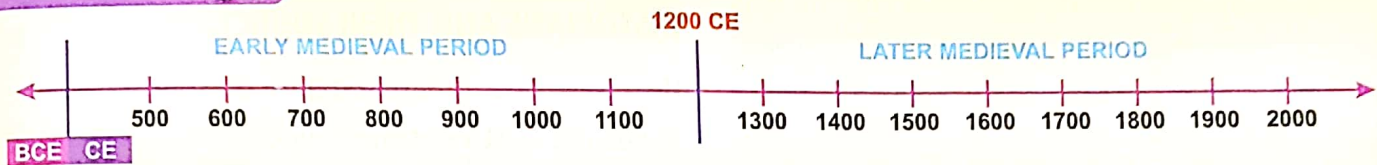


Chronology



Unlike many other countries, India has been known by diverse names during different periods of history. The word 'Hindu' is generally accepted as having originally been a Persian word for someone who lived around or beyond the Indus river which was called **Sindhu** in Sanskrit and meant any inhabitant of Indian subcontinent before the partition. In Persian and Arabic, the term 'Hind' denotes the Indian subcontinent. The name **India** was first applied by the Persians to the region watered by Sindhu. The Muslims during the Medieval period called the subcontinent **Hindustan** and referred to the people as Hindus. Hindus, here literally meant a native of Hindustan and had no significant religious connotation as we understand it today. Today, the country India as we know, is also called Hindustan.

MEDIEVAL INDIA

The history of the world can be divided into three broad periods, namely Ancient, Medieval and Modern. Each of these period covers many centuries and the length of a period may differ from one part of the world to another. For example, the Medieval period began around the fifth century CE in Europe but around the eighth century CE in India. The Medieval period in India covers roughly 1100 years. The time frame of Medieval period is taken as 700-1800 CE.

MAJOR POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Medieval period in India can be broadly divided into two phases— the early Medieval period and the later Medieval period. The history of the early Medieval period is centred on power struggles among regional kingdoms of both North and South India. The most prominent among these kingdoms were Rajputs, Palas, Pratihars, Rashtrakutas and Cholas.

The distinctive cultural characteristics of the regional kingdoms spread to the new regions that came under them.

In the later Medieval period, there were a number of invasions by Muslim conquerors from Central Asia. Among the invaders were Turks, Afghans and the Mughals. The defeat of Rajputs at the hands of



Fig. 1.1 Muhammad Ghori

Muhammad Ghori brought India under the rule of Slave dynasty. After the fall of Slave dynasty, the Khaljis, Tughlaqs and Lodis came to power. The combined period of these dynasties is known as the Delhi Sultanate. The lustre of Sultanate soon faded away when Babur founded the Mughal empire. His grandson, Akbar, extended his empire over the whole of North India and parts of the South. He was followed by Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. The Mughal empire declined sharply after the death of Aurangzeb. The successors of Aurangzeb were weak and incompetent rulers. Thus, the provincial Governors asserted their independence and established regional kingdoms.

CARTOGRAPHY AND MEDIEVAL INDIA

The skill of cartography or map making was practically unknown in ancient India. The growth of trade and expansion of empires in the Medieval period created the need for accurate maps. The Arabs and Europeans who undertook long journeys over land and sea developed cartography. The map shown alongside is a map of the world as was drawn in the twelfth century by Al-Idrisi, a cartographer from Morocco.

The map has the south as shown at the top, Arabia is at the centre and to the left of Arabia is India. Above South India is an island which is probably Sri Lanka. By the end of Medieval period, cartography became more accurate. Most maps of India belonging to this period were drawn by sailors who were more familiar with the

coastal regions. Medieval maps and the writing of Medieval authors provide valuable information about the geographical features and the name of places. However, the place names mentioned in these documents may have changed with time. In such cases, the historian has to find out the present names.

