

# An exploration on the influence of Islam on the art and culture of India



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## **Abstract**

From the earliest days of Islam, there was a clear Muslim presence in the coastal areas of Southern India, as shown by the emergence of Arab trading settlements. These conquests in Northern India at the beginning of the 8th century solidified the influence of Islam and had a significant political and sociocultural impact in the region. The history of India paints a fascinating picture of the synthesis of several disparate cultural tendencies that were over time altered via a process of mutual adjustment and absorption. Islam played a significant part in this by fostering India's multi-cultural and multi-religious culture and by integrating the subcontinent into the Arab-Islamic maritime civilization that stretched from southern Africa to China. This was especially true when it came to tying together Central Asian empires as well as the great Turkic empires of Africa. It provides a relevant illustration of how human brains interact and the ways in which exchanges across cultures and civilizations have an impact on local traditions, religion, literature, and the arts.

**Keywords:** multi-cultural, multi-religious culture, Indian Art, Culture, Arab-Islamic maritime civilization

## **Introduction**

Although it is impossible to quantify the impact of Islam on Hindu society during the Middle Ages, it can be studied and examined by classifying the impact of Islam into various areas, such as the impact on people's

diet, clothing, and social lives; ideals, beliefs, and values; the purdah system; language and literature; art and architecture; and music and painting.

The Arabs and the southern region of India maintained economic links for a long time prior to the advent of Islam. Because it was the first time the Muslims had attacked India, under the leadership of Muhammad Bin Kasim, they achieved political dominance to govern over the Indian land, and they reigned for the next five centuries, the Arab invasion of Sindh in 712 A.D. is significant in the history of India.

The Muslim invaders were keenly aware of their own identity and stayed as a distinct group throughout rather than assimilating or becoming associated with the majority of those who practised Hinduism.

Over time, the Arabs attempted to increase their religious influence in India. The sociocultural landscape of India underwent a tremendous and notable transformation between the 13th century and the entrance of the Mughals in 1526 A.D. Due to the emergence of two religious groups, the Bhakti and Sufi Movements, everything that occurred did so.

## **Impact of Islam on Indian art and Culture**

### **Hindu Society: Purda System and Marriage**

The Islamic culture had a significant impact on Hindu civilization. By adopting Islamic customs, Hindu culture developed the "Purda System." The Hindu ladies who had previously lived in seclusion at home now go outdoors in palanquins with curtains. The Purda system was strictly maintained in the royal harem of Hindu emperors. As an instance, the queen of Prataprudradev visited Sri Chaitanya in a Palanuqin that was draped in curtains.

Additionally, the puberty age was no longer a requirement for a Hindu girl's marriage. On the other side, Hindu society adopted child marriage in imitation of the Muslim custom. Hindu women's status and condition significantly declined, and they were more and more reliant on males as a result.

### **Slavery**

Slavery was a negative aspect of social life that seeped into Hindu culture as a result of Islam's overall impact. It was a well-known custom among the Delhi Sultans and Mughal rulers, and it was quite widespread in Muslim culture. Their lords and emirs also kept male and female slaves.

This practise of slavery was established by Hindu leaders and feudal rulers, and it had a significant influence on Indian civilization. Among the royal Rajput family of Rajasthan, the tradition of giving women slaves as dowry is still prevalent.

## **Dress and Food**

The Hindus also absorbed Muslim etiquette, attire, and cuisine as a consequence of their interactions with Muslims. The Hindus wore lungis, achakan, salwar, and pyjamas. Hindu aristocracy embraced the dinners, gambling, wine-drinking, and other customs of the Muslim nobility. The Hindus adapted foods like palau, kabab, biryani, kachhember, etc. Following the Delhi Court's custom, Hindu monarchs adopted Muslim seating patterns for distinct classes.

## **Dance and Music**

Islam has had an impact on Indian musical instruments and dancing styles. Sitar is a hybrid of the Iranian Tambura and the Indian Veena. The Tabla was created as a consequence of Muslim modifications to the Hindu Mridanga. Different Ragas and classical vocal music underwent subtle changes when those came in contact with Muslim singers. Popular Islamic contributions to Indian classical music include Tarana, Thumri, and Ghazzal. As whole Muslim exponents too were highly impressed with the Indian Dhrupad and Damar. Hindus emulated Qwali and Ghazzal, and they created a kind of pair dance.

