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CHAPTER-II: CONVERSIONS TO ISLAM IN EARLY PHASE OF  
ISLAMIC POLITICAL POWER IN SOUTH INDIA

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We can, however, conceive of the Muslim community in the early medieval India mainly in terms of its historical background and religious settings. But for a few immigrants in the shape of foreign Muslim officers and soldiers, the bulk of Muslims were converts from the indigenous Hindu population. The process of their conversion in these early years as affirmed by contemporary chroniclers like Biladuri, Utbi, Baihaqi and even Barani was quick and hurried. The invaders happened to be in a city or a religion, and in the midst of war, those who could not effect their escape and were enslaved, were given the choice between Islam and death; the choice was exceedingly limited; it was hardly a choice. Those who chose to be converted were taught to recite the Kalima and to say the prescribed prayers.<sup>1</sup>

After the passing of a few generations, Indian Muslims would have forgotten the circumstances of their conversion, and developed a sense of oneness among themselves, arising from a feeling of 'belonging' to one faith. Culturally they were becoming self-contained. They felt pride in Mecca and Medina and Hajj.<sup>2</sup>

The majority are of Hindu descent, resulting sometimes from forcible conversions. During certain periods such conversions were made on a considerable scale, but in general conversion was a

sporadic process resorted to in times such as the capture of a city and the looting of towns in the first flush of victory. Taken as a whole, Indian history has been remarkable for the clemency extended to vanquished in war and for the regard shown to women and children. Among the many exceptions that prove the general rule, Timur's execution of 1,00,000 Hindu captives in a moment of panic before Delhi in 1398 A.D. may be matched by the record of raiding Marathas in the eighteenth century and of the brigand Pindaris in the early years of the nineteenth century. Owing to the ceremonial peculiarities of Hinduism, conversion to Islam was curiously easy. Force a Brahman to eat beef, or even to touch it, and he felt himself to be for ever cut off from his kind. The profession of Islam was then the only, and no means intolerable, alternative in joining the ranks of the out-castes.<sup>3</sup>

The majority of conversions were of two kinds - individual among the upper class of Hindu, and on a mass scale among the lower. Many individuals among the upper classes have embraced Islam through the centuries, and some old established Muslim families certain their Hindu names in pride of their Brahmin descent. Some changed their faith from conviction and others as a matter of policy. A long list can be made of high Muslim ministers who were Hindu converts. Office was often worth a mosque, as was once worth a mass. But the bulk supply, as it were, came from two main sources. All over India specially where the Muslims were firmly established in power or in considerable numbers this

creed attracted the Hindu out-caste. Its promise of brotherhood, its simple and concrete demands, its comparatively few taboos, opened up a new world to any outcaste, who could see beyond the mud walls of village. It is perhaps the rural isolation of India as a whole, together with the absence of effective Muslim power in large areas, which has prevented the absorption by Islam of the whole outcaste community.<sup>4</sup>

There is one more factor that of peaceful penetration along the West coast of India. Arab traders had their settlements after the discovery of the working of the Monsoons in the first century and in due course they became Muslims. These settlements multiplied by inter-marriage and became indigenous Muslim communities in a predominantly Hindu community.<sup>5</sup> For example, Muslim colonies were established all along the coast of Persia and India, and Muslim voyagers began to venture as far as the coast of China. During this period, therefore, the Arab Muslim colonies which were already there on the coast of India must have swelled both by the increase in the number of Arab immigrants and by local converts. At this time the Arab and Persian sailors must have, no doubt, arrived on their foreign commerce together, this also resulting the Persian influence in the coastal Indo-Muslim colonies.<sup>6</sup>

History has recorded that from ancient times settlements have been formed in various parts of the world by shipwrecked crew. On the other hand, there have been cases also where traders

have settled in various parts of the world either for purposes of trade and contracted marriages or have settled in the land of their adoption and married local women.

