

1

Tracing Changes Through a Thousand Years

In the previous class, we studied the history of the ancient period. We discussed about the history of Ancient India and the ancient civilizations of the subcontinent from the pre-historic period to the seventh century AD. In this class, we shall study the history of the Medieval Period. It is important for you to know that the time span of the Medieval Period differs in different parts of the world. In Europe, the medieval period was begun in the 6th century AD and ended in the 15th century AD. But, in India, this period began with the 8th century AD and ended in the 18th century AD. During this period India saw many remarkable changes in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the people.

GEOGRAPHICAL INFLUENCE ON HISTORY

The geographical conditions of a region directly or indirectly affects its history. In case of India also, the geography of the subcontinent has greatly influenced its history. Geography determines the development of a particular area. The areas where the environment is favourable, are densely populated. Their cultures are also affected by outside influences or foreign travellers. On the other hand, the places with an unfavourable environment are sparsely populated. The culture that develops here is not much affected by outside influences.

MAPS AND MEDIEVAL INDIA

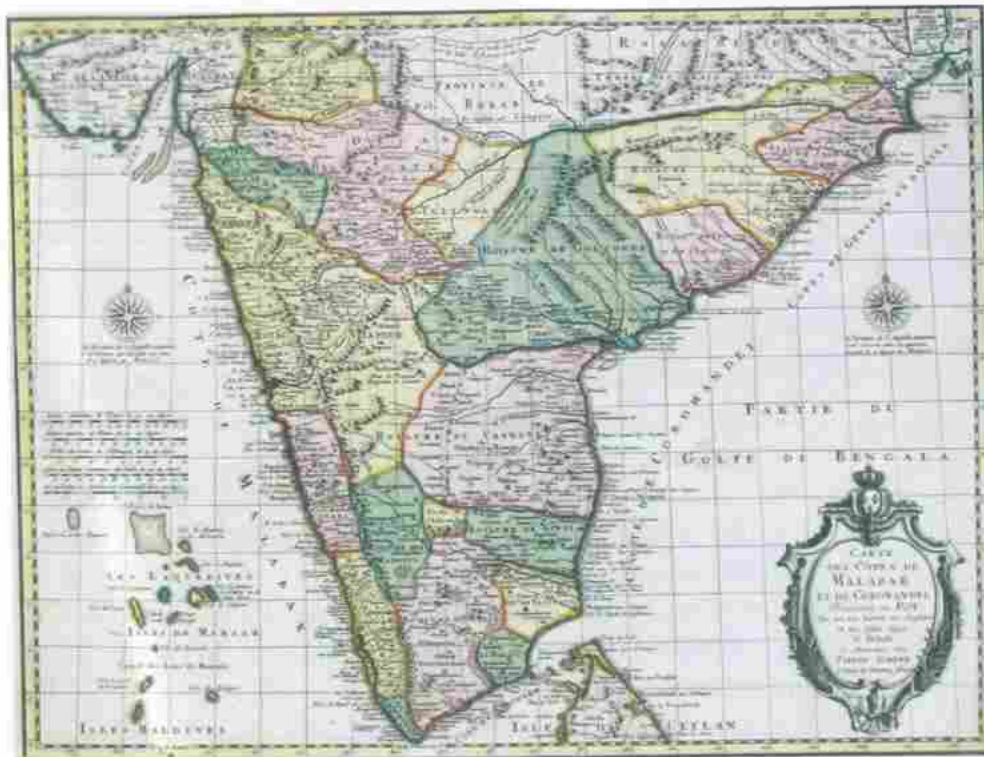
The art or science of making maps is known as **Cartography**. A person who study the history of map making or use tools and techniques to make new maps is known as cartographer.

In Ancient India, people did not know about Cartography or map-making. In fact, the worldwide growth of trade and the expansion of empires during the medieval period created the need of accurate maps. The Arabs and the Europeans were the first who developed the science of Cartography. They felt a need for maps because they often undertook long journeys over land and sea. Contact with the Arabs and Europeans helped Indian to learn about Cartography.