HISTORIANS AND THEIR SOURCES

Historians use different types of sources to learn about the past depending upon the period of their study and the nature of their investigation. You will notice some continuity in the sources used by historians for the study of this period. They still rely on coins, inscriptions, architecture and textual records for information. The number and variety of

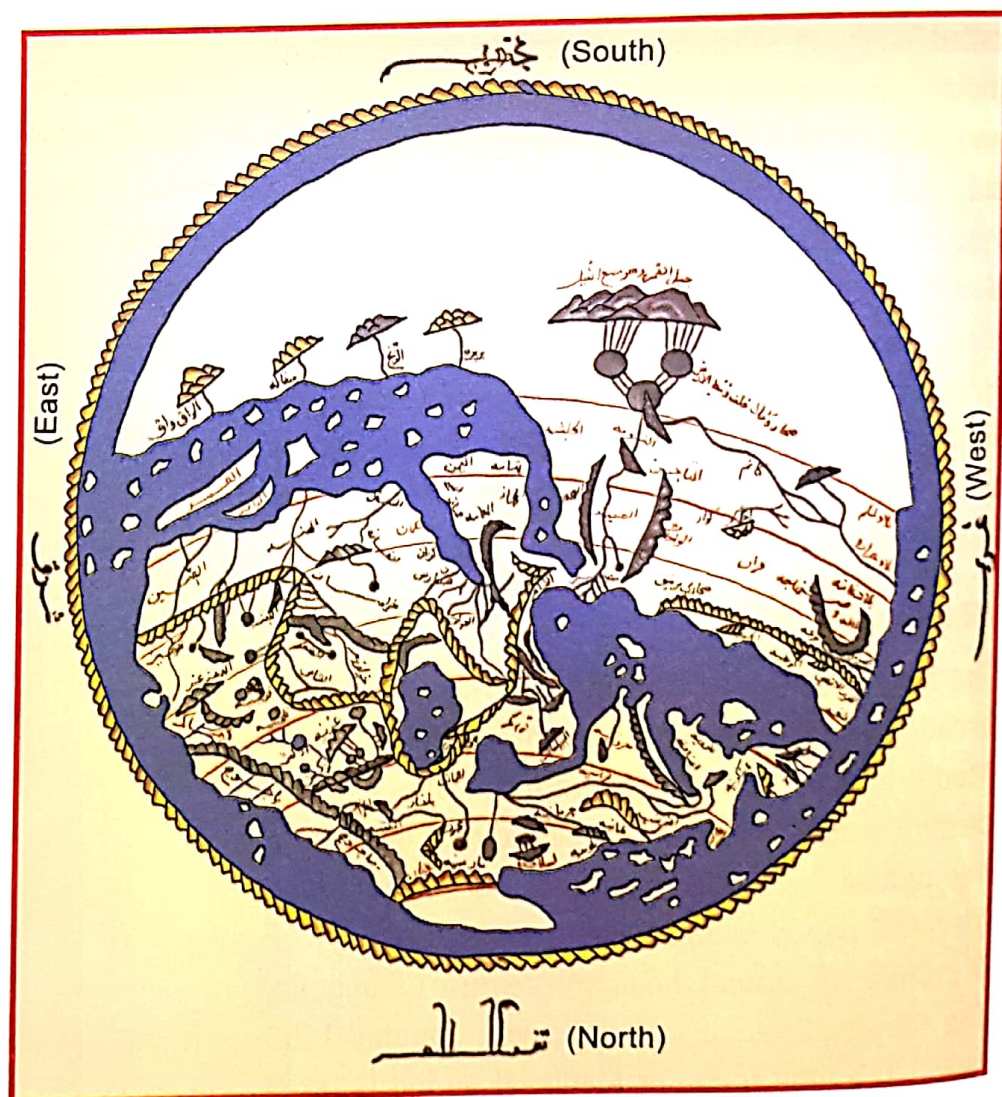


Fig. 1.2 Map of World by Al-Idrisi

Trivia



A book on coins named 'Dravya-Pariksha' was written during the time of Alauddin Khalji. It lists the coins minted during this period.



Fig. 1.3 Buildings as an important archaeological source

textual record increased dramatically during this period. They slowly displaced other types of available information. Through this period, paper gradually became cheaper and more widely available. People used it to write holy texts, chronicles of rulers, teachings by saints, etc.

Archaeology focuses on the study of physical remains and the methods used in recovering them. Archaeological evidences include buildings, inscriptions, paintings and coins.