The nature of the voyages in early times could not but have encouraged the Arab mariners to have marital connections with Indian women. The boats of the Arab used to come to Malabar and other coastal areas of India sometimes in July or August and after about four months of business returned in December or January. In those days the voyage used to take about thirty or forty days.<sup>7</sup> So, even if the Arab sailors and merchants had any settled home life in Arabia, they were away from their homes for the greater part of the year. Thus, while they were in India for about four months in a year, they must have contracted some sort of marital unions, temporary or permanent, with the Indian women, for there is no evidence to show that they brought along with them their own womanfolk. At least in Malabar it was extremely easy for the Arabs to have such unions with the local women, due to the peculiar nature of the social organization of both the early Arabs and the people of Malbar.<sup>8</sup>

#### Cases of Large-scale Conversion to Islam in South India

One is naturally led to enquire what are the causes for the rapid increase of Muhammadans in India, besides the normal increase in population, which added so much to their number. The answer is to be found in the social conditions among Hindus. The

insult and contempt heaped upon the lower castes of Hindus by their co-religionists and the impossible obstacles placed in the way of any number of these castes desiring to better his condition, show in striking contrast the benefits of a religious system which has no outcastes, and given free scope for indulgence to ambition. In Bengal, for example, the weavers of cotton who were looked upon as vile by their Hindū-co-religionists, embraced Islam in large numbers to escape from the low position to which they were otherwise degraded.<sup>9</sup>

When a Muslim enters a place in this country in which there is absolutely no house of Musalmans, the heathens cook his food for him, place it for him on the banana leaves and pour the soup on it, what remains over it is eaten by the dogs and birds. In all the resting places along this road there are houses of the Muslims with whom the Muslim travellers lodge; from them they buy everything which they needed. These also cook the food for the Muslim travellers. If it were not for them no Muslim could have travelled in this country.<sup>10</sup>

Conversion to Islam did not change their social status. They were looked down upon in brutal contempt by the Muslim elite. Zaiiauddin Barani emphasised that low-born Muslims should be kept away from public life and must not be instructed in the alphabet and numbers. They were characterised as brutes, savages, criminals and so forth. The ruling class represented a fraction

of the Muslim population, and a majority of them like their Hindu brothers and sisters, suffered and cried under the heavy weight of feudalism.<sup>11</sup>

The escape that Islam offers to Hindus from the oppression of the higher castes was strikingly illustrated in Tinnevely at the close of the nineteenth century. A very low caste, the Shanars had become prosperous and many of them had built fine houses. They asserted that they had the right to worship in temples, from which they had hitherto been excluded. A riot ensued in the course of which the Shanars suffered badly at the hands of Hindus of a higher caste and they took refuge within the pale of Islam. Six hundred Shanars in one village became Muslims in one day, and their number was quickly followed in other places.<sup>12</sup>

One reason which made a fusion of Hindu and Muslim outlooks not only easy, but in a sense inevitable, was the fact that large masses of the native people entered the fold of the new faith. History tells us that there was no large scale colonisation by the Muslims. It was a case of a infiltration of small groups who came in successive waves. In some cases, those who were conquered had the faith and outlook to their conquerors imposed upon them. In many cases, there was no question of any imposition. There was a willing acceptance of the new faith by the large numbers on whom the existing social order pressed heavily. It also attracted

those who had developed a sense of dissatisfaction with the prevailing religion of the country. It was, therefore, not only the oppressed and unprivileged but a section of the intelligentsia who were drawn by the simplicity and vigour of the new faith. There was no doubt that many were influenced by the worldly advantages offered by the new faith. Equally strong must have been its appeal to those whose innate sense of justice and human dignity rebelled against the rigidities of caste. The Muslim saints and Faqirs by their example and precept must have also attracted large numbers to the new religion.<sup>13</sup>

#### Conversions to Islam in South India

South India also was the scene of the successful labours of Muslim missionaries. From very early times Arab traders had visited the towns on the West coast; in the tenth century the Arabs were settled in large numbers in the towns of the Konkan, having intermarried with the women of the country and living under their own laws and religion under the Muhammadan dynasties of the Bahamanis (1347-1490) and Bijapur (1489-1686) kings, afresh impulse was given to Arab immigration, and with the trader and soldier of fortune came the missionaries seeking to make spiritual conquests in the cases of Islam to win over the unbelieving people of their country by their preaching and example, for, of forcible conversion, we have no record under the early Deccan dynasties whose rule was characterised by a



