
Indo-Saudi Relations- Islam as a Major Factor

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ABSTRACT:

The nature of the Indo-Saudi relations is a well-known fact and the history of these relations dates back to time of establishment of the kingdom of the Saudi Arabia in 1932. India has traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations with the Arab world, especially with the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Traders came from the Arabian Peninsula to exchange goods soon after Islam established its Khilafah in areas far and wide. These traders were a major link between the West Asia and the Mediterranean and the Indian coast. Over the years the cultural exchange and religious ties were established in addition to the relations in the fields of education, military technology, science and so on. The Saudi-Indo diplomatic relations were formally established in 1948 and upgraded fully in 1944. Saudi and Indian officials have reciprocated many friendly and strategic visits to each other. King Saud bin Abdul Aziz visited India in 1955. Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal also visited India in 1981. The next year, the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited the kingdom. Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi also made an important visit to the kingdom in 1982. In Dec. 1994 the then Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Saudi Arabia for the meeting of the Indo-Saudi joint commission. King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz visited India in 2006. With the signing of the Delhi declaration in 2006 by King Abdullah begins a new era in Indo-Saudi relations. It is considered to be a landmark in the development of better understanding and cooperation between the two countries. The two countries are working together closely for the benefit of the people and for the peace and stability in the world. In my paper I will discuss the efforts being made from both the sides to bridge the gap between Saudi Arabia and India and to bring the two countries and its people closer focussing on Islam being a cultural factor that is common between India and Saudi Arabia and plays a key role in the relationship between the two countries.

KEYWORD: Major Factor, - Islam, Indo-Saudi, Relations, Language, Literature

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Indo-Saudi Relations- Islam as a Major Factor:

Among the countries India had strong relations since the ancient period is Saudi Arabia. In fact Saudi Arabia and specially Makkah proved to be a centre of trade for the time immemorial. The Arabs were used to go abroad twice a year; in summer and winter, carrying their goods to the world trade-markets and bringing back the valuables of the other countries to their own. For this very reason they reached to India carrying their goods and bringing back the goods of the India. Apart from the trade materials they also went back with the wise sayings of the Indians and their sciences in which they were very famous for. Jahiz says:

"اشتهرت الهند بالحساب وعلم النجوم وأسرار الطب والتصاوير والصناعات الكثيرة".¹

Tr. India is famous in Mathematics, Astrology, Medical Sciences, paintings and several techniques.

Sa'id Undulusi says:

"إن الهنود يعرفون أكثر من غيرهم من كافة أمم العالم عن علم الطب فهم أبصر من غيرهم بقوى الأدوية وطبائع المولدات وخواص الموجودات".²

Tr. The Hindus are more knowledgeable than the nations of the world in medical sciences so they are more squinted with the effects of the medicines, nature of the lectogogues and features of the natural medicines.

Jahiz again says:

"الفيل والببر والطائوس والبيغاء والدجاج السندي والكركدن مما خصّ الله به الهند".³

Tr. Elephant, tiger, peacock, parrot, Sindhi hen, rhinoceros are among the animals and birds Allah has bestowed upon India.

In the beginning they were related to India only for the purpose of business which compelled them to learn their language which is why it is told that Kaurav and Pandav were well-versed in Arabic and they used to talk each other in it during the famous war of Mahabharata:

"الإخوة كورافا وباندافا من ذوي السمعة المهاجراتا، كانوا يعرفون اللغة العربية ويرد ذكر ذلك في كتاب الهندوس المقدس "المهاجرات".⁴

Through the passage of time and when Islam was introduced to the Arabs by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) the Arab traders who embraced Islam and also those who were acquainted with it, came to India they introduced Islam or told about it to the Indian people and, thus some of the Indians came in touch with Islam and Islamic

teachings. Since then the people from both the sides started meeting each other for the purpose of religion and religious issues even some of the Indians travelled to Arabia only to meet the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

From now, the relations between India and Saudi Arabia (the Arabian Peninsula/the centre of Islam) became bilateral. But when the Abbasid period came and, hence the Abbasid caliphs showed their keen interest in the Indian sciences and arts these relations became trilateral but Islam remained on the top proving to be in the centre of these relations and capturing the attraction of both.

Islam is a Major Factor for these Relations:

Before discussing the role of Islam in strengthening these relations I wish to explain the definition of Islam. Islam is a religion brought by Prophet Muhammad PBUH who was an Arab, and whose main book is the Qur'an which is in Arabic. And when it came to India it was embraced by the people of India too. Now Islam in India in this context has become a collection of three major parts; Arabian society, Islamic teachings and the Indian society. Thus Islam joined the Indians to the Arabs for two major things followed by trade. These two major things are (1) Arabic language and (2) Arab values and Islamic teachings.

