

Seeds of Separation in the Subcontinent: Evaluating the Historical Roots of Pakistan and the Debate on Muslim Invasions

Asmat Ali Khan

Khan Zaman

Mr. Jafar Nazir

PhD scholar Department of Islamic Studies Kohat University of Science & Technology Kohat

PhD scholar Department of Arabic & Islamiyat Gomal University Dera Ismail Khan at-

jafar.nazir@numl.edu.pk

Lecturer, Department of International Relations, NUML, Rawalpindi

Abstract

This paper discusses the historical background of the interlinked debate which considered the Muslim invasions of the Indian subcontinent as the key driver of Pakistan's establishment. The usual record of these conquests is perceived as the consequence of the zealous implementation of the principle of "spreading Islam and governing by the Islamic law." On the one hand, the research should be careful to take into account the intricate interplay between religion, the political realm, and the economics of the time. The paper covers all three of the primary reasons (wealth, trade route, and politics) mentioning the association of religion as the Muslims invasions happen. It studies the social and cultural transformation that set in after this period, such as the rise of Muslim Dynasties, formation of community-specific groups among the Muslims and establishment of Persian as administrative language. Secondly, the paper explores how these historical processes created the development of two independent institutional and social structures and developed hierarchies between Muslim and Hindu societies. The purpose of this essay is to give a detailed historical overview of South Asia. It puts into critical evaluation some of the historical threads in support of the objectivity outline how important it is to understand the past to be able to understand the situation in South Asia today. However, the historical legacy of the Muslim invasions is still perceived to be the true origins of the region's population, diversity of culture, and the sense of political complexity. The comprehension of the varied motives of which that constructs these historic incidents yields a better and more tolerant way of viewing the fast-evolving relationship between religion, ethnicity and nationhood in Pakistan and the Southern Asian region.

Keywords: Muslim Invasions, Pakistan's Establishment, Political Realm, Nationhood

Introduction

The evolution of Pakistan as a separate state and its distinct identity enshrined its rich Muslim historical lineage (Shabbir, 2020). Pakistan's genesis amid the upheaval of the partition in 1947 marked the beginning of a complex narrative woven with cultural, historical, and ideological motifs (Ahmed, 2014). Muhammad Ali Jinnah's unwavering vision paved the path for Pakistan's emergence as a sanctuary for Muslims yearning for autonomy and religious liberty in the Indian

subcontinent (Jalal, 2009). Islam, deeply entrenched in the nation's ethos, serves as the cornerstone of its identity, transcending ethnic, linguistic, and traditional divides to unify its heterogeneous populace (Jaffrey, 2004). The eloquence of Urdu, with its poetic resonance, acts as a linguistic adhesive, binding together the diverse fabric of Pakistan's society (Rahman, 2011). Moreover, Pakistan's diverse geography, stretching from the majestic Himalayan peaks to the verdant plains of Punjab and the coastal expanse along the Arabian Sea, intricately shapes its cultural tapestry, culinary heritage, and economic pursuits (Zaidi, 2012). Despite grappling with internal strife and external pressures, Pakistan perseveres, drawing resilience from its people's indomitable spirit and unwavering commitment to nationhood (Khan, 2018). As it navigates the complexities of the modern era, Pakistan remains steadfast in preserving its unique identity, a testament to its enduring legacy amidst the ever-changing tides of history.

The longstanding role of the Muslims in the subcontinent could be the potential *raison d'être* of this specific identity. Spanning over several centuries, Muslim rulers established a rich cultural legacy that profoundly influenced the region's socio-political landscape (Karim, 2005). The Delhi Sultanate, founded by Qutb-ud-din Aibak in the 12th century, marked the beginning of Muslim dominance in the subcontinent (Chandra, 2009). Subsequent dynasties such as the Mughals further embellished this cultural tapestry with their architectural marvels, artistic endeavors, and administrative prowess (Hasan, 2016). The Mughal era, particularly under Emperor Akbar's reign, witnessed a flourishing of art, literature, and syncretic traditions, blending Persian, Indian, and Central Asian influences (Asher & Talbot, 2008). This period fostered a synthesis of diverse cultures, laying the groundwork for the fusion of identities that would later characterize Pakistan (Ahmed, 2012). The Mughal Empire's decline in the 18th century saw the emergence of regional Muslim powers such as the Nawabs of Bengal and the Nizams of Hyderabad, each contributing to the mosaic of Muslim heritage in the subcontinent (Spear, 1963). However, the soothing influences of Muslim reign that focused on tolerance and pluralism and molded the Islamic ethos endured. It is still felt today, and serves as historical anchor of the country as identity forming factor for it to survive the rapidly changing situation. The ongoing debate about the motives behind the Muslim invasions of the Indian subcontinent is an ongoing issue, which provokes much scholarly discussion and heated public discussion as well, as many people, including academic and religious practitioners (Smith, 2008). Historians, academicians, and scholars offer different views to these invasions. These might be purely, Islamic conquests aimed at spreading Islam, or there may be blended views that consider political, economic, and socio-cultural components as well (Elliot & Dowson, 1867; Habib, 1999). Some say that in most cases, the fundamental motive of these invasions had to do more with religion rather than for the actual reasons of leading a war. For instance, those who favour this idea use the imperial attitude that was unleashed by the Muslims in the conquered areas in order to convert people of other faiths to Islam or subjugate them through political means (Elliot & Dowson, 1867) While it is argued by others that the requests were done for economic and territorial motives including wealth, power and expansion (Habib, 1999). Furthermore, scholars stress that the mixed effect of trade routes, geopolitics and inter-ethnic tensions influenced

