POLITICS AND SOCIETY
DURING THE
EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Collected Works of
Professor Mohammad Habib

Vol. One

Edited by Professor K. A. Nizami

Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History
Aligarh Muslim University

PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE
INTRODUCTION TO ELLIOT AND DOWSON'S HISTORY OF INDIA, VOL. II

I. THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF INDIA

Principles of the Islamic Social Order

The most important fact of the Middle Ages, both for India and the rest of the world, was the rise of Islam, and it is necessary for our purpose that Islam as a world-historic movement of the Middle Ages should be properly understood, divested of all praise and blame which are historically irrelevant.

In the thought of the Prophet of Islam as revealed in the Quran and the hadis (the Prophet's conversations) two basic ideas stand clearly revealed. Firstly, the whole universe, visible and invisible, is contemplated as Allah or the Lord of the Worlds. This is the leading idea of the Meccan revelations, which form the basis of the Quran. There is a thorough contempt for all sorts of gods and of the idols which are made to represent them. There must be a unity of principle in the cosmic order. Had there been more than one God, they would have ruined the cosmic order! But the opposite principle, agnosticism or dahirat, though firmly combated, has been correctly, almost sympathetically, defined: "And they say: There is no life but this earthly life of ours; we live and we die, and nothing kills us but time." It was the very essence of the Prophet's conception of Allah that His relations with man should be immediate and direct, without the possibility or the need of an intermediary. Man's soul (ruh) is the repository of Allah's order (amr)—the moral imperative. "No one bears the burden of another." Every man is responsible for his acts to Allah and shall be answerable for them. And when the gods are dismissed, there is no place for a Church or an organized priesthood. "In Islam no monkey", the Prophet declared.

Secondly, in the mind of the Prophet this metaphysical conception of the Universe was bound up with a particular social order—the brotherhood of those who believed in his creed. "And this is my last advice unto", he said in his last sermon at Mecca, "You are of one brotherhood... If a negro slave with a slit-nose leads you aright, follow him." The doctrine of the equality of the Mussalmans, men and women, is nowhere explicitly enjoined in the Quran. But it is implied—implied through exceptions. The Muslim community or millat was divided into two groups, freemen and slaves. Slavery was permitted as a necessity provided its origin was legitimate and slavery was only legitimate in case of captives of war. Three discriminations are permitted against women—the inheritance of a daughter is one-half of the inheritance of her brother, the evidence of two women is considered equal to the evidence of one man; and, lastly, while a man can divorce his wife by a unilateral act, the wife has to go to a law-court for the annulment of her marriage. Unless discriminations are specified, equality must be assumed; and the law of the Prophet does not tolerate any discriminations on the ground of family status, education, wealth, race, nationality or colour. "All free Mussalmans are of one status (kaf)". Imam Abu Hanifa has declared. In spite of the power and exclusiveness of various governing class groups of the last thirteen centuries, this classless Muslim society with its vision of a purified city and a forgiving God has at all times continued in the Muslim mosques. And in this, its last citadel, it still stands.

These are the two basic principles of Islam from which all other principles are derived. Now the first principle—faith in God—is as old as the hills. The Quran claims no novelty on that account; it is simply reiterating an old but forgotten truth. The second principle—the brotherhood of a classless society within the faith or the millat—is definitely and radically new. The old faith of Abraham, Moses and the other prophets is retained, but the old law is definitely annulled. Every prophet brings his own shari'at or law; the law of the classless society is the last shari'at; and there can be no new shari'at. When discussing the faith, the Prophet could appeal to other revealed books. But neither in the revealed books of old, nor in any of the societies of which the Prophet had any information, was this idea of brotherhood and equality reduced to the basic operative principles of the social order. Arabia was tribe ridden; in Persia the disenfranchised classes groaned under the triple burden of the royal power, the governing classes and the priesthood. Still the Prophet did not for a moment retract or flinch. He worked like a revolutionist and talked like one. The old social orders of the world with their discriminations had to go. "I have been sent to overthrow customs and habits", he said.

Judged by the amount of change it wrought, Islam during the
Prophet's lifetime must be pronounced as not only one of the most vital but also the most bloodless revolutions in world-history. The Prophet's methods were primarily pacific. The sacrifice of less than a thousand lives, counting the dead on both sides, sufficed to bring the whole of Arabia into the new creed. Medina under the Prophet was a working class republic. Everyone worked for his livelihood; there were no painful distinctions of wealth; government was carried on by common discussion; there was no governing class and no subject people.

Two further points have to be noted here as they were of supreme importance in the centuries to come. Islam during the Prophet's time could, under the circumstances of the day, only stand for brotherhood and equality within the 'millet' or the creed. No other position was conceivable. After eleven years of pacific teaching and the attempted suppression of that teaching, the Prophet was welcomed at Medina; there followed some ten years of revolutionary propaganda interspersed with battles of the heroic type. It was a period of revolutionary transition of which the Prophet only lived to see the first act. During this period his relations with non-Muslims were regulated either by the laws of war or by treaties. He was not concerned with the relations of non-Muslims with each other. "To you your creed,' the Quran says "and to me mine." Now the sayings of the Prophet that have survived to us are from these constantly changing revolutionary times. He made laws and annulled them according to the needs of the hour. Inter-marriages with non-Muslims, for example, were first permitted; but as the war-tension increased, they had to be prohibited. What attitude towards non-Muslims the Prophet would have adopted in the matter of 'equality and brotherhood' if he had lived to see Islam become a recognized creed among other world creeds, with a position of pre-eminence, security and stability among them, we do not really know. Later ages, consequently, followed a zigzag course. On the one hand, the fanatical and reactionary religious leaders kept preaching war and hatred for which the occasion had passed. On the other hand, contact with non-Muslims of a higher variety than could have been found in the Prophet's Arabia, with their great traditions in arts and science and the necessity of learning from them the deccencies of human life, the exigencies of the government, the requirements of co-operation in industry, business, trade and all other spheres of work in which religion is immaterial—all these considerations demanded an expansion of the Prophet's doctrine of 'brotherhood and equality' outside the 'millet.' But no textual religious authority could be produced for such an expansion, which the logic of history demanded. The thing was done; it had to be done; but it was not driven to its logical conclusion in thought and action, for the burden of the reactionary elements could not be ignored.

It would not be correct to say that Islam was planned as a city-creed; it was planned for all. Nevertheless Islam throughout its history has found it easier to operate in urban areas and has had to face great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties when it came across wandering desert tribes or great difficulties...
frontiers of the Muslim population have remained substantially where Walid left them, extending in a long belt from the frontiers of Turkistan across northern Africa to Morocco. By A.D. 715 the power of Islam to expand territorially had been exhausted.

The Caliph Mu'awiya (A.D. 661-80), a brother-in-law of the Prophet, initiated two great changes. Firstly, he altered the republican caliphate into a monarchy, though the title of 'Caliph' was retained. The change was symbolized by the fact that he appointed his son, Yazid, as his successor. Thereafter it became an unwritten law that the caliphs, and following them the sultans of later days, had the authority to nominate their successor from among their sons and brothers, and that the nomination would become valid when accepted by the leading officers of the state. Secondly, he organized the leading Arab tribes into an exclusive governing class. This class, as is proved by the extensive conquests of Walid, knew how to bear the burden and reap the rewards of one of the largest empires the world has seen. Still a governing class was a flat contradiction of the Prophet's teachings. Revolts among the governed were inevitable, and the Umayyad dynasty was extinguished in a terrible blood-bath in A.D. 750. The changes wrought by the Caliph Mu'awiya could only be justified on the tyrant's plea—the necessity of the state. Still the institutions created by him, though utterly unknown to the Qur'anic law, have lasted to this day. During the thirteen centuries that separate us from him, the monarchy and a governing class, whatever the composition of the governing class, have been considered an integral part of the Islamic political order, all scriptures and religious texts notwithstanding.

It has been one of the deepest longings of the Muslim mind that the unity of the Faith should be expressed in a universal Islamic state. But in practice this has not been found either possible or desirable. The Umayyads (A.D. 661-750) governed the whole Muslim world. But their successors, the Abbasid caliphs (A.D. 750-1258), were unable to control the Arab countries, which one after another declared themselves independent. By the year A.D. 900 the process was complete. The Abbasid caliphate, thereafter, was left with its eastern lands alone—the lands of the Persians and the Turks, conveniently designated as 'Ajam'. This territory extending from the shores of the eastern Mediterranean to the frontiers of China was still a mammoth empire. The great Abbasid caliphs from Mansur to Mutawakkil (A.D. 754-861) were persons of capacity and exercised a direct administrative control over the empire. But their weak successors were unable to bear the burden. During the tenth century a series of minor dynasties grew up in Persia, the most important of them being the Tahirids (800-79), the Safavids (667-900), the Buwayhids (932-1052) and the Samanids (874-999). They formally acknowledged the caliph, but carried on their government without any reference to him. It was considered sufficient if a Persian or Turkish amir or khan at the time of his accession got a farman (order of appointment) from the caliph and sent him occasional presents.

A great change came with the advent of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni (999-1030), whose conquests both in India and Ajam won him a position of singular eminence. He is counted as the first 'Sultan' of Ajam. Thereafter the sultanate (or empire) became the administrative authority of Ajam, while the caliphate continued as a purely formal symbol till it was extinguished by Halaku Khan in 1258. The Ghaznavid Empire (999-1040) was short-lived, but it was followed by a series of successors—the Seljuq Empire (1037-1157); the Khwarazmian Empire (1157-1221); the Mongol Empire with its two hostile branches, the Il Khans of Persia (1256-1349) and the Oghuz-Chaghatai rulers of Mawaraun Nahr (1227-1370); and the Timurids (1370-1508). After the extinction of the House of Timur at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the conception of the unity of Ajam disappeared, and the Persians as well as the Turks of Central Asia organized themselves into separate national monarchies—the Safavids and the Uzbegs. Thus, if the history of medieval Ajam is surveyed as a whole, it will be found that during the nine centuries that lie between the Saracen conquest of Ajam and the establishment of the Uzbeg and the Safavi dynasties at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the extensive region of Ajam was, with terrible and recurrent interregnums, governed by seven imperial dynasties with their all-Ajam administrations.

A Theoretical Digression

What is the position of the Islamic Revolution in world-history? It will be useless to look for an answer in the works of the medieval Muslims—or of their antagonists. The Muslim historians of the Middle Ages had very meagre information about pre-Muslim civilizations; they were living through a process of which they could not see the end, and it was not possible for them to visualize the day when the Muslim communities, so great in their own times, would be helpless before the immense, scientifically organized production-power of the nations of Western Europe. With very rare exceptions, such as Alberuni, the concept of world-history was totally beyond all medieval scholars, Muslim or non-Muslim. Their vision was confined exclusively
to the history and the social forms of their own group. Later-day 
Muslim apologists have all talked off the point. Nor can the question 
be answered by the writers of modern Europe, who confuse European 
civilization with Christian values or imagine that the world was 
created only for the dominion of European imperialisms. A very 
good example of this type of cheap thought is Sir Henry Elliot's 
*Original Preface* with its pathetic claim to "our high destiny as rulers 
of India". An even better example is the anti negro and, in fact, anti- 
Oriental literature of the United States from Calhoun till the present 
day.

To answer this question scientifically and honestly we must ignore 
all writers who, whatever shape their argument assumes, believe, 
consciously or subconsciously, in the idea of chosen people. The 
question can only be answered from a human as distinct from a 
sectional view-point, and in terms of universal human values as 
distinct from 'class-values' and 'group-values'. Human history as a 
whole does not know of any chosen people. All are called; a few are 
chosen; and even these are dismissed one after another.

It is a notorious fact that only one school of thought today fulfils 
this condition—the school of Marx and Engels. The greatness of these 
two thinkers lies in the fact that, representing ideologically the 
enslaved and the oppressed of all times, all peoples and all lands, 
they transcend those discriminations of race, language, nationality, 
colour and creed, which have been the pith and marrow of all ortho-
dox historians with their cheap platitudes and immense learning. This 
is not a question of scholarship; it is a question of vision. One of the 
most powerful anti-communistic works of the present day, *The 
Strategy and Tactics of World Communism*, expresses a regret "that 
communism for two generations has been degenerating from a great 
theory of history, and a great dream of human betterment, into a 
technique for power" (published by the House of Representa-
tives Committee on Foreign Affairs, No. 619, p. 49). Without this 
degeneration, or development, of communism in the political field we 
are not here concerned. But communism is not only a great theory of 
history but the only theory of human history possible. It starts from 
the right point and surveys humanity from the right angle. Its basis 
is the greatest of human sentiments—the creed of the oppressed—and 
recognizes cordially the merit of all human achievements, regardless 
of place, time and community, while insisting inevitably that all 
human achievements are also limited and conditioned. The doctrine of 
relativity is one of the basic principles of Marxism.

The essence of the doctrine of historical materialism is stated by 

Karl Marx in his Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*: "The 
general result at which I arrived and which, once won, served as a 
guiding thread for my studies, can be briefly formulated as follows: 
In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations 
that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of pro-
duction which correspond to a definite stage of development of their 
material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of 
production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real 
foundations, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and 
to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode 
of production of material life conditions the social, political and 
intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men 
that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being 
that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their 
development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict 
with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal 
expression for the same thing—with the property relations within 
which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of 
the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then 
begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic 
foundations the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly 
transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should 
always be made between the material transformation of the econo-
mic conditions of production, which can be determined with the 
precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic 
or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become 
conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an 
individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not 
judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on 
the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the 
contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the 
social productive forces and the relations of production. No social 
order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there 
are room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of pro-
duction never appear before the material conditions of their existence 
have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore mankind 
always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the 
matter more closely, it will always be found that the task itself arises 
only when the material conditions for its solution already exist or are 
at least in the process of formation. In broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, 
feudal, and the modern bourgeois modes of production can be design-
nated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society."
Even at the risk of wandering into some variety of deviationism, there is no alternative but to develop this brilliant argument further with reference to the East in some important respects.

"The Marxist doctrine," Lenin wrote in March 1913, "is omnipotent because it is true. It is comprehensive and harmonious, and provides men with an integral world outlook irreconcilable with any form of superstition, reaction, or defence of bourgeois oppression. It is the legitimate successor to the best that man produced in the nineteenth century, as represented by German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism."

The followers of Marx, Engels and Lenin are the only group of Europeans who have extended the hand of friendship to the East and whose love for human equality has been genuine; hence the great charm of Marxism-Leninism for our eastern lands. The attitude of all other Europeans has been frankly unspeakable, and the importance of this fact in modern political movements cannot be overemphasized. Still Marx and Engels, who were not orientalists, could know little about Asia. European scholarship about the East till then had been remarkably cheap, superficial and arrogant; and it was quite incapable of understanding the character of our eastern societies. We need not be surprised that Marx and Engels were unable to interpret our eastern history owing to paucity of correct information on the principles; they laid down after considering European history. Asia, on a much larger scale than Europe, has been dominated by a series of systems which may be broadly divided into four epochs—the ancient period based on the caste-system or other varieties of involuntary servitude; the medieval period of large-scale, imperial administrations based on free labour, free contract and free capital but without freedom of thought; the early modern period of submission to European capitalist imperialism due to the low standards of Eastern production which were continued from the Middle Ages; and, lastly, the period of contemporary Asian revival.

The relation of the processes of production to the ideological apparatus of society has to be investigated further. Expounded in the Marxian fashion, every society will have the following—insufficiency of production, social system and an ideological apparatus. The processes of production can be the same everywhere—time and space are immaterial, for the production-processes are based on the universal laws of science. What difference can there be between mining and cloth-making, whether the work is undertaken in the East or the West? And the process of production will tend to create similar conditions of labour. Still the ideological apparatus cannot be ignored. It sometimes lags behind, and is at other times in advance of the current processes of production. The two may often be in sharp conflict. This is what, broadly speaking, gives us the variegated pattern of human societies. Now every society will at any given stage be inevitably involved in contradictions, for it will be creating forces which are contrary to its general character and tend to overthrow it. This vicious contraction in which society is involved may be broken at the end—either by an improvement of the methods of production or by an advance in the ideological apparatus. Labour till recent times was a force of secondary importance; one of the greatest features of 'civilized' societies in the past has been, as Rousseau remarked, the enormous number of 'slaves against nature'. The processes of production may, as at present, change the conditions of labour and shatter the whole ideological apparatus. Conversely, an ideological revolution may bring to the labourer, while his instruments of production remain unchanged, a higher human content with increased dignity and rights. Religion has, at the great turning-points of history in the past, been the chief instrument for this ideological revolution. In this lies its real value. The Marxist condemnation of religion as a whole is no longer necessary. We have to discriminate with reference to time and circumstances. There have been 'progressive adventures' of human society which religion alone could undertake.