striking toleration.<sup>14</sup>

Some times the missionary was a healer as well as a preacher, trust in his power to cure doing much to foster a belief in his creed. At the same time much of their success was due to their influence with the neighbouring Musalman rulers.<sup>15</sup> The majority of the Muslims of Nasik are local converts. Hindu converts commonly took the class name of their patrons or converters. Hence their name is not a correct index to prove their nationality. There are descendants of <sup>i</sup>sants who came to the Deccan from Persia and they style themselves as Syeds. For example, the Syeds of Nasik claim descent from Husain, the younger son of Ali, through their forefather Khwaja Khunmir Husaini who came from Persia about the end of the ninth century A.H. and settled at Gulbarga then one of the chief seats of Muslim power. Under Muslim rule, on account of their knowledge of Muhammadan law and because of the piety of their lives, his descendants were chosen Kazis of several towns and cities.<sup>16</sup>

But the case is somewhat different in the case of the Muslim population of the Ratnagiri District. It is stated in the Bombay Gazetteer as follows: "A foreign element probably existed before the time of the prophet Muhammad (570-632) (A trace of the early Arab sailors is found in Jazira or the Island, the latter part of the name Helizeigara, apparently applied by ptolemy and Periplus to the town and island of Malvan or Melundi)

and in the spread of the Musalman power, between the seventh and tenth centuries, as sailors, merchants and soldiers of fortune, Arabs came to the West coast of India in great numbers.<sup>17</sup> Many high Ratnagiri families though at present following different professions, are distinguished by Arabic Surnames, e.g., Kazi = Judge, Fakih = lawyer; Muallam or Mulla = Professor (Mulla ordinarily means a man who follows the profession of teaching the Koran to children, reading it and performing petty religious ceremonies for others,<sup>18</sup> Mukari = elegy singer; and Hafiz = Kuran reciter.

From the accounts of Sulaiman, the earliest Arab traveller, it would seem that about the middle of the ninth century, the Balharas who ruled the Konkan were very friendly with the Arabs. Among all the kings there was no one so partial to the Arabs as the Balhara and his subjects followed his example. Early in the tenth century, Arabs are mentioned as settled in large numbers in the Konkan towns, married to the women of the country, and living under their own laws and religion. During the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the lands of the Ratnagiri area formed part of the possessions of the Bahamani and Bijapur kings, a fresh impulse was given to immigration, both from the increased importance of Dabhol and other places of trade, and from the demand of Arab and Persian soldiers. Even under the Marattas the services of Arab were still in demand.<sup>19</sup> No record

has been traced of any attempt to force Islam on the people of the district, and from the tolerant character of the Bijapur kings.<sup>20</sup>

A good number of Muslims of the Deccan claim that their ancestors had come to India from Arabia and Persia as soldiers, traders and sailors. The Muslims of the Konkan coast are known as Kufis and their ancestors seem to have come to India from the Euphrates valley, and to belong to the same wave of Arab settlers who in Gujarat are known as Naitas, and in Kanara as Navayats. The traditions of the people and the accounts of many Muslim historians agree that the bulk of these fled to India from the Euphrates valley about the year 700 (82 A.H.) to escape massacre at the hands of the fierce Governor Hajjas bin Yusuf.

One of the Arab preachers in the Deccan, Pir Mahabir Khandayat, came as a missionary as early as A.D. 1304, and among the cultivating classes of Bijapur are to be found descendants of the Jains who were converted by him.<sup>21</sup>

Mr Logn writes (Manual of Malbar) has had a marked effect in freeing the slave caste in Malabar from their former burthens. By conversion a Cheruman obtains a distinct rise in the social scale, and, if he is in consequence bullied or beaten, the influence of the whole Muhammadan community comes to his aid." The same applies to the Nayadis, of whom some have escaped from their degraded position by conversion to the Islam. In the scale

of pollution, the Nayadi holds the lowest place, and consequently labours under the greatest disadvantage, which is removed with his change of religion.<sup>22</sup>

