on Language

Being ruled by the Mughals brought along with them not only their food, clothing, lifestyle but also their way of communication. In India during Islamic rule, we Indians got introduced to Persian and Arabic languages. These languages slowly and gradually made their way into our local languages. Under the Muslim Dynasties, new languages started being used like Urdu and Deccani for official work purpose. Urdu is a language that resulted because of intermixing of words from Persian, Turkish and Arabic Languages. It later became the common language spoken during medieval times. There were several Muslim scholars whose works helped and aided in the growth, development well as expanding the scope of vernacular literature. Malik Muhammad Jayasi, Amir Khushru and numerous other Muslim scholars in their literary works wrote about Hindus and they are a lifestyle.

Impact on Literature

The writing down of history and literature in our country got influenced to a large extent by the Islamic philosophers and thinkers. Several texts and books which were originally written in the Parsi language left a deep and long-lasting impact on Hindu people. Among numerous such works few of the outstanding works are as follows:-

1. Taj – ul – Maa by Hassan Nizam.
2. Kitab – ul – Yamini by Utbi.
3. And last but not the least Tabaqat – I – Nasiri by Qazi Minhaz – us – Siraj.

There were even several Islamic poets who through their works greatly contributed to history writing form in India.

Impact on Art and craft

Islamic people were excellent craftsmen and Hindus by following their techniques created new forms of art and crafts. Islamic people excelled in the craft of papermaking and enamelling work, they even used to do engravings on stones and inlay works on them metals and even pieces of jewellery. Since the Islamic people were very good in various kinds of craftwork it led to the setting – up of numerous kinds of factories. Factories related to papermaking, dyeing, leather tanning, shoemaking, zari work and so on ... Due to the setting – up of so many industries and factories the overall economy of our country got substantially affected.

Impact on Architecture

The coming together and exchanging of ideas between the Hindus and the Islamic architects led to the emergence of a new style of structures and architectures. Numerous mosques, Red Fort, Jama Masjid, Qutub Minar and even Taj Mahal which is one of the Seven Wonders of the World, etc. are a few of the architectural structures built in the Islamic style of architecture. The ideas of tombs, Gumbat, smooth huge walls, Courtyards (Verandas), tall pillars called minarets and so on ... got incorporated in our Hindu style of architecture. The taking of inspiration is not unidirectional. Islamic architecture drew its inspiration from the Hindu temples. In general Hindu temples have inspiration from nature like the Lotus temple; Hindus worshipped nature in various forms like Surya (for sun), Indra (for rain) and even Tulsi for its medicinal purposes. Hence their temples reflected nature in the form of creepers, leaves and flowers.

Impact on Music, musical instruments and dance

Fusion can be seen in our classical Indian music with the coming of Islamic rule. Not only music but even musical instruments underwent modifications and changes as per the preference of Muslim musical artists. Our traditional musical instrument Mridangam which was played by the Hindus got modified and transformed into Tab La. Even Sitar was an outcome of the fusion of Tanpura from Iran and Indian Veena. The air of our Indian streets was filled with the soft, light musical notes of Quwwalis. Numerous classical vocal songs underwent drastic transition which was due to the meeting and assimilation of Indian and Islamic musical artists.

Impact on Painting

There was a visible drastic change in the field of Indian paintings. When Indian painters got influenced by the Islamic painters it led to the emergence of new art forms. A transitional shift was observed when Islamic artists incorporated the Hindu way of painting lady figures on walls blowing trumpets or dancing. Slowly and gradually the Ajanta style of painting got replaced by the Islamic form known as the pyramidal structure of the painting. The traditional Hindu form of paintings which were observed in Tanjor's shrine, Jaipur, Rajputana, in parts of Bengal and so on ... soon faded with the following Islamic form of painting. Even the art of calligraphy developed under the rule of Islam along with pictographic art. Soon the streets, houses, worship places and even bathing places of Hindus were filled with Muslim style of painting.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SUBJECT

The advent of Islamic rule caused the exchange of customs, traditions and ideas. Due to the interaction between the Hindus and the Muslims, a lot of changes and developments can be observed in various fields. It was a journey from a relation of merely trade and commerce to conquest and rule. Even before ruling over India these Arabs influenced and impacted the market of food and fashion by their exchange of goods and trading practices. It is interesting and at the same time shocking to realize how these Arabs which were few dominated, influenced and later on even ruled over the Hindus which were in majority. The analyzing power of the Arabic people is highly commendable in the sense that just by winning one war, that too under the leadership of a seventeen-year-old boy can be conquered and ruled over

