

WHAT HAPPENED IN INDIAN HISTORY

Dr C K Kareem

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Dedicated to My Brother, CK Meeravunny

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PREFACE

It was in 1965 that I first jotted down my reflections on certain aspects of Indian History in the form of a book in Malayalam, entitled 'An Introduction to the Study of Indian History'. The response that the book evoked was most gratifying. Even the most unfavourable reviews were quite heartening to me. My friends and well-wishers came up with the suggestion that the work should be translated into English so as to make it accessible to a wider group of readers. The Book is the result of the persuasion by these teachers and students of history.

The Book, however, is not just an English translation of my earlier book. Certain additions have been made to it. The new inputs also serve to throw light on my plea that a rethinking on Indian history is urgently needed. As a student of Indian history, I have been distressed by many not-so-accidental distortions that have crept into it. That only inadequate attempts have been made so far to weed the garden of our history, is a painful truth.

It is inevitable that the history of a nation recorded by its conquerors should be lacking in detachment and objectivity. When strong self-interest comes in, impartiality goes out of the window. But, it is not necessary for the intellectuals of a nation to cling steadfastly to the myths propagated by the historians, belonging to the conquering class. The English with their sinister aim of 'divide and rule' found history as the most effective instrument to further their cause. They felt no charm in recording Indian history in its genuine course of development. On the other hand, they attempted with success, in destroying it, falsifying it, and reshaping it to suit the imperial designs. Consequently, Indian history today is far from the history of India and her people. It is the history made for Indians and imposed on them forcibly. That the historians of India have not felt the compelling desire to dig deep into her distorted history and unearth the truth, is something we have to be ashamed of. My writings have been a humble endeavour to draw attention to certain aspects of Indian history where the untruth has been most glaring. Having been convinced of the validity of my observation I would be untrue to myself if I did not place them before serious students of history.

I must admit with profound gratitude that I would not have ventured to bring out this volume, had not my friends Dr NA Karim and Prof K A Muhammad given me the assurance to go through the manuscripts diligently, an assurance which they readily fulfilled. I am thankful for their valuable suggestions which I have gladly complied with.

Dr. C.K. Kareem

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CHAPTER 1: THE REVERSES SUSTAINED BY INDIAN CULTURE

Anyone who probes intelligently into the cultural history of India arrives at this conclusion, that the stream of cultural life in this country has suffered many checks. It has never been allowed to flow on unhindered. Those who have attempted a study of this aspect of Indian history have, either deliberately or unwittingly, slurred over certain significant aspects. It is my endeavour in this book to throw light on these aspects, without an understanding of which the perspective of study of Indian history can never be correct. What has raised our land to the lofty heights of ancient civilisations of the world is the Indus Valley Civilisation. This splendid civilisation of the Indus valley has given to every Indian, a reason to be proud of his cultural heritage. This urban civilization has been ranked by eminent historians like Gordon Childe with the earliest civilizations cradled by the Nile and the Euphrates. (Gordon Childe: What Happened in History? pp 111 & 12) John Marshall who was the Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1902 to 1928 says:

"The Indus Civilisation stands parallel to the valleys of Nile and Euphrates. Its contribution has enriched the values of Human Culture. Sir John Marshall says "One thing that stands out clear and unmistakable both at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa is that the civilization hitherto revealed at these two places is not an incipient civilisation but one already age-old and stereotyped on Indian soil with many millennium of human endeavour behind it. Thus India must hence forth be recognised along with Persia, Mesopotamia and Egypt as one of the most important areas where the civilising processes were initiated and developed." (John Marshall: Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization p 17, 1931)

It is only because of the Indus Valley Civilization that India and Indians can hold their head aloft in the cultural field. Every Indian can be proud of the civilisation of the Indus Valley that has made inestimable contribution to the intellectual and emotional spheres of human life. This civilisation is something that fills one with patriotic fervour. It is this civilization that has contributed tremendously to the cultural tradition of Indian antiquity. It has raised Indians to such heights of cultural glory that any national can boast of. But, what caused this urban civilization to perish? It was certainly the Aryan invasion. Eminent historians like Wheeler, Stuart Piggot and John Marshall are unanimous in their view that the destruction of the Indus Valley Civilization is to be traced to the coming of the Aryans. After studying the *Rig Veda* carefully, Piggot and Dharmanandha Kosambi have come to the conclusion that invading Aryans destroyed this ancient Indian civilisation. This stance of historians is reinforced by the authority of the *Rig Veda*,

which states that Indra, who is considered a god, invaded this country with an army of 60,099 soldiers and wrecked the edifice of the Indus Valley Civilisation. That Indra was a mere mortal is emphatically asserted by Dharmananda Kosambi though Keith. Scholars are unanimous in the conclusion that the Indus Valley Civilisation was non-Aryan and was destroyed by Aryan onslaught. Piggot, after examining the remains that were excavated from different burial grounds, says:

"These opponents of the Aryan onslaught, the despicable enemy who dares deny India's supremacy in heaven and on earth are referred to us the *dasyas* and *dasus*" (Stuart Piggot: Prehistoric India p 261)

He continues:

"Our knowledge that the Harappa Civilisation flourished in Northern and Western India at the beginning of the second Millennium BC centred on cities with strongly fortified citadels and containing among its population a large proportion of Proto-Australoids with dark skin and flat noses and that these cities came to a sudden and violent end make the identification of the *dasus* and *dasyas* with inhabitants of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro something near to certainty." (Stuart Piggot: Prehistoric India p 261)

Wheeler in his book, 'Ancient India,' supplies ample evidence of the Aryan destruction of Harappa Civilisation. (Stuart Piggot: Prehistoric India p 261-300) The exploits of Indra are praised in the hymns of the *Rig Veda* in these words, qualifies him as 'strong, young, immortal and ancient.' There can be no doubt about the question as to who was responsible for the wiping out of this urban civilisation.

It is here that a strange and baffling phenomenon in the history of India manifests itself. Those who praise the Indus Valley Civilisation to the skies show no enthusiasm in blaming the forces that wrecked this highly sophisticated urban civilisation of ancient India. If we take pride in the fact that this civilisation existed, how is it that we fail to deplore its fall or blame the people who brought about that fall?

"With all out-stripping Chariot Wheel, Oh! Indra Thou, The far-famed hast over thrown the twice ten kings of men; With sixty thousand nine and ninety followers; Thou goest on from fight to fight intrepidly destroying castle after castle here with strength." (*Rig Veda* III)

In the *Rig Veda*, Indra is qualified as *Purandara* (the destroyer of forts). The bard in his praise sings: 'Thou breakest down the seven citadels.' The war tactics employed by Indra are praised by the singers of *Rig Veda*.

"In kindled fire he burned up all their weapons
And, made him rich with kine and carts and horses." (*Rig Veda* III - 15)

Again in the same hymn, much more feats of Indra are described.

"The Mighty roaring he stayed from flowing, And carried those who swam not safely over
They having crossed the stream attains to riches; We slaughtered Vala and burst apart the defences of the mountain; There the staff-bearer found the Golden Treasury." (*Rig Veda* III)

Verifying these documents, the renowned British archaeologist, Sir Mortimer Wheeler says:

"The recent excavation of Harappa may be thought to have changed the picture. Here we have a highly evolved civilisation of essentially non-Aryan type, now known to have employed massive fortification and known also to have dominated the river system of North-Western India at a time not distant from the likely period of the early Aryan invasions of that region. On circumstantial evidence Indra stands accused." (Sir Mortimer Wheeler: The Indus Civilisation – 1953, Cambridge University Press)

The same view is expressed by Stuart Piggot in these words:

"The forts of the *dasyas* are the citadels of the Harappa Civilization wrecked and plundered by war bands who invoked Indra, the Lord of hosts, as they slaughtered those who would not assert his supremacy". (Stuart Piggot: Prehistoric India p 263; Dharmananda Kosambi: Gautama Buddha p 57)

While we pay glowing tributes to the Indus Valley Civilization, we refrain from putting any blame on the force, whatever it be, that laid to dust this glorious civilisation of ancient India. We should praise the good things and swell up with patriotic fervour, while viewing the great aspects of our ancient tradition. But, it is unheard of that we should simultaneously pay homage to those who brought ruin to the grand edifice of Sindhu Culture, thus arresting progress and creating havoc in our land. If I am legitimately proud of an edifice I have lovingly constructed, I will be the last one to praise someone that shatters it to smithereens. Yet, it is precisely this paradox that appears in Indian History.

The Anglo-Saxons, who invaded England, have been described by English historians as savages and their invasions, labelled as barbarian invasions. The invasion of Gauls that blotted out the mighty Roman Empire in 476 A. D. has also been viewed and branded as a barbarian one. To take yet another example; history has never made a hero of Genghis Khan who burned to ashes the rich culture of the Middle East and destroyed cities and centres of learning. And yet, the Aryan invasions that inflicted on the Indian culture, a disastrous injury that still remains raw, has not ever once been indicted by anyone. If we take the trouble to delve deep, it becomes quite obvious to us that this is not an accidental error that historians have fallen into. Rather, it is a deliberate, skilfully fabricated and diligently propagated idea. The reason is not far to seek. The Indus Valley Civilization was the very antithesis of the Aryan Civilization. They were diametrically opposed to each other and all their differences spring from the basic fact that if one was urban, the other was rural.

This confrontation between these two mighty forces pulled the great Indian civilization back by hundreds of years. To regain anything like that golden state of urban civilization, we have had to drag our steps painfully through centuries. The

story does not end there. The colossal nature of the blow that India had to suffer, when Indus Valley Civilization crumbled, is still felt in the realms of religion. To the people of the Indus valley, the idea of a secular state that our constitution today upholds was already a reality. Relying on Sir John Marshall, the acknowledged authority on the Indus Valley Civilization, Jawaharlal Nehru says:

"The Indus Valley Civilisation as we find it, was highly developed and must have taken thousands of years to reach that stage. It was surprisingly enough, a predominantly secular civilization, and the religious element, though present, did not dominate the scene. It was clearly also the precursor of later cultural periods in India." (Jawaharlal Nehru: The Discovery of India p 58)

The Aryan Civilization however has had its very inception in religion. It drew sustenance from religion and it has always sought to circumscribe all human actions and aspirations within the bounds of religion. Neither India nor her people have ever been able to break free from this stranglehold of religion. If only we could follow the lead given by the Indus Valley Civilization, instead of wrecking it, the flow of Indian culture would not have sustained this disabling setback. Yet strangely enough, none of our historians has drawn attention to this sad fact. This, undoubtedly is no accident or oversight, but the inevitable outcome of a carefully thought out design, that has been successfully implemented.

This is by no means a solitary instance in Indian history. Similar set-backs to Indian culture occurred repeatedly. Take the case of the rise of Buddhism. At a time when inhuman caste system held sway, reducing human beings to deprivation, when in all walks of life - social, religious and intellectual - blatant injustice prevailed, a ray of hope emerged. In his book 'History of Civilisation of Ancient India', RC Dutt explains the process of the dramatic emergence of Buddhism in the caste-ridden society of India.

When inhuman cruelties of caste system reigned supreme, people longed to come out of this suffocated and polluted atmosphere and wished to breathe fresh air. It was an appropriate time for Gautama to preach social equality. He preached the Gospels of love, equality and justice. People flocked to hear him, 'prepared to submit before him and longed to be his faithful followers'. This great moral reformer of Kosala with his ideals of social equality and universal love, led the greatest revolution the world has ever seen. (RC Dutt: History of Civilisation of Ancient India p 420)

Buddha redeemed the people of India from age-old inequalities in religious as well as social spheres. He ushered in a golden age of brotherhood and peace. The impact of Buddha's teachings was soon felt. The originality of his teachings and their profundity drew the attention of the entire world and Indians can still be proud of this great son of India, 'the Light of Asia'. As social and religious values were rewritten in the light of Buddhist teachings, Indian social ambience underwent a transformation. Language, literature, science and all other provinces

of knowledge combined to lend power to this sweeping tide of radical change. The whole of Asia was thrilled to see the new dawn of revolution. But, even as Buddhism was on its triumphant march, forces of destruction were beginning to assail it. Many of the great movements of the world have died out or faded away before they could achieve anything. Some have been stillborn while others have had a premature death because of inherent weaknesses. But, a painful truth confronts the student of history who searches for the causes of the virtual death of Buddhism in India. It is nothing but the truth that the fall of Buddhism was deliberately contrived by the calculated efforts of vested interests.

From the priestly class, who belonged to the highest caste, eminent scholars entered the ranks of Buddhism, feigning goodwill. They consciously and meticulously destroyed its pure and pristine teachings. Convinced of the futility of an attack on Buddhism from outside, the priestly class resorted to a clever and malicious programme of annihilation from within. They embraced Buddhism to suck its life-blood and leave behind a mere carcass. It is not necessary to dwell on how this happened as the matter is dealt with elaborately elsewhere in this book. It is sufficient to remember here that the Vedic culture and the Buddhist culture were two different springs that existed in Indian cultural spectrum. The conflicts that set in, in the history of Indian civilisation from this point, are long and eventful. The encounters of these cultural strands have left their mark on the various realms of Indian life. How far Indian thought and social setup has been moulded by these confrontations, is too vast a topic to go into at this point of discussion. It has been treated, though not exhaustively, in another section of this book.

Historians state unanimously that with the 4th Century AD, Indian history emerges into a golden period. The age of obscurity and uncertainty is over and instead of darkness, a flood of light, greets the diligent student of history. But, to lavish praises only - where both praise and blame are called for - is to ignore reality and to abuse truth. When we qualify the Guptan Age with the epithet, 'golden', certain important questions arise in our mind. Was it not in this age that Buddhism and the social edifice based on it were wrecked? Was it not during this time that Magadhi and the Pali languages were relegated to the background and fell into disuse? Was it not in this age that the country was dragged back to the pre-Buddhist days when Brahminic social order based on injustice and inequality prevailed? This was the period that destroyed Buddhist ideals which the world still values. It was age that witnessed the re-establishment of the monstrous cruelties which Buddhism had sought to wipe out. But even today, the nation that holds aloft the message of Buddhism, praises the forces that annihilated

Buddhism. This paradox, as has been said before, is by no means an accident. It is the thanks-giving for the realisation of the Aryan counter-revolution. Pallavas, who processed successfully the destruction of Buddhism in South India, are also glorified by our historians and the period is also termed as a glorious one in the annals of South India.

Such reversals caused far-reaching repercussions on India. People of India were deprived of even the right of defending their possessions against invaders. It was because of the caste system and its rigid rules that the people of India developed an attitude of servile surrender to all invading powers. What was responsible for creating such a sad state of things? Instead of raising this question honestly and answering it correctly, we ignore this aspect completely. All that our historians have done is to portray the Gupta Age as a 'Golden Age.' They adorn with laurels and epithets on those who in fact had perpetrated a veritable crime. India has still not freed herself from this evil legacy. The pernicious roots of caste system have not been completely pulled out. Still deep within the soul of every Indian, one can discern its ugly scars. To be rid of this completely, to slay the ghost of casteism, Indian history itself has to be reassessed. The cobwebs of falsehood and deliberate distortion of facts must be wiped off. Certainly, such an attempt will raise a furious storm. But, truth has to prevail.

For centuries, India became the victim of innumerable invasions. And then, suddenly, Indian thought and Indian society were drawn irresistibly to a novel social system based on a new ideology and customs unheard of in India. This was Islam that came preaching the ideal of brotherhood and love. When the oppressed and the humiliated embraced Islam, they were for the first time raised to the level of human beings. When the degraded and downtrodden 'Koran' became 'Kareem' it was as if he was reborn. ('Koran' is a name common among the lower castes) He became a dignified and transformed human being. Naturally, large numbers of people belonging to lower castes were drawn into the fold of Islam. While it was the promise of fundamental human rights that drew common people to Islam, the intellectuals were virtually in a dilemma between Vedic and Buddhist cultures.

Islamic ideals and ideology set the best minds of the country thinking, on broader terms than ever before. As a result of this, a sort of blending of Hindu-Muslim ideologies took shape in several spheres. In the wake of all this, a strenuous effort was made all over the country to bridge the cultural and religious gulf that separated Hindus and Muslims. The remarkable renaissance, known in history as the Bhakti Movement, illustrates the height of tolerance to which the people of India could rise. Great seers like Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, Tukur Das, Tulasi Das,

and Dadu celebrated the loftiness of the human soul, and thus sought to bring together diverse religions and cultures. The tenet that they held high was that the mighty power behind the universe, the Almighty who is worshipped by diverse people under different names, is one and the same. In spite of all this, religious discords prevailed and, there was very little hope of unity among Hindus and Muslims. However, India did not turn a deaf ear to the message of religious amity and tolerance that Nanak and Kabir preached. So, their voice did not become a voice in wilderness. Slowly but steadily, a feeling of tolerance and friendliness spread to the social arena.

Akbar the Great, who had an intuitive perception of the subtle forces operating among the people, felt these stirrings in the air. Being one of those rare geniuses, who could feel the pulse of the time and meet its challenges, he encouraged this spirit of peaceful coexistence. Smith says:

"Akbar's *Din-i-Ilahi* was the clear manifestation of Akbar's folly not of his wisdom". Those who comprehend the political undercurrents of the time, its cultural and social upheavals and intellectual ferment cannot subscribe to this view. For, *Din-i-Ilahi* was the child of a lofty idealistic fervour to bring hostile races, and conflicting religions together. But, it is a sad reality that few people ever come forward to give backing to a noble cause." (VA Smith: Akbar the Great Mughal p 219)

The historian, Abdul Kader Badauni, a contemporary of Akbar has censured him severely and even questioned his motives. (Abdulkadir Badauni: *Munta-Kaba-tu-Tawarikh* p 411) It is not surprising then, that posterity has viewed Akbar's lofty and revolutionary efforts harshly, after witnessing its failure and pronounced it a folly. Thus, Akbar's long-cherished dream of cultural and religious synthesis of India died with him. The greatest minds of the age Faizi, Abul Fazal, Birbal and the great Sufi scholar Mubarakhad combined to lend splendour to the philosophical and intellectual framework of *Din-i-ilahi*. Yet, it could not flourish in the Indian soil. Whenever the clarion notes of a mighty revolution were sounded across this country, determined and organised antagonism has stifled the incipient revolution. The death of *Din-i-illahi* marked the end of the Golden Age - an age the like of which India can never aspire to enjoy again. Thus, a promise that was extended remained unredeemed and the hope that stirred within the hearts of good men died unfulfilled. Once more, India and Indians retreated behind the barriers of hatred and distrust and Indian cultural arena was once again contaminated. Indeed, it was an unfortunate reversal! Today, under altered circumstances, historians tend to evaluate the past guardedly. This is why Humayun Kabir and Tara Chand have seen this cultural heterogeneousness of India as unity in diversity. But, historical truths should be accepted as moral

lessons, if history is to serve its purpose. Here again, artificiality has proved to be a big stumbling block.

The same pattern of events may be traced in India even after the establishment of the British rule. Europeans, infused by fervour of the Renaissance and the spirit of inventions, sought to conquer the entire world, and spread the light of scientific knowledge. Certain favourable international circumstances aided the English in becoming victorious in the contest for India. After they had established their rule, they felt themselves called upon to disseminate the new knowledge in this country. Thus roads, railways and telegraph were made to connect the vast country, while colleges and universities served to make the nation intellectually and culturally close-knit. While we consider these today as evident blessings, at that time, they roused such a violent opposition as to make Lord Dalhousie resort to a furious war in enforcing them. What we fervently call 'India's First Freedom Struggle,' was known to the English as 'The Sepoy Mutiny'. Actually, it was neither. It was but the clash between the old and the new, the uncompromising conflict between the conservative and the radical, it was in reality an attempt to arrest the modernisation of India. Though, whatever political aspirations it had, were dashed to pieces, this uprising had one important result. The modernization of India, which Dalhousie had tried implement, would have made tremendous progress in the scientific and technological fields. It would have helped industrialization of India and in all probability would have accelerated the freedom movement. But, the uprisings of 1857 arrested the introduction of western knowledge and science. This was another setback that India and her people suffered apart from the pinch of imperialism. See the words of an eminent English historian, EJ Rapson:

"Thereafter, whenever, the English thought of introducing reforms in India, they approached the matter with much deliberation and foresight."

It should not be forgotten that this event was yet another occurrence that affected India's progress adversely. Whenever the English tried to rouse India from this stupor and to make her feel the invigorating air of reform and change, they set about the task cautiously, encouraging and inviting Indian leadership in the matter. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Sir Sayid Ahamed Khan worked hard among Hindus and Muslims respectively, bringing about an awakening among them. Invaluable is the service that the Brahma Samaj and the Aligarh Movement rendered to India. But, they could not complete their task of reform once again due to the inherent weakness in the Indian temperament. Side by side with the Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj grew up. The avowed aim of the Arya Samaj was to suppress change and reform and to insulate the country from all the influences

of western civilization. Thus, the tide of progress was stemmed by concerted opposition and India had once again to take the path of retrogression.

Many other similar instances can be provided. My aim here is to point out how these historical facts have disrupted the cultural synthesis and sowed the seeds of disintegration. When we aim at national and emotional integration, objective analysis of historical facts is a *sine qua non* for fostering national solidarity. The tendency to hush up the weaknesses of the past will not help a genuine student of history. On the other hand, if we narrate the facts as they are and describe the evil consequences that resulted thereon, that alone will prevent us committing similar follies. To use attractive slogans like 'unity in diversity', as Humayun Kabir has done in his 'Introductions to Indian History' would not be consistent with facts, unless the frailties that ushered in these 'diversities' are explained.

CHAPTER 2: THE TWO CULTURAL STREAMS

A significant aspect of Indian religion and the cornerstone of the Indian cultural edifice is that they are all-embracing. The Indian creed has accommodated the chronic sceptic and the blind fanatic, the holy ascetic and the witchdoctor, the terrorist who hopes to attain heaven by killing innocent people, and the holy Sree Sankara who gladly offered his head to grant the savage's wish. Philosophies that are poles apart are seen reflected in it rather simultaneously. Whenever scientific achievements are enumerated or branches of knowledge extolled, Indian conservatism has one solace - that all these new things have been recorded in the pages of Vedic Literature. Dr S Radhakrishnan, inaugurating the 22nd meeting of International Geological Congress declared that the Upanishads contain the answer to the challenges raised by the perilous metal, uranium.

"Today, man has only two alternatives - either amass nuclear weapons and bring about total annihilation, or make human life happier and richer by a peaceful exploitation of nuclear energy" (PTI: The Hindu dated 15-12-1964)

He also urged the geologists from all over the world to pause a while in their pre-occupation with pre-historic periods based on geological findings, and to give some thought to one of the Upanishads written in the 8th Century BC, where the subject of evolution is dealt with. He announced to them that the Upanishads contain the very truth that anthropologists and biologists were able to arrive at after scanning innumerable geological findings and buried fossils - the truth that even the most striking forms of life have evolved from the single-celled nucleolus. Not only about evolution or geological discoveries, but also about the deadliest

weapons science has invented, we bring forward the same claim - that all these were known to ancient Indians. It is not even impossible for us to establish with the help of verses that in those remote days, we wielded guided missiles and flew in the skies. It might even be claimed that before Columbus or Amerigo Vespucci had discovered America, we had established our sovereignty there.

Even in the field of thought we follow our own logic. This erects a barrier in the path of anyone who endeavours to write the long history of Buddhist-Aryan conflict. Even eminent philosophers and thinkers support the view that Buddhism is only a branch of Hinduism and that any attempt to separate the two would be disastrous. We even come across theories which propagate the idea that Buddha was one of the incarnations of Vishnu. From this, they proceed to the conclusion that despite several diversions, Hinduism and its culture still exists in its original form displaying its indomitable harmony. All this puts the impartial student of history in a predicament. He must be prepared to perform a herculean task and to risk a great deal of distress.

It is an irrefutable fact that Buddhism was the materialisation of age-old protest against injustice. It was not a religion but a social revolution. In all its aspects, it was the converse of Vedic Hinduism. It came into being with the purpose of wiping out the caste inequalities that were being practised in the name of Hinduism. The essence of Buddhism is not something that suddenly dawned on the young prince of Kosala as he meditated under a tree. Nor was it something that was proclaimed to the world one fine morning by a young mendicant who had not yet turned 36. Rather, it was the culmination of the age-old aspiration of the Indian people, the open revolt born out of their suffering and their humiliation. For centuries, saffron-clad mendicants had gone about the country holding in their hands a slender theme of the message of equality. But, it was Gautama Buddha in whose hands this glimmer grew into a conflagration of radiant and dazzling light.

Even in the days of the Puranas, the Brahmin supremacy was firmly established. The Brahmins were powerful in all walks of life. They were held as perceptible gods and to oppose a Brahmin was tantamount to opposing God. It is pertinent here to note the following verse from *Manu Smrithi*:

“The world is under the power of God, The God is under the power of Mantras. The Mantras are under the power of Brahmins. Therefore Brahmins are our Gods.” (*Manu Smrithi* quoted by P Thomas: Hindu Religion, Customs and Manners P 12)

The reasoning had a strong hold on the popular mind. Similarly stories of Viswamitra and Vasishta, if read carefully, convey to us an idea of the extent to which caste system prevailed. When Brahmanical Hinduism condoned any

atrocities committed by the priestly class, discontent and intense frustration developed in the hearts of the people. Even the slaughter of animals, practiced as an essential part of religious sacrifice, was carried on in an appalling scale. In his book, 'Lord Buddha', Dharmapala Kosambi cites a host of examples for this.

"When Lord Buddha was living in Sravasthi, the Kosala King Pasenadi commenced a grand *yajna* for which 500 calves, 500 bulls and 500 goats were offered as sacrifice."

This gruesome animal slaughter that went on almost daily pained all sensitive souls. Incidentally, it must be pointed out here that Brahmins at this time were not vegetarians. The meat of the animals offered as sacrifice during religious ceremonies was shared by the priests. This fact can be easily substantiated using historical evidence. But, this does not come under the scope of our discussion here. What I would like to stress here is the fact that the slaughter of animals done in the name of religion instilled in the minds of the people hostile feelings. A bit of statistics from 'The Travancore State Manual' may be useful here.

"In the year 1906, the amount spent on religious rites and ceremonies has been Rs 50 lakhs. In addition to this, in the Sri Padmanabha Swami Temple at Tiruvananthapuram alone, at least 1500 Brahmins were fed twice a day on a regular basis. To see to the arrangements of this feast, a second grade tahsildar and under him a staff of 103 members were appointed. If, in a small kingdom like Travancore, such colossal expenditure was entailed in the name of Brahmanical religion, one can imagine how things must have been in pre-Buddhist days when priesthood had sovereign sway."

These facts can be seen in 'The Proceedings of the Government, His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore, *Vrischikam* 1080; *Makaram* 1080' and in similar documents in which hundreds of instances of such expenditure were entered under the head, *Devaswom*.' Still worse was the callousness that casteism brought about. All those who belonged to Vaisya caste and the lower castes were little better than cattle owned by the Brahmins. A Sudra had no right to witness the sacred religious ceremonies or to hear the chanting of the Vedas. If accidentally he happened to hear it, he would be so overcome by a sense of guilt that he would not hesitate to pour molten lead into his ear to attain deliverance from the sin of having allowed the sacred scripture to fall on his unworthy ears. If a Sudra uttered the sacred prayers his tongue was to be cut off.

If a Brahmin killed a Sudra, he was given a punishment which to us today appears ludicrous. Strangely enough, the punishment meted out to a Brahmin for such a culpable homicide was that he would have to take a ceremonial bath for employing his hands and thus polluting them by the touch of an impure Sudra. If on the other hand a Sudra murdered a Brahmin, he was to be tortured to death in the most merciless manner. Thus justice and fair-play were matters that were denied to the vast majority of the Indian community. The downtrodden Vaisya or

Sudra could not even hope to enjoy peace or justice in the next world. Even that dream was denied to him for religious rites and prayers had to be made through the intermediary - the Brahmin who was portrayed as the only medium to God. Thus even the 'keys of paradise' were in the guardianship of the Brahmins.

Many people rebelled against these social and religious evils and many raised their voices. But, all these protests assumed dynamic force and all these voices became articulate only after when the Buddha appeared on the scene. The teachings of the Buddha and the resultant revolutionary changes are one of the greatest episodes in the annals of world history. The Buddhist revolution could be one of the oldest of revolutionary movements that the humankind has witnessed. Scorning Brahmanical Hinduism and all its tenets, Buddha built up a social order based on hitherto unheard of ideas. The enlightened one, who believed that man is greater than religion, was the greatest humanist and the best of man. He was no god and no *avatar*, but a man with flesh and blood with emotions and human sentiments, a human being close to its perfection.

The teachings establishing the divinity of the Buddha were spread later on by those who deliberately formulated that strategy in order to weaken Buddhism. To the people of Saranath, who gathered to hear him, Buddha declared:

"Hatred, never removes hatred. Hatred can be removed only by love."

This new message filled the people with wonder. To their astonished ears, Buddha spoke further: "Go unto the all lands and say that all men are equal."

This was a heartening idea to the people of India of whose hearts hankered after equality, love and fraternity. And, it ushered in a mighty revolution strong enough to shake the very foundation of Indian society. Brahmanical Hinduism was brought low by this mighty blow. The tide of a new culture swelled up. Though Brahmanical Hinduism attacked it tooth and nail, this tide was so strong to be hemmed in. A fierce struggle ensued between the two antagonistic concepts and their adherents. The strategies that Brahmanical Hinduism adopted to ensure victory for itself are worth considering. Monier Williams in his book, 'Buddhism,' writes that he was convinced that the Vashnavites and Saivites managed to get into the sacred fold of Buddhism and cleverly sabotaged its lofty Ideals from within. (Monier Williams: Buddhism p 170)

When the priestly class found their way into its core, Buddhism had to shed many of its teachings. When Buddhism grew into a mighty democratic movement, the enemy got into its ranks with assumed love and loyalty and gained control of it. In the days of Kanishka and Harsha, Buddhism was dominated entirely by the Brahmins. Buddhist teachings and customs were given new interpretations. When in a final compromise, Hinduism accepted the vital doctrine of *ahimsa* and gave

up meat eating and readily accepted Buddha as an *avatar* of Vishnu, its victory over Buddhism was complete.

Christopher Caudwell in his 'Studies in a Dying Culture' refers to Bernard Shaw:

"Shaw is a vegetarian as he has nothing to lose by it."

This was exactly the case with the Brahmins too. Those who had to make concerted efforts to destroy Buddhism had nothing to lose by being vegetarians. On the other hand, they had much to gain. Whatever doctrines were the life blood of Buddhism and made it the most appealing, the very same doctrines now became tools in the hands of its enemies to wreck Buddhism. Subsequently, thousands of Buddhist viharas were converted into Hindu temples. Almost all historians admit fact that all over India - including Kerala - the vast majority of Buddhist viharas were converted to their present form of temples with the Brahmins controlling all the rites and rituals. Temples are not mentioned in the Vedas. To the Aryans, worship was a domestic matter. (Prof Wilson: Rig Veda, Introduction) Worship in the temple was not a part of Hindu way of life in the pre-Buddhist days. (PK Narayana Pillai: *Sahitya Panjananan Travancore Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial Souvenir* 1942)

Realising the unique appeal of Buddhism, the priests of Hinduism founded temples. They also started organizing festivals and feasts similar to those that Buddhists used to celebrate and were seen to be attracting masses. In addition to all this, idols of Buddha were installed in their temples. This was a deliberate and cruel treachery perpetrated under the guise of respecting popular sentiment. That powerful rationalist and humanist who argued that the man is the architect of his own destiny and that 'man, not any god, is the arbiter of his own destiny' now felt suffocated within the confines of dark and constricted temples. RC Dutt asserts that temples were built on the ruins of destroyed viharas. (RC Dutt: History of Civilization of Ancient India pp 144, 221) It became a necessity to start festivals, ceremonies and other rituals in the temples on the model of Buddhists to attract the ignorant masses of India back into the fold of Hinduism.

It was one of the world's greatest historians, Arnold Toynbee, who formulated the renowned 'Challenge and Response Theory.' With many an example, Toynbee has amplified his theory that human civilisations have a tendency to resist the influence of another. He affirms that they have the propensity to challenge the intrusion of influence from outside. But, through infiltration and using astute and cunning techniques, the vital qualities of an external culture can gradually be cleverly infused into another. Like answering with the same coin, the practices of one culture can be used to fight against the same culture using devious methods. It is natural for people respond to seemingly harmless ideas and not to challenge

them. Hence, like all general principles, Toynbee's theory has also an exception. That exception is found in the story of the Buddhist-Vedic conflict.

Vedic Hinduism did not resist Buddhism by retaining its individuality. Finding that it was impossible to vanquish Buddhism through idealistic confrontation, it cunningly stole into its ranks and destroyed it. The same insidious process worked against Pali, the language of Buddhist literature. Buddhism had a literary wealth sufficient to throw into oblivion the *Puranic* lore of Hinduism. But, where has this literary wealth vanished? When we try to get the answer to this question, we get an idea of the magnitude of the destructive strategy that Vedic intellectuals perpetrated against Buddhism. Another tactics that Brahmanical Hinduism made use of in its relentless offensive against Buddhism was to spread a devious interpretation of many of its doctrines. The truth of this can be illustrated with the help of a single example that of the word, *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa*, as used in the Buddhist context, is something wide in its range and connotation. This comprehensive term so universal in its scope and meaning can be compared to *dharma* enunciated in the Hindu teachings and that of Charity, the core of Christian ethics, or of *ibadat* in Islamic concept. But, here, *ahimsa* was deliberately misinterpreted to mean 'not to kill' thus distorting it and narrowing its vast meaning.

'Not to kill' was urged by Buddha only to combat the widespread slaughter of innocent creatures in the name of religious sacrifice. To kill fowls or beasts for food was never prohibited. Indians during this time were non-vegetarians. Fish and meat were part of their main diet. Neither Buddha nor Jaina has uttered strictures against eating flesh. What is more, we have abundant proof of the fact that both Buddhists and Jains ate meat. The mendicants, who were strictly told not to turn down any food given to them, naturally could not avoid eating meat and fish. After evaluating all available evidence Dharmananda Kosambi has arrived at certain conclusions on this subject.

"On the day of Nirvana Lord Buddha ate some bacon from the house of a metal-worker. Buddhists of this period are more or less meat-eaters." (Dharmananda Kosambi: *Bhagavan Buddha* p 387)

That Buddha ate the flesh of hog can be understood from the passages of *Anguthara Nikaya*.

"Uggagahapathi says: 'Lord, here is excellent meat well-cooked. I beg of you to kindly accept this meat from me.' Buddha accepted it."

Numerous are the authorities quoted by Kosambi, lack of space makes it impossible for me to cite all of them here. (Dharmananda Kosambi: *Bhagavan Buddha* pp 389, 390, 391, 397, 400 & 401) However, it is not out of place here to draw attention

to a scene in *Uttara Rama Charitam*, where a fatted calf is killed to entertain Vasishtha who pays a visit to the hermitage.

Similarly, it has been established that Brahmins were not originally vegetarians and that they gave up eating meat only at a later stage - as a master stroke of diplomacy. Both before and after the advent of Buddha, they used to consume meat. But the Important question here is not that. It is that the term, *ahimsa*, was deliberately robbed of its wide and profound significance and purposely narrowed to mean merely 'to abstain from killing'. When a teacher teaches his pupils sincerely, what he does is *ahimsa*. If he wilfully ignores his duties as a teacher he does *himsa*. When a student sits in the class with discipline and decorum, he observes *ahimsa*. If he does anything unbecoming of a student, he commits *himsa*. Thus *ahimsa* comprehends all aspects of human activities. And, this was circumscribed to mean merely as 'non-killing'.

Another procedure that the Brahmins utilised was still more detrimental to Buddhism. The Christians and Muslims who were by this time beginning to appear on the social scene of India were also denominated as Buddhists. Their places of worship were described by the term *palli* which was the name of a Buddhist *vihara*. (*Palli* is a common Malayalam word that denotes the Christian and Muslim places of worship. *Pallichantham* and *pallippuram* are terms used to denote the places or plots of land appertained for maintenance of Buddhist Viharas)

Non-Muslims, who were converted to Islam by Malik-Ibn-Dinar, were also called Buddhas. As a result of all this, in course of time, the term the Buddhas became equivalent to the term, Muslim, as is evident from *Keralolpathi* and *Keralamahatmyam* written by Namboodiris, where the two terms appear as synonyms. A few quotations from an important historical work of Kerala can illuminate this point. To identify the property given to the Buddhist centres of worship, they were denoted by the term, *pallichantham* or *pallippuram* in the old documents and *sasanas*. (S Sanku Iyer: Buddhism and Kerala, p 70) Schools in Kerala still retain the names *ezhuthupalli* or *pallikkoodam*. In Malayalam, *ezhuthupalli* or *pallikkoodam* signifies school or place where learning is imparted. It is not accidental that the term *palli* is retained in so many words, and it may safely be assumed that at one time all these places were occupied by a *palli* or *vihara*. (S Sanku Iyer: Buddhism and Kerala, p 53) *Palli* was the term applied to places where Vedic priests had no authority. This is the reason why the term was extended to embrace the places of worship of Muslims and Christians.

I have had the opportunity of examining several old manuscripts (*grandha*) entitled 'The Story of Buddha'. But invariably all these contained history of Christianity. Hence, it is obvious that the term Buddhist was reckoned to embrace

anyone who did not follow, Hinduism. Thus the glowing significance of it was destroyed and a lofty culture was robbed of all its lustre and vitality. The unmitigated cruelty perpetrated against its followers, forced Buddhism to deviate from the path of love, the core of its doctrine. Not satisfied with the intellectual injury inflicted upon Buddhism, Brahmanical priesthood went on to effect veritable holocaust of Buddhist believers. This can be substantiated by innumerable instances recorded by history. As one authority puts it:

"These two religious groups with their opposing ideology and diverging goals, could not naturally, co-exist in the same place. For this very reason, from the inception of Buddhism, wherever it was found to be popular, Brahmanical Hinduism became its bitter adversary and went on annihilating it."

Sir John Marshall writes:

"Since Buddhist monks were massacred without any mercy under the leadership of Pushyamitra, Buddhist believers naturally came to hate Brahmins. Sambandh Moorthy of Madurai, who slaughtered more than 8000 Buddhists in AD 840, has acquired quite a lot of notoriety for himself. Kumara Bhata, the oppressor of Buddhist, is also a familiar figure in the history of North India." (Sir John Marshall: Taxila Vol I p 3)

Thus Brahmanical priesthood tightened its stranglehold through bloodshed. With renewed strength and vigour, it lightened its caste rules and enforced them with very little opposition. But, it could not pluck out the message of love and equality that Buddhism had planted in the minds of the people. It lingered as the culture of the people and became the very breath of their life. The fall of kingdoms and the ruin of empires are nothing unusual in history. As Herodotus the world's first historian has rightly put it:

"All mortal glory is doomed to destruction, but the glory of greatness lives forever."

The glorious Buddhist culture did not die; nor was it swept into oblivion. It lived on, as a vital source of inspiration in all walks of life, bringing this entire sub-continent within its potent influence. Thus two cultural streams flow here side by side; the one that stems from Vedic Hinduism, the other that has its source in Buddhism. Each has its own distinctive ideology, its distinctive message and its own attributes; each has its followers. Failure to comprehend these cultural traditions in all their diversities, as distinctly separate things, has caused a great deal of confusion and controversy. This is dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: IN DIFFERENT SPHERES

Brahmanical priesthood dealt a death-blow to Buddhism and almost wiped out Buddhist forms of worship and rites. Still, it could not obliterate the culture that

Buddhism fostered. Political power and legal protection enabled the Brahmanical culture to bring the whole of India under its control. But, neither political power nor rigid law can erase the glorious ideals from the mind of man. There, they sprout their roots, grow and, in favourable climate, bring forth a fine flowering.

How the Aryans imposed their own way of life and their own social setup on India after wiping out the Indus Valley Civilisation has already been discussed. The conclusion at which Marshall and Wheeler and other historians have arrived after careful study of the historical findings at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, are noteworthy. An important aspect of the religious life of the people of Indus Valley was worship of Siva. And even today, the Siva cult still prevails and this god is worshipped in diverse ways by innumerable devotees.

The Aryans who destroyed the Indus Valley Civilisation worshipped neither Siva, nor the phallic symbol. Of the 1028 hymns of the Rig Veda, three-fourth is devoted to the praise of Indra - the chief deity of the Aryans. Other objects of Aryan religious worship were the Sun, Fire, Wind, Water and so on (*Surya, Agni, Vayu, Varuna* etc.). Neither the *Rig Veda*, nor any of the later Vedas mention the worship of either Siva or the Phallus. However, we find that in course of time, the gods of the Vedas are relegated to the background and Siva and his family of deities is firmly established on the pedestals of religious worship. This strange development is explained by the fact that the beliefs and ideals that are enshrined in human hearts cannot be rooted out by law or authority.

This substitution in worship came about as a result of the Aryan willingness and initiative to come to a compromise with the vanquished race. Had it not been for this vitality of Indus culture, the system of worship practised by the Indus Valley inhabitants would not have become a common faith in India. Under an alien rule, their religious beliefs would have had little chance of survival. But, this resurgence of the Indus Valley religious features, after the lapse of centuries, affirms the truth that cultural influences cannot be completely eradicated. Therefore, Siva is still worshipped in different names and in different manifestations. When Buddhist viharas were converted into Hindu temples, most of them became temples of Siva. When Buddhism declined in India, idols of the Buddha were converted into that of Siva. And, Siva still remains the most important and most elevated deity that Hindus worship. (Monier Williams: Buddhism p 166)

Ultimately, the fact remains, that though Buddhist culture was suppressed and strangled in the grip of authority, it found a permanent place in the hearts of millions of people in India. It did not die out. It has been flowing freely as a parallel stream of Indian thought and culture. Thus Indian cultural source has two diverse channels - Aryan and Buddhist. And, every Indian, wittingly or unwittingly,

bears the strain of either of those cultures and his actions are determined by its influence. With opposing teachings and irreconcilable ideologies, these two civilisations exist side by side.

