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Chapter LXIX

INFLUENCE OF MUSLIM THOUGHT ON THE EAST

A

INTRODUCTION

Gibbon describes the rise and expansion of Islam as one of the most memorable revolutions which has impressed a new and lasting character on the nations of the world. Beginning with a small following, ill-equipped financially and militarily, Islam turned out eventually a mighty force, wielding its sceptre

of authority over a world greater than that of Alexander the Great, greater than that of Rome, and that too acquired in a very much shorter period. Hardly fifty years had passed since Prophet Muḥammad was commissioned by God to spread His gospel of truth when the Muslims planted the banner of Islam on the confines of India on the one side, and on the shores of the Atlantic on the other. Islam began to spread after the migration *(hijrah)* of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina. Conversions took place on an unprecedented scale. The new ideology inspired the Arabs as no other ideology had done before; it filled their hearts with longings both mundane and supramundane and enabled them to accomplish in an incredibly short time what would have otherwise required centuries of well-planned and well-calculated strategy.

The amazing success of the Arab nation was due not only to their organization, zeal, and aspiration, but also and in a large measure to the unifying action of Islam and the inspiring and revolutionary nature of its social programme and its ability to lead the masses out of the hopeless situation created by the decay of the antique civilizations of Greece, Rome, Persia, China, and India,[1] and to the all-powerful influence of the Qur'ān. None can deny the inherent faith of the early Muslims in the ultimate triumph of their cause, actuated as that faith was, not by the baser motives of power, but by the idea of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth.

In the opinion of Georges Rivoire[2] the objective of the Muslim conquests was the construction of a universal State which "recognized no distinctions of race, nor of social conditions, the only rule it insisted upon was equal justice and fraternity." Naturally, the physically suffering and morally disjointed masses found in Islam a promise of liberation and salvation.

To the places they conquered the Muslims carried not only the flag of Islam but also culture, philosophy, and the study of nature all of which had their source in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

In what follows, an attempt will be made to trace the course of intellectual revolution which Muslim thought brought about in Persia, Turkey, China, India, and Indonesia.

B

PERSIA

Islam was introduced to the land of Persia in 7/628 by the Prophet Muḥammad himself, when through an epistle addressed to Khusrau Parvīz, the then Persian monarch, he extended an invitation to him and his subjects to embrace Islam: to affirm the unity of God and the apostleship of Muḥammad,

[1] M. N. Roy, *The Historical Role of Islam*, Chaps. 1–3.

[2] *Visages de l'Islam* quoted by Zaki Ali, *Islam in the World*, Lahore, 1947, p. 110.

to do good and to refrain from evil. In olden times no king, much less a Persian potentate, would receive a direct communication from an unknown person without getting flared up, the act being regarded as an instance of insolence and sacrilege. Accordingly, the Prophet's letter was torn to pieces and his emissary expelled with ignominy and disgrace. On hearing this, the Prophet felt sad and prophesied an early downfall of Khusrau's Empire. It was during the rule of the first Caliph that, as a response to this insult, the Muslim forces, under the leadership of General Sa'd, invaded Persia and inflicted a terrible defeat on the Persian army in the battle of Qādisīyyah. This battle served as a prelude to a series of defeats which the Persians suffered at the hands of the Arabs and which sealed their fate in a short period of ten years after the delivery of the Prophet's letter. King Yazdigird, a lad of eighteen, was probably the last ruler to make a futile attempt against the Muslims. His Chinese and Turkish mercenaries deserted him on the first onslaught of the Arabs, while he was himself plundered and assassinated by a villager in whose hut he had taken refuge after fleeing from the battlefield.

In the first/seventh century the Persian Empire like the Byzantine Empire was tottering under the crushing weight of despotism. Persecutions born of religious dissensions were the order of the day. Zoroastrianism was the State religion and its priests, not content with the spiritual authority they enjoyed by virtue of their office, also held positions of trust and responsibility in the administration of the State. A campaign of vilification followed by persecutions started against the adherents of the older forms of religion in Persia, among which ranked Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Sabaeans, Gnostics, and Manichaeans. All the older faiths and creeds longed to breathe freely and freshly in an atmosphere of toleration and comradeship which they eventually found in the teachings of Islam. Not only was it enjoined by Islam that the Christians and Jews must be treated with fairness and consideration because of their being the "People of the Book," but according to the clear directions of the Prophet the Zoroastrians were also to be treated at par with them, and hence entitled to the same privileges and concessions as enjoyed by the Muslims. All that was required of the non-Muslims was payment of a nominal poll-tax for the security they enjoyed under the Muslim rule. In return they were exempted not only from the payment of *zakāt*, the State tax which every Muslim had to pay, but also from military service. Those non-Muslims who entered the military service had not to pay the poll-tax.

The conquest of Persia by the Arabs brought relief to the Christians. Earlier, the Sāssānid kings had fomented bitter struggles between the Jacobites and the Nestorians; they had also been persecuting the Christian sects within their domains because of the Christian aggression from abroad. King Khusrau II ordered a general persecution of the Christians as he had suffered a defeat at the hands of Heraclius, a Christian monarch. The masses also welcomed the new creed. The Zoroastrian priests held in contempt the working classes—artisans, mechanics, labourers, agriculturists—who defiled fire, earth, and

water in pursuance of their trades and professions. The labouring classes in the Zoroastrian society had the same miserable lot as the Śūdras in the caste-ridden Hindu society. In the new faith of the conquerers, the common man found a panacea to most of the social ills from which he had so terribly suffered. Islam recognizes no distinctions of caste and occupation; it gives no preference to one class of individuals over another save on the basis of merit; and advocates a theory of human brotherhood which transcends geographical and political limits.

With the downfall of the Sāssānid dynasty, Zoroastrianism lost its powerful support. In the altered circumstances it found it extremely difficult to hold its own against the contending forces competing for supremacy. To its spiritual bankruptcy may be added the social confusion for which its priests were chiefly responsible. The Zoroastrian masses welcomed the new faith because of its liberalism, dynamism, and absence of parochialism. They were also drawn towards it because of the many similarities between their faith and the new one. Instead of Ahura Mazdāh and Ahriman, they found Allah and Iblīs; they also got their angels and demons, their stories about the creation of man and his resurrection, about heaven and hell and about sundry things similar to those they found in their own religion. Besides all this, they discovered that the ethics of Islam was not very different from theirs. Under the Muslim rule they began to enjoy a remarkable degree of toleration; their religious practices were respected and their fire-temples safeguarded.[3]

Besides the causes enumerated above for the spread of Islam in Persia mention may also be made of the marriage of Shahrbānu, a daughter of Yazdigird—the last monarch of the Sāssānid dynasty—with Ḥusain, the son of 'Ali. Consequently, in the descendants of Ḥusain and Shahrbānu, the Persians could see the heirs to their ancient kings. This also accounts to some extent for the rise of Shī'ism as a separate sect in Persia and the devotion of the Persians to the 'Alīds. Islam lost its alien character and appealed to the patriotic feelings of the average Persian, as he felt that, in addition to other advantages, he gained through the aforesaid marriage alliance a reassertion of his native values and traditions.

Persia had a remarkable culture and a highly developed civilization many centuries before the advent of Islam. In olden times, she was the cradle of thoughts and beliefs which supplied religion and philosophy to Persians and non-Persians. She was also the centre of a mighty political organization, and her theories of statecraft and administration became a model to the Turks. The intellectual aspect of the pre-Muslim Persian culture was determined by the philosophies of Zoroaster, Māni, and Mazdak—more or less dualistic despite a tinge of monotheism. The pre-Sāssānian thought indicated a tendency towards monotheism, especially in Zoroaster, but the tendency became a dominant feature of Persian thought, almost an indubitable truth,

[3] Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, Chaps. VII and IX.

only after the Muslim conquest. The dualism of Good and Evil yielded place to the dualism of God and matter.

