
ISLAM IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

KSENIA ATAMALI. MUSLIMS IN INDIA: THE PAST AND PRESENT

Keywords: India; Pakistan; Islam; Hinduism; Arab conquests; Ghaznavids; Delhi Sultanate; Mughal Empire; British India; partition of India; intercultural conflict; interreligious conflict; Islamophobia; "Love jihad"; state terrorism; segregation; communalism.

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Abstract. The article discusses the history of Muslims in India from the advent of Islam to the subcontinent up to the present time. The work provides a brief historical background on the history of Islamic states on the territory of modern India and Pakistan, such as the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughal Empire and others. The contribution of Muslims to the Indian independence movement from British colonial rule, the partition of India along religious lines and the aftermath of such partition are also discussed. Much attention is paid to intercultural and interreligious conflict between Muslims and Hindus, the issue of

persecution of Muslims at the state level, acts of violence against the Muslim population and segregation.

Early History

Trade ties have existed between the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian subcontinent since ancient times, even in the pre-Islamic era. Arab traders visited the western Konkan-Gujarat coast and the south-western Malabar Coast on their route to the ports of Southeast Asia. There is ample historical evidence of close interaction between Arabs and Indians from the early days of Islam or even before the advent of Islam in the Arab regions. Thus, Arab traders brought the numeral system developed by the Indians to the Middle East and Europe, and in the 8th century many Sanskrit books were translated into Arabic. With the advent of Islam, the Arabs started to gain significant cultural influence in the world. Interaction between the peoples was not limited to commercial relations since Arab traders who used to visit the west coast annually often married Indian women and chose to settle in India. [1]

The arrival of Muhammad (569–632) transformed the Arabs into a nation united by faith, united in their mission of advancing Islam. Some historians believe that India's first contact with Islam was soon after its emergence in 610: the first ship carrying Muslim travellers was spotted on the Indian coast as early as 630. [2] In the second half of the 7th century, there were already first settlements of Muslims; [3] they became the ancestors of Mappila Muslims, the Muslim community of the Malayali people and the descendants of the Arabs. The Arab merchants, who were bringing dates to India every year, now also carried a young religion that was well received in South India. [4] According to popular tradition, Sheikh Ubaidullah, a relative of Abu Bakr, brought Islam to the Lakshadweep islands west of the Malabar Coast in 661. [5]

Muslims were allowed to build mosques, marry Indian women, and very soon an Indian-Arab community emerged. According to the Legend of Cheraman Perumals, the last ruler (Cheraman Perumal) of the Tamil Chera dynasty built the first Indian mosque in 624 at Kodungallur in modern Kerala; he converted to Islam during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. [6] The oldest mosques were built in the modern states of Kerala and Karnataka during the era of Malik Dinar (d. 748), one of the first Muslim scholars and travelers to come to India carrying Islamic teachings. [7] There were extensive missionary activities along the coast, and many locals converted to Islam.

It is worth noting that during the reign of Ali ibn Abi Talib (c. 600–661) many Jats from Sindh (now Pakistan) converted to Islam. They sided with Ali [8] during the Battle of the Camel (December 8, 656) between supporters of the fourth caliph and a group of rebels led by the Prophet's widow Aisha and companions Talha ibn Ubayd Allah and az-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam.

Muslim Rule

In 712, the 17-year-old Arab general Muhammad ibn al-Qasim (695–715) conquered Sindh and Multan (now Punjab, Pakistan) for the Umayyad Caliphate, thus initiating the Islamic period in the history of India. [9] In the first half of the 8th century, the Indian kingdoms managed to repel the caliphate's advance, and the Umayyad campaigns in India were contained to Sindh. [10] The major Muslim conquest began much later, in 1206, and Muslim rule lasted 551 years, until 1757. In the early 11th century, the Ghaznavid Empire, under Mahmud of Ghazni (971–1030), captured and ravaged Punjab and Gujarat in north-western South Asia. [11] These invaders were much more violent, using swift-horse cavalry and time after time gathering large armies. The capture of Lahore (now Punjab,

Pakistan) by the Ghurid dynasty in 1186 put an end to the rule of the Ghaznavid dynasty. Ghurid Sultan Muhammad of Ghor (1149–1206) laid the foundation for Muslim rule in India by defeating the Rajput Confederacy during the Second Battle of Tarain (1192). In 1202, the Ghurid commander Bakhtiyar Khalji (d. 1206) led the successful invasion of Bengal, making it the easternmost point of Muslim rule at that time.

