

# Muslim conquest in the Indian subcontinent

**Muslim conquest in South Asia** mainly took place from the 13th to the 16th centuries, though earlier Muslim conquests made limited inroads into the region, beginning during the period of the ascendancy of the Rajput Kingdoms in North India, from the 7th century onwards.

However, the Himalayan kingdoms of today's Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim and others high in the Himalayas (such as Almora, Garhwal, Lahul, Spiti, Kinnaur in modern Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh and Chitgaon Hills) were never conquered by Muslims.

## Background

Like other sedentary societies in history, South Asia has been attacked by nomadic tribes throughout its long history. In evaluating the impact of Islam on the sub-continent, one must also note that the sub-continent was a frequent target of tribes from Persia and Central Asia who arrived from the North West. With the fall of the Sassanids and the arrival of the Caliphate's domination of the region these tribes began to contest with the new power and were subsequently integrated into it giving rise to Muslim dynasties of Central Asian heritage, generally the Afghans and Turkics. In that sense, the Muslim invasions of the 10th century onwards were not dissimilar to those of the earlier invasions in the History of Central Asia during the 1st through to the 6th century. What does however, make the Muslim invasions different is that unlike the preceding invaders who assimilated into the prevalent social system, the Muslim conquerors retained their Islamic identity and created new legal and administrative systems that challenged and usually superseded the existing systems of social conduct and ethics. They also introduced new cultural mores that in some ways were very different from the existing cultural codes. While this was often a source of friction and conflict, it should also be noted that there were also Muslim rulers, notably Akbar, who in much of their secular practice absorbed or accommodated local traditions.

The first incursion by the new Muslim successor states of the Persian Empire occurred around 664 CE during the Umayyad Caliphate, led by Mohalib towards Multan in Southern Punjab, in modern day Pakistan. Mohalib's expeditions were not aimed at conquest, though they penetrated only as far as the capital of the Maili, he returned with wealth and prisoners of war. This was an Arab incursion and part of the early Umayyad push onwards from the Islamic conquest of Persia into Central Asia, and within the limits of the eastern borders of previous Persian empires. The last Arab push in the region would be towards the end of Umayyad reign under Muhammad bin Qasim, after whom the Arabs would be defeated by the Rajputs at the Battle of Rajasthan in 738, and Muslim incursions would only be resumed under later Turkic and Pathan dynasties with more local capitals, who supplanted the Caliphate and expanded their domains both northwards and eastwards.

It took several centuries for Islam to spread across India and how it did so is a topic of intense debate. Some quarters hold that Hindus were forcibly converted to Islam by the establishment of jizya and favoring Muslim citizens, and the threat of naked force: the "Conversion by the Sword" theory. Others hold that it occurred through inter-marriage, conversions, economic integration, to escape caste structures, and through the influence of Sufi preachers.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Conversion controversy

Considerable controversy exists both in scholarly and public opinion about the conversions to Islam typically represented by the following schools of thought:<sup>[2]</sup>

1. That the bulk of Muslims are descendants of migrants from the Iranian plateau or Arabs.<sup>[3]</sup>
2. That Muslims sought conversion through *jihad* or political violence<sup>[2]</sup>
3. A related view is that conversions occurred for non-religious reasons of pragmatism and patronage such as social mobility among the Muslim ruling elite or for relief from taxes<sup>[2] [3]</sup>
4. Conversion was a result of the actions of Sufi saints and involved a genuine change of heart<sup>[2]</sup>
5. Conversion came from Buddhists and the en masse conversions of lower castes for social liberation and as a rejection of oppressive existent Hindu caste structures.<sup>[3]</sup>
6. Was a combination, initially made under duress followed by a genuine change of heart<sup>[2]</sup>
7. As a socio-cultural process of diffusion and integration over an extended period of time into the sphere of the dominant Muslim civilization and global polity at large.<sup>[3]</sup>

Embedded within this lies the concept of Islam as a foreign imposition and Hinduism being a natural condition of the natives who resisted, resulting the failure of the project to

