



Indo Arab Relations with Special Assertion of “Arab o Hind Ke Taalluqat” Written by Maulana Sayyed Sulaiman Nadwi

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Abstract: Indo- Arab relation is very old and goes beyond history. So many books have been written in this regard but the book “ Arab o Hind Ke Taalluqat” written by Maulana Sayyed Sulaiman Nadwi is considered to be pioneer work in this field because he has depended on primary sources of Arabic books, travelogues, memoir etc. compiled by Arab traders and merchants in different ages. The book dealt with deep rooted Indo- Arab relations in the fields of commerce, science, philosophy, literature etc.

Keywords: commercial, scientific, Philosophical, literary and political relations between India and Arab world.

The relation between India and Arab world is considered to be very old and goes beyond history. Since India’s philosophy of tolerance and coexistence of all faiths and races had been the core of its civilization, it attracted not only Arabs but other races and nationals throughout the ages and remained a melting pot for world’s culture and civilization.

The book “Arab o Hind Ke Ta’alulqat” is a pioneering work of renowned Islamic Scholar Maulana Sayyed Sulaiman Nadwi in which he has eloquently discussed the Indo Arab relations in view of primary sources of Arabic books, Travelogue, Memoir, etc. and brought to light many interesting information regarding Indo Arab relations.

Maulana Syeed Sulaiman Nadwi was born on 22 November 1884 in Bihar in British India. He was influenced by Allama Shibli Nomani at Lucknow. He did Almiat from Dar-ul-Uloom Nadwatul Ulema in 1906 and appointed as instructor of Modern Arabic and Theology at Nadwatul Ulema, Lucknow. He was destined to become one of the famous biographer of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) with his many publicly acclaimed books. He moved to Pakistan and settled in Karachi in June 1950. He was appointed chairman of Taleemat-e- Islami Board to advise Islamic aspects of Pakistan’s constitution. He died on 22 November 1953 in Karachi at the age of 69.

The book “ Arab –o- Hind Ke Ta’alulqat” is comprising of five chapters: 1st Beginning of relation and Arab travelers, 2nd Commercial Relation , 3rd Educational Relations, 4th Religious Relation and 5th India before invasion of Muslims.

In the very beginning of his book, Sayyed Sulaiman Nadwi said: “Arab World and India are two great nations and two pilgrimage canters. Both are considered to be holy places for the two nations in their places. There are much differences about who are the real inhabitants of India? You would have listened the claim of Arians. But have you listened the claim of Arabs?. The Arians came to Punjab region of India from central Asia few thousand years ago and from there they spread to Gangatic Valley. But Arab claimed that their relation with India is not confined to few thousand years but they are related to it since their birth because this land is their father land.

There are several narrations of Hadith and Tafseer which stated “ when Adam was expelled from the heaven he was dropped on worldly heaven that is called India”.

He goes on saying:

“India and Arab world are the two countries of the world which could be said as a neighbor. The ocean bifurcated the two countries on which surface a long and spacious line connecting each other. Both countries are situated on two shores of the ocean. If one hand of this vast ocean is holding the Holy land of Arabs, the another hand is touching the feet of Ariyawart of Hindus. Naturally the countries situated on the shore are involved in trade. The trade was the first relation which brought the two nations together. Arab traders

would come to the coastal area of India thousand years ago and would transport Indian goods to Europe via Egypt and Syria as well as they would supply European goods to India, Indian Islands, China and Japan”.

According to Maulana Sulaiman Nadwi, there were differences between the ships of Indian ocean and the ships of Mediterranean sea. The planks of the ships navigating in Indian ocean were fastened by the rope made of coir while the planks of the ships navigating in Mediterranean sea were riveted with iron nails. The ships of Indian ocean would be so big in size that they would have two stories, separate rooms, abundant of drinking water and store of goods in addition to passenger, navigators, archers to protect the ship.