Islam and Indo-Saudi Relations:

Saudi Arabia came into existence when the king Abdul Aziz Ali Saud united the different parts of the Arabian peninsula in 1932. Thus the Arabs were united with the Indians as the Indians came in contact with the Arabs. The Saudi-Indo diplomatic relations were formally established in 1948 and upgraded fully in 1944. King Saud bin Abdul Aziz visited India in 1955 and the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited the kingdom in 1956. Later Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited the kingdom in 1982. Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal visited India in 1981. In Dec. 1994 the then Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Saudi Arabia for the meeting of the Indo-Saudi joint commission and later King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz visited India in 2006.

With the signing of Delhi declaration in 2006 by the king Abdullah begins a new era in India-Saudi Arabia relations and it was considered a landmark in the development and understanding the co-operation between the two countries. The two countries are working together closely for the benefit of the people and for the peace and stability in the world.

This relation helped the both to exchange in several fields some of

them are as follows:

- **Language and Literature:** Though Arabs did not learn Indian languages in their early ages the Indians learnt Arabic throughout ages because the Arabic language came to India as a part of Islam, after that they learnt it for doing business or doing job in the Arab government/countries. But it is very interesting that the Arabs took numerous vocabularies and proverbs, styles and stories from the Indians "الموز", "الهند", "القسط", "النارجيل", "جوتي" (Kuwait), "چاي" (Kuwait), "پنکا" (Iraq), "پرده" (Iraq), even the name of the country Kuwait is a changed form of "کوٹ" which means court. Similarly Uyunul Akhbar and al-Iqd al-Farid has quoted numerous Indian proverbs some of which are given below:

Justice of the king is more useful for its people than the full help of time.

- عدل السلطان أنفع للرعية من خصب الزمان

The worst wealth is that which is not spent.

- شرّ المال ما لا ينفق منه

The worst friend is that who forsakes.

- شرّ الإخوان الخاذل

The worst king is that from whom the people are afraid.

- شرّ السلطان من خافه البريء

The worst country is which is not fertile and peaceful.

- شرّ البلاد ما ليس فيه خصب ولا أمن

The king who is less faithful and is careless of his friends is like a prostitute.

- إنما مثل السلطان في قلة وفائه للأصحاب وسخاء نفسه عمن فقد منهم مثل البغي والمكتسب كلما ذهب واحد جاء آخر

The wise king increases with the advice of wise ministers like a sea which increases with the rivers falling into it, and take with wisdom and advice which cannot be taken with power and army.

- الملك الحازم يزداد برأي الوزراء الحزمة كما يزداد البحر بمورده من الأنهار وينال بالحزم والرأي ما لا ينال بالقوة والجنود

The person who seeks leave from the friends at the time of advice, from the doctors at the tile of treatment, and from the Juries at the time of any doubt,

- ومن التمس من الإخوان الرخص عند المشورة ومن الأطباء عند المرض ومن الفقهاء عند الشبهة أخطأ الرأي وازداد مرضاً وحمل الوزر

he will commit mistake, will increase in disease, and will face consequence.

Three things make an increase in familiarity and confidence; Increase in travel, mutual trust and recognition of own people.

Four people are in loss; who whispers to the deaf, who scatters seeds in the mud, who lights candle in the bright day, and who does favour with the unfaithful.

Six things are not permanent; shadow of the cloud, friendship of the mischief, love of the women, abundance of wealth, wrong king and untrue praise.

● ثلاثة أشياء تزيد في الأُنس والثقة
الزيادة في الرجل والمواكلة
ومعرفة الأهل والحشم

● أربعة ليست لأعمالهم ثمرة مسار
الأصم والباذر في السبخة
والمسرح في الشمس وواضع
المعروف عند من لا شكر له

● ستة أشياء لا ثبات لها؛ ظل
الغمام وخلة الأشرار وعشق
النساء والمال الكثير والسلطان
الجائر والثناء الكاذب⁵

As for the stories we have in Arabic Kaliah wa Dimnah⁶, Sindbad⁷ Buzasp wa Blohar and⁸ and several short stories mentioned in the Arabic story books⁹. The Indians also took several vocabularies and proverbs, styles and stories from the Arabs though this exchange was inclined towards the Arabs who were fond of adopting new and unique things, e.g. "الصبر مفتاح الظر" "إنسان", "كتاب", "قلم", "كرسي", "قميص", "العلم نور والجهل ظلام", "آفة المرء النسيان", "اطلبوا العلم من المهد إلى اللحد".

As for the influence of the Indians with the heroes of the Arabs the Arabian hero Hatim has become so famous among the Indians as they use to make serials in this name. Similarly the stories of bravery and generosity have been borrowed from the Arabs.

On the other hand we the Indians are very keen to learn Arabic language as a part of religion. We have a large number of Islamic madrasas in different cities and villages teaching Arabic language and literature, religious sciences, the Qur'an, the Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence etc.