In all spheres of Indian life, the influence of either of these civilisations can easily be detected in the political system and social setup envisaged by Indian intellectuals. The different schools of thought that sprang up in the society are the outcome of the impact of these two divergent cultures. The conflicting ideals cherished by eminent men of the body politic of India, proclaim their cultural lineage. These observations are relevant as they point to the fact that in political spheres, Ideological conflicts are not accidental. When we probe into their cultural sources, we see these conflicts as inevitable. But, those whose vision does not take in cultural undercurrents either take sides with these ideologies fanatically or furiously oppose them.

The same situation has developed in the case of arts and literature. Under the labels of new techniques, we attempt to classify certain artists and artistic values and also evaluate them based on this categorisation. But, this method is very often inadequate in measuring their worth. On the other hand, to determine whether one is a true artist or poet, merely in the light of popular acclaim, would not be quite safe either. For, in the field of art are discernible traces of one cultural heritage or the other. Not merely students of literature, even scholars who handle the subject authoritatively commit errors in judgement because they cannot detect the underlying influence on the artist.

In the literary field of Kerala, frequent debates occur about the stature of some poet or other, or of one artistic movement or another. The dispute about *Kathakali* still persists, unsettled. And yet, *Kathakali*, *Ottam Thullal*, *Chakkiar Koothu*, have all militantly contested themselves on the artistic stage of this country. Similarly great reluctance is shown in certain quarters to acknowledge Kumaran Asan and Vallathol as great poets. The endless wrangling hat was carried on in our literary field about some poet or another, sometimes breaches the frontiers of absurdity. Crossing all limits of decorum, they enter realms of personal malice and bitterness. Students of literature can recall the heated controversy that raged some years back around the poet Vallathol. Exactly in the same way, some time back, G Sankara Kurup became a controversial literary figure. Innumerable publications containing charges, counter-charges, abusive criticism and indictments have littered the scene.

As one interested in literature, I have observed these trends and I believe it would not be out of place here to record my reflections on them, as they go to elucidate the subject under discussion. As has been shown before, in India, two diverse

cultural streams have flown along parallel lines down the ages; one nurtured by the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*, the other one was revolutionary, defying Vedic rites and religious practices. These cultures have had their impact on all walks of Indian life and anyone who stands outside the sphere of influence of either of these is not an Indian. If we view the works of our poets in the light of these truths, we can see that while Vallathol and Sankara Kurup belonged to the Vedic cultural stream, Kumaran Asan was nurtured by the message of love and equality that Buddhism has bequeathed.

The themes of Vallathol are derived from the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata*, and his works reflect the spirit of the Hindu precepts. But, Kumaran Asan was inspired by, and made use of Buddhist tales. Unless we are fully aware of this great difference between the two poets, we cannot give a fair assessment of their talents. The question to be asked in evaluating them is not to which branch they belong, but whether they have effectively upheld or interpreted the cultural heritage from which they drew sustenance. The whole idea of a writer's popularity is intertwined with these issues. For, while Puranic culture, because of its innate inability to attract the common people, became unpopular. Buddhism, by recognising the essential oneness of man, has drawn millions to its ideology. It is not difficult therefore to understand why a poet or artist appeals more to the people than another.

Though Asan's greatness is now acknowledged by a wide public, in his own life time, he had only very few admirers. To assert his rights, this poet had to fight a veritable battle. In this fight for recognition, the weapons that he made use of were Buddhist ideals. The light soon transcended the personal element and became a fight of the suppressed class. His poems, therefore, were the clarion call of a mighty social upheaval. His opponents felt the force of his dynamic genius and retreating, they took refuge behind invective. They did everything in their power to curb his popularity. But planting his feet firmly on a certain cultural plane, this great soul enriched the concepts of universal love and brotherhood. When he makes Chathan plead for the love of Savithri, when he places Mathangi in the ranks of high-born maidens, and when, contrary to tradition, he plants the seed of love in the heart of Vasavadatha, Asan was doing justice to the ideal to which his sensitive nature throbbed. Herein lies his success. This, then, is the reason why Asan failed to become the national poet.

Kumaran Asan did not draw on Vedas and Puranas and had a reason in not doing so. It was consciously and deliberately that he strove to translate into art, the teachings of Lord Buddha. He believed firmly that these teachings would cause laws to be rewritten and social hierarchy to be wiped out. We see today that task

is being carried out and, let us hope that the recent trend continues. When the surging, clamouring masses of people press forward, demanding justice and a fair deal, any writer who has sung about their inarticulate longings and aspirations is bound to be revered. This is why Kumaran Asan enjoys greater popular esteem today than ever before. It would be unrealistic to claim that this enhanced status of the poet is the result of a complete understanding on the part of the people of the ideas expressed in his poetry. Actually, some of the profound thoughts couched in the poetry of Asan lie too deep for popular comprehension. How then has he been able to cast such a spell on the people? The answer lies in the splendour of the culture to which he adhered.

It is the operation of the same factor that explains why Vallathol, who enjoyed great distinction and received high honours in his lifetime, is gradually losing his hold on the people. When he was alive, he won recognition from all important quarters. When the wave of national fervour swept over the country, Vallathol became the disciple of Gandhiji and earned the title, 'National Bard'. In those days, he wrote about Gandhiji and about *ahimsa*. Later, from the ranks of the reactionaries, he moved with ease to those of the radicals. And yet, there was no one here to point out that none of these robes that he successively put on fitted him. The reason is that Vallathol was the spokesman of the Vedic culture and the upholder of racial discrimination.

When Vallthol sang that only the land through which the Ganges flows can give birth to a man like Gandhiji or when he described the entrance of a Brahmin woman into the hut of a Muslim as 'oblution in the crematorium' or as 'the mingling of a drop of fresh water in a salty lake', no voice of censure was raised against these remarks. Even those who denounced the strategy of the communists, failed to find fault with Vallathol who flirted with and almost coveted international leadership. When this adherent of Gandhiji and national poet shifted towards Marxism, none held out a restraining hand. But, as time rolled on, there was the manifestation of another illustration of the truth that the exponents of popular culture ascend the ladder of fame, while the reputation of others declines.

The waxing of fame in the case of Kumaran Asan and the waning of it in the case of Vallathol can be attributed to the different cultural traditions of which they are part. But, popularity is no criterion to judge the genius of a poet. The real test of greatness in a poet lies in the enduring quality of his artistic values and their sincere and aesthetic presentation. Artistic greatness is one thing and popularity quite another thing. The latter is determined by the popular response to the civilisation that the artist belongs to. This digression into literary fields has been

made in order to delineate the mode of operation of different cultures in diverse fields of our activity. Acknowledging their dissimilarity, we should endeavour to bring together these two cultures, and fuse them into something magnificent. Cultural and emotional integration is necessary to bring about a cessation of conflict between these two cultures. It will be worthwhile for those who work in the cultural spheres to envisage this as their goal.

CHAPTER 4: How Civilisations Become Inert?

A bewildered hush fell over Athens; philosophers and scholars alike were shaken by the pronouncement of a hurting judgement. Only one man remained serene and unruffled. That was Socrates who was sentenced to drink the hemlock. To the Greek intellectuals who were weeping unashamedly, Socrates spoke with perfect tranquillity:

"I am better than my judges because, I frankly admit what I do not know, whereas they pretend to know what they do not know."

The judgement against Socrates is by no means an isolated phenomenon. Rather, it embodies a trend found everywhere in the world at all times - a tendency to feign knowledge when knowledge does not really exist. Those who do this are familiar to us through the designation of 'hypocrites'. While adeptly covering up their own inadequacies and dissembling proficiency, they also fail to respect the opinions and feelings of others. All great men have cautioned the world against this dangerous type of people. About them, William Hazlitt wrote:

"Really the conceited man knows neither those above him nor those beneath him. He is not willing to concede that the former exists and refuses to be bothered about the latter."

Characteristics of arrogant men are imprudence and abundance of ignorance that lead their actions to slide to wicked vales. James Allen has stated:

"There is no evil in the world which does not proceed from ignorance. If we are willing to learn a lesson from evil, it will lead to higher knowledge and evil will ultimately disappear."

And, the Greek philosopher, Diogenes puts it:

"Every good is knowledge and every evil is ignorance."

When the ignorant happens to be a hypocrite as well, a despicable condition is created. Those who do not know even the rudiments of politics pose as adept politicians. With the backing of a few illiterate voters and the favour of their political party, they even become rulers. And, a certain myth is very often created

that persons holding authority are not ignorant or naive, and that their opinions are valuable and important. These men have even the audacity to become the spokesmen at learned gatherings and science conferences and, their speeches are eagerly listened to. Perhaps, blind belief in and implicit obedience of those in power is conducive to political stability. But, certainly, the tendency to elevate to the status of a sage and an intellectual, anyone, who has ridden the crest of success in politics, has to be put an end to. Otherwise, the ignorant hypocrites will cause all progress to be paralysed. It is easy even for a foolish person to develop arrogance and egotism, when his utterances are taken as gospels of truth. The next step for him is to feel contempt for others. Such people certainly deserve the disdain of sensible persons.

Proponents of every new movement should be intellectually well-equipped. It is the lack of intellectual endowment among leaders that causes chaos in politics. This evil is not confined to politics, but is manifest in all fields of our activity. The ignorant slowly establish themselves in important positions, in political, social and cultural spheres. We are gradually losing the capacity to pay honour to learning and sagacity, for the hypocrites are everywhere challenging and questioning everything. One thing is certain, we live in a world of hypocrites and, their dominion keeps widening. The ignorant scoffs at the scholar; the illiterate relegates the erudite to the background and the blind leads the blind. We can imagine the plight to which this tendency, if allowed to grow unrestrained, can lead us. Allied to ignorance and hypocrisy is egocentrism. There is this difference between them - while hypocrites pretend to be what they are not; egocentrics believe that their powers are limitless. This pernicious quality is as detrimental to the nation or society as it is to individuals. History affords several instances of how egocentrism shuts out all possibility of growth and progress.

In India, the Aryan Civilization paved the way for great achievements. In intellectual, scientific, philosophic and spiritual realms, substantial contributions were made in those ancient days. Still, these achievements did not lead our country to the heights of greatness to which it could have soared. This is because at this stage, intellectual stagnation already set in and even several individuals displayed egocentrism. Vasishta and Viswamitra are examples of this. Penance or *tapas* was in fact an attempt to achieve crowning glory to the individuals who practised it. They believed that they ascended the summit of knowledge and wisdom. Every *sanyasin* believed that he had arrived at the fountainhead of knowledge and that nothing more remained for him to learn. All heroes of ancient epics like the *Mahabharata* are egocentrics. When this attitude becomes the ideology of a civilisation, a deplorable condition is created.

The lofty achievements of Aryan Civilization were muted because of egocentrism. In the early 11th Century, Al-Beruni, the historian and philosopher, who accompanied Muhammad of Ghazni, summed up Indian national traits thus:

"Indians labour under the belief that no other people are as great as they are, that no other philosophers are as wise as theirs, and that no sciences are as developed as theirs. They are loath to communicate or to have any contact with others. They believe that coming face to face with foreigners makes them unclean. Hence all outsiders are described by them as barbarians." (Edward Sachau: Al-Beruni's India vol I p 23)

Our ancient sages believed themselves to be the reservoirs of all knowledge and showed no desire to acquire new learning. The temple of learning was thus closed and securely barred. As a result of this, our ancient scholarship and philosophy stood stunted - deprived of the opportunity to grow and bear fruit. Our scientific and cultural spheres have all suffered from this arrested development. Though once imbued with vigour, they soon became lifeless. Al-Beruni and Udubi have marvelled at the excellence of our art and sculpture, and expressed their admiration in eloquent words.

"In this they have attained a very high degree of art, so that our people (Muslims) when they see them, wonder at them and are unable to describe them, much less to construct anything like them." (Edward Sachau: Al-Beruni's India Vol II p 144)

The glowing terms in which Muhammad of Ghazni described the Mathura Temple, to his friend are recorded by contemporary historian Al-Udubi in the book *Tharikiyamini*. He has recorded that the sultan thus wrote respecting it:

"If any should wish to construct a building equal to this, he would not be able to do it, without expending a hundred thousand, thousand red *dinars* and to occupy two Hundred years even though the most experienced and able workmen were employed" (Al-Udubi: *Tarikh-i-Yamioi* (Elliot and Dowson, Vol II P 44)

Al-Udubi is of the opinion that this is not man-made but must be the work of *geni* or some other superhuman elements. (Al-Udubi, Elliot and Dowson: *Tarikh-i-Yamioi* Vol II P 58)

However the arts and crafts of India that aroused the enthusiastic admiration of all foreigners did not grow further. The branches of our knowledge that drew praises from the entire world became sterile. This great creative culture that our country possessed centuries before Al-Beruni and others arrived here should have reached the pinnacle of perfection. But, reality was rather otherwise. Instead of progressing, learning in India became stagnant and devoid of growth. The paralysing egocentrism was the sole reason responsible for this state of affairs.

Depravity had already set in when hardly a century and a half later, the descendants of those who had gazed at Indian art and architecture in dazed admiration, laid the foundation of a mighty empire in India and made our people

subservient. It was now our turn to marvel at the new weapons they brought. Everything about the invaders appeared to us as startlingly new. The splendour of their dress, food and manners were looked upon with amazement. Their social setup diffused a spirit of humanism and sense of equality. In art and literature, philosophy and science, they had absorbed the latest trends. By the side of such an overwhelming display of modernity, we felt ourselves inferior. Bowing our heads before the foreigners, we submitted to their authority.

This is not something peculiar to our country alone. It has been evinced by different cultures and different countries in different periods. China, a nation that occupies a unique place in the history of the world could be cited as an instance. The Chinese are the inheritors of a very glorious ancient culture. When most countries of the world were groping in the darkness of savage existence, China had a magnificent urban civilisation. It was China that gave birth to the immortal philosophers and sages like Confucius, Lao Tze and Mencius. But, this eminence intoxicated them. Stuffed with a sense of their own greatness, they became swollen-headed and disdainful of the outer world. An interesting anecdote brings out this superciliousness with which China viewed the world.

English Ambassador McCartney reached China, in the days of Chien Hang, the last great emperor of China. He had come bringing from the King of England a request for trade facilities. In the most solemn tone, the Emperor said that his great empire possessed everything that was necessary; but if the barbarians desired to trade with China they could be permitted to do so in a limited way if they respected their laws and observed their customs. The 'Son of Heaven', the Sovereign of a great people with great and continuous civilisation, had not been aware of the changes that had taken place elsewhere or of the new powers which had developed far away from the Celestial Empire. He continued to think that China was still the centre of the world. Hardly half a century could pass before the same barbarians from the west had laid his mighty empire low. To expiate this sin of egocentrism, to be saved from this stroke of Nemesis, China had to wait another century.

Religious history affords ample illustrations of self-complacency. When Christianity emerged as a mighty force in Europe, the Church aspired for political and religious authority. Kings and potentates of Europe were all brought under the Pope and the Church. This put an end to independent thinking and arrested the spirit of enquiry. For centuries, Europe existed in the Dark Age. The cultural legacy of Greco-Roman world remained unknown to Medieval Europe. Intellect and reason were held in leash and instead dogma and ecclesiastical authority were deemed all-important. Philosophy was stifled. Freedom of thought was non-

existent. Access to the wealth of learning that antiquity held was denied to the people. Socrates and Sapho, Aristotle and Plato, Herodotus and Thucydides were forced into oblivion. In total bondage to an authoritarian Church, the human mind had no chance to grow. Even religion was interpreted narrowly to suit the dogmas that the Church taught. People had no direct access to the Bible or to the teachings of Christ due to the simple reason that only the clergy had the right to read the Bible. With reason in captivity, cultural progress was impossible and civilization became stagnant. The Church dealt a crushing blow to all creative impulses, destroying scientific knowledge and imagination - all in the name of religion. Great men like Galileo, Erasmus and Bacon felt the violence of ecclesiastical opposition to anything that widened the horizon of human thought.

This period in history, when egocentrism reached its zenith has appropriately earned the name 'Dark Age'. Light was not allowed to penetrate the thick walls erected by complacency and fanatic self-exultation. Culture was static and the much needed breath of fresh air from the outside was steadfastly kept out. The Church held all Europe in its power, preventing it from drawing on a cultural legacy of the past and embarking on a quest for the new. The Church also tried to drive into the minds of the people the idea of the validity and adequacy of the dogmas and teachings of the Church. If knowledge about life is to be had from the past, life is to be lived with our eyes to the future. Medieval Europe under Church authority was an exception to this general principle, owing to the closed view, entertained by the hypocrites and the clergy that stemmed all progress.

As a result, the New Age came with a tremendous force. The institutions of the middle ages and the beliefs and ideas they stood for were ruthlessly shattered. The Church that had wielded more than ecclesiastical authority and had extended its power in all areas of human activity was crushed. The people that had suffocated for centuries under the arbitrary authority of church, now breathed the invigorating air of freedom. The tide of Renaissance, too strong to be checked, swept over all Europe bringing about a transformation. Suddenly, the western mind seemed to awake, and search for new vistas of life. Reason was liberated, and was applied to question all that was hitherto received as dogma. As science was freed from shackles, new inventions were made and new ideas took shape. The world stood at the dawn of a new epoch as stirrings of a new life were felt and novel movements were born. The hold of Catholic Church weakened over Christendom and many countries broke away from the Papal authority. Renaissance thus acted as a liberating force, saving Europe from the catastrophic fate that egocentrism brought to other countries. Here fortunately Erasmus, Huss, Wycliffe, Luther, Zwingli and others made the emancipation of the individual

possible. Had it not been for these great men, Christendom would have still remained in the Dark Ages. The Renaissance, by giving them wideness of vision and lofty ideals, made them the founders of the new age of enlightenment and humanism.

An equally significant story relates to the Islamic world. When Europe of the middle ages remained in abysmal ignorance, Muslims could boast of a highly advanced culture. Their capitals were looked upon as the repositories of learning and every branch of knowledge. The Dark Age of Europe was a period of the flowering of the Muslim civilization. The Arabs held out a beacon of knowledge and made invaluable contribution to the theoretical and applied sciences. In industrial and agricultural fields, they introduced new methods. The tide of Islamic civilization spread with tremendous force and won the recognition of the whole world. Cordova and Cairo, Bagdad and Delhi became, intellectually and culturally the nerve centres of the world. They taught the world many things about political administration, social order and economic setup. As for science, invaluable contributions came from these celebrated centres of Muslim culture. Even in art and architecture, Muslims excelled with their use of mosaic and their intricate and beautiful arabesques. Thus, an empire of unrivalled grandeur and splendour existed and the light of knowledge that caused these, beckoned the intellectuals of the world.

But, the violent anti-Christian feeling that the Crusades unleashed carried the Muslim race to the height of narrow-minded bigotry. The great minds that had followed knowledge were dispirited like a sinking star and began to abandon the quest for truth and learning. The very people, who had held the view that a mere drop of a scholar's ink is worthier than the blood of a martyr, now developed an attitude of intellectual snugness and became a closed civilization. An awareness of their own power as one of the greatest and wealthiest empires of the world, combined with intense hatred for Christians paved the way for a reversal in the destiny of Islamic empire. While inspired by the creative urge and spirit of enquiry of the Renaissance, European countries were offering the world new inventions and unravelling vast stretches of new ideas and new learning, Muslims blinded by anti-Christian sentiments, hardly noticed these revolutionary changes coming over Europe.

The Arabs, who had evinced the keenest interest in the sciences, now ignored the rapid strides that science made. Christendom that had been in a deep slumber, having awakened to the intellectual and cultural ferment in the air, was now giving the lead to the world. Muslims shut themselves out from all progress and like the Emperor of China, tenaciously believed in their omniscience. And so, all

the Muslim nations remained warped, for they could neither rise to the demands of the time nor benefit from the waves of new learning that sprang up around them. Further degeneration followed. Never again were the Muslim countries able to break through and march towards progress for the chains of bondage clamped to their feet were too heavy. Christendom, on the other hand, was progressing with a vengeance, emerging from the stagnation of the middle ages. Muslims found themselves in exactly the reverse state. Distant from the path of refinement and open-minded acquisition of knowledge, they retreated into the dark dungeons of bigotry and egocentrism.

The Muslim empire in India was not immune to this fate either. The richest of all Muslim empires flourished in India and the most uncompromising fanaticism also was seen here. Muslims who had held the monopoly of trade hardly realised that Vasco De Gama who alighted at Kappad, eight miles north of Calicut, heralded the advent of a new powerful culture. They were also unaware of the gradual way in which the aliens, through trade and might tightened its stranglehold over the country. They failed to understand that the scene of trade and commerce had shifted from the land to the sea and that a strong navy was potential enough to rule the world. With their eyes firmly shut to the growth of new kingdoms, and the invention of new scientific techniques, they remained as the perfect embodiment of ego centrism and bigotry. Time sped by ushering in revolutionary changes. But, those who refused to awaken to the challenge slumbered on. From this catastrophe, the Muslim world has not yet recovered.

Nations, civilisations and individuals can attain healthy growth only if the examples provided by history serve as eye-openers. A certain indifference that has existed in our cultural, political and social spheres has now grown into a cynicism even towards genuine pursuit of knowledge. The result is that ignorance and inefficiency prevails in many of our spheres of activity. To conceal this symptom of sickness, we resort to the tactics of belittling all good and noble things and of pretending that we know everything. Before this cancerous growth spreads, we have to diagnose it and check it by fostering at least a small section of people who hold knowledge as something precious. One thing is definite - a stagnant civilization can never progress. Only if we establish a progressive society open to the transmission of ideas and receptive to changing trends can we hope to keep pace with the other countries of the world in the onward march. The first step towards this is to conduct an honest and objective evaluation of our cultural, social and political setup with a view to eliminate their defects. Any attempt in this direction is worthy of encouragement and emulation.

CHAPTER 5: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF INDIAN HISORY

Anyone, who attempts an objective study of Indian History, finds the task beset with considerable difficulty. No other country in the world has a written history so indescribably defective. It would seem that the tremendous possibilities of historical study and the immense gains to be achieved thereby have not been fully realised by anyone here. To instil into every man, a deep sense of his responsibility towards his country and his fellowmen and to inculcate in people the primary lessons of tolerance and broad-mindedness, are two of the lofty functions served by history. Those who are ignorant of the cultural heritage of a country are bound to fail in their efforts to formulate economic formulae or to solve national problems. But, in our country those who are at the helm of affairs and deal with matters of great national significance, have seldom been even initiated into the study of history. Naturally, this affects the nation adversely.

Leaders of India, who work hard to realise the goal of emotional integration that they have set before them, have to pay special attention to the codification of history based on facts. The lessons that we bequeath to posterity should not be such as to engender in them hatred and ill-will. Unfortunately, the lessons in Indian history are apt to foster precisely these two sentiments, instead of a sense of physical and mental unity. All other nations of the world have written their history with a view to widen the vision, consolidate the cultural assets, stabilise the national bond and achieve national amity among the populace.

Recorded Indian history still remains a disgraceful exception to this general principle. Here, instead of instilling communal harmony, we inject communal hatred; instead of fostering emotional oneness, we nurture endless enmity; and instead of promoting national integration, we encourage narrow parochialism. Considerations of race and colour are not eliminated, but reaffirmed. Confusion of ideas has come where intellectual progress was intended. We have not paused to consider how this unfathomable evil has come about and how disastrous and far-reaching its consequences are going to be. Sensible and well thought out programmes to combat this has not been forthcoming from the intellectuals, from whom they should be expected. What has to be done is to rewrite history, erasing all deliberate falsehoods, so that a climate may be created where diverse communities can coexist in peace and concord.

Today, there is a greater awareness than ever before of the need for communal harmony and national integration. This favourable trend prevalent in recent times must be exploited fully. But, those who embark on this task have to face colossal

problems. We have not learnt to encourage those who, after long and dedicated efforts, have shown the courage of their conviction to declare many age old beliefs as erroneous. We do not inspire such sincere search for truth. Our country, therefore, needs to give as much importance to the re-assessment of history as to the building up of our nation, so that we may be saved from the catastrophe towards which we are steadily advancing. Kumaran Asan, the great poet of Kerala lamented that freedom means almost nothing to those who are fighting in the name of religion or caste. No doubt, irrigation projects, steel plants and big industries can raise our standard of living. But, if Indians are left to cut one another's throat in the name of religion, all these achievements will be of no avail.

A great many factors have to be taken into account while re-writing history. A number of questions have to be raised. Why has the history of our country alone become so tainted? How can it be rid of these blemishes? What are the steps to be taken for the realisation of this goal? And finally, what are the obstacles in our way? Only if these questions are frankly and honestly tackled, can we build up our future on sure and stable foundations.

The first thing that is to be borne in mind by any student of Indian history is the peculiar circumstance in which our history got written. It is a fact that it is only after the British rule had been established in India that a complete and unified history of the country was written. Though desultory attempts were made before this, it remained for the English to have a comprehensive history of India to be codified. This is indeed a laudable attempt which calls for our gratitude. But, while gratefully acknowledging the enormous funds and toil expended on this mighty scheme, we still have to deplore the wicked tendencies and motives that lurked behind this effort. Even as the English made this unforgettable contribution to India, they inflicted upon her slender body, wounds that smart even today - wounds that bleed profusely and perpetually. We should not turn blind eyes to the fact that this wound was deliberately inflicted.

The remedy for the evils that are noticed in our society lies in the correct, understanding and fair interpretations of the past history of India. It was from the Muslim rulers that the English took over power in India. It was the Muslims who lost the game on the political chessboard. This was an unexpected blow. Since then, Muslim lords and dispossessed chieftains evinced uncompromising hatred of the English. Entertaining the hope that someday, they could reinstall themselves as rulers, they lost no opportunity to oppose the English using tooth and nail. Muslim priesthood that acted as a mere tool in the hands of Muslim nobles gave religious sanction to the anti-English sentiments that they propagated. For a Muslim to serve in the English army or in any office under the

English was interpreted as an offence against God. And unfortunately, this was universally accepted. Even after the fall of Tipu and the Mysore Empire, even when the foundations of British Empire were laid, Muslims in India were unwilling to rise to the demands of the time. Even when they knew that the power of the English was irresistible, they still showed no readiness to be reconciled with them. If it was political ambition that led Muslim nobles to this state, what misled the ordinary Muslims was the crafty indoctrination of Muslim priesthood. All these combined to make the English deeply hostile to the Muslim community and to force them to hold the entire community at arm's length.

"Gradually, the East India Company shut the Muslim aristocracy out of the army, believing that their exclusion was necessary." (Ram Gopal: Indian Muslims - A Political History p 15)

English politicians, endowed with great acumen and political insight, realised that to make secure their political and commercial interests they would have to win the favour of one of the Indian communities. So they made every attempt to win over the Hindu community that formed the vast majority of the people of India. Every movement, every scheme that came from the British for the modernisation of India had woven into it some deliberate strategy to distance the Hindus from the Muslims and to make them wrangle. This is how the policy 'Divide and Rule' came to be evolved. Writing of history was not exempted from this general policy. When this was skilfully practised, the Indian communal scene which was till then peaceful, began to become stormy.

The result of 150 years of British rule in India created an irrevocable breach between two communities that had lived in peace for over six centuries. The English historians, who probed into the fragments of recorded medieval history of India for any trace of communal conflict, met with nothing but disappointment. Despite the fact that a succession of Muslim kings ruled over this country for a period of six hundred years, not a single instance of communal riot could be dug up from history even by the most biased historians. But, when the English policy was executed with unerring efficiency, Hindus and Muslims fell upon each other and a climate of intolerance and communal hatred prevailed. The culmination of this policy as we know was to divide our country into two separate bitterly hostile nations, that have gone on warring with each other ever since.

The birth of the nation of Pakistan is no political accident. It is the fruition of the sustained efforts taken by the English politicians to make Hindus and Muslims bitter adversaries. When we look for the reason behind this chasm between the two groups that lived for ages in perfect amity and brotherhood, we find it in the British policy of dividing to rule. Its inevitable consequence and the disasters it brought forth, form the material for another chapter of this book. Hence, we do

not have to go into details at this point. One thing has to be emphasised: that the English aimed at nothing but fishing in the troubled waters of communal antagonism. In achieving this objective, they were completely successful. Indian history was distorted and presented in such a way as to promote smooth operation of their policy. Today, when we urge the Hindu and the Muslim to be united, we must first look for the cause of disunity and try to make people aware of this and then uproot it. The root cause lies mostly in the English presentation of Indian history. Finding it impossible to pacify the deposed Muslim Nawabs and nobles, the English for their survival resorted to attracting the Hindu aristocracy with all kinds of promises and incentives.

As far as they were concerned, this was only a change in rule. They did not see any alteration in the socio-political setup of the country. So the majority of the Hindus felt no qualms in serving the English who offered them a propitiating hand. Nobody could have thought then that they were being the victims of a political treachery. Hence, Poornayya who was the *Diwan* of Mysore until Tipu Sultan died fighting in the battlefield, continued to be the *Diwan* even after English occupation of Mysore. None of the Hindu aristocracy, suspected then that anything deeper than change of rule was involved or that they were helping in any way the diffusion of a deadly toxic gas into the political atmosphere of India. Perhaps they viewed the English support as stepping-stones to a political resurrection. Any way the Hindu nobility, flattered by compliments and powerful offices, remained unhesitatingly loyal to the English.

To command the allegiance of the Hindus, the English felt it necessary to prevent them from uniting with Muslims. When the writing of Indian history was taken up, this policy came into operation. To please the Hindu Community of India, English historians wrote that in the ancient period India had a splendid civilization and that its glory was unrivalled. They flattered us inordinately by asserting that great and heroic kings ruled over this country and that in the days of their reign, milk and honey flowed through this land of ours. Now, since none is averse to flattery, we took all these to be literally true and felt immensely pleased with ourselves. Next, they introduced colour and variety into their work by painting the history of the middle ages in totally different hues. Muslim rule was painted as a curse from above to lay waste this country, to wipe out a happy and contented people and to destroy their way of life and religious beliefs.

The middle ages, therefore, appear in Indian history as a period of chaos and calamities. It was characterised as a period in which evil and savage kings ruled the country. It was said about this period that Indians were plundered, our holy temples looted and destroyed and our religious customs prohibited. The British

rule was thus interpreted as a god-sent to redeem the oppressed and humiliated Hindu community from the thralldom of Muslim rule. At that point of time, we could not understand that this argument was a clever political trick used by the invaders to consolidate their position here. Even when we saw British rule being praised as the instrument safeguarding Hindu interests, when facts about Muslim rulers were distorted to fan the flame of communal hatred, and when - with aberrant enthusiasm - the greatness of ancient India was lauded, we failed to discern the premeditated policy behind all these.

The history of every nation in the world is divided into three sections for convenience; they are Ancient, Medieval and Modern. Indian history, however, is divided as the Hindu period, the Muslim period and the English period. This fact alone is sufficient to unveil, the malicious intention of the English historians. Another significant and telling fact is that though authoritative records about the period of Muslim rule exist, English historians gave interpretations to certain technical terms in a way that would serve their interests and suit their convenience. They recorded that temples were destroyed, that forceful conversions were made and that by imposing the ridiculous religious tax called *Jiziya*, the Muslim kings oppressed their Hindu subjects.

Sultan Muhammad of Ghazna, who marched into India almost every winter, plundered this country seventeenth times. Even the great Somnatha Temple was not exempt from the sacrilegious attack of this heinous villain. Numerous are the instances recorded in history, of similar looting of temples. But, we are not told definitely that the feeling that prompted this devastation was religious hatred. Since the plunderers were Muslims, the assumption is that fanatic religious hatred must have been the motive. In that case, what is the explanation for the plunder and looting of the great Sringeri Monastery by the Maratha army, under Raghunath Rao Patwardhan? What could have been the motive behind that onslaught in which several Brahmin priests were murdered, gold was stolen and the chief priest was forced to flee for life? (KN Narasimhachar published by Rao Bahadur Archaeological Series - 1916) It was Tipu, whose mission in life is alleged to have been the destruction of temples, who came to rescue of the Sringeri monks by sending his army to chase away the plunderers. This was not an isolated instance. Whenever a king or a *nawab* has attacked another country, he has looted its temples. This has happened because of easily comprehensible reasons.

When we hear of temples being pillaged, it is not the small village temples that we mean. Sree Padmanabha Swami Temple of Trivandrum may be taken as a somewhat adequate example. Those, who have had occasion to visit Somantha Temple, Sree Krishna Temple of Mathura, Sree Rangam Temple of Trichinapally or

even the Temple of Madurai, need no elaborate depiction to grasp the idea. The idea of the destruction of the Hindu temples has caused great confusion of thought among the people of India and hence, a little bit of a clarification is called for here. None of these great temples was merely a centre of worship. These powerfully fortified temples with their imposing towers were actually the nerve centres of the country. Within the great fortresses, there were roads and traffic and shopping centres.

The amazing arrangement of the Sreerangapattam Temple still attracts numerous tourists. The tower and the fort that you first see are strengthened by granite pillars for the making of which herculean labour must have been expended. Through the first tower you pass onto a broad street. On either side of the road there are several houses and shops. When you proceed down the road for a while, you come to the next tower. Stepping through this you are again greeted by another village with its own shops and trading areas. The roads are asphalted and well kept. They lead you to the third and fourth tower. Seven such towers have to be passed before you can reach the holy temple. Seven villages are thus seen within the fort, and in times of war it was here that all the people sought refuge. It is quite natural for the enemy, who comes merely for the sake of looting wealth, to turn to these centres where almost all the wealth of the country used to be stored up. In those days, temples were places of shelter, treasuries and courts.

We know that a similar condition prevailed in Babylon and Egypt for a long time. In the eyes of any invader, temples became coffers filled with the piled up riches of the country. Naturally, these became the target of attack. From the works of contemporary writers like Al-Beruni, Al-Udubi, Baihakhi and Hamdulla Mustanfi, we get a number of relevant references to the several temples pillaged by Muhammad of Ghazna and to the fabulous loot that he got from those temples. The burglar who breaks into a house never bothers to verify the religion of his targeted victim. In the same way, the plunderer hardly ever made a distinction between temple and treasury.

However, in the hands of the English historians, the pillage and destruction of temples speaks only of religious fanaticism. This plausible and emotionally disturbing interpretation was the trump card that they played. People of Kerala, who are familiar with the peculiar structure of the Sree Padmanabha Temple fortifications and *gopuras* from all sides holding shops and habitations, can easily understand this without much explanation. They can easily see through these nefarious tactics of the English, whose sole aim was to prickle the religious

sentiments of the people of India and to exploit them. The topic has been dealt with more elaborately in the Chapter, 'Behind the Destruction of Temples'.

The same fad lies behind the concocted story of forced conversions. Long before the Muslim rule, the Arabs who had crossed the Arabian Sea, had won several followers of Islam in Malabar. It was not with an army behind them that Malik-Ibn-Dinar and his followers built the first mosque in India at Kodungallore, Kerala. The following are the words of the Portuguese traveller and official Barbosa:

"But for the arrival of the Portuguese, the whole of the Coast would have become Mohammadan because of the frequent conversions that took place and the powerful influence exercised by the Muslim merchants from other parts of India such as Gujarat and the Daccan and from Arabia and Persia." (A Description of the Coast of East Africa and Malabar, quoted by Thomas Arnold: The (Sir Thomas Walker Arnold: The Preaching of Islam, A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith p 896)

Another quotation is useful in proving that conversions to Islam were made with the help neither of political force nor of weapons. The Census Report of 1891 gives a revealing account.

"It is satisfactorily proved that since 1872 out of every 10,000 persons, Islam has gained hundred percent in Northern Bengal, 262 in Eastern Bengal and 110 in West Bengal, on an average, 155 in the whole of Bengal proper. The Mussalman increase is real and large. If it were to continue, the faith of Muhammad would be universal in Bengal proper. Nineteen years ago, in Bengal, proper Hindus numbered nearly half a million more than Mussalmans did and in the space of less than two decades the Mussalmans have not only overtaken the Hindus but have surpassed them by a million and a half." (CJO Donnell: the Lower Provinces of Bengal and Their Feudatories, Census of India 1891 vol II pp 146 & 47)

In reality, no sensible ruler ever commits these deeds that can throw his country into disaster. Whether a king is a Hindu, Muslim or a Christian, a ruler is a ruler. In whichever country they might be, they all evince certain common characteristics. They are all hundred percent rulers and not religious propagandists. Man, whose every action is prompted by self-interest, is sure to make his own position secure. The political wobbling practised by leaders of today for the sake of power will help us to understand the tactics and skills adopted by the past rulers. Their religious policies were conditioned by the social and political conditions of the country. Even today, we have political parties and popular leaders that exploit religious feelings and considerations of caste and colour, just as we have instances of kings who exploited religion in order to safeguard their own interests. When it served their interests, several kings are known to have ignored religious teachings with no qualms at all. Hence, trouble develops when the names and religions of kings are taken into consideration while assessing their deeds. If we take them all to be power-crazy politicians of their epochs, their actions will not be misconstrued as being prompted by religious zeal.

Statistics must be made to speak about this vital point. If power was abused and forced conversions made by Muslim rulers, the Muslim population of Uttar Pradesh - the capital of Muslim rule for more than 600 years - would have been much more than 11%. Mysore that witnessed a veritable storm has still only 5% of Muslims. At the same time, in places which did not come under Muslim rule, the percentage of Muslim population remains higher. This paradox is not manmade. It is rather the inevitable outcome of our age-old caste system and of rules that imposed on the 'low-born' Hindu - an unbearable burden which he could shake off by becoming a Muslim. Ignoring this rather unpalatable truth, we have been swallowing the untrue stories of forced conversions.

"The conversion of a Hindu untouchable threw up the glaring difference between his condition as a Hindu and as a Muslim. As a Hindu, he was not allowed access to a public well. As a Muslim, he used it by right and if any Hindu questioned that right, a crowd of the Prophet's followers would accompany him to enforce it. It was the force of simple logic which was sending into the pale of Islam thousands of Hindus." (Ram Gopal: Indian Muslims - A Political History p 195)

The same ploy was used with regard to *Jiziya*, labelled in history as a religious tax. But, was *Jiziya*, in reality, a religious tax? This is a highly controversial subject. It is sufficient here to mention that *Jiziya* was not a religious tax, for an entire chapter of this book has been devoted to this topic. It has to be borne in mind here that the English consciously held up to the world that *Jiziya* is a religious tax, so that the hurricane of communal hatred might blow all the more ferociously. Their strategy was breathtakingly clever. While interpreting *Jiziya* as a religious tax, it would naturally be accepted that the kings who imposed it were religious fanatics. The manipulative English historians knew very well that if *Jiziya* were made to look like a religious tax, none will be able to challenge religious tax cannot exist side by side with religious tolerance. Hence any allegation against these kings would pass for authentic facts and *Jiziya* would give credibility to the worst charges brought against them.

When this strategy proved successful, Indian mind became filled with rancour and hatred. The India that gave birth to the Buddha and Gandhiji - the apostles of *ahimsa* - became the scene of the most callous bloodshed. All ties of friendship were severed and communal hatred submerged all lofty human sentiments. Thus like the mutilated Vasavadatta, this country of ours was cut and torn into bits. Bleeding and smarting from the wounds inflicted, it still cries for deliverance. The blood that flows profusely will weaken our nation. Before this pale and sickly country of ours passes into total darkness, we have to heal this wound. The best remedy is to recast history in the light of truth eliminating a gross error that has been thrust down our throats perforce.

CHAPTER 6: ASOKA AND AKBAR

The annals of history are replete with instances of democratic movements gaining nationwide acceptance and becoming the very life breath of the people. New religions and novel ideals have always fascinated man. Whenever human civilizations have slipped into depravation and superstitions; such periods have given birth to great men who led the masses to wipe out these evils. It is from the stinking mud that the beautiful lotus comes out. In the same way at times of spiritual and intellectual stagnation and inertia, rejuvenating and life-giving movements have sprung up. Those who give the lead to such movements are the products of the time and its tendencies. The men whom history extolls as great are in reality those who could respond to the new trends of the time and those who had an unerring instinct and a remarkable farsightedness. Among these we can find opportunists and those prove to swim along the current as well as those who felt the pulse of the people and acted accordingly. Some have gone to the extent of accepting martyrdom for the sake of the beliefs which they cherished. And, there are those who defied fate and faced all disasters. In short, the greatness of different historical personalities has to be assessed differently.

In Indian history, Asoka the Great and Akbar the Great are remembered as two giants who lived successfully in two eventful epochs. The stories and praises that have been spread about these, are sufficient to instil pride into every Indian. The purpose of this chapter is to subject to an analysis some of the stories prevalent about these mighty souls that lived in ancient and Medieval India respectively. In writing about Asoka, historians seem to have exhausted all praise. Unstinted tributes have been paid to the greatness of Akbar also. Legends are mingled with the facts about these men. Whenever we want to describe the greatness of a noble personality, we begin with miraculous stories about the circumstances about his birth. In the days of *Panchsheela*, when relation between India and China was cordial, we maintained that the cultural and emotional bond between these two countries existed for over six thousand years. When China, violating all codes of morality and decency attacked India in 1962 and dragged us into a catastrophic war, Indian newspapers, and thinkers came up with the discovery that the Indo-Sino conflict was nothing new, and that it was at least 6,000 years old. Perhaps such declarations are a political necessity and such propaganda may be part of political discretion. But, to attribute noble deeds and perfect conduct to all men, whom history tables as great, would be to frustrate the search for

truth and stifle intellectual curiosity. To be aware of the shortcomings of these great men or to throw light on their failings will not detract from their greatness.

In England, the spirit of enquiry and questioning is allowed such freedom that it even ventured to suggest that a man named William Shakespeare never lived and that it is only the pseudonym for someone who lived at that time. Similarly, the student of history, who tries to establish that Queen Elizabeth was a man disguised as woman, is also heard with respect. On the contrary, here, if anyone, aided by authoritative document or logical evidence challenges traditional verdicts and evaluates Valmiki, Asoka or Sivaji along new lines, the attempt is viewed as something absurd. This is precisely the reason for the decline in India of healthy curiosity and that determination 'to strike, to seek, to find and not to yield.'