him. On the other hand, the divergence of Muslim rulers and their different role in managing the community makes the matter more complicated. Some will prefer to enforce religious tolerance and an opening policy while others will prefer the more orthodox orientation and coercive measures (Spear, 1964). In essence, the question about the motives behind the Muslim invasions grows from the complexity of history; hence, it is kept under continuous re-assessment and reinterpretation as new inputs and views of the past enhance our knowledge base (Smith, 2008).

Rationale of the Study

The subject of the historical basis of Pakistan and the debate now on Indian subcontinent about Muslim Invasions is one which is complex, but also is deep in modern relevancy. Through this journey into the past, we make visible the roots of a split that eventually led to the emergence of Pakistan as entity that is different from the rest of the Indo subcontinent. The study of the motives and outcomes of the Muslim invasions becomes a crucial vantage point for seeing how religious identities and political power structures are formed, as more cleavages between the people become evident. This multifaceted review outlines the profound interactions that still create the intricate political fabric of the subcontinent and grants deeper insight into many passionate controversies around the major issues such as place of religion and ethnicity in the political life of the region.

Arrival of Islam in the Subcontinent

The arrival of Islam in India has a long and multifaceted history, with evidence suggesting its presence as early as the 7th century (Chand, 1979). Arab traders and Sufis played a significant role in spreading the religion along the Malabar Coast, with some influential figures like the Cheraman Perumal King converting and establishing mosques (Chand, 1979). This peaceful introduction, alongside the simple tenets of Islam, resonated with the local population (Chand, 1979). Trade also played a role in Bengal, with some accounts suggesting companions of the Prophet reached Chittagong, a strategic port, as early as the 7th century (Marawaji, n.d.). While conflict arose later, it likely reflects the growing Muslim presence in the region. The bustling trade routes of the Indian Ocean connected the economies of South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Arab merchants played a key role in this network, transporting goods between Indian ports and Yemen. However, tensions arose due to incidents involving Arab sailors (Gopal, 1994). In one such incident, a group of Arab sailors were killed in Ceylon, and their families and gifts intended for the powerful Umayyad viceroy, Hajjaj, were seized by pirates in Debul (present-day Karachi) (Afzal, 2009). Hajjaj demanded their release from the ruler of Sindh, Dahir, but received an unsatisfactory response. This episode, coupled with Hajjaj's reputation for harshness, convinced Caliph Walid to authorize punitive action against Dahir.

The Arab Conquest and its Impact

Hajjaj launched three expeditions against Dahir, with the third led by his trusted commander, Muhammad ibn Qasim. This well-equipped force, consisting of 6,000 horsemen and an equal number of camel riders, marched through Shiraz and Makran before capturing Debul. This marked the first time the Muslim flag was raised on the subcontinent (Avari, 2012). Muhammad ibn Qasim then proceeded to conquer Multan, a prominent city in Punjab. His strategy involved

diverting the water supply, forcing the city's surrender. This success, along with conciliatory policies towards those who submitted, facilitated further Arab victories (Avari, 2012). Notably, Buddhist priests in Nirun welcomed the Arab general, and the people of Sehwan revolted against their Hindu governor, highlighting the discontent with the existing rulers (Avari, 2012). The Arab conquest extended beyond Sindh, with Abbasid governors like Hisham undertaking successful campaigns in Kashmir and Gujarat (Pollack, 2004). The Arab conquest of Sindh marked a turning point in the subcontinent's political and religious landscape. While the initial Arab presence was primarily military, it laid the groundwork for centuries of Islamic influence (Avari, 2012). The introduction of Islam challenged the existing Hindu and Buddhist social order, offering an alternative belief system centered around the worship of one God and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (Gopal, 1994). Although large-scale conversions did not occur immediately, the presence of Muslim rulers and the establishment of mosques gradually exposed the population to Islamic practices and ideas. Politically, the Arab conquest introduced new administrative structures and military tactics, influencing the development of later Muslim dynasties in the subcontinent (Afzal, 2009). The concept of a centralized Islamic state, with an emphasis on religious law (Sharia), had a lasting impact on the political systems that emerged in the region. However, it is important to note that the Arab presence was not monolithic. The policies of different Arab rulers varied, with some adopting more conciliatory approaches towards local populations (Avari, 2012). This complex interplay between conquest, cultural exchange, and political adaptation laid the foundation for the gradual Islamization of parts of the subcontinent, a process that would continue under the subsequent rule of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire.

The Development of Muslim Community

The formation of a distinguished Muslim community within the Indian subcontinent was a phenomenon which was ironical in nature primarily because of the religious, linguistic as well as the socio-political factors to shape it into the future (Ghaffar, 2013). The Muslims started a slow process of forming and establishing a Muslim identity with their arrival in the beginning of the 8th century CE. Later, these Muslims set up powerful Moslem dynasties like the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals and this transformed the subcontinent into a territory that had a strong, cohesive Muslim community. It is no brainer to say that religion was a key factor during that time and he acknowledged that he was led by God. Indicating a starting point for the cultural origins of the Arab peoples was the appearance of the new religion of Islam. It embraced a monotheistic belief system and unity of mankind under the counseling of their Ummah (community) and this helped to overcome the pre-existing language and ethnic differences (Ali, 2006). It did so by interlinking various Muslim communities beyond the borders of each region and thus provided a specific identity which could be differentiated from the non-Muslim majorities. Additionally, Persian's becoming the administrative and literary language of the Muslim ruling elite in the subcontinent further added to this newly developed distinctness of identity (Nomani, 2000). Persian language, from its grand literature and its link with and Islamic learning, was undoubtedly the principal instrument for cultural sharing and people's defining their selves. It

eventually brought birth to a special cultural environment that was rarified, and is popularly referred as Perso-Islamic, this cultural environment already involved influences of Persian art, architecture, and politics (Nalini, 2008). Be it the splendid Mughal architectural gems like the Taj Mahal or Persian Urdu becoming a hallmark of Muslim cultural frequency in the subcontinent, they remained very much representative eternal treasures of the era.

Nevertheless, the cultural reasons get studied as the only factors of the emergence of a distinct Muslim community. Socio-political events and religious turbulences were also among the important causes of the conflict (Hardy 1972). Thus, this historical event was a very complicated issue. When the Muslim kingdoms had the upper hand, there came policies that helped to identify those that were Muslims and also those that were not Muslims. This invariably established parallel legal systems where the Shariah of Islam controlled Muslim lives and customary laws ruled over those of the non-Muslims (Habib, 1999). On the other hand, in the newly established Muslim society social hierarchies appeared, Muslims being given the opportunity to be privileged in the new power structure. These differences especially along with the divergence in cultural norms for example dietary laws, marriage rituals and various kind of religious celebrations, contributed even more in the separating of the communities. The main causes of the growth, and in particular of the, certain times, perceived religious tension or conflict, were the gradual separation and the increasing awareness, about, a particular Muslim identity (Bayly, 1988). With the appearance of the Islamist revivalist movements, solidifying this state of difference became much more evident. In short, the emergence of a distinct Muslim community in the Indian subcontinent was a complicated historical phenomenon due to the fact that it was mostly crafted by the subtle harmonic balancing of religions, languages, and customs. It, thus, gave rise to a cultural personality which while it can be outlined as different from the Hindu majority, it also should naturally exist within it. Given the complex history as above it's easy to see the infighting in communalism and the ongoing issues that threaten the survival of multi-culturalism in India.

Contrasting Narratives on Muslims Invasions

The idea behind the Muslim invasions in the south Asian region have been the subject of heated arguments for several years, the object of passionate approaches of researchers, and the reason for the diversity of historians' views. Two schools of thought regardless constitute the debate with each of them making rebuttals and supporting the causes of the diversities (Smith, 2008). The overwhelming view plays a distinctive role as it connects the invasion to the religious celebration, and the forcible implantation of Islam into the lands is described to have been done under divine ordination (Elliot & Dowson, 1867). Muslim rulers and invaders were regarded by advocates of this view as those who had been guided by religious fervor to go forth and to convert the nonbelievers and to expand the realm of Islam. This story largely relies on historical records of the building of mosques, the appointment of Islamic institution leaders, and the transfer of Islamic scholarship [mosque building, appointment of Islamic administration, and transfer of Islamic knowledge through the conquests. While a revisionist view may challenge the traditional belief that religious reasons were the only factors that caused the conflict, there are also postmodern criticisms to consider. This completion movement that argues for the role of both economic and political factors also sheds light on the determinants of Muslim expansion (Habib, 1999). Those who dispute this idea maintain that the attitude of Muslim rulers towards trade was pragmatic, aimed at controlling trade routes leading to the sources of great wealth, achieving greater political authority over competing states and kingdoms (Chandra, 2009). The Indian Subcontinent went down Muslim generating phases tightly linked with aspirations for economic