Inscriptions

Inscriptions can be defined as the wordings inscribed on a coin, pillar, monument or seal. They help us in discovering and reconstructing the history and culture of a particular period. Reconstruction is essential for gaining greater details of the civilisation that one wishes to study. The science relating to the study of inscriptions is called **Epigraphy**.

Buildings

Buildings and monuments including temples, forts, tombs and mosques provide a lot of information. They tell us about the architecture and reveal the cultural history of the period.

Coins



Fig. 1.4 Medieval coins

The study of the ancient and medieval coinage has validated historical events known from literature, artefacts and other archaeological evidences. Coins contain authentic information about the names and dates of different rulers. They also highlight the economic conditions of the period. Sometimes the coins of kingdoms are discovered in many places, very far from one another. This indicates that all these places were part of this kingdom or they had trade with them. The science pertaining to systematic collection and study of coins is called **Numismatics** and the person who studies these coins is called **Numismatist**.

Sculptures and Paintings

Monuments were adorned with beautiful sculptures and paintings. The sculptures were made of stone, bronze and wood. A good number of these sculptures are figures of kings, queens, gods and goddesses. Medieval paintings feature various themes such as mythological tales, palace scenes, battle scenes and forest life. In the Medieval period, we also come across mural paintings and somewhat

later miniature painting. The latter emerged under the impact of Islam and the most famous school of miniature painting is the Mughal school.

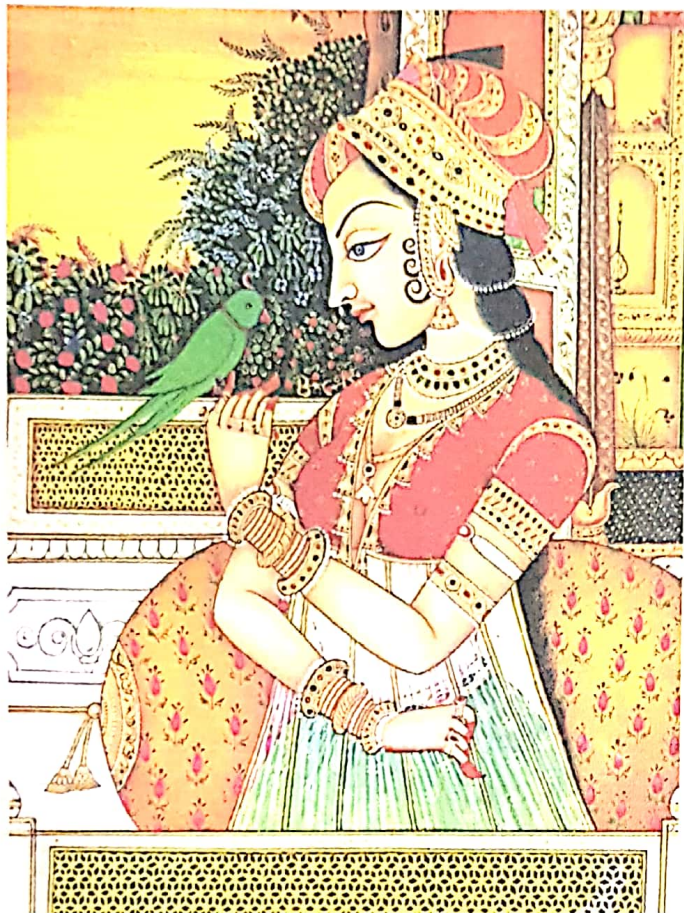


Fig. 1.5 Mughal painting

Literary Sources

In ancient times, people mostly wrote on palm leaves, the bark of the birch tree, wood blocks and stone tablets. From the 13th century onwards, paper began to be used for writing. The Medieval age in Indian history forms a fountainhead of Indian cultural heritage. It witnessed numerous invasions by Muslim rulers who spoke Persian, Arabic and Turkish. Thus, Medieval literary texts

Trivia



An edict pillar of Ashoka, more commonly known as 'Ashoka Lat', was found in Allahabad in 1837. Besides Ashoka it bears inscriptions by Jahangir as well; that belongs to 1605 CE.