An estimate of the number of people killed, based on the Muslim chronicles and demographic calculations, was done by K.S. Lal in his book *Growth of Muslim Population in Medieval India*, who claimed that between 1000 CE and 1500 CE, the population of Hindus decreased by 80 million. His work has come under criticism by historians such as Simon Digby (School of Oriental and African Studies) and Irfan Habib for its agenda and lack of accurate data in pre-census times. Lal has responded to these criticisms in later works. Historians such as Will Durant contend that Islam spread through violence.<sup>[4] [5]</sup> Sir Jadunath Sarkar contends that that several Muslim invaders were waging a systematic jihad against Hindus in India to the effect that "Every device short of massacre in cold blood was resorted to in order to convert heathen subjects."<sup>[6]</sup> In particular the records kept by al-Utbi, Mahmud al-Ghazni's secretary, in the Tarikh-i-Yamini document several episodes of bloody military campaigns. Hindus who converted to Islam however were not completely immune to persecution due to the Caste system among South Asian Muslims in India established by Ziauddin al-Barani in the *Fatawa-i Jahandari*,<sup>[7]</sup> where they were regarded as an "Ajlaf" caste and subjected to discrimination by the "Ashraf" castes<sup>[8]</sup>

Critics of the "Religion of the sword theory" point to the presence of the strong Muslim communities found in Southern India, modern day Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and western Burma, Indonesia and the Philippines coupled with the distinctive lack of equivalent Muslim communities around the heartland of historical Muslim empires in South Asia as refutation to the "conversion by the sword theory".<sup>[3]</sup> The legacy of Muslim conquest of South Asia is a hotly debated issue even today. Different population estimates by economic historian Angus Maddison<sup>[9]</sup> show that India's total population, including adherents of all religions, did not decrease between 1000 and 1500, but increased by about 35 million, from 75 million to 110 million, during that time.

Not all Muslim invaders were simply raiders. Later rulers fought on to win kingdoms and stayed to create new ruling dynasties. The practices of these new rulers and their subsequent heirs (some of whom were borne of Hindu wives of Muslim rulers) varied considerably. While some (like bigot Aurangzeb) were uniformly hated, others developed a popular following. According to the memoirs of Ibn Battuta who travelled through Delhi in the 14th century, one of the previous sultans had been especially brutal and was deeply hated by Delhi's population. His memoirs also indicate that Muslims from the Arab world, Persia and Turkey were often favored with important posts at the royal courts suggesting that locals may have played a somewhat subordinate role in the Delhi administration. The term "Turk" was commonly used to refer to their higher social status. However S.A.A. Rizvi<sup>[10]</sup> points to Muhammad bin Tughlaq as not only encouraging locals but promoting artisan groups such as cooks, barbers and gardeners to high administrative posts. In his reign, it is likely that conversions to Islam took place as a means of seeking greater social mobility and improved social standing.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Impact of Islam and Muslims in India

### Expansion of trade

Islam's impact was the most notable in the expansion of trade. The first contact of Muslims with India was the Arab attack on a nest of pirates near modern-day Bombay to safeguard their trade in the Arabian Sea. Around the same time many Arabs settled at Indian ports, giving rise to small Muslim communities. The growth of these communities was not only due to conversion but also the fact that many Hindu kings of south India (such as those from Cholas) hired Muslims as mercenaries.<sup>[12]</sup>

A significant aspect of the Muslim period in world history was the emergence of Islamic Sharia courts capable of imposing a common commercial and legal system that extended from Morocco in the West to Mongolia in the North East and Indonesia in the South East. While southern India was already in trade with Arabs/Muslims, northern India found new opportunities. As the Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms of Asia were subjugated by Islam, and as Islam spread through Africa - it became a highly centralizing force that facilitated in the creation of a common legal system that allowed letters of credit issued in say Egypt or Tunisia to be honoured in India or Indonesia (The Sharia has laws on the transaction of Business with both Muslims and kafirs). In order to cement their rule, Muslim rulers initially promoted a system in which there was a revolving door between the clergy, the administrative nobility and the mercantile classes. The travels of explorer Muhammad Ibn-Abdullah Ibn-Batuta were eased because of this system. He served as an Imam in Delhi, as a judicial official in the Maldives, and as an envoy and trader in the Malabar. There was never a contradiction in any of his positions because each of these roles complemented the other. Islam created a compact under which political power, law and religion became fused in a manner so as to safeguard the interests of the mercantile class. This led world trade to expand to the maximum extent possible in the medieval world. Sher Shah Suri took initiatives in improvement of trade by abolishing all taxes which hindered progress of free trade. He built large networks of roads and constructed Grand Trunk Road (1540–1544), which connected Calcutta to Kabul, of which parts of it are still in use today.