One of the manifold legends surrounding Asoka and his birth is that his mother suffered no labour pangs while bringing him into this world and that the name *Asoka* signifies this aspect. Thus, it is believed that the boy came into this world performing a miracle. If this is blindly accepted, then it would be unthinkable to attribute to the boy any trace of bad conduct. Such unquestioning acceptance of legends, in defiance of facts, shuts the door on the face of enquiry. The reality could only be that Asoka's mother suffered like any other mortal woman in giving birth to her child.

From this fantastic story, we pass on to an incident in Asoka's life that is vitally important. It is about his being proclaimed emperor even while his elder brother was alive. When one tries to figure out this violation of the law of primogeniture, he is silenced by the argument that there are certain individuals who are exempt from general rules and customs. It is equally futile to find an answer to the question why a period of four years intervened between his accession and coronation. Illogical explanations and arguments may be forthcoming as an answer to such an enquiry. The coronation of a king used to be a spectacular event accompanied by all sorts of colourful ceremonies and it was held as soon one succeeds the deceased. The fact that in the case of Asoka, this important ceremony was delayed indicates that the succession was furiously questioned and that it must have been after intense competition and a great deal of bloodshed that he established himself on the throne. It must have been a matter of superiority of arms that catapulted him to power. Besides, Buddhist religious books record that Asoka was very cruel in his younger days and that he won the throne only after slaughtering his many brothers. This fact is corroborated by contemporary historical works in the Singhalese language.

Despite all this evidence, we cannot imagine Asoka as being capable of any crime. Almost all our historians are ready to refute this evidence with the one argument that Asoka has caused the names of all his brothers to be written on one of his edicts. Right from the Kurushetra Battle to the very last days of kingship, brothers have fought against brothers for the right to rule. In the middle ages, the question of succession was decided in the battlefield. The strongest among a king's sons and the one who had the greatest backing, naturally succeeded his father. But, just because a king came to the throne after a bloody war of succession, nobody depreciates his merits or discounts his achievements. Still, when one attempts to put forward these facts about Asoka, one is faced with lots of frowns.

Asoka subdued his brothers, established his supremacy and affirmed his right to the throne. Undoubtedly, he was a brave warrior. Having ascended the throne very much in the manner advocated by Kautalya in his *Arthashastra*, Asoka was soon engrossed in the task of extending his empire. With a huge army, he set out to conquer Kalinga or present day modern Odisha. The King of Kalinga also made preparations for war. A mighty confrontation followed. After several days and nights of bloodshed, the bloody sword of the Mauryan Emperor rested in its sheath. Kalinga was annexed to the Magadha Empire. The members of the royal family of Kalinga were killed and all that Asoka set out to do was accomplished. Our historians would have us believe that the stink of the battlefield and of the dead bodies of about three lakhs of soldiers disturbed Asoka profoundly and prompted him to turn an apostle of peace. It is very strange that such a conclusion, which is irreconcilable with commonsense and logic, has not yet been questioned.

Asoka, who in his father's lifetime acted as his viceroy to Taxila and Ujjain, had witnessed many battles. Kalinga, as historians claim, was not the first and last war of Asoka. As the viceroy of certain provinces, he had successfully handled several disorders and uprisings. What earned for Asoka the support of the nobility in the war of succession, is the admirable dexterity and courage that he had displayed earlier in the battles that his father led. The nobles and the soldiers saw in Asoka an invincible warrior. As a consequence, he received their unstinted support and the world got a great and noble emperor. Asoka knew from experience what happens in war and what its dire consequences are.

It is only the shock of unexpected events that makes the mind distraught or brings about a completely changed outlook. There was nothing unexpected about the Kalinga War. What is inevitable in all wars took place at Kalinga also. But, when it is urged that the Kalinga War converted Asoka into a Buddhist, a few facts demand consideration. In the first place, it has to be remembered that it was not

merely at the fag end of the war that people were killed. From the beginning the war witnessed considerable slaughter and if the sight of blood could induce a conversion, it should have happened on the first days of the War. Secondly, the fact remains that Asoka's conversion took place only after he had put to the sword every member of the ruling family of Kalinga. Moreover, Asoka's change of heart waited conveniently till Kalinga was safely and surely annexed to the Magatha Empire.

Asoka's way of thinking must have been powerfully influenced by a very shrewd and practical consideration. If the conquest of a small neighbouring country was possible only at the expense of such genocide, any attempt to annex distant lands would have been suicidal. If something much more than expediency had affected Asoka's decision, the humiliation of Kalinga and the slaughter of its innocent people would not have taken place. If it was on a matter of principle alone, the kingdom of Kalinga could have been restored to its defeated ruler. One cannot help comparing Asoka's conduct to that of Alexander, who majestically honoured the only Indian King to offer him resistance. Alexander made Porus the ruler of all his newly conquered Indian territory. The greatness of Alexander is entirely different indeed from that of Asoka who annexed Kalinga to enlarge his own empire.

What then was the truth? Buddhism that had spread all over India had become the prominent feature of Indian civilization. Its message of peace and love had suffused the spirit of this country. The nation wanted peace not war. The people believed in love, not in hate. The mantra that was chanted that of *ahimsa*. The day of violence was over. Under compelling circumstances, any king would find it impossible to go against popular sentiments. The axiom that man is a creature of circumstances has yet another illustration here. Asoka's conversion therefore meant that being sensitive to the pulse of the people and the socio-cultural-intellectual climate of the time; he exploited the prevalent tendencies fully and effectively. It was not an unexpected and sudden reaction to the bloodshed he witnessed at Kalinga.

We can find geniuses in the pages of history, who have taken 'time by the forelocks' and made spectacular use of opportunities. Even after Asoka, instances are known of great men welding popular sentiments to strengthen their own position and enhance their own authority. Prominent among such great men are Akbar and Henry VIII. These illustrious kings, who tried to play the roles of Caesar and the Pope together, provide the most telling examples of channelling popular enthusiasm along the lines advantageous and convenient to themselves. Every country has witnessed the endless tug-of-war for power between the state and

the church,- between secularism and spiritualism. The prolonged conflict between Brahmanical priesthood and Kshatriya kingship culminated in the birth of Buddhism. The light of its teachings spread and won a large following. This radiance must have conquered Asoka too. In addition to enjoying political power, he assumed spiritual leadership of the people as well. Combining these two, he occupied an enviable position indeed. And, the people too must have been contented for having such a great ruler. In temporal and spiritual matters, Buddhists gladly accepted Asoka's leadership. It is far more important to earn the affection and respect of the people than to fight against the popular will or to swim against the currents of the time. Therefore, the admirable quality that Asoka displayed was the keen intelligence of a politician. What he earned for himself was the enduring and fortunate fame of a great leader.

The same story is repeated in Akbar's time. His father Humayun, who was defeated by Sher Shah, was fleeing to Persia when his queen gave birth to a son. Circumstances forced Humayun to entrust this child with his brother Kamran, the ruler of Kabul. With the help of the Persian emperor, Humayun rallied a big army and set out to restore his lost kingdom. Stiff opposition came to him from unexpected quarters. His own brother from whom he had expected help and encouragement cheated him, Humayun was denied the permission to pass through Kabul. Humayun was thus forced into a war with his own brother, King of Kabul. The Battle raged and Kamran knew that his defeat was more or less certain. The story goes on to say that in the thick of the battle, Kamran held aloft the child as a target for his father's artillery and that the boy miraculously escaped unscathed. Overcoming all obstacles, Humayun, marched on to Delhi in triumph. When Humayun recaptured his kingdom from the successors of Sher Shah, the child was only twelve years old.

The one pertinent question that naturally comes to our mind here is this. If Kamran really meant what he did with the child in the battlefield, and the boy escaped death, why then did he not murder the child and satisfy his thirst for revenge? It is impossible to credit the story without attributing divinity to the child and accepting the idea that he was born with a sacred mission. Legends like this are widespread about great men of all countries. But, nowhere else have these been accorded the serious acceptance like that they are given in India. While people of other countries treat them as mere legends, we infuse them with historical realities. Such an attitude can strangle enquiry and is an offence to good taste.

Akbar became emperor at the tender age of thirteen. At the age of eighteen, he had to take up the reins of the Empire. Though Humayun, who fled to Persia,

could return triumphantly to India and was able to restore the kingdom he had lost to Sher Shah, he was not destined to rule over this empire for long. From the successors of Sher Shah he wrested the Empire. But, destiny did not permit him to consolidate his Indian empire nor did he get time to organise its administration. So, the domain that was passed onto Akbar was, in comparison with the other kingdoms of India, comparatively small. Almost the whole of northern India and the larger part of south India were under the rule of independent Muslim kings.

A glance at the political map of India at the time of Akbar's accession to the throne is not out of the place in this context. Towards the north-west, Kabul with its dependencies was under Mirza Muhammad Hakim, Akbar's brother, who assumed independent titles. Extending his kingdom into an empire was beyond the scope of Mirza Muhammad Hakim's ambition. Kashmir was under the rule of an independent Muslim dynasty and the Himalayan states in the neighbourhood were also in a similar situation. Sind and Multan had separated from the empire of Delhi after the death of Sher Shah and formed themselves into independent Muslim kingdoms. Bengal was ruled by the Sultans of Sur Dynasty. Assam and Bihar were also under the scions of Sher Shah. Malwa and Gujarat had become independent states with considerable territories under their jurisdiction and were also ruled by Muslim rulers. Across the Vindhya, Khandesh, Berar, Bedar, Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golkonda, were ruled by their own Sultans, who had absolutely no regard for the rulers of Delhi. Hence the possibility of Akbar's expanding his empire by an exploitation of Muslim sentiments was ruled out.

The Sunni Muslims of India, who were opposed to the Shia lineage of Akbar and his predecessors, were not prepared to rally round the emerging Mughal emperor. Realising the acute situation prevalent at that time, Akbar, with great prudence and sagacity turned to the Rajputs of India for help. The Rajputs, who fought the battle of Kanua under their renowned leader Sangram Singh, had met a most disastrous defeat from the hands of Baber. They had not recovered their lost prestige and sincerely desired royal favours. Thus, the position was such that both Akbar and Rajputs required mutual assistance. The relation was complementary to each other. Dr Iswariprasad writes:

"Akbar's policy towards the Rajputs originated in ambition, but it was more generous and humane than that of other Muslim rulers. He was endowed with the higher qualities of statesmanship and he resolved to base his empire on the goodwill and friendship of the majority community of India." (Dr Iswariprasad: History of Muslim Rule p 351)

At the same time, he made an attempt to be the religious head of the Muslims and the Hindus. While the Muslims called him *Khalifa*, the Hindus referred to him as *Jagadguru*. Thus he managed to glorify himself as the religious and secular head of the Empire.

The religious climate that made the birth of *Din-i-Ilahi* possible resembled the religious tone of India at the time of Asoka. The teachings of Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Tulasi Das, Tukur Das, Meera Bai, Dadu and others had given rise to a feeling of religious oneness. The people of India had eagerly responded to the message of humanity and love that was the greatest contribution of the Bhakti Movement. As a result, the enlightened section of the community had already started an attempt to bridge the gulf of religious disparity and the light of religious harmony and peace had begun to cast a glow on the horizon.

The Sufis of Islam and leaders of Bhakti Cult conversed with one another and disclosed to the world that the Omnipotent God was one and the same to all communities and creeds. Apparently, respecting the new popular sentiment, Akbar cleverly exploited the times and exalted himself by extending his authority from temporal spheres to spiritual realms as well. By founding his new religion *Din-i-Ilahi*, this genius was reaping a rich harvest from the seeds of love and religious amity that Kabir, Nanak, and others had sowed. Kabir emphasised the oneness of God thus:

“If God be within the mosque, then to whom his world belongs?
If Rama be within the Image, then who is there to know what happens without?”
Hari is in the East; Allah is in the West. Look within your own heart
You will find both Karim and Rama.”

Nanak’s creed may be summed up in his own words:

“Religion consisteth not in mere words.
He who looketh all men as equal is religious.
Religion consisteth not in wandering to tombs or place of cremation
Or sitting in attitude of contemplation
Religion consisteth not in wandering in foreign countries
Or in bathing in places of pilgrimage
Abide pure amidst the impurities of the world,
This shalt thou find the way of religion.”

It was apparent that Kabir stood for the cultural synthesis and religious homogeneity. He proclaimed:

“There is no Hindu or Muslim, but man.”

All these reformers had both Muslims and Hindus as their devoted disciples and followers. By forming a national religion out of a synthesis of the best elements of all religions, Akbar proved himself to be a radical among radicals. But, he was more than that. By combining religion and state and bringing them under him, Akbar demonstrated to the world the height to which a superb individual can soar. Till his death, he continued to be the embodiment of the Religion and the State.

The history of England contains a parallel to this. Henry VIII, who felt the pulse of the time, made opportunistic political use of the new ideas that were evolving in Europe. Reformation movement had originated in protest against the religious abuses and atrocities of the Catholic Church. Wycliffe, Huss, Luther and Moore led this great movement against the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Dogmas of the Church were subjected to a severe scrutiny in the light of the teachings of the Bible and a storm of protest raged over the whole of Europe. England at this time had Henry VIII, a conservative Catholic, on the throne. He wrote a book in which he harshly censured Luther and his followers. This vindication of the Church earned for him the title, 'Defender of the Faith'. So, though the waves of the prodigious new movement had crossed the channel and reached England, they had little power to bring about any serious religious upheaval there. Since Henry was on the throne, whatever sympathy the people had for the Reformation, was kept concealed in the secret recesses of their hearts. However, something happened at this juncture that changed the tide of affairs.

Henry was dismayed by the fact that his Queen, Catherine of Aragon could not give him a son who would be the heir to the throne. He was beginning to view this as a punishment for his having married his brother's widow. Moreover, by this time, he had fallen passionately in love with beautiful Anne Boleyn, one of the ladies-in-waiting to the Queen. The King wanted to divorce his wife and wed Anne and since this could not be done without papal consent, he appealed to the papacy. The request of Henry VIII placed the Pope in a dilemma as Catherine of Aragon happened to be the aunt of Charles V, the Emperor of Spain, who was Rome's chief ally in its fight against Luther and his followers. So the Pope was constrained to reject the request of the King of England.

Henry VIII refused to accept the verdict of the Pope. He appealed to the people and the Parliament to wake up to the clarion call of the Reformation. While the King enumerated the cruelties, evil practices of the Church and the abuses of papacy, the pent-up resentment of the people flared up and the Church lost its hold on England. The King was given the overwhelming support by the populace, whose slogan now became: 'Freedom from the Pope; liberation from Rome.' Thus England broke free from Rome and the Church of England became independent - with the King as its supreme head. With the strong support of this Reformation Parliament, the King had his first marriage declared invalid and his marriage to Anne Boleyn accepted. An Anglican Church absolutely independent from Pope and Rome was established by the Acts of Parliament and Henry was acclaimed its Pope. In short, Henry's position as the secular and religious head of England was firmly secured.

Asoka, Akbar and Henry VIII stand together as the greatest examples of shrewd exploitations of popular enthusiasm and new religious sentiments. Though many great personalities have risen to the demands of the time, there are only a few who could channel the altered conditions and blossoming ideals of the times along lines that could enhance their own greatness. Asoka and Akbar and Henry belong to this small group of geniuses, and hence they provide an interesting study to the students of political history.

CHAPTER 7: BONDAGE ON HUMAN INTELLECT

Historians and scholars, who have attempted a critical study of Indian cultural history, have made contributions of inestimable value. While admitting the worth of these contributions, we should take care not to accept these as the last word on the subject. Research in this field still goes on and as a result of sincere and dedicated search for truth; new light is being shed on the many aspects of Indian history.

One of the lofty slogans that we have always held aloft as embodying the essence of Indian culture is, 'live and let live'. Kabir and Tarachand and many other Indian writers have discerned in this the very feature that makes Indian culture unique. They assert proudly that India from, ancient times, has always been a lesson in tolerance, and that the spirit of peaceful co-existence and *Panchsheela* prevailed in this joyful land of ours. Several races, religions and languages lend variety to this mixed culture of ours. Despite the heterogeneousness, we are told, an underlying unity is discernible amidst the baffling diversity.

We claim that we have shown the utmost tolerance to people of all races and all languages and those diverse religions found it possible to thrive here in the congenial atmosphere of our country. 'Live and let live' is undoubtedly a lofty sentiment. But, it is time we discarded the ingenious reasoning that arrives at generalisations through a study of exceptions. Historical lessons can be useful in dealing with present problems only if a method of honest enquiry and fearless confrontation of truth is followed. When we probe into the reality behind the attractive facade, erected by these lofty axioms, facts of a different nature emerge.

When our erudite scholars claim that we have a tradition of broadminded tolerance behind us, what they mean in truth is that from the *Puranic* days, we have put up with the foreign invaders and offered all facilities for fortune-hunting

traders from abroad. Ruthless plunderers, shrewd and calculating merchants, as well as helpless refugees seeking asylum have alike received from us tolerance in generous measures. We even proudly cite the fact that long before Christianity and Islam spread in the countries of their birth, India had already proved to be fertile soil for the growth of these religions. In 71 AD, when the City of Jerusalem was sacked by the Romans, a large number of Jewish refugees who had fled from there, is said to have landed on the Malabar Coast. (Robert Sewell: Historical Inscriptions of Southern India p. 371) The Pentingerian Tables place a temple of Augustus Caesar on the Malabar Coast. (Robert Sewell: Historical Inscriptions of Southern India p 371) Dr Foster, in his *Noticias Dos Judeas de Cochín*, remarks that in 540 BC, when Jews were expelled from Persia, they set sail to Malabar and made the coast their home. (Doctor Foster: *Notices Dus Judeas de Cochín* (Translation) p 473) He continues that more than 8000 Jews settled in many parts of Malabar Coast came from Majocka in the year 389 BC. (Doctor Foster: *Notices Dus Judeas de Cochín* (Translation) p 473) We have tradition of St Thomas alighting on the shores of Muziris, known as Kodungallore, and proselytizing our men into Christianity. Similar traditions are prevalent regarding the propagation of Islam and conversion of King Cheraman Perumal to Islam. Thus we are proud of the fact that we showed tolerance to all religions and welcomed all shades of opinion.

Since the time of Aryan onslaught, a long list of successive invasions - from the invasion of Darius and Alexander to that of Nadir Shah - appears in the chronicles of Indian History. The high level of attainment that our sciences and other branches of knowledge had reached also played a great role in bringing foreigners to India. Seekers of knowledge came from all over the world to this vast storehouse of learning. Even when travel facilities were non-existent, our country drew fascinated travellers to her shores. All these different categories of people, who found themselves in our land for different reasons, found the atmosphere congenial as the people here extended the same tolerance towards them.

When the picture as we paint is so, it is undoubtedly charming. If history is written on these lines, no one will have any reason to complain, or rather, almost everyone will be happy. But, it is not the job of historians to make people feel happy. So, the question is whether the actual ground reality was as attractive as it is painted to be? We merely get away with the claim that we have let live, and never raise the disturbing question, 'whom have we let live?' Did we not let live the rapacious plunderers whose avarice drew them to our country? Very much in the manner of Pilate washing his hands, we plead that we did not resist these successive foreign invasions because of our tolerance. We do not seem to realise that whether we would have had let them or not, these attacking powers were

too dominant, well-armed and ruthless for us to resist. They came and waged war, in order to stay here and rule. To say that we have shown tolerance to our conquerors, is nothing to be quite proud of and it also lacks credulity. In the same vein, to say that we have let them live is an empty boast. We are conveniently overlooking the fact that these foreign powers, whenever they came, shattered our religious and social customs imposed their will upon us and thrust their rule down our throats. In this context, is there any validity in the claim that our forefathers lived breathing the air of freedom and equality?

If we say that they lived so, we have to amend the claim by stating that they lived in shackles, in fear and in abject submission. We, who have shown tolerance to the invaders and claim to have always had a social order based on broad-mindedness and respect for the rights of others, must pause to ask ourselves this one important question. Have we treated ourselves with this liberal and just tolerance that we are proud to have shown to outsiders? When we remember the millions of people, who were condemned to live like animals and were denied of all fundamental human rights, how can we say that ours was a policy of live and let live? Nowhere else in world history, can we find a story of such brutal and unmitigated injustice shown to one major section of the country? True, slavery existed in ancient Rome. But four or five centuries before the Christian Era, the slaves had won freedom by victory in the 'Struggle of Orders'. The bonds that were inherent in the system of feudalism also were loosened in course of time. Only our wicked practice persisted down the ages, branding upon millions of our country men the mark of shame and disgrace. Deprived of the right to live in towns and in villages, these oppressed races fled to the sanctuary of the forests, where they were forced to live like savages. The low castes and the *panchamas* had no right to enter the towns or public streets. (P Thomas: Hindu Religion, Customs and Manners p 74)

Absolutely nothing can be gained from closing our eyes to historical truths. Only when things are viewed in the right perspective can mistakes be corrected. We recall with resentment that in the 11th Century, Muhammad of Ghazna stormed our land seventeen times and pillaged our temples. Our anger and righteous indignation must be tempered with the sober reflection that in our country, the common man never enjoyed the right to defend his property against the invader whoever that might be. Only the Kshatriya had the privilege of taking to arms in order to safeguard the assets. It is therefore this rigid class distinction, this very intolerance that made our wars undemocratic. Our wars had never been popular wars. It is the state of mind, nurtured by this age-old injustice that prompted us to bow our heads and crawl before our invaders.

Very few countries in the world have ever had a warrior class, consisting of only a section of the community, for whom the singular preoccupation was war. But, in India there existed such a warrior class, noted for their valour. Nevertheless, why did they quail before the wave of invasions and why was our country converted into a permanent battlefield where blood flowed copiously? Our historians find the answer by pointing our fingers to the vulnerable Bolan or the Khyber Pass in our north-western frontier. In the like manner, they have no hesitation in blaming our seaports for the landing of the western powers, which came here to establish their rule. As the last and the most substantial argument we are told that our prosperity, the fabulous wealth of India made foreign invasions inevitable.

Now all these specious reasoning serves only as a protective shield to ward off any blow on our national sentiment and our self-respect. We must recall the important fact that no country in the world is so bounteously endowed with geographical security. In the north the lofty Himalayas tower over us as a protective fortification. As for the other boundaries, they are well-guarded by the splendid oceans. Other nations of the world have not been blessed with such enviable geographical protection. Yet, if we take a glance into history, we learn that none of those countries has sustained so many paralysing onslaughts. Though they have all had to suffer temporary defeats, they all rallied and fortified their boundaries with tenacity. Ignoring these eloquent testimonies of history, we seek refuge in the pathetic plea that the Himalayas are punctuated by passes, which allowed invaders to reach India. We deliberately seal our eyes to ignominious incidents in our history, like the conduct of the ruler of Taxila, who on hearing that Alexander's army had reached Bokhara, hastened to offer him all help and homage and thus welcomed him to India with open arms. It was the hailing hands of an Indian prince which opened the door to the Macedonian army.

(EJ Rapson: *Cambridge History of India* vol I p 682)

At no time in our history have our rulers or our people stood together to resist a dangerous foreign onslaught. If united under a centralised authority, we could have saved ourselves. But, our political setup was based on fragmentation and mutually warring dissections. This coupled with social inequalities that precluded any possibility of concerted efforts, made it easy for any foreign power to penetrate into the very heart of our country and rule there. One instance of this is Baber, who could not safeguard the ancestral throne of a petty principality, found it in his power to build up a mighty empire here. In this context, it is pertinent to ask what all these significant facts add up to. Instead of admitting errors and recognizing the weak spots in our history, we try to cover up all deficiencies and

even come up with ideologies that are meant to justify our conduct. The ingenuity behind these efforts is admirable. But, it is very strange indeed.

Centuries before the Christian era, the Chinese prompted by a national enthusiasm unparalleled in all history, carried on a mighty experiment to ward off the Mangol invasions. This experiment assumed the form of a colossal wall, 22' broad 18' high and 1800 miles long. This astounding phenomenon accepted as one of the Seven Wonders of the World still remains as a tribute to united human effort and as the most marvellous symbol of a nation's sense of oneness and the collective appetite for freedom. The pyramids of Pharaoh Kufu - the result of the forced labour of millions of human beings - and Shah Jahan's glorious tribute to his wife, the Taj Mahal - the delightful dream in marble - are no doubt among the most marvellous edifices the world has ever seen. Of course, these had their source in incisive egoism and boundless individualism. But, the Great Wall of China was not meant to be the testimony to anyone's greatness. It is the enduring monument to a country's national pride and its passionate love of liberty. This is undoubtedly one of the rarest relics that history can offer of a swelling wave of national fervour. This one fact is sufficient to enable us to understand the temperament of China and to comprehend the secret behind her aggressive and threatening attitude today.

From this astounding stage of a nation's heroism, when we turn to our own tradition, all that we can boast of is the apathy and indifference that dried up our resources and prevented us from building a mere forty miles of fortification across the Bolan or the Khyber Pass to thwart all invading forces. What was vitally important and badly needed in our country were an awareness of the magnitude of national issues, a sense of oneness and mutual affability amongst the people. All this however remained here as elusive phantoms due to the prevalent social setup. The existence in our country today of large sections of people and even of political parties that owe allegiance to foreign powers is, by no means, an accident. It is the inevitable developments of a certain characteristic evinced by the people of India from early times, the logical and necessary outcome of our tradition. It was not foreign hands that lent all aid to Alexander, Baber, Vasco de Gama, Clive or Wellesley. Every foreign invader has been lifted to the pinnacle of power and installed there in pomp and splendour by our own hands.

When history tells us that Siraj Daula of Bengal, in whom we see the lofty symbol of nationalism, and Tipu Sultan of Mysore, an enduring testimony to the passionate devotion to freedom, were overwhelmed or killed by Clive and Wellesley respectively. What really happened was that Indians fighting under Clive or Wellesley opposed these mighty sons of India and vanquished them. If

the significance of this is grasped well, the paradox of Indian political parties, still owing allegiance outside our country and drawing sustenance from foreign governments, need no longer baffle us. To evaluate the present and to bring national events and developments within focus, factual and undistorted historical facts must be made to speak for themselves. The future grows out of the present even as the present grows out of the past. And, if the future of our country is to be saved from gloom and chaos, then prejudice must be abandoned and reason made use of in the process of unravelling the past and understanding the present. The reluctance to face facts can be fatal and also ridiculous. It is the height of absurdity to console ourselves that we were subject to foreign invasions solely because of our fabulous wealth. No one in his senses can fabricate such an excuse for the attacks launched on our independent nation so suddenly and so unexpectedly by our neighbours, China and Pakistan. If wealth can invite a disastrous attack upon a nation, why is it that America and Russia and many other affluent nations of the world are not the victims of attacks?

A major source of illumination as far as the early period of Indian history is concerned is the collection of letters and travel records of foreign visitors who came to our country. Onesieritus, Aristobulus Ctesias, Clitarchus of Colophon, Nearehus etc. who visited us as early as the time of the Greek Civilisation as well as Megasthenes, Huen-Tsang and Fa-Hien, who have provided the rocky foundation for reconstruction of the ancient period of Indian history, were men of inquisitive mind and keen intellect. Since then, a stream of illustrious visitors has flowed into our country and to enumerate their names would be to create an inordinately long catalogue. However, mention must be made, of the most outstanding of them - Sulaiman (851 AD) Al-Beruni (1151), Al-Idrisi (1153), Benjamin (1165), Al Khazani(1270), Abdul Feda (1253), Mont Corvino (1291), Marco Polo (1293), Rashced-ud-deen (1300), Blordcnus (1320), Ibn Battuta (1337), Mahevan (1405), Abdul Razaack (1442), Nicolo Conti (1442). All of them came to India eager to learn about us, fascinated by our fountains of learning and aspiring to quench their thirst for knowledge. In turn, they made invaluable contributions in the form of historical records. Let us examine what were their musings reflected about this land. All these travellers portray us, with almost a singular mind, as a nation that treated all foreigners as inferiors. All of them lament the isolation from the rest of the community of the Brahmanical priesthood, who were supposedly the repositories of all knowledge and learning.

This policy of isolation, as we learn from these travel records, was so rigid and stringent that if any of them came into contact with an outsider that was considered as a calamity which called for a penance of some sort. We

dishonoured them by the calling them *mletchas* and any kind of interaction with them was considered a taboo. Even as we were reluctant to learn from others, we withheld our stores of knowledge from the foreign aspirants, and jealously guarded this wealth from falling into profane hands. When, after looting our wealth Muhammad of Ghazna returned to Ghazni, the treasures he carried with him included numerous books and many Brahmins of boundless scholarship. These men of learning were not transferred to Afghanistan with the intention of converting them to Islam. Ghazna, who was an ardent worshipper of learning, loved to have his court adorned with savants from all parts of the world. To them, he accorded generous hospitality and it is said that in his stately court, he was surrounded by nothing less than nine hundred and seventy-four illustrious scholars.

The custodians of Indian culture and learning were demanded to pour out their knowledge to the writers and men of science of Ghazni. Even today, a small community of Hindus exists in Afghanistan. There is room for little doubt about the fact that these are the descendants of the men whom Ghazna took with him. This veneration for scholarship and learning manifest in this plunderer who attacked India seventeen times, is something laudable in itself. Turning to the other side of the picture, we are astounded by the dearth of chronicles on the Indian side similar to those left by our visitors. No one bothered to record facts, or even rumours about the representatives of strange manners and customs who had come this way. Nothing about these foreigners excited our interest and our only reaction to them was one of disdain. This, however, did not prevent the poverty-stricken section of our community from taking advantage of these foreign travellers, as is evident from all their writings.

If reality be this, the picture that we have sedulously built up is necessarily exposed as false. To say that our geniality, our limitless hospitality and our tolerance drew these daring inquiry and knowledge-thirsty travellers to our shores is irreconcilable and incompatible with facts. We never displayed the smallest fervour to imbibe knowledge from others and the consequent stagnation that our culture had to suffer has already been dealt with. The bigoted and narrow-minded outlook that causes certain historians to bury problematic or inconvenient facts, often leads them to inferences that are not substantiated by facts. And, any ideology and any brilliant reasoning used to justify such hollow inferences can only confound students. A lie that is repeated a hundred times by eminent tongues assumes the veneer of truth and the unchallenged statements coming from our great historians have robbed students of all incentives to carry on historical research with the true spirit of enquiry.

When emotional integration has become a far more compelling necessity than ever before, the atmosphere for the realisation of this integration has to be consciously created. It is here that history can help. It serves little purpose to go back to past history except to learn something from it. In dealing with the present and in envisaging the future, the lessons that emerge from the past must be of assistance to us. A glittering past woven out of fables and legends cannot inspire many as there will always be a few people who respond to slogans that sound hollow. To combat a crisis and translate into reality our cherished dream of emotional integration and unity, only a truthful, objective and impartial analysis of history can help. And, undoubtedly, it beckons us to encourage and support any attempt in this direction.

CHAPTER 8: WAS JIZIYA A RELIGIOUS TAX?

English historians, in whose hands rested the task of writing Indian history, painted India of the middle ages in a totally murky manner. Having their own ignoble ends to serve, they unearthed many 'facts' that have been proved to be tremendously erroneous and aggressively intimate to obsession and bigotry. The sinister motives that inspired such a distorted version of history were effusively fulfilled when India was divided into two. The British, who sowed the seeds of hatred and distrust, have left the scene. Yet, even now, the poison that they diffused still pervades the socio-political atmosphere of our country. When such a situation lingers for long, it can bring about consequences too horrendous to contemplate. Most of the contemporary Indian historians have blindly been treading in the footsteps of the British. As a result, a student of history feels compelled to pass through a gorge of hatred and revenge while glancing through the records of our country's history. Perilous ills call for urgent remedies. History has to be rewritten exposing the humbug and dishonesty that have been made to grow around isolated incidents. Cleansing certain deliberately distorted technical terms, bearing undesirable connotations, is also found to be a necessity. Truth and nothing less than the truth should lead the way in the historical exploration of our dimly lit past.

The Chapter is an attempt to inspect the much maligned *Jiziya* in the light of facts. In all discussions on *Jiziya*, we take it for granted that it has been indisputably proved as a religious tax. History books picture it as such and both English historians and Indian scholars define it as 'the tax imposed on non-Muslim subjects under a Muslim King', While even eminent scholars join the chorus of

accents condemning *Jiziya* as a heinous and scandalous example of religious taxation, any dissenting tone is doomed to be a voice in the backwoods. However undisputed the honesty and scrupulousness with which an impartial student brings the light of reason to the question, there is little likelihood of it being paid attention to. The indictments against *Jiziya* were built on the foundation - the tactic of the English - in order to arouse antagonism between the two major communities here so that their regime in this country would be snug and secure. When once *Jiziya* is established as a religious tax, any number of stories bewailing the fanaticism of the rulers who imposed such a tax could win credence. That they destroyed temples effected forced conversion or for that matter, anything at all, could be imputed to the rulers who were narrow-minded enough to impose *Jiziya*. Thus *Jiziya* served as a convenient peg to hang all future allegations of fanaticism and religious intolerance. By the universal acceptance of *Jiziya* in its contrived meaning, a certain climate was created wherein implausible lies could be paraded as unquestionable truth.

Long and untiring scrutiny of all available records has forced certain conclusions upon me. I place them here on record along with the facts that make such my findings irrefutable. What sustained me in the arduous task was the confidence that my strenuous effort would earn the appreciation of at least a few sincere and broad-minded lovers of history who stand above religious bigotry and communal hatred. The term *Jiziya*, it must be noted, is derived from the term *Jaza* which means 'gave satisfaction'. (ML Roy Choudhry: *The State and Religion in Mughal India* p 293)

Maulana Muhammad Ali in his translation of the Quran says that *Jaziya* is derived from *gaza* (he gave satisfaction) and that 'the tax is taken from free non-Muslim subjects under a Muslim government as a compensation for the protection which is granted to them - the non-Muslim subjects being free from doing military service. (Muhammad Ali: *The Quran* (Translation) p 195)

To Aghnides, the word *Jiziya* is derived from *Jaza* meaning compensation, requital for good or evil. (Nicholas Aghnides: *Muhammadian Theories of Finance and Taxation*, p 398)

PM Qureishi says:

"Even when the term *Jiziya* was given a technical meaning, it continued to be used loosely for tax as well as tribute." (PM Qureishi: *Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi* p 166)

The well-known historian, Prof KA Nizami, gives a different but reasonable explanation on the derivation of the word *Jizia*. He says that the word originated from the Persian word *Gazith*, which means tax, and when it was adopted by the Arabs in their language, Arabic, they used it as *Jiziya* to mean 'tax'. The Quran uses the word to mean 'a tax'. Irrespective of whether the word is pronounced as *Jazia* or *Jizia*, it sounds disgusting and repulsive to the students of Indian history. I

have followed my revered teacher, Prof KA Nizami, as regard to the spelling and the meaning of the word.

The spread of Islam in Arabia and the establishment of the Islamic State happened almost simultaneously. With the development and growth of the Islamic State, it was necessary to arrive at a certain compromise between religion and politics. It was agreed that the people of a conquered country were not to be forced to embrace Islam, but were to be free to follow their own religion under the protection of the Islamic army. When this situation multiplied, the Prophet's serious attention was taken up by the question of the non-Muslims living under Muslim protection. After pondering over the question, he was convinced that it was the duty of Muslims to consider non-Muslims as the protected community. He admonished his followers by proclaiming that the non-Muslims of a conquered country should be considered as *dhludh dhimma* meaning 'the protected subjects'. The Prophet said:

"Whosoever kills a *dhimmi* will not smell the fragrance of Paradise, and its fragrance spreads a journey for seventy years." (Quoted by Kindi: Book of Governors and Judges vol I p 957)

Abu Yusuf in his *Kitab-ul-Kharaj* quotes that the Prophet admonished his followers by warning them thus:

"If anyone wrongs a man to whom a treaty has been granted or burdens him above his strength, I will bear witness against him on the Day of Judgment." (*Kitabul-Kharaj* p 71)

Abubacker, the first Caliph said:

"Don't kill any of the protected people, for if you do, God will require the protection of them from you and will cast you on your face in hell." (Ibn Said: *Kitab-ul-Tabquat-ul-Kabir*, vol 1 p 137)

Omar bin Khathab commanded General Abu Ubaidah on the eve of his Syrian expedition in these words:

"Forbid the Muslims so that they may not oppress the non-Muslims, nor commit any damage to the property without valid cause, and fulfill all the terms and conditions which you have covenanted with them." (Tabari - Annals etc. p 65)

Many agreements were entered into between the Prophet and the non-Muslim rulers. The sanctity of these agreements had never been a matter of doubt. It was strictly adhered to. In an agreement with the Jews, the Prophet exempted them from military service on payment of *Jiziya*. Same treatment was meted out to the Christians of Najaran when they refused to serve the Muslim army. The Prophet assured them safety of their lives and property in lieu of the payment of *Jiziya*. No bishop or non-Muslim priest was forced to abandon his priesthood nor was he made liable to hardship just because he was a non-Muslim. (Abu Yusuf: *Kitab-ul-Kharaj* pp 72 & 73)

Caliphs Abubacker and Omar are known to have entered into several such agreements, many of which involved the Christians of Iraq and Syria. And, there are recorded instances to show that whenever circumstances rendered the protection of the people of the conquered territory impossible, the tax collected was reimbursed. Cactau says:

“From Papyri dated 30 to 90 *Hijira* it appears that the *Jiziya* was intended for payment of the army.” (Cactau: *Anali-dell-Islam* Translation by Sir Thomas Walker Arnold)

This observation is supported by a letter of Abu Ubaidah, the General of Caliph Omar, who ordered the governors of the conquered cities of Syria to return the sums collected as *Jiziya*. Abu Ubaidah wrote to the people thus:

“We give you back the money that we took from you as we have received news that a strong force (army of Heraclius, the Roman Emperor, is advancing against us. The agreement between us was that we should protect you and as this is not in our power, we return you all that we took. But, if we are victorious, we shall consider ourselves bound to you by the old terms of agreement.” (Sir Thomas Walkes Arnold: *Anali-dell-Islam* (Translation) vol V p 449)

When the people of Cyprus offered *Jiziya*, Omar refused to accept it, saying:

“The conquest was not yet final and that till it was final he could not guarantee their protection.” (Quoted by ML Roy Choudhry: *The State and Religion in Mughal India* p 293)

Muhammad-Ibn-Al-Kasim was asked to abide by the Islamic law when he attempted the demolition of temples. He was told that it was against the law and was asked to repair all the damage done in the land of the conquered. (Elliot and Dowson: *Chachnama* vol I p 186)

“Though politically, the conquest was forgotten soon afterwards, the exemption from *Jiziya*, the appointment of a *dhimmi* as governor on behalf of the conquering Muslims and the keeping up of accounts in the language of the conquered, created in Sind precedents for defining the status of the Hindu subjects in the Indian Muslim state.) (Elliot and Dowson: *Chachnama* vol I p 186)

The evidence quoted is sufficient to affirm the fact that *Jiziya* was only a tax for protection. When the non-Muslims were accepted as *dhimmies*, the task of ensuring their security fell on the ruler and, it was willingly taken up. Such people could claim two important privileges first, the assurance that their faith would be left unimpeded. They would also be given protection from aggression by outside forces. (Dr Tripathi: *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration* p 340) In addition to these, *dhimmies* were entitled to the same rights and privileges as were enjoyed by the other citizens of the country. The legal status of non-Muslim was sometimes recognised by the Muslim states in the following matters. A *dhimmi* could be appointed an executor to the will of a Muslim. (Bailie: *A Digest of Muhammadan Law* pp 175 & 176)

“A *dhimmi* could be made *mutawali* (guardian) of Muslim endowment not connected with the actual practice of the religion. He could even be made superintendent of Muslim education.” (Ameer Ali: Spirit of Islam p 249)

An edict of *Fatwa-i-Alamgiri* emphatically states:

“The *dhimmi*s were not expected to subject themselves to the laws of Islam.” (*Fatwa-i-Alamgiri* vol VI p 141)

Important documents bear testimony to the fact that Aurangzeb regarded non-Muslims as placed outside the territory of Islamic law and that their affairs were regulated entirely by their own code of law. That Islam is founded on tolerance and that intolerance is alien to its spirit is proved by the utterance of the Prophet that the blood of a *dhimmi* is as pure as the blood of a Muslim. So as Maulana Muhammad Ali, in his translation of the Quran elucidates, *Jiziya* was nothing more than the tax imposed on non-Muslims in lieu of the protection that they enjoyed from the Muslims as their right, and which ensured their exemption from compulsory military service.

These facts are adequate to bring out the significance of the tax called *Jiziya*. In extenuation of the imposition of this tax, we must recall the circumstance that the Muslim army was more than mere machinery for the defence of the country. The soldiers were also the defenders of the Islamic faith very much like the soldiers of Christendom who were upholders of the faith. This being the sacred duty that rested upon the Muslim army, non-Muslims were at first exempted from joining the army. But *dhimmi*s, while free from the hazardous duties of the army, did at the same time enjoy the security and comforts that an efficient army guaranteed to the people. Military service being compulsory for Muslims, it was felt that a tax for those who were exempted from this was called for in order to make the balance of justice even. This tax was *Jiziya*. And, it was levied from those within the country, enjoying law and order, peace, prosperity and from whom the state could not expect military service. Thus it was a military tax not in any way a religious one. Aghnides writes:

“Originally *Jiziya* was levied as a compensation for security of life and property enjoyed by non-Muslims in a Muslim state and also as a compensation for military service, which they being unbelievers were incapable of rendering personally.” (Nicholas Aghnides: Mohammadan Theory of Finance and Taxation p 398)

The Romans and Persians imposed a tax on their non-citizens in lieu of military service. (PM Qureishi: Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi p 171)

In course of time, however, when Muslim settlement spread to various countries, a change was noticed. As the missionary zeal cooled down, the army became not so much the instrument of spreading the faith as the means of national defence. And, this secularisation of the army encouraged non-Muslims to join its ranks.