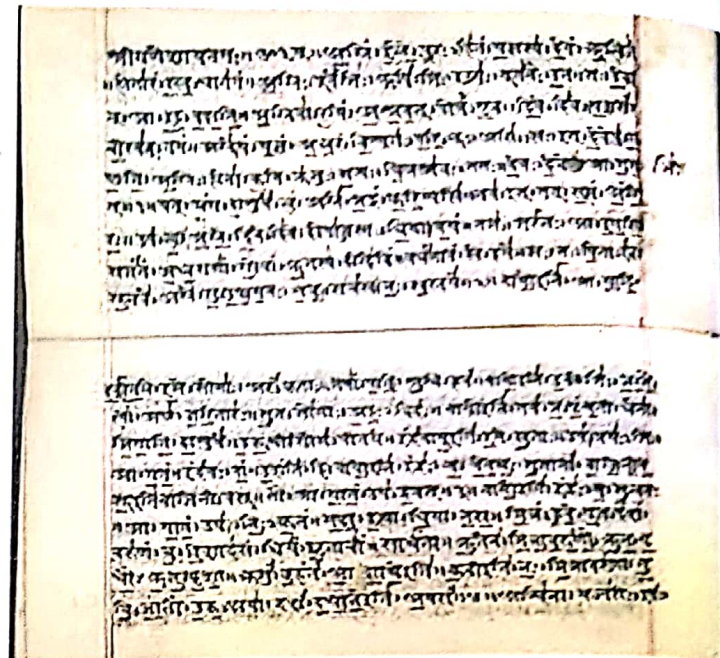


Fig. 1.6 A literary source

written in these languages along with Sanskrit are found.

A very common literary form was the chronicle. A chronicle can be defined as an extended account of historical events written in prose or verse, presented in a chronological order. The chronicles include biographies, autobiographies and memoirs of different kings and rulers.



Fig. 1.7 Marco Polo

The period saw a profusion in writing of all kinds—biographies such as that of Sher Shah called **Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi** written by Abbas Shervani and autobiographies such as Babur's 'Baburnama' and Jahangir's 'Jahangirnama'.

Abul Fazal's 'Akbarnama' and 'Ain-i-Akbari' are complementary works. Shahjahan's court historian Abul Hamid Lahori wrote 'Padshahnama'. Many books in Sanskrit and other languages were translated into Persian. e.g. Badauni translated the Ramayana.

Scholars often wrote the history of rulers or the ruling dynasty of the kingdom in which they lived. 'Rajatarangini' was written by Kalhana which deals with the history of Kashmir. 'Bibhana Vikramadevacharita' describes the achievements of Vikramaditya VI, the Chalukya king of Kalyani in South India.

MANY SCHOLARS ACCOUNT REGARDING CONTEMPORARY INDIA.

Many foreign travellers and scholars visited India during the Medieval period. They have left valuable account of their journeys and experiences in India. One such visitor was Ibn Batuta who was a Moroccan and visited India during the rule of Tughlaqs. Marco Polo of Venice, Domingo Paes of Portugal, Nicolo Conti of Italy and Anastacy Nikitin of Russia were some other travellers who visited India and wrote about our country. Francois Bernier is the author of 'Travels in the Mughal Empire' and Manucci was the author of 'Storio Do Mogor'.

CALLIGRAPHY

Many of the Persian manuscripts were beautifully illustrated. They used floral and geometric designs and no human figures. The handwritten manuscripts were also written stylishly. Persian of style writing is known as **calligraphy**. It was not just writing but also a form of decoration used even on monuments.