The 'Abbāsid Caliphate provided the most congenial atmosphere to the development of philosophy. As a result of Muslim influence, the Persians became the leaders of thought. Among the names of the foremost Persian thinkers may be mentioned those of ibn Miskawaih, ibn Sīna, al-Ghazāli, Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzi, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsi, Mulla Ṣadra. The encyclopedists, Ikhwān al-Ṣafa, though not original in their contributions, are also worthy of mention. They had among them some good scholars like Zaid, son of Rifā'a, abu Sulaimān Muḥammad of Bust, 'Ali of Zanjān, abu Aḥmad Mihrajāni and 'Aufi.[4] Persian Sufism also contains some very great names such as abu Sa'īd ibn abi al-Khair, 'Aṭṭār, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmi, Sa'di, Ḥāfiẓ, al-Jīli, and Jāmi.

From Persia, Islam spread to China, Turkey. Afghānistān, India, and Indonesia.

C

CHINA, TURKEY, AND AFGHĀNISTĀN

Islam was carried over to China by Muslim merchants. It was firmly planted there by Arab troops who fought for Su Tsung (139/756) and settled in China after the successful conclusion of the war.

Arnold thinks that there is no direct evidence of any proselytizing activity on the part of the Muslims in China. The entire Muslim population of the land consists of the descendants of the immigrants from Arabia, Persia, Turkey, and other Muslim territories as a result of Mongol conquests.[5] The number of Muslims in China is estimated at about thirty million.[6] The Chinese Muslims have, however, identified themselves with the rest of their countrymen, in spite of their religious differences.

The Afghāns believe that they were invited to Islam by Khālid bin Walīd in the first/seventh century. But the earliest record of their conversion to Islam dates from the reign of al-Māmūn (198–218/813–833) when a king of Kabul was converted to Islam. His successors, however, reverted to Buddhism. Afghānistān was won for Islam in 258/871 by Ya'qūb bin Laith, but Islamic ideas did not catch the imagination of the masses until after the conquest of the country by Subuktigīn and Maḥmūd of Ghaznah.

The invasion of Chingīz Khān on Muslim Asia is regarded as the greatest calamity that has ever fallen on the human race. Like the huge waves of a mighty cyclone, it swept over the lands of Bukhāra, Khiva, Khurāsān, Iraq, and Russia. Not only did Chingīz Khān plunder whatever he laid his hands

[4] A. M. A. Shushtery, *Outlines of Islamic Culture*, Vol. II, Bangalore, 1938, p. 426.

[5] Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

[6] A. M. A. Shushtery, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 26.

on, but he also destroyed seats of learning and the precincts of Islamic civilization. After his death, his Empire was divided among his sons. Persia fell to the lot of Tuli, one of whose descendants, Hulāgu, was destined to found a dynasty which lasted for about a century and a half. The official religion of the Mongols was Shamānism, which, being a primitive type of religion, could not hold its own against the organized religions prevalent in the lands over which the Mongols ruled. Islam had the least chance of success as the Mongols had established their kingdom on the ruins of the Muslim Empire. But it is one of the surprises of human history that the conquered became the conquerors. The Mongols eventually accepted Islam—a religion the annihilation of which they had planned. With the conversion of the Mongol king to Islam this religion got a chance of spreading to Turkestan, Siberia, and Russia.

The Turks originally inhabited certain parts of Central Asia, particularly Mongolia, Siberia, and Turkestan. They did not profess any of the Semitic or non-Semitic faiths. They worshipped, like most primitive tribes of Asia, the sky, the earth, and water. Their religion lay in deifying the forces of nature and propitiating them by offerings, magic, and incantations. Before their acceptance of Islam they had come under the influence of Buddhism, Manichaeism, Judaism, and Christianity. But none of these creeds could win them over permanently to its side. It was Islam which they accepted finally in the fourth/tenth century. Several reasons have been advanced for the triumph of Islam, but the most cogent one out of these, according to G. L. Lewis, "was the fact that acceptance of Islam automatically conferred citizen rights in a vast and flourishing civilisation."[7]

It was towards the middle of the seventh/thirteenth century that a small band of nomad Turks migrated from Khurāsān under Sulaimān Shāh. Driven by Mongols they hoped to find shelter in Asia Minor. In the rulers of this area they found people of a kindred race, the Saljūqian Turks, whose kingdom was disintegrating due to disputes of succession and invasions from Central Asia. Taking advantage of the decadent conditions, Ertoghrul and Dundar, two sons of Sulaimān, established themselves in a territory ceded by the Saljūqs in recognition of their military assistance. To 'Uthmān, the son of Ertoghrul, however, goes the credit of laying a secure foundation for the Turkish Empire.

Though the Saljūqs were nomad tribesmen, they evinced keen interest in the civilizations of the Persians and the Greeks with whom they came in contact. During the sixth/twelfth century, Anatolia, Qūniyah, and Erzerum became covered with architectural designs inspired by the Persian and the Greek art. They also "encouraged religious thinkers and philosophers. The famous Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmi flourished under their auspices in Qūniyah, and so did others of the Sufi school."[8]

[7] G. L. Lewis, *Turkey*, Ernest Benn Ltd., London, 1957, p. 17.
[8] M. Philips Price, *A History of Turkey*, London, 1956, p. 33.

The Ottoman Turks who replaced the Saljūqs were no less ardent in furthering the cause of learning and literature. It is said about 'Uthmān that as he lay on his death-bed, he advised his sons to "promote the learned to honour . . . and whatsoever place thou hearest of a learned man, let honour, magnificence, and clemency attend him."[9] Ottoman literature is very extensive, comprising every species of letters then current. Among the earlier poets may be mentioned Ghāzi Fāḍil, Shaikhi, Mīr 'Ali Shīr Nawā'i, Aḥmad Pāsha, Najāti, Dhāti, Zainab, Mihri, and ibn Kamāl. They wrote lyrics, and also thoughtful poems explaining the knotty problems of life through allegories and stories of animals and birds. Among the later poets who give evidence of greater poise and balance may be mentioned Fuḍūli, Bāqi, Nefi, Nabi, and Nadīm. They introduced new strains and new modes of thinking in poetry. Among the prose-writers, the names of 'Ali Chalabi, Avliya Efendi, Kātib Chalabi may be mentioned. They wrote on history, chronology, geography, travels, and other subjects.[10]

All this shows that, like other Muslim countries, Turkey espoused the cause of learning and literature. The incentive was, however, provided by the religion of Islam, which the Turks had finally accepted.

D

INDIA

The impact of Islam on Hinduism is a phenomenon of remarkable significance. It is regretted that the Western writers as well as those of India (with the sole exception of Dr. Tara Chand) have in their works either ignored this fact altogether or assigned to it an insignificant place in the history of Indian thought. In this section, it is intended to bring out the extent and significance of those ideas and beliefs which had their source in Muslim philosophy and religion and which in course of time, through personal contacts, religious disputations, discussions, and exchange of views, coloured and changed to a very substantial degree the complexion of Hindu thought and gave it a new orientation and direction.

There is no denying the fact that the Muslims were also influenced by Hinduism in some very important respects. They borrowed from the Hindus some aspects of mysticism and some mores, especially their caste-system, funeral and birth rites, marriage customs, untouchability which they practised against sweepers, and a host of other things—good and bad—which it is needless to enumerate. But the main tenets of the Hindu creed had no influence on Muslim ideology and code of life. No Muslim thinker of any importance has ever accepted the doctrines of transmigration, incarnation, *karma*, and polytheism in any shape or form, and these doctrines constitute the very

[9] Lord Eversely, *The Turkish Empire*, Lahore, 1957, p. 9.
[10] Cf. Stanley Lane-Poole, *Turkey*, London, 1900, pp. 302–23.

soul and spirit of Hinduism. On the contrary, monotheistic ideas of the Muslims together with their belief in the universal brotherhood of mankind were adopted by the Hindus which they bandied about as of Hindu origin. Indian philosophy after the first/seventh century has evinced keener interest in monotheism and casteless society; it has also laid less emphasis on ritualism and negativism in life. This change may be due to several sociological and technological forces among which the advent of Islam in India must be ranked as a major factor of great cultural and philosophical importance. In the event of two cultures meeting together the dominant one pushes the weaker one to the periphery and occupies the centre itself. Something of the same sort happened in the case of Hindu culture and beliefs. In the ideological struggle which ensued Muslim infiltration into India, the native culture, finding itself unequal to the incoming one, had to relinquish the central position.

In what follows an attempt will be made to explain very briefly this remarkable phenomenon. After a short historical survey of the cultural contact, Muslim influence will be traced first up to Śaṅkara, then from Śaṅkara to Rāmānuja, and lastly from Rāmānuja down to the present times.