Map-1 : Indian subcontinent drawn by the geographer, Al-Idrisi

An Arab geographer, **Al-Idrisi** made a world map in 1154. Map-1 is a part of his world map that shows a detail of the Indian subcontinent. Map-2 was made by a French cartographer in the 1720s *i.e.*, nearly 600 years after Map-1. This was part of an Atlas **Nouveau of Guillaume de l'Isle**. Although both the maps show the same area *i.e.*, the Indian subcontinent, they are quite different from each other.



Map-2 : Indian subcontinent from early eighteenth century Atlas Nouveau of Guillaume de l'Isle

- Map-1 shows the Southern India and Sri Lanka on the top. That is, it refers North India as South India. While this is not the case in Map-2. Here, South India and Sri Lanka are given at the bottom of the map.
- In Map-1, the names of places are marked in Arabic and some well-known names are spelt differently. While at the time of formation of Map-2, information about the subcontinent had changed considerably. Map-2 is more familiar to us.

Thus, we find that Cartography in these two periods differed from each other. That is why, while studying documents, maps and texts from the past, historians take into account the context in which a particular information was produced.

NEW AND OLD TERMINOLOGIES

Historical records exist in many languages. But, we observe that these languages have changed over the years. *For example*, medieval Persian is very different from modern Persian. These changes have occurred not only in respect of grammar and vocabulary but in the meanings of words also. *For example*, the meaning of the term, "Hindustan" has changed over the centuries in many ways :

- In the 13th century AD, **Minhaj-i-Siraj**, a Persian writer and historian meant by 'Hindustan' the areas of Punjab, Haryana and the lands between the Ganga and Yamuna. He used the term in a political sense for lands that came under the Delhi Sultanate.
- In the early 16th century, Babur used Hindustan to describe the geography, the fauna and the culture of the inhabitants of the subcontinent. **Amir Khusrau**, a 14th century poet used the term, 'Hind' in the similar way. It did not have any political meaning.
- But today, we understand 'Hindustan' as the modern nation state. The term does carry political and national meanings.

Similarly, the term, foreigner, had a different meaning from what it has today. It is used today for someone who is not an Indian. But, in the medieval



Amir Khusrau

period, a 'foreigner' meant a stranger who was not associated with the villagers or town-dwellers. He/she was not a part of a village, society or culture. In Hindi, the term Pardesi might be used to describe such person and in Persian, Ajnabi. Notably, two persons living in the same village or town were not foreigners to each other even though they may have had different castes or religions.

HISTORIAN AND THEIR SOURCES

Clues and evidence on the basis of which we write history are known as sources. Historians use different types of sources to learn about the past. The sources they choose, depend upon the period of their study and the nature of their investigation. Likewise the ancient period, the sources of this period can also be divided into archaeological and literary sources.

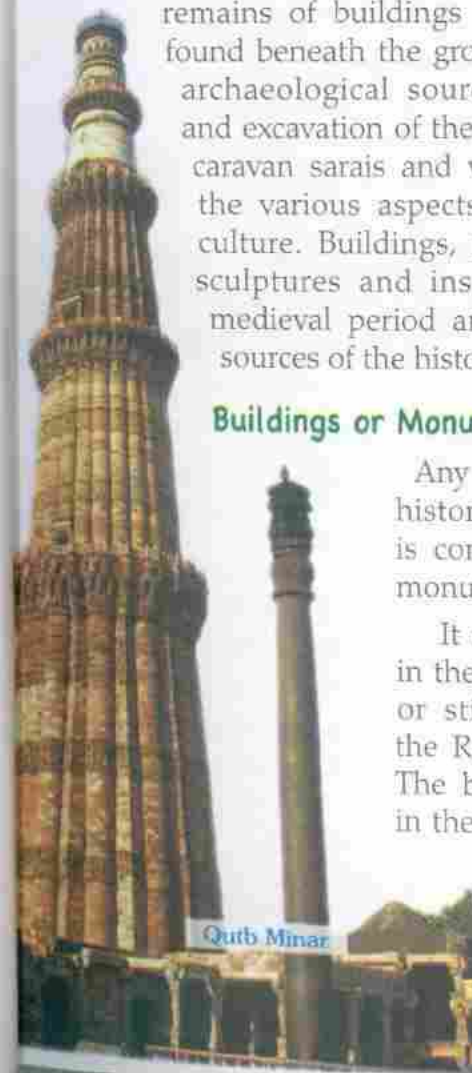
Archaeological Sources

Archaeology is the study of past cultures and periods of history by examining the remains of buildings and the objects found beneath the ground. Among the archaeological sources, exploration and excavation of the medieval towns, caravan sarais and villages highlight the various aspects of society and culture. Buildings, paintings, coins, sculptures and inscriptions of the medieval period are the important sources of the history.