He established that before the advent of Islam there were good relation between India and Arab peninsula and Indian goods were very much in demand in Arab lands even some Indian were aware of Arabic and could talk in Arabic. To prove this he referred the well known book “ Sattiyarath Parkash “ of Swami Dayanan ji by saying:

“even most surprising of this is that during the period of Mahabharata there were some people who knew Arabic language. Though it is hard to believe but when a famous Pundit has accepted this so, I dare not to deny it. In eleventh Samulqas (First Parv Chapter 147) the author of“ Sattiyarath Parkash “ Sawami Dayanand Ji has written that during Mahabharat when Kauros made house of Lakha and wanted to burn Pandos in it then Wadur Ji told Ydhistr in Arabic language and Yadhistr also replied him in Arabic “¹ Sulaiman Nadwai said : If this statement is true then it is proved that how much old is relation of Arabs and Hindus.

Apart from commercial relations there were manpower relations too. Sindh and Baluchistan were most of the time under the dominance of Iranian monarch. Because of that some jingoistic tribes were in the army of Iranian monarch. Arabs have mentioned the two warrior tribes as Zat and Maid. Both are two famous tribes of Sindh. In 6th century A.D. when Iranian were defeated these brave Jatts were accepted in Islamic army with some conditions and were respected by the commander of Islamic Army. During the Battle of Jamal , fourth caliph Hazrat Ali trusted them and put the treasury of Basra under their supervision even Umayyad caliph Hazrat Moawiah has rehabilitated them in the frontiers of Syria to counter Roman attach. Umayyad caliph Walid bin Abdul Malik rehabilitated them in Aintech. Early records refer that Jats were particularly well known in Arabia. Once Abdullah Bin Mas`ud, a well known companion of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) found some persons of particular complexion in the audience of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). He remarked as saying “ in countenance they are like Jats.

Semantic Study of Hind, Hindu, Hindustan and India

As for the word Hind or Hindu which has become a burning issue in political arena nowadays, Philologists and historians have different opinions in semantic study of this word. According to Sayyed Sulaiman Nadwi, as a country India was not named before the advent of Muslims. But every states were having their separate names. When Iranian conquered the land of Sindhu river they have changed the character “ S “ into “H” as per old Persian and Sanskrit grammar thus it became Hindu. Arabs named the sindhu land as Sindh but named other area of India as Hind. In French language the character “H” changed into “I” thus, Hindia became India, since then Hindiah is know in other European countries as India. The people came through the Khaibar Pass named Hind as Hindu Sthan which became in Persian as Hindustan².

Lexical Evidence for Long-lasting Indo Arab Relations

It is worth mentioning that the materials Arabs transported from India are still known in their original names with some modification or referred as their place of origin that could be a lexical evidence for long-lasting Indo Arab relations. In some cases the Arabs added the suffix “Hindi” to terms Indian goods such as Oud Hindi (odoriferous wood), Tamar Hindi (tamarind), Sajeg Hindi (Indian Tekwood) etc. Sometimes they attributed the place name to the goods such as Mandali in view of good quality of odoriferous woods of Karumandal so, they named it Mandali, while sometimes they transcribed some words in Arabic which are ample proofs where they have originated

Arabic	Sanskrit/other Indian Languages	English
Sandal	Chandan	Sandal Wood
Musk	Mushka	Musk
Tanbol	Taambol	Betel
Kaafur	Kapur	Camphor
Qaranfal	Kanakphal	Clove
Filfil	Pipli/Pipla	Pepper
Zanjabil	Zaranja Bera	Ginger
Nilufar	Niluphal	Lotus
Hel	Ael	Cardamom
Jaefal	Jaephal	Nutmeg
Itrifal	Triphal	Electuary
Shakhirah	Shikhar	
Balilah	Bahera	Belleric Myrobalan
Halilah	Harah	Harad
Qarfas	Karpaas	Muslin

¹ Arab –o- Hind Ke Talluqat (Urdu Version) P. No: 7

² Arab –o- Hind Ke Talluqat (Urdu Version) P. No: 8

Sheet	Chaent	
Nilaj	Neal	Indigo
Qarmaj	Karmaj	Cochineal
Muj	Musha	Banana
Narjil	Narial	Coconut
Anbaj	Aam	Mango
Lemun	Lemu	Lemon

Aforesaid words are themselves showing where they have originated and how their structure and shapes have been changed in other countries.

