

## BASES OF PAKISTANI CULTURE

In order to understand the true bases of Pakistani culture, one has got to take into consideration the cultural background of Pakistan.

In the East, the Muslims came into contact with India when Sind was conquered by Muhammad ibn Qasim in 711-714 A.D. and annexed to Umayyad Caliphate of Damascus. The territory of Sind at that time included a large part of the Punjab. Since Sind is separated from India by the great Rajputana desert, the westward march of the Muslims was arrested for the time being, and the Arab annexation of Sind remained an event almost isolated from the history of the rest of India.

By the tenth century A.D. Central Asia and Afghanistan had followed Persia in embracing Islam. The movement of Central Asian Muslims into the border lands of India commenced towards the close of the tenth century. The Muslim Turks, Persians and Afghans who now began to pour into India brought with them a well established religion, Islam, with its advanced and virile concepts of life and society.

In due course, the whole of India except the extreme South came under Muslim domination and began to be governed directly or indirectly by the Sultans of Delhi. Thus the Muslims became an important part of the population of India and their distinct culture was established side by side with that of the Hindus.

As a Semitic and monotheistic religion, Islam is closely akin to Judaism and Christianity. The main fundamentals of Islam are that there is only one God, that Muhammad (peace be on him) is the last of the Prophets of God and that the Quran is the revealed word of God.

This doctrine of Unity is the very core of Islam and from this basic concept, all other tenets, principles and injunctions flow, as from a life-source. According to Muslim belief, God Almighty has revealed His will through His chosen messengers and has thus given us express commands to do certain things and to abstain from doing others. Through His revelation He has shown us how our individual and collective life should be ordered. He has not left the guidance of people even in their social affairs to the whims of the rulers, or

merely to the process of counting heads, for sovereignty essentially belongs to God and to God alone. As Muslims we cannot treat any other authority, human or supernatural, whether parliaments, states or king, as our real sovereign. All obedience and loyalty are subject to our primary and supreme loyalty to God and to His commands, as revealed through Prophet Muhammad. Obedience to other authorities can be rendered only insofar as their commands do not go against the divine commands. The doctrine of one God is thus pregnant with tremendous political significance. It does away completely with the divine right of kings and the absolute, unlimited rights of rulers, peoples, and parliaments. By no virtue of a sheer majority or even of unanimity can Muslims change an iota of the legal and moral precepts of the Quran. According to a verse of the Holy Quran, "Obey God, obey the Prophet and obey those in authority from amongst yourselves; but if there is any disagreement then turn to God and the Prophet (for decision)." Thus God and the Prophet, i.e., the Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet, are final in all matters of dispute.

Islam has its own code of morality, its law and its social system. It believes in the equality of man and abhors idolatry. Hinduism, on the other hand, believes in an endless pantheon of deities, some of whom are worshipped, others propitiated. Every household has its own god or goddess. Transmigration of soul is a basic tenet of Hinduism. The most important feature of Hindu social organization is its caste system which is based on the belief that life is governed by rigid rules of divine origin. The four main castes are firstly the Brahmans, i.e., the priests who are the equals, if not the superiors, of deities; secondly, the Kshatriyas, the ruling or martial class; thirdly Vaishiyas, the agriculturists and traders; and lastly, the Sudras, the servile class. From the orthodox point of view, all Hindus who belong to the fourth class as well as those who profess faiths other than Hinduism are considered untouchables. Even the Muslims who were the rulers of the subcontinent were considered untouchables by the orthodox Hindus.

### **Two Cultures: Two Nations**

Their religious and social concepts being so radically different, Hindus and Muslims, on the whole, have always remained apart.

Hinduism which interdicts inter-marriage between its own castes and even sub-castes was not expected to permit or encourage inter-marriage with Muslims. Islam too bans inter-marriage between Muslims and the followers of polytheistic creeds. The rigidity of the caste system and the serious consequences of expulsion from the caste prevented the Hindus from free intercourse with Muslims. The differences between the Hindus and Muslims persisted even in such minor matters as dress, manners of living, eating, etc., not to mention other important matters such as language and literature. In certain other points, the Hindus and Muslims differed fundamentally. For Instance, the Hindus are not only vegetarians but regard the cow as something sacred and worship it, whereas the Muslims eat the cow.

Many attempts were made at synthesis of the two religious cultures, the most important being that of the Mughul Emperor Akbar (1556-1605). He experimented with a new eclectic religion called Din-i-Elahi, an admixture of Islam, Hinduism and other religions which, however, miserably failed to achieve any tangible results. This policy of Akbar resulted in the persecution of the Muslims and the degradation of Islam and strengthening the position of the non-Muslims, particularly of the Rajputs with whom he entered into matrimonial alliances. However, the basis of the two civilizations, the one Muslim and therefore egalitarian and democratically oriented, and the other Hindu and caste-ridden, were so basically different that they seemed destined to flow like two parallel but separate streams. It had become inevitable that the two nations could never unite.