When this happened, all those who offered their service to the army were exempted from *Jiziya*. (PM Qureishi: Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi p 171)

Muhammad of Ghazni is known to us merely as a plunderer and bigot responsible for much destruction and havoc in this country. It may be surprising therefore to know that one of his commanders was a Hindu. This was by no means an exception. Many of his lieutenants, and even his Governor in Lahore, were Hindus. (*Fath-ui-Buldan* quoted by Dr Tarachand: Some aspects of Muslim Administration p 238)

These examples indicate the temper of the time and underline the fact that a large number of non-Muslims volunteered to serve in the army under Muslim rule. The fact that these were exempted from *Jiziya* is established by any number of authoritative documents. On the authority of Altabari, ML Roy Choudhry writes that if non-Muslims rendered military service they were exempted from paying *Jiziya*. (PM Qureishi: Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi p 171) Whenever the military service of the *dhimmi*s was required, they were exempted from *Jiziya*. (*Fath-ui-Buldan* quoted by Dr Tarachand: Some Aspects of Muslim Administration p 238) This leads us to the inevitable inference that *Jiziya* was a tax levied on those who were not prepared to serve in the army and still enjoyed all the benefits of military protection. This also proves the fact that *Jiziya* was not a religious tax; but, was only a military tax.

Another significant detail that serves to clarify the point is that among those who were spared the levying of *Jiziya* were women, children, the mentally disabled, old men, scholars, monks, and persons with deformities. Authorities like Aghnides, UN Francais Day, ML Roy Chaudhry, PM Qureshi and Dr Tripathi all agree that women, children, the insane, the old and monks were exempted from *Jiziya* and they concede that these individuals were all unfit for military service. Aghnides, quoting Abu Yusuf records that in cases where the blind and the crippled were affluent, *Jiziya* was collected from them, on the strength of the reasoning that while physically incapable of rendering military service, they could contribute something financially. (Nicholas Aghnides: Muhammadan Theories of Finance and Taxation p 404 and 528; UN Francais Day: Administrative System of Delhi Sultanate p 197; ML Roy Choudhry: The State and Religion in Mughal India p 249; PM Qureishi: Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi p 190; Dr Tripathi: Some Aspects of Muslim Administration p 381)

When women, children, old men, scholars and the physically and mentally disabled were eliminated, only the able-bodied men came within the province of the tax. Men, who had no valid excuse whatsoever for refraining from joining the army, did have to pay *Jizia*. When wars were almost a daily occurrence, serving in the army was doubtless a precarious enterprise and though conscription was the

prevalent practice, not a few tried to evade the law and stay back to lead a comfortable settled life. It was therefore necessary to impose some sort of penalty upon those who evaded enlistment and also to discourage such a tendency. Not to do this would have been unjustifiable and would be tantamount to social injustice. If, as historians affirm, *Jiziya* was a religious tax, there would be no explanation for the exemption of women and children, monks and priests from having to pay this. If it were a religious tax, it would have been uniformly imposed on the old and young, men and women, the scholarly and the unlettered. Irrefutable therefore, is the evidence demanding a revaluation of the term *Jiziya*, which has given birth to considerable bitterness.

The British found it no difficult task to give to the *Jiziya* a religious garb. The advent of the Muslims occurred here in India in the heyday of caste system. When *Jiziya* was introduced the Brahmanical class, by virtue of their priesthood and their scholarship were exempted from this. But, soon Muslim rulers felt that they were in no way bound to respect the nation of priesthood and scholarship conferred by birth and there were occasions when Brahmins - other than real priests and real scholars - were called upon to render military service. Such a policy followed by Firoz Shah and Aurangzeb had caused a great uproar during the reign of these two monarchs.

Firoz Shah was the first to insist that the Brahmins also should pay *Jiziya*. This was felt to be a great blow, as the Brahmins, a highly privileged class had hitherto remained above every kind of taxation. Their chagrin was further increased by the fact that the rigid caste barriers prevented them from joining the army and thus becoming in effect Kshatriyas. From this dilemma in which the obstinacy of Firoz Shah placed them, the Brahmins, we are told by Aghnides and Tripathi, were relieved by the wealthy non-Brahmin Hindus, who raised the amount of the tax among themselves and paid it on behalf of the Brahmins. On a subsequent representation, the Sultan reduced the tax on the richer Brahmins to 10 *tankas*. This is the only occasion on record in the history of the Sultanate when the imposition of *Jiziya* was resented. (Shams-i Siraj: *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi* pp 382, - 84; Some Aspects of Muslim Administration pp 290 & 91; PM Qureishi: Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi p 187; Jaffar: Shahid Ashraf: Islamic Culture in India p 144; Nicholas Aghnides: Muhammadan Theories of Finance and Taxation p 528; Dr Tripathi: Some Aspects of Muslim Administration p 34; UN Francais Day: Administrative System of Delhi Sultanate p 89)

The Kshatriyas, and the Vaisya or Sudras were not put to such difficulty by the tax. The situation provided the Sudras and the Vaisyas a golden opportunity to supersede the caste barrier by serving in the army and thus enter the exalted terrain, so far reserved to the Kshatriyas alone. In its long history, only twice (one during the Sultanate and the other during the Mughal period) has the *Jiziya*

roused a great hue and cry and the two occasions were when certain Brahmins were required to choose between paying the tax or joining the army. The British pouncing on these two occasions made capital out of them by reasoning that all those who paid *Jiziya* were Hindus and that the *Jiziya* was therefore a religious tax imposed on the non-Muslim subjects of the Muslim State.

Except in those two occasions when *Jiziya* was resented, Brahmins in fact served the sultans of Delhi as collectors of this tax. In short *Jiziya* cannot stand as an instrument of oppression or fanaticism of Muslim rulers. It stands as a symbol of Brahmanical obstinacy and caste prejudice. It was not religious but political motives that prompted them to impose the tax. This military lax was collected according to the capacity of the persons concerned. People falling within the jurisdiction were divided into the rich, the middle class and the poor and were taxed only according to their respective financial positions. (CM Jaffar: Islamic Culture p 144; Nicholas Aghnides: Muhammadan Theories of Finance and Taxation p 528; Dr Tripathi: Some Aspects of Muslim Administration p 34; UN Francis Day Administrative System of Delhi Sultanate p 89)

The rate of tax was a *dinar* per head per annum for the lowest class, two *dinars* for the middle class and four *dinars* for the rich. (Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol I p 1051) *Dinar* was the money unit of Serbia and since World War 1 of Yugoslavia. 'Dinar is equivalent to 2.982 cents in the currency of United states.' (Encyclopaedia Britannica vol V p 388) People, whose annual income was below five hundred and twenty rupees, were required to pay three rupees as tax. Those with income between five hundred and twenty rupees and two thousand five hundred rupees were to pay six rupees each, and people with income above two thousand five hundred rupees were required to pay twelve rupees each. (Nicholas Aghnides: Muhammadan Theories of Finance and Taxation, p 399)

The statistics of the collection of *Jiziya* from Badshapur Purgana in the year 1680-81 show that the collection was according to the rate specified above. Total population of the purgana was only 1855. Out of it, 1320 persons were exempted from the tax on various grounds. The levy was made only on the remaining 535 persons at the rate of Rs. 12½, Rs. 6¼ and 3¼. In the first type, there were only 88 persons who paid an aggregate amount of one thousand one hundred rupees. The second division comprised of 145 persons and they paid a total amount of nine hundred and four rupees. The last grade of 302 persons put together paid nine hundred and forty-three rupees. Thus a total amount of two thousand nine hundred and fifty rupees was collected from the purgana. (Maulana Azad Memorial Library, Manuscript Section AMU Aligarh ff 38 & 39) This account proves beyond doubt that the rate of tax was the lowest with the lowest grade. Double the rate was levied from the middle class and twice this rate was what the rich had to pay.

Moreover, poll tax is not something unfamiliar to students of history. Under the Gawahar Dynasty of Kanauj, a tax called *turushka danda* was levied either from the Hindus to defend the Kingdom from the Muslims or from the Muslims who were residing in the Kingdom. (UN Ghoshai: Agrarian System in Ancient India pp. 67 & 68) Even in James Tod's days, a poll tax of a rupee per head was levied in some Rajput states. (James Tod: Annals of Rajasthan vol II p 1116) There is ample evidence on record to show that a kind of poll tax was levied from the Mappillas of Malabar before 1800 till it was strictly prohibited by the English East India Company. This tax was called the *purushantaram*. The Joint Commissioners of Malabar in 1792 observed:

"The demand of the Zamorin to take *purushantaram* is made great instrument of oppression against the Mappillas." (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous SI No 56 Part II pp 824, 836 & 837, 845 & 868)

When the strength of army was the main pillar of the empire, conscription was followed in all countries. Vigorous young men, who did not want to undergo the risk of serving the military, were required to contribute an amount by way of tax for the protection and security they enjoyed by the maintenance of the army. This, in fact, is *Jiziya*.

As a result of the peculiar edifice of the caste system prevalent in our country, sometimes Brahmins as a community had to bear the brunt of the tax. Muslims hardly ever were required to pay it, for under Muslim rule, they embraced military career eagerly. This way was not accessible to the caste-bound Brahmin who feared or pretended that taking up of arms would relegate him to the inferior ranks of Kshatriyas. He assumed that it would be a taint upon his sacred caste. Consequently Brahmins were faced with the other alternative, that of paying the *Jiziya*. English historians seized upon these facts; they put the matter in such a way as to inflame communal passion. As *Jiziya* was paid, almost without exception by non-Muslims, it was by no means difficult for these historians to dub *Jiziya* a religious tax and to get away with it. The undisputed acceptance of *Jiziya* as a religious tax was the most fatal instrument in the hands of scheming historians whose sole aim was to nurture a communal rift in this country.

The cleverness with which the British historians implemented their scheme was so successful that the people of India were ready to believe any further story of racial oppression and injustice that the imposers of the *Jiziya* were attributed to. Today we are still enmeshed in communal passions because we have not yet freed ourselves from the effect of the Englishman's definitions of certain technical terms in Indian history. The first step to sanity and reason is to understand these terms for what they really denoted. Our goal today is emotional integration and communal harmony, not communal hatred and destructive passions. Realisation

the lofty goal that we have set before us is bound to be difficult as long as falsehood lingers in our recorded history. As long as it remains so, anyone who comes with a fresh and uncorrupted mind to study history soon gets influenced by the seeds of communal ill-feeling that were sowed there by British historians. This, therefore, is an evil that literacy and the spread of education cannot eradicate. Rather, the spread of education will aggravate the evil and cause disunity and chaos to spread like wildfire. A positive and constructive approach in rewriting our history is the only means of warding off the catastrophe into the jaws of which we will be flinging ourselves in the not too remote a future.

CHAPTER 9: THE STORY OF FORCED CONVERSIONS

OUT of the Muslim population of India and Pakistan very few Muslims are the descendants of Muslim settlers from the outside world, the rest are undoubtedly the progeny of Indians who were converted to Islam. This dramatic spread of the Islamic religion in India has given rise to grave accusations concerning the way Islam was spread in India. The consensus of public opinion seems to be that a faith said to have founded with the sword has been propagated here also with the aid of the weapon. The phenomenal spread of Islam in India has been explained by alleged conversions at the point of the sword. To penetrate this thick layer of popular conviction and to reach the very core of facts, a herculean task has to be undertaken. But, the effort would be worthwhile as the ensuing revelation of truth can bring about better understanding between the two major communities of our country.

The sources of information about Islam, its religion and its culture, that were accessible to the people in general, have been a kind of literature born out of religious malice and vindictiveness. Numerous are the slanderous stories that have been circulated about the Prophet's personal life and also about the way Islam has been propagated. These unrefuted stories have gained wider and wider currency and have been treated everywhere as genuine. Why are they left unrefuted and unchallenged? The defence and vindication of Islam against these base stories could have come only from the spokesmen of the religion that is to say, the profound scholars and interpreters of Islam. But they handled only one language - Arabic. Though their knowledge was fathomless and though they could wield Arabic with ease and eloquence, they were obviously handicapped by their inability to speak or understand any other tongue. The world at large, therefore,

got a second-hand knowledge of Islam mainly from especially English translations, which were more often than faulty, and untrustworthy. Mutilated facts, distorted stories and misunderstood details crept into these writings and the world taking in everything that these second-hand and corrupt sources had to offer, formed misinterpreted impressions of Islam.

However, this is not all. The Muslim culture has had to suffer reversals and set-backs, because of inherent deficiencies. Though Islam was conceived and was born as something glorious, forces of disintegration set in and in course of time vigour and vitality ebbed away from it and the residue left was a far cry from the religion of revolutionary spirit and glowing idealism that the Prophet had given to the world. The adherents of Islam themselves maligned it by acting in ways contrary to the spirit of Islam. Consequently, a great culture that had given intellectual leadership to the world for a long and eventful period in history was left with nothing to do but retire to the back rows and nurse an inferiority complex. A glance at Kerala's cultural history can serve to substantiate the claim of Islam as a culturally liberating influence. At a time when people of Kerala went about clad in mere loin clothes and women had no qualms about leaving their bosoms uncovered, it was Muslims who taught them to be properly clad. Sheik Zainuddeen writes:

"The people of Malabar, whether rich or poor; male or female, are half naked. They wear only a small loin cloth tucked around the waist. (*Tuh-fat-ul-Mujahideen* pp 75 & 76)

Among their (Malabar) ladies including their Queens no one covers head and breast. They wear only a single cloth. In this dress they are seen even in Market places." (Gibb: Travels of Ibn Battuta vol II p 381)

Abdul Razack who visited Malabar in the year 1442 writes in his travelogue thus:

"The people in this part of the country are almost naked. They tuck a piece of cloth between the knees and the waist. They call it *langottee*. But the Muslims of Malabar wear costly dress and turbans like the Arabs." (Elliot and Dowson: vol II p 100)

Duarte Barbosa, the Portuguese officer and historian writes that the Muslims of Malabar wear caps or turbans to distinguish themselves from other inhabitants. He continues that they enjoy the trade monopoly and the command over the high seas. Barbosa says:

"They are certainly a thriving and prosperous community." (A Description of the Coast of South Africa and Malabar vol 1 p 289)

The following is an extract from the Cochin State Manual, dealing with the different categories or castes prevalent in Kerala society.

"There are five classes of men in the kingdom. The Nairs rank with the King. In the first class are those who shave their heads and have a thread or string hanging over their shoulders and these are looked upon as belonging to the noblest families. In the second are the Muhammadans, in the third Chettis, who are the capitalists, in the fourth, the Konkinis who

act as commission agents and the fifth the Mukwas, who live in houses which are forbidden by the government to be more than three feet high and they are not allowed to wear long garments." (Cochin State Manual p 45)

All these, and many more such proofs establish the ascendancy that Muslims once enjoyed in the sphere of culture. But subsequently, the situation came to a sudden standstill and the community that had attained an enviably exalted cultural level was deprived of the vibrancy needed to take another step towards progress. What was worse, it moved steadily and rapidly towards retrogression and came to occupy the lowest of social ranks, in the matter of education, industry and economic development. In short, these proud inheritors of a glorious culture were reduced to the position of a liability to the nation. Even in the observance of their own faith and in their religious worship, the Muslim community in India bore witness to a falling off. The soul and spirit of Islamic principles gave way to mere rites and rituals. In short, Muslims - the ideal community of the bygone days - gradually deteriorated until they became a community looked down upon and even ridiculed. Nor did it end there; Muslim's way of life and worship degenerated and provided credence to the stories and false propaganda that were made about Islam. It was no wonder therefore those Islamic principles were misunderstood and misinterpretations of them sedulously spread. Almost any allegation against Islam and Islamic doctrines and its adherents could thrive under such conditions.

The Prophet, who by sheer dynamism of personality and splendour of his teachings could convert an entire race which was prone to superstition and debauchery, was indeed one of the greatest social reformers the world has seen. As he preached his convictions and tried to spread his teachings, he had to face colossal opposition. In his birthplace the Prophet was not merely not honoured, but actually abused and persecuted. However, despite being subjected to stoning and having filth flung at him, the Prophet showed an unwavering fidelity to his bringing to man the message of God. He never betrayed this message. The hostility of Mecca made him flee from there to Medina, where the people responded to his teachings and provided the right climate for the growth of Islam. It is true that the early history or the growth of Islam is chequered with war and bloodshed. But, history makes it irrefutably clear that these wars were decisive wars fought for self-preservation. That victory smiled on the Prophet and his army does not prove that they were the aggressors. On the other hand, what they did was to put up a brave resistance to attacks and, in doing that, invariably aimed to defeat the attacking forces and conquer them. All this makes it quite evident that anyone who attempts to record the history of Muslim kings or of the spread of

Islam with prejudices and preconceived notions is bound to arrive at wrong conclusions for that simple reason that his premises are faulty.

The perspective would not be complete without taking into account the momentous changes that appeared in the Islamic world. An understanding of these changes can be furthered by studying the period from the time of the Prophet to the days of Genghis Khan in four periods. The first of these divisions covers the period from 622-748 AD. This phase was highlighted by an intensity of the religious zeal and boundless enthusiasm for the spreading of Islam. Countries like Syria, Persia, Sind and northern Africa came under Muslim rule during this period and in all conquered countries, the rulers and the ruled underwent religious conversion. The invasion of Sindh in 711 stands as an exception to this. Here the people were not merely not forced to change their religion, but actually granted this right to carry on their lives and their religious practices as they were wont to. The contemporary author of *Chachnama* says that when the people of Brahmanabad implored Muhammad-bin-Qasim to grant them freedom of worship, he referred the matter to Hajjaj, who sent the following reply:

“As they have made submission and have agreed to pay taxes to the *Khalifa*, nothing more can be properly required from them. They have been taken under our protection and we cannot, in any way stretch out our hands upon their lives and property. Permission is given them to worship their Gods. Nobody must be forbidden or prevented from following his own religion. They may live in their houses in whatever manner they like.” (Elliot and Dowson: *Chachnama* Vol 1 pp 185 & 86)

This was in line with the injunction given by the Quran:

“In the matter of religion no coercion should be employed on anyone.”

Hence at the time of the Prophet and the Caliphs, several Christians and Jews who lived within the protection of the Muslim rule enjoyed perfect liberty to practice their own religions. But in several countries, at the time of conquering them, attempts were also made to instruct the inhabitants of the places with the Islamic principles. It was an imperative need of the age that as the physical dimensions of the Islamic nation increased the message of Islam should also be heard in a wider sphere.

An outstanding feature of the time was the fact that subjects invariably embraced the religion of their King, The story of the propagation of various religions in the world offers any number of examples of the people following the footsteps of the ruler who has undergone a religious conversion. Constantine caused the entire Roman Empire to accept Christianity and the history of Jainism and Buddhism is full of long and telling stories illustrating this general principle. The Prophet himself sent his emissaries not to the people, but to the kings. It was thus that Syria, Iran, Iraq etc. came within the fold of Islam, and the rulers of these

countries drew their subjects also after them. But the story of the Muslim occupation of Sindh stands out as a bold distinction from this general pattern. The political setup of Sindh was different from that of the above mentioned countries. Sindh was ruled by several petty princes and powerful chieftains. Moreover, though the people observed the religion of these rulers, because of the rigid caste system, the people could never aspire to be on a par with the King as far as caste was concerned. The people themselves as we know were graded into different sections. All this stood in the way of the King's or ruler's religion becoming automatically the religion of the people. And, it is precisely this factor that prevented the Sindh invasion from being followed by religious conversion, which in other countries almost invariably accompanied similar conquests.

The second phase extending from 746 to 900 AD is the time of the Abbasside Caliphs. No mentionable wars and no substantial expansion in the empire marks this period. Rather it is distinctly a time of peace and prosperity. It was at this time that the intellectuals conferred on the Arabic language great status and dignity by making it their medium. The period also witnessed the acknowledgement of the political supremacy of the Caliphs. The next stage that stretches from 900 AD to 1000 AD may be qualified as the time of petty dynasties, when the Caliph's power declined and instead, separate independent Muslim dynasties sprang up, Arabic also fell from its pride of place and instead Persian sat enthroned in the literary and cultural world. In certain Muslim countries, Persian was even proclaimed the official language. This third stage was also marked by a lust for empire and desire for political expansion. Finally, the fourth period is fixed as falling between 1000 and 1220 AD. It was the time when development in political and cultural spheres alike brought about what may be described as a renaissance in Persia. Of these four phases, it has to be noticed that only in the first did religious zeal and propagation of Islam come into prominence. The other three stages were decidedly a time of political evolution when religion was never a vital factor. A detailed elaboration of the view is not called for here but it would be pertinent to recall what John Stuart Mill upheld:

"Almost all ethical doctrines are full of meaning and vitality to those who originate them and to the direct disciples of the originators. Their meaning continues to be felt in undiminished strength and is perhaps brought out into fuller consciousness, so long as the struggle lasts to give the doctrine or creed an ascendancy over other creeds. At last it either prevails and becomes the general opinion or its progress stops, it keeps possession of the ground it has gained, but ceases to spread further. From this time may be usually dated the decline in the living power of the doctrine. For when it has become a hereditary creed and comes to be received passively not actively-when the mind is no longer compelled; in the same degree as the first to exercise its vital powers- on the questions which its beliefs present to sit there is a progressive tendency to forget all of the beliefs except the

formalities or to give it a dull and torpid assent, as if accepting it on trust dispensed with the necessity of realising it in consciousness.” (John Stuart Mill quoted by Prof Muhammad Habeeb: Sultan Muhammad of Ghazania pp 2 & 3).

This was literally true of Islam. Herein we have an explanation as to why in India Muslim empire was not established even when it was done in other countries of the world. All the wars fought subsequent to the first phase discussed above were political wars fought for imperial expansions. If forced conversion was the motive for the invasion of Sindh - an event that took place merely 70 years after the death of the Prophet - Islam would have been thrust down the throats of the people at the point of the sword. But no historian has recorded a single instance of forced conversion in connection with this historical event.

Muhammad of Ghazni, the man who destroyed temples, has enjoyed as much notoriety through the centuries as Herod the slayer of infants. He certainly inaugurated a systematic programme of plundering the ancient and holy temples of India. But in doing this, Ghazna was motivated solely and entirely by avarice and not by consuming religious zeal. This historical personality considered almost as the symbol of blind fanaticism and savage intolerance has been evaluated in a separate chapter of the book. It is worthwhile to state here that the destruction of the temples that he perpetrated, a deed which has dragged the name of Ghazna to stand trial before the tribunal of posterity, is nowhere justified in the Quran or the teachings of the Prophet. On the other hand, it is a flagrant violation of the fundamental spirit of Islam as well as the basic tenets that the Prophet eagerly taught the people. How then can this man ever be deemed a missionary of the Islamic faith? In his own beliefs and in his personal life Ghazna showed the same indifference to religion. At no time did he allow religion to infringe on his personal conduct or to restrain his impulses. But of course, any religion is more or less judged in relation to the conduct of its adherents, and hence people found it hard to dismiss Ghazna as just a cruel man and a callous plunderer, without allowing his deeds to cast disgrace upon the religion of which he was a part.

It was inevitable and natural that Hindus should consider Islam a deviation from the truth when it deviates so deplorably from the path of rectitude and justice. No people can be conciliated by being robbed of all it holds most dear, nor will it love a faith that comes to it in the guise of plundering armies and leaves devastated fields and ruined cities as monuments of its triumphant marches. A significant fact is that during his entire lifetime, Ghazna was able to convert only one individual to Islam, Sukupal - son of Jaipal. And, that too was possible only when the tantalising gift of Governorship was dangled before his greedy eyes. Yet, even in this case, Sukupal returned to the faith of his father very soon. Thus, the

religion of Ghazna could not be enthroned in the hearts of the people. All that he could accomplish by his mean and shameful conduct and his vandalism was to alienate the Hindus from Islam and to implant in their hearts a deep-rooted hatred for Muslims. This hatred that has not yet lost its edge even after many centuries and others have taken advantage of it. (Prof Muhammad Habeeb: Sultan Muhammad of Ghazania p 85)

Centuries after Ghazna's atrocities, many Muslim centres became the targets of the Mongol onslaught. Pious and dedicated scholars were forced to flee to some place of refuge. Several of them arrived in India and by the purity of their conduct and the high standards of morality manifest in their demeanour drew many to their faith. The rancour poured into the minds of the people by Ghazna was gradually forgotten and thus conversion to Islam became a not too uncommon phenomenon. If on the other hand, conversion was forced at the point of the sword the moment the threat of the sword was removed, the convert would revert to his former faith. This would be the natural and inevitable reaction to forced conversions. The fact that such a thing has not happened in this country bears out the truth that Islam spread in India as a result of the efforts of the Sufis and the Sheiks and more than that thanks to the good lives that they led which struck the people around them as worthy of emulation.

The Sufis and the Sheiks played a role similar to the role of the Greek and Roman scholars, who running away from Constantinople in 1453 when the Turks invaded the City, disseminated all over Europe the seeds of the Renaissance. It is plain therefore that imperial power and political authority did not play as big a role in spreading Islam in India as untrue stories would have us believe. What Dr KM Panikkar writes about the Muslim population of Uttar Pradesh, which was under Muslim rule for more than 600 years, is pertinent in this connection. The 14 per cent Muslim population of this State proves beyond doubt that conversion was not forced upon the people of India. It may also be presumed that the Hindus did not suffer much under the Sultans just because they were Hindus. (History of India p 201)

On the other hand, the Muslim population of Kerala where there was no Muslim rule is much higher than that of the places where they held sway. Even before Malabar became a part of Mysorean Empire, Muslims constituted one-fifth of the total population as is recorded by our travellers and historians. (*Tuhfat-ul-Mujahideen* p 82; Abdul Razack, Elliot and Dowson: Vol II p 101; Ibn Battuta - *Oibb* p 271 and Barbosa: A Description of the Coast of East Africa and Malabar Vol II p 307)

Sheik Zainuddeen writes in detail regarding the propagation and spread of Islam in Kerala. He says that a missionary group from Arabia came to Malabar Coast and

settled here. It was from them the people of Malabar began to learn the tenets of Islam. It was welcomed by the people, for it appeared to them as a message of hope. Converts to Islam increased day by day and the Muslim population of Malabar reached one-fifth of its total population. For Centuries peaceful proselytising influence had been at work on the Malabar Coast. At the beginning of the 16th century the Mappillas are estimated to have formed one-fifth of the population of Malabar. (*Tuhafat-ul-Mujahideen* p 22)

Barbosa, the Portuguese officer and traveller, says:

“But for the arrival of the Portuguese the whole of the Coast would have become Muhammadans because of the frequent conversions that took place and the powerful influence exercised by the Muslim merchants from other parts of India such as Gujarat and the Deccan and from Arabia and Persia.” (*Description of the Coast of South Africa and Malabar* vol II p 387)

Unabated conversions during the British reign proved beyond doubt that Islam was bound to grow in Bengal irrespective of whether the backing of political power was available to it or not. The Census Report of 1891 gives a revealing account:

“It is satisfactorily proved that since 1872 out of every 10,000 persons, the number of Muslims has increased 100% in North Bengal, 262% in East Bengal and 110% in West Bengal. On an average, Muslim population rose by 157% in the whole of Bengal proper. The Muslim increase is real and large. Nineteen years ago in Bengal proper Hindus numbered nearly half a million more than Muslims did and in the space of less than two decades the Muslims have not only overtaken the Hindus but have surpassed them by a million and a half.” (*Census of India 1891* vol III; CJO Donwell: *The Lower Provinces of Bengal and their Feudatories* pp 146 & 147)

As Sir Thomas Arnold writes:

“It is not in the cruelties of the persecutor or the fury of the fanatic that we shall look for the evidence of the missionary spirit of Islam any more than in the exploits of that mythical personage the Muslim warrior with sword in one hand and Quran in the other but in the quiet unobtrusive labours of the preacher and the trader who have carried their faith into every quarter of the globe. (Sir Thomas Walker Arnold: *The Preaching of Islam, A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* p 119)

Our caste system was one major reason why India turned out to be fertile soil for the growth of Islam was, as has already been shown,. Millions of Indians who were having an existence in which human rights were denied found Islam a veritable Godsend. The gates of all spheres of life so far inaccessible to them were now flung open. When human dignity was to be gained by conversion, many joyfully embraced Islam. The sublime ideals of social equality and brotherhood are at the root of the conversion of many Hindus to Islam. The *Mukkuvas* were

not allowed to have their huts more than three feet high. They were required to prostrate before the high-caste Hindus. (Cochin State Manual p 44)

It was primarily this caste injustice that drove those people into the fold of Islam. Sheik Zainuddeen who was a native of Ponnani says that if an untouchable was converted to Islam, Hindus respected him as they did other Muslims. On the ground of his conversion, the converted was not looked down upon by any one. (*Tuhafat-ui-Mujahideen* p 84) To the down-trodden of the Hindu society, Islam came as a message of hope and deliverance from the tyranny of the higher castes. (Dr Iswariprasad: History of Muslim Rule p 14)

Ram Gopal writes:

“The lure of high post or feudatory gains, secured to Islam during the Muslim rule many high-caste Hindus. But by far the majority of the converts who entered the fold of Islam through the persuasion of the missionaries belonged to lower castes or classes of Hindus to whom the religion of Arabia at once brought the Social equality which Hinduism had denied them from time immemorial.” (Ram Gopal: Indian Muslims - A Political History p 2)

As Sir Henry Cotton, who was for many years an officer of the Bengal civil service and later a member of the British Parliament, in his ‘India and Home Affairs’ writes:

“The Muhammadans of East Bengal are almost all descended from low-caste or aboriginal Hindus, who long ago embraced Islam in hope of social improvement or from hard necessity.”

In short, it was the social inequality and caste rigidity which prevailed in our society that swelled the rank and file of the Muslim Community in India. It is not surprising that to the people of India, Islam appeared as a re-emergence of Buddhist teachings. When many Hindus embraced Islam, they retained their own traditions and customs and followed their own way of life. This explains why there exist even today many Muslim families that follow the Hindu system of succession. There have been also isolated cases of conversion effected by orthodox Muslims labouring under the belief that by converting Hindus to the Muslim faith they were making themselves worthier of heaven. It was not difficult in those days to perform this sacred task as slaves could be bought and easily converted.

“That slavery existed in India at the time is evident from the fact that when Alaudheen Khalji introduced regulation of the slave market, the price of slaves was also fixed. As recently as 50 years ago, in the documents registered in many parts of Kerala along with the clauses regarding the division of property, the apportioning of slaves has also been mentioned. Even in 1854, when the Maharaja of Cochin made a proclamation for the emancipation of slaves, it stipulated freedom only to those who would be born from the date of the proclamation.” (Ernakulam Archives, CL vol VII List XI-I: Regulations)

To Improving one's material prospects and gaining worldly advantage must also have been a very strong inducement or Hindus to leave their religion and accept Islam. The story of Sukupal is notorious and that of Malik Kafer is familiar to all. Many Hindus of the higher castes, especially Brahmins, are known to have changed their faith enamoured of the possibilities of occupying higher position and offices of authority. When the Muslim power was established in the country, it was natural for the people to seek its patronage and those who aspired to it were greatly influenced by Muslim ideals beliefs and practices. Dr Iswariprasad writes:

“Love of position, money and office must have induced some of the most talented men to embrace Islam and to shed their old beliefs and practices.” (Dr Iswariprasad: History of Muslim Rule p 14)

During the rule of the Muslim emperors, this type of conversion was quite a common occurrence. The greatest single factor contributing to the spread of Islam in India, however, is the coming of a stream of Sufis and Sheiks into this country, and the impact their lives and their beliefs had on our people. This is borne out by the practice that is still extant, of people of all religions and castes participating in the religious ceremonies and sacred rites of some of the mosques in our country. Detachment and objectivity in weighing all these factors can lead us to the truth that Islam grew in India not because of 600 years of Muslim rule. It is time we also discarded the myth that Islam was pushed down the throat of the people, at the point of the sword for the real cause lay in the grave defects of our social system and the inherent revolutionary magnitude of Islamic concepts.

CHAPTER 9: TEMPLE DESTRUCTION - AN ANALYSIS

With the advent of the Muslims, there begins in Indian history a period, as it is broadly said, when temples were desecrated and ruthlessly looted. The motive behind all such cases of plunder and destruction was invariably avarice. I have tried to show in an earlier chapter that this wreck and ruin was not born out of a passion for the propagation of Islamic doctrines or sheer fanatic intolerance of a different faith. How then did the pillage of temples come to be accepted as the undisputed manifestation of Islamic bigotry? The answer, as before, lies in the ingenious misinterpretations that history and its events underwent in the hands of British historians - misinterpretations that were deliberately used to sow the seeds of communal distrust and hatred all over the country. Like *Jiziya*, the story of the destruction of Hindu temples has served as a faulty major premise from which all sorts of inferences have been made pertaining to the alleged atrocities

of Muslim emperors. It is very unfortunate that this very intelligent and calculated strategy succeeded in our land. It is an irrefutable historical fact that temples were looted and destroyed. My endeavour here is to analyse the facts and to bring to light the motivation behind this lamentable vandalism.

At the very outset, I would like to shed some light on certain teachings, fundamental to the faith of Islam. Not many people seem to know that Islam insists on every place of worship of every religion to be respected. All prophets, irrespective of their religion, are to be venerated and are to be considered as messengers of God. This reverence for other religions which is something deeper than tolerance lies at the very core of Islamic ideology. Unless we grasp this fundamental truth about Islam, the real meaning of the destruction of temples cannot be understood. Islam admonished its followers to venerate all prophets and religious teachers who lived before the time of the Prophet. It is even made obligatory for a Muslim to invoke the blessings of God, whenever the name of any of the prophets is uttered in their hearing. Numerous are the slanderous pieces of writings that have come from the pens of Christian priests and historians about the Prophet and his personal life. To write about Christ in a similar vein is unimaginable for a true Muslim. If he does it, he ceases to deserve the term, 'Muslim', for he is violating the injunctions laid upon him by his religious faith, which commands that whenever the name of Christ is mentioned, a Muslim has to say: 'Peace be unto him'.

Consequently, Islam exhorts its followers to treat all scriptures as inspired by God and makes no discrimination whatever between the holy texts of one religion and those of another. This tolerance and extraordinary broad-mindedness is not confined to ideological realms but are to be practiced in day-to-day life. For example, a Muslim was permitted by his religion to marry a woman of any faith without converting her to Islam, provided he gives her facilities in his home for carrying on the kind of religious worship which she was accustomed to. It is not surprising therefore that among the beautiful ladies that graced the harems of the Muslim emperors, many were Hindus and that none of them had at any time to undertake a change of faith. In brief, Islamic doctrines are based on broad-mindedness and tolerance, and a deep-rooted veneration for the other religions of the world. Whether those who call themselves Muslims today, practice these sublime ideals or even understand them, is quite a different matter.

The Prophet waged an uncompromising war against idolatry. When Muslims led by the Prophet surged into Mecca, they broke 368 idols that were found in the *Ka'aba*. It is said that one of the idols was smashed by the Prophet himself. Idolatry was so ingrained in the Arab temperament that the Arabs believed that

any boon could be had by making offerings to these idols and that anyone, who so much as touched it, was bound to incur wrath and dreadful curse. It was against this superstition that the Prophet waged an unrelenting war. In wiping off idolatry and in bringing the people to a belief in monotheism, the Prophet naturally had to begin by breaking the idols. We know how Buddhism that rose as a revolt against Brahmanical Hinduism preached that prayers and religious offerings were all utterly meaningless. Buddha said to his disciples:

“It is those who sin that offer prayers. Do good deeds. Then prayer becomes redundant.”

These and similar teachings of Buddhism were meant to ring the death-knell of the age-old customs and elaborate rituals that had become part of Brahmanical Hinduism. Buddha knew that to wipe out a system that is pernicious one should strike at its very root and eradicate the very source of the evil. It was something similar that the Prophet also performed for he considered it his mission to cleanse the world of idolatry and to spread the light of the belief in a single living God. Leaving aside, his staunch and unyielding stand against idol worship, the Prophet showed unprecedented tolerance and compassion and broad-mindedness in all his teachings. All his proclamations issued after the establishment of Islam in Arabia, as well as all his actions reveal the loftiness of his ideals and the profound depth of his religious tolerance. When the people of the conquered territories came under the protection of the Islamic army, only a small tax, meant for protection, was levied from them. They came into the category of *Ahlu-dhimma* or those who were guaranteed protection. This point has been clarified in an earlier chapter dealing with *Jiziya*.

The Caliphs carried on the tradition of broad-minded tolerance that the Prophet preached and practised. The period, 622-748 AD, is known in history as the time when religious zeal and the eagerness to spread Islam was at its zenith. It was also a time of good-will when an ideal way of life was followed by the people. Not a single instance is recorded during this period, of anyone laying a desecrating finger on any of the temples. On the other hand, temples were revered and such tolerance shown that even antagonistic historians have been forced to acknowledge it. This era of peace and prosperity lasted till the advent of the Saljuk Turks. Many of the places of Christian pilgrimage including Palestine were under the custody of the Caliphs. But, none of the churches or shrines in these places were desecrated or burnt down.

During the invasion of Sindh under Muhammad Kassim, hardly a single instance of forced conversion occurred. On the contrary, sources of information like *Chachnama*, says that Kassim was most scrupulous in keeping inviolate the people's freedom of worship and their right to belong to any religious group. Such

conduct as this is irreconcilable with the notion that has taken firm hold on the popular mind that it was necessary and imperative to pillage Hindu temples or burn down Christian churches for the spreading of Islam. If the pillaging of temples is the inevitable consequence or the manifestation of religious enthusiasm, then the period under consideration should have seen the destruction of the maximum number of temples. But, the truth is quite otherwise. And, this proves to us that for the motive behind the scandalous looting of Hindu temples perpetrated by any conqueror should not be considered as prompted by religious zeal but by some other factors.

The great and renowned temples in different parts of India were storehouses of the vast resources of the country. Infinite riches in the form of gold and jewels, stored in these temples, were of such splendour and magnificence as to rouse envy even in a king. The king's coffers were insignificant compared with the fabulous wealth of these temples - the custodians of which were the priests. (P Thomas: Hindu Religion - Customs and Manners p 22) This incidentally serves to convey to us the magnitude of the power and authority that rested with Brahmanical priesthood. What rendered Hindu temples vulnerable to attack is this very important attribute of theirs. It is this fact that made them the target of Muhammad Ghana's recurrent incursions.

In India, the breaking of idols took place at the time of Ghazna. Till then, such a thing was unheard of. But, after the period of this notorious figure, thanks to his atrocities, the stigma of pillaging temples stuck to almost all Muslim kings, who are all described in the pages of history as similar variants of Ghazna. The most tragic and the most enduring evil, which is the legacy of Ghazna, is the bitterness and hatred that persist in the mind of the people of India. The serious repercussions of Ghana's policy are evident from the dearth of Muslim population in the regions between Lahore and the north of India. Ghana's intentions and his deeds which have brought ignominy to Islam and which were in reality irreconcilable with Islamic doctrines have been subject to a close scrutiny in another section of this book. The facts mentioned here have been cited only to expose the folly of identifying the man and his deeds with Islam and also to suggest that contrary to popular belief, Ghazna was no apostle of the faith and that in fact, as far as the cause of Islam was concerned, he was more of an encumbrance than any sort of assistance. This view is corroborated by the latest research done on Ghazna and his period a present day historian. Prof Habeeb writes:

"The non-religious character of the expedition will be obvious to the critic who has grasped the salient features of the spirit of the age. They were not crusades but secular exploits waged for the greed of glory and gold. It is impossible to read a religious motive into them.

The Ghaznavide army was not a host of holy warriors, resolved to live and die for the faith, it was an enlisted and paid army of trained veterans accustomed to fight Hindus and Mussalmans alike.” (Prof Habeeb: Muhammad of Ghazanin p 81)

The reason why Ghazna descended continually upon the temples of India like an avalanche was no secret to contemporary historians. Al-Utubi the famous author of the historical work, *Tarikh-i-Yamini*, has not confused the issues. He has not traced Ghana’s deeds to his religious fanaticism. He makes it very clear that it was ‘the worship of Mammon’, the lust for gold that prompted Ghana’s monstrous deeds. Here is his verdict on the matter:

“The Sultan himself joined in the pursuit and went after them as far as the fort called Bhimnagar which is very strong. The kings of Hind, the chiefs of that country and rich devotees, used to amass their treasures and precious jewels and send them time after time to be presented to the large idol that they might receive a reward for their good deeds and draw them nearer to God. So, the Sultan advanced to this crow’s fruit and this accumulation of years which had attained such an amount that the backs of camels would not carry it nor vessels contain it nor writers hands record it, nor the imagination of an arithmetician conceive it. The treasures were laden on the backs of as many camels as they could procure and the officers carried away the rest. The stamped coin amounted to seventy thousand royal *dirhams* and the gold and silver ingots amounted to seven hundred thousand four hundred mans in weight besides wearing apparel and fine cloths of Sus”. (Elliot and Dowson: *Tarikh-i-Yamini* vol II pp 34 & 35)

Al-Utubi also describes Ghana’s exploits in looting Mathura Sree Krishna Temple. The contemporary historian explains:

“The Sultan then departed from the environs of the City in which was a temple of the Hindus - the name of the place was Maharatul Hind. He saw there a building of exquisite structure, which the inhabitants said had been built, not by man, but by *Genni*, and which could not be believed but from evidence of actual sight...” (Elliot and Dowson: *Tarikh-i-Yamini* vol II pp 44 & 45)

Among the idols there were five made of red gold each one five yards high suspended in the air without support. The eyes of one; were two rubies of such value that if anyone were to sell them, he would obtain 50,000 *dinars*, another had eyes of sapphire, purer than water and more sparkling than crystal, the weight of which was 450 *miskals*. The two feet of another idol weighed 4,400 *miskals*, and the entire quantity of gold yielded by the bodies of these idols, was 98,300 *miskals*. The idols of silver amounted to 200, but they could not be weighed without breaking into pieces and pulling them into scales. The most infamous among the long list of Ghazna’s onslaughts on the temples is that of the Somanath Temple. The grandeur of this beautiful temple as it struck contemporaries has been recorded by Al-Beruni, Utubi, and Khondamir. They have vividly recaptured its ethereal beauty and its resplendent, almost supernatural majesty. Al-Beruni gives the legendary story regarding the Somanath

Temple in these words:

“The Moon being married to the daughters (lunar stations) to Prajapati; preferred one of them, Rohini, to all others, and Prajapati, unable to induce his son-in-law to do justice to all his wives, cursed him so that he became a leper. The moon repented, but Prajapati’s curse was beyond recall. He, however, promised to cover the Moon’s shame for half the month and advised him to raise a *linga* of Mahadeva to wipe off the trace of his sin. This the Moon did. The *linga* he raised was the idol of Somanath, for *Soma* means ‘moon’ and *nath* means ‘master’, so that the whole word means “the master of the Moon”. Muhammad entered the temple and possessed himself of its fabulous wealth. Not a hundredth part of the gold and precious stone he obtained from Somanath was to be found in the treasury of any king of Hindustan” (Al-Beruni: vol II p 103)

Khondamir in his historical treatise *Habib-u-Ssiyar* gives the following details regarding the temple Somanath and its plunder by Ghazna. He writes:

“According to historians, Somanath was placed in an idol temple on the shore of the sea. Ignorant Hindus when smitten with fear assembled in this temple and on those nights (when Ghazna plundered it) more than one lakh men came into it. From the extremities of kingdoms they bring offerings to the temples and ten thousand cultivated villages are set apart for the expenses of the keepers thereof. So many exquisite jewels were found there, that a tenth part thereof could not be contained entirely in the treasury of any king. 2000 Brahmins were always occupied in prayer round about the temple. A gold chain weighing 200 mans on which bells were fixed, hung from the corner of that temple and they rang them at appointed hours so that by the noise thereof the Brahmins might know the time for prayer. 300 musicians and 500 dancing slave girls were the servants of that temple and all the necessities of life were provided for them from the offerings and bequests for pious usages. The sum which the treasury of Sultan Muhammad Ghazna obtained from the idol temple of Somanath was more than twenty thousand gold dinars in as much as those pillars were all adorned with precious jewels.” (Elliot: *Habib-u-Ssiyar* Vol IV pp 181-83)

The author of *Chachnama* gives us an approximate idea of the wealth stored in one of the temples. He writes:

“From one temple 230 *mans* of gold were obtained and 40 jars filled with gold dust. These were weighed and were found to contain 1320 *mans* of gold.” (Elliot: *Chachnama* Vol I p 28)

To an unscrupulous man who would commit any crime under the lure of gold, Hindu temples like Somanath were irresistible. But, the reality has been submerged under the myth that Ghazna was a zealous, fanatic Muslim. Actually, his beliefs and his deeds were alike anti-Islamic. He is the one who can be held solely responsible for creating strong anti-Muslim feelings in India. It must be borne in mind however that Ghazna’s crimes were condoned and abetted by Muslim priesthood of the time, who went to the extent of justifying them by misinterpretation of the Quran and other authentic documents of Islam. ‘The devil can quote the Scripture’ for his purpose and it is not surprising therefore that Ghazna’s advocates - the Muslim priests of his days - came up with an ideology cut out to justify his despicable offences. Naturally, therefore, in the

works of abject and flattering Muslim historians, Ghazna became an upholder of faith. If only Muslim priesthood had openly strongly censured Ghazna's deeds and shown them to be what they were, such a distorted picture of Islam would not have taken hold of the popular imagination in India.