India and Prophet Muhammed (PBUH)

When the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) embarked on his mission the relations between India and Arabia strengthened especially in the field of social and religious affairs. An Indian raja is reported to have sent the prophet a jar of ginger pickle which he himself tasted and shared also with his companions. It mentioned in the Hadiths that the distinctive features of Indian were know to him. Once a deputation of some newly converted people of the tribe came to the prophet (PBUH). Seeing their faces, he remarked: “ who are these people who resemble the people of India (Rejalul Hind)

India and the Early Caliphs:

Since India and the Indians were known to the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) and Arabs, it was quite natural that it attracts the attentions of the successors of prophet Muhammed (PBUH) known as caliphs. It is said that when the Caliph Umar asked an Arab sailor about India, he replied: “ Its rivers are pearls; its mountains rubies; its trees perfumes”. The people of Sarandip are reported to have sent a messenger to Arabia in order to collect direct information about the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). But when he reached Madina it was the period of the Caliph Umer and Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) was already dead, even his first successor (Caliph) Abu Bakr was also dead. He received the information from him. But unfortunately messenger died on the way and his servant returned to Sarandip and reported about the Prophet, Abu Bakr and Umar that they lived like dervishes³

According to Sayyed Sulaiman Nadwi, the first invasion occurred in 636 A.D. during the period of 2nd Caliph Umer as Arabs conquered Thana, which was a small seaport, near Mumbai at the behest of Behrain governor in 636. they further attacked Bharuch and occupied. An Arab named Mughira has invaded Dibal the seaport of Sindh. All these invasions carried out to protect sea routes.

It is worth mentioning that 3rd Caliph Usman has ordered Abdullah Bin Amir the governor of Iraq to depute some who enquires about conditions on India's frontiers. The governor assigned this job to one Hakim Bin Jabla. Hakim reported the Caliph as saying: “ there is scarcity of water in India, dates are bad and bandits are daring, a small contingent of army will be liquidated, and a large army will die of starvation and hunger”⁴ the Caliph dismissed this report considering as poetic exaggeration and did not send an army to India. But sent a marine contingent to inspect the seaports conquered earlier. They made necessary arrangements and went back. The 4th Caliph Ali has deputed permanently an Arab chief to take care of these areas in 660 A.D. 1st Ummayed Caliph Mua'awiah has entrusted Muhallab with the duty of guarding the coast of Sind in 665 A.D. which has become a permanent post later.

The Reasons Behind Invasion of Sind:

It is said that during the period of Umayyad Caliph Walid, some Arab merchants, who were doing their business in Sri Lanka, died. The king of Sri Lanka sent their women and children to Arab Lands by ship but on the way pirates plundered the ship in Diebal and took Muslim women and children as hostage. When governor of Iraq and eastern part of Umayyad Caliphate Hajjaj bin Yusuf came to know the incident, he asked Raja Dahir to returned these children and women. The king expressed his inability to return by saying that they are not under his control. Apart from this, some criminals and anti national elements fled to Raja Dahir from Makran and made their contingent which infuriated governor of Iraq Hajjaj bin Yusuf. Hajjaj appointed his nephew Muhammad bin Qasim as head of the expedition of Sind in 712 A.D. He was just seventeen year of age when he was entrusted with the task. Brave and resolute as a soldier, cool and cautious as an administrator, he won the hearts of Indians by his integrity and by a genuine spirit of religious tolerance. With an army comprising 6000 horsemen he achieved all his military objectives within three years and conquered an area from the frontier of Multan to Kachh and up to frontier of Malwa. He established peace and stability in the conquests and consolidated judiciary system there. As a result he won the hearts of local population. He became so popular in the local people that when he was recalled due to a change in political situation at home, local people wept for him and erected statues of him at Kiraj.⁵

