



The Moghul Islamic Diaspora: The Institutionalization of Islam in Jamaica

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Introduction

'*As-Salamu-'alaikum*', the Islamic greeting in Arabic, meaning 'peace be upon you', continued to be the official greeting among the Maroon Council members in Mooretown, Portland, Jamaica and the *dhikir*, '*Allahu Akbar*', declaring the Greatness of Allah, still throbbed in the hearts of many of the former Muslim slaves when the Indian indentured Muslims first landed in Jamaica in 1845.¹ However, the Islamic greeting, which had distinguished the Muslim Maroon community from the non-Muslims, had lost much of its Islamic significance. The *dhikir* presumably became a personal enlightenment of the soul of the many freed African Muslim slaves in the midst of great social, economic and political uncertainties following emancipation.² With the arrival of the indentured Muslims from India, the peaceful revival of Islam in Jamaica began. Although these Muslims formed a minority of a larger group of indentured labourers and were in an adverse atmosphere, they were resilient and set up institutions which were clear manifestations of a promising resurgent Islamic community. The inner struggle or *jihad* for self-purification and to lead life in accordance with the Holy Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, replaced the somewhat outer *jihad* of the African Muslim slaves as manifested in the Baptist War of 1831–1832 or the Maroon Wars of the eighteenth century.

With the Indian indentured Muslims, and subsequently with the other Indians from the subcontinent, came the Moghul culture exhibiting its richness in culinary arts, fashions and lifestyle. The significance of the Islamic culture brought by the Muslim indentured labourers to the Caribbean has largely been overlooked because of the dominance of the Hindu labourers in the indenture-ship system. India had been under the Muslim rule from the early thirteen century and Islam had made its first appearance in the subcontinent in 712 AD. The Moghul rule in India, which witnessed spectacular cultural achievement, began in 1526 with Babur, a Timurid descendant and the ruler of Samarkand, which epitomized the highly cultured courts and Timurid love of painting and poetry, of architecture and gardens. The rule of the six great Moghul Emperors which ended in 1706 gave way to the nominal reign of the weaker Moghuls under the East India Company rule and was finally terminated by the deposition of Emperor Bahadur Shah II by the British Crown in 1858. Although the dominant religion in India remains Hinduism, Islamic influence in arts, literature, architecture, painting, music, culinary delicacies and confectionery, clothing and fashion have made permanent marks. The present paper attempts to focus on the advent of the Muslims from India, their efforts to institutionalize Islam and the accompanying Islamic culture, which has enriched the multicultural heritage of Jamaica and the region at large.

Emancipation and the Search for Labour

The Baptist Rebellion in Jamaica in 1831–1832 and the widespread slave rebellions throughout the British West Indies during the 1820s and the 1830s saw the final emancipation of the slaves in 1838. Acute labour shortages on the plantations following emancipation led planters to demand other alternative labour sources such as China and India, after efforts to recruit indentured labourers from Africa and Europe had failed.

Although the Atlantic commerce growing out of the slave system contributed to the commencement of the Industrial Revolution, it was a capital-intensive business which Britain could not sustain for too long with its ever-expanding industrial needs for markets and raw materials. The purchase of slaves in Africa, shipping them to the West Indies, the production of tropical agricultural products and their transportation costs to the Atlantic and Europe and the wars which Britain fought to control the Atlantic trade called for extensive capital layout. These expenses 'were several times greater than British trade at home and with Europe ever required'.³ Initially, high capital investment led to lower unit cost of sugar production. However, the high rate of capital depreciation was a heavy charge on the gross revenue of the plantations in the West Indies.⁴ In 1783, although the West Indies dominated the cotton trade, the phenomenal expansion of the industry could not depend on a few tiny islands in the Caribbean for the supply of the necessary raw material.⁵ The West Indian monopoly in sugar was also 'unsound in theory' and 'unprofitable in practice'.⁶ Sugar cost the British people annually more than one and a half million pounds sterling in the late 1820s. Two-fifths of the price of every pound of sugar consumed in England represented the cost of production, two-fifths went in revenue to the government, and the West Indian planter received one-fifth in tribute.⁷

The First Maroon War for over 80 years, followed by Tacky's rebellion and the Second Maroon War and repeated slave rebellions, caused great economic dislocation and social unrest on the plantations in Jamaica for almost the entirety of the slave system in the island. The Baptist Rebellion of 1831–1832 regarded by contemporary authorities as an 'extensive conspiracy formed by the Negroes' on the plantations in Jamaica causing destruction of enormous magnitude hastened the complete emancipation of the slaves in 1838.⁸

The Wealth of Moghul India

By the 1830s, while the slave system had lost its importance to the metropolitan, both India and China held prominent positions in the sphere of British commerce and trade contributing enormously to industrialization and to the British economy.⁹ With the loss of the North American colonies, Britain turned to India aiming to turn Indian economy into the classical colonial mould. The British exchequer was aware of the immense wealth of the East as the Oriental trade in silk, muslin, cotton and piece-goods, dominated by the East India Company, had brought in extraordinary total gains to the nation as early as the late seventeenth century. The produce from East India soared high to £142,717 in 1691–1692 and the 'moneys paid in the exchequer as duties were on the average more than the sums exported to the East in the form of gold and silver'.¹⁰ Englishmen who were in the service of the Company and private traders brought large sums of money into England from India. India was the home of cloth manufacture and the greatest and almost the sole supplier of the hundred varieties of

her well-known cotton goods, precious stones, drugs, and other valuable products.¹¹ It was said that 'all the gold and silver of the universe found a thousand and one channels for entering into India, but there was not a single outlet for the precious metals to go out of the country'.¹² The immense and constant inflow of silver into India made the masses live in ease and comfort under the great rule of the Moghuls. Moghul India, best known for the Taj Mahal, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, had accomplished a high level of cultural achievement in the arts, literature, history, philosophy, poetry, science and architecture.