Buildings or Monuments

Any building that has historical significance is considered to be a monument.

It may be buried as in the case of Harappa or still standing like the Red Fort in Delhi. The buildings may be in the form of temples, forts, palaces, etc. They provide



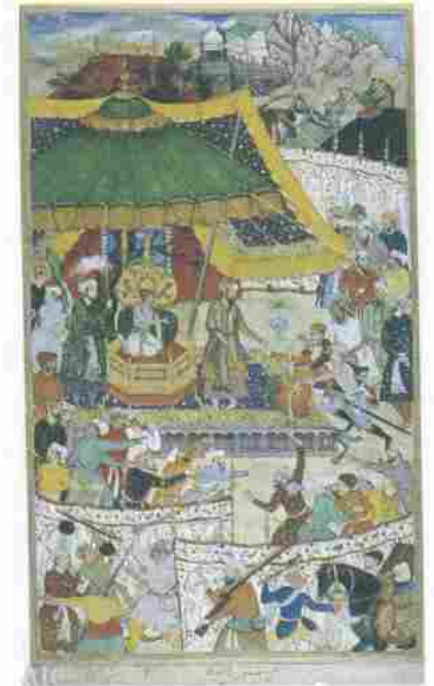
Qutb Minar

useful information about the development of art and architecture as well as the social, political and economic life of the people of those days. Some important buildings or monuments of this period are the Qutb Minar, Buland Darwaza, Red Fort, Taj Mahal, etc.

Paintings and Other Artefacts

Paintings are another important source of history of this period. They tell us about the customs, food habits, dresses and ornaments of this period. We have found various schools of painting that flourished during this period.

Other artefacts include sculptures, pottery, ornaments, etc. which give valuable information of this period.



Painting : Court of Akbar from Akbarnama

Coins

The study of coins is known as 'Numismatics'. Coins tell us about the kings, the extent of their empires, economic status of the kingdom, dates, languages that were in use, trade, art, religion and literary skills of a particular time. 'Dravya-Pariksha', a famous book on coins was written during the reign of **Ala-ud-Din Khalji**. It lists the coins minted during his reign.



Coins : Ala-ud-din Khalji

Inscriptions

These are writings on relatively hard surfaces *e.g.*, stone or metal. Some of the inscriptions of this

period were recorded on copper plates and some are inscribed on temple, mosque and building walls. They generally conveyed a king's orders, his deeds, his preachings, etc. Kings often kept records of victories in battle as inscriptions.

Literary Sources

The books that were written by hand long ago, are called manuscripts. Usually, two types of materials were used for writing the manuscripts. These materials were palm leaf and the specially prepared bark of a tree known as the birch which grew in the Himalayas. From the 13th century, paper was used for writing. During this period, paper gradually became cheaper and easily available. So, the number and variety of textual records increased dramatically.

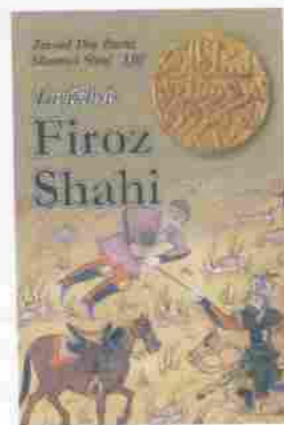
Religious Literature

This includes the religious works and commentaries on the previous classical texts such as Smitis, Dharmasutras, Puranas etc. This was the period of Bhakti's and Sufi saints. They wrote a lot of poetry and epic.

