

CHAPTER - I

INDO-ARAB RELATION THROUGHOUT THE AGES

UNIT- I

EARLY INDO-ARAB RELATIONS

India had never aspired to live in isolation and always kept its doors open for the people and cultures 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 the Arab world was dynamic, diverse and multi-dimensional. 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 between India and Arab World and the civilization 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. 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 *Civilizational Clash*. Quite unfortunately these civilizational clash theories

never believe in an inter-civilizational dialogue and exchange of cultural goods between two civilizations.¹ So, there is a need for understanding culture and civilization that travel beyond the contemporary civilizational debate. In its simple definition, civilization denotes to the ways of living, making nature bend to fulfill the needs of mankind. It also includes 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.

Early Indo-Arab Relations:

Indo-Arab relations that can be dated back to antiquity speak of such 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 Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and reached Arabia via India. Finally, he met Eve in Saudi Arabia.² Adam is believed to have landed in Dajna

¹. Ilias, M.H. *Cultural Contours of India-West Asia Relations*, Century Publications, New Delhi, 2007, p-2

². Ekram, Shiekh Md. *Aabe Kausar*, Feroz Sons Ltd. Pakistan, 1968, p-19

(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 move to the Arab world from South India.¹ The Old Testament bears ample evidence of maritime mercantile relations between India and the Arab world during Solomon's period.

The Arabs had a close commercial and cultural relation with the Indians in pre-Islamic period. The Indo-Arab 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 immemorial time, these two civilizations have been in constant contact with the exchange of goods, ideas, cultures and people of each other. At the 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.

¹. Nadwi, Syed Suleiman. *Arab-o-Hind ke Taluqat* (Indo-Arab Relations), Darul Musannifin Azamgarh, U.P, pp. 1-2

The Indo-Arab connection predates the spread of Islam. Through the regular commercial trips, they knew 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 some parts of India. The trading Arab groups established business communities in the south-west coast of India. Indian goods were moved to Yemen, Syria and finally to the markets of Egypt and European countries. 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 which were 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.¹ 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

¹. Ilias, M.H. *Cultural Contours of India-West Asia Relations*, Century Publications, New Delhi, 2007, p. 114

Takakera. Apart from experiencing the life of West Asia, these groups were also engaged in certain occupations.¹

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 approximately the same time as the early stages 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 Sindh and Hind were two different countries. Sindh 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 Sindh had been regarded as a part of India. Arabic literature often conflates Sindh with Hind though there were references in

¹. Mubarakpuri, Qazi Athar. *Arab-o-Hind Ahde Resalat Main*, (Arab and India in the period of Prophecy), Maktabatul Haq, Jogeshwari, Mumbai, p. 59

Arabic literature to treating Sindh and Hind as separate geo-political entities.¹

The regular commercial interactions between Arabs and Indians throughout this period culminated in influencing each other's language and culture. Some Indian goods, entered into 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 Arabic poetry has many references to this and many other Indian goods being popular among Bedouins too.²

Many Indian words like sandal (chandan), tanbul (pan), karanfal (peeper), narjeel (coconut) etc. were very popular and widely used among the 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 Syed Suleiman Nadwi, referring to Hafiz Ibn Hajar and Hafiz Seuti's works, asserts that we can be proud of having few Indian words like

¹. *Al-Hind*, The Making of Indo-Islamic World, Vol-1, Brill Academic Publishers, Boston, 2002, pp. 144-145

². Ibid

misk (musk), Zanjabeel (Jinjer) and Kafur (kapur) have been used in the holy Quran.¹

Qazi Athar Mubarakpuri quotes several Hadith which 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 fond of Indian goods. One can come across many references for the popularity of Indian goods in Hadith.²

On the other hand, many Arab goods were imported to India like palms and horses from Basra. King of Sri Lanka used to import alcohol from Iraq. Precious diamonds and fishes were also imported to India.³

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 of Arab world carry the surname *Al-Hindi*. Hind is still a popular name being used extensively by the Arab women. The Arabs have contributed even to the naming of this