It was the fear of the extinction of Islamic culture at the hands of their British rulers, who had begun not only to persecute the Muslims but also tried to merge their culture into that of Western culture by spreading a network of Christian missionaries in the country, that led the Muslims to wage a general war against the British in 1857. With the failure of this war of liberation the Muslims were further crushed by the British rulers. To make matters worse, the British spread a network of Christian missionaries in the country and that rightly created a sense of suspicion in the minds of the leaders of the Muslim community that expressed their resentment against everything British including modern education.

This was not a very happy choice as the Muslims were thus being reduced to a status economically and politically inferior to that

of the Hindus who had offered their cooperation to the new rulers and who had already made a good start in learning European social and physical sciences. The Muslims had already fallen about 50 years behind the Hindus who had taken to modern education earlier and in greater numbers. The result was that the public services, commerce, the professions, politics, and in fact all walks of life, were dominated by the Hindus.

This was the situation facing Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan in 1858 and in the four decades that followed. He realized that this negative attitude would lead his people nowhere. He also realized that the British rule had come to stay for some time and that, even just for sheer survival, the nation must equip itself with the moral and intellectual tools of the conquering civilization. His supreme effort was directed to popularising modern education among the Muslims, and to give the youth of the nation the kind of training which might enable them to take their proper and effective share in the political and economic life of the country.

In the beginning, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan made sincere efforts to bring about amicable relations between the various communities of India, particularly between the two major communities, the Hindus and Muslims. But in 1885, there came into existence a political association which styled itself the Indian National Congress. Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan closely watched in its outlook and objectives. He, therefore, felt reluctant to identify himself or his people with it. About this time, the Urdu-Hindi language controversy had begun to take an ugly shape and even educated Hindus were favouring Hindi on communal grounds. Differences between the Muslim and Hindu civilizations also began to impress Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan more and more as he watched the growth of political opinion in the British Indian Empire. He was the first Muslim to realize and to state that Hindus and Muslims were really two separate nations, with separate and often conflicting economic, political and cultural interests.

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, however, was keenly conscious that the Anglo-Saxon type of democratic government was not suited to conditions in India. This is what he said in a speech at a meeting of the Council of the Governor General of India:

The system of representation by election means the representation of the views and interests of the majority of the population. But, my Lord, in a country like India where

caste distinctions still flourish, where there is no fusion of various races, where religious differences are still violent, where education in the modern sense has not made an equal or proportionate progress among all sections of the population, I am convinced that the introduction of the principle of election, pure and simple, for representation of various interests in the local boards and district councils would be attended with evils of greater significance than purely economic considerations . . . The larger community would totally over-ride the interests of the smaller community.

With a political foresight which seems the more remarkable after all these intervening years of history, he had predicated that the political destinies of Hindus and Muslims of India would be along widely divergent paths.

It was on the basis of the two nations theory that the Muslims under the leadership of the late H.H. the Aga Khan demanded and secured the right of separate electorate on the occasion of Morley-Minto reforms of 1909.

In order to maintain the rights and safeguards of the Muslim interests the All India Muslim League was formed in December, 1906 at Dacca. The formation of the Muslim League at Dacca was a step towards that higher goal of unification of Muslims and the gradual development of a sense of being a separate political entity.

The Muslim League continued dominating and succeeding in securing separate electorate for the Muslims in future constitutional advances of 1919 and 1935. However, it was at the annual session of the Muslim League held in 1930 that Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal demanded the confirmation of a consolidated Muslim state in India. In his presidential address, he said:

The principle of European democracy cannot be applied to India without recognising the fact of communal groups. The Muslims' demand for the creation of a Muslim India within India is, therefore, perfectly justified. I would like to see the Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan, amalgated into a single State. Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire,

the formation of a consolidated Northwestern Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims. The idea need not alarm the Hindus or the British. India is the greatest Muslim country in the world. The life of Islam as a cultural force in this country very largely depends on its centralisation in a specified territory. This centralisation of the most living portion of the Muslims of India, whose military and political service has, notwithstanding treatment from the British, made British rule possible in this country, will eventually solve the problem of India as well as of Asia. It will intensify their sense of responsibility and deepen their patriotic feeling. Thus possessing the full opportunity of development within the body politic of India, the Northwest Indian Muslims will prove the best defenders of India, against a foreign invasion, be that invasion one of ideas or of bayonets. I therefore demand the formation of a consolidated Muslim State in the best interest of India and Islam.