Cultural Contacts.—The impact of Islam on Indian culture, thought, and religion was felt as early as the second/eighth century if not earlier. The writings of Muslim historians and travellers show that it was in South India, on the Malabar Coast, that the Muslims who were often preachers of their faith first settled as traders. Akbar Shāh Khān[11] reports of the tomb of a Companion of the Prophet, named Tamīm Anṣāri at Mylapur, twelve miles south of Madras. Islam also penetrated Ceylon. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah found the tombs of several preachers and saints in Ceylon during his travels. He mentions the names of Shaikh 'Abd Allah Ḥanīf, Shaikh 'Uthmān, and Bāba Ṭāhir among others.

Historical evidence proves unmistakably that the first Arab fleet appeared on Indian waters in 15/636 and was repulsed. But about the end of the first/seventh century, says Rawlinson, the Muslim Arabs settled on the Malabar Coast, and this fact is corroborated by Francis Day in his *Land of the Permals*, and by Sturrock in his *South Kanara and Madras Districts Manuals*. Humayun Kabir writes, "Innes, in his *Malabar and Anjangode District Gazetteer*, quotes an inscription of a tomb from Kollam of one 'Ali who died there in 166/788. Further circumstantial evidence is offered by the revolt in 141/758 of a colony of Muslims established at Canton in China. It is obvious that this colony could not have been founded without intermediate stations, of which the Malabar Coast was likely to be one. Caldwell picked up near Kayalapattan in Tinnevelly, near the mouth of the Tamraparni, a number of Arab coins bearing dates from 71/690."[12]

Muḥammad bin Qāsim invaded Sind in 94/712. The expedition was despatch-

[11] *Ā'īnah-i Ḥaqīqatnumā'*, pp. 46, 47.
[12] *The Cultural Heritage of India*, ed. Bhattacharya, 1956, Vol. IV, p. 587.

ed by Ḥajjāj, the viceroy of Iraq and Iran of the Umayyad dynasty. As a result of the conquest of Sind, Islam came to exercise a potent influence on Indian thought and culture. This part of India remained the Far Eastern territory of the Caliphate till 267/880 when the Caliphate began to decline. The kingdom of Ghaznah founded by Subuktigīn who conquered Peshawar in 380/990 was a direct result of the weakening of the Caliphate. The aggressive policy of Subuktigīn was followed by his ambitious and energetic son Maḥmūd and by a series of Mughul, Tartar, Khurāsāni, and Afghān leaders. It was never the intention of the Muslim invaders to spread or work for their religion. A large number of the natives were converted to Islam not because of the political domination of the Muslims but for other reasons, among which may be ranked the missionary activities of the Sufi thinkers and the intolerable economic condition of the masses coupled with the ignorance of their own religion. The most important cause of the conversion was, however, the simplicity of the Islamic doctrine: the brotherhood it proclaims, and the equal status it accords to Śūdras and non-Śūdras alike. Even at the early stages the influence was so great that Dr. Titus mentions eleven out of the several Hindu sects in which a definite mixture of Hindu and Muslim notions and practices prevailed.[13] K. A. Nilkanta admits monotheism and democratic spirit of Islam as potent factors in the evolution of religio-philosophic culture in India and traces in the strictly monotheistic doctrines of Nānak the influence of Islam.[14]

It has been observed that Sind formed an outlying province of the Caliphate till 267/880. During this period and particularly during the reigns of al-Manṣūr, al-Hārūn, and al-Māmūn attempts were made to understand Indian thought. From Sind, Hindu pundits came to the Court of al-Manṣūr and presented to him *Brahmasiddhānta* and *Khandakhadyaka*, famous astronomical works of Brahmagupta. Both of these were translated into Arabic. A great impetus to this cultural understanding was afforded by the ministerial family of the Barmakids, who were patrons of Hindu learning in the Court of Hārūn al-Rashīd. According to al-Bīrūni, this family came from Balkh where an ancestor of theirs was an official in a Buddhist temple. Arab scholars were sent by this family to India to study Indian thought, while Indian scholars were invited to the Court of Baghdād to explain Hindu learning. In the fifth/eleventh century al-Muwaffiq and al-Bīrūni visited India with the object of understanding Indian medicine, astronomy, and philosophy. Al-Bīrūni was the first to translate *Sāṅkhya* of Kapila into Arabic. He also translated *Yoga Sūtra* by Patanjali and introduced *Bhagvad-Gīta* to the Muslims.

The Hindus also evinced eagerness for understanding Muslim religion and thought. Balādhuri writes in the *Futūḥ al-Buldān* that during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd, a Hindu rājah requested the Caliph to send a scholar to him to expound and discuss the fundamentals of Islam. Mas'ūdi, a historian, reports

[13] *Indian Islam*, pp. 172–77.
[14] *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV, p. 61.

that when he arrived in India in 302/914 he found a Brahmani ruler supremely interested in religious discussions. Whenever this ruler heard of a Muslim arriving in his territory he would invite him and entered into religious discussion with him.[15]

From the First/Seventh Century to Śaṅkara.—Inter-communication of such an active nature could not but influence the thoughts and beliefs of both the communities. Indian philosophy would have been substantially different from what it is today, had Islam with its "militant democracy," "liberal rationalism," and "uncompromising monotheism" not entered the arena of Indian thought. There would have been, in all probability, no proofs for the existence of God such as we find in *Udavana's Kusumāñjli* written in the fourth/tenth century, nor would there have been Śaṅkara about whom Humayun Kabir observes, "Historical factors do not exclude the possibility of Śaṅkara's acquaintance with the elements of Islamic thought."[16] "It is necessary to repeat that most of the elements in the southern school of devotion and philosophy taken singly were derived from ancient systems, but the elements in their totality and in their peculiar emphasis betray a singular approximation to Muslim faith and therefore make the argument for Islamic influence probable."[17] Even today there is a group of Śaṅkara's followers who do not cremate but bury their dead in the Islamic way.

All the Mu'tazilites, with the solitary exception of al-Jāḥiẓ, had discussed philosophy and propounded their theories, before Śaṅkara was born in the last quarter of the second/eighth century. Even al-Jāḥiẓ would have died before Śaṅkara, had he not lived up to the age of ninety. The Mu'tazilites were unitarians *par excellence*. They would not admit the attribution of eternal qualities to God, for that would mean the existence of other eternals besides the eternal God. Śaṅkara too was an uncompromising monist, believing God to be one and the only reality, all else being illusion. In the writings of Śaṅkara one finds an increasing emphasis on the unity of God which some people have regarded as an extension of the ancient monotheism of the *Upaniṣads*. But this explanation has failed to satisfy a good many Orientalists who find in Śaṅkara's works "something pertaining to the semitic religions especially."[18] Abu al-Hudhail, a prominent Mu'tazilite, appears to be a precursor of those Hindu monists who maintained that God could be described only in negatives. Abu al-Hudhail, however, admitted, quite contrary to his fundamental position, that God is knowing, loving, and powerful. The other Mu'tazilites were quick to discover the inconsistency and denied, therefore, all positive attributes to the Supreme Reality. In their hands God became unpredicable as well as unknowable, more of an abstract, impersonal, and absolute principle at the back of the universe than a God conceived as a

[15] *Murūj al-Dhahab*, Vol. I, p. 254.
[16] *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV, p. 586.
[17] Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Allahabad, 1946, p. 107.
[18] Pope, Manikka Vashar. Cited by Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

person with whom any contact could be established. They did believe in the possibility of the beatific vision but strongly repudiated all forms of anthropomorphism.

The majority of the Mu'tazilites were atomists. The universe, they thought, was composed of atoms which were indivisible entities. They divided the physical world into substance and accidents or atoms and bodies. Strict determinism, according to them, governed physical phenomena, while freedom of action characterized human beings.