¹. Nadwi, Syed Suleiman. *Arab-o-Hind ke Taluqat* (Indo-Arab Relations), Darul Musannifin Azamgarh, pp. 71-72

². Mubarakpuri, Qazi Athar. *Arab-o-Hind Ahde Resalat Main*, Jamal Printing Press Delhi, 1982, p. 31

³. Mubarakpuri, Qazi Athar. *Khilafat-e-Abbasia and Hindustan* (Abbasid Caliphate and India), Jamal Printing Press, Delhi, p. 356

region *Hindustan*. The name 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. No doubt the Indian people were referred to as Hindus by the Arabs long before the Hindu community began to identify themselves as Hindus.

UNIT- II

INDO-ARAB RELATIONS AFTER THE ADVENT OF ISLAM

Generally, the advent of Muslims in India is traced back to the Arab conquest of Sind, though long before that the Arabs already had settlements on the south-western coast of India. However, opinions differ on the advent of Islam in India and there is a prominent version that there was Arab presence in Sindh region before the Arab invasion of Sind. Although they were small in number, but their presence was significant. The Arab army headed by Muhammad bin Qasim invaded Sindh in 710 A.D. This invasion led to a permanent occupation of Sindh and southern Punjab but the rest of India was unaffected until the close of tenth century, when a fresh invasion began under Mahmud Gaznawi.¹

The spread of Islam fostered this linkage tremendously as Islam reached in India mainly through the Arab traders who were active in maritime trade on the coastal towns of India. In the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. with the advent of Islam and spectacular growth of trade, Arab Muslim merchants became very vital in the coastal trade of India and began to challenge the predominance of south Asian merchants. The Indians who visited the Arab world during this period included many scholars, scientists and physicians who sojourned mainly in Baghdad which

¹. Hitti, P. K. *History of the Arabs*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2002, pp. 210-212

was a great centre of intellectual and cultural activity. The oral history revolving around the journey of Cherman Perumal, the last King of Chera Dynasty of Kerala with the mission of meeting Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) is very popular in south India. The opinions differ on his meeting with the Prophet. Anyway, on his way back from Mecca, Cheraman Perumal died in Oman and his body was buried in a place called Salala. The Muslim rule in northern India led to far-reaching effects in the field of culture and learning. Some Sindhi Muslim scholars were sent to Mecca in order to learn Islamic Theology. In reciprocation, Arab Muslim scholars came to India in order to learn mathematics, science, astronomy and philosophy. The Arabs brought in some technological innovations and introduced some new industries in Sindh. So, some methods were applied by the Arabs in the field of agriculture. Gradually, Sindh acquired a great prominence in Arab affairs for not only was it ruled militarily and administratively by the Arabs from their capital in al-Mansura but a large number of Arab merchants, travelers, missionaries and men of learning and erudition migrated to this province and made it their permanent home also.¹

The origin of South India's cultural contacts with the Arab world pre-dates even the genesis and spread of Islam in this area. India was a

¹. Ahmad, Maqbul. *Indo-Arab Relations*, ICCR, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, p. 6

fulcrum of world trade and a meeting point of western and eastern trade routes. And it is in the context of this great traffic of people and ideas that we find the first appearances of cultural contacts. Cultural interactions, of course, had made headway in this more liberal ambience of trade. The Arabs had settled down in many parts of south India as merchant communities, e.g. in Konkan (Maharashtra), Malabar (Kerala) and in many of the coastal towns of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Mysore. The long distance trade in essentially high value goods also spurred a number of factors that operated in the promotion of cultures. Over the centuries, India had been the melting pot of many cultures. From Rome, China, Arabia etc, they made great voyage to India's southern and western coasts in search of spice. India had absorbed the best of all of these influences and remained as a perfect repository of all diverse cultures for long centuries. Indian maritime regions were more plural in their population in terms of ethnicity, religion and culture. The societies were all comprehensively connected to wide realms of trade, culture and politics. Give and take nature of the cultures was the norms of the society. The religious orthodoxies prevalent islands were brushed aside by this pluralism and there was openness to innovations and new ideas.¹