As a result of the Government of India Act of 1935, the Congress formed ministries in seven out of the eleven provinces of India. It rejected the League's offer of cooperation on the ground that non-Congress men could not be included in the Ministries which must be party ministries. The Muslim League was not prepared to accept this position because it meant that instead of sharing power and responsibility as a partner, the Muslims would be reduced to a state of subordination to the Congress High Command.

The objectives of the Congress policy at this stage were three-fold: to strengthen the opposition to the British, so as to achieve complete independence; to absorb minority parties, especially the Muslim League; and to force the constitutional pace in the Indian states so that it might control the Federal Government when it was established and in which the States were represented.

The methods adopted were: creating dissatisfaction in the state through the Congress organization; disruption of non-Congress ministries and their substitution by Congress ministries; Muslim Mass Contact Movement, which was intended to wean Muslims away from the League; and rigid control of provincial ministries by the Congress High Command. In other words, the Congress aimed at domination

on an All-India basis and in a totalitarian fashion.

Side by side with these developments came another eye-opener for Muslims. This was the general behaviour of the Hindu masses who began to feel that with the installation of Congress Ministries, Hindu Raj had been established. Their attitude became overweening and truculent. They tried on the one hand to thrust on India the Hindu National Anthem which, having an idolatrous strain, was repugnant to Muslims. On the other, they tried to impose the Congress flag as the flag of the whole country. The use of Hindi was introduced at the expense of Urdu. Urdu schools were either closed down or amalgamated with Hindi schools. In the Wardha Scheme of Education, there was no place for the teaching of religion on the plea that it militated against the growth of a common nationhood. But literature and history to be taught in the schools were permeated with the philosophy and mythology of Hinduism and the merits and achievements of Hindu Civilization.

On the assumption of office in the Hindu majority provinces the Congress also began to indulge in provocative and disparaging utterances, denouncing the Muslim League and asserting with characteristic impetuosity that there were only two powers in the country — the Congress and the British Government.

Worse than this was the treatment meted out to the economic and cultural interests of the Muslims by the Congress Government. This challenge to her economic and social existence had its response in a growing political consciousness which swelled the ranks of the Muslim League, and made it, under Mr. Jinnah's determined and efficient leadership, the second largest political party in the sub-continent — second only to its Hindu adversary, the Indian National Congress.

### **Pakistan Demands Accepted At Last**

On account of the hostile and uncompromising attitude of the Congress during the World War II, the Muslim League also had to revise and finalise its programme and aim. At least Dr. Iqbal's concept was accepted, and in 1940 the Pakistan Resolution was passed at the historic session of the All-India Muslim League at Lahore. It laid down:

That it is the considered view of this Session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles: that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial adjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North Western and Eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute independent States in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.

In concrete form this Resolution meant that the Muslim majority provinces of the Punjab, the North West Frontier Province, Baluchistan and Bengal should be separated from the rest of India and grouped together as an independent state to be known as Pakistan.

During the short period of seven years the Muslims succeeded in creating a separate homeland known as Pakistan for the preservation of their lives in accordance with the tenets of Islam. Thus the creation of the new State of Pakistan symbolises the hopes and aspirations of the eighty-six millions of its inhabitants, who, after two centuries of enslavement have at least seen the dawn of liberty. It has secured for them and for their children the right to follow their own of life.

After the creation of Pakistan, the problem of developing a common culture became a problem of vital national importance. In fact the problem is closely linked with the very survival of our separate nationhood. For the factor which binds the various elements constituting the Pakistani nation is chiefly a common culture, to use the term in its proper connotation. The generally acknowledged factors of nationhood hardly exist in our country. We lack even geographical contiguity, as the two wings of the country are separated by more than a thousand miles. Ethnically speaking we do not necessarily belong to the same racial stock. Similarly there are more languages than one in which our people normally express themselves in speech as well as writing. What binds us together, then, except a common culture?

This being the importance of common culture, the word needs a clear definition. Culture has been defined as the sum total of the

behaviour patterns, attitude and values shared and transmitted by the members of a given society. Hence, culture includes institutions like state, family and the ideas of the right and wrong held by a society. In the context of Pakistan, what gives us a common culture is our religion, the religion of 86% of the people of our country. Islam is not merely a metaphysical creed, not even merely a collection of religious dogmas, ethical precepts and rituals. It is all this plus a practical programme of life for mankind, a programme embracing not any one particular aspect of life, but all aspects of life.

Islam, therefore, gives us Pakistanis a common outlook on life; it gives us a common goal of life; it gives us a common set of moral principles, it gives us a common vision of good society and above all, it enables us to transcend the barriers of race, geography, language, etc. and to become members of a common brotherhood of faith.