The wrong doings of Muhammad of Ghazni and the tone of the writings of contemporary historians thus appeared to be in perfect accord and out of these, the English historians made capital. They derived a general pattern from this and similar fabricated stories about all subsequent Muslim kings. The falsehood of many of these stories is hard to be proved. And, they certainly are made tenable because of the reasoning that since they were all descendants of Ghazna, they must have done all this. Ghazna is acknowledged as an isolated case of inordinate greed. Hence, his sins need not to be vested upon his innocent successors. If Ghazna was the religious bigot that history makes him out to be, it was very strange that he did not bother to convert a single individual to his faith. The fact that a section of his army consisted entirely of Hindus, and that many of his commanders including the Governor of Lahore were Hindus, should also be taken into consideration. (Dr Iswariprasad: Muslim Rule in India p 9) The man who took Brahmin scholars to Afghanistan and allowed them to live there and worship according to their own tradition could not have been a fanatic Muslim. Ghazna's raids on India were not even tinged by political ambition and Ghazna himself is anything but an embodiment of the traits of medieval oriental despots.

The question of breaking the idols and of trampling them under foot still remains as something disquieting. Al-Beruni's account provides us with an insight into this aspect of Muhammad Ghazna's attacks of the Indian temples. Al-Beruni writing about the attack on Somanath says that the Hindus had climbed the ramparts to witness the arrival of besiegers. Al-Beruni writes that the Hindus shouted to Ghazna's men:

"Our god Somanath has brought you here to destroy you at one blow, for the idols you have broken in Hindustan." (Al-Beruni's India vol II p 103 & 104)

When believers turned to their idols trusting them to bring down instantaneous doom upon the heads of the enemies, the conqueror must doubtless have been stung to display his superior power and his derring-do by smashing the very idols that the people invoked. So, breaking of idols must have been but a move to confuse the people and steer them into inaction. It must also have been a concession that Muslim kings had to make to the fanatic inclinations of some of their followers without whose goodwill their own survival would be at stake. We must also remember that in any war or invasion, destruction of temples or the breaking of idols were inevitable and common to a certain extent. Only to that

extent did it happen in India also, though the impression that has been subtly conveyed to the people is quite different.

The fact that magnificent temples of India with all their artistic wealth have survived the 600 years of Muslim rule is in itself sufficient to question the veracity of the story of Muslim fanaticism playing havoc with Indian temples. To feel the full import of this, one has only to recall the fate of Buddhist viharas in Kerala, which fell victims to the unsparing severity of the counter-revolution, launched by Vedic Hinduism, and were ruthlessly wiped out in a relatively short space of time. 600 years is quite a long period, even in the history of a nation. And if a systematic annihilation of temples born out of religious conviction was carried on through this stretch of time by Muslim Kings, our marvellous temples, with their breathtakingly beautiful artistic display would not have been there today, to showcase to the world our rich artistic tradition.

An interesting and telling anecdote from the book, *Jamiul Hikayath*, by the historian Muhammad Ufi, may be called here to throw some light on the subject of our discussion. A mosque in the City of Cambay was once destroyed. Cambay was a port-town and an important commercial centre where the leading traders were Muslims. These were envied by rich Hindus who were engaged in commerce and were even ill-treated by the latter. The destruction of the mosque was part of their plot abetted by the officers of the place, as the priest of the mosque soon found out when he took to them his grievances. Later, he composed a poem in Hindi describing the whole story and submitted it before King Jai Singh. The King, incognito, arrived on the scene, and was convinced of the truth of the charges. He penalised the offenders, presented the priest of the mosque with rich garments and ordered the rebuilding of the mosque. (Muhammad Ufi: Elliot Vol II pp 126-139)

Similar incidents must have happened during the time of Muslim rulers too, when grievances must have been duly redressed and any wanton violation of Hindu temples by Muslim fanatics properly punished. But, of course, it is more than reasonable to assure that many such occurrences went unnoticed by the rulers themselves. In all such cases, often avarice was doubtlessly the prime motive. How else can we account for the devastation and looting of Sringeri Ashram by an army led by Raghunath Patwardhan, the Maratha Chief? Many Maratha warriors and princes had also made a policy of attacking temples in their neighbouring countries. (Prof Mohibbul Hasan Khan: Tipu Sultan pp 355 & 356)

Instances of the looting of Hindu temples by Hindu rulers are recorded even in Kerala history. In the Cochin State Manual, we read of an attempt made by the Raja of Cochin to plunder the rich temple of the Konkani, who were a wealthy section of the people. Infinite riches in the form of jewels and golden idols were

preserved in the temple and it is these that the King coveted. The people in charge of the temple had got wind of the evil intention of the king and secretly transferred the treasures of the temple to Alappuzha from Kochi. The Chief of the Authorities of the Temple had to pay dearly for this timely action as the king had him murdered. (C Achutha Menon: Cochin State Manual p 137)

There is no justification at all in assuming that the looting of temple was prompted by religious fanaticism. In Muslims and Hindus, alike it was the result of greed for treasures. It may be that some of these men sought refuge behind religion and thus tried to justify their deeds. But, no justification can cover up the reality that they were all at heart more robbers with no thought for any consideration save the of grabbing riches. Just interpretation and right representation of historical facts can alone save us from fissiparous tendencies and disharmony.

CHAPTER 11: IMPORTANCE OF THE ARAB CONQUEST OF SIND

India has maintained uninterrupted trade relations with countries like Arabia, Palestine, Egypt and the Greco-Roman world that dates back to very ancient times. Establishing the antiquity of these contacts, Hunter writes in his book, *The History of British India*, that perhaps as early as the time of Prophet Moses, this commerce existed for cinnamon and cassia played a part in the temple services of the Jews. (Exodus XXX 23, 24) and at any rate the commerce existed at the time of King Solomon (10th Century BC).

“For the King had at sea a navy of Tharashish with the navy of Hiram ; once in three years came the navy of Tharashish, bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks, with the exception perhaps of silver, these are all products of the Malabar Coast.” (William Wilson Hunter: History of British India vol I p 25)

The Greek writer, Hekattius of Miletus (549-486 B C), has made mentions of places in India that were known to him. Trade in gold, spices etc. was carried on by sea from the Malabar Coast while the silk trade was confined to the Coromandal Coast. Chaldean inscriptions speak of ships of Ur in the 14th century BC carried gold, silk, spices, peals etc. from India, both by caravans by land and by the costing trade by sea. (Robert Sewell: The Historical Inscriptions of Southern India p 81) The *Ophir* of King Solomon’s time was no place other than Beypore, an important port in those days. If Chaldean inscriptions are to be believed, gold and silk perfumes and jewels of our country had found their way to the Sumerian capital of Ur in the 14th century.

Thurston relying on the Pentingerian tables infers that Kodungallore had a Roman

settlement and that in the time of Augustus Caesar (AD 14), a Greek temple was built somewhere in Malabar for the benefit of the Greek and Roman traders. Ancient coins of all Roman emperors from Augustus (AD 14) to Zeno (491 AD) are found in southern India, attesting to the ample commerce which India had with the west. These coins, preserved in museums, tell the story of continuous Indo-Roman trade and cultural relations. Hippalus and Pliny in the 1st Century AD, and Strabo, Ptolemy and the author of Periplus of the Eritrean sea in the second, have all brought out in their writings a wealth of information about the people of India, about commercial possibilities here and of the geographical layout of the country. (Coins of Madras Museum - Catalogue 2)

Contact with India was held in high esteem by the Persians as well. Even before the time of Darius, these two countries were intimately connected with the Indus. Accounts of Greco-Persian wars show how Indian elephants and Indian soldiers formed part of the Persian army. In 170 BC, the Persian army force included 120 elephants, as we learn from the Jewish Chronicle (*Macabus* VIII - 6). In 163 BC, there were 32 war elephants carrying Indian mahouts in the army of Syria. In the wars between Rome and Carthage, Indian elephants trained for war were used by Carthagians. (Robert Sewell: Historical Inscriptions of Southern India p. 371) It was through India that trade was carried on between Arabia and the eastern countries. With the decline of the Roman and the Persian empires, supremacy in the Arabian Sea fell to the Arabs. Joseph Tussaint Reynaud says:

“Everything points to the belief that the Persians and Arabs jointly exercised in those coasts up to the 14th Century, the same ascendancy which the Portuguese did afterwards.” (Joseph Tussaint Reinaud: *Geographie d’ Abul Feda* p 382)

The uninterrupted connection between India and Arabia became more strengthened than ever before, in the 7th Century AD. This is accounted for by the rise and growth of Islam at this period. Islam operating as a unifying force brought together into a single political-social organisation, different races and tribes that were more often than not engaged in long and enervating feuds. It did not take long for Syria and Persia to come under the Muslim rule. This brought to the Arabs the advantage of Persian help in all commercial dealings and enterprises, and at this time only Arab ships dotted the Indian Ocean. In 636 AD, during the rule of Caliph Omar, the first Muslim warship arrived heading for Thana. Its objective was not invasion, but finding out the possibilities of trade and acquiring wealth through plunder. Caliph Omar, however, did not grant his consent for the continuation of this hazardous enterprise. However consent and encouragement were soon forthcoming from his successors. About this time, enterprising Arabs settled in Ceylon and in South India. Rowlandson says that the Muslim Arabs first settled on the Malabar Coast about the end of the 7th Century. (Lt MJ Rowlandson:

Tuhfat-ai-Mujahidheen, Preface ii) Francis Day, corroborating this from traditional accounts and Sturrock's account of Mappillas, confirms it. He says:

"From the 7th century onwards it is well known that Persians and Arab traders settled in large numbers at the different ports on the western coast of India and married women of the country and these settlements, specially large and important in Malabar, where from very early time it seems to have been the policy to afford every encouragement to the traders at the ports." (J Sturrock: South Canara, Madras District Manuals p 180; Francis Day: The Land of the Perumals p 365)

The report of the conversion of Cheraman Perumal, given in *Keralolpathi* and *Kerala Mahatmyam* has great relevance in this context. Sheik Zainuddin, in his book has given a detailed description of the matter. It is not the conversion of Cheraman Perumal that concerns us here but the route followed by the Arab traders with whom he is said to have come into contact. It is said that this band of Arab traders were *en route* to Ceylon and that they alighted at Kodungallore in response to the invitation given by Cheraman Perumal to visit him when they returned from Ceylon after the successful completion of their mission. In the south of India, Arab Muslims had more or less won supremacy in the field of trade and navigation. Ceylon, Maldives, Kollam and Kodungallore had all become their settlements. This lengthy discourse on Arab trade route and settlements has been necessary to show that these had a very close relationship to the Arab invasion of Sindh. Somehow, this aspect has been overlooked by historians and has not got the attention it merits.

I firmly believe that the Muslim settlement in the southern part of India and Ceylon has much to do with the ship for plunder sent to Hajjaj, Governor of Iraq, and the subsequent Arab conquest of Sind. The event, therefore, requires a bit of explanation. In the days of Caliph Walid, the King of Ceylon sent to Hajjaj a ship-load of costly gifts. On board the ship were the widows and daughters of the Muslim traders who had died in Ceylon. (Elliot: *Biladuri* vol I p 118) The ship was attacked by pirates, somewhere near the harbour of Kutch. Hajjaj demanded from King Dahir of Sindh the surrender of the captured ship. Dahir refused to oblige, and thus provoked Hajjaj to send an Arab force to Sindh.

This is the usual cause cited for the Arab invasion of Sindh. But, an interesting theory put forward by Louis Rice in his famous book, *Political History of Mysore and Coorg*, regarding the origin of Labbas. Quoting Colonel Mark Wilkes, Louis Rice observes that in the early stage of Hajjaj's governorship, he had expelled from Iraq some persons from the House of Hashim. These people had taken refuge somewhere along the west coast of India and are believed to have settled down in the Konkan regions and the places near Cape Comorin. Those who settled down at Cape Comorin later came to be called Labbas. (Louis Rice: Political

history of Mysore and Coorg vol I p 353) So, when Hajjaj's army swept down upon Sindh, was it merely to take vengeance on Dahir, or was the move motivated by the desire to destroy the haunts of his former enemies? It is even probable that the news of the ship which started its voyage from Ceylon was conveyed to the pirates by these Muslims, who were living on the Indian coast and were the enemies of Hajjaj. Is it not logical to infer that to eliminate these people, who had become a menace and a threat to his commercial supremacy, must have struck Hajjaj as a political necessity? This question is to be raised by students of history, who are interested in the topic. I presume that a very close connection can be traced between Hajjaj's earlier feud with the Hashimites and the sending of the army to Sindh.

Hajjaj's army was at first beaten. Infuriated by this and stung as is natural, he sent a better-equipped army under the leadership of Muhammad-Al-Kassim. Kassim, who was the nephew of Hajjaj, was indeed one of the marvels of history. Young and enviably daring, he shot abruptly into fame and success, and with equal suddenness and unexpectedness, he fell from the height he had attained to disgrace and death. All these circumstances combined to make Kassim almost a legendary figure. In the short period between 711 and 715 AD, he had a meteoric rise to the zenith of power and glory and was pushed down to the nadir of shame. Though of short duration, Kassim's life was one of splendour. And, the period in which he lived was one of great importance in the history of India. A close look at this momentous time can bring to light the falsehood of many of the stories that British historians had fabricated while engaged in the task of writing history.

The Arab invasion of Sindh is one of those incidents in Indian history that deserves more careful study than has hitherto been given to them. It has been treated as a minor episode that has left no lasting imprint upon Indian history, whereas, the truth is that it is a major event in history and deserves a thorough examination, as it marks the commencement of Muslim rule in this country. The salient features of the administration of Sindh are sometimes slurred over or minimised and sometimes totally ignored. If properly viewed, these features would be a challenge to the theory that Muslim rule in India has always been a period of fanaticism and intolerance.

The war between Kassim and Dahir ended in the victory of the former and in 712 AD, Sindh came under Muslim rule. In 715, Kassim was recalled and was brutally assassinated. Before we enter into the romantic stories that have been spun around the death of Kassim, the greatness of his political achievement seeks our attention. What were the positive features of Kassim's policy in Sindh that made it a glorious precedent for subsequent Muslim rulers in India? The truth here is

startlingly different from the fallacious generalisations that have pervaded in this country about Muslim rule. Not a single instance of forced conversion to Islam occurred during this period. The fact that is all the more striking when we recall that this event took place less than three quarters of a century after the death of the Prophet. It was a time when the zeal for getting converts must naturally have been at its highest. Yet, religious tolerance was a reality and no Hindu temple was wilfully destroyed. Dr Iswariprasad mentions the looting of a temple in Multan; but he makes it clear that it was neither destroyed nor desecrated. (Dr Iswariprasad: History of Muslim Rule p 49)

Another historian too has shed some light on the matter when he reports that the Caliph asked Kassim to give compensation for whatever damage that was done to a Hindu temple in the course of Sindh invasion and that Kassim promptly obeyed this order. (SM Jaffar: Islamic Culture p 108) The people of Sindh thus enjoyed perfect freedom of worship and their religious practices were at no time interfered with. The right of the individual was not violated and neither tradition nor the cultural heritage of Sindh was tampered with. The instructions that Kassim received on this score are worth noting. The contemporary chronicler records that Kassim was instructed to permit the inhabitants to have freedom of worship.

“Nobody must be forbidden or prevented from following his own religion.” (Elliot: *Chachnama* vol I pp 185 & 186)

Depending on the original sources Dr Iswariprasad sums up:

“The Brahmins were treated well and their dignity was maintained. They were entrusted with the offices of administration and the country was placed under their charge.” (Dr Iswariprasad: History of Muslim Rule p 46)

He continues in another context:

“They (Arabs) granted toleration to the Hindus. They did so not because they felt respect for their faiths, but because they were convinced of the impossibility of suppressing the faith of the conquered peoples.” (Dr Iswariprasad: History of Muslim Rule p 49)

Religious tolerance though it served as the cornerstone of Kassim’s policy in Sindh was not the only thing that rendered it unique. The administration of the country was surprisingly enough, left almost entirely in the hands of the people. With the Brahmins rested the task of running the affairs of the State, and the welfare of the ruled was the sole objective. The orders, issued by Kassim to the revenue officers urging them to be lenient and just, are worthy of our notice. To the revenue officers Kassim said:

“Deal honestly between the people and the Sultan, and if distribution is required, make it with equity, and fix the revenue according to the ability to pay. Be in concord among yourselves and oppose not each other, so that the country may not be distressed.” (Elliot: *Chachnama* vol I pp 185 & 186)

By placing administrative and financial affairs entirely in the hands of the conquered people, and by absolute trust in their honesty and their efficiency, Kassim set a glorious precedent demanding emulation by later Muslim rulers.

A remarkable circumstance about Kassim's invasion of Sindh is that he enjoyed the support of a section of the people of Sindh, who were dissatisfied with the then existing conditions of Sindh. A vast majority of them gladly served in his army. That there was a contingent of Kassim's army entirely of Hindus is a factor that sheds ample light on the religious policy of the ruler or the invader. To desecrate a temple or to destroy it was not the kind of task that the Hindu soldiers would tolerate despite their loyalty to the master whom they served. Kassim who enjoyed loyal service of a large number of Hindu soldiers never forfeited their loyalty or trust by such wanton acts as destruction of their temples.

None of these positive features of the Arab invasion of Sindh seems to have caught the attention of historians. Following Lane Poole, all English historians dismiss this episode as something insignificant. They repeat the oft-quoted observation of Lane Poole who wrote:

"The Arab conquest of Sind was merely an episode in the history of India and of Islam, a triumph without results" (Lane Poole: Medieval India p 111)

The truth is quite otherwise. The Arab conquest of Sindh is something that affected the current of Indian history. The administrative system introduced by Kassim, the trust placed in the native people, the employment of the native Hindus in the army, the religious freedom that existed throughout, are all healthy features, which could not but have exerted a profound influence on the Muslim rulers who came later, and more or less, set the pattern they were to follow. But to concede all this would be unwise, from the point of view of English historians, as these salient features would give the lie to many of the stories that they have carefully spread about Muslim rule in India. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand why this epoch-making event in history has been relegated to the background and diligently kept there.

Equally groundless is the prevalent notion that the Muslims themselves did not attach any great significance to the conquest of Sindh. Is it credible that the Muslim world view with apathy and indifference this annexation of a vitally important territory to the realms of the Caliphate? The Arabs, who enjoyed the monopoly of trade routes, both by land and by sea, must have reckoned the possession of this 'nerve centre of trade' no small gain. The gesture of the people of Sindh in offering help and cooperation to Kassim must have conveyed to the Muslim world a sense of the unsatisfactory way in which Indian society was ordered. The astute foreigners must have at once drawn from this strange

conduct of the people of Sindh the inference that in times of future invasions too, similar cooperation could be relied upon. And, it is not wrong to assume that this anticipation must have been felt by subsequent invaders who came confidently to India and set up their rule here. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the Arab invasion of Sindh flung open the doors of India to foreign attacks.

In the field of culture and science, the Arabs gained prodigiously from this contact with India. The richness and variety of Indian culture was not lost upon the Arabs who hastened to imbibe wisdom from the venerable and learned exponents of Hinduism and Buddhism. In AD 771, during the reign of Manzur, certain Hindu scholars, who had extraordinary proficiency in astrology and mathematics, reached Baghdad and they rendered into Arabic *Brahma Siddantha* of Brahma Gupta and his *Kanda Khadyaka*. It was from them that the Arabs learned the first precepts of scientific astronomy. (Al-Beruni: India - Introduction (Sachau) p 31)

Several Hindu philosophers, physicians and lawyers worked under the Caliph enjoying the favour and patronage of the ruler. It was during this period, that Arab scholars, who studied Sanskrit here, produced a translation of the Quran in Sanskrit. Nothing of value in Indian cultural life escaped their notice. Our art, architecture and music were much appreciated by them and the Arabs also served as eloquent interpreters of our thought and philosophy to the western world. However, none of these things has obviously impressed our historians as worth recording. They all have taken refuge behind Lane Poole's assessment of the conquest of Sindh. The result is that many a lesson that calls for evaluation goes unnoticed. This lamentable omission totally eclipsed by the inordinate interest that historians have evinced in the death of Kassim.

The story that has attracted the maximum attention, and won the greatest credence goes like this. After killing Dahir, Kassim sent the dead King's daughters Paramal Devi and Suraj Devi to the Caliph as his gift. Lifting their veil, the Caliph was at once smitten by their unearthly beauty and desired to wed them. The two young ladies then protested saying that Kassim had violated their honour and that he had forced them to stay three days and nights in his harem before he sent them to the Caliph. Blind with rage, the Caliph ordered the murder of Kassim. After the execution of Kassim, the story continues, the daughters of Dahir confessed that what they said was a deliberate falsehood, prompted by their desire to avenge their father's death. The Caliph, now stricken by remorse ordered the killing of the two young women. The interest evoked by this story and the time and effort spent on proving its authenticity really reach the border of absurdity. What we can sensibly infer from a study of the tumultuous period is that, with the death of Caliph Walid in 715, there was a tussle for power and in

the intrigue and bloodshed that are natural to such a political wrangling, Kassim was assassinated. The story of Dahir's daughters and of their vendetta spread and discussed with such care and passion must be the figment of someone's blistering imagination.

This transference of power consequent on the death of Caliph Walid, must have forestalled further attempts of Hajjaj to take revenge. At any rate, this made it impossible for him to wipe out his enemies - the Hashimites who had settled down in South India. The most painful event of this troubled time was the death of Kassim, for we cannot help thinking wistfully of all the reforms and wonderful ideas that this handsome, efficient, noble young man would have effected here in India had he been given a longer lease of life.

The Arab invasion of Sindh, it must be asserted once more was no insignificant, stray incident. It cannot and does not stay isolated from Indian history, but is intimately connected with the chain of historical events that followed. Biased historians, to whom historical truth is of secondary importance, may hold this as irrelevant to the study of Indian history. But to all those who have a comprehensive picture of the Islamic political organisation, and its growth and development, see this incident as an important episode without which the drama becomes incomplete and incomprehensible.

CHAPTER 12: MUHAMMAD GHAZNA - THE SULTAN

Annals of history are strewn with the names of individuals who have earned immortality through certain unforgettable and unforgivable deeds. Several of these are men whose sole right to fame rests on selfish deeds or terrible offences that have been justified by contemporary writers and accepted as inevitable manifestation of the *zeitgeist* or the spirit of the age, and endowed with certain aura of universality. These figures remain always controversial figures. Their deeds are perennial food for dispute. Intellectual and scholarly opinion fluctuates regarding these personalities. Their reputation is made or marred by the interpretations that historians have given to their actions. Muhammad of Ghazni is the foremost among these colourful centres of controversy. Nevertheless, one can rest assured that the last word has not yet been written about him.

No Indian can hear the name of Muhammad of Ghazni mentioned without experiencing a sense of revulsion. This reaction would be perfectly normal and could be dismissed as something natural had it not been for the fact that this feeling extends to a whole group of which the individual is but a small part.

Ghazna's atrocities have brought the whole Muslim race to a state of disgrace. The truth of the saying, 'the evil that men do lives after them but the good is interned with them', has yet another illustration in the story of Muhammad Ghazna. Yet, no one gives the slightest attention to any of the admirable traits that contemporary historians have attributed to Ghazna. But, almost everyone is quick and ready to condemn him and to have his name declared as the synonym of brutality.

Muhammad of Ghazni will remain the centre of a big storm of historical hypotheses, and a frightening bug-bear whose very name is apt to instil terror. One cannot help feeling that the horrible image that the name of Muhammad Ghazna evokes in our minds is a kind of poetic justice. His reputation is the natural result of his actions, a sort of vindication of the belief that a man is not merely the architect of his own life, but the architect of his reputation as well. There is hardly any room for complaint in all this. Yet what is disconcerting is not the curse that Ghazna has invited upon himself but the misunderstanding and hatred of Islam that Ghazna has engendered in the minds of the people. Muhammad Ghazna's deeds are unfortunately equated with Islamic principles and the period of his invasions has become a veritable black mark upon the history of Islam. Several are the Muslim rulers, who despite their graciousness, are yet made scapegoats because of him. Therefore, to bring this period and its central figure within the focus of a historical searchlight is a sheer necessity. Hence, this attempt to figure out the enigma of Muhammad of Ghazni.

It is necessary here to trace the origin of this comet of devastation that blazed its way through our horizon. By the closing of the 8th century AD, the power of the caliphs declined. The Turks wrenched the power from the Arabs and many small Muslim states came up, where once the unified Muslim empire had stood and withered. Ghazni was one such petty state. It was in 969 AD that Alptigina became the ruler of this region and founded a royal dynasty. He ruled over the country till his death and was succeeded by Abu Ishaq. Before the end of a year, he too died. During the next six years, three of the commanders of his army occupied in turn the throne of Ghazni. By 976, Sabuktagin, one of the slaves of Alptigina, came into power and this was actually the turning point in the history of the Kingdom. Ghazna's rise to fame came shortly after this.

The rule of Sabuktagin had its impact on Indian history as it saw the first Muslim onslaught on India, since the time of the Sindh invasion. Sabuktagin had to meet with the stiff opposition of Jaipal, who was King of Punjab and certain other parts of North India. The two armies met in a fierce and decisive war. The outcome of the battle was victory for Sabuktagin. Jaipal, whose defeat owed not a little to

inclement weather, had to sign a treaty promising to pay Sabuktagin ten lakhs of rupees and fifty elephants. The terms of the treaty were however violated by Jaipal, who came to realise that the defeat he had to suffer was not the result of the superiority of the enemy but to the unexpected severity of winter. This breaking of the treaty caused Sabuktagin to march a second time to India, accompanied by his son, Muhammad, who led his cavalry numbering 5000. Jaipal was not insensible to the gravity of the situation. He knew well that this second attack of Sabuktagin was a great menace which had to be faced by a united stand of all the kings and princes of India. He wrote to the rulers around him, warning them to the fact that this was a veritable flood which had to be dammed, if the big and small kingdoms of India were to survive.

The kings of Delhi, Kanauj, Khalendar, Ajmir etc. responded to the invocation of Jaipal and rallied to his aid. Everywhere preparations for war went on and a big wave of national spirit swept over the country. Even the women of Lahore took active interest in the defence of the country, thus making way for the emancipation of Indian women and their emergence into active roles in the history of the country. Jewels and ornaments were freely contributed to the war fund and all petty quarrels and feuds were drowned in the wave of national enthusiasm. The wholeheartedness with which the Indian rulers flung themselves into this war may be gathered from the enormous size of the army. With cavalry of more than a lakh strong and an infinite number of infantry Jaipal was ready to combat the foreign invasion. The story of the fight that followed is a telling illustration of the truth that a disorganized resistance, however strong, is bound to defeat its own purpose. Jaipal's efforts were futile because of the cumbersome bulk of the army and its unwieldiness. (Dr Iswariprasad: History of Muslim Rule p 56) The princes of India had to sustain a crushing defeat and a part of Punjab was brought under the control of Sabuktagin. After 20 years of rule, Sabuktagin died. A bloody war of succession ensued between his two sons, Muhammad and Ismail. Muhammad came out victorious in this war to become later the ogre of Indian history - Muhammad Ghazna.

Ghazna was not very prepossessing. He was of short stature, though his limbs were well proportioned. His face was completely disfigured by the marks left by smallpox and we are told that this was something that caused much anguish to the Sultan. He is reported to have opened out his heart one day to his minister, telling him in despair that his subjects could not turn to him and gain from his ugly face that comfort and assurance of peace and prosperity, which a glimpse of a ruler's countenance usually gives to the subjects. The story goes on to tell that the minister, sensing the acute anguish in the words, counselled him wisely saying

that it was not external beauty or good features that mattered and that what is of more significance is the real majesty and kingliness felt in the heart. This consoled the Sultan, for he was every inch a king and enjoyed in their fullness all the powers that it was given to any ruler to enjoy.

Ghazna who became Sultan at the age of thirty, dazzled in his achievements. He became master of a vast and almost boundless empire and infinite riches and this invincible young hero was very soon the pride of the Muslim world and was accepted in place of the Caliphate. The fame of his greatness had spread to the neighbouring countries and the very mention of his name was sufficient to put terror into the hearts of the rulers of Persia and Turkey. He was a legend to his own generation and paragon upon whom contemporary historians lavished praises. They extolled him beyond all limits and almost vied with each other in attributing magnificent qualities to him. Some of them interpreted him as a valiant soldier who took an uncompromising stand against immorality. Others held him as a martyr and a crusader for the cause of Islam.

The many independent Muslim kingdoms that had sprung up were from the debris of the Caliphate. Among them, Ghazna's proved to be the most promising and was most likely to fill the void created by the fall of the Muslim world empire. Ghazna himself, by showing extraordinary prowess, won the admiration of the entire Muslim world and was in a position to be its leader and unquestioned dictator. The Muslim nobility, ever quick to sense the presence of power and authority, did not hesitate to fawn upon the Sultan. Muslim historians flung away all scruples and integrity to the winds in weaving many a heroic tale about him. They flattered Muhammad in the most hyperbolic terms. Consequently, he was placed above blame and all his actions were at one stroke declared exempt from any taint of sin. So, it not all surprising that Muhammad's name appears among the legendary figures of *Shahnama*. All this would not have mattered very much had it not been for the liberty that even the present day religious scholars take in reinterpreting the sacred tenets of Islam to condone and even glorify the deeds of Muhammad Ghazna. The mixed feelings Ghazna invoked among different schools of thought is summed up by Dr Iswariprasad in the following words:

"To the Hindus, he is to this day a veritable Hun who destroyed their most sacred shrines and hurt their religious feelings. The impartial enquirer, however, must record a different verdict. To him the Sultan is a born leader of men, a just and upright ruler, an intrepid and gifted soldier, a dispenser of justice a patron of letters and deserve to be ranked among the greatest personalities of the world." (Dr Iswariprasad: History of Muslim Rule p 65)

Contradictory facts and mutually irreconcilable reports can be seen about this historical figure and they all have their origin in the writings of contemporary Muslim historians themselves. More than totally countering allegations against

Ghazna's character, they have proceeded to justify his deeds by interpreting the Quran and instances in Islamic history. When marching into India, Ghazna destroyed temples and looted them. Muslim priesthood dared not declare this deed to be a flagrant violation of the spirit and letter of Islamic law. Instead, they went to the extent of giving the whole unfortunate story of plunder, the veneer of religious zeal, by interpreting it as an uncompromising fight against idolatry. Al-Udubi and Baihakhi have emphatically declared that Muhammad was an ideal Sultan dedicated to the cause of spreading Islam. Perhaps such a flagrant breach of truth can be understood if we get an idea of the psychology of the time. The Caliphate, the very heart of the Islamic world empire had ceased pulsating and from the consequent chaos, a number of petty kingdoms sprang up. The incessant feuds among them made confusion worse confounded.

From among them, sprang the Sultanate of Muhammad Ghazna, towering above the rest. Hope stirred in the hearts of all in the Muslim world. All eyes were turned towards him with the expectation that he will lead them and guide them from the enveloping darkness to dawn of order and prosperity. On such a man, they could not afford to use the test of Islamic doctrines, since it was unthinkable for the Muslim priesthood to indict him. Hence, they decreed him as being outside and far above the realm of any laws. Ghazna, who possessed an unerring understanding of the trend of the time, fully realised his advantage and shamelessly exploited it in the most selfish manner possible.

A student of history, who after studying the contemporary writings comprising of a compendium of flattery about Ghazna, compares it with the atrocities he had committed in India, can only think of him as an embodiment of avarice and greed that was characteristic of medieval despots. When even Muslim historians acknowledge and own this vandalism as an expression of Islamic fervour, it is not in any way surprising that other historians have not been slack in making clever use of these circumstances. Based on those writings, British historians and others who toed their line found it easy to declare that all Muslim emperors are fanatics. To validate this theory, they resorted to the example of the pillage of temples and the breaking of idols done by Ghazna. Thus, Ghazna came to occupy a unique place in the study of Indian history and he still remains an important figure not to be hastily dismissed as a fanatic or as an iconoclast.

The period, 1000-1026 AD, witnessed seventeen invasions of India by Muhammad of Ghazna. As time and time again this scourge smote our country, all that was treasured as precious were looted; all that was held inviolate were brutally penetrated; and all idols and beliefs held most sacred were ruthlessly desecrated. Each time the terror seemed to be worse than before and the havoc done more irremediable than before. The people of our country, who were directly in the

path of Ghazna, were in utter distress. The country was impoverished and famine was a persistent torment. Ghazna had not bothered to unify his conquered territories or to build up an efficient administration there. The moment his coffers were full with ill-gotten wealth, he would quit in haste with not a moment's thought for the welfare of the people whom his invasions brought under him.

'They came, burnt, killed, plundered, captured and went away', says a Persian poem recalling the nature of the Mongol invasions. Ghazna's invasions of India would fit in with this description. There was nothing about these raids that could exonerate Ghazna in any way to remove an iota of his guilt. But, in reality, he never suffered so much as the innocent rulers who came after him, who despite their integrity and unblemished conduct, had to bear the stigma passed on by Ghazna. The resentment and hatred released in the country by his actions have brought about irrevocable rift between Hindus and Muslims. The moral indignation that we experience, when we recollect how the mischief of a single man has put such a taint upon the honourable men of history, must be channelled along the path of enquiry. It is as a result of such an attempt that I have decided to place Ghazna, his life and achievements before the analytical scrutiny of cold reason.

Ghazna's father, Sabuktigin, in his will had actually named Ismail his second son as his heir. But, as soon as the father breathed his last, a bloody war of succession followed and after much carnage and bloodshed, Muhammad won the throne and Ismail was taken prisoner. Certainly, this type of mean and wicked action is not something that Quran demands from its believers. It was rather an act that served as a presage of coming events. From there, Muhammad embarked upon a systematic annihilation of the moral code that God-fearing men had established long before. It was the first of a long chain of anti-Islamic deeds, which Muhammad had taken upon himself to perpetrate. The man who for self-aggrandizement and out of lust for power could shut his own brother in prison and put to the sword all his dear ones is a far cry from a believer who obeys the admonition in the Quran: 'Remember that you are not their ultimate authority'. Ghazna's biographer Prof Muhammad Habeeb throws light on the Sultan's religious faith, or rather, the lack of it, when he writes thus:

"Contemporary writings reveal the fact that the Sultan never believed in the Last Judgment and *Hadith* - the sayings of the Prophet - while both are considered to be integral parts of Islamic faith. He believed in an Almighty God. Perhaps, this gave him solace and comfort. Barring his belief in God, he questioned all the established tenets of Islam with reason and thought. He was conscientious of his regal authority and sincerely wished that the priesthood should in any way come in confrontation with his royal power." (Prof Muhammad Habeeb: Sultan Muhammad of Ghazna p 84)

When the very foundation of Islamic faith is unquestioning faith in the Day of

Judgement and in the sayings of Prophet, the man who presumed to question them cannot really be accepted as a pillar of the faith. If he is portrayed thus, is it not the logical to infer that certain factors other than religion must have been instrumental in doing it?

The Sultan's personal life was a repudiation of all the Islamic doctrines. He never let an ounce of enjoyment escape him. He found women, wine and music irresistible. In this, he was but typical of all the rulers of the time. Most of them are said to have excessively indulged in these pleasures. Nevertheless, many of them were capable generals and efficient administrators. This aspect of Ghazna's character is referred to now in order to portray that this was Ghazna's way of life. It is all the more ridiculous and borders on absurdity to regard such a man as a missionary of Islam. The moral laxity of Sultan Muhammad of Ghazna is not that which we are concerned about. But, when the role of the Sultan is confused with the grave role of a crusader or as a defender of Islamic faith, then it is time to take into account the personal life of the man, and to assert the truth that Ghazna could never have assumed such a role.

It is one of those ironies of fate that a man, who was never guilty of the slightest temperance, should be deemed as the icon of a religion that enjoined its followers to abhor any intoxicant and to shun a life of indulgence. Prof Muhammad Habib writes:

“Yet, the astute wine-loving Sultan of Ghazni can never be a missionary of Islam. Far from being a missionary, he was not even a fanatic, though like a clever man with a clever eye to his own profit, he fought with Hindus and Mussalmans alike for the extension of his empire.” (Prof Muhammad Habib: Sultan Muhammad of Ghazni p 18)

Some of the contemporary writings conjure up a totally irreligious type image of Sultan Muhammad of Ghazna. There are several references to his belligerence, his rudeness to his inferiors and pugnacious nature. Even in the matter of exchanging slaves, he was unseemly querulous and argumentative. Much less in keeping with the image of a missionary, is the story that Ghazna's contemporaries believed in. It is about Ahamed Niyaltajin, the commander of Lahore during the reign of Ghazna's successor Mazood. Many believed that Ahamed Niyaltajin was the natural son of Muhammad Ghazna. That the historians of the time held this as something more serious than an idle rumour is evident from the comment of Baihakhi.

“People say many stories relating to his birth and regarding his mother. One thing is certain that this lady was closely attached to the Sultan. God alone knows what the truth is behind these stories.” (Baihakhi: Elliot and Dowson, vol II p 122)

Islam tolerates adultery under no circumstance whatsoever. If he were a true believer of Islam, he would surely have stayed away from such evils. In all the

forty wars that Ghazna fought, he was always victorious. It seemed as if he was quite invincible. Out of the forty wars he fought, only seventeen were against Indian princes. The fact that the majority of Ghazna's wars were waged against other Muslim rulers must be taken special note in this context. Even if we concede for argument's sake that Ghazna's invasions of India were all for the sake of religion, how can we explain the bloodshed caused when Muslim was opposed to Muslim and religious differences did not come anywhere into the picture? Is it not therefore evident that the two motives that swayed Muhammad Ghazna were the desire to expand his empire and the lust for more and more wealth? Weighed by these two passions, he committed limitless crimes, which have all been deliberately linked to the wrong motive and accorded religious sanction. And, this has been done in the case of Sultan Muhammad of Ghazna who had the least regard for religion.

Islamic doctrines are so conceived as to accommodate people of any religion denomination and to tolerate any faith. This is evident from such verses from the Quran as the two given below:

"You have your religion, and I have mine." "There is no coercion in religion."

Any compulsion, in the matter of personal faith or belief, is not merely alien to Islam, but also is strictly forbidden. Islam is based on inner conviction than on external observance of certain rules or rites. The Quran says further:

"Each one needs obey only such rules as are acknowledged to be his."

Everyone must be granted absolute freedom of worship. To interfere in or even interrupt another's worship is held as a heinous offence. Once, a group of Christian priests approached the Prophet for discussing a treaty. Meanwhile, they looked for a place to pray and the Prophet gave the facilities for their worship by vacating his own mosque. With such a precedent set by the Prophet himself, temples and churches of non-Muslims were protected during the time of the Caliphate, as is established by authentic evidence.

In the light of all this, Ghazna's barbarity appears devoid of all religious motives. Born out of lust, these deeds violated all that Islam enforces. Ghazna's atrocious deeds are something that cannot be condoned by any means according to Islamic principles. No honest historian, who is aware of the basic precepts of Islam, can credit Ghazna's misdeeds to the account of the religion. Islam has never, under any circumstances, sanctioned or abetted cruelty and looting. Heinous indeed were Sultan Muhammad of Ghazna's deeds! He swooped down upon the temples like a violent tornado and swept away from them all that was precious. Neither the Brahmins' erudition and the Kshatriyas' valour and dexterity with arms, nor the mute prayers of millions of devotees prevented the golden idols of Indian temples from becoming the coins of Ghazni.