In addition to this several Indian universities and collages offer B.A. M.A. and Ph. D programs in Arabic language. In these universities not only the Muslims benefit from these courses, but our non-Muslim brothers and sisters learn Arabic for the purpose of getting better jobs in India and baroad.

The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabic plays a good role in

organizing seminars and talks with the collaboration of madrasas, universities and centres in different cities of India, in which the scholars discuss the bilateral relations, impacts on the society and the future planes to benefit the two nations; Indian and Saudi.

- **In the Field of Society:** Similarly they were influenced with each other in the field of society but I see that in this regard the Arabs took less influence than the Indians. The Indians were much influenced with the Arabs; in eating, in moving, in living, in behavior even now the Hindu brother started to say (in sha Allah), (ma sha Allah) and (Khalas).

Some dresses in India have the Islamic impact, such as covering the whole body, wearing the black hijab, or only covering the head even among the non-Muslim girls and ladies.

- **In the Field of Religion:** Not only this, the Arabs influenced them in the field of religion too specially the birth of Sikhism which is based on oneness of God. Similarly revisit of Hinduism and several religious things came due influence of the Muslims. If we look at the Muslims in India they mostly act according to the teaching of Islam specially in the basic duties and one of them is the travel for performing Hajj. As we know the Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam and all the rituals of it are performed in Saudi Arabia (Makkah, Arafat, Muzdalifah and Mina). Every year lacks of Muslims travel to Saudi Arabia for performing Hajj and the Saudi government provides all the facilities to ease their performance.

In India we have a great history of Hajj travelogue like the Hajj travelogue by Nawab Sikar Begum Bhopal named 'Pilgrimage to Mecca' published from London in 1870, Safarnama-e-Hajj by Shaiftah and Safarnamah Hajj by Sayyidul Ulama Ali Naqi Naqwi.

The Saudi government also preparing the Hajj encyclopedia and the Indian part has a big space in it describing the history of Hajj travel between Indian and Saudi Arabia throughout the ages.

- **In the Field of Arts & Sciences:** As regards sciences the Arabs took much benefits from the Arabs but as regards arts the Arab-Islamic arts influenced the Indians even their temples have the impact of Islamic architecture. First we take the Arabs:

• Sciences

The Arabs took much benefit in the fields of different sciences like medical sciences, mathematics, astrology, astronomy, chemistry etc.

Here we wish to shed some lights on each science in which the Arabs were benefitted by the Indians:

1. **Medical Sciences:** In this field the Arabs took much benefit even they developed it and made their own medical science named as 'Arabian Medicine'. The books translated in this regard are as follows:
 - a) *Sushuriti Sanhita*: This book was written by the famous Indian physician 'Sushurat' who learnt medicine from Dewdas in Varanasi. The book contains diseases, its symptoms and its treatment. It is in ten chapters. Ibn-e-Nadīm says: "Kitāb-o-Susrad is in ten chapters. Yaḥya bin Khālīd ordered to render it into Arabic"¹⁰. Al-Rāzi has took benefits from this book in his famous book of Unāni medicine¹¹.
 - b) *Chark Sanhita*: It is the book written by famous Indian physician Chark who was in the courtyard of the king Kanishk. Al-Bairūni says about him: "The Indians have a book in medicine which they give weightage. It is known with the name of its author, Chark. His family tree of knowledge reaches upto Perjapati the father of Indian medicine"¹². 'Abdullāh bin 'Alī translated this book into Arabic.
 - c) *Kitāb al-Sumūm*: The author of this book is Chānakya whose Arabiacised form is 'Shānāq'. Chānakya was the Minister of Chandragupt Mauriya. Ibn Abi Usaibi'a says about him: "Among the famous Indian physicians is Shānāq. He has many experiments in the medical science"¹³. Abbās bin Sa'īd al-Jauhari translated it from its Persian version which was done by Kanka the famous Indian translator.
 - d) *Kitāb fi Ilājāt al-Nisā'*: It was written by one of the Indian lady physicians. Al-Rāzi has taken benefits from this book.
 - e) *Kitāb fi Ajnās al-Hayyāt*: It was written by Roy. Similarly '*Kitāb al-Namuzar fi al-Amār*', '*Kitāb fi al-Tawahhum*', '*Kitāb Nidan*' and '*Kitāb Tauqishnal*' were translated into Arabic.
2. **Mathematics:** In this field India not only did favour upon the Arabs but through the Arabs it did faour upon the whole world. Before the Indians the humanity was unaware of full numbers. It is the Indians who taught it to them and from them the Arabs took and made it famous in the whole world. Till the date they named it as 'al-Arqām al-Hindiyyah' (Indian Numbers). Its story has been narrated by al-Bairūni in details. See his book 'Taḥqīq-o-Ma Lil Hind', Page no. 82-84. Arabs not only took it from

them but also they wrote original books on the topic. Among some Arabs who wrote books on the topic are Abu Naṣr Moḥammad bin ‘Abdullāh al-Kaluzani, Abu Yūsuf Yaqūb bin Is.ḥāq al-Kindi, Aḥmad bin ‘Umer al-Karabisi, Sinān bin al-Fat.h, Abul Qāsim Ali bin Aḥmad al-Mujtaba and Muḥammad bin Aḥmad bin Yūsuf al-Khawārzmi.

