

# History of India up to 1206AD

## (18BHI13C)

### UNIT 4

#### Contents

1 Arab Conquest of Sind (712 A.D.) .....	2
2 Mahmud of Ghazni .....	3
3 Muhammad Ghori .....	5
4. Impact of Mohammeden Invasion .....	6

## 1 Arab Conquest of Sind (712 A.D.)

The religion Islam was born at Mecca in Arabia. Its founder was Prophet Muhammad. But his teachings made the wealthy people of Mecca his enemies. Therefore, he migrated to Medina in 622 A.D., which was the starting point of the Muslim calendar and the Muslim era called hijra. After eight years he returned to Mecca with his followers. He died in 632 A.D.

The followers of Muhammad set up an empire called the Caliphate. The Umayyads and the Abbasids were called the caliphs. They expanded their rule by conquests and spread their religion Islam. In 712 A.D., Muhammad bin Qasim invaded Sind. He was the commander of the Umayyad kingdom. Qasim defeated Dahir, the ruler of Sind and killed him in a well-contested battle. His capital Aror was captured. Qasim extended his conquest further into Multan. Qasim organized the administration of Sind. The people of Sind were given the status of *zimmis* (protected subjects). There was no interference in the lives and property of the people. Soon, Qasim was recalled by the Caliph.

However, Sind continued to be under the Arabs. But the Muslims could not expand their authority further into India due to the presence of the powerful Pratihara kingdom in western India. Although the conquest of Sind did not lead to further conquests immediately, it had resulted in the diffusion of Indian culture abroad. Many Arab travelers visited Sind. Indian medicine and astronomy were carried to far off lands through the Arabs. The Indian numerals in the Arabic form went to Europe through them. Since Sind was a part of the Arab empire, the inflow of Indian knowledge was great.

The Arab governor of Iraq, Hajjaj Bin Yusuf, under the pretext of acting against the pirates, sent two military expeditions against Dahar, the ruler of Sind, one by land and the other by sea. Both were defeated and commanders killed. Hajjaj then sent, with the Caliph's permission, a full-fledged army, with 6000 strong cavalry and a large camel corps carrying all war requirements under the command of his son-in-law, a 17-year-old Muhammad Bin Qasim.

### **Muhammad Bin Qasim**

Muhammad Qasim marched on the fortress of Brahmanabad where Dahar was stationed with a huge army. Dahar's wazir (Prime minister) betrayed him, which was followed by the desertion of a section of his forces. The predecessors of Dahar, the Brahmin rulers of Sind, had usurped power from the earlier Buddhist ruling dynasty of Sind and, with the patronage of Dahar Brahmins, had occupied all higher positions. This led to discontentment and therefore Dahar lacked popular support. In this context it was easy for Muhammad Qasim to capture

Brahmanabad. Qasim thereupon ravaged and plundered Debal for three days. Qasim called on the people of Sind to surrender, promising full protection to their faith. He sent the customary one-fifth of the plunder to the Caliph and divided the rest among his soldiers.

The Arab conquest of Sind has been described as a “triumph without results” because it touched but a fringe of the country, which, after Qasim’s expedition had a respite from invasions for about three centuries.

## **2 Mahmud of Ghazni**

In the meantime, the Arab empire in Central Asia had collapsed with several of its provinces declaring themselves independent. One of the major kingdoms that emerged out of the broken Arab empire was the Samanid kingdom which also splintered, leading to several independent states. In 963 Alaptigin, a Turkic slave who had served Samanids as their governor in Khurasan, seized the city of Ghazni in eastern Afghanistan and established an independent kingdom. Alaptigin died soon after. After the failure of three of his successors, the nobles enthroned Sabuktigin.

Sabuktigin initiated the process of southward expansion into the Indian sub-continent. He defeated the Shahi ruler of Afghanistan, Jayapal, and conferred the governorship of the province on Mahmud, his eldest son. When Sabuktigin died in 997, Mahmud was in Khurasan. Ismail, the younger son of Sabuktigin had been named his successor. But defeating Ismail in a battle, Mahmud, aged twenty-seven, ascended the throne and the Caliph acknowledged his accession by sending him a robe of investiture and by conferring on him the title Yamini-ud-Daulah (‘Right-hand of the Empire’).