## **Religion: Bhakti Movement**

In the area of religion, Islam had a stronger effect. It provided Hinduism a severe jolt and destroyed the Brahmanical influence from Hindu culture that it had been using for a long time. In addition, the influence of Islam on Hinduism has significant repercussions.

The adherents of Hinduism faced a formidable assault from the Islamic message of global brotherhood, establishment of equality in society, rejection of the caste system and untouchability, hostility to idol-worship, and belief in the oneness of God. This helped shape the Hindu mentality throughout time and encouraged the rise of liberal movements led by various saints and reformers.

The "Bhakti Cult," or Single-minded direct dedication and adoration to "One," was born as a result of this. It also gave birth to the Bhakti Movement and produced numerous saints, including Sri Chaitanya, Ramanand, Kabir, and Nanak.

The subjugated masses who were denied social rights and were freed from the priests' grasp thanks to the Bhakti cult received the much-desired respite. This Bhakti religion had a significant impact on South India. Many South Asian thinkers, like Sankaracharya, Ramanuja, Basava, and others, emerged to redefine Hinduism in terms of Islamic monotheistic.

## **Impact on Art and Architecture**

It is believed that Islam had a significant influence on mediaeval architecture and the fine arts. A new sort of art was created as a result of the melding of Hindu and Muslim art cultures, with Persian exterior features like spherical domes, open courtyards, and arches replacing Hindu fundamental components like workmanship and decorative richness. Islamic architecture was used in the construction of the Qutab Minar, Taj Mahal, Jama Masjid, and the Humayun's Tomb in Delhi. In their palaces, the Rajput kings used Mughal architectural elements. Even Hindu temples were unable to resist the effect of Islam.

## **Impact on Music and Painting**

Indian culture was greatly impacted by music. The Muslim sultans loved music a lot, and throughout their reign, a vibrant musical culture arose. Qawwallis gained enormous popularity. The blending of Persian and Indian music led to the creation of new notations. Some of the musical instruments, such as the sitar, generated a fusion of the Indian Veena and the Iranian Tambura. In addition, Tabla was a musical adaptation of the Hindu song Mirdang.

## **Early history of Islam in India**

Since ancient times, trade links have existed between Arabia and the Indian subcontinent. Arab merchants used to go to the Konkan-Gujarat coast and the Malabar Coast, which connected them to the ports of Southeast Asia, even before the advent of Islam. India originally came into touch with Islam via newly muslimized Arabs. The first ship carrying Muslim travellers was seen on the Indian coast as early as 630 CE, according to historians Elliot and Dowson in their book *The History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians*. The first Arab Muslims are said to have arrived on the Indian coast in the latter half of the seventh century CE, according to H.G. Rawlinson's book *Ancient and Medieval History of India*. (*Tuhafat Ul Mujahideen* by Zainuddin Makhdoom II is another trustworthy book.) J. Sturrock's *Madras District Manuals* and Haridas Bhattacharya's *Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. IV*, both support this assertion. The Arabs rose to prominence as a global cultural force with the introduction of Islam. Arab businessmen and merchants took up the role of the new religion's propagators, spreading it wherever they went.

## Conclusion

We can conclude that the contact between Hinduism and Islam has created a new synthesis of cultures and religions after examining and analyzing the extent of Islam's influence on Hindu society in several areas, including the impact on people's diet, attire, and social lives; ideals, beliefs, and values; the purdah system; language and literature; art and architecture; music and painting, etc. Additionally, it can be inferred that Islam had a significant impact on Hindu civilization, which may be thoroughly investigated and analyzed depending on a particular topic or area (like tradition, language, art, music, ideology, etc.) It is commonly accepted that when individuals from various cultures coexist in a given geographic region, more common ideologies, beliefs, value systems, customs, etc. are likely to be produced. People exchange and affect one another's social, political, and cultural perspectives. The same is applicable to both Islam and Hinduism.

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