

CLASS SET

Interactions in India (711-1707)

In the early 8th century, Islam became popular in the northwestern corner of the Indian subcontinent. Islam's arrival in India had a profound impact on the region. This impact is still evident today with the division of Muslim Pakistan and Bangladesh and Hindu dominated India.

Islam Arrives

The first significant Muslim push into India was in 711 at Sind, near the Indus River delta. By the late 900's a Turkish Muslim sultan who controlled Ghazni or what is Afghanistan today began sending troops on horseback through the Khyber Pass on raids for booty. Eventually these raids established a tribute relationship between the Muslims and Hindus in northern India.



By 1151, Ghazni was in civil war and a new Turkish dynasty arose and conquered all the way to Delhi. Armies of the Turks destroyed Hindu places of worship and massacred thousands of Hindus on the march to Delhi. These new Turkish ruler established the Delhi Sultanate.

Islam was present in India before the Turkish invasions, because Muslim merchants had lived in the coastal ports of India for years. Muslim merchants living in these cities were known to have married local women and were important business leaders in their communities.

The Delhi Sultanate

The territory under control of the Muslim rulers in Delhi expanded rapidly. By mid-century, Bengal and much of central India was under the Delhi Sultanate. They based their laws on the Quran and the sharia and permitted non-Muslim subjects to practice their religion only if they paid the jizya (head tax). They ruled from urban centers, while military camps and trading posts provided the nuclei for towns that sprang up in the countryside.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Sultanate was its temporary success in insulating the subcontinent from the potential devastation of the Mongol invasion from Central Asia in the 13th century, which nonetheless led to the capture of Afghanistan and western Pakistan by the Mongols. The Sultanate ushered in a period of Indian cultural renaissance, The resulting "Indo-Muslim" fusion left lasting monuments in architecture, music, literature, and religion. In addition it is surmised that the language of Urdu (literally meaning "horde" or "camp" in various Turkic dialects) was born during the Dehli Sultanate period as a result of the mingling of Sanskritic Hindi and the Persian, Turkish, Arabic favored by the Muslim invaders of India.

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The Sultanate suffered from the sacking of Delhi in 1398 by Timur (Tamerlane) but revived briefly under the Lodhis before it was conquered by the Mughals in 1526, who ruled from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Mughals were also Muslims, so relations between Muslims and Hindus as conqueror over conquered continued to the 1700's.

Religious Differences

Hindus and Muslims differed profoundly in their faiths. Hindu polytheism conflicted with Islamic monotheism. Muslim rulers saw themselves as foreign conquerors and maintained a strict separation between the Muslim ruling class and the Hindu population. While the Muslim rulers seemed to be tolerant of Hindus, they were not adverse to destroying Hindu temples and building mosques in their place.

Very few Hindus converted to Islam, and those that did were generally from the lower castes hoping to escape the discrimination they faced. The relationship between Hindus and Muslims in Post-Classical India was generally characterized by suspicion and dislike.

Cultural Exchange

Islamic traditions blended with language, dress, cuisine, architecture, social customs and values of the natives to give rise to much of present day Indian culture. Islamic architecture and art is widely noticeable in India, examples being the Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar.

Islamic rule saw a greater urbanization of India and the rise of many cities and their urban cultures. The biggest impact was upon trade resulting from a common commercial and legal system extending from Morocco to Indonesia. This change of emphasis on mercantilism and trade from the more strongly centralized governance systems further clashed with the agricultural based traditional economy and also provided fuel for social and political tensions.

Numerous Indian scientific and mathematical advances including the use of Hindu-Arabic numerals were spread to the rest of the world. The languages brought by Islam were modified by contact with local languages leading to the creation of several new languages, such as Urdu, which uses the modified Arabic script, but with more Persian words. The influences of these languages exist in several dialects in India today.

Adapted from these sources:

http://www.bharatadesam.com/history/islamic_conquest_in_india.php

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<http://history-world.org/islam6.htm>