Unlike the British Raj who emptied the Indian treasury, the great Moghuls, beginning with Barbur, enriched the country and have left their mark in the history of Medieval India not only as conquerors but as builders of a great empire of which present day India boasts of its proud heritage. The Moghuls equalled and often surpassed in certain respects the Saffavids and the Ottomans. The memoirs and treatises left by the Moghul Emperors, the *Babur Nama*, the *Akbar-Nama*, the *Ain-i-Akbari* and the *Zafar Nama*, to name a few, form astounding pieces of historical evidences, of gazetteer, almanac, dictionary of science, book of rules and procedures and statistical digest. Poetry was almost the *lingua franca* of court life and of diplomacy.¹³ Unparalleled in the world, miniature paintings depicting various courts lives, royal personalities and royal events occupy the pages of voluminous manuscripts and albums prepared during the Moghul rule. Likewise, the beautiful figurative *kashi* or tile work stretching for several hundred yards and to a considerable height along the outer wall of the fort at Lahore is another spectacular achievement. The architectural monuments at once illustrate the excellent taste and the Islamic piety of the Moghul Emperors. The Red Fort at Agra, the impressive buildings of Delhi and Fatehpur Sikri, the Pearl Mosque and the Badshahi Mosque with their ogee arches and the bulbous domes as an exclusively Muslim architecture and the great mausoleums with its epitome the Taj Mahal, each speaks for its architectural ingenuity and concept and each reflects the character and personality of the architects—the Emperors. Built of white polished marble with a continuous *dado* showing flowering plants in low relief, the Taj Mahal, that wonder of wonders and unquestionably the most sublime work of art ever created by human hands at the cost of four million English pounds, epitomizes Muslim men's love for their wives. The love for Mumtaz Begum and her beauty inspired Emperor Shah Jahan to erect a monument in memory of his wife greater than any that had ever existed on earth.

The concept of garden in India has been a gift of the Moghuls, their Persian soldiers and courtiers.¹⁴ The first Emperor, Babur, introduced the gardening technique of Central Asia and Iran in India. Described as 'fascinating', 'alluring' and 'enchanting', Delhi's Moghal Garden is geometrically formed, the likes of which do not exist in the world any more. The gardens in the Red Fort at Delhi and the Taj Mahal at Agra epitomize symmetry and atmosphere. Limitless in colours and exquisite in ecological diversity with waterfalls and white marble pavilions are the gardens of Kashmir—the Chashma Shahi, Nishat, Shalimar and Vernag.

Such glories and cultural achievement undoubtedly reflect a high degree of economic prosperity, political leadership and religious tolerance of the Moghuls. However, Western authorities paint a negative picture and have refused to uphold the virtues of these Emperors as Islamic. For example, Stanley Lane Poole describes the great virtues of Humayun as 'Christian'.¹⁵ The state policies of the Moghuls embraced religious tolerance as enjoined in the Holy Qur'an: 'Allah forbids you not, with regards to those who fight you not for (your) faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly

and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just'.¹⁶ Evidence suggests that fruitful collaboration existed between Muslims and Hindus during the Moghul period like their predecessors, the Tughlaks.¹⁷ To unite the passionate and volatile communities of India, Akbar devised the *Din-e-Ilahi*, a new religion which has been condemned as a direct assault on Islam. The matrimonial alliances of emperors Akbar and Jahangir bear testimony to the religious harmony present in the royal courts and palaces. Rajput armies were at the service of the Moghuls and distinguished Hindu members became administrators, governors and generals of the empire. The humanitarian nature of the Emperor Shah Jahan and his devotion to abide by the Qur'anic Command to serve those in distress are illustrated through his daily dispensation of large sums in charity for needy women outside the harem and providing of dowries for destitute girls or pensions for widows and orphans,¹⁸ much in line with the command in the following verses from the Holy Qur'an:

And serve Allah. Ascribe no thing as partner unto Him. (Show) kindness unto parents, and unto near kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and unto the neighbour who is of kin (unto you) and the neighbor who is not of kin, and the fellow traveler and the wayfarer and (the slaves) whom your right hand possess. Lo! Allah loveth not such as are proud and boastful.¹⁹

In addition, though unconcerned with the affairs of state, the *sufis* who came to India with their message of love and compassion were successful in spreading the message of Islam and helped to give Islam a broader base in India.²⁰

British Exploitation of Moghul India

However, this religious tolerance and economic prosperity did not continue to flourish following British political and economic domination of India which began in the mid-eighteenth century. The religious harmony and opulence of the empire gave way to communal violence and plunder of the splendours of India as Great Britain pursued an unapologetic policy of oppression and treachery through its infamous *divide and rule* principle, exploiting and inciting sectarian hostilities between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Britain, through the East India Company, gained a foothold in Moghul India unseating the legal Nawab of Bengal through treacherous and devious policies in 1757. The rape and plunder of Bengal by the East India Company soon after the Battle of Plassey, resulting in the ruination of the prosperous industrial province of Bengal by 1789, set into motion the Industrial Revolution in England with a rapidity of changes that 'probably nothing has ever equalled'.²¹ Evidence further suggests that 'probably between Plassey and Waterloo a sum of £1,000 million was transferred from Indian hoards to English banks'. In short, an average of £17.2 millions per annum flowed into the British economy.²² Scholars have further suggested that 'possibly since the world began, no investment has ever yielded the profit reaped from the Indian plunder, because for nearly fifty years Great Britain stood without a competitor'.²³ With the consolidation of Company rule, the flight of capital from India increased to a horrendous scale at the expense of the development of the native resources of India. This is illustrated by a declaration made by John Sullivan, a Company's servant for 29 years and President of the Madras Board of Revenue before a Parliamentary Committee set up in 1848, to investigate the conditions of India upon the insistence of John Bright, a Member of Parliament for Manchester:

Our system acts very like a sponge; drawing up all the good things from the banks of the Ganges, and squeezing them down upon the banks of the Thames ... The demands ... (on the People) are incessant and facilities for meeting those demands are in a great measure denied to them.²⁴

After wars, pensions, and 10.5% dividends had been paid, Bright's Committee found that with revenues of £20,000,000 a year—or £300,000,000 between 1833 and 1847—plus £16,000,000 in loans, the Company had spent only a little over £100,000 annually, or a total of a million and a half sterling for desperately needed public works in all its territories.²⁵ Evidence further suggests that the Indian taxpayer met all administrative expenses incurred within Britain as well as in India.²⁶ India's very large export surplus on merchandise balance of trade between 1814 and 1858 was also unilaterally transferred to Britain to settle overseas debt and administrative expenses incurred within Britain.²⁷

The role of Indian raw cotton in impelling the whole British economy forward into rapid industrial growth is immeasurable. The manufacturing and commercial interests in England, particularly the Manchester Chamber and the Lancashire cotton industries, made India a potential supplier of raw materials and an importer of cheap machine-produced textiles from Britain,²⁸ thus ruining Indian industries, particularly the cotton industry of Bengal.²⁹ Great Britain's cotton needs were well-secured with the acquisition of Indian territories having the finest cotton tracts by Lord Dalhousie through the application of the *Doctrine of Lapse* in the 1840s and 1850s. Although American cotton was cheaper and formed an important source for Lancashire industries, its supply was often hindered due to short crops in the 1830s and 1840s.³⁰ India thus became not only the most important source of cotton but also a market for British manufactured cotton goods for about two hundred million people. Manchester's dependence on India became more vital with the outbreak of the Civil War in the United States.