### Spread of technology

With the growth of international trade also came the spread of manufacturing technology and an urban culture. Local inventions and regional technologies became easily globalized. This was of profound importance to those parts of the world that had lagged in terms of technological development. On the other hand, for a nation like India which had had a rich intellectual tradition of its own, and was already a relatively advanced civilization, this may have been of lesser import. Although there is considerable debate amongst historians as to how much technology was actually brought into India by Muslim invaders, there is one (albeit controversial) school of thought that argues that inventions like the water-wheel for irrigation were imported during the Muslim period. In some other cases, the evidence is much clearer. The use of ceramic tiles in construction was inspired by architectural traditions prevalent in Iraq, Iran, and in Central Asia. Rajasthan's blue pottery was an adaptation of Chinese pottery which was imported in large quantities by the Mughal rulers. There is also the example of Sultan Abidin (1420–70) sending Kashmiri artisans to Samarqand to learn book-binding and paper making.

### Cultural influence

The divide and rule policies, two-nation theory, and subsequent partition of India in the wake of Independence from the British Empire has polarized the sub-continental psyche, making objective assessment hard in comparison to the other settled agricultural societies of India from the North West. Muslim rule differed from these others in the level of assimilation and syncretism that occurred. They retained their identity and introduced legal and administrative systems that superseded existing systems of social conduct and ethics. While this was a source of friction it resulted in a unique experience the legacy of which is a Muslim community strongly Islamic in character while at the same time distinctive and unique among its peers.

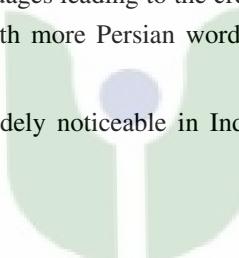
The impact of Islam on Indian culture has been inestimable. It permanently influenced the development of all areas of human endeavour - language, dress, cuisine, all the art forms, architecture and urban design, and social customs and values. Conversely, the languages of the Muslim invaders were modified by contact with local languages, to Urdu, which uses the Arabic script. This language was also known as Hindustani, an umbrella term used for the vernacular terminology of Urdu as well as Hindi, both major languages in South Asia today.

Muslim 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.

A related development to the shifting economic conditions was the establishment of Karkhanas, or small factories and the import and dissemination of technology through India and the rest of the world. The use of ceramic tiles was adopted from architectural traditions of Iraq, Iran, and Central Asia. Rajasthan's blue pottery was a local variation of imported Chinese pottery. There is also the example of Sultan Abidin (1420–70) sending Kashmiri artisans to Samarkand to learn book-binding and paper making. Khurja and Siwan became renowned for pottery, Moradabad for brass ware, Mirzapur for carpets, Firozabad for glass wares, Farrukhabad for printing, Saharanpur and Nagina for wood-carving, Bidar and Lucknow for bidriware, Srinagar for papier-mache, Benaras for jewelry and textiles, and so on. On the flip-side encouraging such growth also resulted in higher taxes on the peasantry.

Numerous Indian scientific and mathematical advances and the Hindu numerals were spread to the rest of the world<sup>radar.ngcsu.edu.185</sup> and much of the scholarly work and advances in the sciences of the age under Muslim nations across the globe were imported by the liberal patronage of Arts and Sciences by the rulers. 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.

Islamic and Mughal architecture and art is widely noticeable in India, examples being the Taj Mahal and Jama Masjid.



## Early Muslim communities

Several reasons existed for the desire of the rising Islamic Empire to gain a foothold in Makran and Sindh; ranging from the participation of armies from Sindh fighting alongside the Persians in battles such as Nehawand, Salasal, Qadisia and Makran, pirate raids on Arab shipping to the granting of refuge to rebel chiefs.

The Punjab and Sindh region had also been historically under considerable flux as Central Asian Kingdoms, the Persian Empire, Buddhist Kingdoms and Rajput Kingdoms vied for control prior to the arrival of the Muslim influence.

Islam in India existed in communities along the Arab trade routes in Sindh, Ceylon and southern India.

## Muhammad bin Qasim

In 711, the Umayyad Caliph in Damascus sent two failed expeditions to Balochistan (an arid region on the Iranian Plateau in Southwest Asia, presently split between Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan) and Sindh.

According to Muslim historical accounts such as the Chach Nama, the nature of the expeditions was punitive, and in response to raids carried out by pirates on Arab shipping, operating around Debal. The allegation was made that the King of Sindh, Raja Dahir was the patron of these pirates. The third expedition was led by a 20-year-old Syrian chieftain named Muhammad bin Qasim. The expedition went as far North as Multan, then called the "City of Gold," that contained the extremely large Hindu temple Sun Mandir.