But this brings us to a further question, which has to be discussed here. Religion ought to be, but in actual fact has not been, a cause of progress; its general tendency, apart from the great cataclysmic revolutions in faith which history records, has been just the reverse. In its highest manifestation in the human mind belief in God has been a revolutionary concept—revolutionary in the sense that it has transcended all traditional barriers of race and class and has sought the welfare of mankind as a whole. But many influences, the chief of them being the governing classes helped by the priests, as well as the element of habit in the nature of man, have during the larger part of human history turned faith in God and the whole influence of religion into a conservative force for the maintenance of the existing social order and the shameless oppression of the weak and the helpless. All great religions have made their first start among the working people and in their first manifestations have helped to break the vicious ideology of existing society. But success has always created a governing class within the creed; and this governing class at a new and higher level has used religion for its own purposes. But here the paths of various religions part. In the lands of Islam it was not
possible to prevent the study of the Quran and other religious texts. As a result of this, the governing class had to combat a series of heresies. These heresies appeared continuously, and the battle was unending. Some of them may have been due to adventurism. The object of most of them was to reinstate by some means or other the classless society of the Prophet or to find a remedy for labour troubles. Behind all of them lay the vision of a revolutionary God—a God who was commanding a readjustment of the existing social order. The idea of God is not necessarily a conservative or a reactionary concept, though this aspect of it has been foremost in all stabilized religions.

Position of the Islamic Revolution in World-History

It is not difficult to indicate in broad outline the position of the Saracen expansion in world-history, the character of the economic order it gradually evolved in Ajam and the ideological set-up which developed with this political and economic order. This task has not been attempted before, but there is no difficulty about it provided one sees things from the proper, i.e. the Marxist, angle. And since these changes were destined to have a lasting influence in India also, it is better, first, to see how they operated in the lands of their birth.

The remarkable success of the Saracen expansion was due to the fact that it put an end to all sorts of discriminations and involuntary servitudes; and its expansion was, generally speaking, limited to the area where these servitudes existed and from which they could be removed. It failed where these servitudes did not exist or where they were too deep-rooted—on the frontiers of China, where there was servitude, and on the frontiers of Europe where the servile status was too depressed to be aroused.

Pious Mussalman attribute the success of their faith to the valour and the virtues of the Mussalman. But it is not denied that the conquered were also brave, and conquists so rapid and so permanent cannot be explained by valour alone. We have to look deeper into the social forces at work.

Modern historians give the name of 'primitive communism' to a long period of early human history, covering over a million years, when men lived in totem and maintained themselves primarily by hunting. Over a large part of the globe—the two Americas, Australia, Central and Southern Africa—humanity never progressed beyond this stage. But in the Mediterranean region and Asia further progress was made possible by a series of inventions, such as the potter's wheel, the spinning wheel, the loom, the cart, and the boat; by the taming of animals; by the mining of metals, and by the discovery of agriculture. During the era of primitive communism men's labour was barely sufficient for himself; he had nothing to lay aside for the future and no increase of population seemed possible. With the four great changes mentioned above, a man's labour could create a surplus-value over and above what he needed for the bare maintenance of himself and his family. Early civilization was due to the fact that this surplus-value was appropriated or exploited by a governing class, which thus found the means and the leisure for creating the conditions of civilized life—industry, commerce, religion, philosophy, the fine arts and, most important of all, the state. This exploitation was necessary for the next step in the progress of mankind; it was also singularly inhuman. It took different forms in different countries, but broadly speaking, in the Mediterranean region, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor it took the form of holotage or slavery, while in the lands of the Eastern Aryans, i.e. Persia and India, it took the form of the caste-system. The achievements of classical Greece, which deserve all the admiration they get, were based on a bare-faced exploitation of the original inhabitants, or helots, who formed about 80 per cent of the population.

The exploitation of slaves and non-caste groups had been going on in various lands for centuries before the rise of Islam. But by this time all its possibilities as a production-system had been completely exhausted. There was also in many lands a deep resentment among the lower classes to whom ordinary human rights were denied. The most important of these lands was Persia, where the people were divided into five castes on the same lines as the four castes of India. The Sassanian Emperor was proclaimed to be the God-incarnate; and his power was supported by the priests and the nobles. The mass of the population, more vital than in most lands, deeply resented its position of degrading servitude. Still all attempts to reform failed, the most important of them being the communist movement of Mazdak in the reign of Gubad, father of the famous Anucherwan (A.D. 531-79).

To these oppressed classes there came from the heart of the Arabian desert the Prophet's call to the creed of brotherhood and equality. It is also a well-known fact that, whether a man accepted Islam or not, Islam was out to abolish all servile conditions. There could, under the shari'at of Islam, be no question of a whole people or even of small groups being kept under servile conditions, whatever their religion. Unless slavery could be proved, free status was assumed; and Islam, subject to specified discriminations against non-Muslims which will
be examined later, assumes an equal freedom for all. There are no grades of freedom in Islamic law.

If shari‘at of early Islam is compared with other legal systems of those days, it will be found to have two distinctive features as a civil code: firstly, unless a man is proved to be a slave, he has full civil rights; secondly, in the innumerable matters that come up before the civil court—contracts, sales, wage-claims, easements and torts, mortgages, gifts, mercantile customs, etc.—no discrimination of any type is permitted, not even on the ground of religion. With one sweep of the big brush the workers of Ajam were enfranchised in the domain of civil rights.

But to understand this change, we have to keep the productive features to this extensive area in view. There is a weak monsoon in the province of Fars, and the South Caspian provinces have a heavy rainfall of about 80 inches a year. But apart from these two favoured regions, the average rainfall of Ajam is four inches a year; this slight rainfall, cyclonic in character, is of absolutely no use for agriculture. Cultivation, consequently, depended entirely upon artificial irrigation. Persia has no rivers worth mentioning and depended entirely upon kareezes and kanats, which brought water to the peasant’s farm from distant springs. Most of these kareezes were destroyed by the Mongols in the thirteenth century and have never been reconstructed. In the land of the Turks there are a number of important rivers—e.g. the Marwar Rud, the Oxus, the Jaxartes, the Zarafshan, the Terim. They were the source of an extensive canal system and most of the rivers, with the exception of the Oxus and the Jaxartes, did not succeed in reaching any sea. The ground in steppe-land, i.e. rocky hills and rocky plains, in which the traces left by the primeval glaciers are clearly visible. Where water was available, the ground being extremely fertile, corn and fruit-trees grew in abundance. But over the waterless steppe the Turkish tribes wandered at will, feeding their flocks of sheep and goats on the sparse herbs. An unbelievably large part of the total population of Ajam, possibly 40 per cent, lived by cattle-breeding. The more backward tribes, like the Ghuzz and the Mongols had no other occupation except cattle-raising; agriculture as an art was not known to them. In some parts of Ajam the summer is quite hot, but the winter everywhere is bitterly cold.

At the absolutely primitive level, these people could live without any trade or commerce on the few commodities they themselves produced. Life in the Hazara (Chur) mountains even now seems to be possible on cattle and fruit-trees alone. But the great medieval

empire, while enfranchising the city-labourers, also established security of roads and made trade and commerce possible on an extensive scale. Trade reacted on industry, and the great cities of Ajam took a new lease of life as industrial centres. A large number of new cities were also founded, mostly as military cantonments. Mechanical power was not known to that age, except in the form of water-mills. But in all that human and animal muscles could accomplish, it did not fail. Every city was proud of the strength of its labourers and of the wonderful skill of its trained artisans. The markets everywhere overflowed with manufactured goods. But many of the cities, like Naishapur, stood in desolate areas, where the trade-routes met, and far from the region from which they got their food supplies of grain, cheese and meat. At the higher economic level of the Middle Ages, everything from the security of the extensive system of canals and kareezes to the feeding of the populous cities depended upon one condition—a strong and efficient all-Ajam government or empire. It is this basic need which the seven imperial dynasties, that we have noted, were designed to meet. Conversely, a period of interregnum and chaos threatened to throw the whole population back to its primitive, pre-Muslim level; and public opinion backed up any ‘hero’ who promised to give a unified administration to Ajam.

‘One capitalist kills many’, Marx has said. This is, no doubt, true of the modern machine age. Mechanical power and the machinery of credit now-a-days give a decisive advantage to the larger capitalist. It was not so in the Middle Ages. The industrial technique of the day gave an almost equal advantage to the large and the small manufacturer. By the side of the armament manufacturer-getting government contracts there could flourish the individual artisan, who made swords or bows in his workshop and was locally reputed for his skill. Some industries, like mining and metal-working, had to be undertaken on a large-scale, if at all. Others, like carpet-making, could not be undertaken by one man only. Nevertheless cottage-industries and manufacturing concerns flourished side by side. The age seemed to be more intent on the development of skill than of inventions. It was, however, not in industry but in commerce that the greatest profits could be made; for it was the trader rather than the industrialist who could create a monopoly for himself. Taken as a whole, Ajam maintained a standard of prosperity during the Middle Ages which no part of it outside the Soviet Union has yet regained.

That the industrial progress of Ajam did not go beyond a certain stage was due to the fact that reactionary religious thought killed science, and science alone could have made possible the next advance.
in the march of humanity—the utilization of the powers of nature for industry in the place of the muscles of man and brute.

The result, as generation followed generation, was constantly increasing labour discontent. This discontent naturally expressed itself in a medieval form—in the form of religious heresies. The most important of these heresies was the Ismaili cult with its vision of an Imam, who would have the power of amending and abrogating even the Quranic law, and who would establish a rational order of society and promote science. In the little island of Bahrain, Nasir Khusrav, a poet-scholar of the twelfth century, tells us that the local Ismaili Imam had abolished fasts and prayers, declared the building of mosques unnecessary and established a socialistic agricultural community. It is difficult, Maulana Chazzali says, to prevent Ismaili ideas from permeating the Persian working classes. In some form or other the more notable heresies of the Middle Ages were 'the creed of the oppressed'. Multitudes of men were prepared to follow any rebel, who promised to put things right or 'spiritual deliverers' who claimed to be mahdis and the like. It suited the orthodox governing classes to treat labour leaders as heretics and heretics as rebels. The Kurd rebel, Babak Khurrami, is a good example. But as Ajam, on the basis of its cottage industries and small manufactures, could develop no proletariat sufficiently organised and disciplined to take charge of the state, victory lay entirely with the governing classes and the forces of reaction. Ajam society had by the twelfth century reached a contradiction it could not transcend. The external proof of this inner paralysis is the ease with which the Mongols swept through the whole region and the utter inability of Muslim society to offer any organized resistance. A second proof is that in all spheres of science, and in most spheres of culture and learning, its progress came to a definite end.

II. The Culture of Medieval Ajam

The Theological Sciences

We can now proceed to examine the cultural set-up of Ajam that accompanied the political and economic advance discussed in the previous chapter and came to an end in the thirteenth century.

Muslim culture in Ajam developed steadily from the seventh to the twelfth century. By the first quarter of the thirteenth century it had
A better fate awaited secular literature—poetry, history and the like. Here there was no question of religious persecution; progress, consequently, did not stop. The same may be said of the arts. To architecture there was naturally no objection, specially as it found expression in mosques and mausoleums, towers and domes. There are references to mural paintings during the sultanate period; but painting as an art was condemned. The poor painter was told with egregious stupidity that he was rivalling God and that severe punishment awaited him for this presumption in the other world. But the Mongol rulers of Persia, the Il Khans, were in no way bound by Muslim opinion, and painting on paper prospered under their patronage till Muslim society came to accept it. As for music and dancing, the governing class patronized these arts and there was no gain-saying it. For where the governing class was concerned, the mullahs, who depended upon it for their livelihood, had no alternative but to remain silent; and the wine-parties of the aristocracy would have been insipid without the dancing women and their songs. On the popular level, the Chishti mystics fought the mullahs for the recitation of mystic songs and certain varieties of music, and succeeded after a prolonged struggle.

The relation of the culture of Ajam to Indo-Muslim culture is extremely simple. The whole of the science and culture of Ajam, briefly surveyed above, was bodily imported into India by the first quarter of the thirteenth century—text-books and teachers, along with their current controversies. Soon afterwards Muslim culture was crushed in its homelands by the terrible Mongol invasions. In the period intervening between the Mongol invasions and the Timurid revival (A.D. 1218-1400), India was the only country where Ajam culture could flourish.

III. The Urban Revolution in Northern India

I. Indian Society before the Churian Invasions

The time has now come when the social facts of the Middle Ages can be properly interpreted by the removal of that wholly deceptive ideological coating that has been put on them by medieval as well as modern writers. Because the English government was a foreign government supported by foreign troops, it has been imagined that the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire were administrations of the same type; and it is conveniently forgotten that the Mussalman of India had no 'home government' outside India and none of that superiority in machine-industry and armaments, which led inevitably to the establishment of British rule in India. One must be very ignorant of the original material of Indian history, political and non-political, to imagine that the government of medieval India was either foreign or military.

Secondly, because it suited the rulers of the Middle Ages in works and speeches intended entirely or primarily for the Mussalman to portray themselves as protagonists in that eternal conflict or jihad in which men of the Faith are supposed to wage against all wicked people, it does not in the least follow that their pretensions were correct—or that they even deceived intelligent contemporary Muslins, who were independent of the government in the matter of their livelihood. The Delhi Sultanate was no more 'Muslim' than the British Empire has been 'Christian'. The official historians and the class of mullahs, who were dependent on the government—and the government provisions in this respect were extremely liberal—had, of course, their directions from those in power. But the higher Muslim religious consciousness throughout the Middle Ages repudiated the claim of the state to be anything but the organization of the dominant class for its own benefit. The Qazi of Ghazni refused the present of the gold of an idol from Sultan Mahmud because the campaigns of his father, Sultan Mahmud, had not been waged according to the principles of the Prophet's jihad. Independence from the government was one of the basic teachings of Shaikh Nizammuddin Auliya, admittedly the greatest Muslim religious teacher of the Khalji-Tughluq period, and, in fact, of all Indian mystic teachers of the Middle Ages. That the state or government is 'an organization of sin' and that no man, who cares for his spiritual salvation, will enter its service, was one of the deepest religious convictions of the medieval Muslim mind both in India and Ajam. This conviction runs like a red thread throughout our religious literature of the higher type.

The scientific historian will do well to bear in mind Marx's warning: "... so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production. No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed."

The tendency hitherto has been to contemplate this 'period of transformation' in India in purely ideological terms without any re-
ferences to the social factors or the method of production or the legal and social position of the working class. The two antithetical propositions—that true religion prevailed against the false for it is the nature of religious truth to prevail or that the barbarians conquered the civilized because it is the nature of the barbarians to conquer—can be pitted against each other till the end of time without any useful result.

But seen from a higher level, the whole process becomes clear. What is called the Muslim, but is really the Ghurian conquest of India, meant two things—firstly, the substitution of the Ghurian Turks for the Thakurs as the government class; secondly, the enfranchisement of the Indian city-workers, accompanied by a considerable landslide among them towards the new faith.

This transition was made possible because Indian society had become weak and helpless owing to a series of contradictions. Two of these contradictions lay on the surface for all to see: the contradiction between a hereditary caste of warriors and the current methods of war, and the contradiction between the standard of the Indian producer’s work and his legal and social status. A third contradiction is to be found in the continuation of a hereditary caste with a monopoly of culture in an age when all over the world, even in medieval Europe, it had become a custom to recruit students from all classes. This fact alone can explain the silence of Hindu thinkers from the eighth to the fourteenth century.

