

# MEDIEVAL INDIA:

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

*Being the substance of  
Four Lectures delivered in Urdu to the  
Hindustani Academy, Allahabad*

By

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY F. J. C. HEARNSHAW, M.A., LL.D.

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I AM much honoured by being invited to write a short Introductory Note to my friend Mr. Yusuf Ali's excellent lectures on the social and economic conditions of medieval India. Mr. Yusuf Ali was my contemporary in the University of Cambridge over thirty years ago, and ever since those remote Victorian days—days of enviable prosperity, tranquillity, and confidence—I have followed with admiration his distinguished career in the Civil Service and in the higher walks of education.

The four lectures herewith presented to the public are based on a wide survey of first-hand sources, and a deep study of their significance. They relate to a little-known but profoundly interesting period of Indian history. They deal, moreover, with an aspect of Indian life, namely, the social and economic, hitherto inadequately examined—an aspect incomparably harder to see in entirety and perspective than is the political or even the religious history of the great sub-continent.

In these anxious days, when misunderstandings are rife and suspicions quick, it is most important that everything possible should be done to awaken in England respect for Indian institutions, and in India faith in English goodwill. Mr. Yusuf Ali is an invaluable mediator between the two civilizations, with each of which he is intimately acquainted.

I sincerely trust that the interest which his masterly survey of medieval Indian culture is sure to arouse may further the great cause of Anglo-Indian amity and mutual comprehension.

## PREFACE

THE following pages comprise the substance of four lectures delivered in Urdu at the Hindustani Academy of Allahabad in 1928. They attracted some notice in their Urdu garb, and it has been suggested that their publication in English may reach a wider audience in and outside India, and may even help in the study of our medieval history in our universities.

I have only made two alterations for this English edition. I have eliminated some matter that was mainly addressed to the Hindustani Academy and to my Urdu listeners. And I have added a few introductory remarks, in order to make the opening appear not too abrupt on account of the omission of the passages which may have no interest for English readers. I hope that in judging of the value of the lectures and my mode of presentment, the gentle reader will not lose sight of the date of the lectures and the audiences to which they were addressed.

The cultivation of the vernacular languages in India has reached a stage at which the demand for original historical and research work has far outstripped its supply. Urdu and Hindi are in this respect in no way behind any other vernacular. Urdu is still somewhat hampered by its antiquated system of printing. Most of its books are still lithographed. The Hindustani Academy uses type printing. But the existing Urdu type or type-printed work cannot be considered satisfactory. The attempt to copy in movable type all the variations of Urdu letters as seen in manuscript calligraphy must be pronounced a failure. The essence of manuscript calligraphy consists in varying the shapes and sizes of curves in different combinations and according to the position of given letters

at the beginning, the middle, or the end of words. The essence of good printing is to have letters of uniform size and shape, to have the lines printed with mathematical precision, and to make rapid reading by the eye (an everyday necessity) possible as well as an artistic pleasure. If by duplicating or triplicating the shapes of single letters the fount is made unwieldy, it adds to the difficulties and the expenses of compositors' work. In modern commercial printing cost is not a negligible quantity. With the initial prejudice of Urdu readers against type printing, type printing cannot be made a success unless it is cheaper and better than lithograph printing. It is not correct to say that type printing cannot be artistic or beautiful. Its artistic quality or beauty will depend upon other considerations than those which apply to manuscript calligraphy or its imitation, the lithographed book. First let us produce reasonably good and cheap type printing, and we shall gradually be able to evolve more and more artistic printing standards as time goes on. The great superiority of type printing consists in its accuracy and clearness. For accuracy it is necessary to have three shapes of the letter *wāw*, to represent the three sounds *ū*, *ō*, and *au*, and three shapes of the letter *ya*, to represent the three sounds *ī*, *ē*, and *ai*. No modern language can make much progress, or even hold its own, which depends upon lithography and is not able to use the latest resources of the modern printing-press.

I am much obliged to Professor F. J. C. Hearnshaw for the kindly interest he has taken in the work and for the Introductory Note he has been good enough to write for it.

A. YUSUF ALI.

WIMBLEDON.

October 1931.

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