Secular Literature

Chronicles : A chronicle means a record of the rule of the king and life at their courts. Most of the chronicles written during the Persian, Arabic and Turkish era. Some important chronicles of this period are as follows :

- Rajatarangini, a Sanskrit composition by **Kalhana**. This comprises history of the kings of Kashmir.
- **Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi** by **Zia-ud-Din Barni**. It comprises the history of the Sultans of Delhi.
- **Khazain-ul-futuh and Tughluqnama** by **Amir Khusrau**.



Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi

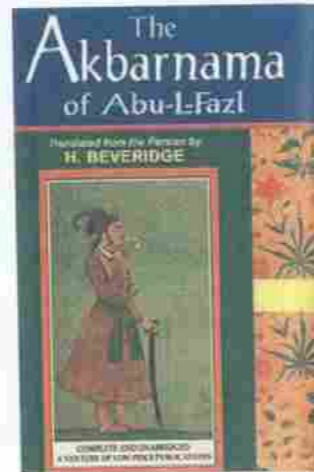
Autobiographies : Some important autobiographies of this period are as under :

- **Futuh-i-Firozshahi** by **Firoz Shah Tughluq**.
- **Tuzuk-i-Babur** by **Babur**.
- **Tuzuk-i-Jahangir** by **Jahangir**.

Biographies

Some important biographies of the medieval period are :

- **Prithvirajaso** by **Chandbardai**.
- **Humayun-nama** by **Gulbadan Begum**.
- **Ain-i-Akbari and Akbarnama** by **Abu'l Fazl**.



Akbarnama

Travelogues

Some famous accounts of foreign Ibn-Battuta, Marco Polo, Nicolo Conti, Abdur Razzaq, Ralph Fitch, Bernier and Tavernier, they describe the political and socio-economics conditions of India.



Ibn Battuta

Documents

Medieval documents include records of land revenue and land grants, writings on history and science, etc.

Another important literary source of this period are the farmans i.e., imperial decrees, orders and correspondences of the kings.

During the medieval period, manuscripts were collected by the kings, rich people, monasteries and temples. These manuscripts were kept in libraries and archives. An archive is a place where documents and manuscripts are stored. Today,

all national and state governments have archives where they keep their old official records and transactions.

Today, historians face many difficulties in using manuscripts because of the following reasons :

- Since there was no printing press in that period, scribes copied manuscripts by hand. Naturally they made small changes in words or sentences. These small changes made during copying grew over centuries and made the manuscripts substantially different from one another. So, historians often have to guess what the author had originally written.
- Authors revised their chronicles time-to-time. For example, Zia-ud-din Barni wrote his chronicle for the first time in 1356 AD. He wrote another version of it two years later. But, both the versions differ from each other. Moreover, historians did not even know about the first version until the 1960s.
- When historians read documents, maps and texts from the past, they have to keep in mind the different historical backgrounds in which that information was produced.
- They also have to be careful about the terms they use because they might mean different things in the past.

NEW SOCIAL AND POLITICAL GROUPS

Mobility

The medieval period was a period of great mobility. People travelled to long distances in search of wealth and opportunity. Many travellers' groups came to this subcontinent because it had immense wealth and the possibilities of growth. One group of people who became more important in this period were the Rajputs. Between the 8th to 14th centuries the term was applied more generally to a group of warriors who claimed kshatriyas caste status.

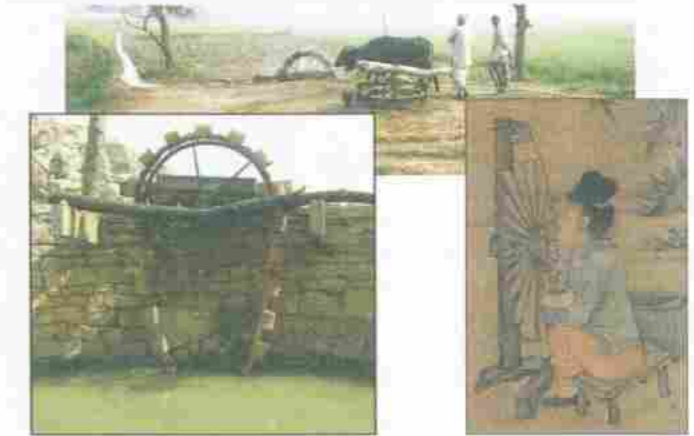
New Ideas

These travellers' group brought new technologies, new crops and other innovative

ideas with them. These new ideas resulted in great economic, political, social and cultural changes.