Besides cotton, other important export items from India between 1814 and 1857 were indigo, piece-goods, raw silk, opium, sugar, spices, oil seeds, jute and various other miscellaneous goods.³¹ While the West Indies sugar plantation economy based on the capital-intensive slave system became unprofitable and burdensome to the imperial government, India, with the vastness of the country and its riches, drew the attention of the political leaders, traders, capitalists and manufacturers of Britain. Bengal sugar showed a phenomenal increase from 1836 to 1837 onwards as a result of the equalization of duties on the East India products with those from the West Indies.³² Apparently, emancipation of the slaves in the British West Indies challenged the survival of the islands plantation economy, but the interests of the entire British Empire, and more particularly of the manufacturing districts, were bound up intricately with those of the Indian position of Her Majesty's dominions.

The Chinese Connection to British India

India was also central to the British trade with China. There was a steady demand for Indian cotton as a basic ingredient of India's trade with China. Together with opium it was used to pay for the tea and silk bought to meet the demands of the British consumers.³³ By 1773, the East India Company established a monopoly of the opium cultivation under the Bengal government. While the abolition of slavery in the West Indies became pertinent for the British capitalists and manufacturers, the importance of India and China became more acute to the British economy. The Canton trade in the

eighteenth century was heavily one-sided in China's favour.³⁴ Foreign traders bought tea, silk, rhubarb and other articles with gold and silver, while the Middle Kingdom—Imperial China had no need for the Western products. Very often 90%—and sometimes as high as 98%—of the East India Company's shipment to China was gold, and only 10% commodities.³⁵ However, the balance in China's favour slipped the other way from the early 1830s with the dramatic rise in British export of opium to China from India. Following the abolition of the Company's monopoly of the China trade in 1834, the British sold \$18 million worth of Bengal opium in China against the \$17 million worth of Chinese tea and silk which they bought in 1836.³⁶ Apparently, without the opium trade Britain would have suffered a severe deficit. Opium had become the economic panacea for the British trade doldrums. As the slave economy came to an end in the Caribbean, Britain prepared for the Opium War to open China to meet its expansive, industrial needs. The vast human resources of China together with its natural resources became victims of the economic imperialism of Great Britain.

Indian Indenture-ship

Likewise, the story of the Indians as overseas labourers serving in the far-flung British Empire entails for the most part disappointment and despair. Indian labour migration was of a global nature in the nineteenth century. Britain was not content only with the flight of capital and precious jewels of India such as the Kohinoor diamond, which adorns the British Crown. To meet its need for labour services in the British Empire, the Imperial government resorted to large-scale export of human resources from India. Between 1838 and 1917, approximately half a million East Indians came to the Caribbean. Most of these Indian immigrants were imported to serve in the sugar estates of Guyana and Trinidad. Almost 16 %, or about 80,000, of them were Muslims. One-third of the East Indian population was female. Although the exact number of immigrants who came to Jamaica between 1845 and 1917 is unclear, evidence suggests that about 37,000 landed in Jamaica, representing only 8.5% of the total indentured East Indians imported into the British West Indies.³⁷

The Propelling Factors

The political, economic and social situation in India had become untenable for many by the 1840s. Unemployment, social and political deprivation, a state of anarchy, repeated famines due to political decisions and natural calamities such as drought and floods forced many to look for alternatives. British political and economic imperialism in India saw the disintegration of the stable self-sufficient traditional communities based on a delicate balance of agriculture and handicraft industry. Over the centuries, the Muslim rulers of India had nurtured the developments of such communities through its decentralization policies. The very word *ummah*, meaning community, demonstrates Islam's commitment to the welfare of its citizens. The Muslim rulers of India largely adhered to this principle of the welfare of its communities in the formulation and implementation of its land tenure and land taxation policies. In Moghul India, the *zamindar*, or the landowner, who was usually an elite figure, exercised autonomous authority over his area as long as he paid a fixed portion of the revenues from his property to the Central authorities. However, the introduction of a new land tenure and land revenue by the British, beginning with the Permanent Settlement of Bengal in 1793, saw the ousting of the old *zamindar*/landlord families,

thus severing the old-established link between government and the cultivator of the soil. The British-created *zamindar*, who was divested of all political and public duties but declared the absolute owner and revenue collector of his estate, employed a vigorous and harsh method of tax collection.³⁸ The peasantry was also subjected to all manner of rental payments. While the Muslim rulers of Bengal had collected £818,000 in land revenues in 1764–1765, the British enjoyed a land revenue of £3,235,259 in 1794–1795.³⁹ The increased economic burden accompanied with brutality saw large numbers of peasants dispossessed of their lands due to non-payment of rents, debts and mortgages.⁴⁰

The internal trade monopolized by the East India Company servants pushed out Indians from commercial activities. The Bengal famine of 1770 was the direct result of the monopolistic practices in trade. The English created a famine by buying up all the rice, and then selling it at exorbitant prices.⁴¹ Repeated famines occurred in Northern India between 1860 and 1878, affecting Orissa, Bihar, Oudh, Northwest Provinces and United Provinces.⁴² Often shortages of crops were due to the planting of poppies instead of rice or other grain by the peasants under undue pressure and order from the Company as opium fetched extraordinary profit in the Company's trade with China.

In addition, the British increased transit duties and imposed custom duties on commodities that were hitherto exempt. The imposition of tariff policies that guaranteed free entry of British products into India but levied prohibitive duties on Indian products entering Britain resulted in severe disruption of cottage industries and an unprecedented displacement of millions of workers in the countryside. Many unemployed workers and dispossessed peasants migrated to urban Bengal in search of employment and they formed a ready pool of indentured labourers to be exported to different colonies of the British Empire.⁴³ The oppressive nature of the caste system impelled many, particularly the lower caste, to migrate to new homes to gain human dignity and better economic opportunities. While widows tried to escape the demands of the traditional households, debtors made efforts to avoid the creditors. A sense of adventure also motivated a few to explore the offer of indenture-ship.

