



Early Indo-Arab Relations: A Study

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Abstract

The seminar paper is based on the topic "Early Indo-Arab Relations: A Study". It is an important and feasible research topic in present day research scenario. The Arabs have a deep rooted association with India from the dated back in respect of inter-cultural dialogues and exchanges between two age-old civilizations. There are a lot of historical evidences for this time tested cultural tie up. As we find in religious sources, the first human being, Adam is believed to have landed in Sri Lanka and reached Arabia via India. Finally, he met Eve in Saudi Arabia' Adam is believed to have landed in dajna which means south. Adam was landed in India from the heaven of sky. He set his first step in Sri Lanka, which was a part of the greater India. Several goods like perfumes and spices were on move to the Arab world from South India. So, it bears an ample evidence for maritime mercantile relations between India and the Arab world.

This paper highlights the early Indo-Arab relations in respect of business, economy, history, culture and believes.

Keywords: Indo-Arab, Inter-Cultures, Socio-Economic, Business, Thought and Believes, Innovation.

Introduction

India had never aspired to live in isolation and always kept its doors open for the people and culture from across the world. The philosophy of tolerance and coexistence of all faiths and races had been the essence of its civilization. It remained a melting pot for the world's culture and civilization. The intensive interaction between India and Arab world was dynamic, diverse and multidimensional. However, the impact of this interaction was very much visible and lasting in the domain of culture and thought. The main aim of this thesis is to focus on the cultural exchanges and the civilizational affinities that existed for several centuries, The cultural linkages in the past, in fact, have brought these two regions more close to each other and provided the base to maintain the relationship of similar sort in the contemporary times. Now, I want to overview Indo-Arab relations

That existed throughout the ages. 'culture' and 'civilization' are the two coterminous terms, though each one possesses a distinctive semantic domain with clearly defined meanings. There is a burgeoning trend in the present religious-political context to use both synonymously. Most of the discussions then tend to confuse 'culture' with 'civilization' and civilization inevitably with 'religion'. These discussions then prepare ground for identifying the essence of culture in terms of 'civilization clash'. Quite unfortunately these 'civilization clash' theories never believe in an inter-civilization dialogue and exchange of cultural goods between two civilizations. so there is a need for understanding culture and civilization that travel beyond the contemporary civilization debate.' In its simple definition' civilization denotes to the ways of living, making nature bend to fulfill the needs of human kind. It includes also organizing societies into socially and politically well-defined groups working collectively for improved conditions of life in matters of food, dress and communication and so on. Anyway, civilization is a collection of 'lived

practices' that enables a society to make sense of its existence. culture' on the other hand' refers to a set of values, customs, beliefs, practices which constitute the way of life of a specific group

Objectives

1. To examine the nature, development, and impact of early interactions between India.
2. To explore the Arab world, focusing on trade, cultural exchange, and the spread of religion from pre-Islamic times to the early medieval period.

Methodology

This study is based on a historical-analytical method, involving:

1. **Literature Review:** Examination of primary and secondary sources, including historical texts, travelogues (e.g., by Al-Biruni, Ibn Battuta), and ancient Indian and Arab records.
2. **Archival Research:** Analysis of archaeological findings, inscriptions, coins, and maritime trade records.
3. **Comparative Analysis:** Comparing Indian and Arab historical sources to understand the mutual perspectives and the nature of interactions.
4. **Thematic Approach:** Organizing data around key themes such as trade, religion, and cultural exchange for clarity and focus.

India's Early Relations with Arabs:

Indo-Arab relations that can be dated back to antiquity speak of such intercultural dialogues and exchanges between two age-old civilizations. There are a lot of historical evidences for this time tested cultural tie up. As we find in religious sources, the first human being, Adam is believed to have landed in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and reached Arabia via India. Finally, he met Eve in Saudi Arabia. Adam is believed to have landed in Dajna (that is Dakshin in hindi) which means south. Adam was landed in India from the heaven of sky. He set his first step in Sri Lanka, which was a part of the greater India. Several goods like perfumes and spices were on move to the Arab world from south India. The old Testament bears ample evidence for maritime mercantile relations between India and the Arab world during Solomon's period.

The Arabs had close commercial and cultural relations with the Indians in pre-Islamic period. Our friendship dates back to the very ancient times in history when Indian and Arab sailors plied their ships across the seas and established commercial links with each other. As a result, Arab traders built their permanent settlements on the western coast of India which played an important role in exchange of Indo-Arab cultural relations. From the time immemorial, these two civilizations have been in constant contact with the exchange of goods, ideas, cultures and people of each other. At this end of history, Indo-Arab relations have been on a distinctive trajectory with the massive movement of people from India to the Arab world and vice-versa in the form of pilgrimage and labour migration.