Bin Qasim invaded the sub-continent at the orders of Al-Hajjaj bin Yousef, the governor of Iraq. Qasim's armies defeated Raja Dahir at what is now Hyderabad in Sindh in 712. He then proceeded to subdue the lands from Karachi

to Multan with an initial force of only six thousand Syrian tribesmen; thereby establishing the dominion of the Umayyad Caliphate from Lisbon in Portugal to the Indus Valley. Qasim's stay was brief as he was soon recalled to Iraq, and the Caliphates rule in South Asia shrank to Sindh and Southern Punjab in the form of Arab states, the principal of whom were Al Mansura and Multan.

## Battle of Rajasthan

The Battle of Rajasthan is a battle where the Indian coalition of Gurjara Pratihara and Chalukya dynasty of Lata defeated the Umayyad Caliphate governor of Sindh in the 730s CE. While all sources (Hindu and Muslim) agree on the broad outline of the conflict and the result, there is no detailed information on the actual battle. There is also no indication of the exact places where these battles were fought—what is clear is that the final battle took place somewhere on the borders of modern Sindh-Rajasthan. Following their defeat the remnants of the Arab army fled to the western bank of the River Indus.

## Communities in the North-West

Subsequent to Qasim's recall the Caliphates control in Sindh was extremely weak under governors who only nominally acknowledged Arab control and shared power with coexisting local Hindu, Jain and Buddhist rulers. Ismaili missionaries found a receptive audience among both the Sunni and non-Muslim populations here. In 985, a group around Multan declared themselves an independent Ismaili Fatimid State.

Coastal trade and the presence of a colony in Sindh permitted significant cultural exchange and the introduction of Muslim teachers into the subcontinent. Considerable conversions took place, especially amongst the Buddhist majority. Multan became a center of the Ismaili sect of Islam, which still has many adherents in Sindh today. This region under generous patronage of the arts provided a conduit for Arab scholars to absorb and expand on Indian sciences and pass them onwards to the West.

North of Multan, non-Muslim groups remained numerous. From this period, the conquered area was divided into two parts: the Northern region comprising the Punjab remained under the control of Hindu Rajas, while the Southern coastal areas comprising Balochistan, Sindh, and Multan came under Muslim control.

## Ghaznavid Period

Turk-o-Afghan empire, Under Sabuktigin, Ghazni found itself in conflict with the Shahi Raja Jayapala. When Sabuktigin died and his son Mahmud ascended the throne in 998, Ghazni was engaged in the North with the Qarakhanids when the Shahi Raja renewed hostilities.

In the early 11th century, Mahmud of Ghazni launched seventeen expeditions into South Asia. In 1001, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni defeated Raja Jayapala of the Hindu Shahi Dynasty of Gandhara and marched further into Peshawar and, in 1005, made it the center for his forces.

The Ghaznavid conquests were initially directed against the Ismaili Fatimids in on-going struggle of the Abbassid Caliphate elsewhere. However, once this aim was accomplished, he moved onto richness of the loot of wealthy temples and monasteries. By 1027, Mahmud had captured most of Northern India and obtained formal recognition of Ghazni's sovereignty from the Abbassid Caliph, al-Qadir Billah.

Ghaznavid rule in North India lasted over 175 years, from 1010 to 1187. It was during this period that Lahore assumed considerable importance apart from being the second capital, and later the only capital, of the Ghaznavid Empire.

At the end of his reign, Mahmud's empire extended from Kurdistan in the west to Samarkand in the Northeast, and from the Caspian Sea to the Yamuna. Although his raids carried his forces across Northern and Western India, only Punjab came under his permanent rule; Kashmir, the Doab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat remained under the control of the

local Rajput dynasties.

In 1030, Mahmud fell gravely ill and died at age 59. He had been a gifted military commander, and during his rule, universities were founded to study various subjects such as mathematics, religion, the humanities, and medicine.

As with the Turkic invaders of three centuries ago, Mahmud's armies looted temples in Varanasi, Mathura, Ujjain, Maheshwar, Jwalamukhi, Somnath and Dwarka. Mahmud was quite pragmatic and he even utilized unconverted Hindu generals and troops in his expeditions. His main target remained the Shiites and Buyid, Iran. There is considerable evidence from writings of Al-Biruni, Sogidan, Uyghur and Manichean texts that the Buddhists, Hindus and Jains were considered People of the Book and references to Buddha as Burxan or a prophet can be found.<sup>[13]</sup> After the initial destruction and pillage Buddhists, Jains and Hindus were granted "protected subject status" as dhimmis.