¹. Ibid, p. 7

UNIT- III
SCIENTIFIC AND ACADEMIC INTERACTION BETWEEN INDIA
AND THE ARAB WORLD

The tie of India with the Arab world goes back to 5000 years. Archaeological excavations across the region regularly yield evidence of the Arabs intimate maritime and commercial links with our civilizations in Harappa and Mohenjodaro. There is evidence of relations between the Harappan Civilization and the Dilmun Society. In pre-Islamic times, Arab traders acted as middlemen in trade between Bharuch in Gujarat and Pondicherry and the Mediterranean through Alexandria.

India's relations with the Arab world in southern India have been on different trajectory. In north, the Arabs came as conquerors and exercised their political might while in the south; they had an altogether different history of arrival. They came in south as travelers, merchants and occasionally as missionaries. Indo- Arab relations were not based on political antagonism but on friendship. This lively spread of Islam through the friendly merchants provided the opportunity for deep-rooted cultural exchanges and intellectual communications. It also led to the regular movement of scholars and cultural goods from each side.

Some scholars trace the beginning of studies on Hadith by the Indians to the early days of the arrival of Islam in southern India in the 7th century and in north in the 8th century. Islamic scholars from the 8th

Century A.D. to Al-Beruni (d.1048 A.D.) have, in their writings, documented Indo-Arab cultural links including Indian contributions to Arab thought and culture. Travelers between India and the Arab world were the vehicles not only for scholarly exchanges but also for cultural interactions at a popular level.

The direct and deeper cultural linkages and scientific exchanges between the Arabs and the Indians trace its genesis to a century after the rise of Islam, specifically, with the foundation of Abbasid Caliphate in the middle of 8th century. This period marked as the beginning of a long history of cultural contact which lasted several centuries. The process of cultural exchange was reciprocal and there has been dissemination and diffusion of maximum amount of knowledge in the sciences, arts, religion, philosophy and social and cultural ideas and values. Translations of Indian works were undertaken by the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad where, especially under Harun al-Rashid, Indian concepts in secular subjects ranging from medicine to mathematics and astronomy were translated into Arabic.

It is worth mentioning here that India, in ancient times, was far ahead of the world in science, philosophy and literature. Chess was invented in India. As a result of age old relations between India and Arab world, the Arabs have become acquainted with some facts of rich intellectual heritage

of India. They had a very high opinion of the Indians. After the rise of Islam when Arabs developed a keen sense of intellectual curiosity and a voracious appetite for learning, they were naturally attracted to the intellectual legacy of India which served as a source of knowledge to them, especially in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, wisdom and literature.¹

India can boast of a long history of over 5000 years since the time of Indus Valley Culture. Over the centuries, it has gained such rich experience and developed such a massive fund of knowledge that when Al-Beruni came to India in 11th century, he listed quite a few branches of learning that impressed him highly such as philosophy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, logics, lexicography, drama, fiction, poetics, administration and matrimony. As early as 8th century, the Muslims were interested in all the learning of Hindus. The great Abbasid caliphs, Harun Al-Rashid and Mamun, set up an Academy to know the heritage of past, particularly Greeks and the Indians. They invited the pundits from India, who liberally showed their learning in mathematics, medicine, astronomy and metaphysics. The Arabic numerals which the world knows today are in

¹. Vohra, NN. *History, Culture and Society in India and West Asia*, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 2003, p. 2

Indian philosophy, the Muslim world of Psya of Nyaya School, the Mimamsa-sutra of Jaimini of the Mimamsa School, the Laukayata of Charvaka School and the Vedanta school of Indian philosophy contained in Upanishads.¹