The Arrivants

The first ship load of 261 immigrants from India docked at Old Harbour Bay, St. Catherine, on 9 May 1845.⁴² The Clarendon Estates became the first recipients of these migrant workers from India. European and African culture saw the beginning of the intrusion of two cultures from India simultaneously—Islamic and Hindu.

Evidence suggests that until the mid-1850s migrants were recruited mainly from among the aboriginal tribes living in the hilly Choto Nagpur district in southern Bihar of the Bengal Presidency, known collectively as *Dhangars* or *Kols* or *Hill Coolies*.⁴³ Emigration to the overseas colonies increased by more than three times following the brutal suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857–1858.⁴⁴ This is regarded to be the first national attempt to free India from the expanding British political rule and the last effort to restore the Muslim rule with Bahadur Shah II, a symbolic figurehead as the Moghul Emperor. Although the Mutiny was a Hindu–Muslim alliance of dispossessed sectors of the traditional elite, landlord/*zamindars*, the peasantry and the Indian soldiery within the British Army, the Muslims became the worst victims. Britain regarded the rebellion as Muslim conspired as the Company rule had replaced the Muslim Moghuls. Many Muslim mutineers, like the high caste ex-soldiers from the disbanded native army perhaps, joined the emigrants in order to flee from the prospect of being prosecuted in

a military court. Muslims, perhaps, in an attempt to flee from the increasing political persecution and economic hardship opted to work overseas, not knowing the tortuous journey and the hard life which awaited them in the West Indian plantations. Under the Land Settlement of the British Indian government, the Muslims increasingly lost landownership or *zamindari*. The British exploited the sectarian feelings of the society where the majority Hindus had been ruled for so long by the minority Muslims. Consequently, Muslims were denied justice and political and economic opportunities both by the British and their Hindu surrogates. Many Muslims among others were often tricked and kidnapped to be brought to the Caribbean. Muslims, also labelled as Musalmans, formed a minority of the Indian immigrants brought to the Caribbean.

Figures for Jamaica from 1900 to 1915 show an average of 15.9% of the total arrivals from India being Muslims.⁴⁵ Evidence suggests that only 93 were Muslims out of a total of 607 labourers on the *Indus* which arrived in Jamaica in 1907. Evidently, many of the Muslims originated from the United Provinces (at present called Uttar Pradesh) and particularly from Agra and Oudh and from the province of Bihar.⁴⁶ Recruiting centres such as Lucknow, Allahabad, Azamgarh, Faizabad, Mirzapur, Ghazipur and Gorakhpur among others in the United Provinces and Shahabad in Bihar suggest that among those recruited for indenture-ship from these cities and districts, most were Muslims. These cities, predominantly Muslim populated, had witnessed the zenith of Islamic culture and social life.⁴⁷ While Agra still stands unparalleled in the world with the *Taj Mahal*, Faizabad was 'the fount of knowledge' and Muslim culture, and a 'chosen centre' for merchants loading caravans which came from Persia, Kabul, China and Europe.⁴⁸ Lucknow, settled by Muslims as early as 1030 AD, became a great centre for trade and a rendezvous for seekers of knowledge from Asia during the reign of Akbar.⁴⁹ The unprecedented splendour of Lucknow is illustrated by the description made in 1858, by Sir William Russell, correspondent of the *London Times* who was sent to India to cover the campaign of Sir Colin Campbell, the British Commander-in-Chief entrusted with the suppression of the Indian Mutiny. Sir Russell writes:

A vision of palaces, minars, domes azure and golden, cupolas, colonnades, long facades of fair perspective in pillar and column, terraced roofs, all rising up amid a calm still ocean of the brightest verdure. Look for miles and miles away, and still the ocean spreads and the towers of the fairy city gleam in its midst. Spires of gold glitter in the sun. Turrets and gilded spheres shine like constellations. There is a city more vast than Paris as it seems, and more brilliant lying before us. Not Rome not Athens not Constantinople, not any city I have ever seen appears to me so striking and beautiful as this: and the more I gaze the more its beauties grow upon me.⁵⁰

Drudgery of Plantation Life

Muslim immigrant workers coming from such socio-cultural background obviously found life on the plantations difficult to adjust to. The drudgery of plantation life began with their allocations to serve on the estates of St. Andrew, Vere, Clarendon, St. Mary, Westmoreland, St. Catherine and St. Thomas. Immigrants wearing shackles while working in the field was a reality.⁵¹ Horror stories of starvation and nakedness were rife.⁵² Since economic interest lay at the root of indenture-ship, the system was indifferent to the religious practices and observance of cultural tradition of the East Indians. In the various estates, Muslims found it difficult to lead a disciplined life in

accordance with the Holy Qur'an and *Sunnah*.⁵³ Deplorable living conditions in barracks shared by groups of 25–50 adults of different origin, ages, sex, religion and kinship and nine-hour work days often prevented the Muslims from performing the five times obligatory prayers/*salat* as stressed in the Holy Qur'an: 'Make prostration and draw nigh to Allah'.⁵⁴ However, the obstacles to the performance of prayers at the appointed times in the prescribed manner did not prevent the Muslims from seeking the spiritual nourishment of the soul. Although the centrality of prayers in daily life suffered, they were performed when and where possible and admissible. Furthermore, the constraint to perform the *wudhu* (the prescribed ablution before *salat*) did not inhibit Muslims from upholding cleanliness. Muslims aware of the basic principle that external purity leads to internal purity or the purification of the soul and the mind, and external impurity leads to internal impurity,⁵⁵ endeavoured to observe the Qur'anic Command, 'O you who believe! When you rise up to prayer, wash your faces and your hands',⁵⁶ by always carrying a bottle of water. The bottle of water was seen as a badge of Muslim identification.⁵⁷ The spiritual struggle or the 'exertion' in the way of Allah, often referred to as the greater *jihad*, may have been the grounds of trouble caused by the Muslims on the estates. Apparently, planters were not keen to see large importation of Muslims as they were regarded to be the troublemakers on the properties.⁵⁸

Neither was fasting nor *sawn* during the holy month of *Ramadhan* an easy task for many of the Muslims to observe. However, oral history suggests that despite the rigours of estate life, many of the Muslims were steadfast in fasting while others observed the essence of fasting in the form of self-scrutiny and self-restraint.⁵⁹ Special efforts were made by these workers to perform prayers, meditate and read the Holy Qur'an during this month as it is a time of sober reflection to lead men to a deeper and richer perception of Allah.