## **Shahāb-ud-Din Muhammad Ghori**

Muhammad Bin Sām better known as Shahāb-ud-Din Muhammad Ghori was an Afghan pashtun from sur tribe and conqueror from the region of Ghor in Afghanistan. Before 1160, the Ghaznavid Empire covered an area running from central Afghanistan east to the Punjab, with capitals at Ghazni on the banks of Ghazni river in present-day Afghanistan, and at Lahore in present-day Pakistan. In 1160, the Ghorids conquered Ghazni from the Ghaznavids, and in 1173 Muhammad Bin Sām was made governor of Ghazni. He raided eastwards into the remaining Ghaznavid territory, and invaded Gujarat in the 1180s but was rebuffed by Gujarat's Solanki rulers. In 1186 and 1187 he conquered Lahore in alliance with a local Hindu ruler, ending the Ghaznavid empire and bringing the last of Ghaznavid territory under his control, and seemed to be the first Muslim ruler seriously interested in expanding his domain in the sub-continent, and like his predecessor Mahmud initially started off against the Ismaili kingdom of Multan that had regained independence during the Nizari conflicts, and then onto booty and power.

In 1191, he invaded the territory of Prithviraj III of Ajmer, who ruled much of present-day Rajasthan and Haryana, but was defeated at Tarain by Govinda-Raja of Delhi, Prithviraj's vassal. The following year, Muhammad assembled 120,000 horsemen and once again invaded India. Muhammad's army met Prithviraj's army again at Tarain, and this time Muhammad Bin Sām won; Govinda-Raja was slain, Prithviraj captured and Muhammad Bin Sām advanced onto Delhi. Within a year, Muhammad controlled Northern Rajasthan and Northern Ganges-Yamuna Doab. After these victories in India, and Muhammad's establishment of a capital in Delhi, Multan was also incorporated into his empire. Muhammad Bin Sām then returned east to Ghazni to deal with the threat on his eastern frontiers from the Turks and Mongols, while his armies continued to advance through Northern India, raiding as far east as Bengal.

Muhammad returned to Lahore after 1200. In 1206, Muhammad Bin Sām had to travel to Lahore to crush a revolt. On his way back to Ghazni, his caravan rested at Damik near Sohawa (which is near the city of Jhelum in the Punjab province of modern-day Pakistan). He was assassinated on March 15, 1206, while offering his evening prayers. The identity of Ghori's assassins is disputed, with some claiming that he was assassinated by local Hindu Gakhars and others claiming he was assassinated by Hindu Khokhars, both being different tribes.

The Khokhars were killed in large numbers, and the province was pacified. After settling the affairs in the Punjab, Muhammad Ghori marched back to Ghazni. While camping at Dhamayak in 1206 AD in the Jehlum district, the sultan was murdered by the Khokhars<sup>[14]</sup>

Hasan Nizami and Ferishta record the killing of Muhammad Ghori at the hands of the Gakhars. However, Ferishta may have confused the Ghakars with the Khokhars.<sup>[15]</sup> Other historians have also blamed Shahabuddin Ghori's assassination to a band of Hindu Khokhars.<sup>[16]</sup>

All the historians before the time of Ferishta agree that the Khokhars, not the Gakhars killed Muhammad Ghori.<sup>[17]</sup>

Some also claim that Muhammad Bin Sām was assassinated by the Hashshashin, a radical Ismaili Muslim sect.<sup>[18]</sup> [19]

According to his wishes, Muhammad Bin Sām was buried where he fell, in Damik. Upon his death his most capable general, Qutb-ud-din Aybak, took control of Muhammad's Indian conquests and declared himself the first Sultan of Delhi.

## The Delhi Sultanate

Muhammad's successors established the first dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate, while the Mamluk Dynasty in 1211 (however, the Delhi Sultanate is traditionally held to have been founded in 1206) seized the reins of the empire. *Mamluk* means "slave" and referred to the Turkic slave soldiers who became rulers. 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. Several Turko-Afghan dynasties ruled from Delhi: the Mamluk (1211–1290), the Khalji (1290–1320), the Tughlaq (1320–1413), the Sayyid (1414–51), and the Lodhi (1451–1526). Muslim Kings extended their domains into Southern India, Kingdom of Vijayanagar resisted until falling to the Deccan Sultanate in 1565. Certain kingdoms remained independent of Delhi such as the larger kingdoms of Rajasthan, parts of the Deccan, Gujarat, Malwa (central India), and Bengal, nevertheless all of the area in present-day Pakistan came under the rule of Delhi.