As we have shown in previous chapters, the Mu'tazilites believed in the cult of reason and endeavoured to reconcile the doctrines of Islam with rationalistic views then prevalent. Quite a good many of them enjoyed State patronage. Bishr, the son of Mu'ammar, was a favourite of the Caliph al-Māmūn during whose reign efforts were made to understand Hindu thought and culture through discussions and translations of religious literature. In theological and philosophical discussions, the protagonists of different views had complete freedom to express themselves. It is not unlikely that in this free exchange of ideas the Hindu participants returned to their homeland with quite a number of rationalistic doctrines having their origin in the Mu'tazilite mode of thought. Communication is rarely one-sided; in free and frank exchange of ideas the traffic is more often than not two-sided. The Mu'tazilites could not satisfy the masses because of their exclusive concern with reason and their seemingly unorthodox views. The Ash'arites protested against the religious rationalism of the Mu'tazilites and advocated a middle path between philosophy and orthodoxy. They refuted the Mu'tazilite views, even while they modified the orthodox doctrine. They rejected the Greek and Oriental philosophies, proved Islamic doctrines by the dialectical method, and refuted non-Islamic religions as well as some sects of Islam. Al-Ash'ari, al-Bāqillāni, al-Juwaini, al-Ghazāli, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzi, and ibn Taimīyyah wrote in defence of Islamic theology and in refutation of Greek and particularly Aristotelian thought. Al-Ash'ari was born in c. 260/873, while al-Ghazāli, in whose hands the Ash'arite theology reached its final triumph, was born in 450/1058. Al-Ghazāli was convinced that the philosophical theory could not form the basis of religious thought and that it was by revelation alone that the essentials of religion could be known. Al-Ghazāli asserted that revelation was quite enough and that its ultimate truth could be ascertained only by the experience of the individual. Through ecstasy one could become a knower and receive, so to say, direct communication from God.

In addition to the Mu'tazilites, Ash'arites, and al-Ghazāli who touched almost on all problems of philosophical and religious interest and whose theories found a way to the Indian soil through various channels some of which we have mentioned above, there was a long, unbroken line of Sufis, beginning with the early Companions of the Prophet who, like the Prophet himself, set a model for the Sufis by their intense zeal and enthusiasm for the cause of Islam, by their piety, and by the austere life they led. The Sufis,

among whom may be counted Ibrāhīm bin Adham (d. 160/783), Faḍl bin 'Iyāḍ (d. 185/901), Rābi'ah al-Adwīyyah (d. 185/802), were orthodox Muslims with no pantheistic bias; they revelled, however, in self-abandonment, fervent piety, and quietism, carried to the extreme. Rābi'ah conceived of prayer as a free and intimate intercourse with God. Her prayers indicate spontaneous outpouring of her heart to God. Says she, in one of her prayers, "O my Lord, if I worship Thee from fear of hell, burn me in hell, and if I worship Thee from hope of paradise, exclude me thence, but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, then withhold not from me Thine Eternal Beauty."

From Śaṅkara to Rāmānuja.—By the time of Rāmānuja, who was born in 407/1016, a host of Muslim thinkers and Sufis—some of the best philosophers that Islam has ever produced—had expounded and elaborated their thoughts in fine systems. It is very unlikely that their thoughts and theories should have failed to influence Indian thought through religious discussions and philosophical disputations which, as we have seen, took place on a wide scale both on the Indian soil and in the Courts of the Caliphs. Evidence is not wanting to show that some of the controversies which figured so prominently in Indian philosophy, after Islam had firmly entrenched itself on the Indian soil, were nothing more than echoes of Muslim thought, in some cases well in others more blatantly expressed.

Sufism now entered a new phase of its development. Asceticism still remained important but it was subordinated to theosophical and gnostic speculations. This position is discernible in the sayings of Ma'rūf al-Karkhi (d. 200/815), abu Sulaimān al-Dārāni (d. 236/850), and Dhu al-Nūn Miṣri. According to Nicholson, Dhu al-Nūn is the source of Neo-Platonic elements in Islamic thought. Abu Yazīd al-Bisṭāmi (d. 260/874) was the first Sufi to propound the doctrine of *fanā'*, and in his teaching Sufism became practically identified with pantheism. Ḥusain bin Manṣūr, commonly known as al-Ḥallāj (b. 244/857), famous for his saying, "I am the Truth," had travelled in East Iran, Gujerat (India), and Central Asia. He maintained that the soul which is immaterial and immortal suffers from its alignment with the body, that the Supreme Being is incomprehensible by the human intellect and imagination, and that union with the Ultimate Reality is possible through suffering. Manṣūr was not appreciated by his contemporaries owing to some of his unorthodox utterances as a result of which he was executed. It was al-Ghazāli, however, who won recognition for Sufism in Islam.

Apart from the fact that Sufi doctrines and practices must have found their way to India along with other ideas of Muslim origin, there is irrefutable historical evidence to show that Muslim Sufis came in the wake of Muslim conquerors and traders and attracted the people of India by the purity and sublimity of their lives. They transmitted, by their personal contacts and discussions, their whole ideology and the way of life as understood by them and their counterparts in other parts of the Muslim world. Ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalāni mentions in his *al-Iṣābah fi Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥābah* a certain Bāba Rattan who

accepted Islam and visited Mecca twice. He was perhaps the earliest Indian Sufi. A little later came 'Abd Allah known as Bāba Khāki, who died in 101/719 and was buried in Pākdāman cemetery in Lahore. Another saint was Sayyid Sālār Mas'ūd Ghāzi Miān who, in 425/1033, met a martyr's death at the age of nineteen and was buried in Bharaich in the United Provinces. In the same century there came to India another saint of very great eminence and of far greater historical significance than any of his predecessors. He was 'Ali al-Hujwīri, popularly known as Dāta Ganj Bakhsh, the writer of the well-known work, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*.

Amongst the Muslim thinkers who flourished between the second/eighth and fifth/eleventh centuries may be mentioned al-Kindi (c. 185/830–260/873), the first philosopher of the Arabs, more renowned as a mathematician and astrologer; al-Fārābi (258/870–339/950), who adopted the Neo-Platonic doctrine of emanation; al-Rāzi (251/865–313/925), the celebrated Muslim physician, physicist, chemist, and philosopher; Miskawaih (d. 421/1030), a Persian moralist, philosopher, and physicist; and ibn Sīna (370/980–428/1037), the representative of purer Aristotelianism.

The philosophical thought that had developed from al-Kindi to ibn Sīna, that is, before Rāmānuja's time, was transplanted in India by the early Muslims, who, in the opinion of Tara Chand, "were men of high rank . . . who lived and laboured in India, and through their personal contact and influence spread the ideas of Islamic philosophy and mysticism through the length and breadth of India."[19] As a result of this impact, theism became pronounced in Indian philosophy; one comes across proofs for the existence of God for the first time in Udayana's *Kusmāñjali*. The *Kusumāñjali* or the Hindu proof of the existence of God was written in the fourth/tenth century.[20] Keith says, "To Udayana doubtless belongs the credit of making theism a principal tenet of the school, though we have no reason to suppose him the inventor of the doctrine."[21] The same is true of the *Vaiśeṣika*. Radhakrishnan observes, "The *Vaiśeṣika* has been regarded as non-theistic. Kaṇāda... the author of the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras* . . . does not mention God, but later commentators felt that the immutable atoms could not by themselves produce an ordered universe unless a presiding God regulated their activities. The authorship of the *Vedas* and the convention of the meaning of words require us to postulate a prime mover. The world cannot be explained by the activities of the atoms alone or by the operation of *karma*. The system, therefore, adopts the view of God which is found in *Nyāya*."[22]

In Indian philosophy the *Nyāya* and the *Vaiśeṣika* are generally treated together, but these systems in fact never formed a single unitary doctrine

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 48.
[20] S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, Oxford, 1957, p. 358.
[21] A. B. Keith, *Indian Logic and Atomism*, Oxford, 1921, p. 32.
[22] S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

before the middle of the third/ninth century. Keith puts the date of the syncretism of these two systems in the year 285/898 when Vācaspati composed his *Nyāyasucini-bandhu*.[23] A clear exposition of the combined doctrine is, however, to be found in Udayana "whose date, after many vicissitudes of opinion, is definitely fixed at 374/984 by his own statement in the *Lakṣaṇāvli*. . . . Much more famous is his *Kusumāñjali* which is the classic exposition of the proof of God."[24]

It is worth remembering that the *Nyāya* and the *Vaiśeṣka* were combined together to form a single system, after Islam had penetrated deep into the Indian sub-continent. Both the systems were atheistic and atomistic to begin with, but later they took a theistic turn as a result of Muslim influence.