To understand this we must first begin by examining the structure of Indian society before the Ghurian invasions.

The condition of Indian society—mostly city-society—has been described by the Arab travellers, but their work has been consolidated and thrown into the shade by the classic work of Alberuni. Some Hindu authorities on the subject are also available. A critical examination will show that the two confirm each other.

The basic fact of Indian cultural life was the religious and intellectual supremacy of the Brahmans. No substantial advance in science had been made since the ‘golden age’ of the Guptas, but the great books of the past were carefully taught and preserved. The Brahmans with whom Alberuni studied may have been conservative and unprogressive, but they were remarkably enlightened, intelligent and well-informed. The word, Khatriya, had fallen into disuse and the well-informed. The word, Khatriya, had fallen into disuse and the well-informed. The word, Khatriya, had fallen into disuse and the well-informed. The word, Khatriya, had fallen into disuse and the well-informed. The word, Khatriya, had fallen into disuse and the well-informed.
except the fuller, shoe-maker and weaver, for no others would descend to have anything to do with them. These eight guilds are—
the fuller, shoe-maker, juggler, the basket and shield maker, the sailor, fisherman, the hunter of wild animals and the birds, and the weaver (Vol. I, p. 101). The lowest workers are enumerated as the Hadi, Doma, Chandala and Badhautu. “They are occupied with dirty work like the cleansing of villages and other services. They are considered as one sole class and distinguished only by their occupations. In fact they are considered like illegitimate children, for according to the general opinion they have descended from a Sudra father and a Brahman mother as the children of fornication; therefore they are degraded outcastes. All other men, except the Chandalas, in so far as they are not Hindus, are called mlecchas or unclean, i.e. all those who kill men (i.e. hangmen) and slaughter animals and eat the flesh of cows” (Vol. II, p. 137). And at another place Alberuni adds: “Of the classes beneath the castes, the Hadi are the best spoken of, because they keep themselves free from everything unclean. Next follow the Doma, who play on the lute and sing. The still lower classes practise as a trade killing and the inflicting of judicial punishments. The worst of all are the Badhautu, who not only devour the flesh of dead animals, but even of dogs and other beasts” (Vol. I, Chap. IX).

Some important groups are omitted in this list, such as metal-workers, masons, etc., but in view of the general tendency of the times, they were also probably compelled to live outside the fortified settlements. The primary aim of the governing classes was to keep the lower orders in their place. Perhaps the following extract from Alberuni very well illustrates the upper-class ideology of his days. “The following is one of the traditions of the Hindus. In the days of King Rama human life was very long, always of a well-known and well-defined length. Thus a child never died before his father. Then, however, it happened that the son of a Brahman died while his father was still alive. Now the Brahman brought this child to the door of the king and spoke to him: “This innovation has sprung up in thy days for no other reason but this, that there is something rotten in the state of the country, and because a certain wazer in thy realm commits what he commits.” Then Rama began to inquire into the cause of this and finally they pointed out to him a Chandala, who took the greatest pains in performing worship and in self-mortification. The king rode to him and found him on the bank of the Ganges, hanging on something with his head downward. The king bent his bow, shot at him and pierced his bowels. Then he spoke: ‘That is it. I kill thee on account of a good action which thou art not allowed to do.’ When he returned home, he found the son of the Brahman, who had been deposited before his door, alive” (Vol. II, Chap. LXIV). The character of the caste-system has changed in India from age to age; but there can be little doubt that at the time of Ghurian invasions Indian caste-restrictions had reached their maximum development. While elsewhere—in the lands of Christianity and Islam—prayers, far from being the privilege of a class, had been made the duty of all, and the working classes, through persuasion, education and the compulsion of public opinion were being driven pell-mell to the congregations in the churches and the mosques, no such opportunity was allowed to the mass of the Indians.

Alberuni’s account is confirmed by Manusmriti or the Code of Manu. The character of this work has been often discussed; though compiled in the 3rd or 4th century A.D., probably by many writers, it certainly expresses the general opinion of the higher classes in the period preceding the Turkish invasions. Manusmriti makes the greatest possible claim for the Brahman with no sense of restraint. “He is by right the lord of this whole creation. A Brahman, coming into existence, is born as the highest on earth, the lord of all created beings, for the protection of the treasury of the law. Whatever exists in the world is the property of the Brahman; on account of the excellence of his origin the Brahman is, indeed, entitled to it all. He alone deserves to possess this whole earth” (Chap. I, pp. 93, 99, 100, 105). But the lower classes and workers are to be kept in their place. Here are a few of Manu’s statements. “A Sudra, though emancipated by his master, is not released from servitude; since that is innate in him, who can set him free?” (I, p. 326). “A Chandala, a village pig, a cock, a dog, a menstruating woman, and a eunuch must not look at the Brahmans while they eat” (III, p. 119). “I will now enumerate those (sons) of mixed origin who are born of Anulomas and of Pratilomas, and thus are mutually connected—the Suta, the Vaidheka, the Chandala, the lowest of mortals, the Magadhika, he of the Kshattri caste (jati) and the Ayogava. These six also beget, the one on the females of the other, a great many (kinds of) despicable (sons), even more sinful than their fathers and excluded (from the Aryan community, varn:). Those races, which originate in a confusion of the castes and have been described according to their fathers and mothers may be known by their occupations, whether they conceal or openly avow them. (Further) in consequence of the omission of the sacred rites, and of their not consulting Brahmans, the following tribes of Kshattriias have gradually sunk in this world to the condition of Sudras—viz. the Paundrakas, the Kodas, the Dravidas,
the Kaubogas, the Yavanas (Greeks), the Sakas (Turks), the Pandas, the Pahlavas (Persians), the Kinas, the Kiratas and the Daradas. All those tribes in this world, which are excluded from the community of those born from the mouth, the arms, the thighs and the feet (of Brahman), are called Dasyus, whether they speak the language of the Mlechchhas (barbarians) or that of the Aryans” (Chap. X, pp. 25, 29, 39, 40, 43, 45).

After this condemnation of all Indians born of a confusion of castes and of the leading non-Aryan or foreign tribes (Greeks, Turks and Persians) settled in the land, the great Code proceeds to specify the position of the working classes. “The dwellings of the Chandala and Schwa-pa-chas shall be outside the village, they shall be made Apaprats, and their wealth shall be dogs and donkeys. Their dress (shall be) garments of the dead, they shall eat their food from broken dishes, black iron (shall be) their ornaments and they shall always wander from place to place. A man who fulfils a religious duty shall not seek intercourse with them; their transactions (shall be) among themselves, and their marriages with their equals. Their food shall be given to them by others (than an Aryan giver) in a broken dish; at night they shall not walk about in villages and in towns. By day they may go about for the purpose of their work, distinguished by marks of the king’s command, and they shall carry out the corpses of persons who have no relatives; that is a settled rule. Dying without the expectation of a reward, for the sake of Brahmans and of cows, or in the defence of women and children, secures beatitude to those excluded (from the Aryan community, Vahya)” (Chap. X, pp. 51-53, 62).

All our authorities are unanimous in stating that while in the rest of Asia, and to some extent even in Europe, the cities had become beehives of industry, in India the higher classes appropriated the cities and towns exclusively to themselves while the workers lived in unprotected villages and in settlements outside the city-walls. In the rural areas the galling restrictions of caste were not so painfully felt; here every culture-group or caste-group lived a life of its own. But the old village-community, whatever its value, had completely disappeared, leaving no traces whatsoever, and the countryside was governed autocratically by the raja, ranaus and ranaus. We will examine the rural situation later.

This division of Indian society into castes and subcastes with impassable barriers between them, and the principle of discrimination as the basis of society, could not fail to lead to the unhappiest results. Indian culture had once been on the offensive; it had penetrated into the heart of Central Asia in the form of Buddhism and it had also gone to the islands of the Pacific Ocean. But for centuries before the Ghurian invasions, Indian culture had been on the retreat. Within the country itself the Thakur class with its monopoly of power had completely alienated the workers and peasants. Even the Brahman class was not particularly loyal to the state. Alberuni in the time of Sultan Mahmud records some complaints of theirs against the rulers of the day, e.g. in the matter of temple-girls or deva-dasis. No activity of the Brahman group in defence of the country is recorded during the Ghurian invasions, but when the tide of invasion had reached the frontiers of Bengal, they greatly contributed to the ruin of the Sena dynasty by spreading panic and prophesying its fall. We have to examine, lastly, what would be the military strength of such a regime—a regime in which the privilege of defending the country was assigned exclusively to a high-born class. In the first generation of Islam, every person was required to offer his services for the defence of the community, unless he was ill or too old or lacked arms and the means of transport. The armies of Chengiz Khan were also collected by compulsory conscription. The governments of Ajam, however, depended not on conscription but on trained and paid soldiers. But the art of fighting was nobody’s exclusive inheritance; one Mussalman had as much right to it as another. In practice the army of an Ajam state was only limited by the funds at its disposal, for the number of trained soldiers available always exceeded the demand. It was otherwise in India. Though the number of Indian soldiers recorded at many engagements is fabulous, it was the camp-followers who swelled the numbers. The actual fighting was done by the Thakurs in India as by the knights in Europe. And in India, as in Europe, the number of warriors available at a national crisis could not be increased. This partly explains the ease with which the Mongols conquered the countries of Eastern Europe in the thirteenth century.

But in India there was a further handicap—the rigidity of the caste-system with its insistence on chut or physical contamination. The rigidity of caste-restriction in India has varied from age to age. But it was certainly very rigid during the Ghaznavid and Ghurian times. Inter-marriages and inter-dining were totally prohibited. Hindus who did not belong to the same caste could not share each other’s fire and water during a campaign. A stern code was prescribed with reference to non-Hindus. “I have repeatedly been told”, says Alberuni, “that when Hindu slaves in (Muslim countries) escape and return to their country and religion, the Hindus order that they should fast...
by way of expiation, then they bury them in the dung, stale and milk of cows for a certain number of days till they get into a state of fermentation. Then they drag them out of the dirt and give them similar dirt to eat and of the like. I have asked the Brahmans if this be true, but they deny it, and maintain that there is no expiation possible for such an individual, and that he is never allowed to return into those conditions of life in which he was before he was carried off as a prisoner. And how should that be possible? If a Brahman eats in a house of a Sudra for sundry days, he is expelled from his caste and can never regain it” (Vol. II, Chapter LXXI).

Fighting the Mussalman with these handicaps meant putting a premium on needless suicide or—flight. A Mussalman captured by the Hindus could eat their food and, when ransomed, returned to his people with credit. No such thing was possible for the caste-Hindu; for his people, including his own family, would disown him. There was no place for him in his own society again. In practice no Hindu captives returned. We hear of heroic jauhars performed by the caste-Hindus when their forts fell into the hands of the enemy; their dauntless courage in mounting the funeral pyre or dying sword in hand, when a surrender could have been arranged, astonished and horrified the Turks. But we also hear of battles in which enormous armies melted away even before the engagement had become warm. The Thakur could face death; that was easy for him; but he could not risk captivity. And most battles cannot be fought except at this risk.

II. Early Muslim Immigrations into India

The overseas trade of the Arab and the Semitic people with India goes back to the pre-historic period. With the conversion of the Arabs to Islam, this trade was further enlarged and integrated. Two new Indian customs—that the Hindus must not cross the salt-water and that they should not travel overland into countries where the munja-grass does not grow and the black gazelles do not graze—practically handed over all foreign commerce, along with the domestic commerce incidental to it, entirely to outsiders. To mention a few commodities only, India needed Arab horses and Persian Gulf pearls while foreign countries needed Indian sugar, silk textiles and the Indian sword. Arab merchants had a free-run of the country and got a warm welcome from the rais, specially from the Rashtrakutas (A.D. 753-973). In most of the larger towns of the Deccan and South India, the Mussalmans were allotted plots of land in the suburbs of the cities for their residential houses, godowns, mosques and graveyards.

There was, simultaneously, an advent of the Muslim traders from the north. Sind, conquered by Muhammad bin Qasim, broke away from the caliphate and was turned by the Ismailis or the Carmathian heretics into an indigenous Indian kingdom. The far-flung campaigns of Sultan Mahmud would have been impossible without an accurate knowledge of trade-routes and local resources, which was probably obtained from Muslim merchants. But the mass of the immigrants came after Sultan Mahmud. Alberuni regrets that the invasions of Sultan Mahmud had incited such a hatred in the Hindu heart as to make any intellectual intercourse between the two peoples difficult, and soon after Mahmud’s death the Ghaznavid officers were driven back to the Ravi. Still human resentment (at least in India) is short-lived, and during the two centuries after Mahmud’s death, Muslim refugees found a warm welcome in the land.

During these two centuries Ajam (Persia and Central Asia) was then invaded, plundered and ransacked by Turkish tribes from the east. First, during the later days of Sultan Mahmud and his son, Mas’ud, the Seljuk Turks marched the whole land and Sultan Mas’ud himself fled to India for safety along with his father’s treasures, which were thus scattered in the land of their origin. There must have been a great immigration of the Mussalmans into the Panjab during this period. The consolidation of the Seljuk Empire (A.D. 1037-1197) on a civilized basis probably stopped this immigration, but a century later conditions worsened again. The last days of Sultan Sanjar saw the establishment of the Qara-Khita power in Turkistan. In A.D. 1154 Sanjar himself was captured by the Ghuzz Turks, who carried him about in a cage while they plundered Persia and Afghanistan, district by district. This started a second great wave of immigration to India. One of these immigrants was the mystic, Shaikh Ali Hajweri, author of the Kashif al-Mahjub, who lies buried in Lahore.

The immigrants came first to the Panjab and from there they slowly spread into the territories of the Hindu rajas. India has always been tolerant of culture-groups, and the Muslim immigrants were allowed to organize their own small culture-groups without molestation. They traded with each other and with the Hindus; and they probably brought into the country industries that were not known, especially the heavy-armament industry. When Muhammad bin Qasim, for example, invaded Sind, he had the exclusive monopoly of catapults (munjanis), the construction of which the Mussalmans had learnt from the Romans. But by the end of the twelfth century the fort of every rai was plentifully supplied with munjanis and munja-stones and the armies of most Indian rai had a Muslim contingent. It would not be an unfair assumption that these catapults (called munjanis,
tradas and maghribis in Persian, according to their design) were at least originally constructed by skilled Muslims in the service of the raids. The most vital industry brought by the Muslims was the manufacture of paper, which they had learnt from the Chinese. The great effect of fairly cheap paper, which replaced the old South Indian leaves, on the preservation and expansion of Hindu as well as Muslim culture and education must not be underrated. In the manufacture of woollen cloth also the Muslims had a lot to contribute. The refugees naturally brought their home-culture with them, intact and unchanged, and they had even before the Ghurian invasions developed it to a surprisingly high standard in this country. Thus, for example, Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya, whose ancestors had been living in India for three generations, was born at Kangra in A.D. 1192. By the time he was twelve, he had learnt the Quran in all the seven qiblas (modes of recitation) in that Hindu environment and when at that early age he went to the Arabian lands for further studies, he had no difficulty owing to the Arabic language which he had learnt here. The Muslim colony at Kanauj disappeared with that town, but Badaun situated within the territory of the Ghurwar rai was more fortunate, and became a remarkable centre of Muslim education. Maulana Raziiuddin Hasan Saghani (A.D. 1181-1252) studied the Prophet's hadises at Badaun, and when he went to Baghdad he was immediately acknowledged to be one of the leading scholars of the subject. His compilation of the hadises, the Masaiurjul Annoor, is of all such works the most reliable.

By the middle of the twelfth century the Muslim ways of life, good and bad, were thoroughly known to the Indian people. The average Indian—Brahman, Thakur or city-worker—knew very well what was at stake in the political contest. He was not facing a thing unknown.

III. The Military and Social Aspects of the Ghurian Conquest

It has been stated already that the Ghurian conquest had two aspects—the substitution of the Ghurian Turkish slave-officers for the Thakurs as the governing class and the removal of all discriminations from the city-workers, regardless of their creed. These two movements were integrally connected. All other aspects of this revolution were contingent and ancillary.