The role of Islam as the basis of a common national culture needs a little more of elaboration. Islam is characterised for being rigid and flexible at one and the same time. Why? Because Islam firmly lays down certain fundamental principles for all Muslims and these have to be followed very strictly. But these principles are of such a nature that they do not impose an iron frame-work of uniformity. They keep the door open for a good deal of diversity, for such temperaments with which human beings have been endowed by their Creator. Islam does not insist, for instance, that we eat this or that, or cook our food in this or that particular manner. What Islam does is to lay down broadly what categories of food are permissible, or conversely, prohibited. Similarly, in matters of dress, Islam does not insist on any dress fashion. It merely lays down the minimum portion of the body that must be covered by our dress; that it should be modest and should not give vent to lewdness and so on. Thus all Muslims have a set of basic standards for judging whether they should wear or not wear a particular dress. This set of standards all Muslims share. But this common basic outlook on life, this community of values, it is obvious, does not kill diversity altogether. What it actually does is to give full legitimate latitude to diversity and yet keeps intact the bond of unity between the various elements constituting a Muslim society. Thus "unity in diversity" is what is capable of contributing towards developing cultural homogeneity. In other words, Islam is not opposed to the different elements of Pakistan developing their own characteristics to the optimum.

What Islam will do for us is that it will maintain and keep on nourishing the deep although intangible foundations of our national unity and the community of culture.

We, therefore, should be very clear about this basic point. Our common national culture can only be an Islamic culture for Islam is the biggest common denominator in our national life. There is a good deal of talk in certain sections of educated people that Pakistan should develop a culture which is peculiarly Pakistani, and this peculiarly Pakistani Culture, in their view, cannot be Islamic for Islam is not shared by all Pakistanis, even though it is shared by 86% of Pakistanis. Such people are not aware of the magnitude of their unrealism and ignorance. There is not a single state in the world all of whose citizens, without any exception, share anything in common. It is nothing short of day-dreaming to imagine that any nation in the world will be able to develop a culture whose fundamentals are shared literally by every single member of that society. Moreover, in the context of Pakistan, all endeavours at developing a national culture divorced from Islam is bound to give rise to a variety of cultures with nothing common between them and in fact closer to certain varieties of the cultures of our neighbouring country, India. The culture developed in the former West Punjab will be closer to that of East Punjab than the culture of East Pakistan. Similarly, East Bengal culture will be closer to the culture of West Bengal than to the culture of West Pakistan. One need not be a very profound thinker to foresee the calamity to which this trend of thought will lead us. To be absolutely frank, the development of a Pakistani culture detached from Islam can mean only one thing: the disintegration of Pakistan and the end of our existence as a separate nation.

Now the question remains: what is Islamic culture which we would like to develop? Islamic culture means the cultivation of the mind in order to enable a Muslim to regulate the whole of his life in accordance with the Divine Law as incorporated in the Quran, and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). Islamic culture not only deals with the cultivation of the mind of the believers as individuals but also of Muslim society as a whole. In fact it aims at nothing short of universal human brotherhood.

By Islamic culture, we mean not the culture attained at any

given moment by a certain people who profess the religion of Islam irrespective of the consideration from which sources of this culture was derived but the kind of culture prescribed by the Islamic religion of which human progress is the definite and avowed aim. The Quran promises success in this world and also in the hereafter to persons who act upon its guidance and obey its laws. It aims at nothing short of the success of mankind as a whole and this success is to be attained by cultivation of man's gifts and faculties. If any development in Muslim society is not sanctioned by the Quran or some express injunction of the Prophet, it is un-Islamic and its origin must be sought outside Islam. Muslims are not expected to achieve any success from its adoption, though it need not necessarily militate against success. If any development is contrary to an express injunction of the Quran and against the teaching and example of the Prophet, then it is anti-Islamic; it must militate against success, and Muslims simply court disaster by its adoption.

Islamic culture is so intricately bound up with religion, so deeply imbued with the idea of Allah's universal sovereignty, that it cannot be treated without comprehending the teachings of Islam. In its grandeur and its decadence, Islamic culture, whether we survey it in the field of science, or of art and literature, or of social welfare, has everywhere and always this religious influence, this all-pervading ideal of universal and complete democracy.

Islamic Culture naturally originated in the beliefs, tenets, and principles of that religion, but with the march of events, it continued assimilating all that was best and beneficial in other people's creeds and cultures and rejected the elements which militated against the Islamic sense of morality or wore in conflict with the fundamentals of Islam.

It is therefore, incumbent upon all Muslims to encourage all those factors in the development of our common culture that are enjoined upon by our Divine Law and to discourage all those which are forbidden by the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet.