

### **The Coming of Islam to South Asia.**

- A. Muslim invasions from the 7th century added to the complexity of Indian civilization.
  - 1. Previous nomadic invaders usually had blended over time into India's sophisticated civilization.
  - 2. Muslims, possessors of an equally sophisticated, but very different, culture, were a new factor.
- B. Cultural "encounter":
  - 1. The open, tolerant, and inclusive Hindu religion, based in a social system dominated by castes
  - 2. Islam was doctrinaire, monotheistic, evangelical, and egalitarian.
  - 3. In the earlier period of contact, conflict predominated
  - 4. As time passed, although tensions persisted, peaceful commercial and religious exchange occurred in a society where Muslim rulers governed Hindu subjects.

### **Political Divisions and the First Muslim Invasions.**

- A. The stable empire ruled by Harsha collapsed with his death in 646.
- B. Hindu culture continued to flourish, but political divisions left north India open to Muslim invasions beginning in 711.
- C. Many Indians, treated as "people of the book," welcomed the new rulers who offered religious tolerance and lighter taxes.
  - 1. Most indigenous officials retained their positions, while brahmin castes were respected.
  - 2. Few Arabs resided in cities or garrison towns
  - 3. Minimal conversion efforts did not change existing religious beliefs.

### **Indian Influences on Islamic Civilization.**

- A. Although Islam's impact in India was minimal, Islamic civilization was enriched by Indian culture.
  - 1. Indian achievements in science, mathematics, medicine, music, and astronomy passed to the Arabs.
  - 2. Indian numerals were accepted, later to pass to Europe as "Arabic" numerals.
- B. Colonies of Arabs settled along India's coasts, adopted local customs, and provided staging points for later Islamic expansion to island and mainland Southeast India.
- C. Islam became an enduring and influential "minority" element in Indian culture
  - 1. Persian supplanted Sanskrit as the elite language of north India
  - 2. Urdu-Hindi developed in response to need for Hindu-Muslim communication
    - a. Urdu = Muslim language, drawing on Perso-Arabic heritage (Pakistan)
    - b. Hindi = derived from Sanskrit related dialects of the Punjab (India)

### **Patterns of Conversion.**

- A. Although Muslims came as conquerors, interaction with Indians early was dominated by peaceful exchanges.
- B. The main carriers of Islam were traders and Sufi mystics, the latter drawing followers because of similarities to Indian holy men.
  - 1. Their mosques and schools became centers of regional political power providing protection to local populations.
  - 2. Low and outcast Hindus were welcomed.
  - 3. Buddhists were the most numerous converts. Buddhist spiritual decline turned interest to the vigorous new religion of Islam.
- C. Others converted to escape taxes or through intermarriage.
- D. Muslim migrants fleeing 13th and 14th century Mongol incursions also increased the Islamic community.

**Patterns of Accommodation.**

- A. In most regions Islam initially had little impact on the general Hindu community.
- B. High-caste Hindus did not accept the invaders as their equals.
- C. Hindus thought the Muslims, as earlier invaders, would be absorbed by Hindu society.
- D. Muslim communities did adopt many Indian ways: they accepted Hindu social hierarchies, foods, and attitudes toward women.

**Stand-off: The Muslim Presence in India at the End of the Sultanate Period.**

- A. Similarities in style and message between Muslim Sufis and Hindu bhaktic devotees led to attempts to bridge the gaps between Islam and Hinduism.
  - 1. The *bhakti* movement sought to erase distinction between Hinduism and Islam
  - 2. bhakti teachers taught that Shiva, Vishnu, and Allah were one deity
- B. The orthodox of each faith repudiated such thought.
  - 1. Brahmins denounced Muslims as temple destroyers and worked for reconversion to Hinduism.
  - 2. Muslim ulama stressed the incompatibility of Islam's principles with Hindu beliefs.
- C. By the close of the sultanate period there were two distinct religious communities. The great majority of the population remained Hindu. They were convinced of the superiority of Indian religion and civilization, and of its capability to absorb the Muslim invaders.