CCOT Essay: Diffusion of Islam to South Asia

Between 610 CE to 1450 CE, the diffusion of Islam from the Middle East to South Asia changed from the main religions of South Asia being Hinduism and Buddhism to the main religions being Hinduism and Islam. Also, Muslims expanded the term dhimmi to include not only Christians and Jews like before the diffusion of Islam from the Middle East to South Asia, but also to include Hindus and Buddhists. However, Muslims continued to believe in egalitarianism in their faith, but practice non-egalitarian concepts in their lives by adopting Hindu practices for a majority of this time period.
In the time period of 600CE-1450CE, the diffusion of Islam from the Middle East to South Asia changed from the main religions of South Asia being Hinduism and Buddhism to the main religions being Hinduism and Islam. This was because Buddhists converted because they were attracted to the organization of Islam and some low-caste Hindus converted because they liked how in Islam all people were seen as equal in God’s eyes. This was because in Hinduism they were at the bottom of the caste system meaning that they had a long way to go before reaching mahisha in their next lives, but in Islam as long as they followed the 5 Pillars then they could go to heaven.
Before Mahmud of Ghazni first entered North India in the early 1000s CE, the majority of Indians were Hindus and the minority of Indians were Buddhists, with some smaller and less popular religions as well. But while Islam was being diffused to South Asia, the main group of people to convert were Buddhists, which can be seen because they were unhappy with the disorganization of Buddhism. Also, some low-caste Hindus converted to Islam because some laborers and untouchables were too poor to pay the jizya, so they converted to Islam in order to avoid it. After the diffusion of Islam to South Asia, Qutb-ud-din- Aibak established Delhi as the capital
of the Sultanate of Delhi in 1206 CE which showed how the Muslim minority ruled over the Hindu majority demonstrating that the main religions of South Asia were no longer Hinduism and Buddhism, but instead Hinduism and Islam. Also, during the time period of 610 CE to 1450 CE Muslims expanded the term dhimmi to include not only Christians and Jews like before the diffusion of Islam to South Asia, but also to include Hindus and Buddhists. For example, Hindus and Buddhists were allowed to pay the jizya in exchange for religious tolerance showing that they were considered dhimmi along with Christians and Jews. However, throughout the time period of
610 CE to 1450 CE, Muslims continued to believe in egalitarianism in their faith, but practiced nonegalitarian concepts in their lives by adopting some Hindu practices for a majority of this time period. This may have been because Muslims wanted people to convert to Islam so they adopted some Hindu practices in order to make their religion more like Hinduism in order to make people more willing to convert. This is similar to when Christianity was spreading throughout the Mediterranean when Christians adopted ceremonies and the honor of saints in order to appeal to Rome's early polytheistic beliefs in order to gain converts during the Classical era.
For example, during the Abbasid Caliphate Muslims practiced the seclusion of women in the house and harem and the veiling of women when leaving the house along with the required presence of a man when leaving the house in order to show the women's inferiority to men. This same basic concept can be seen when Islam diffused to South Asia when some Muslims adopted the Hindu practice of sati in order to show the wife's dependence on her husband. Also, Muslims divided along caste lines that were first introduced to them by Hindus in the early 1000s CE when Mahmud of Ghazni entered North India in order to show how some people were considered to be more important than others. This
Continuity was also similar to when Islam diffused to Southeast Asia during this time period because Sufis allowed people to practice some of the animistic beliefs that people had before Islam had diffused to Southeast Asia which created a different version of Islam that was still considered to loosely be Islam (just with some conflicting beliefs.) The Sufis also did this in order to make their religion seem more familiar to them in order to make people more willing to convert over to Islam.
Therefore, during the time period of 610 CE to 1450 CE the diffusion of Islam from the Middle East to South Asia changed from the most popular religions of South Asia being Hinduism and Buddhism to the most popular religions of South Asia being Hinduism and Islam. Also, the term dhimmi changed from referring to just Christians and Jews to also referring to Hindus and Buddhists. However, Muslims continued to believe that all people were seen as equal in God’s eyes, but not practice this concept in their lives shown by how they adopted some Hindu practices for a majority of this time period.