As there was no printing press in India in Medieval

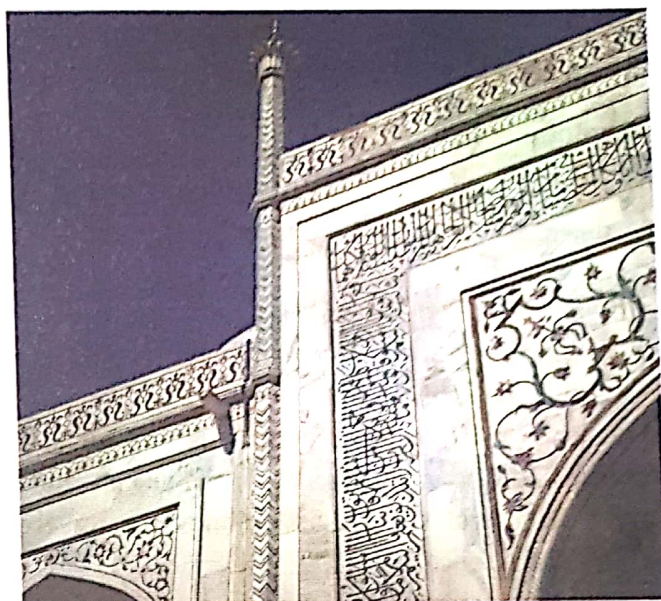


Fig. 1.8 Calligraphy

times, all Indian paper documents of the time were manuscripts (handwritten documents). Often scribes (employed to keep records) made copies of the original document. While doing this, they sometimes copied incorrectly. Some scribes also put in their own language or their own thought on the subject. All this gradually changed the original text. Historians have to gather information from these changed documents, if they cannot find the original documents. This is difficult because the historian has to study all the available versions carefully and cross check the contents against other dependable evidences.

Another problem is that the languages used in old documents have changed over time. The spelling and the meaning of words, the grammar and even the scripts have changed. Historians cannot read some of the documents because they are unable to read the scribe's handwriting or because the script is no longer in use. For example, the term **Mlechchha** was used during the ancient period for all non-Aryan people including hill and forest dwellers. During the early Medieval period, the term referred to all foreigners and culturally different people; from kings to untouchables. Gradually as some Mlechchhas were absorbed in Varna system, the term

came to be applied to meat eating people and those who did not observe caste rules.

Keeping Records

The elaborate systems of administration in Medieval India required the keeping of records. The paper documents that come down to us are at present preserved in archives. An archive is a collection of historical documents and records of a government, family or other organisation. Medieval documents and inscriptions include records of land revenue and land grants; works of religious literature and secular works such as writings on travels, history and science.

New Social and Political Groups

Medieval period was a period of economic, political, social and cultural changes. During this period, many new social groups emerged. Among them were Rajputs, who were warriors of Rajasthan, the Sikhs, who were a religious group of Punjab and the Jats of Haryana who were farmers. Many of these social groups were absorbed into the caste system. For example, the Rajputs who always wanted to be heroic and noble got Kshatriya (warrior) caste status. With the expansion of agriculture and trade, wealthy land owners and traders acquired higher social status. With agricultural expansion, forest dwellers, tribal and even some outcastes took to cultivation and were absorbed into Shudra caste. Some people took to new professions besides their traditional ones. For example, the Brahmins were the highest caste, some of them entered lower caste professions like agriculture and trade.

The growth of new professions gave rise to new subcastes or Jatis. A Jati consisted of people who belonged to the same profession. Prominent among the Jatis that emerged were the Kayasthas— a subcaste of scribes. They rose to prominence because record keeping had become an important profession. Jatis formed their own rules and regulations to be

followed by their members. These regulations were enforced by an assembly of elders.

Many foreign traders settled in the prosperous cities which grew along the Indian coastline. They brought with them their cultural ideas, religious beliefs, social customs, new technologies and even fruits and vegetables. For example, the period saw the introduction of new technology like Persian wheel in irrigation and the spinning wheel in cloth weaving. India was introduced to Chinese sericulture (silk production by raising silkworms). The Turks brought melons, oranges, lemons, plums and peaches. The Portuguese brought potatoes, tomatoes and chillies.

Old and New Religions

Some important changes occurred in Hinduism during this period. This included the worship of new deities, the construction of temples by royalty and the growing importance of Brahmins. The knowledge of Sanskrit text earned the Brahmins a lot of respect in society. Another development of this period was the emergence of the ideas of Bhakti. It meant loving a deity which devotees could without the aid of any priests or elaborate rituals.

During this period, a new religion called Islam appeared in the subcontinent. It arose in Arabia in the seventh century CE. It is centred on the belief of one God, 'Allah' and the teachings of his last Prophet, **Muhammad**. These teachings are contained in the holy book of Muslims known as **The Quran**. Merchants and migrants first brought the teachings of the holy Quran to India in the seventh century.

After Prophet Muhammad's death, a Caliph or Khalifa succeeded him as the religious and political head of the Muslim community. Later, the community split into two major sects, namely, Shia and Sunni. The Shias regard Muhammad's son-in-law Ali as the Prophet's true successor. The Sunnis believe that a Caliph should be chosen by the whole community.