The first aspect of the revolution need not detain us for long. Shihabuddin Ghuri, who had been defeated by the Rai of Gujarat in 1178, was also defeated by Rai Pithora at Tarain in A.D. 1191. But this noted hero was in the habit of surviving defeats. In 1192 he returned to fight at the same place and won a signal victory. Next year he defeated Rai Jai Chand, the Guhjarwar ruler of Kanauj, at Chandwar near Etawah. These two battles sufficed for the conquest of Northern India. It has to be noted that Shihabuddin's victory at Tarain was due to a diplomacy, which should not have deceived anybody, and to a cheap trick—attacking the enemy unaware in the morning—against which common military foresight should have provided. At Chandwar the main Ghurian army never came into action; Qutbuddin Aibek with the advance-guard alone succeeded in defeating the Kanauj army. The open country came into the hands of the invaders almost without any effort. Then the fortified cities of Northern India one after another fell after very short sieges, unwilling or unable to offer any serious resistance. More significant still, Bakhthiar, an adventurer from Khali, the territory round the lower course of the Helmund, who had been twice declared unfit for enrolment in the army as a common soldier, harassed and conquered Bihar and about one-half of Bengal with some two thousand soldiers. The trick by which he drove out Rai Lakshman Sen from his capital, Nadia, is well known. But the kingdom must have been remarkably shaky if it could be overturned by such a trick. Thus the whole of Northern India from the banks of the Ravi to the banks of the Brahmaputra came into the hands of the Ghurian Turks within a period of twelve or thirteen years. Seldom in human history has a country so large, so populous and, according to the academic standards of the age, so cultured and civilized as far as the upper classes were concerned, been conquered so easily—and by such commonplace men. Both in the rapidity of its establishment and longevity of the system it established, the Ghurian achievement stands in sharp contrast with the British rule. The explanation lies not in the military but in the social factors. Indian city-labour, both Hindu and Muslim, helped to establish the new regime, and it also maintained it, through all revolutions and revolts, for over five hundred years.

The home resources of the Ghurian Empire were insignificant and its military power, judged by Central Asian standards, was rickety in the extreme. In 1206 Shihabuddin Ghuri, who had already ravaged Khurasan, marched north against his great rival, Alauddin Khwarazm Shah, and encamped outside the latter's capital, Khwarazm. The issue showed how weak the Ghurian power was in the face of a determined popular resistance. The religious scholars of Khwarazm declared that everybody was a martyr who died in defence of his home and hearth against an unjust aggressor, Muslim or non-Muslim, and proclaimed a holy war against Shihabuddin. The people were soon up in arms. The non-Muslim Kara-Qitas of Turkistan decided
to support Alauddin Khwarazm Shah, who had been paying them tribute, and their famous general, Taniku Taraz, was despatched against Shihabuddin. Shihabuddin fled back from Khwarazm in utter consternation and distress, but he was not destined to reach his capital in safety. At Andkhud the enemy surrounded him on all sides; his officers deserted him and the battle, which ended almost before it had begun, sealed the fate of the Ghurian Empire in Ajam. Shihabuddin fled for safety with about a hundred soldiers to the Andkhud fort, and from there, through the generous intermediation of the Sultanate Salatin of Samargand, he was allowed to return to Ghazni. He came to India to collect a second army against his Central Asian opponents, but was assassinated by an Ismaili heretic on his return journey.

In its homeland, too, the Ghurian government was not destined to last. In 1215 Jalaluddin Mankbarni, one of the sons of Jalaluddin Khwarazm Shah, drove out Tajuddin Yalduz, Shihabuddin's successor, from Ghazni and brought the historic Balkh-Bamian-Kabul-Ghazni valley under his control. In 1216 the Mongol conqueror, Chengiz, started his terrible attack on Muslim Asia; city after city was plundered and devastated; and the remnant of Shihabuddin Ghuri's family in Afghanistan disappeared. But India under Ilutmish was quite a different proposition from what it had been thirty years before and guided by omens, or by his own common sense, one of the greatest conquerors that the world has ever seen, retreated from the bank of the Indus just as the great Alexander had once retreated from the bank of the Sutlej. In spite of the continued efforts of three generations, the Mongols were unable to accomplish their great enterprise of conquering India. The post-revolutionary Indians were in no mood to be conquered. The Indian worker with his newly won freedom (of which more presently) was determined to fight it out in every city and every street. So India alone was able to stand against the Mongol invasions, which had shattered every state-power in east and west. And this new-found strength was entirely due to the Urban Revolution of Northern India.

In the course of thirteen years, A.D. 1292-1305, the Ghurian Turks, whose fate in their homeland we have just surveyed, conquered the whole of Northern India from the Ravi to Assam. Whatever the cause of the Ghurian success, the second battle of Tarain (1292) and the battle of Chandwar can hardly be called serious engagements, though a chosen band of Indian warriors decided that death in the battle-field was the proper rite for them. Then the cities of Northern India, as we have seen, fell like autumnal leaves. The workers, who might have fought had they been so inclined, were left outside the city walls; the resources of the open country were exclusively in the hands of the Turks and inside the cities there were septs, banyas, brokers, clerks, jobhis, teachers of all kinds, vaids, temple-priests and all other non-fighting elements without grain, cloth, arms, and without even the capacity to man the city-walls. Finally, the rais, ramats and ranas of the countryside, who had no other alternative, made a written contract with the invader for the collection of land-revenue from them on the areas under their control, and this put a final end to the conflict. We are told that Qutbuddin Aibek raised the revenue from one-sixth to one-fifth, but this made no difference to the chiefs concerned for the higher tax would have to be paid by the ordinary peasant or bilahar. Subject to this the countryside was left untouched till the advent of Alauddin Khalji.

This was not a conquest, properly so-called. This was a turn-over of public opinion—a sudden turn-over, no doubt, but still one that was long overdue. The Indian capacity for fighting was there, but it had simply not been called into play. In the years to come, under a properly organized government, the Indian soldiers, drawn from the ranks of the working classes, proved to be more than worthy of their salt in their conflict with the Mongols; the best warriors of the world. But people will not fight for their chains.

The essence of the social question was this. Face to face with the social and economic provision of the Sharia'at and the Hindu Smritis as practical alternatives, the Indian city-worker preferred the Sharia'at. And the decision of the city-worker was decisive, for it is in the cities and not in the countryside that governments and empires are made and pulled down.

In the centuries that were to follow Muslim kings and Hindu rais fought each other continuously, and there were many and varied Hindu revivalist movements and movements of religious and social reform. But no Hindu national and political movement is traceable in any part of India till the reign of Aurangzeb, when a political and communal turning was given to Muslim political policy. So long as Hindu ideology stuck to the caste-discriminations of the Smritis, a return of the old regime would have been resisted by the masses of the Hindu and Muslim working classes as well as the petit-bourgeois of both communities. The attempt would have been futile, and was never made. By the very nature of their military, social and cultural organization, the dominions of the surviving independent rais were incapable of expansion; that the social and political system of Chitor or Ranthambhor, for example, should spread to Delhi and absorb it, was unconceivable. Nobody wanted it, nobody could even dream of...
it. Much was made then, and has been made later, of the Baradu Revolt led by Khusru Khan on the ground that some of the Baradus were Hindus. But it is absolutely clear that Khusru Khan and his followers wanted to capture the Delhi sultanate and to continue its traditions. They had no intention of reinstating the old social and political system, and in spite of their desperate situation, they sought no alliance with the Hindu raja. It was impossible to turn back the hands of the clock—and the Baradus knew it well. The central empire of Delhi, on the other hand, was bound to expand for the social and economic conditions of the new age demanded a centralized administration for the whole land on new lines.

The invasion of the Ghurian Turks brought about this great social and economic revolution because the industrial and social forces in the country had been prepared for it for centuries, but their path had been barred by the ideology of the caste-system and the Thakur-military regime. External pressure broke this regime, and then with remarkable rapidity in the course of half a generation the country settled on new lines. Everyone, except the topmost rajas and their immediate followes, accepted the new social order. The forces of resistance vanished as if by magic. Viewed in a proper scientific and non-communal perspective in the context of world-history and of future Indian history, the so-called Ghurian conquest of India was really a revolution of Indian city-labour led by the Ghurian Turks.

We need not be surprised that those who led the revolution reaped the rewards of success. But only by the substitution of the Ghurian Turks for the Thakur-regime could the city-workers obtain their rights. The one was impossible without the other. Centuries of bitter experience had proved that the old Hindu aristocracy was too tradition-bound to lead a social revolution.

"When a great idea spreads over the world", Alberuni observes, "every nation appropriates it, including the Hindus." Neither of the two ideas of the new regime—equality of civil rights and the new methods of city-production—were entirely foreign. The doctrine of equality in spiritual matters is the essence of higher Hinduism. Alberuni, who was told so, writes: "According to the Hindu philosophers, liberation is common to all castes and to the whole human races, if their intention of obtaining it is perfect. This view is based on the saying of Vyasa: 'Learn to know the twenty-five principles thoroughly, then you may follow whatever religion you like; your end will be salvation.'" The new regime gave a legal and social expression to this doctrine. Even in the sphere of production the law about the degradation of the workers—the weaver, for example—

must have been broken at some points even during the old regime. Indian silk, specially from Deogir, was of the highest quality, and it is difficult to imagine that it was woven by workers to whom a proper status was denied. But something cataclysmic was needed to push matters vigorously ahead. "Force", says Marx, "is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power." The Ghurians provided that element of force.

IV. Chief Features of the Urban Revolution

It is not difficult to point out the chief features of the Urban Revolution of the thirteenth century in Northern India as our records, carefully studied and scientifically and impartially interpreted, give us a fairly complete view.

i) The government of the rajas had kept the Indian workers outside the city-walls. When the Turks entered the cities, the Hindu low-caste workers entered along with them. And they came to stay. The new regime wanted the workers, along with their families and their workshops, inside the city-walls; their presence was indispensable to the work of the new regime and they had to be at hand. Their services were needed for government as well as for industrial purposes; without them neither industry nor the government could function properly. No one now was or could be excluded from the city; our records show all sections of the people living within the cities without any sort of discrimination. The city-wall was a medieval necessity, primarily for police purposes. The gates were closed at sunset and could under no conditions be opened till the morning. For the convenience of belated travellers, however, inns were constructed outside the main gates and sufficient police protection was generally provided. The recorded history of our early medieval cities, as well as an examination of their surviving ground-plans, shows that houses were being constantly built outside the city-walls and new ramparts had to be constructed to enclose the ever expanding suburbs. The cities, under the new regime, were developing into thriving centres of industry and commerce, and expansion and overcrowding were both inevitable. It was also inevitable that the cities should come to dominate the countryside more and more. They became, lastly, the sole repositories of the country's civic sense; successful or otherwise, all medieval revolts were revolts supported by the city-workers.

ii) The discriminations made by the Sharifat on religious grounds will be discussed later. Here it has to be stated positively that the Sharifat makes no discriminations whatsoever in the transactions of civil life and treats free contract regardless of the creed of the parties
as the basis of the economic order. "Perform your promise when you have made it", the Quran declares. Now it is a notorious fact that the Muslim faith has made no progress in the rural areas of the provinces that now constitute the Indian Union. But it was different with the urban areas of Northern India. The Hindu city-worker could gain no legal privileges by belonging to the new faith, and the government offered him no temptation. Nevertheless there was a landslide in favor of the new faith; and by the middle of the thirteenth century we find large numbers of Muslim workers of purely Indian origin in every city and town. At present the Mussalmans, the overwhelming bulk of whom belong to the working classes, are 80 per cent or so of the urban population of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar towns. It is difficult to make an estimate for the Middle Ages. But the increase in the size of Friday mosques and theds during the thirteenth century may point to a growing mass of Muslim workers. By the end of Ilutmish’s reign, all Friday mosques were overcrowded and the congregations used to spread out into the adjoining open land.

It is useless to talk of force with reference to the conversion of the city-workers of the thirteenth century. A few may have adopted the new faith through conviction; others may have been tempted. But what we find mostly is the conversion of groups. Elephant-drivers (mahouts) and butchers adopted the new faith almost at a man. Weavers in large numbers also preferred it. Sweet-meat makers or hitwaq found sticking to the old faith quite profitable for as Hindus they could sell their produce to members of both religions. But Mussalmans like meat-dishes and we hear again and again of Muslim cook-shops, which had a thriving business. The metal-workers of Delhi preferred the old faith. The growers of pan in the rural areas adhered to Hinduism but in the cities a majority of pan-sellers at least adopted the new faith. Firuz Shah in his Futuhat says that he had remitted taxes on the following: vegetables; brokerage; butchers; amusements; flowers; betel-leaves; octo in grain and cereals; scribes; indigo; fish; cotton-carding; soap-making; sale of ropes; oil-making; parched grain; taxes from shopkeepers for the use of public lands; cloth-printing; gambling-houses; suits and petitions; police dues, qassabi (slaughtering animals); butter-making; grazing-tax; fines of various kinds; dangezah (an impost in addition to the octo), ground-rent of houses and shops; dawri (forced requisition of cattle); roasted mence-meat; fruits; marriages; and brick-kilns. Since the Futuhat was originally an inscription in Firuz’s Palace Mosque, it is perhaps safe to assume that the Muslim working class audience to which it was addressed had a special interest in some of the matters mentioned; others, on the face of them, appertained to the whole public. The Hindu business community, on the other hand, gave no contributions to the new religion. The new regime had caused its operations and profits to increase; but that was a different issue. Apart from the organized strength and continuity of its traditions, it was impossible for the Hindu business community to consider a religion in which the taking of interest was not permitted, while as Hindus they were legally entitled to taking interest both from Mussalmans and Hindus. Medieval Muslims who lent money on interest were uncondemned by public opinion. But it was not possible for society to dispense with the services of sahau or Hindu bankers. Still there was a small minority of local Muslim merchants everywhere.

Taken as a whole the gain of the new religion was considerably in the hands of skilled labourers, among the professions which Hinduism had placed very low, such as weavers, butchers, etc. and in the group of hammad or unskilled labourers. But large number of unskilled Hindus of the lower castes also drifted into the cities; they are generally referred to as paks (footmen). It has to be added that no document proving any organized religious propaganda by the Mussalmans during this period has yet been unearthed. The wholesale conversions attributed to the Muslim mystics of this period are found in later-day fabrications only and these works must be totally discarded. The Muslim mystics did not bother about conversion; it was no part of their duty. Muslim mysticism in those days was a postgraduate discipline—a discipline exclusively for Mussalmans who had completed their study of the theological and other sciences. "I have nothing to do with the multitude", Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya (ob. a.d. 1293), the famous Suhrawardi mystic of Multan, declared with reference to his own work. There was, of course, considerable exchange of opinion between the followers of the two creeds. "Jogis of every variety used to frequent the Khasqah of Shaikh Firdust in Ganj-i Shakar (ob. a.d. 1265)". Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (ob. a.d. 1235) tells us, and he proceeds to explain the remark of a jogi he had approved. I have proved elsewhere (Medieval India Quarterly, No. 2, October 1930, p. 1, et. seq.) that the popular Conversations of Maulvayat attributed to Shaikh Mu'minuddin Ajmeri, Shaikh Qutbuddin Bakhshyar Kaki, Shaikh Firdust in of Ajodhan and Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya are pure fabrications and have nothing to do with these saints; the conversions of Hindus attributed to them are mere myths fabricated by the cheap and unknown miracle-mongering authors of these works. But three great mystic works survive to us from the Khali and the Tughluq period—the Fauzul-Fuad of Amir Hasan Sigi,
the Khairul Majalis of Hamid Qalandar and the Siyarul Auliya of Amir Khurd; and these works give us a very good idea of the attitude of the Muslim mystics of the thirteenth century. The mystics never indulged in munastara or theological controversy of any sort; they never ran down Hinduism. Here and there a Hindu theory or a Hindu story is quoted with approval, but knowing of Hinduism is, on the whole, conspicuous by its absence. The mystics of our period neither studied Hinduism, like Alberuni, nor quarrelled with it. They merely passed it by. Not a single case of conversion or attempted conversion by a mystic Shaikh is recorded in our reliable annals. A Muslim once brought his Hindu brother to Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, presumably in the hope that the great Shaikh would help to convert him. But the Shaikh would have none of it; this was not his mission, and he preferred to change the conversation. "In the early days of Islam", he remarked, "conversion to Islam took place owing to the excellence of Muslim character. But where is that excellence now?"