It is said that Cheraman Perumal, the last emperor of Kerala, dreamt of a miracle performed by the prophet in Arabia, which produced such a great impression on his mind, that shortly afterwards, meeting by chance a group of Muhammadan pilgrims proceeding from Arabia to Adam's peak in Ceylon, he was so fully convinced of the truth of the religion of Islam that he became a Muhammadan. Subsequently, it appears, he divided his kingdom among his kinsmen; proceeded to Arabia; met the prophet; and before he could return to his native land to spread the faith, he fell ill and died. Fearing the approach of death, so the story runs, he took care to give letters of introduction to a party of Arabs recommending them to the favour of the kings of Malabar with a word of advice to the Rajahs to give them all encouragement to spread Islam in the land. On their arrival at Craganore in the Indian state of Cochin, they were received hospitably by the local Rajah who gave them lands to build mosques and thus, it would appear he built a number of mosques from Quilon in the South to Mangalore in the North and spread Muhammadanism in the country. According to this version, the religion of the prophet was introduced into Malabar sometime about the first half of the 19th century A.D.<sup>23</sup>

Modern historical research, however, has thrown doubts on the truth of this tradition, which, it may be remarked here, is widely believed to this day by the people of the country. The difficulty is to identify who this Cheraman Perumal was and when he became a Muhammadan. There are also traditions to the effect that a Cheraman Perumal became Buddhist and another that he turned a Christian. And, besides, Sulaiman, an Arab merchant who visited Malabar about the middle of the 9th century A.D. remarked that he is not aware of any Muhamman living in the country at the time. Again, it is curious to observe that none of the early travellers to Malabar (of whom there have been a good number, some of them devoted Muhammadans) have mentioned about the story of the conversion to Muhammadanism of the inevitable Cheraman Perumal.<sup>24</sup> Be this as it may, there can be no doubt, considering the great popularity of the legend that some august personage of Malabar, an Emperor or a Zamorian, did embrace Muhammadanism sometime during the early middle Ages and this event marked, as it were, a turning point in the political history of Malabar.

Traditions and legends apart, this much is certain that from the earliest times, there has been commercial relation between Malabar and the Far East on the one hand, and with Arabia, Egypt and the countries in Europe on the other. Long before Arabia became Muhammadan, the Arab had planted colonies all along the Western seaboard of India and especially on the Malabar

coast, giving rise to a mixed population", the progenitors of the Moplahs after the event of the prophet in Arabia, Muhammadanism spread to Malabar as well and the fact that there was already an appreciable body of the non-Muslim Moplahs in Malabar, facilitated, not a little, the introduction of Islam into the country, probably, about the latter part of the ninth century A.D.<sup>25</sup>

John Briggs mentions as follows:

Mahomedans in Malabar are mostly of the Shafay (Mahomedans adopting the doctrines of Aboo Abdoolla, surnamed Shafay, who lived in the eighth century of the Christian era) persuasion, I conclude that Mullik, the son of Hubbeeb, was also of the same faith. From this period, the Mahomedans extended their religion and their influence in Malabar; and many of the princes and inhabitants became converts to the true faith, gave over the management of some of the sea-ports to the stranger, whom they called Nowayits (literally, the New Race). The Rajas of the ports of Goa, Dabul and Chaul were the first who gave them this appellation, and encouraged emigration from Arabia; and though their elevation to public office gave umbrage to the Christians and Jews, who became their determined enemies, yet, as the countries of Deccan and Gujarat were gradually brought under Mahomedan subjection, their enemies were unable to do these Arabian settlers any material injury, until the tenth century

of the Hijra, when in the decline of the Mahomedan empire of Delhi and Portuguese invaded India.<sup>26</sup>

In Maharashtra about the close of the fourteenth century a celebrated saint of Gulbarga, Sayyaid Mahammad Gisudaraz converted a number of Hindus of the Poona District.<sup>27</sup>