Improvement in Technology

The medieval period also witnessed great technological changes. For example, this period introduced the Persian wheel in irrigation, the spinning wheel in weaving and firearms in combat.



Persian Wheel

Spinning Wheel

New Crops

New foods and beverages were introduced in the subcontinent by traveller's groups. Potatoes, corn, chillies, tea and coffee were some of the new crops introduced into the subcontinent during this period.

New Peasant Groups

In order to clear the forests, forest-dwellers were, sometimes pushed out of their lands with the spread of agricultural settlements. So, changes in their habitats forced many of them to migrate. Some of them became peasants. These new peasant groups gradually began to be influenced by regional markets, chieftains, priests, monasteries and temples. They were required to pay taxes and offer goods and services to local lords.

The above conditions created significant economic and social differences amongst peasants. Some possessed more productive land while others were given menial tasks and thus relegated to poverty. There was a sizeable number who worked as agricultural labourers. Some peasants also did artisanal work along with agricultural activity during the lean season.

Jatis

A Jati means sub-caste. As the society became more differentiated, people were grouped into jatis. These jatis were ranked on the basis of their backgrounds and their occupations. Ranks were not fixed permanently. They were varied according to the power, influence and resources controlled by members of a Jati. Remarkably, the status of the same Jati could vary from region to region.

The affairs of Jatis were regulated in the following ways:

- Each Jati framed its own rules and regulations to manage the conduct of its members.
- An assembly of elders *i.e.*, the Jati Panchayat enforced these regulations.
- Jatis had to follow the rules of their villages also.
- Several villages were governed by a chieftain.

Political Developments

Important Groups of People

In the medieval period, the Rajputs became very important. Literally the term, Rajput means the son of a ruler. But, it included the rulers, chieftains, soldiers and commanders of different monarchs in the subcontinent. Rajputs were said to possess extreme valour with a great sense of loyalty. Other groups of people such as the Marathas, Sikhs, Jats, Ahoms and Kayasthas also became politically important during this period.



Shivaji



Rajaraja Chola

Region and Empire

In the early medieval period, regional kingdoms of both the north and south India had considerable conflicts with each other. This led to the frequent rise and fall of kingdoms. The

most prominent among these kingdoms were the Rajput kingdoms in the north and the Chola Kingdom in the south. The later medieval period saw the rise of powerful Muslim dynasties such as the Khaljis, the Tughluqs and the Mughals.



Coins of Rajaraja Chola



Ala-ud-din Khalji



Coins of Ala-ud-din Khalji

According to a Sanskrit Prashasti, the ruler of Delhi Sultan **Ghiyas-ud-Din Balban** (AD 1266-86) stretched from Bengal (Ganda) in the east to Ghazni (Gajjana) in Afghanistan in the west.

Occasionally, dynasties like the Cholas, Khaljis, Tughluqs and Mughals were able to build an empire that was pan-regional.