### **Mahmud’s Military Raids**

Mahmud ruled for thirty-two years. During this period, he conducted as many as seventeen military campaigns into India. He targeted Hindu temples that were depositories of vast treasures. Though the motive was to loot, there was also a military advantage in demolishing temples and smashing idols. The Ghaznavid soldiers viewed it also as a demonstration of the invincible power of their god. The religious passions of Mahmud’s army expressed itself in slaughter of ‘infidels’ and plunder and destruction of their places of worship. However, there is little evidence of any large scale conversion of people to their faith. Even those who became Muslims to save their lives and properties, returned to their original faith when the threat of Ghaznavid invasion ceased.

After defeating the Shahi king Anandapala, Mahmud went beyond Punjab, penetrating deep into the Indo-Gangetic plain. Before reaching Kanauj, Mahmud raided Mathura. In later historiography, of both the British and Indian nationalists, Mahmud is notorious for his invasion of the temple city of Somnath (1025) on the seashore in Gujarat. Many scholars argue that these plundering raids were more of political and economic character than of religious chauvinism. Desecration of temples, vandalising the images of deities were all part of asserting one's authority in medieval India. Mahmud's raids and his deeds fit this pattern, though their memories went into the creation of communal divide.

This apart, the plundering raids of Mahmud were meant to replenish the treasury to maintain his huge army. The Turks relied on a permanent, professional army. It was built around an elite corps of mounted archers who were all slaves, bought, trained, equipped, and paid in cash from the war booty taken alike from Hindu kingdoms in India and Muslim kingdoms in Iran.

Persian sources contain exaggerated claims about the wealth seized from these raids. For instance, it is claimed that Mahmud's plunder of the Iranian city of Ray, in 1029, brought him 500,000 dinars worth of jewels, 260,000 dinars in coins, and over 30,000 dinars worth of gold and silver vessels. Similarly, Mahmud's raid on Somnath is believed to have brought in twenty million dinars worth of spoils. Romila Thapar points out that those who had suffered from these predatory invasions seemed to maintain a curious silence about them, as Hindu and Jain sources available on Somnath expedition do not corroborate the details or viewpoints found in Arab chronicles.

Such plundering raids were economic and iconoclastic in nature, and communal character was attributed to them later. They represented the kinds of disasters that were inseparable from contemporary warfare and the usual plundering nature of rulers of the medieval period.

The history of the Ghaznavid dynasty after the death of Mahmud is a story of endless clashes over succession between brothers, cousins, and uncles. There were, however, exceptions like Sultan Ibrahim who ruled for over forty-two years and his son Masud who ruled for seventeen years. The ever-hanging threat from Ghuris from the north and the Seljuq Turks from the west proved to be disastrous for the kingdom. The later rulers of Ghaznavid dynasty could exercise their authority only in the Lahore region and even this lasted only for three decades. In 1186 Ghuri prince Muizz-ud-din Muhammad invaded Punjab and seized Lahore.

The last ruler Khurav Shah was imprisoned and murdered in 1192. With his death the Ghaznavid house of Mahmud came to an end.

### **3 Muhammad Ghori**

If Ghaznavid invasions were intended for loot, the Ghurids enlarged their scope to establish garrison towns to ensure the regular flow of plunder and tribute. Muizzuddin Muhammad of the Ghori dynasty, known generally as Muhammad Ghori, invested in territories he seized.

Through the 1180s and 1190s Ghori established garrisons in the modern provinces of Punjab, Sind, and Haryana. These centres of military power soon attracted the in-migration of mercenaries in search of opportunities. These mercenaries were recruited to organize fiscal and military affairs of the Sultanate. The Sultan's military commanders in north India were drawn from his elite military class. Specially trained in warfare and governance these slaves were different from agrestic (related to landfield labour) and domestic slaves. Lahore, then Uchch and Multan were initially considered significant centres of power. In 1175 Ghori headed for the city of Multan which he seized from its Ismaili ruler. The fort of Uchch fell without a fight. The Chalukyas of Gujarat inflicted a crushing defeat on Muhammad Ghori at Mt. Abu (1179). After this defeat Ghori changed the course of his expedition, consolidating his position in Sind and the Punjab.