If Sultan Muhammad of Ghazna's wars were in effect crusades, it was strange of him to have employed Hindus in an entire division of his army or to have appointed a Hindu as the Governor of Lahore. His army was trained to fight Hindus and Muslims alike for the reasons for which they fought were material and not in any way religious. Ghazna's religion was egoism and avarice. The lion's share of the booty that Ghazna obtained from India came from the well-filled coffers of the temples. He knew where to look for gold and struck precisely where he expected to find fabulous wealth. But, in doing this he invited censure on the entire community which he belonged to, when the wickedness of this plunderer was misinterpreted as the necessary result of the admonitions of Islam. Islam itself became hateful in the eyes of non-Muslims and equated with ferocious intolerance. The future generations of Muslims of India have had to bear the brunt of his misdeeds.

It is no wonder that Muhammad failed in winning a single convert to Islam. Who in his sane mind would want to embrace the religion of one who set fire to their temples and smashed the very idols which they prayed to? A creed or an ideology can win people only if it is properly presented before them. Savagery and ruthlessness are ineffective means of converting people to any religion. Other than the Sultan Muhammad of Ghazna, no other force in history, either within Islam or outside, has been able to inflict such a fatal blow to Islam's image. A lessening of the ill-will felt towards Islam may be possible, if only historians come to an agreement about Ghazna and pronounce him guilty of unforgivable crimes against humanity. It is only natural that every believer's heart is wounded when temples are destroyed. Such deeds can never be justified and their perpetrator must be declared guilty so that the names of innocent rulers and their religion may not be dragged into the swamp.

The spite engendered by Sultan Muhammad Ghazna's deeds lingered in the minds of the people unabated for two centuries more. By the 13th century, when Muslim cultural centres fell under the invasion of the Mongols, the Muslim intellectuals and the Sufis were forced to flee. Many of them landed in several parts of India where they settled down in peace. Those Muslims, who were so completely different from the arrogant followers of Ghazni, created quite a different impression in the minds of the Indians. Moreover, having come in the role of fakirs and holy men, entitled them to reverence and sympathy. They did not arouse the abhorrence that was the natural reaction to Ghazna and his policy. It must be conceded however that Muhammad Ghazna, in spite of all his cruelty and haughtiness, was no uncivilized barbarian. He was the embodiment of the spirit of the age, and was not insensitive to the beauty of art and learning.

Sultan Muhammad Ghazna patronised poets and pundits, many of whom were

famous in Asia. Pride of place among them was enjoyed by Al-Beruni, who was a mathematician, philosopher, historian and Sanskrit scholar. He was almost like an inseparable companion of Ghazna and to him we owe invaluable records of Indian sciences and faithful portrayal of Indian people. The most famous among these luminaries that graced the court of Ghazna was Fir Oausi, the author of *Shahnama*. Other eminent scholars, historians and poets that graced the court of Ghazna were Al Utubi, Ansari, and Baihakhi. It must be said to the credit of Ghazna that he was able to appreciate their greatness and afford them the most generous patronage and unstinted help. He was equally alert to detect books of inestimable worth among the treasures he came across in the plundered regions and he promptly conveyed them to his own country where they were treasured in the University of Ghazni. He was intensely alive to the splendour of life and drank life to the lees, in his own way. He was hundred per cent a soldier and statesman with no trace of the spiritualist or the religious reformer about him. He knew the time and how to mould the forces of the time to suit his interest. He was successful in his attempts and was even great in his own way.

CHAPTER 13: THE TWO FANATICS OF INDIAN HISTORY

One of the many paradoxes that appear in the study of Indian history arises from the fact that while the religious policy of Indian rulers is made much of, in the long period of British rule, religious policy is hardly ever mentioned. A great deal has been said about the religious policy of the Maghadas, the Guptas, the Cholas or the Pallavas in ancient period of Indian history, and even more about the religious policy of the Sultans of Delhi and the Mughals. When we ask ourselves why this discrepancy has occurred, and when we make an honest attempt to explain this anomaly, we become convinced once again of the malicious motives that operated in the recording of Indian history. Historians seem to have brought to the study of Indian history two diverse sets of norms or two utterly different criteria. In the long period of English rule in India, a religious policy of definite shape is nowhere attributed to them. They apparently stand above questions of religion and are judged for what they did in the socio-political and economic spheres. Now, this is where the historian's evaluation of Indian rulers differs. No ruler worth the name, who has an essential grasp of the principles of statesmanship, will risk losing the support of the people. To him all questions of religions fade before the urgent requirements of economic, social and political issues. Ignoring this fundamental principle, historians writing about Indian rulers glaringly focus the searchlight on the religious policy of these rulers. This

approach served to initiate an unbridgeable chasm between Hindus and Muslims because in the extensive chronicles of Indian history, rulers belonged to either of the two communities. When the criterion of religion was used, every Muslim ruler naturally assumed the stature of a fanatic and any temple wrecked during his time was at once attributed to his religious intolerance. It would be like winking at truth to pretend that Hindu temples remained inviolate during the English regime. About the demolition of temples that occurred during the British periods, sane and sensible reasons were brought forward justifying the reasons. The reason, why this double standard in judging history was employed and why reasons for the destruction of Hindu temples during British rules were never employed to explain similar occurrences during Muslim rule, is quite explicit. If impartiality and objectivity seems to guide the historian, who studies the British period, why should he desert these invaluable principles while evaluating the Muslim rulers?

With the very inception of the British rule, political uprisings against the English took place in India. The *Wahabi* movement in North India and the Mappilla revolts in Malabar were purely Muslim uprisings against the British yoke and it is the Muslim community that was singled out by the British to be the victims of their horrifying reprisal. Hundreds died in the north as well as in the south and hundreds were forced to flee for their lives. Not satisfied with these, the English for their own reasons destroyed several mosques, and demolished the tombs of many revered Muslim saints. Religious leaders like Syed Fazal were transported with their followers to Arabia. Even when the fury of the English was directed in such an unambiguous way against a single community, the whole matter was viewed as a question of law and order and was justified under reasons of political expediency.

The very same law and order situation arose at the time of Aurangzeb. But, to the historians, it manifests a different colour. When Aurangzeb had to wage wars against the Rajputs, the Marathas, the Jats, the Satnamis and the Sikhs, on political grounds and for the maintenance of law and order, he was looked upon as a fanatic and these wars were interpreted as wars born out religious intolerance. The same unfairness has been exhibited in the evaluation of Tipu and other Muslim rulers. It is an obvious fact that the primary concern of any civilized government is to ensure law and order within the country. Rebellions and uprisings are menacing threats to the stability of governments and are therefore, to be put down at once. The government of India's determined stand against the rebellious Maoists, Naga Christians and Bodos serves as an excellent illustration of this political principle. Yet, none has thought of accusing our government of displaying religious fanaticism in its dealing with the Nagas. It is most unfortunate that this balanced and sane view of things does not operate in the historians'

assessment of the Muslim rulers. Nowhere is the difficulty caused by the use of a double measure felt more than in history's verdict of the two controversial figures Aurangzeb, and Tipu Sultan. It behoves the fair minded student of Indian history, therefore, to bring to the evaluation of these rulers, objectivity and thorough impartiality.

The religious policy of Akbar was intended to enhance his own power and prestige, whereas that of Aurangzeb was conditioned by the fear of losing it. This is the verdict pronounced by a modern historian who has brought under his study the religious policies of Aurangzeb and of his renowned ancestor Akbar. In the course of a previous chapter on Asoka and Akbar, an attempt was made to draw the political map of India at the time of Akbar's accession to the throne. It was pointed out then, how the religious policy of Akbar was conditioned by the political setup of his time. The nascent Mughal Empire bequeathed to him, by Humayun was threatened by independent Muslim rulers on all sides. Young Akbar was intensely alive to this menace that loomed large on his political horizon. It was therefore a political sagacity that prompted Akbar to seek the aid and the good will of the Rajputs. As for the Rajputs they had not yet emerged from a sense of shock to which a crushing defeat at the hands of Baber had reduced them in the Battle of Kanua in 1526. Therefore, Akbar's conciliatory attitude to the Rajputs was eagerly welcomed by them, as royal favour had a salutary effect upon their morale. In fact Akbar's marked leaning towards the Hindus served to arouse the indignation of the Muslims and to hurt Muslim susceptibilities. Abdul Khader Badauni, Akbar's court librarian who wrote his book *Muntakabat-tawarikh*, in camera, has mentioned several cases of Muslim revolt being sternly put down by Akbar and of Muslim pride being hurt thereby.

However, when Aurangzeb came to the throne, the shape of the country had altered immensely. The political map of India showed an entirely different picture. The Mughal Empire had become so vast to take in almost the whole of India, including Kabul and Afghanistan. No independent Muslim ruler was strong enough to pose a threat to the Emperor as during the time of Akbar's accession. On the other hand, the Rajputs and other Hindus had emerged from their sense of shock following the favours and encouragement accorded by the Mughals. By the time of Aurangzeb, the Rajputs and other Hindus had regained their former strength and this naturally aroused their hitherto dormant political ambitions. Therefore Aurangzeb had continually to be in war with these fissiparous factions. To bring them under control and to maintain law and order, within the unwieldy empire under him, was an urgent task that Aurangzeb had to perform. Basically, the situation was the same under Akbar and under Aurangzeb. The only difference was that while it was the aggrieved Muslims that rose against Akbar, it

was the resurgent Hindus that questioned the authority of Aurangzeb. In reality, the religious policy of Aurangzeb was in no way different from that of his predecessors. Only the political situation had changed, and the Hindus were in a position to assert their independence and aspire for their lost sovereignty. The following facts are sufficient to bring home to us the fact that Aurangzeb's religious policy did not in any way deviate from that of the Great Mughals and to discredit certain allegations based on which, the evaluation of his religious policy has been made, with no reference at all to the altered political setup.

A very grave allegation levelled against Aurangzeb is that he dismissed Hindu officials from service. The source of this allegation is a *firman* issued by Aurangzeb to the effect that the corrupt divans and collectors of revenue should be dismissed and Muslims appointed instead. This *firman*, however, was soon modified by another which required the appointment of one Hindu and another Muslim in all departments both civil and military, so as to act as a check upon each other. (Thomas Arnold: Preachings of Islam p 241) At the same time, authorities like Delaet, Kewal Rau, and Abdul Hameed Lahori agree that during the time of Aurangzeb there were 529 *mansabdars* while in Akbar's time it was only 247. According to Kewal Rau's history, Hindus holding ranks from 7000 down to 500 under the great Mughals are given below:

Rank	Akbar	Jahangir	Shajahan	Aurangzeb
7000	1	0	0	2
6000	0	1	1	4
5000	5	9	9	5
4000	4	4	10	5
3500	1	1	0	4
3000	3	5	24	13
2500	0	3	5	5
2000	8	13	22	16
1500	0	5	31	27
1000	8	4	33	15
900	0	1	2	1
800	0	3	20	0
700	4	0	15	3
600	0	1	11	2
500	7	5	44	2
Total	41	55	227	104

The following table is regarding the *mansabdars* under the great Mughals as extracted from the writings of the historians, Abul Fazal, Delaet, Kewal Rau and Abdul Hammed Lahori.

		Abul Fazal	Delaet	Kewal Rau	Lahori	Total
Akbar	Muslims	215	----	214	----	247
	Hindus	32	----	37	----	----
Jahangir	Muslims	----	383	----	----	438
	Hindus	----	55	55	----	----
Shajahan	Muslims	----	----	437	453	664
	Hindus	----	----	227	110	----
Aurangzeb	Muslims	----	----	435	435	539
	Hindus	----	----	104	104	----

These data spells out that of the 247 *mansabdars* under Akbar there were only 32 Hindus, that is, less than 13%, whereas under Aurangzeb, out of the total of 539 mansabdars, 104 were Hindus raising the percentage to 19. Rajah Jaswant Singh, Rajah Jai Singh, Raja Man Singh etc. were Aurangzeb's military chiefs. This fact coupled with the tables given above, provide enough and more material to refute the allegation that Aurangzeb dispensed with the services of Hindu officers.

The charge that Aurangzeb demolished Hindu temples is another fabricated story born out of the same motive. Sometime back, the Asiatic Society of Bengal brought to light a *firman* issued by Aurangzeb to Abdul Hasan, the Governor of Benares that reads as follows:

“Let Abdul Hasan, worthy of favour and countenance, trust to our royal bounty and let him know that, in accordance with our innate kindness of disposition and natural benevolence, the whole of our untiring energy and all our upright intentions are engaged in promoting the public welfare and bettering the conditions of all classes, high and low, therefore, in accordance with our holy law, we have decided that ancient temples shall not be overthrown but that new ones shall not be built. In these days of our justice, information has reached our Noble and most Holy court that certain persons actuated by rancour and spite have harassed the Hindus, resident in the town of Benares, a few other places in that neighbourhood and also certain Brahmin Keepers of the temples, in whose charge these ancient temples are, and that they further decide to beware these Brahmins from their ancient office (and this intention of theirs causes distrust to that community), therefore, our Royal command is that, after the arrival of our lustrous order, you should direct that in future, no person shall in any way interfere or disturb the Goshani, so that he may continue with peace of mind to offer up prayers for the continuance of our God-given empire that is destined to last for all time. Consider this as an urgent matter. Dated, 17th *Rabi-ul-Akhir* 1091 AH.” (Zahid-ud-din-Faraqui: Aurangzeb - His Times pp 131 & 132)

The second *firman* runs as follows:

“At this auspicious time an august *firman* was issued that as two plots of land measuring

5881/2 dira, situated on the bank of the Ganges at the Beni Madho Ghat, in Benares (One plot is in front of the house of Goshain Rainjivan and on the bank of the central Mosque, and the other is higher up) are lying vacant without any building and shall in unlawful way interfere or disturb the Brahmins and the other Hindu residents in these places so that they may as before, remain in their occupation and continue with peace of mind to offer up prayers for the continuance of our God-given Empire that is destined to last for all time. Dated the 15th of *Jamadal Akhir* 1069 AH (1659 AD)" (Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1911 p 689)

Two more significant *firman*s are worth quoting as they reveal the emperor's religious policy.

"At this auspicious time an august *firman* was issued that whereas Maharajadhiraja Ran Singh has represented to the most holy, and exalted court, that a mansion was built by his father in Mohalla, Madho Rai, on the bank of Ganges at Benares, for the residence of Bhagwant Goshain, who is also his religious preceptor, and as certain persons harass the Goshain, therefore our royal command is that, after the arrival of our lustrous order, the present and future officers, should direct that in future, belong to *Bait-ul-Mal*, we have therefore granted the same to Goshain Ramjivan and his sons as *inam* so that after building dwelling houses for the pious Brahmins and holy *faqirs*, on the above-mentioned plots, he should remain engaged in the contemplation of God and continue to offer up prayers for the continuance of our God-given empire that is destined to last for all time. It is therefore incumbent on our illustrious sons, exalted ministers, noble *umaras*, high officials, *daroghas*, and present and future *kotwals*, to exert themselves for the continual and permanent observance of this hallowed ordinance, and to permit the above-mentioned plots to remain in the possession of the above-mentioned person and of his descendants from generation to generation and to consider him exempt from all dues and taxes, and not to demand from him a new *sanad* every year. Dated 1098 AH (1688 AD)" (Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1911 p 689) (Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1911 p 689)

The above *firman*s clearly reveal the attitude of the authority that passed the orders. In another, Aurangzeb issues an ordinance in favour of the Muslims who were not allowed to have their Friday congregations in a Cathedral Mosque of Ahmadabad. The *firman* is as follows:

"In Ahmadabad, there is a Cathedral Mosque situated near the City Gate. For a year, the Kulis have not allowed Muslims to offer prayers there. See that no one disturbs the Muslims." (Mirati-Ahamadi: Ali Muhammad Khan p 275)

It is vividly apparent that Aurangzeb did not abandon the religious policy adopted by his predecessors. This fact is testified to by Alexander Hamilton, who speaking about the Parsis, says that they enjoyed freedom of worship and liberty of conscience. The Christians, he continues, were free to build churches and to preach their religion. He concludes:

"The gentoos have full toleration for the religion, and keep their fasts and feasts as in former times, when the sovereignty was in Pagan princes' hands. There are above a hundred different sects in the City (Surat), but they never have hot disputes about their doctrine or way of worship. Everyone is free to serve and worship God in his own way. And

persecutions for religions' sake are not known among them." (Alexander Hamilton: A New Account of the East Indies, vol I pp 159, 162 & 163)

If this is the truth about the much-maligned Mughal, Aurangzeb, it would be worthwhile to enquire into the truth behind the allegations regarding Tipu Sultan of Mysore. The first thing that we have to do is to comprehend Tipu's relations with the English. Of all Indian rulers and Kings, it was only Haider Ali and his son Tipu Sultan that succeeded in giving to the English the taste of defeat.

GB Melleson writes:

"It was the ruler of Mysore alone who had shown himself at all equal to the English on the field of battle" (GB Melleson: Seringapatam, the Capital of Tipu p 146)

Josias Dupre wrote to Robert Orme:

"This is the first time a country enemy has gained an advantage over us." (Indian Record Series: Letter from Josias to Orme Vol II p 599)

He was the only Indian ruler whom they could not coax into alliance, for Tipu had nothing but unmitigated hatred of the foreigners. That Tipu was a nightmare to the East India Company is borne out by the writings of Colonel Alexander Beatson.

"Since the peace of Seringapatam and more especially since the year 1796, the destruction of the British power in India had formed the favourite and unremitting object of Sultan's hopes and exertions. His haughty mind never could be reconciled to the sacrifices he was compelled to make for the purchase of peace in 1792 and his increasing eagerness to recover the extensive portion of his dominions then ceded to the Allies urged him to pursue a systematic course of intrigue against the British power among all the native states and to revert to his ancient and hereditary connection with France, as the only effectual means of gratifying either his ambition or revenge." (Colonel Alexander Beatson: A View of the Origin and Conduct of the War with Tippoo Sultan 1800 p 215)

He has elaborated on this theme and in another occasion describes lucidly what the might of Tipu meant to the Company.

"The continuance of Sultan's power upon so formidable a scale must have proved to the company a perpetual source of solicitude, expense and hazard. But the engagements which he had contracted with the French, the public proofs which he had given of his eagerness to receive in Mysore as large a force as they could furnish, combined with the prodigious magnitude of their preparation and the rapid progress of their army in Egypt evidently directed to the destruction of the British power in India." (Colonel Alexander Beatson: A View of the Origin and Conduct of the War with Tippoo Sultan, 1800 p 114)

Studying the correspondence of Tipu with France and other foreign countries as well as with native states, Beatson points out:

"They furnish abundant evidence, that the antipathy to the English was the ruling passion of his heart, the mainspring of his policy, the fixed and fundamental principle of his councils and government." (Colonel Alexander Beatson: A View of the Origin and Conduct of the War with Tippoo Sultan, 1800 p 216)

Things do not end here. Back in England, the East India Company was the target of fierce censure, and in the British Parliament there raged a veritable storm over

the misdeeds of the English in India. Eloquent voices like those of Edmund Burke and Richard Brinsley Sheridan were raised in loud denunciation of the Company's unjust dealings with the natives. Burke vehemently criticised the Company's government in India in the British Parliament:

"It is one of the most corrupt and disruptive tyrannies that probably ever existed in the world. There is not a single prince, state or potentate, great or small in India, with whom they have come into contact and whom they have not sold. There is not a single treaty which they have not broken. There is not a single prince or state who ever put any trust in the Company and who is not utterly ruined" (Parliamentary History XXIII: Edmund Burke's Speeches 18 November 1783 pp 136 & 137)

To justify their stand and as a reprisal to the charges against them, both at home and abroad, the Englishmen in India resorted to a conscious policy of distorting historical facts as a result of which, their inveterate enemy Tipu was portrayed in the darkest of colours. An impartial student of history, who has insight, will not find it difficult to see how Tipu could not get justice from English historians. Religious fanaticism and bigotry were the two weapons that came in handy to the English in their battering on Tipu's character. This method served a double purpose as it flung mud at their antagonist and at the same time pleased the non-Muslim sections of the Indian community and ensured their support to the English. A careful study of the sources of these allegations can show how utterly untrustworthy they are and how hollow and groundless are the charges of bigotry brought against Tipu. In a significant letter written to Raghujee Bonslea, Cornwallis accuses Tipu of religious bigotry and asks the Maratha Prince to rally round the English to fight against Tipu who he describes as:

"A man who is the enemy of all mankind, and whose heart is bent on the destruction of every sect as well Hindoo as every other. "(Foreign Secret Consultations 10 March 1790 No 5)

This malicious propaganda was carried on to such an extent that the princes of India believed Tipu to be capable of committing any atrocities in the name of religion. As a result, when preliminary discussions on the draft treaty signed at Seringapatam were in progress, the Maratha *vakils* required John Kennaway, the English representative to include a certain provision in the treaty. Kennaway writes:

"The Maratha *vakils* acquainted me that an article should be inserted to prevent Tippoo from circumcising Hindoos. I asked them what the contents were, they said that they did not know but would enquire and inform me." (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous 1792 vol 54 pp 123 & 124)

This shows that while rumours concerning Tipu's bigotry and the forced conversions he effected were prevalent, there was no evidence that could give to these rumours authenticity. Another important point that has to be borne in mind is that all these allegations, scattered throughout in abundance in historical

literature, came out only after Tipu had imposed prohibition on trade within his country. These allegations flourished spread wide after his defeat and subsequent death. The Chief of Tellichery Factory wrote to the Governor Fort William, regarding the prohibition of trade and how it affected the English. The English even felt like winding up the Tellichery Factory due to the enormous loss incurred by maintaining an establishment without any trade prospects. But, they believed that in future if Tipu could be dislodged from the Malabar Coast.

“Tellichery would be most important a settlement from the point of view of military and commerce.” (Foreign Political Secret Proceedings August No 96, 25 September 1789 p 1849) Combined with this effort of the foreigners, another factor operated against Tipu Sultan. This was the false propaganda made by the caste Hindus or Kerala who were severely affected by the socio-economic reforms of Tipu Sultan. When the land survey was carried out by Tipu and land tax was imposed in opposition to the custom of the country, the Namboodiris who were the feudal lords felt it as a preliminary step to sabotage their caste rules by which they were held in divine esteem, and as a challenge to their unalienable rights over. This is evident from the proceedings of the Joint Commissioners of Malabar, who relied on the method of collecting data by questioning their informants. One such question was:

“In what year did the *jenmakar* run away?”

The answer to which given was:

“In 964 ME 1788-89 all the *jenmakars* ran away, and as to their not attending on Arshad-beg-Khan’s time, the cause was that in this country the principal *jenmakars* are Namboodiri Brahmins who do or did not come in to the grasp, for to do so they thought would mean the degradation of their caste.” (Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous SI No 56 part I p 150)

Another powerful community of Kerala, the Nairs, were also affected very much by Tipu’s socio-economic reforms. They were the warrior community of Kerala, who like any other military class, were bound to suffer at the hands of a conqueror. In short, Tipu’s socio-economic policies made him unpopular with the Hindus of Kerala. In their capacity as *jenmis* and as warriors, the Namboodiris and Nairs of Kerala respectively, were most adversely affected by Tipu’s policies. A significant matter to be noted here is that these Namboodiris, who harboured within their hearts the most bitter hatred for Tipu, also happened to be custodians of learning and also the sources of information regarding this period. How far their testimony could be accepted is something that any sensible person can judge. It has been contested that Tipu, in his fanatic zeal, thrust Islam upon a number of his subjects. And that, in Kerala, hundreds of Brahmins, Namboodiris and Nairs were forced to convert. Such conversions at the point of the sword were said to have been effected in Coorg also. Even Christians, they say, were not

spared by this bigoted Muslim conqueror and neither Hindu temples nor Christian churches were safe from his fanatic rage. But how do these charges stand to search light of truth'?

The alarm that Tipu had set about performing a mass circumcision was first raised by L Avvon, the Chief of the Tellicherry Factory and it is his testimony that was built upon by historians like Colonel Mark Wilkes and William Logan. It should not be forgotten that the rumour was first recorded in 1788-89 when the prohibition of trade in Malabar was so closely guarded by Tipu's men. Logan's version of the charge and Colonel Mark Wilkes rendering of the same afford very interesting reading and at the same time illustrate how ridiculous history can be made to look when there is nothing but hearsay reports to substantiate grave allegations. William Logan writes:

"On 14, July 1788, a Brahmin who was required to convey the message refused to go, and assigned as his reason that there was a report prevailing that the Sultan had issued orders for all the Brahmins on the coast to be seized and sent up to Seringapatam." (William Logan: Malabar Manual Vol I pp 448 &449)

The basis of this was the report circulated by the Chief of Tellicherry.

"In July 1788, the circumcision of many Brahmins took place." (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous SI No 56 Part I p 89)

Colonel Mark Wilkes writes:

"It was at Kuttipuram that 2000 Nairs with their families were converted." (Colonel Mark Wilkes: Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore vol II p 136)

Logan completes the picture in the following manner:

"The unhappy captives gave a forced assent and on the next day the rite of circumcision was performed on all the males, every individual of both sexes being compelled to close the ceremony by eating beef." (William Logan: Malabar Manual vol I pp 448 &449)

The source of this report was also the Chief of Tellicherry who wrote:

"It was now (that) many of the Nairs were cut off, circumcised or obliged to fly to the Jungle." (Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous SI No 56 part I p 90)

The Chief of Tellicherry, in turn, had relied on the words of a bewildered Brahmin, who had refused to serve as a messenger for fear of conversion, and who confessed that he had received the news from someone else. The nature of the relation between the Chief of Tellicherry and Tipu can be understood from the following letter that Tipu wrote to him.

"You are not a good man, but whether good or bad doesn't matter! I have many lakhs of people like you in my service and so has the Company ... From this time forward, you must not write to me for anything of business, for if you write to me I shall not send any answer. Hope you understand it." (Poona Residency Correspondence SI No 37 A p 37)

Thus the sources and their nature are most untrustworthy. Another grave charge of mass conversion was reported from Coorg where it is rumoured that 70,000

were circumcised and made Muslims. This story had also originated from an absurd report of L Avvon, the Chief of Tellicherry to CW Mallet, the Resident of Poona on 31 December 1789, obviously designed to create a stir among the Maratha chieftains.

“Tippoo was in the suburbs of Tellicherry to marry his son to the daughter of Bullia Bebbu, widow of the late Ali Raja. During the celebration of the marriage, 40,000 captives, unhappy families of the Coorg country and other parts of the Malabar Coast, are to be circumcised.” (Poona Residency Correspondence SI No 51 p 43)

The same report was endorsed by Cornwallis in his letter to CW Mallet, the Resident of Poona. (Foreign Political Proceedings 5 February 1790 Consultations No 14, Cornwallis to Mallet 255 & 256) The real significance of the communication and its ulterior purpose become evident when we recollect that it was on 29 December 1789 that the first attack on the Travancore Lines took place, thus providing the English with the cause for declaring war against Tipu. It is evident that these reports were deliberately aimed at winning over the Marathas whose help the English were soliciting in their campaign against Tipu. If Tipu was so desirous of acquiring converts as his opponents have made out, he could very easily have forced his prisoners of wars to embrace his religion. But what actually took place was quite contrary to it as is evident from a letter that Tipu has written to Ghulam Ali Khan and Ali Reza, Tipu's *vakils* who were then negotiating with the English in the camp of Cornwallis. Tipu writes:

“Several people belonging to the Raja of Travancore were made prisoners. I gave each of them a rupee and a cloth and released them before the peace was concluded.” (Poona Residency Correspondence No 465 p 603)

Again a *purwana* from Tipu Sultan to the Pettah of Coorg issued in the same period of the alleged conversion throws much light on his religious policy. Written on 21 May 1791 it ran as follows:

“It is well known to me that you have for a long period experienced much trouble in your country and under this consideration, I forgive everything which has happened. You may now fulfill your several duties as subjects and observe all the customs of your religion agreeably to ancient practices and whatever you formerly paid to your own Rajas, the same I expect you will now pay to the government.” (Poona Residency Correspondence No 313 pp 421 & 22)

This was the policy that Tipu consistently followed throughout his reign. Regarding Tipu's treatment of Christians, the author of 'The Memoirs of Tipu Sultan' writes:

“Tipu is also said to have carried away from the Province of Malabar 7,00,000 Christians and to have made Muhammadans of 10,000 Hindus.” (Memoirs of Tipu Sultan p 270)

This is a glaring instance to prove the incredibility of the allegations brought against Tipu. The Joint Commissioners of Malabar in the 'Summary Account of Christians' - obtained from Major Dow - has calculated thus:

“At present there are 26 churches and about 20,000 souls under the cure of the Bishop of Verapolly. The number of native Malabar Christians on the whole of Malabar Coast is not more than 200,000 souls of which about 90,000 are settled in the Travancore territory.” (Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous SI No 56 part 1 p)

Even according to the Census of 1921, the number of Christians in Malabar does not exceed 58,557. (CA Innes Malabar: Gazetteers Vol II Appendix V pp 31 & 36)

Buchanan who interviewed the religious head of the Christians of Malabar in the year 1801 testifies that their number was on the increase even during the Mysorean rule and that he did not hear of Christians being forced by Tipu to accept Islam. (Buchanan: A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore Canara and Malabar Vol II p 391) Another instance is cited by Barthalomeau who was in the Verapolly Seminary during the time of the attack of Tipu on Travancore lines.

He has written:

“Naked Christians and Hindus were dragged to pieces, tied to the feet of elephants. All churches and temples were destroyed. Christians and pagan women were forcibly married to Muslims.” (Voyages to East Indies - Translation by Froster pp 141 & 42)

Barthalomeau was prompted to write thus by the reports carried to his ears by those who had fled from the suburbs of Travancore Lines. His own experience was far otherwise. About the fate of the Verapolly churches and the Christians there, he has written:

“By the grace of God and the favour of our Apostle Ouseph, our church and monasteries were not burnt down. They were neither desecrated nor made the objects of the Sultan’s wrath.” (Voyages to East Indies - Translation by Froster pp 141 & 42)

Another valuable testimony that exonerates Tipu of the base charges brought against him comes from the author of Cochin State Manual, who has written on the strength of the authority of temple records that when the Mysorean army marched to Thrissur, the priests of the great temple in the city and the Swamiars of the Mutt locked up the temple and fled to Chennamangalam. When they returned after the departure of Sardar Khan, they found everything intact, and the temple chronicler noted with considerable surprise that not only were the places of worship not pillaged or defiled, as was anticipated, but not a single door was found unlocked by the enemy. (C Achutha Menon: Cochin State Manual p 122)

Thus the personal experience of people was utterly different from the rumours that reached their ears regarding Tipu.

Far from persecuting the Hindus Tipu actually conferred on them great honours and raised them to high positions. His Prime Minister was Purnayya and his Treasurer was Krishna Rao. Shama Iyengar was the Minister of Post and Police and his brothers Ranga Iyengar and Narasing Rao held high positions at Seringapatam. Srinivasa Rao and Appagi Ram, Mool Chand and Siyan Rai and Nayak Rao and Nayak Sanjayana were Tipu’s chief confidants and members of his

diplomatic missions his *Foujdar* of Coorg was a Brahmin, Nagappayya. Most of his *amils* and revenue officers were Hindus. A number of military generals and governors of Tipu were his trusted Hindu subjects. Madanna and afterwards Srinivas Rao were the civil governors of Malabar. Ramalinga Pillai was one of the important *sirestadars* of Tipu, who helped Mir Ibrahim to carry out his revenue reforms. Most of his revenue collection, and writers in Malabar were Hindus. (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous SI No 56 p 155) Jemea, of whom Malabar Commissioners refer to as a Brahmin of a very respectable character, was employed as an officer under Tipu. (Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous SI No 59 para 39 p 43) Naonji Pilla and Oudhoot Rao were important revenue officers. (Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous para 47 p 47)

Tipu's relation with Sringeri Mutt is well-known. In the Ernakulam Archives is preserved, a very interesting document related to the account of the 4th Anglo-Mysore war given by an eyewitness. We are told by the writer of this document how Tipu visited the Mutt, barefooted, and received blessings from the *Jagadguru* - the High Priest of the Mutt. The document bears mention of a letter that the Guru gave to the Maratha chief, urging him to terminate his alliance with the British and to help Tipu, instead. (Ernakulam Archives 1 No VII 1st series pp 481 - 83) This overt help given by the *Guru*, at the risk of incurring the displeasure of Tipu's enemies speaks volumes regarding the very warm relationship that existed between Tipu and the religious head of the Sringeri Mutt. Details regarding Tipu's relationship with the Sringeri Mutt are given in pages 355 and 356 of 'The History of Tipu Sultan' by Prof Mohibbul Hassan Khan)

The stories about the desecration of Hindu temples at the hands of Tipu are as untrue as those of forced conversions and persecution of Hindus. On the contrary, evidence is abundant to disprove it. The Mysore Archaeological Report brings to light a number of gifts and contributions given by Tipu to various temples within his kingdom. Lakshmikantha Temple in Nanjangode Taluk has four silver cups, a silver plate and a silver spoon with the inscriptions that they were gifts from Tipu. (Mysore: Archaeological Report 1917 p 59) Narayana Swami Temple at Melukote contains gold and silver vessels and some jewels with Tipu's name engraved on them. (Epigraphica Carnatica vol III series 77) Srikanteswara Temple at Nanjangode possesses a jewelled cup set with five kinds of precious stones at the bottom bear the name Tipu Sultan Padasa. (Epigraphica Carnatica vol III series 77 p58) In the Rananatha Temple at Seringapatam, there are seven silver cups and seven camphor burners, the inscriptions on which show that they were gifts of Tipu Sultan Padasa. (Mysore: Archaeological Report 1911 pp 23-40) In Kerala, where the story of temple destruction is deep-rooted Tipu had made liberal contributions to

various temples and *satrams*. The following document relates to the rent-free lands given by Tipu Sultan to various temples, *satrams* and divine heads or Kerala. (Kozhikode Archives: *Inam* Registers, 5 folio volumes)

SI No	Donee	Location	Extent of Land in Acres
1	Mannur Temple	Chelembra Amsam, Ernad Taluk	70.42 wetland 3.29 garden land
2	Tiruvanchikulam Siva Temple	Vailattur Amsam, Ponnani Taluk	208.2 wet land 3.39 garden land
3	Guruvayur Temple	Guruvayur Amsam, Ponnani Taluk	46.02 wet land 458.32 garden land
4	Trikkantiyur Vettakkorumakankavu Temple	Kasba Amsam Calicut Taluk	122.70 wet land 73.36 garden land
5	Kuttamadathil Srikumaran Namboodiripad	Kadikad Amsam, Ponnani Taluk	27.97 wet land 6.91 garden land
6	Trikkandiyur Samootham Temple	Trikkandiyur Amsam , Ponnani Taluk	20.63 wet land 0.41 garden land
7	Naduvil Madathil Tirumumbu	Thrissur	40.26 wet land 22.13 garden land 4.17 dry land

Yet, the bitter critics of Tipu consoled themselves with the remark:

“The districts around Mysore abhor him and also he was so suspicious and cruel that none of his subjects none probably his children lamented his fall.” (HH Dowell: Cambridge History of India vol V p 342)

But, the truth was something else. The two Colonels who successfully led the English army into the fort of Seringapatam, recorded regarding the funeral procession of their fallen enemy thus:

“The streets, through which the procession passed, were lined with inhabitants; many of whom prostrated themselves before the body and expressed their grief by loud lamentations.” (Colonel Alexander Beatson: Origin and Conduct of War with Tipu Sultan p 148; The Memories of Tipu Sultan pp 311 & 312)

If Tipu Sultan was cruel and if people hated him, this would have been the most appropriate time to show their resentment. The English would have been immensely pleased by such gestures. To show such sincere grief and lamentation towards a dead monarch in such adverse circumstances was seldom witnessed by the annals of Indian History. Colonel Alexander Beatson writes:

“To add to the solemnity of the scene, the evening closed with a most dreadful of storm, attended with rain, thunder and lightning, by which two officers and some others in the Bombay Company were killed and severely hurt.” (Colonel Alexander Beatson: Origin and Conduct of War with Tipu Sultan p 149)

This and similar other things about him could have been the reason why people of Mysore elevated Tipu in to high esteem and even now assign to him some sort of divinity and offer prayers at his tomb, to redress their grievances. Disregarding the religious aspect, it portrays the lofty inference of the people regarding Tipu Sultan of Mysore.

The facts discussed in the above pages, therefore, can convince any sane person, of the sad disparity between the truth about two of the monarchs of medieval India and the terrible stories that have taken root in the popular mind about them. The deliberate efforts taken by English historians to hide the truth about these rulers and to project a wrong image of theirs on to the screen of history can also be perceived here. If rather elaborate details about the attitude of Aurangzeb and Tipu towards Hindus are given, it is because it has been necessary to supply them in order to contest the vast iniquity done by English historians and their Indian students.

These two Muslim emperors of medieval India are but outstanding examples of the innumerable cases in Indian history that cry out for exoneration. It must be borne in mind that the Muslim community today stands to gain nothing at all by insisting on the truth about the Muslim rulers. Even as the Hindu historians have nothing to gain by belittling them. Therefore considerations of caste and religion should be thrown away and history must make use of the criterion of the truth.

CHAPTER 14: SOURCES - CHAFF AND GRAIN

In the preceding chapters, I have made references to several instances in Indian history where falsehood and deliberate distortion of facts have prevented the students of history from learning at the truth. Even the sources, which are said to be original, are far from being trustworthy. Therefore, it is high time to undertake a reassessment of these sources, with unbiased judgment and detachment, sorting out the corn from the chaff. Only when these sources have been subjected to this process, can they be of use to those who sincerely undertake historical research.

An attempt has been made to bring to light some of the glaring defects that are inherent in these original sources, which have been given far too much importance in the writing of Indian history. One of the sources of information is

the writings of the various travellers who have visited this country of ours. These travelogues supply a mine of information regarding the people of India, their political institutions, as well as their religious and social customs. But, there are different types of travelogues. Very often, their qualities were programmed by the motives that brought their writers to the shores of India. While some came seeking better avenues of trade and commerce, others arrived in obedience to the call of religion. Diplomatic missions were the aim of still many others. Only a few have been prompted by a pure and dispassionate interest in India, the land and its people. It is but natural that the writings of these would assume a subjectivity which at times would be completely misleading. The danger that can threaten the objectivity of these travelogues are the politico-religious bias of the writers, their reliance on rumours and hearsay, the very human tendency exhibited by many of them to pen exaggerated pictures of what they saw and at times even of what they did not see. Their tolerance of the treatment they received from the rulers and the people of the concerned countries must also have influenced their recording of the facts about them.

From the writings of the Greek travellers, right down to those of modern writers, these defects can be detected. Some of these travellers like Suleiman and Ibn Battuta have caused much havoc and confusion. Suleiman visited Kozhikode as an ambassador from Persia, with the religious mission of converting the Zamorin of Kozhikode to Islam. He was on his way to China. Failing in his mission, he returned. One of the important arguments against the strong tradition prevalent in Kerala, regarding the religious conversion of Cheraman Perumal and the dismemberment of his empire, has been derived from the writings of Suleiman. He wrote that he did not see in Malabar anyone who spoke Arabic or Chinese. (SM Husayn Nainar: The Knowledge of India Possessed by Arab Geographers down to the 14th Century AD p 60) On the strength of this, modern historians argue that Islam was introduced into Kerala only after 852 AD. (Logan: Malabar Manual vol I p 231; Nagam Aiyar: Travancore State Manual vol I p 225)

In fact, Husayn Nainar in his monumental work, 'Arab Geographers of India', writes that the travelogue ascribed to Suleiman might have been written by some other traveller who visited this country earlier than Suleiman because the hook assigned to him is a compendium of the travel records written by many a navigator or traveller. (SM Husayn Nainar: The Knowledge of India Possessed by Arab p 59) Joseph Tussaint Reynaud who translated the work says that Suleiman failed even to record the activities of his compatriots in Gujarat and Bombay and that:

"His main object was a voyage to China without turning to right or left and he did not pay much attention to the conditions of affairs on the Indian coast" (Quoted by Dr Tara Chand: Influence of Islam on Indian Culture p 38)

Suleiman fails to mention either about Christians or Jews. It would be unhistorical therefore to argue on the strength of this that both Christians and Jews came only after this date. Another important traveller, who has created much confusion in Indian history, is Abu Abdulla popularly known as Ibn Battuta. He visited this country in 1330 AD when Muhammad bin Tughlak was the Emperor of India. He spent 10 years at his court and left for China. On his way he was detained in Kerala, where he spent more than eight years. After returning to his native country, he began to narrate his experiences during the course of his long travels. Ibn Battuta left his home town Fez when he was about 21. After roaming around the world, when he returned to his native country, he was in his fifties. His countrymen had given him up for dead and when he finally made his appearance, he created quite a sensation. People flocked around him and listened to his fabulous tales with wonder and awe. Encouraged by the response of his audience Ibn Battuta, like many other travellers, spun a number of tales where facts and fictions were mingled without scruples. In a very short time, he had become a legend. The Nawab having had occasion to hear about this weather-beaten traveller and his tales, called him to his presence. After listening to some of his stories, the Nawab dismissed them and their narrator with the remark:

“This Sheik is a liar.” (Ibn Khaldun: *Muquadhimah* Translation by France Rosenthal vol I p 360)

However, afterwards, at the suggestion of the great scholar of the times, Ibn Khaldun, the Nawab, appointed a minister to take down these stories. (Ibn Khaldun: *Muquadhimah* Translation by France Rosenthal vol I p 360) Ibn-Battuta now found himself in a delicate situation. Having earlier embellished his stories with colossal exaggerations and figments of his imagination, he could not take back any of these, now that he was forced to put them in writing. Thus he did the only thing possible, he wrote down his tales as he had narrated them to impress his astounded listeners. This is the circumstance in which Ibn Battuta’s *Kitab-al-Rahila* came to be accepted as the refined material for the basis of historical study. To him we owe the story of how Muhammad bin Tughlak engineered an accident that put an end to Ghiyasuddin Tughlak’s life. (Ibn-Battuta: *Kitab-al-Rahila* Translation by HAR Gibb p 128) But, Ziauddeen Barni and other contemporary historians have denied the truth of this charge, and have emphatically declared that it was an accidental death caused by lightning.