superiority as much as zeal to spread their religion through further conquest. Also, internal political strife in the sub-continent which left some of the local rulers in a vulnerable position, often prompted them to invite Muslim powers to act as a sort of enforcer in exchanging for a stability that was hard to secure on their own (Elliot & Dowson, 1867). The reasons of Muslim conquest in the subcontinental areas are complex which cover a number of things. It is difficult to disregard the presence of religious passion, an element that undoubtedly played a crucial role in these events. One, however, must understand it better if we are to appreciate fully the complex interplay of economic and political forces that shaped these historical happenings. A nuanced understanding of these diverse motivations allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the complex historical processes that led to the establishment of Muslim communities and political entities within the Indian subcontinent.

The Legacy of Muslim's Rule

Although Muslim period in India during lasts some centuries is past, the influence of this culture on social, cultural, and architectural landscape is unalterable. Something one can always be sure of, at least, are the great monuments of the period, known as The Taj Mahal and the Qutub Minar, which still remain as the artifacts of that time (Avari, 2012). Persian language was efficiently conferred as the language of the administration and the establishment culture which also accelerated the theory of literature and richness of Urdu lingo (Friedman, 2015). In addition, Islamic practices like calligraphy and miniature paintings intermixes with the typical indigenous arts to form an utterly unique Indo-Islamic art sense (Koch 2006). While the role of Muslim domination is double-edged, it cannot be denied that it infiltrated into all aspects of and became a vital part of the host culture. Historical accounts show a continuum of religious tensions and at times Hindu majorities vs Muslim rulers and vice versa (Hardy, 6.1972). The establishment of the two whang with one another could occur within society because they have separate legal systems and a hierarchy based on religion (Habib, 1999). These historical tensions, along with the rise of nationalism in the 20th century, ultimately contributed to the partition of India in 1947, which separated the predominantly Muslim regions into the independent nation of Pakistan (Jones, 2009). Understanding the multifaceted legacy of Muslim rule, with both its unifying and divisive aspects, remains crucial for comprehending the rich tapestry of South Asian history.

Conclusion

It can be seen that the Muslims invasion and the subsequent conquests paved way for the rise of Islam in sub-continent. The Muslim invasions in the Indian subcontinent brought Islamic culture and religion a parallel to the Indian nations. The prevalent view portrays these conquests as primarily driven by religious zeal, aiming to spread Islam and establish Islamic rule. Such a viewpoint emphasizes the mosques' constructions, the employment of Muslim officials, and the spread of Islamic scholarship, all of which have appeared after the taking over of the Muslim lands. On the other hand, the voice in major writers can be interpreted in different ways. It clarifies the maneuverability of these economic and political considerations. On the Sub-continent, the rich lands, heavily engaged trade routes, and their strategic position created an appetizing target, and played as much into Muslim expansion as the lust for wealth and political control as they did into religious madness. Beyond the borders although, rivalries among the

various subcontinent states maximized the opportunity for Muslim intervention, where strategic alliances were forged by local chieftains with Muslim powers. With such a unique intricate mix of religion, politics and economy that the place had history had a tremendous effect in its development. The ascendancy of Muslim dynasties and the emerging of clear-cut Muslim towns brought changes to what was a social and cultural order. The Persian language was not only adopted by Sassanians as the administrative medium of the society but it also led to the formation of a unique cultural environment. Yet the process of integration continued to formulate many different systems of law as well as social segregation among Muslim and Hindu societies, further creating a divide amongst the two. South Asian countries are inextricably tied to their historical threads. The untangling of these threads is critical to understanding the situation in South Asia today. This is an inheritance that still echoes in the lives of people in this region through demography, ethnic composition, and the country's political situation. Acknowledging that religion, ethnicity, and national identity have been multidimensional influences of historical occurrences results in a more informed perspective about the gradual rising/declining relationship between religious, ethnic, and nation entities within Pakistan and ultimately, the South Asian nation. Through an objective examination of the past, we enable a wider and realistic interpretation of the past with a reflection on the obstacles and opportunities that may pave the road to the future.

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