Although the Islamic dietary principles could not be strictly adhered to during the indenture-ship period, Muslim immigrant workers made special effort to have *halal* meat on special occasions. The prohibition on the consumption of blood in Islam requires the clinical slaughter or *dhiba* in a particular manner to allow for the maximum drainage of blood from meat tissue. The slaughtering of the animal must be preceded by the pronouncement of the words *Bismillaah*, *Allaahu Akbar* ('In the name of Allah, Allah is Most Great'). In the absence of *halal* meat, the Muslims found solace by reciting *bismillah* before consumption of the non-*halal* meat.⁶⁰ Some were even forced or tricked to eat pork, the consumption of which is a Qur'anic prohibition. However, at certain instances, particularly during the depression years, indigent Muslims opted for out-of-door relief to avoid contamination of the Alms House.

Deceitful Contracts

Indentured immigrants, whether Muslims or Hindus, were cheated in terms of their contractual rights, wages and return passages through manipulation of the law and also through subtle illegalities employed by the estate interests.⁶¹ Repatriation funds which were initially due after one year and subsequently after three years were often withheld, and immigrants were cheated out of land grants when the contract period was concluded. Evidence suggests that financial inability and the untimely or no repatriation of workers hindered the performance of the *Hajj* or the pilgrimage to Mecca during the month of *Dhul Hijja*.⁶²

The colonial government in Jamaica insisted that a State Registered Marriage Officer should perform the marriage, obtain a 'Certificate of No Impediment', and subse-

quently register the marriage. Both the Muslims and Hindus steadfastly opposed this. Evidence suggests that *mullahs/moulvis* or Muslim priests performed Muslim marriages, without being appointed Marriage Officers by the Governor under the Jamaican Marriage Law. In a letter to the Protector of Immigrants written in 1945, Moulvi Madar Hussain, an immigrant from India, claimed that he solemnized Muslim marriages for nearly 50 years without having an official appointment.⁶³ Apparently, there were four *moulvis* in 1943. Although in Islam, marriage requires no priest, Muslims regard the marriage function as a religious duty, rather than being only a civil act with legal functions. State Registered Marriage Officers tended to diminish the religious aspect of the marriage institution and eroded the respect of the *mullah* or *moulvi*. Since the workers were on temporary contracts and were expected to return to India, Muslims, like Hindus, saw no need to register marriages locally to make them legally valid as long as they observed the religious requirements. Muslim marriages like those of the Hindus, therefore, failed to receive legal recognition, hence the children of such unions were regarded as illegitimate.⁶⁴ This denied the children inheritance on the death of their parents and the wife inheritance from her husband's property at his death and *vice versa*. Such a practice was in direct contradiction to Islamic law, which does not allow children to bear the stigma of illegitimacy or the women that of unlawful consort. The Muslim immigrants were aware that in Islam marriage is a civil contract and a commitment to Islam based on mutual consent and love for procreation and legalizing children.⁶⁵ The marriage relationship is summed up in the metaphor of the Holy Qur'an: 'They (wives) are your garments and you (husbands) are their garments'.⁶⁶ Many Qur'anic verses urge Muslims to get married: 'And He it is who has created man from water, and then He has made for him blood and marriage relationships. Your Lord is All-Powerful';⁶⁷ 'Lord, give us joy in our wives and children and make us examples to those who fear you'.⁶⁸ Prophet Muhammad (SAW) emphasized the importance of the practice of marriage when he said: 'Marriage is my Sunnah. He who does not act according to my Sunnah does not belong to me'; 'A person who marries achieves half his religion, so let him fear Allah in the other half'.⁶⁹

Furthermore, the chapter of the Qur'an entitled '*Al-Nisa*' ('The Women') defines in a just manner the share of inheritance that is due to each individual, male and female. According to this chapter, women are not only no longer allowed to be inherited like chattels, but as individuals, they have a legal right to inheritance.⁷⁰ 'Men shall have a share in what their parents and kinsmen leave; and women shall have a share in what their parents and kinsmen leave; whether it be little or much, it is legally theirs'.⁷¹ The adherence of the Muslims to the Qur'anic commands and their objection to abide by the requirements under Jamaican Law deprived many Jamaican-born Indian Muslims and the widows of the first generation of indentured immigrants of their rightful inheritance.

Although many Muslims were multilingual, some speaking as many as nine languages, the lack of fluency in English among them often put them at a disadvantage when concluding a contract or in the courts where their statements could not be understood.⁷² Language barriers also prevented the completion of marriage certificates by the *moulvis*, officiating the marriages.⁷³

In the midst of economic hardship and social degeneration, the Christian churches applied overt and covert pressures for conversion to Christianity. Some Muslims accepted Christianity along with other East Indians. However, the process of baptism and acceptance of Christian names were often only pretensions, since ostentatious acceptance of Christianity gave them some social respectability and with it came

personality change.⁷⁴ Although some third generation Indian Muslims no longer observe Islamic practices, they have not embraced Christianity. Apparently, many Muslims such as Alice Badlu from Albany, St. Mary, and some of the Munsies from Islington, St. Mary, still believe in the first pillar of faith, *Imaan—la ilaha illa Allah Muhammadur Rasul Allah* ('There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet'). However, the descendants of Hafizullah in Annatto Bay have accepted Christianity.

The observance of *Hussay* on the 10th of *Muharram* (the first lunar month of the Muslim calendar) commemorating the martyrdom of Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad and son of the last of the first four Caliphs, Ali ibn Abi Talib, has amounted to carnival celebration in Clarendon, Jamaica, particularly among the *Shiite* descendants of the Indian immigrants and of the low caste Hindus. The tragedy at Karbala, Iraq, has given birth to the enactment of the death dramas and the symbols of mourning, the horse and *tazya*, representation of Hussain's shrine at Karbala.⁷⁵ The *Shiite* community worldwide observes this tragic event with solemn remembrance of Imam Hussein, who died while defending Islam. The religious significance of the 10th of *Muharram* emphasized by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has been lost by the *Shiite* descendants, though upheld by the *Sunni* Muslims. On the other hand, the *Shiite* observance of *Muharram* is regarded to be an un-Islamic practice by the *Sunnis* worldwide.