From Rāmānuja up to Date.—Rāmānuja (b. 407/1016), a Hindu reformer of southern India, advocated the worship of God with devotion and faith. He recognized love as the guiding principle for the relation not only between man and God but also between man and man. Consequently, all man-made barriers including those of caste were to be discarded and the doors of religiont hrown open to all, irrespective of social position arising from caste or colour. Rāmānuja admitted Śūdras to temples, emphasized self-surrender *(prapatti)*, and adoration of the *guru (guru bhakti)*. His emphasis on self-surrender and love of the *guru* can be traced to Buddhism and Upaniṣadism but his acceptance of monotheism and the stress he laid upon it was entirely due to the inspiration he received from the new faith which was then being preached to the people by Muslim saints like Nathad Wali, for the erection of whose mosques land was granted by the Hindu king Kuṇ-Pāndya.[25]

While not denying the influence of Buddhism and Upaniṣadism on the philosophy of Rāmānuja, it can be maintained that Islam could have supplied to the Bhakti leader both the idea of submission to the will of God and that of adoration of the spiritual guide. As for adoration of the *guru*, Rāmānuja could have got the clue from the writings of the Sufis and also from his personal contacts with them. The objective of *bhakti*, according to Rāmānuja, is not the realization of *nirvāṇa*, but eternal blessedness in the presence of God—a Sufistic belief and not a Buddhistic view. His recommendation of a casteless society in which Śūdras should suffer no indignity because of their birth and his throwing the doors of temples open to the low-caste are a clear evidence of profiting by Muslim religion and Muslim practices.

In the sixth/twelfth century there arose two sects in the South which clearly revealed the influence of Islam. They were the Lingāyats and the Siddhāris. The Lingāyats worshipped one God, who, according to them, reveals Himself, as the world-teacher *('Allāmah Prabhu)*. The leader of the movement, Basava, was regarded as an incarnation of Shiva, an *'Allāmah Prabhu*, whose divinity passed on to his successors and representatives. As

[23] A. B. Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 31.
[25] Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

love was considered to be the first creation of God, *bhakti* or devotion was taken to be the ideal of life. This ideal was attainable through treading a path of austerity, resignation, and concentration on God. The Lingāyats made no sacrifices, kept no fasts, did not go on pilgrimages, and discarded purification ceremonies. There was no caste and no differences based on birth or sex. Marriage was voluntary, widows were permitted to remarry, the dead were buried, and the doctrine of transmigration of the soul was not believed in.

Siddhāris, a group of philosophical rhymists, were more uncompromising in their monotheistic beliefs than the Lingāyats. They rejected the authority of the *Vedas* and *Śāstras* and also the theory of metempsychosis. Like the Sufis, they described the Ultimate Reality as Light and conceived of the end of life to be an absorption in God. The Siddhāris were also alchemists, and followed Dhu al-Nūn Miṣri in this respect.[26]

The religious reform movement started in the South spread to the North from the eighth/fourteenth century onward. The Muslim conquest of Northern India by the end of seventh/thirteenth century ushered in an era of unprecedented revolution in traditional Hindu thought. From the eighth/fourteenth century onward, we find the religious leaders of the North rejecting certain elements of the ancient creed and exhibiting a strong tendency to imbibe new ideas and theories. Indian architectural designs show a borrowing of certain features from the Arab and Persian styles of architecture; Indian paintings are influenced by the Central Asian and Persian techniques; in Indian literature a common medium arises in the form of Urdu, while Indian technical and scientific disciplines give evidence of a considerable use of terminology and information contained in Muslim works.

In the realm of thought the same phenomenon is evident. Rāmānanda, who flourished in the first half of the ninth/fifteenth century, is by many regarded as a bridge between the Bhakti movement of the South and that of the North. He travelled far and wide in search of knowledge and had teachers from the various sects of Hinduism, but his soul remained discontented till he came in contact with Muslims in Benares.[27] Followers of all religions were welcome to his creed. He admitted to his sect disciples from both sexes.

From the teachings of Rāmānanda arose two schools, one represented by Tulsīdāsa and the other by Kabīr, the former being conservative and the latter radical, but each was concerned in its own way with the evolution of a religion acceptable to the Hindus and Muslims alike. Both lay stress upon devotion; condemned externalia of religion, rituals, and ceremonies; protested against dogma and authority; and maintained that "the divine disclosed itself in the human race as a whole."[28] Kabīr was introduced to Hindu philosophy and religion by Rāmānanda, but he spent a considerable part of his

[26] Caldwell, *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. I, p. 177.
[27] Macauliffe, *The Sikhs*, Oxford, 1909, Vol. VI, p. 102.
[28] *Ibid.*

time in the company of the Sufis. Kabīr hated caste distinctions, rejected the authority of the six schools of the Indian philosophy, pooh-poohed the theory of the transmigration of souls, and repudiated the doctrine of reincarnation.

In his teachings Kabīr was indebted to the Sufis. His central theme was that God cannot be comprehended through intellect but that He can be approached only through *bhakti*, i.e. to say, through devotion and ecstatic trance. He held that the essence of God is light and thus came close to the fundamental position of the Sufis. Nicholson finds many points of resemblance between his views about the universe expounded in his first *Ramaini* and the notions of al-Jīli and Badr al-Dīn Shahīd.[29] According to Tara Chand, Kabīr made an attempt to reproduce, as in Muslim philosophy, the scheme of nine spheres through which the whole creation develops.[30] The goal of human life is the realization of union with God for which purpose the services of a *guru* are absolutely essential. Consequently, utmost care is to be exercised in the selection of a *guru*. The *guru* directs the soul of the disciple along the right path, disciplines his self, and brings him in the living presence of God. Kabīr never recommended renunciation, in spite of his concern with God, and remained till the end of his life a weaver. No doubt, he prescribed a rigorous path of self-discipline, even prophesied disappointments and frustration for the pilgrims, but nowhere did he teach complete withdrawal from the world.

In the latter half of the ninth/fifteenth century was born a redoubtable champion of monotheism in a small village of the Punjab. His parents gave him the name of Nānak and the subsequent generations remember him as Guru Nānak for his piety, cosmopolitanism, and spiritual leadership. He laid the foundation of Sikhism on principles which show clearly and unmistakably the influence of Islamic ideology, beliefs, and practices. Guru Nānak felt that he was commissioned by the Almighty to launch a campaign for monotheism and a life of righteousness. He condemned polytheistic beliefs and practices, preached non-sectarianism, and admitted no caste distinctions. His ethics, unlike that of the Hindus, was life-affirming, practical, and to some extent puritanical. He recommended righteous living, fear of God, and the obedience of a *guru*—all Muslim principles—in order to attain salvation which to him was the blending of the light of the soul with that of God. Nānak realized like the Sufis that God, being incomprehensible through the intellect, can be approached through humility and through understanding one's worthlessness and inadequacies. Despite his love for God, he would allow no anthropomorphic characterization of the Deity, though he remembered Him lovingly sometimes as a husband and sometimes as a bride to relate Him intimately to his own soul.[31] Guru Nānak did believe in the transmigration of souls and also in hell. Not satisfied with the punishment which the sinners were destined to

[29] *Studies in Islamic Mysticism.*
[30] Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, p. 157.
[31] Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 195.

suffer through repeated births in lower forms, he threatened them with dire punishments as described in the Qur'ān in the parable of hell.

Guru Nānak's debt to Islam was so great and his teachings so well steeped in Sufi lore that, according to Tara Chand, "the fact of the matter is that it is much harder to find how much exactly he drew from the Hindu scriptures. His rare references to them lead one to imagine that Nānak was only superficially acquainted with the *Vedic* and the *Purānic* literature."[32] In his insistence on the unity and brotherhood of mankind and in his condemnation of idol-worship, caste distinctions, and ritualism, Guru Nānak was as good a Muslim as any other Muslim. It is a pity that the later *Gurus* were drawn into a whirlpool of politics as a result of which a peace-loving Church was converted into a militant society.