In fact, the Arabs had started translation of scientific ideas and knowledge into Arabic after the rise of Islam, but it was confined only to religious sciences and books of Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh and history. The only ruler, who paid some heed towards medicine and chemistry during this period was Khalid bin Yazeed bin Muawiya but with the establishment of Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. Abbasid Caliph Mansur was very much interested in sciences. He received a delegation of mathematicians from Sindh led by a Pundit that reached Baghdad with a Sanskrit book *Surya Siddhanta*. The Caliph himself monitored the translation of this work into Arabic with the help of a mathematician of the court, Ibrahim Al-Fazari. Caliph Mansur received an embassy from Sindh which consisted of Indian Pundits who presented him several treaties on mathematics and astronomy. These works were later on translated into Arabic with the help of pundits by the order of the Caliph. Thus from about the middle of eighth century, an era of Indo-Arab scientific cooperation is said to have begun. The

¹. Abhyankar, Rajendra M. *West Asia and the Region: Defining India's Role*, Academic Foundation, New Delhi, 2008, p. 225

scientific literature of India that was introduced in Baghdad actually belonged to the Maurya and Gupta periods.¹

India's scientific literature was first introduced to the Arabs in Baghdad where Sanskrit works were made available by the Indian delegation. Quoting famous Arab writer Al-Jahiz, Syed Suleiman Nadwi, points out that many Pundits and medical practitioners like Manka, Balha, Bazgar, Falbarfal and Sindhbad were invited to Baghdad by Yahya bin Khalid al-Barmaki.²

The Abbasids established the *Baitul Hikmah* in Baghdad, where scholars sat together and translated ideas and scientific knowledge from all across the world into Arabic. Many classic works of antiquity would have been forgotten if they were not been translated into Arabic. During this period the Muslim world was a cauldron of cultures which collected, synthesized and significantly advanced the knowledge gained from the ancient Mesopotamian, Roman, Chinese, Indian, Persian, Egyptian, North African, Greek and Byzantine civilizations. In pursuance of his policy, Al-Mamun established *Baitul Hikmah* (House of Wisdom), a combination of library, academy and translation bureau which in many respects proved the

¹. Ahmad, Maqbul. *Indo-Arab Relations*, ICCR, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, p. 10

². Nadwi, Syed Suleiman. *Arab-o-Hind ke Taluqat* (Indo-Arab Relations), Darul Musannifin Azamgarh, pp. 130-131

most important educational institution since the foundation of the Alexandrian Museum in the first half of the third century B.C.¹

Closely parallel to this, the city of Mecca served as a Center of trade in Arabia. The tradition of the pilgrimage to Mecca became a site for exchanging ideas and goods. The influence held by Muslim merchants operated from Mecca over African-Arabian and Arabian-Asian trade routes was tremendous. Arab-Islamic civilization grew and expanded to then unknown maritime world alongside its merchant network. Astronomy was one of the first sciences introduced in the Arab world at the end of 8th century through the Indian Sanskrit book *Sidhhanta*. With the translation of this book, Arab scientists became acquainted with the developments taken place in India in the field of astronomy. After this, Indian astronomy was studied by the Arabs with greater effort and interest. The other Sanskrit astronomical works introduced in the Arab world at that time include: Aryabhattya (in Arabic Arjabhad) by Aryabhat of Kusumpura; Khandakhadyaka (in Arabic Al-Arkand) by Brahamagupta. The Arab traveller cum author Al-Bairuni has made some substantial reference on the enormous amount of popularity gained by astronomy among Indians.

¹. Hitti, P. K. *History of the Arabs*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2002, p. 310

Astronomy became popular in the Arab World when the second Abbasid Caliph, Mansur took over the throne. He was very much fond of astronomy so when he decided to build city of Baghdad, he made it according to astronomic rules.¹ A number of Arab astronomers engaged themselves in the study of Indian works and translated with greater amount of improvisations on the basis of their own observations. Ibrahim bin Habib al-Fazari who wrote *Kitab al-Zij* based on *Surya Sidhhanta*, Mohammed bin Musa al-Khawarizmi and Habash bin Abdullah al-Marwazi constituted a long array of astronomers who were really inspired by the Indian scholarships. The contribution of India in the growth of Arab astronomy was both conceptual and philological. Many Sanskrit astronomical terms were Arabisized and freely used by Arab astronomers in their treatises: kardaja (Karamajya, Sanskrit) was used and later replaced by Arabic Witr Mustawi then Jib (Jiva, Sanskrit), auj (Uch, Sanskrit) were used by earlier Arab astronomers. Like astronomy, Indian mathematics was also introduced to the Arabs towards the end of 8th century. Ibrahim bin Habib al-Fazari himself endeavored the translation of many Sanskrit mathematical treatises into Arabic. Through these works, Indian numerical system and the concept of zero became known to the Arab world. The Arabs learnt