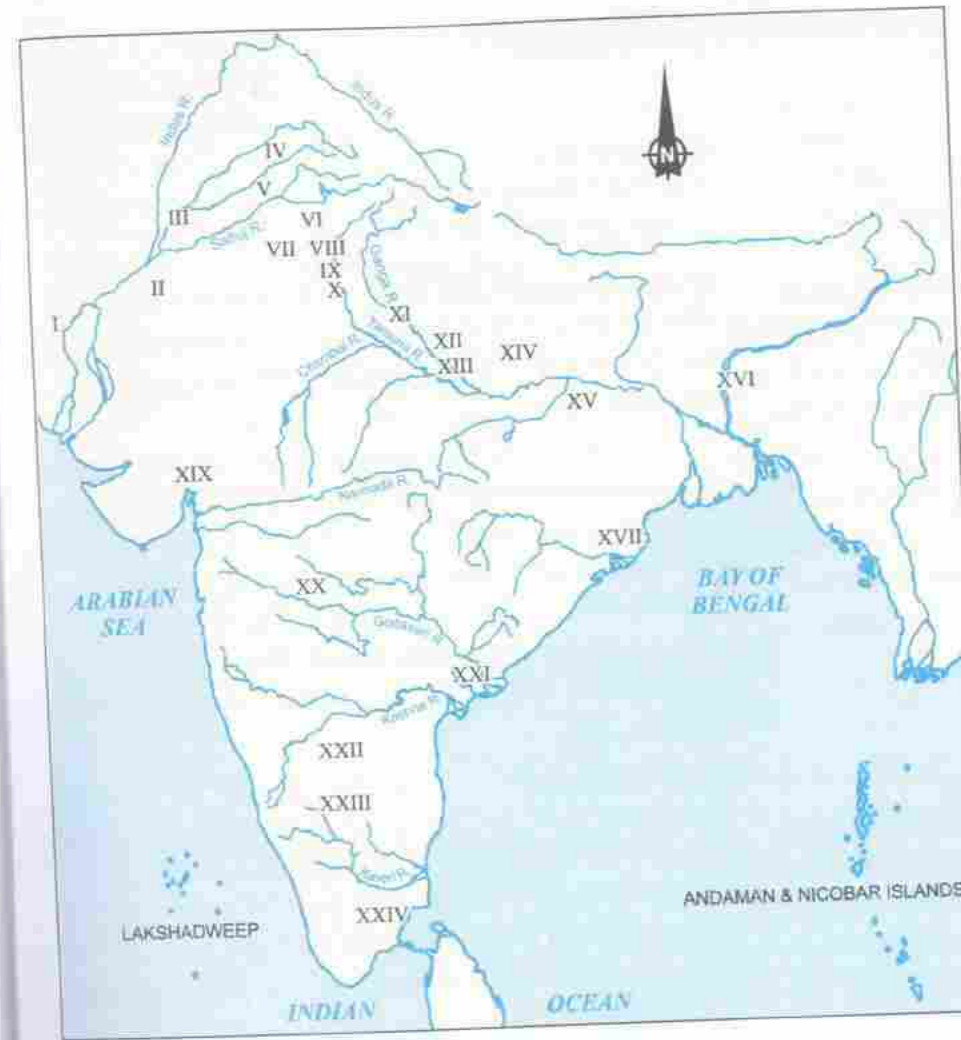
In the eighteenth century, with the decline of the Mughal empire, many regional states re-emerged. But, due to years of imperial and pan-regional rule, the character of the regions had changed considerably. As a result, many distinct and shared traditions came into existence in the field of governance, management of the economy, cultures and language. All these regions felt the impact of large pan-regional forces of integration without losing their distinctiveness.

OLD AND NEW RELIGIONS

Some of the major religious developments during the medieval period are as follows:

Hinduism

- New deities came to be worshipped.
- Some tribal and forest groups were absorbed into the Hindu society. This brought some tribal ideas of worship into Hinduism.



- I Siwistan
- II Uchch
- III Multan
- IV Kalanaur
- V Lahor
- VI Samana
- VII Sarsuti
- VIII Kuhram
- IX Hansi
- X Delhi
- XI Badayun
- XII Qannauj
- XIII Kara
- XIV Awadh
- XV Bihar
- XVI Lakhnauti
- XVII Jajnagar
- XVIII Malwa
- XIX Gujarat
- XX Devagiri
- XXI Tilingana
- XXII Talanj
- XXIII Dvarasamudra
- XXIV Malabar

Provinces of the Delhi Sultanate during Muhammad Tughluq's reign.
Sources: Egyptian Masalik al-Absar fi Mamlak al-Amsar of Shihabuddin Umari.

- Construction of temples became an important activity among the Hindu rulers.
- The importance of Brahmanas or the priests grew. They had a dominant position in the society. The knowledge of Sanskrit texts gave Brahmanas a lot of respect in the society. Rulers patronised learned Brahmanas and granted them tax-free land. Therefore, many Brahmanas became wealthy and powerful. Often, they used their power to make rigid caste and religious rules.
- The emergence of the **idea of Bhakti** was



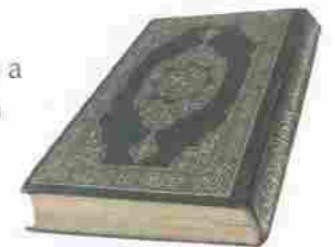
Do You Know?