Kabīr, Tulsīdāsa, and Guru Nānak were followed by a host of Hindu thinkers and reformers in the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries who promoted and furthered what in essence were the fundamental principles of Islam. Tuka Rām, a Maratha saint, conceived of God on lines identical with those of Kabīr, rejected *Vedic* sacrifices, idol-worship, and caste,[33] while Chaitanya, a Brāhman by caste, loved the Muslims so much that he had several Muslim disciples. Chaitanya preached the unity of God, insisted on love and devotion, song and dance and ecstatic trance for union with God.[34] It can be easily seen that Chaitanya's teachings bore a close resemblance to those of the Sufis.

Coming to modern times, we notice two important movements of the Ārya Samāj and the Brahmo Samāj. The former, despite its opposition to Islam, preaches what in reality is the essence of Islam. Swāmi Dayānand *(vide* his *Satyārath Parkāsh)*, the founder of the Ārya Samāj movement, denounced idol-worship and ritualism as a corruption of the pure Hindu religion. He also condemned hereditary caste-system and instead favoured functional castes. What is remarkable about him is that he indefatigably preached the doctrine of monotheism which in his opinion could be derived from the *Vedas* and other sacred books of the Hindus. That monotheism is deducible from the *Vedas*, may be true. It does not, however, contradict Islam; rather, it ratifies the basic standpoint of Islam that God has been revealing Himself to different nations. Hence if monotheism is found in the *Vedas*, it would not be surprising to a Muslim. What is, however, surprising is Swāmi Dayānand's emphasis on this doctrine which is lacking in the pre-Islamic literature of India.

The Brahmo-Samājists have discarded the theory of rebirths. They are also opposed to ritualism, image-worship, and caste-system.

In addition to these two movements in modern Hinduism, there is the Rāma-Krishna religious reconstruction movement and the Theosophical

[32] Tara Chand, *op. cit.*, p. 177.
[33] Fraser and Marathe, *Hymns of Tukaram.*
[34] Jadunath Sarkar, *Chaitanya.*

Society following a religious and social programme; each of these bears close resemblance to Muslim faith and practice.

From India Islam goes to Indonesia.

E

INDONESIA

Before the advent of Islam, the Indonesian Archipelago, the biggest country after China in the Far East and the seventh among the great countries of the world, was ruled over for about a thousand years by the Hindus, who went there as traders in the first or second century A.D. and eventually became rulers through their effective diplomacy and practical common sense. According to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru,[35] the first Hindu immigrants to Indonesia belonged to Southern India. Being traders they settled on coasts and traded with different lands in sundry articles of daily use. They also brought with them their religion which, because of its superiority, could not fail to influence the natives. There is, however, no historical evidence to show whether it was Buddhism or Hinduism that first came to Indonesia. The Hindus never cultivated the art of history in the early centuries, nor did they devise canons for sifting recorded or oral evidence, with the result that their early history is nothing but a mass of fairy tales founded upon imagination, makebelieve, or hearsay with no solid rock of facts to stand upon. The early Hindu settlers in Indonesia have left no record of theirs; consequently, it is difficult to determine the chronological order of Hindu cults and beliefs as they found their way into this new land. It is, however, conjectured that the form of Buddhism first to enter the Archipelago was Hinayāna and that after a considerable period of time the other form of Buddhism, Mahāyāna, was also introduced. In the Majaphit period when Hindu culture and Hindu domination were at their highest a new religion arose, which was the result of the fusion of Brahmanism and Buddhism, incorporating in itself some strands of indigenous thoughts and feelings.

In spite of the political and commercial domination of the Hindus, the country as a whole was never converted to Hinduism. In Java, Hinduism had its strongest centre, while Buddhism had the greatest number of its adherents in Sumatra, Malaya, and a few other adjoining and adjacent islands. A large part of the Archipelago, however, remained untouched by Hinduism and continued to revel in idolatry and nature-worship. In a large majority of the islands, life went on as usual—the same round of festivals, customary observances, and rituals, showing no sign of foreign influence or changed socio-political conditions. Life in these areas was hemmed in by countless superstitions and irrational fears—the products of ignorance and idol-worship. Multiplicity of superstitions led to the creation of innumerable

[35] *Glimpses of World History*, p. 133.

deities, each deity being held responsible for a particular phase of human life or nature. Homage was paid to gods and goddesses out of fear, for their displeasure could bring about disaster, infertility, epidemics, floods, death, and what not. Consequently, an elaborate ritual, performed meticulously, was required to keep the deities on the right side. Often the ritual was so complicated that a specially trained agency was called for to perform it strictly in accordance with set practices and established laws. There arose thus a priestly class whose function it was to help invoke the sympathy of gods and goddesses through incantations, charms, sacrifices, and offerings—all of these practised and performed in a characteristic manner and style.

Wherever Hinduism was in ascendancy the Brahmans assumed the functions of priests and arrogated to themselves the power which none else but a person endowed with supernatural powers could have. The priestly class came to wield, in course of time, not only spiritual but also temporal power through their association with Courts and princes, for the kings needed divine help as much as ordinary mortals. Anxious to keep their power intact, the priests transmitted their knowledge only to their kith and kin. Very often the recipient of the information was the son of the priest who was initiated into the art of performing ceremonies and trained in them with the utmost exactitude and care, for a slight error or omission would bring about the wrath of a god instead of pleasing him. Thus, the priestly class became hereditary, enjoying special privileges and prerogatives.

The society was split up into two classes, with the priestly class at the top, dominating and exploiting the other by its cleverness, sophistry, and chicanery. Because of his colossal ignorance, political servitude, and economic insufficiency, the common man contented himself with the life and fortunes of a serf or an underling.

Hinduism accentuated the prejudice of class distinction; it gave a fillip to idol-worship; it augmented rather than diminished the number of deities; and above all it introduced *ahiṁsa*, a life-negating ethics and a life-renouncing philosophy. The natural outcome of this attitude was extension in the field of superstition, an acute sense of individual and collective insecurity together with moral and spiritual bankruptcy on a wide scale.

Islam entered the arena when Hinduism was at the zenith of its glory. The latter was armed with the might of political domination; it had its missionaries all over the Archipelago, who had converted thousands of the natives to their faith; and it had firmly entrenched itself on the soil by its cultural superiority, commercial leadership, and marital relationships. Islam had to fight against heavy odds. There was no political power to launch a campaign against the Indonesian Hindu rulers. In the middle of the seventh/thirteenth century when Islam got a foothold in Sumatra, the Muslims all over the world had fallen on evil days. The Fāṭimids who ruled over the Arab countries, Egypt, and Africa were in a process of disintegration; the 'Abbāsids were on their last legs; Persia was the vantage ground for self-

interested upstarts; while Spain, once the pride of Muslim culture and philosophy, had forgotten its traditions and was in the throes of death, surrounded as it was by the Christian hordes who were bent upon giving it a short shrift. In India the Slave dynasty was replaced by the Khaljīs, who were busy at that time setting their own house in order and had little time to look to other peoples' affairs. It is evident that under these circumstances no Muslim power was in a position to lend a helping hand to any campaign, much less to one which had no connection with territorial aggrandizement or imperialistic expansionist programme.

On the Indonesian soil no gun was fired, nor any sword drawn for the propagation of Islam. Arnold says, "The history of the Malay Archipelago during the last six hundred years furnishes us with one of the most interesting chapters in the story of the spread of Islam by missionary efforts. . . . In every instance, in the beginning, their work had to be carried on without any patronage or assistance from the rulers of the country, but solely by the force of persuasion, and in many cases in the face of severe opposition, especially on the part of the Spaniards."[36]

Several causes have been listed by historians for the slow and spontaneous spread of Islam throughout Indonesia, but it must be admitted that there is yet no established theory to account for this remarkable phenomenon—unique in the annals of history for its methodology and success.

A common explanation for the religious conquest of Indonesia by Islam is offered in terms of the commercial relations which the Muslim merchants from India established in the middle of the seventh/thirteenth century with the Indonesians. These merchants, it is said, married Indonesian women and secured thereby a respectable position for themselves. In course of time the Indonesian wives together with the slaves of their household furnished a nucleus for the acceptance and spread of Islam.

A little reflection will, however, show that this explanation is no better than a myth and needs to be exploded in the interest of truth. Before exhibiting the hollowness of the explanation, it is interesting to note that even so great an authority as Arnold[37] seems to subscribe to it. He quotes approvingly from Padre Gainza who says, "The better to introduce their religion into the country, the Muhammadans adopted the language and many of the customs of the natives, married their women, purchased slaves in order to increase their personal importance, and succeeded finally in incorporating themselves among the chiefs who held the foremost rank in the state. Since they worked together with greater ability and harmony than the natives, they gradually increased their power more and more, as having numbers of slaves in their possession, they formed a kind of confederacy among themselves and established a sort of monarchy, which they made hereditary in one family.