¹. Nadwi, Syed Suleiman. *Arab-o-Hind ke Taluqat* (Indo-Arab Relations), Darul Musannifin Azamgarh, p. 153

mathematics from Indians and they called it Indian mathematics or numbers. It was via the Arabs, the Europeans learnt mathematical innovations originated in India and they called it Arabic figures. It is difficult to come to a conclusion when Arabs learnt it but it is said that the translation of *Surya Sidhhanta* in Arabic that contained mathematics and numbers in its 13th and 24th chapters, introduced mathematics in the Arab world. Indian system of medicine was known to the Arabs probably from the early times. The Quraysh tribe of Mecca handled the drug and spice trade and hence came in to frequent contact with India and Persia. The drug merchants had to supply not only directions for use but possibly medical, pharmacological, botanical and mineralogical explanations as well.¹ Translation of some medical books from Greek language to Arabic had already started in the Umayyad period in early 8th century but it developed fully with the establishment of Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. Indian medical science (Ayurveda) was however properly introduced to the Arab world only after several of the classical Indian works on the subject were translated into Arabic under the patronage of early Abbasid caliphs.

The introduction of Indian medicine in the Arab world is related to the illness of Caliph Harun Rashid. When he suffered from a serious

¹. Ahmad, Maqbul. *Indo-Arab Relations*, ICCR, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, p.16

disease, Arab physicians were unable to cure him. So, an Indian physician named Manka was called in by the Caliph at the suggestion of his courtiers. He treated the Caliph and cured him. He was rewarded and later attached to the hospital of Baramika. He was a very famous physician of that time, who had translated several medical works into Arabic. Other Indian physicians who got a wide acclaim in the Arab world were Ibn Dahn probably a descendant of Dhanapati and Salih the son or descendant of Bhela. The famous Indian works translated into Arabic were Charaka Samhita, Susrud, Astanka Hridya, Sindhsan (Siddhyoga), Nidan and Kitab al-Summ. Among these translated books, two require special mentioning here; one is Susrud (Arabs called it Sasru) comprising on 10 chapters with the details of symptoms of illness and the medicine for its treatment; and the other is Charaka Samhita by famous Indian physician Charaka.

Charaka Samhita was first translated into Persian and then into Arabic by Abdullah Ibn Ali. The book Nidan explains only the signs of 404 illnesses, not the treatment.¹ Besides, several other works on different types of snakes and their poisons, drugs, treatment of pregnant women, intoxicants, disease and medicaments, effects of mania and hysteria were

¹. Nadwi, Syed Suleiman. *Arab-o-Hind ke Taluqat* (Indo-Arab Relations), Darul Musannifin Azamgarh, p. 148

also rendered into Arabic ¹ Quite interestingly, the works of an Indian woman physician, Rusa had been translated into Arabic that exclusively deals with women's diseases.

¹ Ahmad, Maqbul. *Indo-Arab Relations*, ICCR, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, p-17