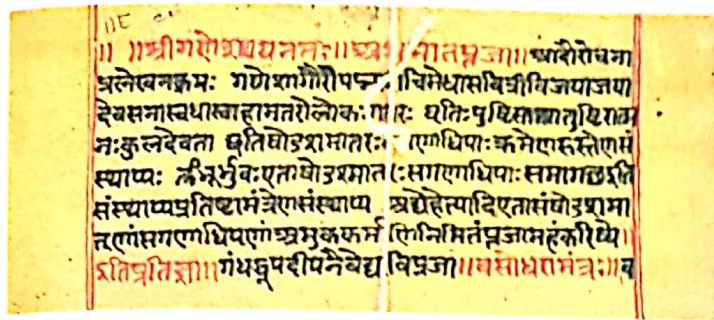


Fig. 1.9 Sanskrit text

Using Different Sources

The historian has to judiciously and carefully use the different sources while writing history. Certain

sources such as the archival records and coins are considered more reliable than certain other types of sources like literature or oral traditions. Sometimes the information provided in one source may be contradictory to that of another source. In some cases, the information contained in the literary text or inscriptions may not be straight forward. Such texts lend themselves to multiple interpretations. In other words, each historian will interpret the texts in a different manner.

DATE LINE

700–1800

Time Frame of Medieval Period.

EXPLANATORY WORDS

1. **Connotation-** A secondary meaning of a word or expression.
2. **Cartography-** Skill of map making.
3. **Chronicle-** Record of events.
4. **Inscription-** Text engraved on metal or stone surfaces.
5. **Epigraphy-** Science of studying inscriptions.
6. **Numismatics-** Science of systematic collection and study of coins.
7. **Mural-** A large picture directly painted or affixed on wall, ceiling, etc.
8. **Calligraphy-** Art of beautiful and stylish handwriting.

CHAPTER REVIEW

1. In the late Medieval period, there were numbers of invasions by Muslim conquerors from Central Asia.
2. The rule of Slave dynasty started after defeat of Rajputs at the hands of Muhammad Ghori. After Slave dynasty, Khaljis, Tughlaqs and Lodis ruled. Jointly the period of these dynasties is known as Delhi Sultanate.
3. After Delhi sultanate came Mughal empire, which started with Babur and ended with Aurangzeb.
4. Various sources to gather information about History are maps, inscriptions, coins, historians and their accounts, paintings, sculptures, books, chronicles, verses, etc.
5. Many foreign travellers and scholars visited India during the Medieval period.

EXERCISES

1. Answer the following questions in brief:

- What are inscriptions? How are they helpful?
- Give one reason why the science of cartography progressed during the Medieval period.
- What is meant by Bhakti?
- Which period of Indian history is called the Medieval period?
- What were the subjects of the Medieval paintings?
- What is a chronicle?

2. Answer the following questions in detail:

- Give an example to show how the usages of terms changed with time.
- Briefly discuss the religious developments that took place in India during the Medieval period.
- What are the difficulties historians face in using manuscripts?
- What were the important kingdoms that flourished in India during the early Medieval period?
- What is Epigraphy and Numismatics? How inscriptions and coins are useful to the historians?
- Write a note on the literary sources of Medieval Age.

3. Choose the best alternatives for your answers-

- Which of the following is not an archaeological evidence?
 - Inscriptions ☐
 - Coins ☐
 - Chronicles ☐
- Tarikh-i-Shershahi was written by—
 - Badauni ☐
 - Abbas Shervani ☐
 - Abdul Hamid Lahori ☐
- Study of coins is called—
 - Epigraphy ☐
 - Calligraphy ☐
 - Numismatics ☐
- Persian wheel is used in—
 - Irrigation ☐
 - Weaving ☐
 - Driving ☐
- The early Medieval period runs between—
 - 12th–17th CE ☐
 - 8th–12th CE ☐
 - 8th–16th CE ☐
- The defeat of Rajputs at the hands of Muhammad Ghori brought India under the—
 - Mughal dynasty ☐
 - Slave dynasty ☐
 - Turk dynasty ☐
- Marco Polo belonged to—
 - Venice ☐
 - Paris ☐
 - London ☐