Physical discomfort and mental anguish did not distract most Muslims from the *shariah*, the path of Islam. The spiritual struggle, or the inner exertion in the way of Allah, by Muslim immigrants individually and jointly enabled them to survive as a minority among the majority low caste Hindu indentured labourers and in a new hostile Christian environment in the estates. The aspiration to survive as Muslims made them adopt strategies and charter actions to retain and reinforce their faith and maintain unity of the *ummah* island-wide through educational and social events, besides religious teachings and activities.

The Muslim Ideal

The East Indian Muslims realized that an important way of ensuring the preservation of Islamic identity was through a sound Islamic education for the younger generation. Consequently, they refused to send their children to schools for fear of being converted to Christianity, rather than objecting to education *per se*. The churches ran government elementary schools established for the children of the immigrants from India. Therefore, such institutions were seen as agents of proselytization. Parents of the children who went to such schools asked their children to be exempted from religious classes. In fact, Muslim parents expressed their desire that their children be taught in Arabic or Urdu, a language derived from Arabic and Persian and developed and introduced by the Mughals in India. The Urdu language differentiated the more educated Muslims from the non-Muslims in India. It is still spoken by most Muslims in India and is at present the official language of Pakistan. Muslims further wanted their children to be taught by Muslim Indian teachers in order to retain the Islamic culture and be integrated into their own ethnic group.

The Jamaican colonial government until 1910 did not see it necessary to have separate schools and to finance education for the children of 'transient citizens'.⁷⁶ Efforts to retain Islamic culture on the part of the Indian parents and the indifferent

attitude of the government towards educating the Indian children resulted in illiteracy and kept the community in a contemptuous position.

In the meantime, the observance of religious festivities gained prominence among the activities pursued by the Muslims to strengthen the *ummah*. On *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adhaa*, Muslims working in different estates and scattered in various parishes came together with their families and performed their prayers as one *ummah*.⁷⁷ The Islamic tradition of celebrating *Eid al-Fitr*, the festival of the breaking of the fast of *Ramadaan* on the first day of the month of *Shawwal* and *Eid al-Adhaa*, the festival of sacrifice commemorating Prophet Ibrahim's obedience of Allah and his sacrifice and steadfastness of his son, Ismaa'il, on the 10th of *Dhul Hijjah*, was observed with great festivities. The strength of their faith and unity was also demonstrated through their efforts to perform together the obligatory *Jumma*, congregational prayers on Friday afternoons. *Sumi* families came together to observe the 10th of *Muharram*, called *A'ashura*, which is the climax of two days of fasting recommended by Prophet Muhammad and as practised by Prophet Musa (Moses) as an expression of glorification to Allah in commemoration of the saving of Prophet Musa from the Pharaoh of Egypt.⁷⁸

The traditional Indian Muslim ceremony of holding *Milad-un-Nabi*, in commemoration and observance of the birth, life, achievements and favours for the Prophet, was also kept alive. The gathering of the *ummah* to express gratitude to Allah and seek His Blessings on behalf of the Prophet helped to strengthen and reinforce their faith. Other occasions when the Muslims came together included weddings, the birth of a child, and the death of a Muslim to offer *salaat al-janaazah*, the funeral prayer, which is a duty imposed on the Muslim community. They used their own personal land for cemetery purposes. They further realized that solidarity within the community is the first step towards the realization of unity, and hence, an effective means to meet the challenges against the Islamic faith.

The Institutionalization of Islam

Communal solidarity manifested itself in the establishment of two houses of formal worship—*masjids* or mosques—thus institutionalizing Islam in Jamaica. For almost a century, Muslim immigrants performed prayers individually and in congregations without a formal house of worship or a *masjid*. The lack of appropriate opportunities to build *masjids* and the idea that the whole world is a *mosque* for prostration without exceptions may have been the reasons for the absence of *masjids* during indenture-ship. The East Indian Muslims' steadfastness to live in the way of Allah led them to build the first *masjid* located at 8 Windsor Road, Spanish Town, Saint Catherine, in 1957, the year which also witnessed the establishment of the short-lived British West Indies Federation Government. Named Masjid Ar-Rahman, it was built by Mohammed Khan, a Muslim immigrant worker who had come to Jamaica from Uttar Pradesh in 1915 at the age of 15.⁷⁹ The Masjid at once became the spiritual centre for upholding the banner of Islam, uniting the Muslims and teaching and training them about Islam and Islamic practices. It also acted as the centre of social, educational and religious activities. The functions of the Masjid resembled those of the Holy Mosque, in Makkah in its worship aspect and those of the Prophet's Mosque, in Madinah in terms of spiritual, educational, social and political aspects of Muslim community life. The Masjid encouraged the performance of prayers in congregations, as the merits of praying thus are much greater than praying individually at home. The congregates lost no time to chart the action of *da'wah*, the duty of Muslims to invite non-Muslims to

Islam and Muslims to become better adherents to the principles of Islam. Muhammad Khan's deep conviction and learning in Islam were so strong that the community named him to be the first *imam* of the mosque.⁸⁰ He performed his duties, leading the prayers of the Muslim congregates until his death in 1973. Despite many odds, Muhammad Khan performed the *Hajj*, the fifth pillar of Islam, and earned the title of *al-Hajj*.

The Spanish Town Mosque is a concrete structure, measuring approximately 20×25 feet (7×8 metres) with four small minarets and a dome symbolizing Islamic architecture. The present *Imam* is from Guyana, a descendent of an Indian immigrant. The community has a large racial mix, including Indians and Africans. Masjid Ar-Rahman inspired the Muslims of Westmoreland to erect the second mosque in Jamaica. Masjid Hussain in Three Miles River, Westmoreland, was built upon the land contributed by Aja Golaub, a Muslim immigrant who came from India with his father at the age of seven.⁸¹ The construction of the *masjid* was spearheaded and organized by Latif Bacchus, an Indian Muslim from Guyana. Built in 1958, the *masjid* was originally a wooden structure measuring approximately 15×20 feet (5×7 metres). The *masjid* has been reconstructed and is now a concrete structure (20×30 feet or 7×10 metres) and stands as an example of the spiritual richness of the indentured Muslims. Its first *imam*, Tafazzal Hussein, came directly from India in the 1950s. Well versed in Islamic theology, he served as an inspiration to the Muslim community and he led prayers until his death in 1988 at the age of 87 years.