To this science Algebra is related. Though it was invented by the Arabs themselves they based it upon the Indian numbers. The famous book on this topic is ‘*Kitāb al-Jabr wa al-Muqābala*’ by al-Khawārzmi.

3. **Astronomy & Astrology:** These two sciences are related to the Indians. The Arabs did not anything about this science before their contact with the Indians. They had only ‘al-Tanjīm’ (Natural Astronomy). The Indians were expert of this science as al-Bairūni said¹⁴.

The famous book on this topic translated by the Arabs was ‘Barham Sidhdhānt’ which was written by ‘Barham Gupt’. He wrote this book at the age of 30 and presented it to the king Dayagharmukha. It was translated in the period of Abu Jafar al-Mansūr as al-Qifti said¹⁵.

Al-Bairūni has mentioned it in details and pointed out its contents¹⁶.

The second Indian book translated into Arabic from Sanskrit is Arjubhuz. It was written by Arya Bhat. He was born in 471AD and hailed from Patna. He started writing books at the age of 23. This is his last book which contains 12 chapters.

There is another book translated on the topic is Khanda Khadyaka. It is known in Arabic as ‘al-Arkand’. It was also written by Braham Gupt. It was translated into Arabic by Yāqūb bin Tāriq. The translation has been revised by al-Bairūni.

There is another Sanskrit book ‘Panchasidhdhanta’ written by Virahamira. It was also rendered into Arabic among his other books on the topic.

4. **Horoscope:** Its Sanskrit name is Jātuk. On this topic several books were translated such as ‘*Asṭārul Mawāḥid*’ of Kanka al-Hindi¹⁷, ‘*Kitābul Mawāḥid*’ of Ghaudar al-Hindi¹⁸, ‘*Kitābul Mawāḥid al-Kabīr*’ of Sanghal al-Hindi¹⁹ and ‘*Kitābul Mawāḥid*’ of Brahmur who wrote two books on the topic²⁰.

Not only this, but the Arabs have developed this science writing books on the topic. Among some famous Arabs writers on the topic are Muḥammad bin ‘Umer al-Ṭabri, Abu Sahl Fazl bin Naubakht, Sahl bin Bashīr, al-Ḥasan bin Ibrāhīm al-Asajj and al-Ḥasan bin al-Khatīb.

5. **Chemistry:** Though Arabs developed this science they took

benefits in this regard from the non-Arabs including the Indians whom Ibn-e-Nadīm considers among its inventors²¹.

Among the Indian books translated on the topic is '*Kitāb-o-Khātif AL-Hindi*'. It was written by Khātif al-Hindi whose two books were translated on the topic²².

Arabs did not translate much on the topic and started writing original books from which the Europeans took benefits.

As for the Indians we are fully aware of Islamic architecture found in India and during the course of time the non-Islamic buildings including the Hindu temples were made having the Islamic imprint²³.

Conclusion: To conclude so we can see from the previous quick examples that the religion of Islam was the major factor for flourishing these relations between Indian and Saudi Arabia followed by other fields such as trade, economy, science, culture, defense, and the political relations.

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- ⁵ Uyūn al-Akhhār, 1/3, 5, 25, 27 and 112, and 3/24, 161 and 169
- ⁶ Al-Yaqubi, 1/98 and al-Masudi, 2/203
- ⁷ Fihrist Ibn Nadim, pg. 424
- ⁸ Al-Yaqubi, 1/106
- ⁹ Fihrist Ibn Nadim, pg. 424, 437, 439
- ¹⁰ Al-Fihrist, Pg: 435
- ¹¹ Uyūn al-Anba fi Tabaqāt al-Atibba, 2/33
- ¹² Kitāb-o-Tahqīq ma lilhind, Pg: 76
- ¹³ Uyūn al-Anba fi Tabaqāt-i-al-Atibba, 2/33
- ¹⁴ Tahqīq-o-Ma lil Hind, Pg: 73
- ¹⁵ Tarīkhul Hukama, pg: 270
- ¹⁶ Tahqīq-o-Ma lil Hind, Pg: 74
- ¹⁷ Al-Fihrist, Pg: 392
- ¹⁸ Uyūn al-Anba fi Tabaqāt al-Atibba, 2/32
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