The Indo-Arab connection predates the spread of Islam. Through the regular commercial trips, they knew about India long before the advent of Islam. There was frequent Arab seafaring on the western and southern coasts of India which culminated in Arab settlements in parts of India. The trading Arab groups established communities of especially on south-west coast. Indian goods were moved to Yemen and then to Syria, from there finally to the markets of Egypt and even Europe. Parallel to this, Indian maritime traders made extensive voyages to the Arab world for the purpose of trade. These visits resulted in religious convergences of various sorts as there were many things in common between Hinduism and the pagan religions existed in West Asia. Sages from India mingled with the Arabs and started influencing each other's way of life. In so far as the Gulf coast was concerned a considerable number of Indians appear to have migrated there in Pre-Islamic era' either to establish businesses, seek employment with Arab traders or just to escape instability at home. The Indian groups which migrated and enjoyed greater position in the Arab world, to name a few were: Zatt, Maids, Sayabjah, Asawera, Ahamera, Bayasera and Takakera. Apart from experiencing the life of west Asia' these groups were also engaged in certain occupations.

The Indus Valley Civilization was one of the world's first known civilizations with high amount of urbanization. This civilization flourished in the vast plains of the Indus River and adjacent regions which are now in Pakistan and western India. This civilization developed at approximately the same time as the early city states of Egypt and Mesopotamia. This urban civilization spread over a vast geographical region from the high mountains of Baluchistan and Afghanistan to the coastal regions of Makran, Sindh and Gujarat. There are material evidences for the existence of trade contact with the surrounding cultures in the Arabian Gulf, west and central Asia and peninsular India, during the peak of this civilization. Arab historians of different periods held the view that Sind and Hind were two different countries. Sind was surrounded by the borders of Hindustan, Kirman and Sajistan while other parts bordering China was considered Hindustan. Hindustan was popularly known among the Arabs as Hind. These two regions are now called India and Pakistan respectively. From the ancient time both Makran and Sind had been regarded as a part of India. Arabic literature often conflates Sind with Hind though there were references in Arabic literature to treating Sind and Hind as separate geopolitical entities.

The regular commercial interactions between Arabs and Indians throughout this period culminated in influencing each other's language and culture. Some Indian goods entered in the Arab world were named after the place of origin, al-Hind. Indian swords were very famous in Arab world and they called it Hindi, Hindawani and Muhannad. It gained the reputation of being very supple and sharp. Pre-Islamic Arab poetry has many references to this and many other Indian goods being popular among Bedouins.

Many Indian words like Sandal (Chandan), Tanbul (pan), Karanfal (peeper), Narjeel (coconut) etc were very popular and widely used among Arabs. Although the Quranic scholars are of different opinion about the non- Arabic words used in the Holy Quran, the great Indian Islamic scholar Maulana Sayyed Sulaiman Nadwi, referring to Hafiz Ibn Hajar and Hafiz Seuti's works, asserts that "we can be proud of having few Indian words like misk (mushk), Zanjabeel (Jinjer) and Kafur (kapur) have been used in the holy Quran.

Qazi Athar Mubarakpuri quoting several Hadith (sayings of Prophet) sources says that Indian goods like Musk, camphor, ginger, carnation, pepper, wood, swords and clothes have extensively been used among the Arabs. Even Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and his companions were very much found of Indian goods. One can come across many references for the popularity of Indian goods in Hadith.

On the other hand, many Arab goods were used to be imported to India like palms and horses from Basra. King of Sri Lanka used to import alcohol from Iraq. Precious diamonds and fishes were used to be imported to India.

The cultural contacts were not confined to the linguistic interactions only, but to a wide variety of activities ranging from menu to the naming of individuals and clans. Many distinguished families in Arab world carry the surname 'al-Hindi'. Hind is still a popular name being used extensively by Arab women. The Arabs have contributed even to the naming of this region 'Hindustan'. The name to the religion 'Hinduism' is partly an Arab contribution. It was the Arabs, Persians or Greeks that we owe the concept of the Hindu - the people who live across the river Sindhu or Indus. There is no doubt that the people of India were referred to as Hindus by the Arabs long before the Hindu community began to identify themselves as Hindus.

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