Ibn Battuta’s next lie and one that looks quite preposterous was that Muhammad bin Tughlak changed his capital from Delhi to Deogir, which he renamed as Daulatabad. Elaborating on this patent lie, he goes on to say how the Sultan ordered each and every citizen of Delhi to leave the capital before an appointed time on penalty of death and how a subsequent search of the capital revealed two men hiding there, one of them blind and the other lame. He goes on to

describe how these unfortunate men were punished in the most merciless manner. Engrossed in fabricating his fantastic story, Ibn Battuta was oblivious to his self-contradictions. After stating that the search ordered by a royal mandate discovered only two men prowling in the deserted city, Ibn Battuta blunders when he goes on to say that the brutal punishment meted out to these two men terrified the people of Delhi into making haste in leaving the Capital. This is not the only discrepancy in the matter. Ibn Battuta carries on describing how the Sultan, viewing the deserted city from the lofty terraces of his palace, sighed in supreme satisfaction:

“Now my heart is content, I have taught the impudent citizens of Delhi a lesson.” (Ibn Battuta: *Muquadhimah* Translation by HAR Gibb)

It is very clear that if the Emperor was still in Delhi, the Capital could not certainly be described as deserted. Reliable sources tell us that he dined with more than 20,000 of his courtiers, generals and illustrious poets, every day. That the Sultan never entertained the idea of shifting the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad is obvious from the account of Abbas Ahamed-al-Umari, a man of considerable learning and ability. He says:

“Delhi is the capital of the Kingdom of India. Next comes Dewakir (Deogir), was which founded by the Sultan of that empire and named by him as *Kaabutul Islam* or the Metropolis of Islam.” (Elliot and Dowson: *Badr Chach* vol III p 574)

Badaruddin who was known as Badarchach of Chach or Tashkent, who was under Muhammad bin Thughlak writes about a letter he received from the Sultan:

“On the first of *Shahban*, the year 745 *Hijra*, orders were issued that I should go to the country of Deogir and I was thus addressed: ‘Oh, Badar, accompanied by Jamil Malik, the poet and Nekroz, the slave, take thy departure with a pomp worthy of Rustum. May He who accomplishes all designs aid thee, may the God of both worlds protect thee; but speak not of Deogir, for it is Daulatabad to which I allude, a fort exalted to the heavens. Although it is a point in my Kingdom, it comprises what is equal to 1000 kingdoms of Jamshid. Go to the Court of the Governor of the Country, Kutlagh Khan, and acquire honour by this presentation.” (Elliot and Dowson: *Badr Chach* vol III p 570)

This makes it obvious that the City of Daulatabad was not brought to the notice of the people through imperial proclamation, but through the most courteously worded personal letters written to his nobles. Another point worthy of attention here is that the Emperor himself speaks of the magnificence of this newly built and well-planned City, Deogir, to which he intended a section of his nobility to shift. The idea being a well thought out one, elaborate preparations were carried out to make the place ‘exalted to the Heavens’.

Al-Umeri writes that Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlak had carefully arranged an effective system of communication while he intended to have both Delhi and Deogir flourish simultaneously in imperial splendour:

“All through the country, which separates the two capitals of the Empire - Delhi and Deogir, the Sultan has had drums placed at every post station. When any event occurs in a city or when the gate of the one is opened or closed, the drum is instantly beaten. The next nearest drum is then beaten and in this manner the Sultan is daily and exactly informed at what time the gates of the most distant cities are opened and closed.” (Elliot and Dowson: *Wa Mamalikul Amsar Absar* vol III p 582)

Ibn Battuta's fanciful accounts about Muhammad bin Tughlak stand exposed as blatant lies in the light of such revealing and authentic contemporary records. Any sane person will have the urge to echo the verdict that Ibn Khaldun pronounced long ago upon his countryman:

“He narrated such fantastic tales that his listeners were all dumbfounded and remarked that his stories cannot be believed since all people consider him a liar.” (Ibn Khaldun: *Muquadhimah* Translation by France Rosenthal vol I p 370)

The two specimens of travelogues here examined go a long way to prove the need for approaching similar sources with much care and caution. It is easy to be duped by them unless we are even on our guard to rift the truth from the mass of irrelevant details, fabricated stories and deliberate contravention of truth. Diplomatic letters occupy an important place among original sources and no student of history can afford to ignore them. However, the same warning that was given earlier about travelogues must be given in connection with these also. A number of factors make diplomatic correspondence unacceptable at its face value. A diplomat writes guardedly with a high degree of caution. The letter is well thought out, and safely worded, and it is always meant to defend the country of the writer or to justify its stand. Hence it is not always of such absolute veracity as to demand the absolute credence of the historian. Moreover, letters dispatched from one ruler to another, often smack of persuasiveness and is almost always meant to win over a particular person. As self-interest plays a major role in the composition of such letters, truth is made subservient to propaganda. Inaccuracy also marks these letters and this may be due to the ignorance of the writer regarding some event or personage or due to his reliance on hearsay and popular opinion.

Among the innumerable letters that have been used in the reconstruction of the period of Tipu Sultan, many have been found to pass on information that is incorrect. A telling example is the letter written by CW Mallet to William Medows:

“I have this instant received the following intelligence from the southern frontier of the Stale. The remainder of the enemy horse on this frontier has proceeded toward Seringapatam. Tipu has issued orders through his dominions to bring pioneers to be furnished from the different towns and districts. The news of his being wounded is not circulated in these parts, but it is said Mir Kamaruddeen fell in the attack of the Travancore lines.” (Poona Residency Correspondence vol. III No 81 p 89)

When such a letter falls into the hands of a student of history, he is apt to believe its contents implicitly, but the truth could be far otherwise. The letter quoted here, circulates a cruel falsehood that Mir Kamaruddeen Khan died during the attack of the Travancore Lines, whereas in reality he survived the fourth Anglo-Mysore War. (Tipu Sultan p 164)

In another letter Mallet corrects himself thus:

“A man of mine is just arrived from Tippoo’s camp before the Travancore lines which he left the middle of February. He assured me that he saw Tippoo in the beginning of that month in perfect health and that he had not been wounded. His cousin Kamaruddeen Khan received two deep wounds on his breast of which it is expected he will recover.” (Poona Residency Correspondence Vol III No 88 p 100)

In fact, relying on these apocryphal authorities, historians believe that Tipu himself led the attack on Travancore Lines on 29 December 1789 and that he received a severe fall. (Political Proceedings 3 February 1790 Consultations No 5 January 4 1790 Powney to Holland) The fall is said to have made him lame for the rest of his life. (Colonel Mark Wilkes: Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore Vol II p 146) Such letters, while they provide us with a dramatic and interesting feature of the event, actually lead us astray because Tipu was neither present on that occasion, nor did he suffer a disabling fall. (Political Proceedings 10 February 1790 Consultations No 9, 1 January 1790 Tipu to Holland)

One or two letters of the same period are also worth reproducing to clarify how original records themselves can mislead the inquisitive enquirer. This letter is written by the English Resident of Hyderabad to Cornwallis on 26 February 1790. It runs as follows:

“A private newspaper is received from Tippoo’s camp. The Nizam here has heard from the private *huncars* that Tipoo Naig died on the 1st of *Rabu-ul-Avval* or 5 January 1790, after a week’s illness of an epidemical disorder that is very prevalent in his army. As this news was not well authenticated, the Nizam sent another person with promise of a reward to bring intelligence. People at Karnaul are prohibited from speaking of Tippoo’s death under pain of confinement. Whatever intelligence should be hereafter received shall be written to you.” (Foreign-English Translation of Persian Jan-June 1790 S No 30; National Archives of India: Original Receipts No 93)

On 16 March 1790, another letter was received by the Governor-General from the Resident of Hyderabad which says:

“Advice is received from Seringapatam that Tippoo Naig died on the 22nd *Rabee-ul-Akhar*, 9 January 1790, three days after he was wounded and his family members are in mourning now. But, the commanders or the troops till publish that he is alive, to prevent the troops from dispersing and confine whoever mention his death. The Nawab of Curnool has sent several spies to Tippoo’s army, to learn certain information. They will shortly return. Everyone is on his guard throughout the whole country. Thereafter will write whatever certain news is heard. The people belonging to the *zamindars* of Calicut Coast, in conjunction with the Malewar troops, has fortified themselves in the hills and even on the

4th January were attacked by Tippoo on foot with a large body of infantry and Tippoo was wounded with an arrow and musket bullets.” (Foreign-English Translation of Persian Jan-June 1790 S No 30; National Archives of India: Original Receipts No 66 p 141)

Students depending on any of the letters cited above may plead that his death took place earlier. In all these cases, it must be noticed, the mischief done is not intentional, but the result of erroneous reports. Nevertheless, a considerable portion of our historical literature bears signs of deliberate attempts to falsify facts and to portray events in a totally fallacious vein. This regrettable phenomenon occurs especially when the conquerors undertake to write the history of the conquered. This was the reason why in the writings of Greek historians, Hannibal appears to be a ruthless barbarian - an image that has been handed down to posterity through generations.

In the same way, the conquering Aryans conferred upon the Indus Valley people an inferior status and depicted them as an uncivilized race. The Aryans in their literature immortalised their heroes with the halo of divinity and condemned their opponents for everlasting ignominy by portraying them as demons or *rakshasas*. Thus, our ancient literature came to be peopled with such monstrous figures as Ravana, Bali, Sugreeva and the like. In every way, the Aryan reference was affirmed and whatever admirable qualities the enemy had were relegated to the background. When English historians penned the history of medieval India the above mentioned tendency came into operation. They were under the compulsion to prove that the culture that they brought in, the administrative system that they introduced and the relations with the subjects that they maintained were all superior to what prevailed here before their advent.

To enhance their own greatness and glory, it was necessary for the conquering English to detract from the greatness of those rulers who held the reins of the Indian domain before them, and to hold them up to the scorn and ridicule of posterity. Hence the medieval period of Indian History came to be steeped in comparative darkness. This was not all. Guilty of having shown terrible injustice and cruelty to the people of the conquered territory, they naturally brought to cover up their inequities under false allegation brought against their opponents. The magnitude of the allegations varied in proportion to the intensity of the resistance that the opponents offered. The English, who in their long period of conquest first met with defeat from the hands of Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, naturally avenged this disgrace by painting these two rulers in the most loathsome colours. To give to their portraits a resemblance of fidelity, they resorted to diverse means and techniques. A spate of autobiographies and memoirs designed to appear authentic sprang up. Books containing unflattering caricatures of these personalities and unattractive or even disgusting details

about their lives and deeds were prompted to be written. The irreconcilable chaos and permanent harm done by these counterfeit historical records can hardly be depicted brusquely. These 'cooked-up facts' being accepted as genuine, give rise to innumerable misconceptions about these rulers which still linger in the popular mind.

The Malabar Edicts of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan which served as the foundation for all charges of bigotry, intolerance and oppression brought against these rulers are the most glaring examples of the type of records borne out of malice. It was the book, 'History of Haider Shah and of His Son Tipu Sultan,' that first brought to the notice of the world an edict supposedly issued by Haider Ali in the year 1766 to the people of Malabar. It is claimed that the Edict appeared consequent to the suppression of a general revolt that took place in Malabar. The author of the Book reports:

After the routing of the rebels, Haidar Ali issued a solemn edict which declared the Nairs deprived of all their privileges and ordained that their caste, which was placed after the Brahmins, should thereafter be the lowest of all the castes subjecting them to salute, the Pariahs and others of the lowest castes by ranging themselves before them as the other Malabaris had been obliged to do before the Nairs, permitting all the other castes to bear arms and forbidding them to Nairs, who till then had enjoyed the sole right of carrying them; at the same, time, allowing and commanding all persons to kill such Nairs as were found bearing arms. This Ordinance being found to make the submission of the Nairs absolutely impossible because they would have thought death preferable to such degradation, he made a new edict by which he re-established in all their rights and privileges, such Nairs as should embrace Islam." (MMDLT: History of Haider Shah and of His Son, Tipu Sultan p 141)

This scandalous edict was quite eagerly digested by all our historians who used it as their trump card to prove religious intolerance of Haider Ali. Before we subject the clauses of the Edict to close scrutiny, a few observations regarding the Book have to be made. The Book was published anonymously, though a hint was provided that the author was a French General in the Mughal army. (MMDLT: History of Haider Shah and of His Son, Tipu Sultan - preface p 2) William Logan who leaned heavily on the Book and quoted extensively from it introduces the writer as:

"Prince Gulam Muhammad's author and refers to him as a general in the Mughal army,"

This has misled several writers including KM Panikkar, who without having access to the original text happened to get acquainted with it through William Logan's 'Malabar Manual', into supposing that the author of the Book is a Muslim employed in the Mughal army. Panikkar refers to him as 'a Muslim Historian', in one place, and in another, qualifies him as 'a pro-Haider Muslim Historian'. (KM Panikkar: History of India pp 432 & 442)

If the Edict were genuine, then it is a wonder why it has escaped the notice of such faithful chroniclers, as Andrien Moens, the Linguist of the Tellicherry Factory,

Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani and others. Had the Edict really existed, it would surely have found its way to the documents of any of these writers. They would have pounced on it finding it as the best most powerful tool to malign their avowed rival. The British would have wielded it as the most devastating weapon to demolish the image of the Mysore sultans. Since no other authority corroborates the pronouncement of our unknown author, it can safely be presumed to be an invention of a malicious mind to denigrate the Mysorean ruler. Andrien Moens, who was the then Dutch Governor of the Malabar Coast, was also the biographer of Haider Ali. Neither in his 'Memorandum on the Administration of the Malabar Coast' nor in his biography, 'Haider Ali', the so-called pronouncement of the Edict has found any mention. Similarly, a number of edicts in the name of Tipu Sultan were also brought out by people with vested interests. One of the most preposterous of these edicts pertaining to Malabar is given by Colonel Mark Wilkes in his 'Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore.' It runs as follows:

"From the period of the conquest until this day, during twenty-four years, you have been a turbulent and refractory people and in the wars waged during your rainy season, you have caused numbers of our warriors to taste the draught of martyrdom. Be it so; that is past is past. Thereafter you must proceed in an opposite manner, dwell quietly and pay your dues like good subjects and since it is a practice with you for one woman to associate with ten men and you leave your mothers and sisters unconstrained in their obscene practices and are thence all born in adultery and are more shameless in your connections than the beasts of the field. I hereby require you to forsake these sinful practices and live like the rest of mankind. And if you are disobedient to these commands I have repeated vows to honour the whole of you with Islam and to march all the chief persons to the seat of government."

(Colonel Mark Wilkes: Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore p120)

There are a large number of other edicts also in the name of Tipu Sultan, the descriptions of which would consume a lot of time and space. After the searching scrutiny of the available materials of this period we may legitimately form the conclusion that the so-called edict was manipulated by Colonel Mark Wilkes, who wrote the history of Mysore between 1810 and 1815.

All the writers after this period considered Wilkes as the sole authority of Mysorean history and blindly followed him. No other reliable evidence of an earlier date can be cited to corroborate considered Colonel Mark Wilkes's claim. It was in 1792-93 that the Joint Commissioners of Malabar made countrywide enquiries with the leading men of Malabar for the Malabar settlement. Of a long chain of questions covering a wide range of subjects not a single question pertaining to the Edict was asked. Not only has the subject not been mentioned in the Report of the Commissioners, but it has also been shut out from their

proceedings. If such a hateful Edict was circulated in the year 1790, the Joint Commissioners of Malabar, who started their work in 1792, would not have failed to measure the extent of the resentment it aroused among the people. At least the joint commissioners might have referred to such an edict either in their proceedings or in their report, if at all such an edict had been proclaimed.

In 1800, Dr Francis Buchanan, who was a very vigilant and accurate observer, was deputed by the Governor General to assess the real condition of the ceded Malabar Province. His invaluable work, 'A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Carnatic Mysore and Malabar,' which was published in 1801 immediately after its submission, does not make even a passing reference to such an edict. Another contemporary observer of this period was Van Angel Beck, the then Dutch Governor of Malabar who also wrote 'The Memorandum on the Administration of Malabar Coast.' It is significant that he too does not make any reference to such an edict. His letters written to the Rajas of Kerala, especially to the Raja of Cochin, cover a wide variety of subjects and are even now preserved in the Ernakulam Archives. But, the letters do not mention anything about the Edict. Andrien Moens, who was at Batavia during this period and who was in constant touch with the Raja of Cochin, had not heard anything about this infamous diktat. The Tellicherry Factory records that cover even the smallest details of the Malabar affairs do not offer us any reason to credit the story of such a statute. Even the Muslim historians of Tipu's Court, including Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani, do not mention this anywhere. If such an edict was proclaimed by Tipu, these historians at least might have made use of it in their writings to portray Tipu as the Champion of Islam.

After the Fall of Seringapatam, Tipu's library and a mass of papers fell into the hands of the triumphant British. Colonels Kirk Patrick's 'Select Letters of Tipu Sultan' and Colonel Alexander Beatson's 'The Origin and Conduct of War with Tipu Sultan' were the title of two books written utilising the materials from Tipu's library and a mass of papers that the British pillaged. Though hundreds of letters, proclamations and edicts were published by them in these volumes, neither of them has so much as mentioned this Malabar Edict of Tipu Sultan. No evidence prior to 1810 has been obtained to corroborate what Colonel Mark Wilkes wrote after 1810 in his book, 'Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore'.

Therefore, this can also be justly and rightly considered as an utterly false document invented by vested interests to disparage Tipu Sultan. The main purpose of examining the facts about these fabricated edicts has been to show how contemporary historical literature itself can be misleading and even pernicious. These facts should serve as a warning to all of us to scan the original

sources carefully and rely only on those documents that are corroborated by other authorities. Undoubtedly, one of the basic lessons to be learned in the writing of history is not to depend on secondary sources alone.

CHAPTER 14: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FOUR ANGLO-MYSORE WARS

The history of India of the 18th Century can be divided into two parts: the first, beginning with the death of Aurangzeb in the year 1707 and extending to the ascendancy of Haidar Ali in the year 1761, and the second, extending from this date till the death of Tipu Sultan in 1799. The death of Aurangzeb was the trigger for the downfall of the grand Mughals. The period from 1707 to 1761, was a period of turmoil and confusion in the history of India. It witnessed a number of native and foreign powers fighting each other to establish their supremacy in India. The Sikhs, the Marathas, the Nizam, the French, the Dutch and the English emerged as independent sovereigns. They held sway in their respective domains which were carved out from the ruins of the grand monarchy of India. But, no power whether Indian or foreign, proved competent enough to fill the political vacuum created by the later Mughals. The Third Panipet War finally broke the Maratha ascendancy and with it all hope, of an Indian power gaining supremacy over the whole of India, was lost.

The foreign powers - the Dutch, the French and the English exercised equal influence and commanded more or less the same strength in their political and commercial activities. The grand monarchy under the Mughals had continued for a considerable long stretch of time. Once, it declined, the fall was irreparable. The country became an ocean of intrigues and conspiracy. No power could gain an upper hand in Indian Politics. Thus, in the first part of 18th Century, a number of powers almost equal in strength emerged on the political map of India.

When we enter into the second part of the 18th Century, the political horizon of India becomes clear and definite. It was in 1761 that Haider Ali became the ruler of Mysore. He and his son Tipu Sultan unquestionably established their superiority over their Indian contemporaries. They proved beyond doubt that if there was to be a trial of strength between themselves and other Indian and foreign powers severally, they would have quite easily regained the lost political unity of India. The history of India regains importance from this time onwards, for it was the only power that could dream of integrating India once more under a national monarch. The period from 1761 onwards was thus a period when an attempt was made for the revival of the glory that was India. The modern outlook

of the Mysorean rulers and their eagerness to industrialise the country and introduce revolutionary reforms in the feudal and traditional society, lead us to the legitimate assumption that if the rulers of Mysore could triumph over the English, they would have modernised the country far better than the English had done. A serious study of the political, social and economic reforms innovated by them shows that radical changes would have been felt by the Indian society if the Mysorean power were destined to predominate Indian politics. But, that was not to be.

The course of Indian history took an unfortunate turn when the English emerged as the most decisive force among the European powers contending for supremacy in India. It was a strange coincidence that the year 1761, in which Haider Ali became the virtual ruler of Mysore, witnessed the establishment of the English as the foremost power among the Europeans in India. The fall of Pondicherry in January 1761 and Haider's success in May of the same year were the two events that occurred in southern India distinguishing both the English and Haider as major powers. (B Sheik Ali: British Relations with Haider Ali 1760 - 1782 p 31)

The Anglo-French contest for supremacy in India ended in the victory of the English, a victory that carried great political significance, and determined the subsequent history of India. It was in the same year that the Marathas retreated after their defeat from the last Battle of Panipet. The significance of the year 1761 AD does not end here. It was important yet another way. In this year, Rama Varma the Raja of Travancore became the most important power among the rulers of Kerala. The Raja of Cochin and the Zamorin of Kozhikode, who were in constant enmity with each other, accepted the Raja of Travancore as the arbitrator of future disputes between them. The close friendship and alliance of the Raja of Travancore with the English East India Company made them a formidable force in Kerala. Thus the political uncertainty of India was removed from 1761 onwards with the emergence of two important powers, the Mysore and the English - one Indian and the other foreign.

The history of India from 1761 AD to the close of the 18th century is the period of the struggle for supremacy between these two powers to decide the destiny of India and her people. The significance of the four Anglo-Mysore wars has to be evaluated on this background. However, generally, in the written history of India, no special treatment is given to signify its real importance. In fact, the four Anglo-Mysore wars were thus a trial of strength between the Indian aspiration of regaining her political unity and the English ambition of establishing a colonial empire. Studied from this point of view, - the period from 1761 to 1799, would certainly provide solutions for innumerable problems embedded in the history of

India. Hence, a close scrutiny of the exchanges between the East India Company and the Mysore sultans is necessary a sincere attempt to unravel some of the myths around some prominent figures of Indian history.

The first Anglo-Mysore War was started immediately after the conquest of Malabar by Haider Ali. The English were supported by the Marathas and the Nizam of Hyderabad. (Andrien Moens: Memorandum of the Administration on the Malabar Coast p 154) It was in accordance with the declared policy of Governor General Clive who wanted the 'overthrow of Haider Ali's usurped power.' (Board's Minutes & Consultations 25 August 1767)

He believed that:

"His (Haider Ali's) reduction is our most principal object, as the only sure method to give peace to the Carnatic and stability to our possessions. The sooner we extirpate him and restore the ancient family of Rajas, the better. (Madras to Bengal Consultations 31 August 1767)

But, Haider Ali bought off the Marathas and made peace with them. Then he sent his son, Tipu, on 11 June 1767 accompanied by Mahafuz Khan and Mir Ali Raja, to the Nizam who received them warmly. (Mir Husain Ali Khan Kirmani: *Nishanti-Haideri* - Translated by Colonel Mills pp 128 & 129) The Nizam was thus induced to throw over his allies and to join Mysore in fighting the English. In the first phase of the war the English won some brilliant victories. They captured Mangalore and invested with the Kannur Fort. On 3 March 1768, William Logan writes:

"The Prince of Kolatnad and the Raja of Kottayam had agreed to join with 1700 Nairs. But the combined forces of the local Rajas and English were repelled and made to sustain heavy loss by Ali Raja of Kannur." (William Logan: Malabar Manual vol I p 415)

When the British realised that the capture of the place was not an easy task, 'the scheme was finally abandoned.' (William Logan: Malabar Manual vol I p 415) The course of the first Anglo-Mysore war turned rapidly in favour of Haider Ali. The recapture of Mangalore and the flight of the panic-stricken English garrisons shattered the morale of the English in India and brought them disgrace. Colonel Mark Wilkes comments:

"It was the most shameful retreat. There were 41 guns 200 Europeans and 1200 *sepoys* in the Fort. The retreat was so shameful that they left behind their sick and wounded consisting of 80 Europeans and 180 *sepoys* and most of their arms and ammunitions." (Colonel Mark Wilkes: Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore Vol I p 608)

In fact, Colonel Mark Wilkes, though he cannot help betraying resentment at the hasty retreat of the garrisons does at the same time try to minimize the disgrace that had befallen upon the English by reducing the number of men left behind them to be captured by Tipu Sultan. The Dutch Governor Andrien Moens, reports the event in the following manner:

“The majority of the English were cut off from the fortress, put to the sword or taken prisoners and the result was that the English had to abandon the Fort and flee to Bombay leaving everything behind them.” (Andrien Moens: Memorandum of the Administration on the Malabar Coast p 155)

Another contemporary author corroborates the remarks of Andrien Moens:

“The rout of the English Army was so great that very few had time to make their escape on board the ship to which they communicated their fears. Their flights added to the ardour of Haider’s. Europeans and *sepoys* immediately embarked and took three transports. In this manner was the whole English army taken consisting of the general, 46 officers, 680 English troops and more than 6000 *sepoys* together with their arms and baggage.” (MMDLT History of Haider Shah and of His Son, Tipu Sultan P 235)

Thus the English force was driven out of Mangalore with much more casualties and captives left behind them than Colonel Mark Wilkes writes, ‘with such indecent haste,’ (William Logan: Malabar Manual vol I p 416) and this paved the way for Haider Ali to dispossess them from the rest of Malabar Coast.

In the next phase of the war, the Nizam made peace with the Company. But Haider pursued the war with varying fortunes. The English who felt eager for cessation of enmity with Haider opened negotiations for peace. But, Haider wanted to dictate terms before the very gates of Madras. The Company’s envoys charged with this mission received the following reply from Haider:

“I am coming to the gates of Madras and I will there to listen to the propositions the Governor and Council will have to make.” (MMDLT: History of Haider Shah and of His Son, Tipu Sultan P 243)

Haider Ali’s threats were not empty words.

“He with 6000 cavalry made a forced march to the Mounts, where he virtually dictated the terms of peace.” (Indian Records Series vol II - Vestiges of Old Madras 1640 - 1800, p 397)

The author of the history of Haider Shah says:

“While all the world was at a loss to determine where he was, he all at once showed himself at the gates of Madras, and dispatched a flag of truce to demand what propositions they had to make.” (MMDLT: History of Haider Shah and of His Son, Tipu Sultan p 243)

After reaching the neighbourhood of Madras, Haider wrote to Josias M Dupre, who was at this time the Second of the Council of Madras:

“I have been desirous of seeing you for this long time and being now arrived in your neighbourhood, have written to the Governor to send you hither to carry on a negotiation of peace. By the blessing of God, you are a great *sardar*, wise and experienced in all matters. You have moreover lately carried on a correspondence of letters relative to peace which makes me still more earnest to see you... Whatever tends to the establishing of a lasting peace between us, I shall inform you of the persons... Let me therefore, have the pleasure of seeing you as soon as possible... When you set out from Madras you will despatch a camel *hircarach* before with a letter, that I may find a great *sardar* to meet you near my army. May your happiness always increase...” (Indian Records Series, vol II p 598 Letter 28 March 1769)

Josias M Dupre accordingly set out on the morning of 30 March 1789 to Haider's camp. He was escorted and taken to the presence of Haider by an army general. After discussing the peace terms, Dupre returned in the evening to Madras. The Council, after two days of deliberation, on 2 April, drew up the treaty having terms that each would support the other if attacked. On 3 April 1769, the treaty was signed and sealed by Haider Ali. (William Logan: Malabar Manual Treaties etc. vol I CXLIV and LXXXVIII))

It is proved beyond doubt that Mysore under Haider Ali was a formidable force that could easily dispel any invading force whether Indian or foreign. Josias M Dupre who negotiated peace terms expressed his views on the peace concluded with Haider in the following private letter to Robert Orme:

"We have at length concluded peace with Haider such as will do us no honour yet it was necessary and there was no alternative but that or worse. The reason it seems so disgraceful is that it (the War) was begun with ideas of conquest on one part and it is said this is the first time a country enemy has gained an advantage over us; the latter part of the War, which probably will be thought the country liable to. An army of Maratha horse, we always dreaded because we always knew that it was not their business to fight but to plunder, to burn and destroy. It was Haider instead of Maratha and I think there can be no doubt but that whilst our force consists of infantry, only any power with a large body of horse may plunder and ruin the country and if we have nothing to support our armies in the field or in garrison, but the current revenues of the country the failure of these must bring ruin on us... What thing must have been our condition had the war continued... We had but provisions for 15 days in the Black Town, when the peace was concluded. Nothing could have prevented him in this path more than in the south from burning and destroying all the grain in the stock in the villages and on the ground. A famine would have ensued and as it is grain is scarce and there certainly will be great distress before the next crop. Although I was clear that the peace, such as it, was better for the Company than the continuance of the war, yet my mortifications are not small and I cannot avoid thinking myself unfortunate in coming to India just in time to share the disgrace and to have from henceforth affairs to manage which are so encumbered and entangled that I can see no course we can take without being exposed to new embarrassments..." (Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous - Robert Orme volume XXV 10 June 1769 Indian Record Series p 599)

The same sentiment was expressed by all English generals who participated in the First Anglo-Mysore War. General Joseph Smith who commanded the English Army against Haider wrote to Robert Orme on 28 March 1769 thus:

"I believe it is the first instance known throughout our history of Europeans pressing to surrender a town to blacks." (Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous - Smith to Orme 28 March 1769 vol XXII p 30)

In the long history of European colonisation in India, it was for the first time that an Indian power gained victory over the foreigners. This enthralling episode in the history of India which could arouse the national spirit of India and could inspire every Indian with pride and make him glory in the country's past has not been

given due importance or the recognition that it deserves, in the pages of Indian history. The reason why the English dreaded the rise of Mysorean power can easily be detected from this. (Indian Record Series: Vestiges of Old Madras 1640-1800 vol II p 548)

The Treaty of Madras that put an end to the hostilities between Haider Ali and the English contained a provision for an offensive and defensive alliance between Haider and the Company and for the mutual restitution of the conquest. The English did not carry out the provision of the treaty. (Indian Record Series - Vestiges of old Madras 1640-1800 vol II p 548)

Haider was too very indignant against the breach of treaty provisions by being elusive in assisting him against the Marathas. HH Dowell writes:

“But, in all probabilities what indisposed him much more than either of these circumstances was the fact that he had been wholly unable to induce them to renew that Treaty of Offensive and Defensive Alliance which they had concluded in 1769 but never carried out.”

(HH Dowell: Cambridge History of India vol VI p 282)

He had made more than one overture with that end in view, one of them so late as 1778. (Rumbold's Minutes: Madras Military Consultations Fort St George 4 July 1778)

On 13 March 1778, the French recognised the Declaration of Independence of America, and thus brought on another war with the English. (William Logan: Malabar Manual vol I p 424) The author of ‘The History of Haider Shah’ writes:

“Haider being informed in the month of August 1778 that hostilities had commenced between England and France, made a truce of six years with the Marathas.” (MMDLT History of Haider Shah and of His Son, Tipu Sultan p 255)

When news reached him about the outbreak of war between England and France, Haider Ali foresaw that he would have to enter into an open hostility with the English. The possession of Pondicherry fell from the French to the hands of the English. Soon after the commencement of the War, the English wanted to capture Mahe also, the remaining French settlement on the Malabar Coast. This awakened Haider Ali to the grave consequences that might accrue if Mahe came to be in the possession of the English. These French possessions were his supply centres and their capture by the English would vitally affect his interests. HH Dowell observes:

“By reasons of his conquest on the Malabar coast, he claimed full sovereignty over the whole area including the European settlements. The Europeans had never acknowledged this claim; the English in particular had rejected it.” (HH Dowell: Cambridge History of India vol VI p 282)

What Dowell considers as the claims of Haider Ali was reiterated in a letter on 19 March 1779, to the Governor of Madras, in which Haider Ali wrote:

“Now you have set on foot an expedition against Mahe. There are many factories in my country belonging to the Dutch, English, French, Portuguese and Danes who trade in my

country on the footing of subjects. None of those possess forts or countries which should cause to any other to attack them and if anyone should attack them it will be proper for me to give assistance to those whom I consider my subjects. You and the gentlemen of the council are acquainted with this and at any rate will act as you think proper.” (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department: Fort William Proceedings of the Secret Select Committee from 4 January 28 to June 1779 - Haider Ali to Governor 19 March 1779)

Haider wrote to Thomas Rumbold that Mahe was situated in the territory of his tributary the Raja Karthinadu and that he would consider this reduction as a hostile act. (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department: Haider Ali to Thomas Rumbold 19 March 1779 Consultations 7 April 1779) Instructions were issued to the Rajas of Chirakkal, and Karthinadu to help the French troops at Mahe. But, quite suddenly without firing a single shot, Mahe fell on March 19, five days after Colonel Braithwaite’s arrival there. The fall was so sudden that it disappointed Haider whose troops were on their way to the French relief. (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department: Braithwaite to Madras 19 March 1779 Consultations 5 April 1779 vol 60 pp 46 49)

Mahe’s reduction was an important cause of Second Anglo-Mysore War. By November 1779, Mahe had been evacuated by the English and all the British troops in Malabar had been concentrated in Tellicherry for defence of the Town against the forces of Kolathunadu and Kadathunadu Rajas. In the month of February 1780, Haider Ali’s General, Sardar Khan, arrived in Malabar with a force and after settling some domestic disputes with the Rajas of Kottayam and Kadath Nadu appeared near Tellichery on 8 July 1780. A few days later, the siege of Tellicherry commenced. Haider Ali with an army of 90,000 men descended upon the Carnatic on 20 July 1780 and the second Anglo-Mysore War began. (Colonel Mark Wilkes: Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore Vol I p 812)

William Baillie was a lieutenant-colonel in the East India Company's service. He was captured by Haider Ali in 1780 at the Battle of Pollilur, and died in captivity in Seringapatam in 1782. (Mir Hussain Ali Khan Klrmani: *Nishan-i-Haideri* Translated by Miles p 1980) The defeat of Colonel William Baillie, to which was summed up by Thomas Munro as ‘the severest blow that the English ever sustained in India’. (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings Gleig to Munro p 25) and other reverses of the English in the War made the condition of the besieged in Tellichery, ‘very serious’. (William Logan: Malabar Manual vol I p 415) Another major defeat the English had from the hands of Mysoreans was the defeat of Colonel Braithwaite at Tanjore.

“Colonel Braithwaite, sometime after the engagement began, sent a flag of truce to the enemy, after which no person was killed, but the remainder of the garrisons were taken prisoners.” (National Archives of India: Foreign Political - Secret Proceedings 11 March 1782, p 983)

In Malabar, the English successfully withstood the onslaught of the Mysoreans and were able to defeat two generals of Haider, Sardar Khan and Makhdum Ali. Hearing this disaster from Malabar, Tipu was ordered to move to the Coast. When Tipu reached Palackad, he found that the enemy had retreated. Without loss of time Tippu pursued the English 'incessantly harassed and cannonaded them' (Colonel Mark Wilkes: Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore vol II p 30) and a large party of Tipu's cavalry, who had preceded the enemy, captured much of their baggage and provisions. (Charles Stuart: Catalogue and Memoirs of Tipu Sultan p 69) This was continued throughout the day until Colonel Humberstone reached by Ponnani River by the sunset. The river was swollen by rains and Tipu believed that it was impossible to cross it. Therefore he determined to rout the English force by the break of next day and gave rest to his army. To his surprise, Tipu found early in the morning that the enemy had crossed the river and escaped from his clasp. Colonel Mark Wilkes graphically describes how the English force was saved from total annihilation from the hands of Tipu in these words:

"The early part of the night was passed in anxious search for a practicable ford and at length one was found so deep as to take ordinary men to the chin; yet clamping together in silence, the tall assisting the short, the whole got across without the loss of a man". (Colonel Mark Wilkes: Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore vol II p 30)

Though Tipu made a desperate attempt to override them, he could not, because by that time they had taken up a safe position in Ponnani Town. (Madras Military Consultations January 1783 vol 85 AP 144) There, Major Macleod having arrived with reinforcement from Mumbai and took up the command of the whole army. But, having received the news of Haider's death Tipu suddenly broke up his camp and 'proceeded with all possible haste to Seringapatam.' (Charles Stuart: Catalogue and Memoirs of Tipu Sultan p 265)

The English rejoiced over the death of Haider Ali and determined to derive as much advantage out of this as possible. But, their calculations were set at naught when Tipu succeeded his father without any contest and started his campaign against the English with more vigour. The recapture of Bednur and the siege of Mangalore by Tipu made the English to open negotiation for cessation of hostilities. An armistice was signed on 2 August 1783. In the course of the siege of Mangalore alone, the English had 1700 of their men killed, wounded and missing and between 30 and 40 officers killed and wounded. (National Archives of India: Foreign Political - Secret Proceedings 18 August 1783) When Colonel William Baillie surrendered, there were only 200 Europeans including 50 officers with him. These were the remnants of Baillie's total force of 3853 men. (Mir Husain Ali Khan Kirmani:

Nishanti-Haideri - Translated by Colonel Mills p 198) Even in a fight in which English was successful, it is significant that the loss on the part of Mysore was not much. Colonel (afterwards Sir) Eyre Coote has reported thus:

"I do not conceive it could have been considerable. We captured 30 or 40 horses of all kinds. The English casualties on the other hand were 79 men and 7 horses. (Foreign Political - Secret Proceedings July 4 p 2149)

Even after the Armistice was signed, the English continued their efforts to strengthen their position by capturing Tipu's possessions in Malabar. Commander Fullerton captured Palackad Fort and Captain Macleod captured the Kannur Fort. These were gross violations of the Armistice. These new acquisitions did not improve the English positions nor did they give any better bargain in the negotiations of peace. The *Beevi* of Kannur and the *rajas* and *zamindars* of Malabar Coast were included as friends and allies of Tipu in the first article of the Treaty of Mangalore which was signed on 11 March 1784. (National Archives of India: Foreign Political - Secret Proceedings 13 May 1783 p 2150)

The English had thought that they were forced to conclude treaties with Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan on disadvantageous terms and wanted to violate them. HH Dowell Observes:

"By that humiliating pacification, (as Hastings called it) in the treaty of Mangalore, Tipu appeared as a conqueror." (HH Dowell: Cambridge History of India vol V p 332)

It was in fact 'not considered as a treaty but as a truce' by the English. (Military Sundry Book vol LXI pp 1462-1464)

Grand Duff wrote to Shelburne:

"An English army much superior to one under a Lawrence or a Clive five and twenty years ago made Hindustan tremble at the bare recital of its victories, now for the first time was retreating in the face of the Indian enemy." (National Archives of India: Foreign Political - Secret Proceedings, Grand Duff to Shelburne 30 November 1780)

In Dow's 'History of India,' we can find the kind of fear that gripped the English:

"We were alarmed as if his horses had wings to fly over our walls." (Major Dow: History of Hindoostan, vol II p 362)

Macartni writes:

"The resources of both Calcutta and Madras were strained to their maximum limit, peace was necessary for us for had war continued for a few months more we must have inevitably sunk under the accumulated burdens of our expenses." (National Archives of India: Foreign Political - Secret Proceedings 23 Nov 1784 Madras-Bengal 29 October 1784)

Consequently, the Company was forced to sign a treaty which had failed to bring any territorial gains to the Company and which had prevented many officers from seeking revenge for the loss they or their compatriots had suffered at the hands of Tipu. (Prof Mobibbul Hasan Khan: History of Tipu Sultan p 80) Hence, it was not surprising that the treaty of Mangalore 'was considered merely a truce which

would not last very long.’ (Military Sundry Book vol 61 pp 1462 to 1464) The general feeling of the Company’s officers was echoed in the remarks of General (afterwards Sir) Thomas Munro when he wrote to George Robert Gleig:

“It is to be hoped that the treaty of peace which the company has lately concluded with Tipu is only meant to be temporary.” (National Archives of India: Foreign Political - Murno to Gleig p 370)

The Third Anglo-Mysore War was the result of the English manoeuvres to retrieve from the humiliating treaties the English had to sign in the two Anglo-Mysore wars. We have seen that the English did not consider the Treaty of Mangalore as a permanent one, but only as a temporary truce. Therefore, from the very beginning, they began to violate the provisions of the Treaty.