[36] Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 363.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 365.

Though such a confederacy gave them great power, yet they felt the necessity of keeping on friendly terms with the old aristocracy, and of ensuring their freedom to those classes whose support they could not afford to dispense with." To this quotation Arnold adds, "It must have been in some such way as this that the different Muhammadan settlements in the Malay Archipelago laid a firm political and social basis for their proselytising efforts. They did not come as conquerors, like the Spanish in the sixteenth century, or use the sword as an instrument of conversion; nor did they arrogate to themselves the privileges of a superior and dominant race so as to degrade and oppress the original inhabitants, but coming simply in the guise of traders they employed all their superior intelligence and civilisation in the service of their religion. . . ."[38]

This explanation along social lines founded on respect and prosperity is invalidated, according to C. A. O. van Nieuwenhuijze, by the fact "that the type of trade which the foreign Muslims conducted was by no means alien or new to the Indonesian society."[39] The same point of view is presented with much rigour and empirical data by Comp. J. C. van Leur[40] to whom the inquisitive reader may turn for further elucidation and clarification.

The object of the refutation is not to deny the role of the early Muslim traders in the dissemination of Islamic beliefs and practices; it is rather to assign to them a proper place in the situation which was extremely complex and comprised far more potent factors than trade and marital relationships. The traders were no better than carriers of a culture or a world-view which could not have gained ground in spite of their zeal and fervour, had it not the strength to stand on its own legs.

Another explanation for the peaceful penetration of Islam into Indonesia is to be found in the socio-political conditions of the urban society which was powerfully influenced by the caste-system that had been introduced by Hinduism. Priesthood had divided the society into two watertight compartments. This and like differences were supported and in a way accentuated by the caste-system which the Hindus had brought with them and introduced. Hinduism not only ratified bifurcation in the Indonesian society, it also multiplied the then existing divisions, for Hinduism admits of four classes and not only two in society. These divisions based originally on professions became hereditary so that no person, howsoever talented he might be, could change his caste. A person born in a Śūdra home could by no means shed the social stigma attached to him for having been born in a low-caste home. Intelligence, integrity, talent, and hard work were of no avail in face of the inflexibility of the caste-system. The worst to suffer in this system were those who stood at the lowest rung; they were the most oppressed and the most

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 365–66.
[39] *Aspects of Islam in Post-Colonial Indonesia*, p. 35.
[40] "Indonesian Trade and Society," *Essays in Asian Social and Economic History*, The Hague, 1955.

exploited, but the others too with the exception of the priestly and the Brahmanical class had to suffer different kinds of social indignities and disabilities.

The non-priestly classes, particularly the lower ones, found in Islam a panacea to the ills which like a miasma were eating up the very fabric of the society. Since Islam recognizes no distinctions which divide man from man and recommends a classless and casteless society, it captured the imagination of the Indonesians, who embraced the new religion to reassert their dignity as human beings and to re-acquire democratic rights to live as free individuals unhampered by artificial man-made restrictions. The conception of the universal brotherhood of mankind together with the basic equality of all human beings, which Islam advocates so vehemently, proved a dynamite for the foundations of the social structure of Hinduism. Accordingly, Hinduism crumbled like a house of cards and the Indonesian masses, particularly those living in the urban areas, accepted the new faith in large numbers. From the harbour towns and coastal areas, where the grip of the caste-system was the strongest and the most pinching, Islam spread inland.

Another reason for the success of Islam is to be discovered in the simplicity of the creed that it preaches. It makes no metaphysical presuppositions as is done, for instance, by Buddhism, nor does it demand credence in too many transcendental beings as is the case with Hinduism. Islam is unencumbered by theological subtleties. It simply asserts the godhead of one God and the prophethood of Muḥammad and that of others. The fundamental tenets of Islam are, thus, the fundamental demands of the human intellect. Professor Montet says, "Islam is a religion that is essentially rationalistic in the widest sense of this term considered etymologically and historically. . . . This fidelity to the fundamental dogma of the religion, the elemental simplicity of the formula in which it is enunciated . . . are so many causes to explain the success of Muhammadan missionary efforts. A creed so precise, so stripped of all theological complexities and consequently so accessible to the ordinary understanding, might be expected to possess and does indeed possess a marvellous power of winning its way into the consciences of men."[41]

Hinduism never accorded with the genius of the Indonesians in spite of the Hindus' long cultural contact with them and their equally long political domination. The average Hindu Indonesian wore his creed like a veneer which left his soul as well as his body almost naked. He yearned for a creed more in line with his natural cravings and intellectual demands. When Islam presented itself as a rival to Hinduism and heathenism, it quickly acquired victory by the force of its logic and the rationality of its demands.

Another factor which may have contributed to the success of Islam is its theory of human society which releases man from his narrow geographical

[41] Edouard Montet, *La propagande chretienne et ses adversaires musulmans*, Paris, 1890, pp. 17–18, quoted by Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 413–14.

grooves and makes him a member of the community *(ummah)* of Islam. National loyalties and political affiliations are subordinated to the larger interests of the Muslim community as a whole. Not only does this conception emancipate an individual from the prison of self-interest and parochialism, it also provides an anchor-sheet for the forlorn and the neglected. A convert, after having lost his kinship with his clan, can save himself from the pangs of loneliness by conjuring up his association with a bigger whole which recognizes neither territorial limits nor clannish bonds. A thing of this kind is not to be found in other religions, much less in Hinduism, torn as it is by its caste-system, family distinctions, and the practice of untouchability.

Islam has not only the idea of *ummah* to put an individual in a wider perspective, it has still another idea nobler and richer in content for the rehabilitation and re-establishment of the lonely and the forsaken. This idea is to be found in mysticism which promises to place man in the lap of Infinity. It is said that in the beginning the Indonesians were attracted by the mysticism of Islam rather than by any of its other aspects.

In addition to the reasons enumerated above, one very potent reason for the propagation and success of Islam in foreign lands, particularly in Indonesia, Malay, Indo-China, and the Philippine Islands, was the enthusiasm and sincerity with which Islam was presented by the early Muslim mystics who migrated to these islands of their own accord and settled there temporarily or permanently. Generally, they accompanied the Muslim traders or came in their wake. The first thing they did was to acquaint themselves with the local dialect; this was necessary for transmission and exchange of ideas.

After acquiring proficiency in the native language, the Sufis started propagating Islam among the influential and the rich, believing that reform of these would rid the society of most of the ills from which it suffered, and that their conversion would be followed by those of the masses. The unlettered and the unsophisticated people which formed the bulk of the society looked up to their chiefs and nobles for guidance and inspiration. Not able to make a decision themselves, they imitated the high-ups in all matters. Hence the success of a religious ideology among the upper classes, the Sufis thought, would work for the spiritual regeneration.

The Sufis built mosques which often had schools attached to them. From these centres of learning were delivered courses of lectures on Muslim theology, culture, philosophy, and history. Mysticism has a philosophy of a very high order. It replaces the cold formalism of the *Sharī'ah* by an intense and passionate longing for the all-loving God and ensures the purification of the heart by treading a well-regulated Path. The Sufis regarded prayers, fasting, and pilgrimage as means and not ends to be cultivated and pursued for their own sake. But they knew that the means were as much necessary for the spiritual uplift of a person as the attainment of the end. And, therefore, the early mystics who took upon themselves the burden of carrying the message of God to the four corners of the world stressed the performance of religious duties, such as

offering prayers, fasting, going on a pilgrimage, etc., along with acts of supererogation for winning the pleasure of God.

A brief historical sketch of the growth and development of mysticism in Islam has been provided in an earlier chapter and, therefore, need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that by the end of the seventh/thirteenth century when Islam was imported to Indonesia and other adjacent islands, the theory of mysticism had received its final touches at the hands of the leading Muslim thinkers and divines. According to a number of Orientalists, the best of Muslim religion is to be found in its mysticism.