UNIT- IV
LITERARY AND CULTURAL INTERFACES

Music was the other major avenue, where quite lots of interactions were taken place. Jahiz, in his writings, has praised Indian music. It is said that no book related to Indian music have been translated into Arabic in Baghdad but the Spanish historian, Qazi Sayeed Andalusi (1070) has mentioned about a book on Indian music. The book is *Nafar*, which linguistically means *fruits of wisdom*, has reached to the Arabs. According to him this book contains Raag and Sur (music). By all possibilities, it may be the Persian book *Nauber*, which means new fruit, reached to the Arabs through the translation from Persian. Quoting one of his Hindu friends, Syed Suleiman Nadwi reiterates that it could be Nad that means sound in Sanskrit.¹ Indian singers from Sindh were very famous among the Arabs. Arab poets and educated persons were also entertained by them. The Arab poet Abu Jamil employed a famous singer Mutriz Sindi Madni for the recitation of his poems. He was a famous poet of Mahdi Era (775-785). Khumar Qandaharya was a renowned Indian female singer whom Abdullah bin Rabi bought and brought in to Arabia for two dirham.²

¹. Nadwi, Syed Suleiman. *Arab-o-Hind ke Taluqat* (Indo-Arab Relations), Darul Musannifin Azamgarh, p. 158

². Mubarakpuri, Qazi Athar. *Khilafat-e-Abbasia and Hindustan* (Abbasid Caliphate and India), Delhi, pp. 390-391

As compared to the Indian scientific literature, literary works in Sanskrit were less known to the Arabs. There were hardly any Arabic translations of the classical works. What little was translated is well known and became popular literature in the medieval times. The reason may be that by the time, Arabs became aware of Indian literature, Arabic literature had sufficiently advanced in both forms of prose and poetry.

Similarly, the great Indian epics and philosophical works like Upanishads and Ramayana remained untranslated in Abbasid period probably on account of their religious content but they had been rendered in Arabic later on. The Indian literary work which gained a wide fame was Panchatantra- a collection of fables containing wise sayings. It was originally written in Sanskrit by a great Hindu scholar, Pundit Vishnu Sharma. However, it was lost and perished in the sands of time after being translated into Pahlavi (literary Persian) language in the 6th century. Thereafter, it was translated into Arabic in the 8th century by Abdullah bin al-Muqaffa and it was christened as *Kalila wa Dimna*. The Arabic translation made it well known all over the Europe and it was then translated into Hebrew, Latin, Spanish and Italian. During the reign of

Nushirwan (531- 579), Buzurjmihr was specially sent to India (Ganges) to procure a copy of the Fables of Bidpai (also known as *Kalila wa Dimna*).¹

Indian stories and tales were famous among the Arabs in Abbasid period. During this period, along with the translations of Indian books in sciences and mathematics, many stories were also rendered in to Arabic. Some of the famous books fall in this category are: *Kalila wa Dimna*, *Sindbad Kabir*, *Sindbad Sagheer*, *Kitabul Badd*, *Kitab Baunasef wa Balohar*, *Kitab Bonasef*, *Kitab Adabul Hind wa al-Sindh*, *Kissa Hubute Adam*, *Kitab Turuk*, *Kitab Dabak Hindi* (on Man and women), *Kitab Suwerum*, *Kitab Shanaq fid Tadbeer*, *Kitab Baidba* (on wisdom and knowledge) and *Kitab Utur Mashrubat*.²

Arab scholars, merchants and travelers had visited many parts of India but it seems they were either experts of Islamic science or were interested in religious propaganda. But there is no evidence to show that Arab scientists of this period visited India.³ Al-Beruni (973-1048) although was not an Arab, was one of the first Muslim scientists who visited India in the beginning of 11th century. In his well known book *Kitab fi Tahqiq*

¹. Ahmad, Maqbul. *Indo-Arab Relations*, ICCR, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, p. 18

². Mubarakpuri, Qazi Athar. *Khilafat-e-Abbasia and Hindustan* (Abbasid Caliphate and India), Delhi, p. 390

³. Ahmad, Maqbul. *Indo-Arab Relations*, ICCR, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, p. 28

ma'lil Hind (Researches on India), he didn't record the military and political history of India in any detail but wrote its cultural, scientific, social and religious history, thus showing that he had as wide a concept of history as that of modern historians. He had rendered a great service to India by presenting its ancient cultural and scientific legacy to the Arabic speaking world of his time.

