

Lucknow Culture

However, coming back to our topic of Muslim Culture, we must briefly mention the culture of Lucknow, the capital of the Kingdom of Awadh. When you go to visit a governor or president, there are some manners you have to observe, some etiquette you have to follow. This culture began at the imperial courts of the Muslim monarchy of Delhi. Of course, there existed the court etiquette in the palaces of the Hindu Kings of Rajputana. But the Moghuls of Delhi refined it into a very high degree. From Delhi, it spread to the courts of the provincial governors and rulers throughout India.

When it reached Lucknow, the Nawwabs and the Kings popularized it to such an extent that even common people began observing that etiquette – those manners, in their own houses. Thus the Lucknow culture came into being, where people on meeting one another bow down to each other, use approved phrases and words, each insisting that the other should go ahead — and many things like that. This culture spread in accord and due respect to everyone to Patna and Murshidabad in the East, and Hyderabad in the South. It enriched the Indian cultural fabrics. Although the hustle and bustle of modern life had taken its toll, it is still the hallmark of civility and culture. This culture teaches you to give preference to others; it trains you to speak politely even while angry, to express your displeasure in a civilized manner.

In the past, the people of Lucknow gave so much importance to teaching their children good behaviour and proper manners of talking, sitting, walking, eating, drinking and things like that, that they used to send the children to some reputable courtesans. It may look strange but actually those courtesans maintained very strict discipline in their places; nothing was done which could not be seen by the wives and daughters. And just by sitting in those gatherings, youths learned how to behave properly.

Those days are gone, although its influence may be found here and there. I am optimistic by nature, and I expect and hope that the respect and love which the Lucknow culture showed to others, the respect and love which Islam accords to others, which Hinduism shows to others, will eventually prevail; and the people of India will again return to their original way of thinking, and settle their differences amicably and peacefully, showing love and respect to one another, living in harmony and brotherhood.

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