We have, in view of all these circumstances, no alternative but to conclude that the acceptance of Islam by the city-workers was a decision of local professional groups, and that in making their decisions they were not only concerned with mundane affairs and their position in the social order than with abstract theological truths, which they had been declared incapable of understanding, or even hearing. The Muslim city-workers of today, unlike the later converts in the rural areas, such as the Muslim Rajputs or the Bhilay Sultans of Awadh, have no distinctive Hindu traditions left. But the transition took time. In earlier days in Delhi, Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh remarks, Musalmans of different professions in Delhi had separate graveyards. But in his own day (circa A.D. 1354) this curious anomaly had disappeared.

iii) One of the most significant and the most rapid achievement of the new regime was the total change in the art of war. Formerly fighting was a function of the Thakurs; the profession was hereditary and probably allied to land-tenure. Under the new regime the army became a function of the new working class. No one was excluded from the profession; the respectability of a soldier was decided not by his birth but by his stamina, capacity for discipline and skill in wielding his bow and shield and sword. The profession of arms was open to all but it required careful training. The soldier was an artisan, trained to his job, andrambition was to become an artist in his profession. Owing to the large number of men required for the army, no conditions could be imposed except those absolutely necessary—the possession of arms and the capacity to wield them. Birth and

religion, so far as the ordinary soldier was concerned, were matters of indifference, loyalty was presumed. No oath of allegiance was administered; Indians were just expected to be true to their salt. The salary was not high; the 234 tankas which Alaudin Khilji gave to a man with two horses was obviously a rock-bottom wage. Still after a distinct revolution in the traditional ideology had taken place, and the profession of arms had been thrown open to all, there appeared in due course an acute unemployment among the soldiers. The real cause seems to have been an enormous increase in the working class population. The constant rebellions of the Middle Ages were due very largely to the fact that a large number of unemployed soldiers were prepared to follow any adventurer, who gave them their wages, however reckless the enterprise, for they were in immediate need of some means of livelihood.

Unlike the governments of the raja, the Empire of Delhi depended not primarily upon the strength of its army as an offensive weapon in the open field. Some forts were maintained on the frontier; those already constructed in the heart of the country were preserved, but they were often put to civil uses, and the general complaint was that they were allowed to fall into disrepair. Delhi never had a proper fort to protect it, for it kept on expanding beyond every new city-wall. It was clear to the directors of the new military policy that if you allowed the enemy to take possession of the open country and to drive you pell-mell into a fort, then your final collapse, with the resources of the country in the hands of the enemy, was not far off. So they fashioned an army of Indian soldiers and horsemen drawn from all classes, trained to rapid marches and manoeuvres, and instead of specializing in the construction of forts, they developed the art of reducing them. Mamluqis (catalouls) of very large size were constructed on the spot; they could kill men occasionally but seemed to have done little damage to forts that were really strong. The last desperate device in the reduction of forts was the construction of the pasheb—a rising mound of earth made by leaping sand-bangs right up to the fort ramparts. But one thing was clear under the new regime—rulers who fled into their forts for protection would not be able to rule the land. They would be starved into submission. Sultan Alaudin made this fact frightfully clear on that terrible day when, rejecting all other advice, he marched out of Delhi to challenge Qutlugh Khwaja on the field of Kili.

iv) With the advance of the thirteenth century, we get a clear evidence of the growth and multiplication, almost to a dangerous extent, of the urban working class. "This is a law of population",
Marx says, "peculiar to the capitalist mode of production; and in fact every special historic mode of production has its own special laws of population... An abstract law of population exists for plants and animals only, and only in so far as man has not interfered with them." Slaves do not multiply, nor serfs; but 'free' wage-labourers always seem to multiply, beyond the capacity of the existing means of production. Under the old regime, when the workers lived in their gilds outside the cities, and all their lives were regulated by the gild, the population does not seem to have increased. The conditions of the new city-life were entirely different. The Muslim workers followed no laws of marriage except those of the Sharì'at; for them the domination of the gilds in private life, as distinct from professional life, had completely ended. Since the Sharì'at, as enforced by the qaza, treats marriage entirely as a contract and permits divorce, such an arrangement would tend to increase population. Among Hindu workers also the domination of the gilds must have weakened under the new competitive conditions leading to a freedom unknown before. The conditions of industry and commerce in India during the thirteenth century were akin to what Marx calls the 'manufacturing', as distinct from the 'machine' era, of European capitalism. All the three conditions prescribed by Marx as the prerequisites of capitalist production were there—free labour, free capital and freedom of contract (Capital, Part II, Chapter VI). But Marx at this particular place overlooks the fact that a fourth factor is also necessary—freedom of thought and of science. The absence of this factor prevented medieval India from marching from the 'manufacturing' to the 'machine' stage of production and all its revolutions, in spite of their variety, were limited by one fundamental fact—the unchanging instruments of production. But it has been observed that nascent capitalism everywhere leads to a multiplication of the labouring classes, and we need not be surprised at the same phenomenon in India during the thirteenth century.

The consequence, however, is more clear than the cause: and by the end of the century all kinds of trained city-artisans could be found in enormous numbers, and their ranks were swelled by an even larger number of unskilled hammadls, paiks and the like. As a result unemployment became acute; and unemployment led to distress, and distress to rebellion. The government, on the one hand, tried to find remedies for unemployment, such as useless public works like the enormous columns near the Qutb Minar, or when unable to do so, it met rebellion and discontent with the sword. Another aspect of this unemployment is the preaching and the practice of charity—the immediate relief of distress, on which so much insistence is laid in the literature of the day. It is probable that unemployment was more acute among Muslim workers, who had multiplied more plentifully within the categories of their traditional arts and crafts, than among the Hindus. This spectre of unemployment is one of the chief features of what may be called the higher imperial period—the regime of the Khiljis and the earlier Tughluqs (A.D. 1250-1351).

V. City of Delhi

The great changes that came over the country are indicated—perhaps over-indicated—by the rapid growth of the city of Delhi. The early history of Delhi is difficult to trace; but it did not count for much during the old regime, and the glory of founding it belongs to Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish (A.D. 1211-30), who constructed his monumental Minar to symbolize the new epoch. But once it had been selected definitely as India's capital, all the forces of the new age contributed to its rapid expansion. Here the Turkish governing class spent the revenues it had collected in the provinces and gathered its enormous retinue of fighting men, artisans of all grades, large contingent of personal servants, dancing-girls and their circle of musicians and bhangi; poets and litterati, students living on their charity, mullahs and low-grade mystics. The centre-piece of the Turkish official hierarchy was, of course, the sultan in his palace with its enormous organization. Two of these palaces are mentioned. The Qasr-i Suhair (White Palace) of Iltutmish and the Qasr-i Lal (Red Palace), which Balban seems to have constructed before he ascended the throne. But its traces of them can be found anywhere. Every soldier of the empire was expected to come to Delhi once a year for review or arz, when after an examination by the Amir-i Arz (Minister for War) he would get his salary and the cost of his horse and equipment. A great market grew up to supply the requirements of the great cantonment with its constantly changing personnel from all provinces. Here also were established the great Government Workshop for manufacturing everything required by the palace or the army, which it was beyond the power of private capital to supply.

The citizens of Delhi, though Indians by birth, were dependent for their livelihood on the government and its Turkish officers, and in the hour of trial they did not forget the claims of salt. "The citizens of Delhi," Barani says with reference to Jalaluddin's accession in 1299, "had for eighty years prospered under the rule of the Turks and the government of the Khiljis appeared to them intolerable." But this loyalty was futile, for Delhi was not only a government affair but an
all-India centre of industry and commerce. The city had a large number of inns, some of them being charity concerns, for all kinds of merchants and travellers, and some 10,000 to 20,000 load-cattle were used by Hindu naiks to supply provisions to the city. There were general markets for things of common use and specialized markets for grain, cloth, horses, and slaves of all nationalities. The markets were overseen by brokers (dalals), rather sharp in their methods, who helped people to buy and sell. Industries grew up along with commerce—industries of all types from the manufacture of armament to the training of prostitutes and dancing girls. Delhi, needless to add, was also the centre of banking. All sorts of people wanted loans, including the high Turkish officers, some of whom were always in the debt of Hindu sahukars or money-lenders.

But what distinguished Delhi above all things was its cultural set-up. Leading scholars came here from Ajam, which the Mongols had ravaged, hoping for the patronage of the kings and high officers or, in any case, for practising their professions. They were distinguished by their personal qualifications and came with authentic certificates. Indian teachers from mofussil towns were also drawn to the rising metropolis. They were proud of the places of their origin and often used them as surnames. Some colleges were organized by the government and a few owed their origin to rich donors. But a large number of teachers plied their own trade. Muslim students of higher branches of studies from the provinces, with no visible means of livelihood but determined to get on, squeezed themselves into mosques, inns, mussalman and private houses, and were generally considered to be the most deserving recipients of charity. The foundations of Muslim academic studies imported from Ajam were thus firmly laid. Delhi did not become the centre of higher Hindu academic studies. But Hindu non-academic sciences—astrology, magic of all kinds, ritual or the art of finding lost things, etc., found plenty of believers. Astrologers, in particular, were in great demand, for both Hindus and Mussalmans sought their direction and advice. According to Isami, there was at least one astrologer of distinction in every mahalla of the city.

No account of the great capital would be complete without a reference to its seamy side—to its dancing-girls, taverns and brothels. The matter stood at two distinguishable levels.

The culture of the whole East had perforce to be assimilated by the Delhi courtesans of the higher classes. Khusrav and Barani return to this theme again and again. Barani with regret that he had missed the joy of life and Khusrav with no such personal regrets. The training of courtesans had apparently become an important field for financial investment, for when Kaituqabad (A.D. 1286-90) repented himself of wine and women, the interests concerned were able to take effective steps to bring him back to the old path.

“For the purpose of offering them to the sultan’s service”, Barani states, “well-known reprobates and old, wicked procuresses had trained up young girls—girls with beauty, slimness, grace and allure, bold, Brunette and shameless—to sing melodiously, to strike the rubab, to recite ghazals and to engage in repartees and to play nora and chess. These courtesans, everyone of whom was a danger to cities and kingdoms, were brought up with expensive care. Even before their breasts could ripen to womanhood, they were taught riding, polo-playing and wielding the lance with thousands of accomplishments and graces. Every alluring art and trick—tricks that induce the Muslim ascetic to put on the Brahman’s thread and drag the mystic to the tavern—was taught to them. Indian boys of graceful stature and girls of remarkable looks were taught to sing in Persian and then dressed in robes of brocade; they were trained in the courtesies, customs and manners of the court. The ears of handsome boys were pierced for pearl ear-rings; beautiful young slave-girls were decked like brides. And (along with them) there were expert musicians and reciters of the praises of the sultan in Hindi and Persian, in prose and verse; and also jokers and buffoons (bhangis), who with one joke could incite the sorrow-hearted to hilarious laughter and the jovous-hearted to such fits that they could not hold their sides from laughing. All these in the hope of the sultan’s favour came from far-off places. And the spirit-distillers of Koil (Aligarh) and Meerut—brought fragons of scented spirit that was two or three years old.” Our medieval records are full of references to the traditions and institutions which Barani refers. But their high development by the time of Kaituqabad implies a generous patronage by the Turkish slave-officers of the sixteenth century, and shows how thoroughly they had been Indianized. In what is known as the culture of Lucknow, these traditions of training dancing-girls remained till recent times, the girls who are selected for training being known as nachis. But the military elements in the training of the dancing-girls disappeared long ago with a change in the character and the appreciative capacity of their patrons.

At the lower level the taverns and brothels, which seem to have been plentiful in Delhi, were centres of vice and crime. They were noisy affairs and kept the neighbourhoood disturbed. A petition from an ordinary citizen, presumably a Mussalman, to the Delhi kotwal, which Amir Khusrav has preserved, seems to imply that "the life of
the humble petitioner, which had been pretty uncomfortable before owing to the loud, all-night prayers of the mystics living on either side of his house, had finally become quite unbearable owing to the opening of a tavern on the opposite side of the street, with a grocer-

boy thrown in to enliven the social landscape and help the sales. Here all Indian elements met in a common brotherhood of distress and discontent, and often planned reckless adventures or else hired themselves out to those who had bold designs in hand. We are often told of habitual criminals, false witnesses and other undesirable characters being picked up in the taverns. The Indian liquor, which has survived to us from the Middle Ages, is the worst in the world and the dirtiest, but it is easy to distil, and the working classes seem to have been quite content with it. The sober classes, who knew little or nothing of this Delhi underworld, were markedly afraid of it. It is only for such a social mix-up that the government of Jalaluddin Khalji could frame the charge that two reckless Hindu adventurers, Niran-

jan, an ex-kowal, and Hathya, a swordsman, had planned to assassi-

nate the Sultan on his way to the Juma prayer in order to raise Sidi Maula to the caliphate!

The variegated buildings of the city spread outward from the great Minar. In the rooms near the Minar, some of which still stand, un-

attached scholars seem to have had the privilege of teaching. In spite of many references to it in contemporary literature, it is difficult to find out how the city was planned. But it soon expanded beyond the old walls. The houses of the great officers have been described as three or four-storey buildings with a small and winding staircase on one side. It may be assumed that they had good gardens. The houses of the rich merchants were of the same style, but they were in the heart of the crowded city-quarters: the lower-storey was used for sales and business transactions and the upper storeys for the residence of the family. The average inn seems to have been like our college hostels, i.e. rooms in a rectangle with a verandah running in front of them and a gate that could be safely locked up; references are some-
times made to a platform in the centre of the rectangle with a roof standing on pillars. Many houses of the period may have been con-

structed in the temple-style, though exact reference is wanting and none of such houses seem to have survived. The bazaars were thickly congested and the congestion was only made bearable by the absence, or rarity of wheeled traffic in the streets, the better mode of loco-
motion for those who could afford it being horses and litters. The majority of the people lived in mud-houses with thatched roofs. If even these were beyond their reach, they lived under a chapper (straw-roof) supported by a mud-wall on one side and rough sticks on the other, getting some protection from the sun and rain but none from the wind and dust. Some sort of order must have been imposed upon the people in the construction and laying out of their houses, for Delhi in normal times was an orderly city. The Sharafat provides rather carefully for those innumerable claims and counter-

claims, such as easements and servitudes, without which decent civic life is not possible.

Delhi by the end of the thirteenth century had come to occupy a unique position in the Asian world. There was, in fact, no city like it anywhere on the globe. The great Muslim cities of Agra and Ajmer had either been destroyed by the Mongols or else were leading a precarious existence with a decaying population. The capitals of the Mongol rulers like Sial or contemporary Qara-Qorum were enormous encroachments with no culture or civic life. The claim that Delhi was the heir to the great cities of Iraq and Ajam is a recurrent theme in the literature of the day. "Delhi owing to the combination of learning and action is like Bulghara," Amir Khusrau declares. For all its faults, its citizens loved it. They never called it merely by its name but in prose and verse they referred to it as Hazrat-i Delhi (Revered Delhi) or the Shahir (the City).