It was Al-Biruni, who perhaps was the first scientist to translate Arabic scientific works into Sanskrit. Quoting from Sachu, Maqbul Ahmad says that his work as a translator was a double one. He translated from Sanskrit into Arabic and from Arabic into Sanskrit. He wants to give Muslims an opportunity to study Indian sciences of India and on the other hand, he called upon to spread Arabic learning among Hindus. He translated Samkhya by Kapila, the book of Patanjali, Paulassasiddhanta and Brahma *Siddhanta* by Brahmagupta and Brihatsamhita and Laghujatakam by Varahamihira into Arabic. He also translated into Sanskrit the following books: Euclid's Elements, Ptolemy's Almagest and a treatise of his own on the construction of astrolabe.

The establishment of Muslim kingdoms in the north and in the south and the introduction of Arab educational system and the Sharia brought a large number of Arab theologians, jurists and men of learning to India

throughout the medieval period and some Indian Muslim scholars also visited Arab world and acquired eminent positions in their respective fields. The history has witnessed the exchange of scholars between the two regions on a large scale. According to a Sikh Guru Nanak (1469- 1539) is said to have visited Arabia and Iraq. He met many religious scholars and gave lectures in many places.¹ Some Arab travelers, such as Ibn Batuta of Morocco occasionally found themselves elevated to positions of power by their hosts. Ibn Batuta, for a while, was made the Qazi of Delhi, even though he was unfamiliar with the school of Islamic jurisprudence used in India. Indian scholars have also documented the compilation of a large number of Indian works in Quranic studies over the last 500 years as also in Islamic jurisprudence over a slightly longer period. Perhaps less remembered today is the contribution of Indians to Islamic scholarship in the medieval period. After the Abbasid period, literary interactions declined. But the cultural renaissance known as *Al-Nahda* in Egypt in the late 19th and early 20th century led to a renewed encouragement of translation of Arabic works into Indian languages and of Indian books into Arabic. Works by personalities such as Rabindranath Tagore and Allama

¹. Ahmad, Maqbul. *Indo-Arab Relations*, ICCR, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, p. 30

Muhammad Iqbal were translated into Arabic by scholars from Egypt and other Arab countries.

Tagore's award winning book *Geetanjali* was translated by Wadie Haqqi in Lebanon. Syed Sulaiman Nadvi's famous book on Indo-Arab relations and Shibli Nomani's *Al-Farooq* have been recently translated in Arabic by Dr. Suhaib Alam and Jalal Sayeed Hafnavi respectively. Premchand's *Gaodan* had also been rendered into Arabic. Rampur Raza Library in Rampur has published a well researched book about India in Arabic. The book presents the picture of India as depicted in Arabic poetry.

Egyptian scholar Tharwat Okasha prepared an encyclopedia of Indian arts in Arabic in recent times. India's contribution in promotion of Arabic language and literature in India does not need any introduction. The history of learning and teaching of Arabic language in India starts with the arrival of Islam. It came as the language of Arab traders who were in the region in visible numbers. It was further boosted by the invasion of Mohammed bin Qasim in 710 A.D. Teaching of Arabic started traditionally in Mosques and Madrasas which were established to study on Qur'an, Hadith and other aspects of Islamic studies. People learnt Arabic because it was the language of Qur'an and was necessary to understand the basic theory of Islam. These Madrasas played an important role in promotion of

Arabic language and produced famous scholars of Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh and Islamic history.

In the recent times, cultural and literary encounters between India and Arab world are on a large scale, particularly after the establishment of Indo-Arab Cultural Centre at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi. This Centre is regularly engaged in fostering the age-old cultural relations by organizing Arab cultural programs in India as well as promoting Indian culture in Arab world. Literary encounters between the well known Indian and Arab writers are taking place on regular basis. The Centre, during the last two years has successfully translated and published more than 20 books of well known Indian authors including A. P. J Abdul Kalam (former President of India), Amartya Sen and Prof. Mushirul Hasan into Arabic. Likewise, a number of Arab literature have been translated several Indian languages. The process of literary and cultural exchanges between India and Arab world is on large scale under the ambiance of this Centre.