In Poona, there are two places known as Senior Saikh Salla and Junior Saikhsalla. From those, the Dargah of senior Saikhsalla is near Kanade Vada (House) on the bank of river in Shaniwar Peth. First there was a temple of God Shiva known as Narayanishwar. That temple was destroyed and then Dargah was built over the site. The owner of this Dargah, Mujawar and Pirjade were the descendants of Sham Bhat Rajarshi who was Brahmin. This Brahmin became the disciple of Saikhsalla Auliya and became Muslim. Shaikhsalla Auliya appointed him as the authority after the death of Auliya. Sham Bhat told that "I am converted to Islam so I must get the religious authority. And so Auliya tried and gave the rights of Kazi in Poona to Sham Bhat. His descendants are still found in Poona."<sup>28</sup>

### Muslim Communities in South India

I) Bohora: The Bohoras or Boras are Musalman converts from the Bombay side. In Madras they have their own high priest and their own mosque (in Georgetown). They considered themselves as a superior class, and if a member

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enters their mosque, they clean the spot occupied by him during his prayers. They take part in certain Hindu festivals, e.g., Dipavali or illumination at which crackers are let off.<sup>29</sup>

II) Dakni: Dakni or Deccani is defined in the Madras Census Report, 1901 as 'a territorial name meaning a Musalman of the Deccan, also a name loosely applied to converts to Islam. In the Tanjore district, Muhammadans who speak Hindustani, and claim to be pure Muhammadan descent, are called Dakni or Dakanis. In other Tamil districts they are called Patanigal, to distinguish them from Labbais and Marakkayars.<sup>30</sup>

III) Labbai: The Labbais are summed up in the Madras Census Report, 1901, as being "a Musalman caste of partly Tamil origin, the members of which are traders and betel vine (piper Betel) growers. They seem to be distinct from the Marakkayars, as they do not intermarriage with them, and their Tamil language contains a much smaller admixture of Arabic than that used by the Marakkayar. In the Tanjore district, the Labbais are largely betel vine cultivators, and are called Kodikkalkaran (betel vine people). In the Census Report, 1881, the Labbais are said to be "found chiefly in Tanjore and Madura". They are the Mappilas of the Coromandel coast, that is to say, converted Dravidians, or Hindus, with a slight admixture of Arab blood. They are thrifty, industrious and enterprising, plucky mariners, and expert traders.<sup>31</sup>



As regards their origin, Colonel Wilks, the historian of Mysore, writes as follows (in Historical Sketches of the Southern India, Mysore, 1810-17) "About the end of the first century of the Hejirah, or the early part of the eighth century A.D., Hijaj Ben Gusaff, Governor of Iraq, a monster abhorred for his cruelties even Musalmans drove some persons of the House of Hashem to the desperate resolution of abandoning for ever their native country. Some of them landed on that part of the Western Coast of India called the Concan, the others to the eastward of Cape Comorian. The descendants of the former are Navaiyats, of the latter the Labbai, a name probably given to them by the natives from that Arabic particle (a modification of Labbick).<sup>32</sup>

Another account says that they are the descendants of the Arabs, who, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, came to India for trade. These Arabs were persecuted by the Mughals, and they then returned to their country, leaving behind their children of Indian women.<sup>33</sup>

In Mysore Census Report 1891-1901 there is a mention as follows. The Labbais who were settled in the Mysore province, were an enterprising class of traders, settled in nearly all the large towns. They are vendors of hardware and general merchants, collectors of hides and large traders in coffee produce and generally take up any kind of lucrative business.<sup>34</sup>

IV) The Moplahs or Mappillas: In the West coast of the Madras presidency, the word 'Moplah' is used to denote either the Muhammadans, peculiar to Malabar, or the Syrian Christians, or the Jews, who are known as Jonaka, Nasrani and Juda Moplahs, respectively. In Malabar and South Canara, however, it is used to designate the Muhammadans only.