The English blatantly violated the Fourth Article of the Treaty. the Fourth Article of the Treaty had stipulated that Kannur should be evacuated by the English. (William Logan: Malabar Manual vol I Treaties etc. I XC) This was adhered to only after receiving strong complaints from Tipu. The Chief of Tellicherry received a letter from Tipu expressing his discomfiture about the Kannur Fort in which he wrote:

“The fort referred to was left in total disarray as a jungle and then your troops went away. By this, it is not certain that the heart is not clean.” (Madras Military Consultations May 29 1784 vol 99 B p 2050)

Tipu accused the English of violation of the treaty, in his letter dated April 23, 1789 addressed to the Chief of Tellicherry in strong terms. He wrote:

“The treaty formerly entered into between the *Sarkar* and honourable Company has been always observed and kept without any difference until this time. But you have now lately broken the treaty made with the Company in the following instances. First, you have taken Dharmapatanam, a place belonging to the *Sarkar*. Secondly the Raja of Catiote with his family and the family of Chericka - all of them fled to Tellicherry with 20 lakhs of rupees. You embarked all these on board a ship and sent them to Ram Raja’s country. You let the people remain in your settlements and by your advice they got out at night and robbed in the *Sarkar’s* district. I sent my people to advice that it was not proper for you to act contrary to the Treaty of Peace to which you answered that you knew nothing at all of the Treaty.” (Poona Residency Correspondence vol III No 37 A pp 36 & 37)

In yet another letter, Tipu required the Chief:

“You must not give assistance or protection to any inhabitants, merchants or other persons belonging to this *Sarkar* and or any of these people who come into your district. You must seize and send them back again. You have taken by force Dharmapatanam and other places belonging to Ravi Varma, the Raja of Chericka. I am made acquainted with (of these violations) by the writings from the said Raja. You must return them.” (National Archives of India: Foreign Political - Proceedings 1, 22 Sept 1788 SI No 9 pp 3803 & 3804)

The Factors were also made it known by Prince of Chirackal to by his letter dated 28 May 1788 of his determination to send his people for taking possession of Dharmapatanam, about which he says:

"I have received the orders of the King (Tipu) to take possession of the territories which formerly were under my government." (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Prince of Chirackal to the Chief of Tellicherry 28 May 1788)

These preparations were reported by the Factors on 26 June 1788, with a request to send reinforcement to defend the place. When Tipu received discouraging response to the complaints he made against them, he retaliated by imposing a total ban on export and import trade in Malabar. This affected the English Company gravely. In the Council Proceedings of 26 August 1789, this is recorded thus:

"Tipu seems determined to preserve the prohibition of the exportation of the coast produces. The Company can derive little or no benefit from the trade at Tellicherry... At present is too unprofitable to be worth bestowing a considerable sum upon it or maintaining an efficient force there." (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Sept 25 1789 SI No 96 26 August 1789)

But, the Company had not fully lost hope:

"At the same time if through some fortuitous events the Malabar Rajas should shake off the yoke of Tipu and circumstances should justify our forming alliance with them one might nurture to predict that Tellicherry would become a possession highly valuable to our employees in point of commerce and of great political weight. Therefore, it has become imperative for the bare existence of the English to devise a scheme of destroying their formidable foe." (National Archives of India: Foreign Political - Foreign Secret Department Proceedings pp 1855 & 1856)

Even when the peace was prevailing, the English fomented rebellions in Tipu's kingdom. For making a grand alliance against Tipu, they started negotiations with the Marathas, the Nizam, the rajas of Cochin and Travancore and the dispossessed Malabar chieftains. Hardly a year had lapsed since Lord Cornwallis had assumed the office of the Governor General when the prospect of a war in Europe darkened the political horizon of India also. The English expected that Tipu would make an attack on Carnatic. (Poona Residency Correspondence Vol III No 2 Cornwallis to CW Mallet 29 August 1784 p 9)

The English also learned of Tipu's embassies to France and Constantinople. (Poona Residency Correspondence Vol III No 5 p 4 Archibald Campell to CW Mallet 8 June 1784 vol III No 12 p 10) At this time, the French troops also arrived to render service to him. (Poona Residency Correspondence vol III No 10 pp 8 & 9) Along with these, Tipu's ceaseless activities to improve his militia, made the English believe that Tipu would make a breach of the Treaty of Mangalore. (Poona Residency Correspondence vol III No 21 p 19 Oct 20 1787 RH Boddam to Mallet) But, it was soon confirmed that:

"He was not to make any movement of a hostile nature... I shall be convinced that he is in no way disposed to quarrel with us." (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings 1 - 22, 5 September 1788 No 92 p 3461)

On 28 August 1788 Campell wrote to Captain Kennaway endorsing the same opinion:

“Tipu is not disposed to quarrel with us this time.” (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings 1 - 22, 5 September No 92 p 3829)

Yet, the English did not stop their efforts of forming an alliance with the Marathas and the Nizam of Hyderabad pretending that they were on the brink of a war. As early as in 1787, Cornwallis directed CW Mallet to propose an alliance with Nana Fernavis in his letter dated 29 August 1787:

“You will point out to Nana how favourable his opportunities would be to regain their lost territory and that if he chooses to form a connection with us, the Marathas may expect the greatest advantages from our success.” (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings No 2 p 9)

Similar letters were sent to CW Mallet, the Resident of Poona, to conclude an alliance with the Marathas. (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings Letters 25 & 26 pp 24 - 26) CW Mallet ceaselessly continued his effort of weaving the web of alliance with the Marathas, by dangling before them the sure prospects of territorial acquisition. Thus, on 7 February 1790, Mallet succeeded in securing the official declaration of the Maratha Court of its ‘disposition to take part with your Lordship’s Government in hostility against Tipu Saheb.’ (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings Vol 3 p 202) At length, after endless vexatious and delay, the Treaty was executed and exchanged on 6 June 1790. (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings pp 150-151)

Similarly, Cornwallis, through his representative John Kennaway, showed friendly overtures to the Nizam of Hyderabad with the aim of winning him over for an alliance. John Kennaway succeeded in fanning the flame of Nizam’s fury against Tipu Sultan. (National Archives of India: Diplomatic Correspondence between Mir Nizam Ali Khan and the East India Company (1780 - 1798) A R No 7942 pp 13 & 14) Since Cornwallis was not in a position to enter into a new treaty, he wrote to Nizam:

“This letter must be conceded by HH as equivalent to a treaty as the members of the council have also given their consent to its contents.” (Diplomatic Correspondence between Mir Nizam Ali Khan and the East India Company (1780 - 1798) A R No 6647 p 116)

The success of the English diplomacy lay in the fact that Lord Cornwallis could create an impression in the minds of Nizam and Marathas that the alliance with the Company would be always for their own good.

The English did not stop with the alliance of these big powers, but continued their efforts to form alliances with the deposed Rajas of Malabar and Rajas of Cochin and Travancore. A Paper of Protection was published inviting rebels to come under the Company’s shelter and offering them support in their effort to oust Tipu from the Malabar Coast. Within a few days, Tylor, the Chief of Tellicherry

wrote to Abercrombi that Chirackal, Karthi Nadu, Cotioti Rajas and the Raja of Coorg were well inclined towards the Company and were eager for the friendship with the English. (Poona Residency Correspondence dated 17 May 1790 vol III No 109 p 137) Similarly, a treaty of friendship was entered into between the Raja of Cochin and the English, through the mediations of Powney, Resident of Travancore. (Ernakulam Archives No 167 List LXXI Series 1) On 8 August 1790, the Beevi of Kannur was compelled to sign a treaty with them. (William Logan: Malabar Manual Vol I - Treaties etc. 1, XCVI)

Thus, all possible preparations were taken by the English to single out Tipu Sultan. The dread which Tipu's power inspired in the English can easily be discerned from these military alliances. All efforts of Tipu to counteract the machinations of Cornwallis through his *vakils* at Poona and Hyderabad proved to be in vain. Likewise, his efforts to secure the help of the French bore no fruit whereas Cornwallis did successfully induce Tipu's tributaries, the Beevi of Kannur and Raja Rama Varma of Cochin, to discard their allegiance to Tipu Sultan. Thus, unlike the previous two Anglo-Mysore Wars, Tipu had to fight this time single-handedly against the combined forces of the English who allied with all the native powers of the country.

The War started in April 1790 and ended on 18 March 1792 with the Treaty of Seringapatam. Tipu lost the Battle and had to give away half of his kingdom and three crores and 30 lakhs of rupees. (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous vol 54 1792 John Kennaway - Kirk Patrick: Select Letters of Tippoo Sultan Appendix A (1) p 77) Ultimately, the English machinations and manoeuvres were successful in crippling their veritable enemy. Lord Cornwallis wrote to Dundas:

"We have at length concluded our Indian war handsomely, and I think as advantageously, as any reasonable person can expect. We have crippled our enemy without making our friends too formidable. (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings Cornwallis to Rose No 2 p 155)

In a letter written to George Robert Gleig, Thomas Munro expressed satisfaction mentioning it as a treaty of 'moderation and conciliation.' (National Archives of India: Foreign Secret Department Proceedings: Munro - Gleig 1 p 131) The English coveted the Malabar possessions of Tipu as they had immense commercial and military importance. As early as 5 February 1790, Mallet wrote to Cornwallis:

"Were it possible to conduct a war with Tipu to such a conclusion as we might dictate, it is probable that a more humiliating to him and a more honourable to us would not be wished than drive him from the seacoast of Malabar, to reinstate the Nair princes in their ancient freedoms and tenures to secure such a possession on the coast as should be equal to the purpose of our commerce and to the supply of our deficiencies of the Bombay revenue, to procure such of the forts, between the Carnatic Balghaut, and Payenghaut as should be

judged requisite for our security on the frontiers and lay him under engagements to hold the remainder of his dominions in perpetual friendship and alliance with the Company, by which means a solid barrier would be opposed to the views of the Marathas, so long as the firmness and authority of our power, the only permanent basis of all political engagements supported our influence over his Councils.” (Poona Residency Correspondence Vol 3 No 63 p 67)

By ousting Tipu from Malabar they wished to convert their Tellicherry settlement ‘a possession highly valuable in point of commerce and of great political weight.’ (Foreign Political Secret Proceedings 20 August 1790 S No 96; September 25 p 1849) When the peace talks were in progress the Bombay Government did not forget to bring to the notice of Abercromby the immense importance of the Malabar Coast with a view to acquiring it. They wrote to him:

“The territory from Goa to Cochin, from the sea-coast to the Ghats includes a country valuable in every respect of situation, produce, revenue and commerce by fortifying the passes in the mountains it may be defended with a small body of troops and by our having possession of the ports, Tipu will be cut off, from all communications with the French and other European powers who have hitherto supplied him with military stores and he will thereby effectually be excluded from a very essential resource for carrying on future wars.” (Foreign Political Secret Proceedings No 448 p 585)

The English aim was to expel Tipu from the Coast of Malabar and reduce his power. In addition to bringing to the war, the best army and equipments the English had ever assembled in India, Cornwallis himself took up the task of leading the army. (Colonel Mark Wilkes: Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore vol II p 174; Mill and Wilson vol V p 345) The military intrepidity of rare talents of Tipu was admired even by his enemies. (Colonel Mark Wilkes: Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore vol II p 174; Mill and Wilson vol v p 411) Tipu showed extraordinary military prowess even against these highly overwhelming odds. Prof Mohibbul Hassan Khan remarks:

“He had inflicted great loss on English army both in men and in material. He had not only foiled the plans of Medows for the invasion of Mysore, but had also invaded the Carnatic, thus converting a defensive into an offensive war.” (Prof Mohibbul Hasan Khan: The History of Tipu Sultan p 195)

In page 345 of 5th volume of Cambridge History of India, it can be seen that ‘Tipu displayed outstanding perceptive leadership and bravery in the war.’ In fact, all authorities agree that Tipu was not prepared for a war with the English when it was thrust upon him by the Company, making use of the favourable political situations prevailing in the country. CW Mallet explains this political situation in his letter of 5 February 1790 to Cornwallis in the following words:

“I am inclined to think that the vigour of the British Government now in India is equal to the prosecution of our just resentment against Tipu’s extirpation.” (Poona Residency Correspondence vol II No 63 p 65)

All English generals in India construed the time most favourable for their aggressive designs. John Kennaway writing to Campell endorsed the same opinion. He wrote:

“I do not think a more favourable juncture is likely to occur when viewed either with respect to the internal state of its (Mysore) government or its connections so far I have been able to ascertain them with the neighbouring powers of Tipu and the Marathas, the present affords to the execution of our designs.” (Foreign Political Secret Proceedings SI No 92 pp 3768 & 3769)

Dowell writing in ‘The Cambridge History of India’ puts the English version thus:

“However with the usual English good fortune Tipu selected as the time for his provocative attack on Travancore, the time when the French were much too engrossed by their domestic affairs to spare a thought to India so that he was left to meet Cornwallis’ attack alone.” (HH Dowell: Cambridge History of India, Vol V p 326)

Thus, the 3rd Anglo-Mysore War was a political necessity for the English who were manoeuvring to do away with their formidable foe. (Colonel Alexander Beatson: Origin and Conduct of War with Tipu Sultan p 148; The Memories of Tipu Sultan p 44)

The English expected that Tipu would come round to a friendly alliance with the English if he was stripped off half of his dominions and a good deal of money. This English sentiment was expressed by the Marquis of Wellesley in his dispatch to the Secret committee of the Court of Directors on July 13, 1804 in these words:

“The growth of the hostile power of Mysore from the year 1792 to 1798, might probably have been controlled or even converted to the purpose of our security had it been possible to induce Tipu Sultan to enter into a subsidiary Alliance with the company at the close of the war in 1792.” (Marquis Wellesley: Despatches - Minutes and Correspondence vol IV No 33 p 160)

But, the pervading spirit of Tipu was to oust the English from India, for which he began his strenuous efforts to enlist the support of Indian and foreign powers. The reasons for the arrogant proclamation of the 4th Anglo-Mysore War were the results of the uncompromising attitude of Tipu who preferred death to becoming a prisoner into the hands of the English. (Colonel Alexander Beatson: Origin and Conduct of War with Tipu Sultan p 148; The Memories of Tipu Sultan p 165)

GB Melleson voices the tremendous trepidation that the English had of the Mysore sultans:

“It was the ruler of Mysore alone who had sworn himself at all equal to the English on the field of battle. It was Haider who dictated peace to us under the walls of Madras... Seringapatam under its late Hindu sovereigns had never been aggressive, but under its two Muslim rulers the English in Madras had learned to speak of it with respect whilst in Trichinapally and in Madurai, in Trivandrum and in Cochin, its name was never mentioned but with awe.” (GB Melleson: Seringapatam, the Capital of Tipu p 146)

The avarice and greed of the English could not tolerate the sovereign rulers who knew what sovereignty was. Colonel Alexander Beatson writes:

“The continuance of Tipu Sultan’s power upon so formidable a scale must have proved to the company a perpetual source of solicitude, expense and hazard.” (GB Melleson: Seringapatam, the Capital of Tipu p 44)

“In a crisis of world history, when no obstacle seemed able to bar the daring genius, it was necessary for the safety of the British interest in India, that the one sovereign, who hated those interest and who had himself seen what his troops led by his father could accomplish, should be rendered as far as possible harmless for evil.” (GB Melleson: Seringapatam, the Capital of Tipu pp 153 & 154)

Tipu Sultan fought and died in the battlefield. Thus, the struggle for supremacy between the indigenous and foreign powers ended in the failure of Indians. Consequently, it marked the close of a significant chapter of Indian history, which India was ruled by her own men. The fall of Tipu not only gave territorial gains to the English but also made them ‘paramount in India’. (Marquis Wellesley: Despatches - Minutes and Correspondence Vol IV (Edited by Montgomery Martin – London) vol IV p 92) A contemporary correspondence evaluated the fall of Tipu thus:

“The Empire of the East is at our feet.” (Auber: Rise and Progress of British India vol II p 192)

The Maratha Statesman Nana Farnavis sensed the prognosis and repercussions of British colonisation of India. He said:

“Tipu is finished; the British power has increased; the whole of East India is already theirs. Poona will now be the next victim. Evil days seem to be ahead. There seems to be no escape from destiny.” (Quoted by Sardesai: New History of the Marathas vol III p 354)

The fall of Tipu in 1799 heralded a foreign and imperial government with its colonial and mercantile policies, the pinch of which was felt very acutely by the people of India for nearly a century and a half. The opinions of the English generals and the private letters written by them have been extensively quoted in this chapter with the objective of giving a clear picture of the consternation that the Mysore sultans put into the heart of the English. It was only Mysore under its Muslim rulers that stood par with the English in all spheres of political activities. It is said that no two kings can exist in the same realm and so it was impossible for the English and the Mysorean rulers to coexist. Both powers endeavoured ceaselessly to put an end the other.

The international political situation and the lack of imagination among the indigenous rulers lent all possible aid to the English in annihilating their formidable Indian enemy. Thus, the four Anglo-Mysore wars form an inevitable part of one of the greatest chapters of Indian history - of the struggle between the English and the Indians. This period of Indian history, which witnessed the most uncompromising and relentless resistance offered to the English, has not unfortunately been given the importance that it warrants. The saga of the Mysorean opposition of the British is one that can inspire all Indians, even as it

can exalt the Mysorean rulers to the ranks of some of the best statesmen and ablest warriors the world has produced. That these great men have not received their share of grateful acclaim from posterity is an evidence of the lack of objectivity with which Indian history has been written. The sooner an attempt is made to shed all bias and to restore these great sons of India to the stature that they deserve, the better it will be for our country as a whole.

CHAPTER 16: INDIA DIVIDED

Despite the strenuous and passionate efforts of honest leaders, India was parted into two. But, this painful division of the country was not the result of a sudden surging of religious sentiments. Rather, it was the culmination and fulfilment of forces that were steadily gaining momentum. Where did these forces originate and how did they culminate? They had their origin in politics and in politics did they find consummation, for religious feelings and communal antipathies were deliberately kicked up and carefully fostered for political reasons. This can be seen from the very advent of the British power.

The clever tactics used by the British, to set the Hindus and Muslims springing at each other's throats, demand careful attention. It must be asserted emphatically that in the Middle Ages, no Muslim emperor effected forced conversion or ordered religious persecution though the English have never lost an opportunity to affirm the opposite. This assertion is necessary before we turn the delineation of subsequent events. I have stated in an earlier context that the period of Muslim rule did not witness a single communal riot in India, though fanatics and selfish persons were as much in existence then as at any other time.

When the Muslim rule was established after the defeat of many Hindu princes and kings, naturally the Hindu nobility were affected too. While the Muslim ruler replaced the Hindu king, a Muslim aristocracy thrived where Hindu nobility had once flourished. When on the other hand, if the conqueror were a Hindu and the conquered were Muslims, the reverse of this process would necessarily have occurred. Between the Muslim nobility and the Hindu lords, incessant divergences, all sorts of intrigues and cold wars went on and on. But, since these feudal lords were only a very small number, their perpetual feuding could not ever gain the status of a national or major event. One thing was definite - whether Hindu or Muslim - the feudal lords had their distinctive traits such as exploitation of the serfs, and unprincipled amassing of wealth. So, their selfish interests and the ensuing conflicts arising out of them did not get the popular backing of either

Muslims or Hindus. At no time did the common people of either community rise in hostility or create a crisis by rising up in revolt. The poor farmer had his own misery to nurse and, into his wretched existence, such differences as between a Hindu, Christian or Muslim could not penetrate. Attending the second Round Table Conference on 30 November 1931, Gandhiji spoke thus:

“So long as the wedge in the shape of foreign rule divides community from community and class from class, there will be no real living solution, there will be no living friendship between these communities. It will be after all and at best a paper solution but immediately you withdraw that wedge, the domestic ties, the domestic affections and the knowledge of common birth; do you suppose that all these will count for nothing? Were Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs always at war with one another when there was no British rule? We have chapters and verses given to us by Hindu historians and by Muslim historians to say that we were living in comparative peace even then. And, Hindus and Muslims in the villages are not even today quarrelling? This quarrel is coeval with British advent. and immediately this relationship, the unfortunate, artificial, unnatural relationship between Great Britain and India is transferred into a natural relationship; when it becomes, if it does become, a voluntary partnership to be given up, to be dissolved at the will of either party, when it becomes that, you will find that Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Christians, untouchable will all live together as one man.”

Drawing attention to the historical truth that Hindus and Muslims in India had always lived in perfect amity and peace; Gandhiji put the blame for the present conflicts on the artificial, unjust and unnatural rule of the English. He was optimistic that the moment the English left our soil, conditions would change and that Hindus and Muslims would revert to their old habit of peaceful co-existence. But, this rosy future that Gandhiji envisaged for the post independent India did not become a reality.

The reason was the English policy of ‘divide and rule’. From the beginning the Muslims regarded the English with grave misgivings. Compelled to surrender authority because it was a historical necessity, the Muslims naturally viewed the enemies who had seized power from them with strong feelings of antagonism. This uncompromising opposition to the English, rooted in selfish reasons, was then given a religious justification and the sanction of Muslim priesthood. Non-cooperation was followed as the policy of the Muslims in order to show their unabated hatred of the English. Though this was understandable to some extent, when it was prolonged and foolishly clung to even after the lapse of decades, it was bound to appear rather absurd and detrimental to the community. It prevented the entire Muslim community from achieving any progress during the British regime.

Indian Muslims who had once occupied the foremost ranks in the matter of knowledge and learning and scientific enquiry were now thrown into regression.

When therefore our country was caught up in the mighty wave of progress, the Muslim community stood by, stubbornly refusing to be drawn into this progress. Modern science and western culture were all resisted by the Muslims, for they were all associated with the English. No Muslim came forward to attend schools and the universities established by the English. Thus, the wonderful advantages and avenues of English education remained alien to them. Naturally, important government posts could not be attained without English education, the retrogression of the Muslim community was complete. The prolonged religious fervour shown by Muslims became a colossal barrier to their progress. The Calcutta Persian Paper expressed the Muslim sentiment thus:

“All sorts of employment, great and small are being gradually snatched away from the Muslims and bestowed on the men of the other communities, particularly of Hindus.” (The Calcutta Persian Paper, Durbin dated 14 July 1869)

The same authority gives another statistics:

“Out of 240 Indians admitted from 1852 - 1868, 239 were Hindus, and one was a Muslim. In Government offices there was hardly a Muslim to be seen.” (The Calcutta Persian Paper, Durbin dated 14 July 1869)

LF Rushbrook Williams in his book ‘The State of Pakistan’ draws the attention of his readers to the fact that the uncompromising attitude adopted by the Muslims towards the English was due to their long and unblemished tradition of royal authority they wielded, the loss of which was irreconcilable. (LF Rushbrook Williams: The State of Pakistan p 19)

In this way, the community that had once wielded authority and enjoyed power, now became backward and in course of time, came to be regarded as a liability of the nation. What brought about this deplorable state of affairs was first the mentality of the Muslims and secondly the conscious policy of the English. The openly hostile Muslims were scorned by the English and kept off all positions of power. Rushbrook Williams has clearly analysed the position of the Muslims under the English. He writes:

“The failure of 1857 revolt affected the Muslims very severely. If the Mughals were to be reinstated, the Muslims would have benefitted as the successors of nobles and *jagirdars*. The responsibility of 1857 revolt was thrust upon them and they were treated by the English not only with suspicion but also with great enmity. The upper strata of the Muslim community knew only how to wage wars and how to man the administration. They were devoid of any other profession. The English shut them away from these spheres for generations as they could not repose their trust on them. On the other hand, the Hindus who studied English and showed no aversion to the western civilisation profusely obtained English favours. They became an inseparable part of English administration in India as they already were holding the same positions in the preceding regimes.” (LF Rushbrook Williams: The State of Pakistan p 16)

Thus while the Muslims floundered in the quagmire of hatred and ill-feeling, the Hindus enjoyed the encouragement and favour of the English. This resulted in widening the rift between the two communities further. From this point, hostility between Hindus and Muslims deepened and all chances of peaceful coexistence were ruined.

The schemes and stratagems implemented by the English in the cultural and educational spheres, the artificiality and the injustice, provoked the Muslim community further and prompted them to start plotting the overthrow of the English. Carried away by blind rage, they were prompted to undertake many preposterous, hazardous and brutal deeds. Under Wahabi leadership, an intense struggle was carried on against the English. To maintain law and order in the north-western frontier, the English were compelled to expend much money and human lives. Two incidents that happened at about this time will bring home to us the intensity of the hatred that Muslims harboured towards the English. One that happened in 1871 was the assassination of the Chief Justice of Bengal who had condemned the Wahabis. The second was the murder of the Viceroy Lord Mayo, by the convict Sher Ali in the Andaman.

Many instances of organised and armed revolt against the English took place in Malabar, which had come under the Company's rule in the year 1792. The first attempt to dislodge the English was made by Unni Moosa Moopen of Elampulassery, who had fortified houses in the jungles on the foot of the Ghats and kept a retinue of a large number of Mappillas. On 20 May 1792, it was reported by Major Dow that a battalion of English force was moved to Velatre with all speed for maintaining peace and capturing Unni Moosa Moopen. (Ram Gopal: Indian Muslims - A Political History p 26) It is reported by the Bombay Commissioners that when the fortified palace of Unni Moosa Moopen was captured, a number of letters of Tipu Sultan were found requiring him to continue his fight against the English. (Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous SI No 55 para 213 pp 61 & 62)

Other rebel leaders who joined Unni Moosa Moopen in their fight against the English were Hydrose, Chemban Pokker and Attan Kurikkal. Attan Kurikkal and Pokker were appointed by the Company as officers in the police department but soon the Company's officers had to declare them as outlaws. They declared five thousand rupees each for the capture of Unni Moosa Moopen, Attan Kurikkal and Chemban Pokker. Finding their position weak, the Company changed their policy to appeasement and granted Company's favours in land and money. (William Logan: Malabar Manual, Treaties etc. vol I No 73 and Malabar Supervisor's Diary 30 June 1794) In spite of these, continuous wars ensued. In a fight, Hydrose was captured at

Ponnani and was transported for life to Botany Bay. (William Logan: Malabar Manual Vol I p 501)

Chemban Pokker was captured by Baber, the Collector of Malabar and was imprisoned in the Palackad Fort. But, he escaped from the fort and encountered the English army under Baber. The English army was repulsed by the rebels. This success encouraged Chemban Pokker to make a daring attempt on the life of G Waddel, the Superintendent of Malabar. In 1800, when the rebellion of Pazhassi Raja was in its final stage, Unni Moosa Mooppan, Attan Kurikkal and Chemban Pokker joined the Raja in his fight against the English. The whole of Malabar thus rose in revolt from south to north. The Company authorities were apprehensive of a possible alliance of the Malayalee forces with their formidable enemy, Tipu of Mysore.

The British took all precautions to quell the revolt at the initial stages itself. The relations and followers of these leaders were incessantly harassed by the Company's officers and a number of them were arrested and imprisoned. Failing to obtain any useful information regarding the movements of the leaders, their properties were confiscated by the Company. Finally, in 1802, Unni Moosa Moopen was shot dead in an encounter. In the skirmishes with the English troops, Chemban Pokker also was killed. Thus from 1792 to 1805, there were continuous troubles in different parts of Malabar in which a number of Mappillas laid their lives.

In 1836 a major revolt of Mappillas took place. Hundreds of Mappilla peasants were killed in this confrontation with the English. On November 17, 1841, a large band of Mappillas estimated at 2000, defied a police party on guard over the spot where some of the rebels were killed in the early days of the same month. These forces forcibly carried off the dead bodies of those rebels and interned them with honours at a mosque. The leaders who partook in this episode were captured afterwards and transported to Andaman.

In August 1849, another mass movement was launched against the English. Major Dennis hearing this alarming news drew his men for an open battle. In his report of September 1849, he describes vividly the untiring spirit that was shown by the rebels. He says:

"After firing all their match-locks, they took to their war knives, swords and spears and yet struck down to the ground, renewed the fight even on their knees by hurling their weapons at the faces of our men and it continued until literally, they were cut to pieces... in the space of half an hour the enemy was annihilated, leading 64 dead, their bodies lying close to each other, exhibiting most dreadful wounds some having received four or five musket bolts, besides bayonet stabs." (Foreign Secret Department Proceedings - Miscellaneous - Report of Major Dennis 5 September 1840)

Another revolt took place on August 1851 in which the English sepoys retreated. The Mappillas pursued the fugitives and cut down as many as they could. But in the final round up, all those who were directly connected with the revolt were shot down by the English army. In September 1852, Strange, the Special Commissioner of Malabar, after examining the circumstances that led to thirty-one revolts before this period, came to the conclusion that only seven cases were related to agrarian disputes; all the others were aimed at paralysing the government. (Correspondence regarding the relation of Landlord and Tenant in Malabar 1852 - 1856 p 8)

In February 1851, Connolly, the Collector of Malabar reported that ten to twelve thousand Mappillas, great numbers of whom were armed men prepared for a revolt with the blessings of Syed Fazal Pookkoya Thangal of Tirurangadi. On the strength of this report, the Thangal with his family, companions and servants numbering 57 were deported to Arabia. This was a signal for a widespread agitation. The English enacted the Mappilla Outrageous Acts of XXIII and XXIV in 1854. These oppressive measures exasperated them and on 11 September 1855, a band of Mappillas entered the residence of Collector Connolly and brutally hacked him to death in front of his wife. A number of rebels were rounded up following this event. A collective fine of Rs. 38,331/- was realised from the Mappilla inhabitants of the Amsoms. (William Logan: Malabar Manual Vol I p 577)

Following this incident, a number of Mappillas were transported to Andaman and Botany Bay. The landed properties of the suspected and sentenced were confiscated by the Company. In 1857 and 1858 the Mappilla leaders were arrested and sent to different places. In 1860 and 1864 a number of rebels were deported from Malabar. But in 1865, there was an open battle between the army and the rebels. The village was fined for Rs. 42,000/-. A number of people were transported from their native places to remote places. In 1877, a similar revolt occurred in which hundreds of people were rounded up and most of them were deported to Arabia, Andaman and Botany Bay. There occurred some other serious revolts in 1879 and 1880. (Report Walluvanad Class II Magistrate 24 June 1879; Order October 1880 No 2500 R Davidson Chief Secretary)

Another serious threat was in the year 1884. Army was forced to march against the rebels and it was after a day and night battle with the rebels that they were suppressed. In 1885, similar occurrences were reported by the then Collector, W. Logan from Malappuram, Ponnani and Walluvanad. A search was made and 17295 arms of which no less than 7503 fire arms of different types were recovered from these areas. (William Logan: Malabar Manual Vol I p 592) In the outbreak at Ponnani seventeen persons were shot dead and a mass fine of Rs.

33,688/- was imposed on its populace. In the Pandikkad Revolt of 1885, thirty-two Mappillas were shot dead and a collective fine was imposed on the village. (Judicial Department GO No 502 dated March 11 1896)

In February 1896, there occurred a larger revolt in which ninety-nine Mappillas were shot dead in the protracted fight. The Chief Secretary at that time has reported by that when the bodies were cremated, only twenty-five could be identified. (R Davidson Chief Secretary Judicial No 1567, 30 September 1896) In May 24, 1894 the Mappillas again tried their strength against the English forces and a total number of thirty-one persons were killed. (Judicial Department GO No 1267 dated 24 May 1894) Fawcett, the Superintendent of Police, in his report, gives us a detailed history of the events from 1894 to 1898 wherein a number of revolts took place in different parts of Malabar. In his statement, he gives a list of three hundred and thirty-six persons who were charged with criminal conspiracy and treason and the sentences pronounced on them. (Judicial Department GO No 819 dated 25 May 1898) In 1915 the District Collector, CA Innes was ambushed on his way and narrowly escaped with his life. In the ensuing fight, four Mappillas were shot dead, eight were severely wounded and one was captured. Another event took place in 1919, when a gang of young Mappillas fought against the English forces; but they were rounded up in a farm house and were all shot dead.

The most appalling tragedy took place in 1921, when there was a mass upsurge of Mappillas of Malabar against the Company. According to GRF Tottenham, the District Magistrate of the time, the number of Mappillas who actively participated in the revolt was 190,000 in Walluvanad and 122,000 in Ponnani. (Report from the District Magistrate of Malabar No. 367 dated 15 September 1921) In fact, almost the whole southern division of Malabar was freely under the control of the rebels for nearly six months. It took more than eighteen months to curb the revolt and restore the British administration. It is impossible to arrive at the exact number of the people, who were killed in the rebellion. In the military operations against the rebels, which lasted for nearly eighteen months, a large number of innocent people including women and children were mercilessly butchered. Approximate assessments say that more than 12,000 were killed in the various encounters. More than 14,000 were court-martialled and all of them were either sentenced to death or transported for life. (EK Koyatti Moulavi: Malabar Rebellion of 1921 p 140) In the Battle of Pukkottur alone, three hundred Mappillas were killed. There were many such battles fought in different parts of Malabar. It took several years to heal the deep wound caused by the rebellion. Such a brutal massacre of thousands and thousands of human souls, as the one that took place in Malabar during the

British period, might never have occurred before or after in the annals of Kerala history and, perhaps, in the whole of Indian history.

It was in the midst of such disturbing circumstances that the Anglo-Muslim relations existed in India. Faith or mutual trust was something unthinkable and unattainable. The rift that existed from the beginning became wider and, no hope of reconciliation was anywhere to be seen in the horizon. When the uprising of 1857 took place, Muslim nobility gathering all their resources, made a desperate attempt to oust the English from power. But, the British were able to deal with the rebellion quite easily. Quickly, the situation was brought under control and the Muslims were utterly crushed. There were many Muslims as well as Hindus amongst the Company's troops or informers who took part in the 1857 Rebellion. But, the English authorities and chroniclers singled out the Muslims who were involved in the conflict. The British army turned fiercely on those Muslims and held them totally responsible for the Revolt. The charge against them was that, through the revolt, they aimed to re-establish Muslim rule in India whereas the Marathas or Sikhs had no similar intention. (Ram Gopal: Indian Muslims - A Political History p 28)

Contemporary English historians attributed the entire blame to the Muslim nobles. This view seemed acceptable to the Indian historians as well, for what seemed to be the desired result of the uprising was not the installation of the rule of the Sikhs or the Marathas, but the re-establishment of the Muslim rule. Besides, the agitators themselves shouted slogans that referred to the restoration of the Mughal Empire. It was this threat aired by the rebels that prompted the English to exile the only surviving descendant of Baber, Bahadur Shah Zafar, to Andaman. The shrivelled old man, the last of the link of a mighty Mughals, spent his final days rotting in a desolate island prison, scribbling poems of great pathos.

The first sign of a change in the attitude of the Muslim community towards the English came as a result of the fervent efforts of Sir Syed Ahamed Khan. Addressing the First Educational Conference in 1886, he said that to ameliorate the conditions of the Muslims here in India, it was not necessary for them to get involved in politics. He pointed out that only education alone could raise the standards of the community and place them in the path of progress. He argued eloquently against the folly of obstinate isolation and urged the Muslim community to cooperate with the British.

At about the same period, a significant new turn was developing in the relations between the English and their Hindu subjects. The Hindus who had reaped the benefit of imperial favour and had enjoyed all the advantages of English education, western influences and official status, were now beginning to be

inspired by the spirit of nationalism. As many national movements were born, more and more people who were loyal subjects became potential trouble-makers. This disconcerting turn of events naturally caused grave concern among the English. The Muslim nobility quick to take in the altered circumstances, decided to gain from them. Forgetting their former antipathy to the English, they now proposed the offer of an alliance. This determined the policy of the English. How the English evolved their policy in India can be understood from the declaration of Elphinstone, who was simultaneously a historian as well as British Governor. He said:

“To divide and rule was once the strategy of the Romans. Today we have to make it our own.”

To placate the Muslims, the British bewailed the sad and miserable plight of the Community, playing all the while on the religious sentiment of the Muslims and managing to direct it against the Hindus, especially against the nascent spirit of nationalism that the Hindus represented.

In the meanwhile, the Muslim Community was able to produce a few graduates and this lent a keener edge to the struggle between the Muslims and the Hindus, as wrangling for jobs added to already existing rift between the communities. The English were satisfied with the prevailing circumstances. On the pretext of ensuring social justice, they introduced the system of reservation, thereby declaring Muslims as loyal subjects. Lawrence Frederic Rushbrooke Williams writing about the causes for the partition of India declares that the most important of these was the one pertaining to offices. This is what he states:

“The Muslims of India did get any opportunity to enter neither into the banking business nor in any textile or the like industries. Hindus, who monopolised the fields, jealously guarded the entrance of any one from outside. Same sad state of affairs was felt by the Muslims even in civil and military services under the Government.” (LF Rushbrook Williams: The State of Pakistan p 21)

Hindus had been enjoying a kind of monopoly in the field of official service. Now, for the first time, they encountered the kind of competition which they considered to be an encroachment into their territory. Naturally, this made them furious. To add fuel to the fire, the language issue was subtly brought to the forefront by the English and the situation was aggravated. Either of the communities turned out to be fervent supporters of Urdu or Hindi. Not content with all this, incessant propaganda was given to the idea that Hindus and Muslims belonged to two divergent political traditions that were irreconcilable. Making use of this idea it was Curzon who divided Bengal in the beginning of the 20th Century, based on the criterion of Muslim or Hindu majority.

Pressed by the compelling trends of the time, the English introduced reforms in the administrative sector. Flirting with the national awareness of the people, Minto-Morley Reforms were awarded to Indians. The reforms envisaged by the British heralded only an extremely limited kind of representative character. The electoral scheme of 1907 showed Muslims that they would get without agitation more than what Hindus would get with agitation. The condemnation of the scheme on the platforms of Indian National Congress created the mindset among Muslims that their interests could be promoted only 'through communal solidarity and not through collaboration with political agitators'. (LF Rushbrook Williams: The State of Pakistan p 114) Successive constitutions of India of 1919 and 1935 also upheld the continuance of communal reservation as well as separate electoral rolls and constituencies for Muslims and Hindus. This widened the already existing gulf between the two communities still further. The English policy won all that it intended to achieve.

The widening divide culminated into vicious communal riots. Blood flowed profusely and freely. The stench of dead bodies filled the air. The first communal riot occurred in 1893 between Muslim fanatics and the Committee for the Prevention of Cow Slaughter. The next riot took place in 1920-21 in Bengal. The large-scale carnage that marked this riot was soon replicated by similar riots in Amritsar and Multan in 1923. By this time, the average Hindu and the average Muslim, who were hitherto engrossed in the struggle of earning a livelihood, were also drawn into the conflict for the first time. Riots spread like wildfire with this retail participation, when those, who had so far very little time to spare for communal agitations, also joined the fray. A major role in enflaming the fury of the riots was played by the police authorities themselves. It can now be affirmed with the help of irrefutable proof that the English actually manoeuvred these riots and gave advice and blessings to the agitators. Uncontrollable passion could easily be channelled along destructive lines and the smallest spark was sufficient to cause a huge conflagration.

Indisputable evidence remains to prove that the riots were engineered by the police under the inspiration of English officers by arousing the religious susceptibilities of illiterate and uneducated people of the two communities. The sight of a slaughtered cow in front of a temple or the spectacle of a butchered pig near a mosque was enough to infuriate ordinary people. Such was the atmosphere of distrust and animosity between the two communities. (LF Rushbrook Williams: The State of Pakistan p 158) The brutality and the killing of Indians by Indians wrung the heart of sensitive souls. Many of them, who could keep their head and think above consideration of caste and religion, began to see through the divisive

policy of the English. As a result, during the time of the partition of Bengal, bonds of kinship between Hindus and Muslims were aroused by these sane and sensible Indians. A spirit of Indian nationalism and the yearning for independence came to reign in the hearts of the people and doused the fire that raged till then.

An important event of this momentous time was the starting of the Khilafat Movement. With the defeat of the Turks in World War I, the Indian Muslims' anti-English feeling acquired greater intensity. This was because Turkey, which ruled the Ottoman Empire, had claims to the spiritual allegiance of Muslims. Gandhiji and the Ali brothers gave inspiration and leadership to the Movement and the need to sink all religious differences was stressed by them. (Hameed Ali: The Mappillas p 114) Yet another great blow inflicted on the British on India was the major event known as the Mappilla Rebellion of 1921. This has been referred to in detail in the early portions of the Chapter. But, a shocking instance of unspeakable cruelty meted out by the British on the Mappillas need to be mentioned here. More than one hundred captured rebels were huddled together in a goods wagon of a train going from Kozhikode to Madras. By the time the train reached Pothanur, the majority of them had died of suffocation and the two or three persons, who were alive, were unconscious. (EK Koyatty Moulavi: The Mappilla Revolt of 1921 p 114)

English historians, who have spread the utterly false story of the Black Hole of Calcutta, are - not surprisingly - silent about this monstrous deed which is no fiction but real hard fact. It is a pity that none of our writers or historians has moved their pens to immortalise these martyrs or to glorify their saga of heroic patriotism. Anti-English feelings mounted among the Muslims. But, before it had time to cool down, the English dexterously gave it a twist and what was purely a national uprising was labelled as a communal riot. How far the English succeeded in this can be understood when we recall the fact that even today the majority of Hindus feel something akin to wrath when they hear of the Mappilla Rebellion. In the same way, whenever it looked as though the Hindu and the Muslim would join hands in fighting against the foreign yoke, the English instantly averted the danger by stirring up ill feeling between the two communities, thus making a united effort impossible. Either swine were killed in the vicinity of mosques, or cows were slaughtered on the fringes of Hindu temples resulting in simple-minded Hindus and Muslims of our country flinging themselves at one another's throats.

Political parties now sprang up that drew sustenance from the religious frenzy of the time. The Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League are but the two sides of the same coin. Both made capital out of the ignorance of the masses and made

the idea of Hindu-Muslim amity more and more elusive. History as taught in schools did not help the situation either. Tender minds exposed to the false 'facts' of history such as the persecution of Hindus under Muslim rule, or the destruction of Hindu temples by Muhammad Ghazna, easily and effortlessly swallowed the lethal dose of mutual hatred and suspicion. The whole country was now filled with the venom and very few seemed to be unaffected by it. Following the 'Direct Action' of the Muslim League on 16 August 1941, appalling manslaughter was carried out in Noakhali (now in Bangladesh) Similar clashes occurred in Bihar and Punjab opening a new chapter or unprecedented horror in the history of India. The blood that started flowing at that juncture has not yet receded and the tears shed by the refugees then have not yet dried out. The solution that the English administered for the disaster was more catastrophic. Before they left, they resorted to the drastic measure of dividing the country into two. Thus, Pakistan was born out as the consequence of the English strategy of creating split or rift.

Sree Prakasa in his book 'Pakistan Birth and Early Days' asserts:

"Practically all British officers in India were for Pakistan. It was, in fact, they who created Pakistan, and not Mr Jinnah or Indian Muslims. Mr Jinnah's efforts would have been fruitless if he did not have the solid support of the English behind him. He knew this only too well when he called on the English to divide and quit." (Sree Prakasa: Pakistan - Birth and Early Days p 21)

What is still sadder is the fact that the mindset of the people has not been transformed even after partition. Instead of reducing the resentment, partition of India has actually installed acute antagonism between the populace of the two nations. Sree Prakasa says:

"I, for, one only see all the old problems remaining, many in a worse form and new ones arising in 'their worst forms, for which there is no solution... I see that the bitterness is only on the increase and no one appears to have profited by the partition either politically or morally." (Sree Prakasa: Pakistan - Birth and Early Days p 21)

Communal riots occur almost daily. Newspapers bring us startling accounts of the inhumanities that are still committed in the name of religion. The nation can no longer afford to remain quiet about these things. The progress of our country needs more than anything an atmosphere of communal harmony. We should be first and last Indians. The partition itself has sapped our resources and our vitality. This cutting up of a living structure into two has been accompanied by tremendous problems and unexpected crisis in the tackling of which, all our conserved strength and all our resources meant for constructive efforts had to be utilised. We cannot therefore afford to let the evil continue to plague us. It is time we shook ourselves free from all remaining traces of communalism. At least, the next generation must come up to be sober, sane, healthy and whole. This is

possible only if the spirit of national unity is inculcated in the young. For this, we have to resort to the use of history, not history as the English historians swayed by selfish imperialistic motives wrote, but history based on truth, history that is the living record of the eventful past of a mighty nation. With national fervour and broad minded respect of facts, our history has to be rewritten.

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