The *masjids* in Spanish Town and Westmoreland offered classes in Arabic and Urdu illustrating the importance the two languages to these Muslims. Arabic, the language of the Holy Qur'an, occupies a special place in the heart of every Muslim, and Urdu poetry and prose with its literary style, humour and witty writing was initiated and reached its perfection in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, the home of many of these Muslim immigrants.⁸² The *khutbah* or Friday sermons at *Jumm'ah* were delivered in Urdu until very recently. The increasing racial mix has led to the introduction of English as the medium of presentation of the *khutbah* with occasional Arabic as references from the Holy Qur'an or the *Hadith*. The *masjids* have continued Islamic studies in Arabic begun by the Indian Muslims and classes in Mathematics and English are additional offerings.

Since the founding of the *masjids* in Jamaica by the East Indian Muslims, Islam has made its permanent presence in a predominantly black Christian country. The indentured Muslims laid the foundation for the seven subsequent *masjids* established in Jamaica since the 1960s with the advent of a black Muslim community. While the first two *masjids* were built with individual family assistance, the latter ones have been built mostly through contributions made by the Muslims and maintained with the help of regular contributions by the community. The racial mixture in the Muslim community and the presence now of nine mosques indicate the growing importance of Islam in Jamaica. Unity of the *masjids* is maintained through the Central Masjid located at Camp Road, Kingston, established in 1981.

Besides facilitating the coming together of the community through regular congregational prayers, each *masjid* serves as a centre for religious and social activities. The present *masjids*, as in the days of indenture-ship, celebrate with great festivities the occasions of *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adhaa*. Following the traditions of the Muslim world, the *masjids* have a library on Islamic theology and jurisprudence. They also serve as a centre for assistance at times of disasters, and provide accommodation for Muslims visiting Jamaica on official duties. Every year, the Central Masjid welcomes delegates from many Muslim countries attending the Annual Law of the Sea Bed Conference in

Kingston. Its regular membership is also very cosmopolitan, including representatives from Asia, Africa, North America, Europe and the Caribbean.

The *masjids* also act as agencies to collect *zakat*, the obligatory tax on wealth paid annually by Muslims and distribute the same among the poor and needy Muslims. In short, the *masjids* have helped shape a Muslim identity and for this the Jamaican Muslims are indebted to the indentured Muslims.

The Muslim community has realized the importance of the family to the growth and development of the community and consequently the *masjids* take much pride in arranging meeting of prospective couples for marriage. The Islamic principle of a marriage contract between two equal partners which entails an offer by the groom in the presence of two witnesses is strictly adhered to. The bride enjoys the exclusive right to stipulate her own conditions in the contract, determining terms of marriage and divorce terms and *mahr* (dowry), a gift in the form of cash, jewellery or land, which is considered to be a cushion for divorce. This is in accordance with the Qur'anic saying: 'Give women their *mahr* (dowry) as a free gift; but if they choose to make over to you part of it, you may regard it as lawfully yours'.⁸³ The *sheikh* or the *imam* usually solemnizes the marriage in the *masjid* followed by *Valimah*, a feast arranged to celebrate the marriage.

The desire and effort to observe the Islamic dietary principles among the Muslims is reflected in the increasing availability of *halal* meat in the mosques, particularly during religious festivals and on Fridays. A meat store was opened in Portmore in 1986 by the Indian Muslims to sell *halal* meat to the Muslims. In keeping with the spirit and principles, a bakery has been established at the Camp Road *masjid* to provide the Muslim brethren with confectionery goods, which contain no prohibited (*haram*) ingredients such as lard. *Da'wah* is no longer confined to public lectures and seminars conducted in the educational institutions by the *ummah* members. Through weekly television discussion sessions and radio programmes called *Islam the Way Forward*, the voice of the *ummah* is heard on the history of the Muslim community, the essence of Islam and on the varied issues and areas covered in the Holy Qur'an and the *Hadith*.

Moghul Delicacies and Gastronomy

The contributions of the indentured Muslims in the area of Jamaican and Caribbean cuisine are difficult to measure in exact terms. With them came the new exotic and spicy Indian food, the influence of the culinary arts of the Moghuls. During the Moghul rule the art of gastronomy and the preparation of a variety of dishes of rice, meat, and milk had reached the height of perfection. Many of these dishes originating from Arabia and Persia not only dominated the Moghul court and the Muslim States in India, but were common items of entertainment by Muslims on most religious and special occasions.⁸⁴ The collective name for foods selected for feasts at home or sent out was *tora*. It consisted of *pulau*; *muzafar*, a sweet, rich rice dish with saffron; *mutanjan*, meat, sugar and rice with spices; *shir mal*, an unleavened bread made with milk and butter with saffron on the top; *safaida*, a simple sweet rice dish; fried aubergine; *shir baranj*, a rich sweet rice dish boiled in milk; *quorma*, meat cooked with yogurt and spices; *arvi*, a fried vegetable with meat; *shami kababs*, croquettes of meat and lentils, along with *murabba*, a dry sweet dish made of mangoes, *achar*, pickles and chutney. The art of gastronomy is illustrated by the various innovations in the preparation of the food. One invented a *pulau* which resembled an *anar dana* (pomegranate seed) in which half of each grain of rice was fiery red like a ruby and the other half was white and sparkled

like a crystal. The dish used to serve the *pulau* appeared to have been filled with coloured jewels. Another cook produced a *nau ratan* (nine-precious gem) *pulau*, in which the rice was coloured to reproduce the nine well-known gems.⁸⁵ In the course of 100 years, refinement and display of delicacies produced excellent Muslim chefs even in Lucknow who became famous throughout India. The legacy of delicacies still continue and in Lucknow interest in good food 'is shared by nearly everyone' and 'their products are incomparable and most delicious'.⁸⁶ Such then were the skills in delicate and delicious cooking of the Muslim immigrant workers, which found expression on special occasions.⁸⁷