The derivation of the word 'Moplah' is doubtful. Various theories have been advanced, and leaving aside all those that they are at the best mere guesses, we may put down the following:

- (i) Ma, Mother, and Pilla, a child, i.e., mother's child,
  - (ii) Mappilla, a son-in-law; and
  - (iii) Maha, great and pilla, a honorific title used as among the Nayars of the Indian State of Travancore.
- This seems to be the most reasonable one.<sup>35</sup>

The Moplahs are spread over a large area from the Cape Comorin to Mangalore in the North, but it is in Malabar that they abound. They form 30 per cent of the population in the District and about one-third of the total Muhammadan population of the Presidency, and they are to be found most all along the coast and in the interior of the Taluqs of Ernad and Valluvand.<sup>36</sup>

The Mappillas or Moplahs, are defined in the Census Report, 1871, as the hybrid Mohomedan race of the Western coast, whose numbers are constantly being added to by conversion of the

slave castes of Malabar. In 1881, the Census Superintendent wrote that "among some of them there may be a strain of Arab blood from some early generation, but the mothers throughout have been Dravidian and the class has been maintained in number by wholesale adult conversion."<sup>37</sup>

Concerning the origin of the Mappillas, Mr Lewis Moore states (in Malabar Law and Custom, 3rd Ed. 1905) that "Originally the descendants of Arab traders by women of the country, they now form a powerful community. There appears to have been a large influx of Arab settlers into Malabar in the ninth century A.D. and the numbers have been constantly increasing by proselytism. The Mappillas came prominently forward at the time of the Portuguese invasion at the end of the fifteenth century A.D. "The Muhammadan Arabs", Dr. Burnell writes (in Element of South Indian Palaeography) "appear to have settled first in Malabar about the beginning of the ninth century; there were heathen Arabs there long before that in consequence of the immense trade conducted by the Sabeans with India."<sup>38</sup>

V) Marakkayar: The Marakkayars are described in the Madras Census Report 1901, as a Tamil-speaking Musalman tribe of mixed Hindu and Musalman origin, the people of which are usually traders. They seem to be distinct from the Labbais in several respects, but the statistics of the two have apparently been confused, as the numbers of the Marakkayars are smaller than

they should be."<sup>39</sup> Concerning the Marakkayars of the South Arcot district, Mr Francis writes (Gazetteer of the South Arcot District) as follows: "The Marakkayars are largely big traders with other countries such as Ceylon and the traits settlements, and own most of the native coasting craft. They are particularly numerous in Porto Novo. The word Marakkayar is usually derived from the Arabic Markab, a boat. The story goes that, when the first immigrants of this class (who like the Labbais, were driven from their own country by persecutions) landed on the Indian shore, they were naturally asked who they were, and whence they came. In answer they pointed to their boats, and pronounced the word Markab, and they became in consequence known to the Hindus as Marakkayars or the people of Markab."<sup>40</sup>

VI) Navayat: The community was generated by Arab seafarers consorting with the local Indian women. There are also other Muslim communities on the coast of India such as the Moplahs of Malabar and the Konkani Muslims of the Konkan coast with similar Indo-Arab origins. All these communities had occupational contacts with one another in the past

The Arab ancestors of the Navayats were mostly sailors and traders who visited their families only occasionally or periodically with the result that the community was nurtured almost entirely by the native women.<sup>41</sup>

The Navayats or Navayets are summed up in the Madras Census Report, 1901, as - "a Musalman tribe, which appears to have originally settled at Bhatkal in North Canara, and is known on the West coast as Bhatkali. The <sup>e</sup>drivation of the name is much disputed. There are five sub-divisions of the tribe, namely, Kureshi, Mehkeri, Chida, Cheas and Mohagir. It takes a high place among Musalmans, and does not intermarry with the other tribes.

Of the Nevayets, the following account, based on the Saadul-Nama, and conversations with members of the community, is given by Colonel Wilks (in Historical Sketches of South India, 1810).

"Nevayet is generally supposed to be a corruption of the Hindustanee and Mahratta terms for new-comer. About the end of the first century of the Hejira, or the early part of the eighth century of the Christian era, Hejaj Bin Yusuf Governor of Iraq, on the part of the Khalif Abd-al Melik-bin Merwan, a monster abhorred for his cruelties even among Musalmans, drove some respectable and opulent persons of the house of Hashem to the desperate resolution of abandoning for ever their native country. Aided by the good officers of the inhabitants of Kufa, a town of celebrity in those days, situated near the tomb of Ali, West of the Euphrates, they departed with their families, dependents and effects and embarked on ships prepared for their reception

in the Persian Gulf. Some of these landed on that part of the Western coast of India called the Concan; the others to the eastwards of Cape Comorin; the descendants of the former are the Nevayets; of the latter the Lubbe. The Lubbe presented to one common origin with the Nevayets, and attributed their black complexions to intermarriage with the natives; but the Nevayets affirm that the Lubbe are the descendants of their domestic slaves; and there is certainly in the physiognomy of this very numerous class, and in their stature and form, a strong resemblance to the natives of Abyssinia.<sup>42</sup>