Patron means an influential and wealthy person who supports another person—an artist, a crafts person, a learned man or a noble.

one of the major developments of this period. Around 7th century AD, many Hindu religious thinkers of South India began to challenge Brahman domination in the field of religion. They stressed on Bhakti *i.e.*, personal devotion to God. Bhakti did not require any middleman or a priest and elaborate rituals. The Bhakti Movement attracted people from all sections of the society. But in North India, it began only around the 13th century.

Islam

- During this period, a new religion, Islam appeared in the subcontinent. Islam believes in one God, Allah



Quran

and the teachings of his last prophet, Muhammad. The teachings of **prophet Muhammad** are written down in the holy book, called **Quran**.

- Many rulers were patrons of Islam.
- After Prophet Muhammad's death, a Caliph or Khalifa succeeded him as the religious and political head of the Muslim community.
- Later the Muslim community split into two major sects—Shia and Sunni.
- The Shia Muslims believed that Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali was the legitimate leader of the Muslim community.
- The Sunni Muslims accepted the authority of the Khalifas of the community.

THINKING ABOUT TIME AND HISTORICAL PERIOD

In the 19th century, many British historians, like **James Mill** who wrote '**History of British India**' in 1817, were very critical of Indian culture. They divided the history of India into three periods—Hindu, Muslim and British. But, this division was full of drawbacks. It was based on the religion of rulers. It ignored the significant historical developments in the society, economy or culture. This division also ignored the rich diversity of the subcontinent.

In order to get a clear picture of the important changes in history, historians generally divide the past into three periods. These are : the Ancient or Early Period, the Medieval or Middle Period and the Modern Period.

This year, we shall study the history of the Medieval period. The word, 'medieval' comes from a Latin word which means 'middle age'. Thus, the Medieval period is the period between the Ancient and the Modern periods.

There are no such well-defined criteria or general rules for the division of the world history into ancient, medieval and modern periods. So, the periodisation of history varies from one country to another.

The Medieval Period in India stretches roughly from the 8th to the 18th century AD. Thus, in this unit, we shall study the history and civilisation of the Indian subcontinent during this period. The Medieval Period is further sub-divided into two periods—Early Medieval Period (8th-12th century AD) and Later Medieval Period (13th-18th century AD).

The Medieval Period has been marked by drastic political, social and economic changes. The culture that we inherited in the Modern Period was a result of these changes. This period witnessed the remarkable spread of peasant societies, the rise of regional and imperial state of, the development of Hinduism and Islam as major religions and the arrival of European trading companies.

The historians often face many problems in dividing the past into ancient, medieval and modern periods. *For example*, medieval period is often contrasted with the modern period. Modernity reflects material progress and intellectual advancement. This suggests that the medieval period did not progressed in these areas. But, actually it was not so.

MEDIEVAL LIFE

During the medieval times in Europe, many cities and kingdoms were fortified. This made an attack by invaders, especially the nomadic people very difficult. The forts were made of brick and stone with walkways and towers. The guards defended the city from strategic positions. These forts also reflected medieval life in Europe. Consider Indian forts of medieval period in this context and find out more about our legacy of this period.

IMPORTANT WORDS

- **Medieval Period** : Relating to Middle Ages dated between CE 700 to 1750.
- **Indian subcontinent** : A landmass smaller than a continent but having similar major characteristics. The Indian subcontinent today comprises of five countries namely Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.
- **Foreigner** : In the medieval period, a 'foreigner' meant a stranger who was not associated with the villagers or town dwellers.
- **Epigraphy** : Study of inscriptions on coins, buildings, pillars and rock edicts.
- **Numismatics** : The study of coins, bank notes and even decorative medals.
- **Manuscripts** : A literary work which is written by hand.
- **Scribe** : A person who copied the manuscripts by hand.
- **Archives** : A repository of public records or manuscripts.
- **Miniature paintings** : Paintings used for illustrating (illuminating) the manuscripts or books.
- **Habitat** : Abode of a plant or an animal including man.
- **Jatis** : Subcastes.
- **Pan-Regional** : A view of diverse regions.
- **Patron** : A client; someone in position who favours the other.
- **Caliphs** : The successors of Prophet Muhammad.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **712 CE** : Arab conquest of Sind.
- **1001 CE** : Turkish raids of India begin.
- **1150 CE** : Earliest map made by Al-Idrisi
- **1720 CE** : Map made by French cartographer
- **700 - 1750 CE** : Medieval Period in India