Since the 1960s, the variety of *Moghlai* dishes has been increased with the coming of Indians and Pakistanis from the subcontinent. Among the *Shahi Moghlai* dishes which now have made their appearance on the menu list of state functions, special ceremonies and restaurants in Jamaica and more particularly in Trinidad and Guyana are: *Moghlai koftas* (stuffed meat balls), *kabab ruksand* (grilled meat balls), *Moghlai shami kababs*, *seekh kababs* (skewered meat patties), *Moghlai chops* (lamb chops Moghul style), *biryani* (rice with lamb), *pathani-petha gosht* (meat and pumpkin curry), *Moghlai Raan* (spiced leg of lamb), *Moghlai murgha* (spiced chicken curry), *tandoori murgha* (barbecued chicken), *murgha pulao* (chicken *pulao*), *curry goat* (goat meat cooked with hot spices) *paratha* similar to buss-up-shot (a pancake made with milk and fried in clarified butter, thick, crispy and 6–9 inches in diameter), *kheema samosa* (minced meat patties), *sabzi samosa* (vegetable patties), *halva* (cream of wheat, or flour with egg cooked in clarified butter (ghee), *kheer* (rice pudding), *sevian* (vermicelli pudding), *jalebis* (sweets formed in a spiral, glazed with syrup), *gulab jaman*, croquettes of curd in soft syrup, and *shahi tukra* (fried bread in sweet milk).

Because Muslims are meat-eaters, the variety of meat dishes were predominantly confined to the Muslim population of India. Although Hindus, who are for the most part vegetarians, prefer a sweet taste, the names of many of the sweet dishes prepared in India indicate that they originated in Arabia or Persia. Taking the name and taste into consideration, it would appear that *halva* is of Arab origin and came to India via Persia. *Jalebi* is a corruption of Arabic *zalabia*. *Gulab jaman*, *jalebi*, and the four kinds of *halva sohan*, namely, *papri*, *jauzi*, *habshi* and *dudhia*, appear to be essentially Muslim. Moreover, sweets prepared by Muslims are 'infinitely better' because of their culinary experience than those prepared by Hindu confectioners.⁸⁸

The Indian Muslims are known for their use of various exotic spices—*garam massalas* such as clove, cinnamon, cardamom, and saffron. Every *Moghlai* dish is cooked with *garam massala*. Ground cumin (*zeera*) and coriander seeds, turmeric and chilli powder are the other common spices, which have come to Jamaica and to the British West Indies through them. Edible colours, saffron and edible gossamer-thin wafers prepared with gold and silver foil are used for decorative purposes. *Keura* (an essence of flower of the *keura* plant) and rose water are common ingredients used for fragrance in *Moghlai* cooking. Jamaicans commonly use rose water in the preparation of food. Betel leaf and betel nut chewing also played an important part in the social life of India and made their appearances into Jamaica and the Caribbean through the Indians. Traditionally, the betel nut is cut with special scissors and is put into the leaf along with white lime and other ingredients, folded and sometimes wrapped in special edible silver foil.

Moghul Fashion, Jewellery, Music and Decorations

The influence of Indian Muslim dress with its emphasis on modesty cannot be ignored.

Muslims introduced stitched clothing, *kurtas* and *pyjamas* to India. *Sari* and *dhoti*, which are unstitched sheet of cloth were the garments worn by the Indian women and men before the advent of Muslims to India.⁸⁹ In Jamaica, Muslim women, including both Indians and African Jamaicans, are apt in wearing *shalwar*, *kameez*, *punjabee*, *churidar*, *gharrara* (pants with two legs), and *sharrara* (long gown) embroidered *coatti* or vests which are the traditional Islamic dresses worn in India. Non-Muslim African Jamaican women have also learnt to appreciate the fashions of Muslim Indians. Embroidered muslin scarves often worn by well-to-do Jamaican women were part of the dress of all elegant women in Muslim India. Leather works including shoes worn by the Indian immigrants also owe their origin to the Muslims who brought it to India along with their other apparel.⁹⁰ Prior to the arrival of the Muslims to India, wooden sandals were worn by all. Shoes were never worn in India because leather was repugnant to Hindus for religious reasons. Women of East Indian origin in Jamaica own and operate shops carrying female fashion clothing, footwear and jewellery. The jewellery industry run by Muslims of Indian origin (Hassan's Jewellery and William's Jewellery) also became a household name in Jamaica, though in recent times the industry is dominated by non-Muslim Indians.

Muslim rule in India was also known for the development of light classical and instrumental music. Among the innovations which were popular throughout India were *khyal* (a love song), *Urdu ghazals* (songs of lamentation) and *soz* (the recital of *marsiya* elegies in a *majlis*, a religious gathering). These songs with their deep love sentiments and religious undertones were popular among the early Muslim immigrants from India.⁹¹ To improve the *sur* (notes) and *lai* (rhythm), Muslim musicians in India innovated two musical instruments, the *s'arangi*, a stringed instrument (referred to as the Indian guitar), and the *tabla*, a pair of small drums.⁹² After the Muslims came to India and their music collaborated with that of the Hindus, the *tamboura* (a simple stringed instrument with a narrow neck and a gourd at the end) was invented.⁹³ These instruments now form part of the collection of artefacts housed at the African Caribbean Institute, in Kingston, Jamaica.⁹⁴

Since the 1960s, decorative household goods of Indian Muslim origin, which have made their appearance in Jamaica, though on a limited scale, are chandeliers and carpets. Rich carpets and impressive chandeliers were among the furnishings of the Moghul houses. The first documentary evidence of carpet production in India dates to the reign of Akbar.⁹⁵ Fine craftsmanship can be seen in the prayer rugs produced under Shahjahan. Fine weaving combined with the lustrous wool gives the effect of a sumptuous velvet rather than a wool rug. Huge chandeliers illuminated the exquisite administrative halls of the Moghul rulers.⁹⁶

Conclusion

Muslims from the Moghul Empire have not only shaped the Islamic identity of the Muslim Community in Jamaica, but have also integrated with the black Muslim community through interracial marriage. Although insignificant in number, the establishment of the *masjids* long before the erection of the Hindu temple illustrates the resilience and the vibrancy of the Muslim immigrants. It is through this invisible yet invincible minority that the continuity of Islam has been maintained, forming the link between the Moors and African Muslim slaves and the emergence of the black Muslim community in Jamaica since the 1960s. Race and religious prejudices in a predominantly black Christian society, however, have almost eclipsed the story of the Indian

Muslims. Although Islam has been present in Jamaica since the days of Columbus, the Muslim community has not been accorded constitutional recognition. Through their cultural contributions the Muslims from the subcontinent have now become part of the multicultural and multi-heritage society of Jamaica.

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