The Sultans of Delhi enjoyed cordial, if superficial, relations with Muslim rulers in the Near East but owed them no allegiance. They based their laws on the Quran and the Islamic sharia and permitted non-Muslim subjects to practice their religion only if they paid the jizya (poll 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 most significant 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 (see the Ilkhanate Dynasty). 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.

The Sultanate suffered significantly from the sacking of Delhi in 1398 by Timur, but revived briefly under the Lodi Dynasty, the final dynasty of the Sultanate before it was conquered by Zahiruddin Babur in 1526, who subsequently founded the Mughal Dynasty that ruled from the 16th to the 18th centuries.

## Timur

Timūr bin Taraghay Barlas, known in the West as Tamerlane or "Timur the lame", was a 14th century warlord of Turco-Mongol descent,<sup>[20] [21] [22] [23]</sup> conqueror of much of western and central Asia, and founder of the Timurid Empire and Timurid dynasty (1370–1405) in Central Asia, which survived until 1857 as the Mughal dynasty of India.

Informed about civil war in **South Asia**, Timur began a trek starting in 1398 to invade the reigning Sultan Nasir-u Din Mehmud of the Tughlaq Dynasty in the north Indian city of Delhi.<sup>[24]</sup> His campaign was politically pretexted that the Muslim Delhi Sultanate was too tolerant toward its Hindu subjects, but that could not mask the real reason being to amass the wealth of the Delhi Sultanate.<sup>[25]</sup>

Timur crossed the Indus River at Attock (now Paistan) on September 24. The capture of towns and villages was often followed by the looting, massacre of their inhabitants and raping of their women, as well as pillaging to support his massive army. Timur wrote many times in his memoirs of his specific disdain for the 'idolatrous' Hindus, although he also waged war against Muslim Indians during his campaign.

Timur's invasion did not go unopposed and he did meet some resistance during his march to Delhi, most notably with the Sarv Khap coalition in northern India, and the Governor of Meerut. Although impressed and momentarily stalled by the valour of Ilyas Awan, Timur was able to continue his relentless approach to Delhi, arriving in 1398 to

combat the armies of Sultan Mehmud, already weakened by an internal battle for ascension within the royal family.

The Sultan's army was easily defeated on December 17 1398. Timur entered Delhi and the city was sacked, destroyed, and left in ruins. Before the battle for Delhi, Timur executed more than 100,000 captives, mostly Hindus.<sup>[20]</sup> <sup>[24]</sup>

Timur himself recorded the invasions in his memoirs, collectively known as *Tuzk-i-Timuri*.<sup>[20]</sup> <sup>[20]</sup> <sup>[24]</sup> <sup>[26]</sup> <sup>[27]</sup> In them, he vividly described the massacre at Delhi:

In a short space of time all the people in the [New Delhi] fort were put to the sword, and in the course of one hour the heads of 10,000 infidels were cut off. The sword of Islam was washed in the blood of the infidels, and all the goods and effects, the treasure and the grain which for many a long year had been stored in the fort became the spoil of my soldiers. They set fire to the houses and reduced them to ashes, and they razed the buildings and the fort to the ground....All these infidel Hindus were slain, their women and children, and their property and goods became the spoil of the victors. I proclaimed throughout the camp that every man who had infidel prisoners should put them to death, and whoever neglected to do so should himself be executed and his property given to the informer. When this order became known to the ghazis of Islam, they drew their swords and put their prisoners to death.

One hundred thousand infidels, impious idolaters, were on that day slain. Maulana Nasiruddin Umar, a counselor and man of learning, who, in all his life, had never killed a sparrow, now, in execution of my order, slew with his sword fifteen idolatrous Hindus, who were his captives....on the great day of battle these 100,000 prisoners could not be left with the baggage, and that it would be entirely opposed to the rules of war to set these idolaters and enemies of Islam at liberty...no other course remained but that of making them all food for the sword.<sup>[28]</sup>

As per Malfuzat-i-Timuri,<sup>[24]</sup> <sup>[26]</sup> Timur targeted Hindus. In his own words, "Excepting the quarter of the saiyids, the 'ulama and the other Musalmans [sic], the whole city was sacked". In his descriptions of the Loni massacre he wrote, "..Next day I gave orders that the Musalman prisoners should be separated and saved."

During the ransacking of Delhi, almost all inhabitants not killed were captured and enslaved.