IV. THE RURAL REVOLUTION

The urban revolution, which we have been discussing, did not extend to the countryside. It is proved by one record that most ghasbes (small towns) and larger villages, known as mauzas, were fortified. Had these towns and villages offered a stiff resistance to the invader all over the country—as they did to the Mongols less than a century later—the Ghurian conquest of India would have been absolutely impossible. The fact that the open country passed into the hands of the Turks proves one of two things—either that the village folk did not consider the old regime worth fighting for or else that the change (as they visualized it) did not matter much to them. Very probably both considerations were present in their minds. For the Ghurian Turks, on their side, had neither the will nor the means to establish a direct government over the countryside. The Mussalmans were about 7 per cent of the total rural population in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar at the time of the partition of 1947. The mass of the Indian Mussalmans throughout the ages has belonged to the working class.
and the lower middle class; the average income of the Mussalmans has been definitely less than the income of the caste Hindu though higher than the income of the non-castes. Nevertheless he demands certain social amenities and cannot live without them—the congregational mosque for his five prayers; the common graveyard where his fellow Muslims may bury him neatly and tearlessly and pray for the forgiveness of his sins; a school for the education of his children; a hajj, preferably blind, who may recite the whole of the Quran in the month of Ramadan; and last but not the least, social intercourse with an academic flavour in it. As a result, the Mussalmans in the countryside have lived entirely in qasbas or little towns. Some of these qasbas are very old, like Sattara in Bara Banki district, which existed in the thirteenth century and may have existed earlier. But most of these qasbas are of later growth. In Awadh many of them trace their origin, probably correctly, to Alauddin Khalji's settlement policy. A few qasbas, like Jais in Rai Bareli district, are purely Muslim. But so long as he had enough co-religionists for the purposes mentioned above, the Mussalmans was quite content to live in a qasba with a Hindu majority. But outside the qasbas he has found it hard to live, for his creed is fundamentally a city-cared. Now if we leave out of account the Muslim Rajputs, Bhalay Sultans, etc., whose lateness of conversion is proved, among other things, by the prevalence of Hindu customs among them and their consciousness of gotra relationship with the Hindus who have not been converted, the number of Mussalmans in the rural area outside the qasbas is negligible today—perhaps not even 1 per cent of the population. No arguments should be needed to prove that it was even more negligible in the thirteenth century.

That there was a sufficient number of educated Mussalmans of foreign as well as of Indian origin in the towns of Northern India is proved by the fact that the new government was able to carry on all its office-work in the Persian language. But the number of such persons, if efficiency is also taken into account, must have been limited. None of them could be spared for detailed work in the rural areas; there the thirteenth century government had to act through the intermediaries alone. These Hindu intermediaries are referred to by our authorities as rots, ranas, raawas, chaudhars, maqaddams and khuts. Muqaddam is an Arabic word meaning 'the first man'. Khut is probably an Indianization from khat or deed; I am told that the term is still used in Bhopal, though I have not come across it in Uttar Pradesh. Judging from later authorities, it seems that the Ghurian Turks had been content to take a deed or khat from these local Hindu intermediaries, who were certainly not landlords, that the land-revenue, somewhat enhanced, which the old government had been getting in the past, would be collected and paid by them into the local treasury in future years. Thus, on the face of it, the Indian countryside suffered little or no change owing to the Ghurian conquest.

Some ninety years after the death of Shihabuddin Ghuri, Sultan Alauddin Khalji drew up an indictment against these Hindu intermediaries, the main points of which are as follows:

(a) They paid no rent for their own land but compelled the cultivator (or rajput, the balahar of Ziauddin Baran) to pay the rent for the land cultivated by them as well as for his own land, thus throwing the burden of the 'strong' upon the 'weak';
(b) they appropriated the village pasture, leaving none for the cultivator's cattle;
(c) in addition to the above two privileges, they took a separate perquisite or commission for themselves;
(d) even so they paid nothing to the government, ignored its orders and even imprisoned its agents;
(e) they enlisted their own private armies and fought with each other;
(f) lastly, they lived like aristocratic gentlemen, wearing silk clothes, mounting fine horses and shooting with Persian bows. "Not even a hundred karolhs (200 miles) of my kingdom obey me as I ought to be obeyed", the Khalji emperor complained.

The existing annals of the thirteenth century do not enable us to form an opinion concerning the first three complaints of Alauddin Khalji, who implied that the position of the ordinary cultivator had worsened in the countryside while the Hindu intermediaries were trying to convert their position from state-agents into hereditary landowners. But the other complaints of Alauddin are proved by our annals. The government of the slave kings had no paid agents of its own in the countryside and depended entirely upon the goodwill of the Hindu intermediaries; it was weak and the attempt of the intermediaries was to ignore it altogether. During the reigns of Ilutmish (A.D. 1211-56) and Balban (A.D. 1260-66) things seemed stabilized, though Balban undoubtedly had a hard task and even during his reign, to quote one example only, we find Jalaluddin Khalji collecting revenue from a Mandali village by plundering it and getting a sword-slash on his face in the struggle. Our annals about Ilutmish
are so meagre that we cannot definitely decide whether he was really
obeyed in the countryside or connived at the virtual independence
of the intermediaries. But his military strength was great; and the
intermediaries may have decided not to force an issue with the con-
queror of three Muslim kingdoms and several Rajput states. But there
can be no doubt that during the rest of the century the raias, ranaas
and rawats were completely out of hand. The Chaharas had left the exis-
ting countryside chiefs in charge, and these chiefs probably continued
in the new regime the traditions to which they had been accustomed
in the old. It is a fair assumption that—(a) Rai Pithora, Jai Chand,
Lakshman Sona and the other rulers would not have fallen like
nine pins if they had the support of the countryside chiefs, and
(b) that when the latter, in writing, gave an undertaking to pay the
revenue to the new government, it was with a clear mental reservation
that they would pay nothing unless compelled to do so at the point
of the sword. For the purpose of holding the countryside under a
military regime, the Turkish army was negligible in numbers; and
it could not make up for its lack of numbers by mobility alone. Also
there was no Muslim element to support it in the countryside.

This brings us to one of the deepest contradictions of the sixteenth
century—the contradiction between town and country. The towns,
on the whole, were well governed by the kotwals and their staff; and
the population—now terribly mixed, regardless of race, caste, creed
or custom, with the Chandela building his thatched house by the
side of the Turkish noble's stone palace—obeys the administration
and the law. Industries were improved and they also multiplied. The
maintenance of law and order being the main object, the city-
governments were generally autocratic. The city kotwal had to look
to everything and was responsible for everything; in practice his
power was only limited by his capacity. So long as he kept the city
in good order—and the test of good order was a well-fed population
that did not resort to rioting—his position was secure. It was the duty
of the kotwal not to enter politics and to accept the government
established at Delhi, and he generally did so. Even at storm-tossed
Delhi itself, the kotwalship of the city remained in the hands of one
family. The grandfather of the Malik Ulma Fakhruddin, the kotwal
of Delhi at the time of the Khilji revolution, had been appointed by
Shahabuddin or Aibek and his father had also held the same office.

Outside the cities, with their crumbling ramparts and their expand-
ing suburbs, the organized anarchy of the rural intermediaries reigned
supreme. These gentlemen had, of course, no conception of the world-
destiny of India or of Hinduism. Nor had they any design of com-
binng against the Turkish government of Delhi, for the chief object
of their hereditary hatred were some of the neighbouring Hindu
chiefs. They fought for things that were of immediate value to them-
selves and their high caste clansmen and followers—the non-payment
of taxes, the plunder of the trade routes, the sacking of the city
suburbs and the overpowering of their neighbours. The administration,
which had no local agency, was often reduced to the necessity of
collecting land revenue through the army, which the local chiefs did
not hesitate to fight. These incursions into the countryside by the army
were officially dubbed 'campaigns'. At other times, the government
officers inflicted hideous and unpardonable punishments on the
villagers, without making any distinction between the innocent and
the guilty, in the hope of enabling the government to operate through
a reign of terror. But such methods are ruinous to a stable, non-
revolutionary government, and the Hindu intermediaries retaliated by
wiping off the administration from extensive tracts of the country for
years together.

The new level of city-industry made trade and commerce exces-
scially profitable, and as the profits of the traders increased, the traders,
according to the Hegelian law of 'negation of negation', produced the
robber chiefs. These robber chiefs, drawn presumably from the ranks
of the Hindu intermediaries, built forts on the main-routes to plunder
the merchants or levy transit duties for themselves. We have plenty
of evidence to prove that a lot of people wandered about fearlessly
throughout the country—poor students in search of free lodging and
free tuition, Muslim mystics, qalandars and javali; Hindu jogis of
all types, workingmen in search of livelihood, beggars and pilgrims,
small peddlars and the like. They had, no quarrel with the robber
chiefs; and if they met a robber chief or his officer, they would prob-
ably ask for help and get it in the form they wanted—a square meal,
a night's lodging, some cash and a letter of recommendation for
similar hospitality at the next robber-castle. For the robber chiefs
were gentlemen of a sort—progressive, humane, revolutionary tem-
pered, God-fearing gentlemen, who hated the ways of kings and the
reactionary state; and because the law and the theology of the day
condemned them for exploiting the exploiters (including the appro-
piation of government money in transit), they spent in charity, in
the immediate relief of human distress, a larger proportion of their
income than the zamindars, government officers and businessmen
of India have ever done. It is significant that medieval Indian folklore,
while it showed scant sympathy with the plundered merchant, idolized
the robber chief, taking him as a symbol of that spiritual and moral
discontent against the existing social order which tore the souls of the oppressed.1

But faced with this phenomenon, the government could not sit idle. The first and most obvious plan was to compel merchants to travel in caravans, for which the government gave a guard while private enterprise provided the transport necessary. Such a procedure is all right for steppe-lands and desert-lands, where water is scarce and the cities and even villages are at great distances, and also for Haj pilgrims who travel at stated times. But in a populous country like India with continuity of arable land, people could not afford to wait for the weekly or bi-weekly caravans. Their business required them to travel at all times. The second plan was for the government to build its own forts all along the route to wage a war with the robber-forts. Such a policy is attributed to Balban, who garnished his forts with the Afghans, presumably on the principle of 'thief catch thief', or 'Greek meet Greek', or 'diamond cut diamond'. But really it was a confession of failure—of failure to establish law and order by extending the urban revolution to the countryside and organizing the authority of the administration throughout the country. Our medieval writers had certain tests for a medieval all-India administration and are never tired of applying them. Could an old woman with plenty of gold travel throughout the country unmolested? The village-headmen in the neighbourhood of the trade-routes attend to the safety of the travellers at night with lighted lamps? Was every piece of rope lost by a traveller found at the government's order? In case of theft or robbery was the administration strong enough to tie the headmen of the neighbouring villages neck to neck and thrash them till the culprit was produced? The praises of the court-historian of Balban, Minhaj-us-Shiraj Jurjani should not deceive us.

1. Perhaps one authenticated account of a thirteenth century robber would not be out of place. In the reign of Sultan Iltumish, a mystic from distant Tabriz, Shahib Jalaulluddin, was sitting before his house in Badaun when a Hindu curd-seller passed by with his culd-veil on his head. The Shahib looked at the culd-seller intently and the man trembled. Soon after he came to the Shahib, confessed his sins and asked to be converted to Islam. He was a robber by profession; culd-selling was only a subterfuge to discover who was in Badaun. Jalaulluddin gave the repentant robber the name of Shahib Ali. Thereafter Shahib Ali was one of the most respected citizens of Badaun. Not much of theology could be taught to Shahib Ali at his advanced age; he was never able, for instance, to pronounce the Arabic gift. But he was honest and God-fearing, and when Badaun's most distinguished son, Shahib Nizamuddin Akhlaq, was to be invested by the teacher with his daicit or turban, old Shahib Ali was considered to be the fittest man for presiding over the ceremony and holding one end of the cloth.
group of officers. The rest he ignored. He was neither afraid of meeting
death nor reluctant in inflicting it. If Shaikh Nasrul din’s statement,
based on what he had heard from Qazi Hamid Multani, is to be believed,
the sole object of Alauddin’s policy was ‘service to the people
of God’. He was unworthy, he said, but God had placed him
above his betters; and he could only prove himself worthy of God’s
favour by serving His people. Of all the schools that have filled this
earth with their chatter, Alauddin believed in one school only—the
school of experience. The concrete problems of life had to be solved
by the process of trial and error. There was no other way.

With reference to the rural problems of India, Alauddin laid down
one basic principle—‘The burden of the strong was not to be thrown
on the weak.’ This principle, in application, entailed two postulates.
With reference to arable land, every man had to pay according to
the amount of land he cultivated, biseya by biseya; and as to the
pasture, every peasant had to pay pasture-dues (charati) according to
the number of cattle he kept, different rates having been fixed for the
smaller and larger heads of cattle. Alauddin’s great revenue minister,
Sharaf Qal, with a host of experts and other staff, measured the whole
land and the Khali j army, the strongest India had seen since the days
of Samudragupta, made even a dream of revolt by the rural chiefs
and intermediaries impossible. The papers of village patacitri were
sent to Delhi, where they were closely scrutinized, and the money re-
ceived by the local treasury-branch was carefully compared with the
amount paid by every cultivator. Anything due from the govern-
ment agents concerned was ruthlessly exacted; it was not Alauddin’s
policy to overlook crimes. The muqaddams or local thakurs were not
liquidated. They were still required for many purposes, including the
maintenance of law and order and the working of the local judiciary.
But their perquisites were abolished and they were reduced to the
position of village-headmen. The government made its own arrange-
ments for the collection of land-revenue from the countryside. This
required a large staff, which was known by the general designation
of nauaisanda, writers or clerks. The progress of education during the
thirteenth century had apparently made it possible for Alauddin to
find sufficient persons with a knowledge of Persian and of the local
dialects for revenue work. The total number of these persons is not
given, but some estimate of their number is possible from the fact
that when Alauddin died, some eight to ten thousand of them were
in prison. It has to be remembered, however, that these people, new
to their work, committed more offences than is usual with govern-
ment servants and that Alauddin, unlike most heads of modern states, con-
considered it his duty not to connive at but to punish the offences of his officers. Maybe, some four hundred to six hundred thousand local government servants of all grades, including the paiks, were employed by the government for the Rural Revolution it had taken in hand.

But other supplementary changes were also necessary and had to be undertaken. The village-headmen were made responsible for the security of roads and had to perform this duty efficiently at the risk of their necks. The Hindu naiks of the country were organized into one corporation (yak jiht shudand), made to sign deeds of responsibility for each other and compelled to use their 100,000 or 200,000 beasts of burden for the regular supply of food-grain to the cities. Trade in ordinary cloths was left to private enterprise under government supervision, but trade in finer textiles was assigned to the Hindu merchants of Multan, who were given a government-subsidy for the purpose. Simultaneously, a tariff of prices for all things, including even the fee of dancing girls, was imposed by the Sultan at Delhi under his personal supervision. It may be safely assumed that other cities were asked to follow suit. Alaudin did not and could not reduce the price of commodities, as is generally assumed. The value of commodities depends upon their cost of production and it was impossible for Alaudin to reduce this cost; in fact, we find Alaudin taking it carefully into consideration, so that every person concerned in the production-process may get his proper wages. In substance, the great Khalji Emperor achieved two things—first, he relieved the low-caste cultivator from the oppression of the high-caste rural intermediary; this was a revolutionary step, novel and purely Indian. Secondly, he insured the safety of trade-routes and the regular exchange of commodities between town and country. This was a novelty for India. But though Alaudin’s historian, Ziyauddin Barani, was ignorant of it, the supply of food-grain to the towns at a proper price was one of the regular functions, and about the most important, of all Ajami governments. If a government failed to perform this function, the city-population would starve, revolt and overthrow it. In fact the Persian government’s responsibility for supplying grain to the city-bakers lasted till 1929, when the advent of lorries enabled it to transfer this responsibility to private enterprise.

Since both the cultivator and the intermediaries were Hindus, no religious or communal issue was involved. We get references to some tax-collections in the countryside who were Muslims. But the mass of the employees in the newly established local government were Hindus. Now if a Hindu is defined as a ‘non-Muslim Indian’ (which, it is submitted, would be a proper definition for the thirteenth century), then there was nothing communal about the policy of Alaudin Khalji. The Prophet of Islam knew nothing of such esteemable persons as zamindars, feudal barons, farmers of revenues and the like; and the Muslim Shari’at obliges the state to collect its taxes directly from the producer. But Alaudin was not appealing to the Shari’at and confesses that he knew nothing about it at the time. He was concerned exclusively with a patent, all-India injustice, the domination of the intermediary over the cultivator; and he liquidated the intermediaries as effectively as Chairman Mao Tse-Tung and the Communist Party have liquidated feudalism in China during the last three years. It is obvious that the cultivator gained what the intermediary lost. There was a greater incentive to production and an undeniable increase in prosperity throughout the land. But if by the term ‘Hindu’ we mean only the dominant upper class, then we may, at our choice, glory over the miseries of the intermediaries, like the communist Barani, or curse Alaudin for being a communalist because he struck at the upper-caste Hindus in favour of the Hindu cultivator. But one thing was clear after the tremendous Khalji adventure. India would never again become a land of caste-privileges it had been for some centuries past. Whatever shape the future may assume, Alaudin had assured one thing for all time. In all spheres of life, except marriage and personal laws, India would become what the Manusmrti so intensely hated—‘a confusion of castes’.