Maulāna Burhān al-Dīn is said to have been the first Muslim to preach his faith to the islanders. He belonged to the Qādirīyyah order of Sufism which is named after 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlāni (470/1077–561/1166), a saint whose writings, generally orthodox in content, have a tendency to mystical interpretation of the Qur'ān. The Maulāna also belonged to the Shāfi'īyyah sect—one of the four legal schools of Muslim theology named after Imām al-Shāfi'i who effected a synthesis of the strict adherence to Tradition of the Mālikīs with the Ḥanafi method of *qiyās*, that is to say, with the analogical deduction. Abu Ḥanīfah, the founder of the Ḥanafi legal school, made free use of his own judgment in deciding between traditions, while Mālik ibn Anas maintained the exclusive validity of the accepted traditions. Al-Shāfi'i carved a *via media* between these two modes of approach and attempted a synthesis.

Maulāna Burhān al-Dīn was, thus, steeped in the best traditions of Islam. He followed the *Sharī'ah* and was affiliated to the most tolerant and progressive school of Sufism, a school which was neither too liberal nor yet too conservative. The Muslims of the Archipelago at present belong predominantly to the Shafi'īyyah sect and this is due to the teachings of the Maulāna.

It is interesting to note that the Shāfi'īyyah sect was predominant on the Coromandel and the Malabar Coasts of India when the Muslim traders from these areas first landed in Sumatra and introduced their culture and religion. It may be conjectured in the absence of any historical record that the Maulāna belonged to India and travelled with or came in the wake of the Indian Muslim traders who also belonged mostly to the Shāfi'īyyah sect as well as to the Qādirīyyah school of mysticism.

Among the Muslim rulers of Sumatra, Sulṭān Aḥmad worked ceaselessly for the glory of Islam. During his reign as well as during that of his descendants Muslim missionaries were sent far and wide. Wherever they went, they built mosques and schools to provide permanent centres of devotion and learning. The schools also served as community centres where matters of common interest were discussed. The King al-Mālik al-Ẓāhir, a descendant of Sulṭān Aḥmad, was fond of holding discussions with theologians, and his Court was thronged with men of learning and letters. We have it on the authority of ibn Baṭṭūṭah that the king had summoned two jurisconsults from Persia for discussion and clarification of some religio-legal issues.

Next to come under the influence of Islam was the Molucca. There is no

knowing of the fact how the new religion was introduced, but this much can be inferred from the present cultural condition of the islands that there existed strong traces of Indian and Arabian influence in the life and literature of the inhabitants. Their religion is predominantly Shāfi'īyyah, but their culture is steeped in Arabian lore and learning. The Muslim kings of the Moluccas rendered yeoman's service to the cause of Islam by instituting centres of Muslim culture, literature, history, and philosophy. During the reign of Manṣūr, the Malayan language adopted the Arabic script. Ancient Indian Muslim literature was transliterated into Malayan Arabic script. Manṣūr also introduced Islamic constitution in the country, though not completely, for he kept intact the old system of taxation, general administration, and fishing; yet in all other matters he made an attempt to follow the Shāfi'īyyah jurisprudence, social polity, and details of administration.

Islam spread to Java through the efforts of the trading mystics of Malay, particularly of Maulāna Malik Ibrāhīm, an Indian national of Gujerat district. The Maulāna was not only a Sufi of high order but also a scholar of the first rank and a Ḥakīm of no mean repute. He cured a Hindu dignitary who subsequently embraced Islam and is counted among the nine saints of Java. He is known as Raden Raḥmat. The other saints belonged either to the rich Hindu families or to the defunct Majaphit dynasty. All of them without exception led a life of simplicity, piety, and high religious fervour. They converted thousands to Islam by their example and teaching. A mosque was built where the nine saints met occasionally to discuss matters of common interest. The converts also congregated there to discuss their problems and difficulties. Deputations from foreign lands were also received in this mosque. This shows that the mosque was not only a centre of devotion but also a community centre dedicated to multipurpose activities. So great was the religious ardour that the Muslim converts of Java entertained a keen desire to visit the holy places of Islam; one of them, Sunan Gunang by name, went for pilgrimage to Mecca where he learnt the principles of Islam from Arab teachers, and came back to Java full of enthusiasm for the new faith.

It will take several pages to recount the story of the spread of Islam in other islands of Indonesia. Suffice it to say that its propagation was nothing but a peaceful penetration through the efforts of traders, mystics, and preachers—both native and foreign.[42]

Before the advent of Islam, Java had been ruled by Majaphit, a Hindu dynasty, which had fallen on evil days; as a result, the country had become divided into a number of principalities, each owing allegiance to its own chieftain. The people followed either Hinduism or Buddhism, but very often their religion was an admixture of both with a strong overtone of animism and belief in magic and sorcery. The condition of other islands was no better. The

[42] Detailed information on this subject is to be found in Arnold's *Preaching of Islam* and Crawford's *History of the Indian Archipelago*, Edinburgh, 1820.

Hindus whose early contacts with the Archipelago were of purely commercial nature[43] soon developed colonial and imperialistic designs in the land[44] and started a process of "Hinduization," which gave birth to a caste-system as rigid as that in India and provided in addition an appeal to the deification of kings and the ruling class.[45]

After the downfall of the Majaphit dynasty in the ninth/fifteenth century the Muslim rule was firmly established in Java and other islands till the conquest of the Archipelago by the Dutch towards the end of the tenth/sixteenth century. For about two hundred years the Muslims remained at the helm of affairs and contributed substantially to the cultural development of the country. They tried to rid literature of absurd and obscene stories about gods and goddesses; they worked for the amelioration of the society, and introduced, through translation of Arabic and Persian books, a system of philosophy, mysticism, jurisprudence, and ethics, which had its roots in Muslim thought and religion. That the Indonesian literature of the pre-Muslim period was utterly nonsensical, superstitious, and obscene, has been testified by Crawford[46] and also by Dr. Richards.[47] The latter maintains that the purpose of such literature was simply to humour the princely class by its esoteric and fictitious nature. The Muslim rulers replaced it by healthy literature. Sulṭān Agung, a ruler of Mataram (1022/1613–1055/1645), wrote a treatise on philosophy, morals, and statecraft; the eldest son of an Egyptian scholar, 'Allamah ibn Ḥajar al-Hutāmi, wrote a monumental book on mysticism entitled *Sīrat al-Mushṭāqīn;*[48] 'Allāmah Nūr al-Dīn compiled a historical work called *Bustān al-Salāṭīn,*[49] while Tān Muḥammad, a premier of Malaya during the reign of Sulṭān 'Abd al-Jalīl, wrote a historical account of the rulers of Malaya and Sumatra. Besides original publications, a host of Persian and Arabic works were translated. Al-Ghazālī's *al-Isrār* was translated by 'Abd al-Ṣamad. *Sikandar Nāmeh* and *Maṯnawi* of Maulāna Rūm and *Tuḥfat al-Aḥrār* of Jāmi were also rendered into the Malayan language.[50]

The impact of translations and original works on theology, morals, philosophy, and culture of the Indonesians was tremendous. It paved the way to a new type of literature which attempted to deduce morals from stories in which the principal actors and characters were birds, animals, and trees. These anecdotes were written on the pattern of the aforesaid *Maṯnawi* of Maulāna Rūm and *Manṭiq al-Ṭair* of 'Aṭṭār, and helped to inculcate a healthy attitude towards world and its affairs. Instead of *ahiṁsa* and life-negating

[43] J. Gonda, *Sanskrit in Indonesia*, p. 18.
[44] R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient India Colonies in the Far East*, Lahore, 1927, p. 70.
[45] D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South East Asia*, London, 1955, p. 18.
[46] John Crawford, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 298.
[47] Richard Winstedt, *The Malayas*, London, 1950, p. 143.
[48] Nūr Aḥmad Qādri, *Tārīkh-i Tamaddun-i Indonesia*, p. 357.
[49] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. II. p. 507.
[50] Richard Winstedt, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

ethics, emphasis was now laid upon effort, struggle, and achievement. Renunciation was eschewed in favour of community living, and a casteless society was preached for in place of a caste-ridden one. Spiritual values were extolled as against the commercial ones. All this led to a great awakening among the masses. The Indonesians realized as never before that they were connected with one another by ties which transcend caste, creed, and colour.

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