Timur's memoirs on his invasion of India describe in detail the massacre of Hindus, looting plundering and raping of their women and children, their forced conversions to Islam and the plunder of the wealth of Hindustan (Greater India). It gives details of how villages, towns and entire cities were rid of their Hindu male population through systematic mass slaughters and genocide and their women and children forcefully converted en masse to Islam from Hinduism.

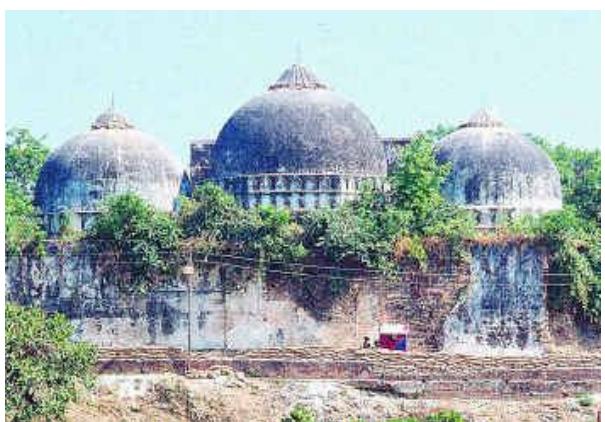
**Timur** left Delhi in approximately January 1399. In April he had returned to his own capital beyond the Oxus (Amu Darya). Immense quantities of spoils were taken from India. According to Ruy González de Clavijo, 90 captured elephants were employed merely to carry precious stones looted from his conquest, so as to erect a mosque at Samarkand — what historians today believe is the enormous Bibi-Khanym Mosque. Ironically, the mosque was constructed too quickly and suffered greatly from disrepair within a few decades of its construction.

## The Mughal Empire

India in the 16th century presented a fragmented picture of rulers, both Muslim and Hindu, who lacked concern for their subjects and failed to create a common body of laws or institutions. Outside developments also played a role in shaping events. The circumnavigation of Africa by the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama in 1498 allowed Europeans to challenge Arab control of the trading routes between Europe and Asia. In Central Asia and Afghanistan, shifts in power pushed Babur of Ferghana (in present-day Uzbekistan) southward, first to Kabul and then to India. The dynasty he founded endured for more than three centuries.

## Babur

Claiming descent from both Genghis Khan and Timur, Babur combined strength and courage with a love of beauty, and military ability with cultivation. He concentrated on gaining control of Northwestern India, doing so in 1526 by defeating the last Lodhi Sultan at the First battle of Panipat, a town north of Delhi. Babur then turned to the tasks of persuading his Central Asian followers to stay on in India and of overcoming other contenders for power, mainly the Rajputs and the Afghans. He succeeded in both tasks but died shortly thereafter in 1530. The Mughal Empire was one of the largest centralized states in premodern history and was the precursor to the British Indian Empire.



A view of the "Janmasthan (Birthplace) Mosque"/ Babri Mosque,  
1528-1992

Babur was followed by his great-grandson, Shah Jahan (r. 1628–58), builder of the Taj Mahal and other magnificent buildings. Two other towering figures of the Mughal era were Akbar (r. 1556–1605) and Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707). Both rulers expanded the empire greatly and were able administrators. However, Akbar was known for his religious tolerance and administrative genius while Aurangzeb was a pious Muslim and fierce advocate of more orthodox Islam.

## Aurangzeb

While some rulers were zealous in their spread of Islam, others were relatively liberal. Moghul emperor Akbar was relatively liberal and established a new religion, Din E Elahi, which included beliefs from different religions. He abolished the jizya for some time. In contrast, his great-grandson Aurangzeb was more zealous and ruthless ruler .

In the century-and-a-half that followed the death of Aurangzeb, effective Muslim control weakened. Succession to imperial and even provincial power, which had often become hereditary, was subject to intrigue and force. The mansabdari system gave way to the zamindari system, in which high-ranking officials took on the appearance of hereditary landed aristocracy with powers of collecting rents. As Delhi's control waned, other contenders for power emerged and clashed, thus preparing the way for the eventual British takeover.

## Durrani Empire

The decay of the Mughal power saw a series of invasions by the Persian adventurer, Nadir Shah, but no occupation per se. Following his death, his Royal Guardsman Ahmed Shah Abdali - a Pashtun - embarked on an invasion of conquest. In the short space of just over a quarter of a century, he forged one of the largest Muslim empires of the 18th century. The high point of his conquests was his victory over the powerful Marathas in the third Battle of Panipat 1761. In South Asia his empire stretched from the Indus at Attock all the way to the outskirts of Delhi. Uninterested in long term of conquest or in replacing the Mughal Empire, he became increasingly pre occupied with revolts in Persia and by the Sikhs. His empire started to unravel not long after his death.