the whole of India. Just after their first victory, the Arabs realized the weakness of India. They realized that the Hindu religion was divided by caste. They also realized that every caste is divided based on work. Hence a particular caste cannot do all kinds of work, for example, they easily defeated the Brahmin rulers as Brahmins never waged wars. Islamic rule over Hindus was not just the introduction of a new religion or faith in our country, but it also brought along with it its own unique culture, tradition and way of life. There are few things common in both Hindu as well as Muslim religion, like fasting, Hindu religion is based on Vedas and scriptures written by rishi munies likewise Muslim religion too is based on the Quran which is a compilation of sermons and teachings of prophets and so on... Apart from religion Hindus were introduced to new cuisines and flavours. New techniques of cooking were introduced in India like kebabs which Hindus later modified into vegetarian kebabs too. Fashion and clothing style started to bend more towards Kurtis, pyjamas and hijabs from sarees and dhotis. Several factories both small as well as large scales were set – up for the manufacturing of shoes, paper works, tanning, dyeing and leatherwork. Like every coin has two sides, like every blooming rose has its own set of thorns, in the same way, Islamic rule over Hindus too had both pros as well as cons. In Islam, women did not enjoy equal status when it came to their socio-political life. In Islam, there existed a Purdah system so women were behind the veil. Now one may think in Hindus too women cover their heads in veils, but this was not the case in Hindus in those times. The Muslims were introduced to the concept of Devadasi when they started ruling over Hindus. The service of a Devadasi was considered a very respectful job as per Hindus. To become a Devadasi women had to pass a large checklist which comprised of soft skills, looks, dance, singing and so on...When Muslims started ruling over Hindus they started ending this custom of Devadasi putting it under the category of prostitution. Hindus upon noticing that Muslims were ill-treating Hindu women and due to a drastic increase in rape cases decided to make their rules rigid. Hindus got scared that their religion might get extinct if they did not take strict measures. Hence they started the bhakti movement and even translated their religious scripts into local languages to keep the followers of the Hindu faith intact to their roots. Is this fear of becoming a minority due to the spread of the Muslim faith still prevail... does there still prevail a hint of hatred in the hearts of Hindus towards Muslims and vice versa... yes the fear of getting dominated by Muslims still prevails. Deep down the Hindus knew that Muslims were united in their faith and not divided like them on the basis of caste. People often tend to blame the Britishers for their “divide and rule” policy which as per them was the cause of hatred between the Hindus and

the Muslims. But they fail to notice that the seeds of hatred were sown not by a third party but by one's thoughts of fear and jealousy. There were various Islamic thinkers as well as philosophers who through their works talked about various aspects of Islamic rule. Even the administration system under Muslim rulers was highly organized. The system of administration was divided among Sultan, Nobles and Khalifa. All of them had a varied scope of power. They even had Wazir and various ministers to lead the numerous departments like trade, finance and so on... Before the advent of Muslim rule in India, numerous Hindu Kings were ruling over small parts of our country. Hence under Muslim rule for the first time concept of large and huge dynasties under a single king came into the picture. During the rule of the Muslims, several taxes were imposed upon Hindus. Like Jizya, Kharaj which included taxation on Hindu worship places too, this further fueled the anger of Hindus against Muslims.

CONCLUSION

It was a journey of how Arabs from being traders and travellers, started ruling over India. After the assimilation as well as interchanging of cultures, one can say Arabs greatly contributed to the diversity of our country. From introducing new spices through trade to waging wars; from introducing the Purdah system to sometimes even raping and kidnapping Hindu women the Arabs started ruling over Hindus and imposed their customs upon them. There was a time when women enjoyed freedom and had rights. But slowly and gradually women's socio-political status started to degrade. Upon observing the rapid growth and spread of Islam Hindu persists got alarmed and scared. A large number of conversions started taking place when people realized the benefits of the Muslim faith. This led eventually to making Hindu laws rigid. The fear of the spread of Islam led to some positive effects too. The Bhakti movement was initiated by the Hindus. For the very first time, people belonging to all castes and regions could read the Vedas. Hindus realized the power of unity. They realized the demerit of a rigid caste system. Due to the caste system, a specific caste was specialized in particular duty or work. This was the very reason which led to their defeat despite having more than sufficient manpower. The Muslims were united under one god Allah. For the first time in their entire life, Hindus witnessed severe kinds of punishments inflicted upon accusers and ill-treatment towards women. Muslim rulers imposed various kinds of taxes, started numerous factories and opened the gates for trade and commerce. Factories such as textile, dyeing, shoemaking, leather tanning started in India. The setting up of factories led to

the stable growth of our country's economy. The practice of trade not only accelerated the rate of economic development but also led to the strengthening of international bonds with neighbouring countries. In the end, a lot of hate was filled in the hearts of Hindus both out of the outcome of war and sufferings as well as out of jealousy behind their unity. The seed of envy and enmity between the Hindus and the Muslims was later on fueled by the Britishers. Now with the passing of years, this anger is slowly fading away. This hatred still prevails among them although now it is much more subtle. But the very fact that when Hindus and Muslims stand together and united no one can defeat them remains unshaken. If both accept each other and take the good things from each other's religion, custom and tradition then no external threat can threaten our country.

References

v Journal Article:-

1. Cynthia Talbot, *Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu – Muslim Identities in pre-colonial India*, 37 *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 692,692-722(Oct 1995).
2. Ahmad Porahmad & Simin Tavallai, *The Contribution of Muslim Geographers to the Development of the Subject*, 89 *Geography* 140,140-144(April 2004).
3. Gustav Richter & M.S. Khan, *MEDIVAL ARABIC HISTORIOGRAPHY*, 23 *Islamic Studies* 225, 225-247 (1984).
4. A.R. Momin, *The Indo – Islamic Tradition*, 26 *Sociological Bulletin* 242,242-258(1977).
5. Andre` Wink, *From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean: Medieval History in Geographic Perspective*,44 *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 416,416-445(2002).

v Books:-

1. 72 Pushpa Prasad, Sectional President's Address: ARTISANS IN MEDIEVAL INDIA: THROUGH NAGARI INSCRIPTIONS, 246-263(Proceedings of the History Congress, 2011).