The urban and the rural revolutions of the thirteenth century cannot be properly visualized except in relation to world-history. Hitherto our modern historians, following the court-analysts of Delhi and the Rajput barons, have surveyed the Indian historical landscape entirely from the foot of the royal throne. This attitude is wrong and has to be changed. We have to look at history from the view-point of the masses, i.e. of the city-workers and the peasants. It is immaterial whether the governing class was Hindu or Muslim. History can only give it a good certificate to the extent that it served the people. To the ‘philosophy of the first look’, to use an expressive Hegelian term, it seems odd that a group of Turks should come into the country and almost effortlessly suppress the hereditary aristocracy of the land. But they could only do so because public opinion was with them—because to an extent, though only to an extent, in the pursuit of their personal careers, the selfishness of which no one should deny, they were also, consciously or subconsciously, subserving the public good.
V. THE TURKISH GOVERNING CLASS

Contradictions in Muslim Political Ideology

In the sphere of political philosophy early Islamic thought was involved in a contradiction which no one could resolve. Priests, politicians and kings, who sided either with the ‘thesis’ or the ‘antithesis’, cursed, fought and killed each other. But they were naturally unconscious of the contradiction.

For the first time in the long history of Islamic thought we will have to take a rational and scientific view of the problem. My opinions may seem novel, for they have never been presented before. Nevertheless they are scientific and correct and will be accepted by all scholars of Islamic history, who are in a position to survey the matter impartially and without a priori prejudices.

It is obvious that no one trying to establish a religion for all men and for all times will commit the error of tagging any administrative or political theory on to it; a political theory would limit the sphere of the religion itself to the time and place where it could apply. The Arabian Prophet made no such mistake. All attempts to present Islam as a system of administration are fraudulent enterprises calculated to deceive and to make a profit out of the ignorance of the multitude by misleading it on a colossal scale. But it has to be admitted that such attempts have been made, and on the whole quite successfully, in all Muslim countries and at all times. All religions, says Gibbon, are equally useful to the statesman. But in the Middle Ages Islam was more useful to the governing class than any other creed. It was exploited, but it limits.

Islam, like Christianity, prescribes no political system and the hadis of the Prophet are remarkably silent on the question. Nevertheless the Qur’an which claims to be “a guide and a cure for those who believe”, had to lay down the basic principles of the Muslim political-social order. These principles, as we have already seen, are—(a) government must be based on common discussion (wa umur hum shura batin-a hum), and the Prophet is directed by the Qur’an to consult the Mussalma in their affairs; (b) a conditional obedience to the rulers is prescribed; if the governors and the governed differ about any matter, appeal lies to Allah and His Prophet. It must be emphasized that, apart from these two principles, the Qur’an and the authenticated hadis are absolutely silent. No rules are prescribed for the election or the depositions of rulers or for the devolution of political authority or for the millions of problems that arise in the course of public administration. Of course we have records of what the Prophet did, for example in the sphere of military organization and of taxation; and the mullahs have kept on claiming through the centuries that all Muslim communities, regardless of their social structure, method of production and climatic and geographical conditions should live according to the Prophet’s sunnah or tradition. The Muslim mullah has never had the courage to say that the Prophet’s sunnah did not apply in these matters and that what the Prophet did, but refrained from prescribing for all times, is not religious binding. But in practice it had no alternative but to ignore the sunnah in these matters. Ajam, for example, could not be administered on the same principles as the revolutionary city-state of Medina.

Now in the context of world-history there can hardly be any difference of opinion on the question of the application of the two Quranic precepts. (a) It was possible to work according to the Quranic precept of government by common discussion in a city-state, where public opinion was highly developed, and where the element of slavery was so small that it could be ignored. Medina was such a city-state. The Greek city-states, where the majority was reduced to slavery or helotage, belonged to a different and morally less developed category. (b) Modern science, and the means of education and communications it has made possible, enable us to conduct the affairs of large territorial states according to the principle of government by discussion, or democracy as we prefer to call it. (c) But in the large territorial empires of the Middle Ages, which consisted of several linguistic and national groups, the two Quranic precepts were, unfortunately, not applicable, and people who wanted these mammoth empires to be governed like the Prophet’s city-state were merely crying for the moon. There was no end of cursing and killing and gnashing of teeth, and both parties condemned the other to hell-fire. But the thing was simply impossible. The ‘democrats’, if the term be allowed, blamed the ‘rulers’ of violating the Prophet’s tradition by ignoring the people and claimed the power of setting them aside; the rulers claimed, and with equal validity, that government by discussion or democracy would open the way to anarchy and destroy the unity of the mullah. And by that long process through which the people ultimately control their governors, the Muslim mullah showed its preference for a unity, which was attainable, to a democracy that was not only impossible but looked like a hideous dream.

The Prophet was a revolutionist. For him the great offence was not to overthrow the duly and legally constituted powers, and the ideology on which they rested, but to help in their preservation. If by
revolution is to be understood calling into question every existing institution and every existing idea with reference to man's highest moral law and the expansion of human rights, then history knows of no greater revolutionist than the Arabian Prophet. A revolutionary government, of course, must have its revolutionary legal basis, but this basis is nowhere laid down in the Quran. The basis of the Prophet's revolution is his claim to wahdi or divine inspiration, and the Quran assumes that for the revolutionary republic of Medina, Allah and His Prophet are the duly constituted authorities. Further, every revolutionist has to provide not only against counter-revolution, but also against other revolutions on wrong lines—against 'deviationism'. But so far as the Islamic Revolution was concerned, the problem of deviationism, leading to the War of Apostasy, arose in the time of the first caliph, Hazrat Abu Bakr. The Prophet was not troubled by it. His difficulties lay with a Medinese group of munaqiqs or hypocrites. But their sin was non-feasance rather than misfeasance. They were not prepared to make any sacrifices for the Faith or to go to war, and they said about the Muslim warriors, 'Had they remained with us at home, they would not have been killed.' They were also blamed for sympathizing with the Prophet's enemies and for being pagans at heart. But the inner thoughts of men are known to God alone. "We judge by externals", Shaikh Junaid of Baghdad has said. Consequently the crime of 'hypocrisy' or nifāq came to an end with the life of the Prophet, when Allah Himself was the accuser. No Mussalman after the Prophet's days can be charged with this crime.

The question naturally arises: "How did the Prophet visualize the future?" He was sure of the expansion of his creed. He was equally certain that it would not become universal. "And the majority of men," says the Quran, "will not become believers (mu'min) even if you desire." He was constantly changing the laws and institutions of Medina at the injunctions of Allah, at his own discretion and according to the advice of his counsellors. Bitterly hostile to him was the city-state of Mecca; the Bedouin tribes of the desert were hard to enlighten; most of the inhabited spots in Arabia were hostile to him to start with; and far-off there were the empires of the Persians and the Romans, the constitutions, laws and social organisations of which he did not approve. The Mussalman have a lot of fabricated hadîses in which the Prophet is made to take a gloomy view of the future: they even make him forecast and disapprove of the advent of monarchy! But perhaps the following authentic saving of the Prophet is the best expression of his attitude about a matter that must have been of deep concern to him: "I do not know whether the beginning of my religion will be better or its end." He was obviously thinking of Islam in terms of world-history. One thing, however, is certain. The Prophet laid down no binding injunctions for the conduct of the government or the state under circumstances which he could not possibly foresee, and left the whole matter to the secular reason of his community. He even refrained from appointing his successor, unambiguously and by name. There would be clashes of public opinion—deep, perhaps mortal, differences. But how else is one to arrive at the truth? The Prophet's conception of the world was intensely dynamic and he was not afraid of the working of public opinion. "The differences in my community are a blessing", he said.

The Pious Caliphs was based not on any Quranic injunction or even an unambiguous direction of the Prophet, but on the ijma-ı ummat or the consensus of public opinion. Consequently, for no opinion that he may hold about the Four Pious Caliphs can a Mussalman be considered to have gone out of the Islamic pale. But no ijma-ı ummat or general opinion seemed possible in the conflict of Hazrat Ali and Mu'awiyah, when nations opposed nations, leaders and parties changed their political affiliations overnight, adventurers appeared on every side claiming that they were the true representatives of the deeply perplexed and bewildered public, and there was a palpable danger of the recurrence of that anarchy from which the first Caliph had saved Islam after the Prophet's death. Public affairs could only be stabilized, as has already been pointed out, by the organization of a governing class, and this Mu'awiyah proceeded to do. But the governing class, in turn, could only be stabilized through monarchy—through a man who had supreme control and whose power would devolve according to some known law of succession. The Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates were really monarchies, and they only differed in three respects from the later monarchies of Ajam—(a) the occupants of the thrones were Quraishite Arabs; (b) the government could claim some vague continuity of traditions with the Pious Caliphate; (c) and Arabic was the official language. Now the Quran is aware of the existence of kings; it calls them malik, but it refers to them like some curious animals of foreign lands and of bygone times, quite extinct in Arabia. The living traditions of Arabia knew nothing of monarchy. Mu'awiyah, 'the Caesar of the Arabs', as the Caliph 'Umar called him, has been blamed by Muslim historians for establishing a hereditary monarchy and of organizing the noble Arab clans into a governing class. We are not here concerned with cursing or praising the great statesman. But the chief elements of the situation should not be overlooked. (a) For Medina to govern the whole empire as
the subject territory of a city-state in the same way as the oligarchs of Rome had governed the extensive territories of the Roman Republic was out of the question. Public opinion would not tolerate it, and the provinces had no intention of obeying any authority sending them orders from distant Medina. Hazrat Ali himself, consequently, moved his capital from Medina to Kufa in Mesopotamia. (b) It was not possible to govern an extensive empire, consisting of a score of nationalities, according to the popular and democratic traditions of the Prophet’s city-state. (c) There was an acute danger that in this conflict of interests, linguistic areas and national groups, the political unity of the Islamic world, which was necessary in that generation for the preservation of the creed itself, would completely vanish. Now Mu’awiyah suppressed all controversies and conflicts by organizing a Qurayshi monarchy and an aristocratic Arab governing class. From the view-point of Medinite democracy it seemed a setback. But fundamentally it was an advance. A large part of the empire was still pagan, and only the Arab aristocracy could shoulder the twofold burden of Islamicizing the subject people and their institutions and of pushing forward the frontiers of the empire. Of course the subject people were denied all political privileges. But again, was there an alternative? It is to the credit of the Arab aristocracy that it fulfilled its mission so effectively in three generations that the Muslim world could afford to overthrow it.

So monarchy and a governing class came into existence and continued for centuries; only in the present generation are the Muslim countries learning how to do without them. Now the Prophet’s Shar‘at does not know of either institution, though later legislators recognize them as facts. The Shar‘at, which does not recognize monarchy, has no law for the succession to the throne; the matter has to be regulated by custom and convention or decided by wars of succession. The Shar‘at also knows of no privileged class entitled to govern the rest of the Mussalman; moreover, treason is not a crime known to the Qoranic law. Nevertheless a governing class could not survive without punishing its opponents, Shar‘at or no Shar‘at. In the history of medieval Islam every governing class has punished its opponents with as much barbarity as was consistent with its own welfare and its reputation for some sort of justice; and it has, in its turn, been barbarously extinguished by new claimants to power. Whether we consider the Arab aristocracy of the Umayyad period or the Ghurian Turks in India, they maintained themselves by the same cruel methods and were extinguished in the same cruel fashion by those who knew how to govern better.

This brings us to an allied subject, medieval torture, for which the government, and not the Shar‘at, was wholly responsible. The Prophet prohibited both torture and trial by ordeal; he declared that confessions wrung by torture were inadmissible as evidence; and he prohibited putting any man to death, whatever his offence, except by hanging, decapitation or crucifixion.

The qazis adhered to the Prophet’s injunctions so far as lay in their power, but they were weak-kneed, submissive and made no protests. But the governing class flouted the Prophet’s injunctions openly and shamelessly; and as a result the art of torture received a high development during the Middle Ages. Consideration for the reader’s feelings rather than lack of information prevents me from describing its development in detail. But sufficient information is given in formal histories. The medieval jallad or torturer was a well-known figure and an specialist in the infliction of pain. But he was an individualist and tortured one man after another in a solo game. Our modern methods of wholesale destruction were quite beyond his ken; he was only a trained working-man following an hereditary profession and not a scientific expert in high-grade explosives and atomic energy.

The Turkish Governing Class

The Abbasid Revolution which overthrew the Umayyads in A.D. 750 had the support of the Persian people, and during the period of the Greater Abbasids (A.D. 754-851) political power was shared by the leading highly Arabized Persian families with the anti-Umayyad Arab leaders. The most important official family of the people, the Barakides, was of priestly Persian origin. But with the decline of the Abbasid caliphate towards the ninth century, a new governing class emerged, the Turkish slave-aristocracy, and it gradually established its hold over the larger part of the Muslim world.

The emergence of this new governing class has been described by my friend, Mr. S. A. Rashid: “A large number of kingdoms sprang up in the eastern and western dominions of the Abbasid caliphate, when it began to decay and disintegrate; and these kingdoms developed new political institutions, which had far-reaching effects on the social and economic life of the people. One of the most important of these was the institution of the Royal Slaves, which was a most effective social and military instrument for the maintenance of the authority of the rulers. The slaves were trained to assist the king in keeping order among the people they had subdued by force of
ars. This remarkable institution of making soldiers and administrators out of slaves was not peculiar to the Turkish empire-builders of ninth and tenth centuries but can be traced back to Greece and Rome.

"In the beginning of the ninth century, when decadence and degeneration had set in the Abbasid Empire, the Abbasid caliphs first maintained—and later on forfeited—their authority by purchasing Turkish slaves from the Asian steppes and training them at Baghdad for the calling of soldiers and administrators.

"The Arabs conquered the Turkish lands in the time of Walid (706-15). When the Abbasids succeeded the Umayyads, they came into closer contact with their Turkish subjects and Turkish neighbours. The Turks paid as a part of their poll-tax Turkish children, who were sold as slaves in Islamic lands. These Turkish slaves were very highly prized by the caliphs and the noblemen at the court because of the beauty of their women and the dignified deportment of their men. Strong in body, courageous, skilful in archery and horsemanship, indifferent to fear and fatigue, possessed of great endurance and steadfastness in battle, they soon caught the fancy of the degenerate descendants of Abbas and secured the foremost place in Islamic countries.

"The first caliph who employed the Turks as soldiers was Mansur (754-75), but in his time the Turkish corps was small and of no political importance. By the time of Amin (808-15), Arab predominance had been extinguished by the preponderance of the Persians at the court and in the camp. Mutammar (838-42), who succeeded Al-Mamun, was born of a Turkish mother; he feared and despised the Persians. He was the first caliph to employ a large number of Turks; so many, in fact, that according to one Arab writer 'Baghdad became too small for them'. He later on shifted his Turkish adherents to Samarra. Quarters were assigned there to the Turks according to their tribes and the location of their homes. They were divided into detachments with commanders over them. The caliph was exceedingly anxious that his Turks should maintain their original traits of character and their loyalty to the family of Abbas. He, therefore, purchased Turkish slave-girls and compelled his guards to marry only Turkish girls. The slave-girls were given fixed stipends and their names were entered in registers, so that no Turk could either abandon or divorce his wife; Turkish guards soon gained ascendancy in the court and the camp, and any party wishing to obtain power or influence had to win their favour and secure their services. The following story very well illustrates the power and the influence which the Turkish party exercised at the capital. The Caliph, Mutammar (866-69), once summoned the astrologers and asked them how long he would live and retain his caliphate. A wit who was present said, 'I know better than the astrologers.' Being asked to specify the period of the caliph rule, he replied, 'So long as the Turks please.' The caliphs became mere puppets in the hands of their erstwhile slaves, so that, according to Jurj Zaydan, 'Whereas at first the Turkish captains swore allegiance to the caliphs, presently the caliphs swore allegiance to them.' As their influence at the court increased, a larger numbers of Turks professed Islam and migrated towards the west; and in the year 350 A.H., 200,000 families of no fewer than five members each adopted Islam.