IMPORTANT POINTS

- The medieval period lasted for 1000 years.
- During the medieval period, Indian frontiers, both land and maritime, encompassed many lands which are now separate nations.
- The geographic region referred to by the term 'Hindustan' included only the areas of Punjab, Haryana and the lands between Ganga and Yamuna.
- The literary sources of this period throw a great deal of light on the history of this period. Other sources of information are archeological, inscriptions, coins and cultural influences and traditions.
- The literature of this period was in hand written form known as **manuscripts**. Printing had not yet reached India.
- During the medieval period, new social and political groups emerged. Major changes took place in food, dress and culture of the people.
- The social classes became more differentiated and changes in village life took place.
- The whole of India was divided into several small and regional kingdoms. We have conflicting accounts of territorial claims of these kingdoms.
- Within each region, there existed minority communities. A majority of people were associated with ruling dynasties. Later the Mughals carved out a pan-regional empire.
- Through the thousand years between CE 700 and 1750, the cultures of different regions did not grow in isolation.
- The ruling kings and monarchs **patronised** the brahmins.
- In addition to the invaders, the new religion, Islam and its teaching were brought to India by merchants and migrants.



EXERCISES

I. Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

Choose the correct option from the following :

- In India, the Period of Medieval history ranges from the

(a) 6th to 15th century AD	(b) 8th to 18th century AD
(c) 10th to 15th century AD	(d) 13th to 18th century AD
- Who among the following was a fourteenth-century chronicler? **HOTS**

(a) Romila Thapar	(b) Abu'l-Fazl
(c) Ghiyasuddin Balban	(d) Zia-ud-Din Barni
- Who among the following was an Arab Cartographer who made a World map in 1154?

(a) Guillaume de l'Isle	(b) Al-Idrisi
(c) Zia-ud-Din Barni	(d) Abdul Hamid Lahori
- British historians divided the history of India into three periods

(a) Hindu, Muslim and British	(b) Ancient, Medieval and Modern
(c) Pre-historic, Historic and Modern	(d) None of these
- The use of which one of the following materials increased significantly in the Medieval Period for writing the manuscripts?

(a) Palm-leaves	(b) Birch bark
(c) Paper	(d) None of these

II. Very Short Answer Type Questions

- Who was considered a 'foreigner' in the past? **HOTS**
- What are the literary sources of history for the medieval period of India?
- List some of the technological changes associated with the medieval period.
- What do you mean by the term, 'pan-regional empire'?

III. Short Answer Type Questions

- How does geography influence the history of a region? **HOTS**
- Describe any two archeological sources of the medieval period in India.
- Describe some important chronicles of history during the medieval period in India.
- "The medieval period was marked by significant changes in religious conditions of India." Discuss.

IV. Long Answer Type Questions

- How has the meaning of the term, 'Hindustan' changed over the centuries?
- In what ways were the affairs of jatis regulated?
- Mention the various difficulties that historians face in using manuscripts. **HOTS**
- What were some of the major religious developments during the medieval period?
- How do historians divide the past into periods? Do they face any problem in doing so? **HOTS**

V. Fill in the blanks

- The archives are places where _____ are kept.
- New crops like _____, _____, _____ and _____ were introduced into the subcontinent during medieval period.
- The Arabs called the Indian subcontinent as _____.
- It were the Turkish who laid the foundations of the _____ Empire in India.
- The rupee was the coinage of _____ Suri.



MORE TO EXPLORE

Activity

Collect pictures, coins and other things from which you can collect information about the history of medieval India. Make a list of the things collected.

Web Link

For more information log on to the following link :

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval/India>