

Evolution and growth of Muslim society in the Sub-continent

Although Islam spread rapidly in the world as soon as it surfaced in the world, but it established its foothold in the Indo-Pak Sub-continent in the beginning of 8th Century A.D.

It was during the rule of sixth Umayyad caliph, Walid bin Abdul Malak (705-715 A.D), when an overarching incidence of ship looting occurred near Debal, a sea port. The ships, carrying widows and children of deceased Arab soldiers, sent by the king of Ceylon (present day Sri-Lanka) to the Umayyad Governor, Hajjaj bin Yousef, of Baghdad were ransacked by a contingent of ferocious Hindu pirates. Hajjaj sent his emissary to the Rajput king, Raja Dahir under whose jurisdiction the pirates carried out the loot. The raja bluntly turned down the Governor's claim said the pirates were not under his sway. Hajjaj decided to send the young Imaduddin Muhammad bin Qasim to teach the raja a lesson and release the prisoners. Muhammad bin Qasim was the ruler of Faris when he was called back by the Governor.

Muhammad bin Qasim then led a glorious Muslim army and invaded Sindh in 712 A.D. During his short stay in Niran he was reinforced by four thousands Jats who were long subdued by the self-righteous king. Raja Dahir came with his 40,000 soldiers along with contingents of elephants. However, the Raja killed in the battle field and his demoralized army retreated. Muhammad bin Qasim not only released the prisoners along with the looted ships but also established Islamic society/rule in Sindh. Qasim continued to expand the Muslim society beyond Sindh. He marched up to Multan where he defeated Raja Gor Singh.

During this time several changes occurred that made his expeditions slow down and finally put a halt. Hajjaj bin Yousef had been died in 714 A.D and, within months administrative changes wrought in Damascus. Walid bin Abdul Malak was replaced by his brother Suleman bin Abdul Malak (715-717 A.D). The new ruler was extravagantly luxury loving and quite incompetent for the accession to the throne. Suleman called off the best Generals from around their respective destinations and through intrigues executed them one by one. These Generals brought laudable victories to Walid. They included Qutaiba bin Muslim, the conqueror of Turkistan; Tariq bin Ziad, the conqueror of Andalus; Musa bin Nasir, the conqueror of North Africa; and Muhammad bin Qasim, the conqueror of Sindh. Muhammad bin Qasim was died languishing in the prison at the age of just 22. He was replaced by Yazid bin Kabashi.

Qasim's rule, though short, is marked by the historians as marvelous and magnificent. He gave relief to the local population scourged by the extra-judicious rule of the erstwhile rajas in general and Raja Dahir in particular. Furthermore, he espoused inter-religious harmony and brought prosperity and good governance in the areas under his domain. Italian scholar F. Gabrieli said: "Present day Pakistan, holding the values of Islam in such a high esteem, should look upon the young Arab conqueror, Muhammad bin Qasim, almost as a distant Kistes (founding father), a hero of South Asian Islam".

With the passage of time, the rule of Umayyads finally evaporated in 750 A.D. They were succeeded by the Abbasids. The Abbasid rulers, time after time, sent their governors to the Sub-continent. According to Ibn Haukal, who traveled extensively through the Arab domains around the middle of the 8th Century, particularly mentioned the affluence of the people of Sindh. Moreover, during the rule of Abbasid caliph Al-Mansur (754-775 A.D), scholars from the Sindh were welcomed at the court of Baghdad. In the north, Islam was making inroads from Afghanistan into the north-western region of Pakistan. Islamic missionaries were actively spreading their faith among the tribes.

Due to a weak Abbasid ruler, who acceded to the throne later on, lost sway over the territories of the Sub-continent at the end of the 9th Century. In the 10th Century, Turks invaded the Sub-continent through the renowned Khyber Pass. The most important of them was Mahmud of Ghazni, the son of Sabuktigin, the great General. Mahmud ruled the sub-continent from 997 A.D. He wanted to expand his rule across India and attacked seventeen times in this regard. He was a great warrior. He reduced the influence of the Hindu Shahi Kingdom, which was prevalent in India. He became known as an Idol Breaker after the destruction of Somnath temple. However, he died in 1030. Mahmud appointed Khusru Malik as the governor of Lahore. However, Khusru Malik was killed by the Ghuris headed by Muhammad Ghori and paved their empire around 1185.

Muizz-ud-din Muhammad bin Sam, known as Shahab-ud-din Muhammad Ghori, is among the one who played a paramount role in the establishment of Muslim rule, especially in North India. He defeated the fearsome army of Prithvi Raj Chauhan in 1192 in the second battle of Tarain. He had the credit to establish the first Muslim in Delhi.

In 1206, Ghori had to travel to Lahore to crush a revolt. On his way back to Ghazni, his caravan halted at Damik near Jehlum. He was killed while offering his evening prayers.

From 1206 to 1526 A.D Delhi Sultanate rose to power. It is believed, however, that the period of Delhi Sultanate was politically turbulent but the Muslim society under the Sultanate period flourished at a great length. Sufism also made it way during this era. He is aptly called as the founder of Muslim Empire in Indo-Pak Sub-continent.

Mughals, led by Zaheer-ud-Din Babar entered India in 1526 A.D and remained in power, though nominally, till 1857. The Mughal epoch is particularly known as the period of Muslim architecture, literature and gave a boost to religious reformists and saints such as Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, Shah Waliullah, Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Ganj Shakar, Nizam-ud-Din Chishty, etc.

Islam left profound effects on minds of people of the Sub-continent. Islam completely changed the living standard and style of thinking of the people of the Sub-continent. The Muslim society gave a welcome fillip to the cultural, economic and, social development in the Sub-continent and boosted inter-religious harmony as well. Turks introduced Persian language which intermingled with Arabic and other local languages gave birth to several new languages including Urdu. Though the Muslim society experienced ups and downs throughout the history, yet it yielded positive effects on the minds of people at large in Indo-Pak Sub-continent.