Impacts of Muslim Arrival In Subcontinent

The First Foothold

The major incursion of Islam into the Indian subcontinent happened during the times of the Umayyads.

One may ask what prompted such a military incursion by the Umayyads when they already had fronts open towards the west.

The basic reason was that the trade of the Muslims was being hampered because of attacks from the Sindhi Raja Dahir on Muslim ships and the imprisonment of Muslim men and women. This issue was aggravated when Meds (a tribe in Sindh) began preying upon Arab ships from Kutch, Debal and Kathiawar.

Muhammad bin Qasim

In 711 AD, a 17 year old Muhammad bin Qasim was put in charge of the army to India after which there was literally no turning back for the expansion of Islam in the sub-continent.

Initially there was very little resistance that he faced. In fact, in the Buddhist controlled city of Nerun he was literally welcomed by the monks. This was the case with most cities along the Indus as they voluntarily came under Muslim control without a fight. Buddhists in some cases asked the Muslims for protection against Hindu governors.

However, not everyone was happy with this intrusion of the Muslim armies. The Raja of Sindh, Dahir, marched his armies out against Muhammad bin Qasim and in
the year 712 AD the two armies met in the battle field with a resounding victory to the Muslims. With this victory, all of Sindh came under the control of the Muslims.

Impact of Islam on Indian Culture

1. Hindu Society: Purda System and Marriage:

The Hindu society was largely influenced by Islam. The ‘Purda System’ became prevalent in Hindu society by following Islamic practices. The Hindu women who were living in seclusion at home now moved outside their houses in the palanquins covered with curtains. In the royal harem of Hindu rulers, Purda system was rigidly enforced. To cite one example, the queen of Prataprudradev went to visit Sri Chaitanya in the palanquin covered with curtains.

Further, the age of puberty did not become the criteria for the marriage of a Hindu girl. On the other hand, child marriage was introduced in Hindu society in imitation with the Muslim practice. The condition and position of Hindu women deteriorated considerably in the Hindu society and they became more and more dependent on man.

2. Slavery:

An unhealthy feature of social life that crept into Hindu society due to utter influenced of Islam was slavery. It was very common in Muslim society and more obviously it was a well known practice with the Delhi Sultans and Mughal emperors. Their nobles and emirs also maintained slaves both male and female.

The Hindu leaders and feudal lords adopted this institution of slavery and it exerted great impact on Indian society. Still now in Rajasthan among the royal Rajput families, the custom of offering women slaves in dowry is practiced.

3. Dress and Food:
Another result of the contact with the Muslims was that the Hindus adopted Muhammadan dress, food and etiquette and fashion. The Hindus wore achakan, salwar, pyjams and lungis. Dinners, gambling, wine-drinking etc. of the Muslim nobles were adopted by their Hindu counterparts. Food like Palau, Kabab, Biryani, Kachhember etc. were adopted by the Hindus. The Hindu rulers adopted Muslim etiquette of sitting arrangements for various classes by following the practice of the Delhi Court.

4. Dance and Music:
Indian dance forms and instruments were also influenced by Islam. The Indian Veena and the Irani Tambura merged together to emerge as Sitar. The Hindu Mridanga underwent alternations by Muslims and the result was the Tabla. Different Ragas and classical vocal music underwent subtle changes when those came in contact with Muslim singers. Tarana, Thumri, Ghazzal were popular Islamic contributions to Indian classical music. As a whole Muslim exponents too were highly impressed with the Indian Dhrupad and Damar. Qwali and Ghazzal were imitated Hindus and they produced a form of duet dance.

5. Religion: Bhakti Movement:

The influence of Islam was more pungent in the domain of religion. It gave a rude shock to Hinduism and shattered the Brahmanical influence from the Hindu society which it was availing since long. Besides this, the impact of Islam on Hinduism produced important consequences.

The Islamic message of universal brotherhood, introduction of equality in society, rejection of caste system and untouchability, opposition to idol-worship and the idea of oneness of God threw up a powerful challenge to the upholders of Hinduism.

6. Growth of Popular and Liberal Religion:

A lasting impact of Muslim rule was the division of the entire society into two distinct division – Hindus and Muslims. In due course of time these two sections evolved as two separate nations and the seed of this two-nation theory was
germinated during India’s struggle for freedom and finally grew into a bitter fruit dividing India into Hindustan and Pakistan.

7. Mutual Respect:

Coming to the influence of Islam on Indian society, it can be stated that mutual cooperation and respect grew among the Hindus and Muslims. The healthy spirit of mutual toleration found expression in the growing veneration of the Hindus for Muslim saints and vice-versa. It led to the worship of ‘Satyapir’ both by the Hindus and Muslims.

The Hindus offered sweets and incense sticks on the tomb of Muslims ‘pirs’ ‘Saints’ and ‘Saikhs’. To express their sentiments of brotherhood and charity, they fed the Muslim Fakri’s and Saikhs, and began to observe Muslim festivals and fairs. They also become and devotees of the Muslim saints. For example, the tomb of Muinuddin Chisti at Ajmer and the tomb of Nizamuddin Auliya at Delhi became the centres of attraction for the Hindus. Similarly, the Muslims also visited Hindu shrines. Sultan Ziauddin visited Hindu shrine of Amarnath and Saradadevi’s temple.

8. Linguistic Synthesis:

The living together by the Hindus and Muslims not only developed mutual respect and cooperation for each other, rather it also brought a linguistic synthesis. Urdu became the outcome of this. It was a mixture of Persian, Arabic and Turkish words with the concepts and languages of Sanskrit origin. This Urdu became a common language in medieval period. A vast number of literatures was produced in this language.

9. Art and Architecture:

The influence of Islam on Hindu art and architecture was quite discernable. The common features of Islamic architecture were its massive structure in the forms of buildings mosques, domes; tall minarets; courtyards, huge walls etc. This Islamic influence of architecture was largely felt on the construction of Hindu
temples, palaces and buildings. Also, the Islam borrowed the design of lotus, Kalash, different Indian flowers, the creepers; mango leaves etc. from the Hindu architectural forms. Thus, both the Hindus and Muslims reciprocated in a nobler way by following each other’s architectural designs.

10. **Painting:**

Indian painting underwent a great change coming in contact with Islamic paintings. The Islamic practice of painting the walls with the figures of ladies blowing trumpet was followed by the Hindus. The Ajanta style was gradually replaced by the pyramidal structure of the Sultanate and Mughal period.

The painting in Hindu shrines on Tanjore, Jaipur, Rajputana, Bengal and other places were followed by the Mughal style. Calligraphy developed during the Mughal period and the Hindus imitated it a lot. Pictorial art in the Islamic model was followed by the Hindus. Themes of Ramayana, Kaliyadalana etc. were followed in the same style. The Hindu houses, streets, bathing ghats and places of worship were painted following the Muslim style.

11. **Crafts:**

New arts and crafts were created by the Hindus following the Islamic style. Following the Muslim practice crafts like papermaking enameling, inlay works on stones, metals and Jewells etc. emerged in India. Numerous Karkhanas (factories) like paper, dying tanning, shoemaking, zari work etc. grew up in the country following the Muslim practice. A sustainable economy was affected by the development of crafts which took place in India by following the Muslim practice.

12. **Restoration of Contact with Outside World:**

Islam also helped the people of India in restoring its contact with outside world. In the past, India had its contact with outside world. It carried on cultural and commercial contact with the countries like South-East Asia, Rome, Egypt, Greece, China etc. After the fall of the Gupta empire and that of Harsavardhan, such relation ceased.