Ghori attacked the fortress of Tabarhinda (Bhatinda), a strategic point for the Chauhans of Ajmer. The ruler of Ajmer Prithviraj Chauhan marched to Tabarhinda and faced the invader in the First Battle of Tarain (1191). Prithviraj scored a brilliant victory in this battle but failed to consolidate his position believing this battle to be a frontier fight, and did not expect the Ghurids to make regular attacks. Ghori was wounded and carried away by a horseman to safety. Contrary to the expectations of Prithviraj Chauhan, Muhammad Ghori marched into India in the following year (1192). Prithviraj underestimated the potential danger of the enemy. In the Second Battle of Tarain, one of the turning points in Indian history, Prithviraj suffered a crushing defeat and was eventually captured. Ghori restored him to his throne in Ajmer. But on charges of treason he was later executed, and Ghori's trusted general Qutb-ud-din Aibak was appointed as his deputy in India.

Soon Ghori was back in India to fight against the Kanauj ruler Jaya Chandra. When all Rajput chiefs had stood by Prithviraja in his battles against Muhammad Ghori, Jaya Chandra stood apart, as there was enmity between Prithviraj and Jai Chandra, on account of Prithviraj's

abduction of Jaya Chandra's daughter Samyukta. So Ghori easily defeated Jaya Chandra and returned to Ghazni with an enormous booty. On the way while camping on the banks of Indus, he was killed by some unidentified assassins.

#### **4. Impact of Mohammeden Invasion**

- **Religious Changes:** Islam was established in Sind and Multan. The attempt failed as Rajput's had a strong position in North. Initially, after the death of Muhammad bin Qasim, the Khalifah were shaken and the Islamic propagation was declined. The alliances made by Muhammad Bin Qasim proved to be fruitful in later invasion of Islamic rulers. The views on Islam were changed as Arabs were not cruel. No extra taxes were imposed on Hindus for believing in Hinduism which won their hearts and they embraced the Arabs with the open arms.
- **Political and Social impact on India:** The poor management of the Hindu rulers and their weak army strengths were in front of the world which developed the interest of Arabs to occupy the entire India. The Arabs opened the way of communication with the other Islamic regions and thus the direct trade and business with the Islamic countries started (should be added or not). The Sind area which was considered to be tribal before Arab invasion became economically strong and civilized. The law and order of the Arabs changed the social status of the region. The Arabs were great politicians. They believed in winning the mind of people rather than acquiring land. The social reforms took place during this time as the peaceful administration was set whereas other parts of India were highly disturbed. The disunity of Hindu Rajas proved to be the bigger spring bolt to bring the change in the area. The common people were fed up with internal fights and they had no respect for the Rajput's empire.
- **Economical and cultural developments:** The Arabs adopted the policy of toleration and allowed Hindus to follow their religion. The Arabs adopted the rich rituals of Brahmins and gained knowledge in the areas of Astrology, Medicine and Arthashastra. Many of the Sanskrit words were added in Arab dictionaries. The small areas were converted in cities. The Arabs did town planning according to the crop of that particular area and set up business accordingly. This improved the economical conditions of the Sind Region. For trade horses and camels were brought from other areas which later on became a mean of carrying goods from Sind to other countries.

- **The settlement of Arabs:** Many of the Arab soldiers married Sindhi women and got settled in Sind. This increased the population of the region. The Arabs started treating Sind as their own land and tried to develop the area in all the spheres. The good buildings and planning of cities left a significant impact on the Indian culture which was reflected later on. The Arabs were great poets. They believed in the development of new languages which gave birth to Sindhi language (a mixture of Arab and Sanskrit language). The poetry written in Sindhi is famous till date. It given birth too many famous poets. The great Quran was translated in Arabian language.

The Arab invasion in Sind region was a great historical moment which brought social and economic development in the tribal region of Sind. The law and order were established. Peace and culture was developed. Education was spread. Trade with the Arab countries was set. The people of Sind adopted Islamic culture. Their belief that the Islam only believes in cruelty changed and the Islam was spread. The Brahmins were given respect and they were free to follow Hinduism. They repaired some Hindu temples which were destroyed in Islamic Invasion. Thus, the Hindus developed respect for the Arabs. Hinduism and Islamic culture were followed side by side and the two religions had healthy exchanges of culture. A mix culture was spread which was known as Sindhi Culture. It has impact on the coming times. This period was not for a very long time. It ended with the death of Muhammad Bin Qasim but The Sind area had great benefits during this time.