He was not only a just Amir but religious tolerant too. According to Chaab Nama, when the people of Brahmanabad approached him for permission to repair a temple, he informed them of the following decision: “ as they have made submission and have agreed to pay taxes to the Khalifah, nothing more can be properly required from them. Permission is given them to worship their gods. Nobody must be forbidden or prevented from following his religion. They may live in their houses whatever manner they like”⁶.

Anyway, the contact between India and the Arab World, which was confined to the coastal areas and was limited mainly to trade and commerce, after the invasion led to establishment of Arab rule in Sind and southern Punjab and subsequently strengthened the political ties.

Intellectual Contacts Between India and Arab World:

³ Early Arab Contacts to South Asia P. No: 22

⁴ Futuhul Buldan, relevant extract in Early Arab Contacts to South Asia P. No: 56

⁵ Arab o Hind ke Talluqat P. No 10

⁶ Chach Namah 210, relevant extract in Early Arab Contacts to South Asia P. No: 61

New era of intellectual and cultural relationships begun when Abbasid Caliphate established with its capital at Baghdad in 750 A.D. the new Abbasid capital Bagdad had been completed in 770 A.D. and it had played vital role to boost these relationships as it brought India nearer to the center of the Muslim empire.

It is worth mentioning that the translation works had been started during the Umayyad Caliphate. But Greek and Syriac languages dominated in this period because Damascus was far away from India. When Islamic capital shifted from Damascus to Baghdad Indian languages specially Sanskrit got opportunity to prove its credibility. It is said that during the Abbasid Caliph Abu Jafar Mansur, a deputation of scholars from Sind reached Baghdad. One of its member was a Pandit and scholar of mathematics and astronomy. He brought with him a copy of Brahmasiddhanta written by Brahmagupta in 628 A.D. The Caliph Abu Jafar Al-Mansur entrusted the task of the translation to his court mathematician Ibrahim Al-fazari with the help of Pundit. The is famous in Arabic as “ Assind Hind “. The second book Ariya Bhat was translated from Sanskrit into Arabic and named as “Arjina”. Third book rendered into Arabic was Khanda Khadek and known as “ Arkan “ and “ Ahraqan “.

As for Indian medicine, many books were translated from Sanskrit into Arabic such as Shashrat, Charak, Nadan, book of Pandit woman gynecologist Raosa etc. but among them two earned fame. The first one was Shashrat known as Sasru in Arabic and another was Charak. The Charak was first translated into Persian and was later rendered into Arabic by Abdullah Bin Ali.

It is remarkable that An Indian Vaid Manka was invited to Baghdad for the treatment of Harun Al-Rashid. When the Caliph recovered from his illness, he appointed Manka as superintendent of Translation bureau to supervise the translation of Sanskrit works. Abbasid Wazir Yahya Bin Khalid Barmaki sent an agent to India to procure Indian medicinal herbs. The Barmakids are also reported to have appointed a void Ibn Bahn as superintendent of their hospital.

Conclusion:

Indo-Arab relations are generally attributed to the invasion of Sind by Muhammed Bin Qasim in 712 A.D. But it is a totally wrong perception. Archaeological excavations across the two regions provide ample evidences that Indo- Arab maritime and commercial ties go back to thousand years and the trade relations between the two regions as mentioned above had been proved through Arabic books, Travelogue, Memoir, etc even before the advent of Islam. Apart from this, Cheraman Juma Masjid built in 629 A.D. at the hands of Prophet Muhammed’s two Companions is considered to be a tall proof that commerce and trade had played pivotal role in spreading Islam in India not the invasion and Indo-Arab relations were not based on political antagonism but on friendly relationship.

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