

resolved that the government should enter into dialogue with Taliban, but few days later the Pakistan's interior minister claimed that some were trying to sabotage the plan (see: Abbas Ansari, 2013). It shows there are still some forces to whom peace with Taliban is equal with their insecurity.

Salim Shehzad's book is a potential contribution to the studies of terrorism. His insights are unique and first hand. As an investigative journalist he has collected his information directly from the field. He has tried to open a new window for understanding the phenomenon of terrorisms at the cost of his own life.

### References

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**Islamic civilization in South Asia : A history of Muslim power and presence in the Indian subcontinent.** By Burjor Avari. London : Routledge, 2013, p. xviii+317. ISBN 978-0-415-580625 (Paperback)

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In *Islamic Civilization in South Asia*, Burjor Avari analyses the history of Islam and Muslims in South Asia. The book attempts to articulate "dispassionately the issues concerning the Islamic past of South Asia" (p. xvii). It consists of eleven chapters in addition to a preface and concluding remarks.

Chapter One provides a brief description of terms like 'Muslim', "South Asia", "Indian subcontinent", 'India', "Islamic Civilization", and Muslim 'Power' and 'Presence'. Starting with the advent of Islam in Arabia, Avari provides a brief history of major Islamic events from the Prophet's (SAW) first revelation to the pinnacle of the Islamic empire which later facilitated Europe's "cultural transition from the dark ages to the renaissance" (p. 4). In this chapter, while discussing the subcontinent's cultural legacy, Avari points out that "political India is a new nation, but cultural India is an ancient regional civilization" (p. 5). The first chapter provides the gist of the book but may also be considered a prelude to subsequent chapters.

Chapter two covers the early Muslim expansion as a formative phase in the early cultural encounter in Southern India, following the arrival of the Arab traders on the Malabar Coast and Kerala. This early encounter produced a unique blend of Islamic culture. It should be mentioned here that “long before the rise of Islam” Arab “traders and seafarers, along with the Persians, had been engaged in the Indian ocean commerce” (p. 17). According to the author, in Northern India, it was the military conquests of Muhammad bin Qasim that helped spread Islam and “a conscientious Mussalman need not be ashamed” of this (p. 26).

Chapter three deals with the Turkish power and their presence in India. During this period, the ‘Persian’ culture triumphed in India, and Ghaznavids and Ghurids—being the torch bearers of Persian culture—provided an “exciting stimulus to the multicultural society of India” (p. 38). Avari attempts to portray the character of Mahmud Ghazni in a balanced way. Thus, he points out that although Mahmud was a looter and marauder, he also provided patronage for people of culture, like the great scientist, Ibn Sina, the scholar al-Beruni, and the poet Firdausi. Avari states that “without Mahmud’s patronage and support these men’s learning might have gone unrecognized, and history would have been poorer” (p. 51).

Chapter four narrates the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. The author argues that “it was the force of personality that made or deposed a sultan” (p. 60). Although the lack of a systematic policy of succession to the throne indicated the instability of the political system, the sultans were so far-sighted that they “charted out a balanced strategy of survival and domination in an alien religio-political landscape” (p. 57). The fifth chapter deals with the Mughal period in which the Muslim power and culture witnessed a dynamic change. After the dismantling of the Delhi Sultanate, it was Babar—the pioneer/founder of Mughal Empire—who made his way to India, and his conquest of India did not come to be expressed in religious monuments but “pervasively as the imperialism of landscape architecture” (p. 96).

Chapters six and seven concentrate on the Mughal ascendancy and its disintegration. The author records that the “Muslim power reached its apogee during those years” (p. 101). He supports Akbar’s secular views and liberal policies “from the hindsight of history”, and considers his religious liberalism as a visionary project, that “attempted to create a unique pre-modern secular model” (p. 114). Therefore, the author terms Akbar as a “great unifier of communities” (p. 123). After the Mughal Empire become excessively bigger under Aurangzeb, it fell into decline, partly born out of internal strife and partly owing to foreign interventions, particularly the British interference in India’s affairs. As Avari puts it, “the East India Company simply stepped in to fill the vacuum left by the dying and powerless empire” (p. 127). He, however, points out that apart from these political upheavals, art and architecture continued to flourish in the Indian Subcontinent under the Mughals.

Chapter eight discusses at length the position of Muslims under the East India Company. The Company played a decisive role in three successive phases, namely through trade, politics, and military the last being the focus of this chapter. The East India Company, however, had “institutionalized discrimination almost from the beginning” (p. 158). This hurted both the Hindus and the Muslims, but it was particularly hard for the latter to forget that their 1000 year-old domination had come to an end. The author gives a detailed background of the policies of the Company that were resented. These policies ultimately led to the revolt of 1857.

Chapters nine and 10 deal with British colonial politics. Chapter nine is composed in the backdrop of territorial states and colonial rule; the accommodation and pressure of integration and difficulties of Muslim culture in the colonial setting. This period, therefore, was “a time of enormous political, social, economic and cultural change awakened a spirit of nationalism” (p. 176). The rift between Muslim pluralism and individuality is the focus of Chapter 10. After communal hatred had broken out between the Hindus and the Muslims, partition of the Subcontinent was inevitable. However, according to the author, what is worth noting is that both India and Pakistan “lost valuable human resources”, and one of the bitter fruits of this division is the Kashmir issue—, which has “dragged on until today” (p. 214).

Lastly, Chapter 11 (the Epilogue) briefly examines the problems of ‘security’, the impact of ‘shariah’, and “Muslim law” on women after the emergence of two new independent states of India and Pakistan in 1947. For Pakistan, the problem of concern for Avari, is “the democratic deficit of the political system” (p. 233) that has resulted into the break-up of Pakistan in 1971 and the emergence of Bangladesh. It is not an exaggeration to argue that Pakistan has constantly been oscillating between democracy and dictatorship.

A number of specific shortcomings of this book need to be pointed out. First, the title of the book seems inappropriate. It should have been “Muslim Civilization” rather than “Islamic Civilization” which the author has tried to portray it as a secular one. Second, a major weakness of the book is its reliance on mostly secondary sources. Leaving aside these shortcomings, this book, overall, is a modest attempt by the author to present as comprehensively as possible the history of Islam and Muslims in South Asia. The author’s presentation is simple, lucid, and accessible; he has tried to focus on the social, cultural, political and economic history of the Muslim past in South Asia. Maps, plates, and excerpts at the end of each chapter help readers to comprehend the text. An extended bibliography located at the end of the book is good indication of the depths of the author’s scholarship. All in all, *Islamic Civilization in South Asia* is a good read and should find a place on the shelves of the libraries of students, research scholars and those interested in the history of South Asia alike.