## Iconoclasm

### Nalanda

In 1193, the Nalanda University complex was destroyed by Turkish Muslim invaders under Bakhtiyar Khalji; this event is seen as the final milestone in the decline of Buddhism in India. He also burned Nalanda's a major Buddhist library and Vikramshila University, as well as numerous Bhuddhist monasteries in India. When the Tibetan translator, Chag Lotsawa Dharmasvamin (Chag Lo-tsa-ba, 1197–1264), visited northern India in 1235, Nalanda was damaged, looted, and largely deserted, but still standing and functioning with seventy students. Mahabodhi, Sompura, Vajrasan and other important monasteries were found to be untouched. The Ghuri ravages only afflicted those monasteries that lay in the direct of their advance and were fortified in the manner of defensive forts.



Ruins of Nalanda University

By the end of the 12th century, following the Muslim conquest of the Buddhist stronghold in Bihar, Buddhism having already declined in the south declined in the North as well as survivors retreated to Nepal, Sikkim and Tibet or escaped to the South of the sub-continent. Hinduism and Jainism survived because they did not have large centers of worship and devotion based around heavily fortified monasteries.

### Vijayanagara

The city flourished between the 14th century and 16th century, during the height of the Vijayanagar Empire. During this time, it was often in conflict with the kingdoms which rose in the Northern Deccan, and which are often collectively termed the Deccan Sultanates. The period saw brutalities from both sides. In 1366, Bukka I captured the Muslim region of Mudkal and slaughtered all but one inhabitant. The lone survivor of this carnage is supposed to have taken the news to Mohammad Shah, the Sultan of the Bahmani Sultanate. In response the sultan ravaged the Hindus (Reference: Lonely Planet INDIA, 2005). In 1565, the empire's armies suffered a massive and catastrophic defeat at by an alliance of the Sultanates, and the capital was taken. The victorious armies then razed, depopulated and destroyed the city over several months. The empire continued in slow decline, but the original capital was not reoccupied or rebuilt.



Sri Krishna Temple in Hampi

## Somanath

The first temple of Somnath existed before the beginning of the Christian era.

The second temple, built by the Maitraka kings of Vallabhi in Gujarat, replaced the first one on the same site around 649. In 725 Junayad, the Arab governor of Sind, sent his armies to destroy the second temple.

The Pratihara king Nagabhata II constructed the third temple in 815, a large structure of red sandstone. Mahmud of Ghazni attacked this temple in 1026, looted its gems and precious stones, massacred the worshippers and burned it. It was then that the famous Shivalinga of the temple was entirely destroyed.

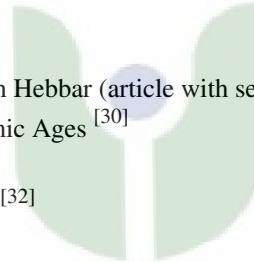
The fourth temple was built by the Paramara King Bhoja of Malwa and the Solanki king Bhima of Gujarat (Anhilwara) between 1026 and 1042. The temple was razed in 1297 when the Sultanate of Delhi conquered Gujarat, and again in 1394. Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb destroyed the temple again in 1706.



Somanatha Temple Prabhas Patan, Gujarat, from the Archaeological Survey of India

## External links

- History of Islam in India <sup>[29]</sup> by Neria Harish Hebbar (article with several pages)
- Library of modern Hindu history - The Islamic Ages <sup>[30]</sup>
- A Response to Muslim Legacy in India <sup>[31]</sup>
- Islamization and the Arab conquest of India <sup>[32]</sup>
- The Legacy of Jihad in India <sup>[33]</sup>
- Historical Interaction of Buddhism and Islam <sup>[34]</sup> (Including an e-book on the various phases of Muslim Rulers conquering India)
- Historical Narrative of Pakistan <sup>[35]</sup>
- History of Crafts, Manufacturing and Trade in South Asia <sup>[36]</sup>



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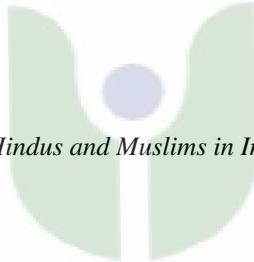
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