Victor S. D'Souza mentions that the community of the Navayets of Kanara has been traced back to the Muhammadan community observed by Ibn Battuta at Honnavar in 1342 A.D. But the earliest known reference to Navayats is found in an inscription of the 11th century A.D. The inscription records the grant of the village Laghu Morambika (the present Morambi in Ilhas, Goa) made by the Kadamba King Jayakesi I of Goa to a person called Chhadama belonging to an Arab family. The name of Chhadama's father is given as Aliyama and that of his grand father as Madhumada, the latter two names being the Sanskritised versions of the Arabic personal names Ali and Muhammad respectively. The name Chhadama itself has been shown to have been derived from an Arabic expression meaning one who remembers God or a Chamberlain or door-keeper. The name of the community of which Chhadama belonged is mentioned as Nauvittaka or the

present name Navayat. The inscription is dated the 5th July 1059 A.D. Chhadama (referred to by the Portuguese as Sadano) was also appointed governor of the Konkan by king Jayakesi I and under his wise administration the city of Goa achieved great prosperity. His grand father Madhumada (Madhumod) who was a rich merchant, is reported to have made a magnificent present of wealth to the Goa Kadamba King <sup>u</sup>Ghalla-deva II (980-1005 A.D.). Thus, the Navayat settlement of Goa can be traced as far back as the 10th century A.D. and possibly it had existed for generations earlier.<sup>43</sup>

#### Minor Muslim Communities in South India

Another group of Muhammadans in South India, the Dudekulas who live by cotton cleaning and by weaving coarse fabrics, attributed their conversion to Baba Faqrud-din whose tomb they revere at Penukonda.

Faqrud-Din Pir, as the story goes, was born in A.H. 565 (A.D. 1122) and was the king of Seistan in Persia. He had made a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina and was bidden by the prophet in a dream to go to India. Eventually he arrived at Trichinapolly, and there he met the celebrated saint, Nathar Shah, and became his disciple and was sent by him in company with two hundred religious mendicants on a proselytising mission. After his admission into holy orders he was told to travel about and plant

his miswak (The miswak, or tooth-brush, is a piece of the root of pilu tree, which is used by Muhammadans, and especially Fakirs for cleaning the teeth) wherever he halted, and regard the place where it sprouted on his permanent residence.

When Baba Faqru-din arrived at Penukonda Hill, in the Anantpur District, he, as usual, planted miswak which sprouted. He accordingly decided to take this spot as his permanent abode. But there was close by an important Hindu temple, and the idea of a Muhammadan settling close to it enraged the Hindus, who asked him to leave. Further, the presence of the Muhammadans was unwelcome to the Raja of the place. But Baba Faqru-din performed various miracles and attracted the Raja of the place. The raja offered the village of Penukonda to Faqru-din as a Jagir. This offer was declined and the saint asked that the temple should be converted into a mosque. The Raja granted this request and he became a Musalman. The Raja's example was followed by a large number of inhabitants of the neighbourhood who embraced the Muhammadan religion, and were the ancestors of the Dudekulas.

The Dudekulas are called by the Tamils as Panjaris. Though Muhammadans, they have adopted many of the customs of the Hindus around them, such as tying a tail round the brides throat at marriage, and being very ignorant of the Muhammadan religion, and even joining in Hindu worship as far as allowable. Circumcision is, however, invariably enforced and they are much given to the worship of Muhammadan saints. In dress they resemble



the Hindus, and often shave the beard, but do not leave a single lock of hair upon the head as most Hindus do. Their customs are a mixture of those of the Musalmans and Hindus. The Dudekulas, were originally Sheikhs, but though their names are Muhammadan, they drop the name of Sheik for males and Bi for females. In large towns their manners resemble more closely to those of Muhammadans.<sup>44</sup>

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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