"The Abbasid institution of recruiting the official bureaucracy from amongst the Turkish slaves was adopted and elaborated by the Samanids. The latter were closer than the caliphs of Baghdad to the source from which the raw materials for a Turkish slave-bureaucracy was derived; at the same time they had a comparatively stronger incentive to train a pack of 'human watch-dogs' in order to protect their perilously exposed dominions from the wild kinsmen of their domesticated Turks. The Samanid Turkish slaves were put through a long and minutely graduated probation culminating in their appointment to responsible military or administrative offices. These slave-soldiers and slave-administrators founded new kingdoms or supplanted the dynasties in whose service they had been originally trained. The Samanid slave-system was the parent institution which the Ghurians copied and applied as 'an instrument of domination over an entire body-social of an alien civilization.'

"From the viewpoint of the monarchs of Ajam a slave-bureaucracy had definite legal, political and other advantages. According to the law of the Shari'a the slave could not marry without the permission of the master; the sons of a slave were in their turn slaves of the master; and, lastly, when a slave died he was inherited not by his sons but by his master. So far as it lay within the power of the monarch, these conditions were ruthlessly imposed on all the members of the slave-bureaucracy. It has to be added that in India the imposition of these conditions on government officers continued long after they had ceased to be recruited from the slave-market.
from His Throne and could also reascend, but they denied His omnipresence. Simultaneously, a Ghurian royal family, known as the Shamsabani dynasty, established its supremacy over the land. It was quite unlike other Muslim monarchies in two respects. If we follow the succession-settlements recorded by Minhaj-uss Siraj, we find that a principle akin to the joint-family system of the Hindus is in operation. The hereditary lands of the family are partitioned but the unity of the family is maintained. Probably as a result of this, the dynasty of Ghur was characterized by a warmth of family affections not found in any other ruling dynasty of Islam. It was quite compatible with this system that the family should have three chiefs or sultans—Ghiyasuddin, Shihabuddin, and their uncle, Malik Fakhruddin. Shihabuddin, though a mighty warrior and the builder of an empire, always considered himself subordinate to his elder brother, Ghiyasuddin, a far-sighted but indolent ruler. Finally when Ghiyasuddin died in A.D. 1202 Shihabuddin divided the ancestral lands between the heirs of his brother, the chief of whom were Nasiruddin Mahmud (son of Ghiyasuddin) and Ziyauddin (Ghiyasuddin’s son-in-law). The great Empire of Ghur, with Ghazni as its capital, Shihabuddin kept in his own hands. It was his peculiarity, his personal achievement, and not the hereditary property of the Shamsabani dynasty. Nasiruddin Mahmud, who neither then nor later showed any enterprise or ambition, quietly accommodated himself to the decision of his uncle, who seems to have had a very low opinion of him. Shihabuddin Ghur had no son and his only daughter had died in his life-time. To an old man, who comforted him on the lack of an heir, he said that he had a thousand Turkish slave-officers to inherit him. What arrangement Shihabuddin would have made for his succession, it is impossible to say, for his assassination came unexpectedly. The military march to Ghazni was changed into a funeral procession and, after an unseemly struggle, it was decided to take his coffin to Ghazni. But who was to inherit Shihabuddin? The hereditary lands of Ghur and the empire of Shihabuddin seemed to two different blocks of property. What claim could Nasiruddin Mahmud have to his uncle’s empire? The officers in charge were not prepared to give up to Nasiruddin Mahmud the extensive territories, which they had helped Shihabuddin to conquer and which they effectively controlled. So a compromise was arranged. Nasiruddin in return for presents gave letters of manumission (khatt-i azadi) to the three great slave-officers of his uncle—Qutbuddin Aibek, Nasiruddin Qubachi and Tajuddin Yalduz, and confined himself to his hereditary lands. These slave-officers, now legally set free, could assume the

The high mountains of Ghur in eastern Afghanistan, now known as Hazara, had in the centuries before Islam been brought within the expanding orbit of Mahayana Buddhism, when India had an expanding, and not a retreating, culture. The whole territory is strewn with Buddhist remains. The progress of Islam in the land was slow. When Sultan Mas'ud (a.d. 1090-40) invaded the region from Herat, most of the Turkish chief of this tract were still non-Muslims. In the generations that followed, Islam in the form of the Karimains sect penetrated into the land. Accounts of this sect have been given by Shahrastani and other writers of the period, it was, roughly speaking, a half-way house between Islam and popular Buddhism. It imagined that Allah was seated on the upper portion of the Asra (Throne) just as the Buddha is depicted as sitting on the lotus. The Karimains were materialists or maqasimilians; they affirmed that Allah could descend...
status of independent rulers by striking their own coins and having their names recited in the Friday Sermon or Khutba.

The territories of these three officers were consolidated into the empire of Delhi, 'extending from sea to sea', by Shamsuddin Ilutmish. But we are here only concerned with the principles involved. First, when Nasiruddin gave legal freedom to the three great slave-officers of his uncle and withdrew his succession-claims, all the other Ghurian slave-officers were automatically set free, for you cannot have a slave without a master. Secondly, these officers were not the slaves or even the employees of the sultan of Delhi, but his co-heirs. They had all been Shihabuddin's slaves; they had built up the empire by a joint enterprise under his leadership and he had appointed them to their several posts. Formerly the Khans had governed the land; Shihabuddin had put his officers in their place, and the officers were determined to remain at their jobs, insisting that the empire was a joint inheritance of all the slave-officers of Shihabuddin. It followed, thirdly, that the sultan of Delhi, who had to be one of them, could only attain to his office with their consent or the consent of their leading chiefs. The imperial office was elective, at least in form. In practice the leading chiefs, through force and intrigue, combined to instal or to dethrone the monarch. Very often their attempt was to put the crown into commission — to have a dummy king and to do everything in his name.

Fourthly, the system was monopolistic and anar- spheres. The system of imperial Ajam, i.e. the right of the sultan to appoint, promote and dismiss anyone he liked, subject to such regulations as may be framed, was not denied in principle; but in practice the exercise of this royal prerogative was impossible. Bakhshyar Khalji, having founded a principality of his own, was allowed to co-ordinate it with the Delhi Empire; but the later treatment of the Khalji kingdom of Lakhnauti by Ilutmish shows that a non-Turkish group of rulers in the land was not acceptable to the sultan and his advisers. Since the empire was expanding and new officers were needed, a certain amount of recruitment of Turkish slaves for official purposes had to be continued. Balban himself was such a slave. A very limited number of Turkish immigrants or refugees from the northern lands (like Amir Lachin, father of the poet Khusrav) were admitted into the official Turkish hierarchy and given the courtesy title of sultan or sultan's slave. But if the list of officers, given by Mihlar and Barani along with all incidental references in other authorities, are carefully examined, it will be found that all key-posts in the central as well as in the provincial and district administrations were the exclusive monopoly of the families of the Turkish slave-officers, who had helped Shihabuddin in founding the empire. There was no place for outsiders in this charmed circle of official hierarchy; they could only enter at the cost of their lives. The resentment in official circles was particularly bitter against the Indian Muslims, from whom, in particular, a very serious danger could be apprehended.

It was inevitable that the sultan should try to throw off this close control by organizing an official group of his own. Sultan Razia lost her throne and her life in making such an attempt. Nasiruddin Mahommed (1229) also made a weak-kneed attempt in the same direction. He dismissed Ghiyasuddin Balban from the post of viceroy or regent and placed the imperial affairs in the hands of an Indian officer, Balban. But next year the "Turkish" slave-officers, who had been sent to their districts, surrounded the sultan and told him that they intended to go for the Haj pilgrimage, which was the medieval way of saying that they intended to resort to force. The helpless sultan yielded to the threat: Balban, at that time the doyen of the Turkish bureaucracy, was reappointed to his former post, and Balban was put to death soon afterwards. Ghiyasuddin Balban when he came to the throne talked a lot of nonsense about noble birth. This phrase in his mouth could have only one meaning — that all appointments should be given to the sons of Turkish officers and that Indian converts of Islam should be sternly kept in their place.

The anarchy of the Ghurian slave-aristocracy was an inevitable result of their monopoly of power and office. Shamsuddin Ilutmish seems to have had no difficulty in controlling his officers but after his death in 1236 the flood-gates of trouble were opened. The concept of the empire, or a common all-India administration, had taken too deep a hold over the minds of men, or, to be more exact, it was a widely felt social, political and economic necessity. Under these circumstances the Turkish officers tried to make themselves substantially independent in their governorships or districts (qadis) or, in the alternative, to organize themselves into a clique that would dominate the Delhi court. But every one of them was as ambitious as his neighbour and declared, "I and none other"; so apart from the principle that the Turkish group should have a monopoly of power, no general agreement was possible. Under these conditions, officers' revolts became endemic, and except in some extreme cases they ended not in hangings for treason but in compromises based on promotions and transfers. When after forty-six years of official anarchy, Balban ascended the throne in 1260, bitterly determined to assert the royal authority, he found that nothing short
of the physical annihilation of the Turkish slave-aristocracy would ensure obsequience to the central authority, and so this reactionary but able and ruthless king to whom not only Barani but even Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya gave the certificate of being a good Mussalman was driven to use murder, poison and assassination for crushing his disloyal subordinates. A considerable part of the group had to be simply annihilated. Balkan's policy of killing the Ghurian aristocrats was continued by Nizamuddin during the reign of his successor, Kaigubad, and by 1290 the Turkish official body was in no position to resist the destiny in store for it.

Towards the end of the period of the Slave-kings (1206-1290), the title of Chihalgany or forty families was given to these Turkmen aristocrats. This number is purely formal. The highest officers of the state never reached that number. If, on the other hand, we include among the Ghurian slave-officers all persons who had key-posts in the army and the administration, then even the number of 1,000 suggested by Shihabuddin himself is too small. They had all commissioned posts in the army, i.e. posts from which promotion was possible, and all political key-posts, both central and local, from the Vakhsh or Regency of the empire to the charge of the districts and the kutchawships of the forts. But purely administrative posts, even if they were considered equivalent to army commands, and posts in the revenue and clerical departments, however high, were possible for others.

Contemporaries have naturally passed different judgments on this curious group that governed India for about a century, but it is not difficult to form a reasonable estimate. "It is useless to praise the valour of a Turk", says Gibbon, and the Turkish slave-aristocracy was never found wanting in the field of battle. The empire-building activity of the first generation is really remarkable. Coming from a Central Asian region of which few of them had the faintest recollection and to which none of them hoped or wished to return, and with no childhood memories to sweeten their lives except what they remembered of the families of the slave-merchants who had brought them up, they were the citizens of all lands and any land. They quickly and finally accommodated themselves to the conditions of this country and even constructed and endowed their mausoleums and their graveyards during their lifetime at carefully chosen spots. But life is short and they were bent on enjoying both war and peace. Few of them were book worms, but all of them were well educated. They spoke Turkish, but they were also at home in Persian, which had been their medium of instruction. They were patrons and pro-
tectors of the culture of the day. Whatever we may think of their mode of acquiring their wealth, they spent it with a generous hand, and were not seldom in debt to the Hindu bankers (sadhus) of Delhi. They drank profusely; they prayed and fasted with punctiliousness; they patronized mullahs and dancing-girls with the same indifferent generosity, the latter for this world and the former for the next; but the mullahs, as many of them found to their cost, were not allowed to sit in judgment on their private lives. Every variety of art in the new land found in them a body of munificent benefactors—astrology, mild varieties of magic such as ramal (geomancy), mural paintings, which have unfortunately quite perished, hunting of every kind, architecture, education and scholarship. With no calculations for distant aims, they always worked for the relief of immediate and visible distress without regard to caste or creed, and, subject to the traditions of the day and the interests of their class privileges, they were fanatics for peace, order and, above all, for justice. To all who were privileged to associate with them, whether Turkish or non-Turkish, to their innumerable hangers-on, servants, dancing girls, musicians, to casual visitors, merchants and travellers from distant lands, and above all to the associates of their receptions or mahlis-i-i cish, they were wonderfully fine fellows, polite, cordial and humorous, with an urbanity of manners borrowed from Persia and correct to the last item of etiquette and good form.

But there was another aspect of this Turko-Indian slave-aristocracy which the average Indian could not possibly forget. Short in stature but with a frame of steel that could stand both the strain of war and the orgies of drunkenness, with a red face, red or flaxen hair, a moustache that refused to grow and a pointed beard of limited dimensions, the Central Asian Turk was an odd, in fact a hideous, figure on the Indian landscape, where people have throughout the ages preferred mild and retiring characters. To the people at large the Turkish slave-officer appeared presumptuous, self-assertive, brutish and tyrannical; he struck hard at anybody that came across his path, whether in the public street or when out hunting. The punishment he sometimes meted out to his servants and others in his wrath struck terror throughout the country. A great and impassable chasm divided the governors from the governed. In the social gatherings of the Indian Mussalmans, the presence of the governing Turks was not welcomed, and, when necessary, was borne with patience and resentment. The Ghurian Turks had built a state-machine to which at the time there was no practical alternative, and people will always have to submit, in such way as they can, to the
insolence of those who through their possession of power control the livelihood of men. But the instinct of the average Indian Muslim was to keep out of the path of these Turks, and not to enter their service except as a last necessity. No one wept at the terrible fate that ultimately overtook this governing group after it had fulfilled its function. The governing group, on its part, had no illusions about its position. It enjoyed power but not popularity, prestige but not respect. And so when it planned its graveyards quite against the general usage of the Mussalmans, it took care to fortify them properly with a very thick stone-wall and commanding buttresses. The Archaeological Department has erroneously put down these buttressed graveyards as 'wall-type mosques'. They are the memorials of one of the most unpopular and most efficient regimes that India has seen. Several such graveyards can be seen on the road from the Qutb Minar to Tughlaqabad.

By the time of Khaqan's accession, it was clear to all that the personal ambitions of the Turkish slave-bureaucracy and its complete lack of loyalty to the sultan and the central authority were utterly incompatible with the continuance of the Delhi administration. Either the one or the other had to perish. Balban, in his attempt to establish the central authority, as we have seen, had broken the backbone of the body to which he belonged, and which presumably he wanted to preserve in power. Nasr-ud-din is credited with killing a fair number by his sly and underhand methods. Jalaluddin Khajji, the old and non-revolutionary leader of a real revolution, temporized with the Turkish officers in spite of one big rebellion and several conspiracies. Here, as elsewhere, it was left to Alauddin Khajji to complete the revolution. While marching on Delhi, he won over the Turkish officers from the side of Jalaluddin's family by substantial presents of gold. But when his power was firmly established and he needed them no longer, he ordered Nusrat Khan to see to their complete liquidation. They were arrested, Barani tells us, and put to death or exiled to distant forts; their properties, amounting to over a crore, were confiscated and brought to the public treasury; their families and followers were overthrown. Only three officers of the old regime were forgiven. Barani says this was due to Alauddin's appreciation of their loyalty to Jalaluddin's salt. But one of these officers was a Khajji; another bore the Hindu surname of Rana; and the third was probably an Indian Mussalman of indifferent origin.

It was necessary to clear the field for the working of the new or higher imperial system — a system in which the bureaucracy would be the creation of the central government or the state to execute the policy laid down by the sultan after consulting his Majlis or Advisory Council. Hereafter, except during the two Afghan monarchies, it was not possible for a government officer to claim that he was not a servant of the government but its partner. All officers — whether khans, maliks and amirs of the Delhi sultanate or the mansabdars of the Mughal empire — were creations of the imperial power. Without this prior revolution in the administrative machine itself, Alauddin's rural revolution would have been impossible.

(This Introduction was written in May 1892 for the revised edition of Elliot and Dowson's History of India, Vol. II, Cosmopolitan Publishers, Aligarh. Though written nearly two decades after the preceding article, it is, in fact, a continuation of the same theme—Exorax.)