The Ghurids laid the foundation for the Delhi Sultanate in India. After Muhammad of Ghor was assassinated, his trusted slave-general Qutb ud-Din Aibak (1150–1210) declared himself the Sultan of Delhi and started the Mamluk dynasty. With the creation of the Delhi Sultanate, Islam spread across much of the Indian subcontinent. From the late 12th century, the subcontinent was dominated by Muslim empires, most notably the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire; from the mid-14th to the late 18th centuries various Muslim states ruled much of South Asia. Although the origins of the Muslim dynasties in India were diverse, they were invariably united by Persian culture and Islam.

The Delhi Sultanate lasted 320 years, and was successively ruled by five dynasties: the Mamluk dynasty (1206–1290), Khalji dynasty (1290–1320), Tughlaq dynasty (1320–1413), Sayyid dynasty (1414–1451) and Lodi dynasty (1451–1526). During the rule of the Delhi Sultanate, there was a synthesis of Indian and Islamic civilizations, as well as the integration of the Indian subcontinent into the developing world system and growing international networks, which had a considerable impact on Indian culture and society. In the 13th and 14th centuries, the Delhi Sultanate also repelled potentially destructive invasions by the Mongol Empire. [12] In the 13th century, India began to adopt and widely use mechanical technologies from the Islamic world, such as papermaking technology. [13] During that time, Indo-Islamic architecture emerged. [14]

In the 14th century, the Khalji dynasty under Alauddin Khalji (c. 1266–1316) extended Muslim rule south to Gujarat, Rajasthan and the Deccan. The Tughlaq dynasty temporarily

expanded its territory to Tamil Nadu. However, the Delhi Sultanate slowly declined, undermined by internal strife. Thus, in 1347, rebel Shi'ite Muslims led by the Delhi military leader Hasan Zafar Khan founded the Bahmani Sultanate on the southern Deccan plateau. [15] Gradually, more territories broke away from the Delhi Sultanate, declaring independence: the Madurai Sultanate (1335), powerful Bengal Sultanate (1353), Khandesh Sultanate (1382), Malawi Sultanate (1392), Jaunpur Sultanate (1394) and Gujarat Sultanate (1407). Moreover, some sultanates were conquered by Hindu states such as the Vijayanagar Empire [16] and the Rajput dynasty. Also, the Delhi Sultanate suffered greatly during Timur's invasion in 1398.

In 1526, Babur (1483–1530) of the Timurid dynasty invaded India and defeated Ibrahim Shah, the last Sultan of Delhi from the Lodi dynasty. Large areas of northern India were controlled by the Sur Empire, which was founded by the Bihari general Sher Shah (d. 1545) after the Mughal emperor Humayun (1508–1556) was exiled in 1539. In 1555, Humayun triumphantly returned from Persia, and the Mughal Empire asserted complete dominance of the Indian subcontinent; the Mughal Empire was one of the three gunpowder empires. The Islamic rule in India reached its height during the reign of the Mughal empire Aurangzeb (ruled 1658–1707), who compiled the Sharia-based legal code Fatawa 'Alamgiri. It should be noted that the legal system of the Delhi Sultanate was Sharia-based, especially in the 14th century. However, the emperor Akbar the Great (reigned 1556–1605) adopted a secular legal system and ensured religious neutrality. [17] The Mughal Empire fell into decline after Aurangzeb's death, lacking competent rulers and waging bloody wars with the Rajputs and Marathas. It was the Maratha Empire that replaced the Mughals as the dominant power in the subcontinent between 1720 and 1818.

Muslim rule in India dramatically changed the cultural, linguistic and religious structure of the subcontinent. Persian and Arabic vocabulary entered local languages such as Punjabi, Bengali

and Gujarati, and even created new languages, such as Urdu and Deccani, which were the official languages of the Muslim dynasties. Religions such as Sikhism and Din-i-Illahi emerged out of the fusion of Hindu and Muslim religious traditions.

In 1857, the beginning of the British Raj ended Muslim rule in modern India, although some aspects of it remained in the states of Hyderabad, Junagadh, Jammu and Kashmir and other native princely states under the British protectorate in Hindustan until the mid-20th century.

The Indian Independence Movement and the Partition of India

Muslims greatly contributed to the Indian independence movement that ultimately ended the British Raj. There is a number of noteworthy Muslim revolutionaries, such as Titumir (1782–1831), who led the Bengali Muslim rebels; Hazrat Mahal (c. 1820–1879), who fought against the British East India Company during the Indian Rebellion of 1857; Mohamed Barakatullah (1854–1927), one of the founders of the left-wing Ghadar Party, which was behind the unsuccessful uprising in Punjab and Bengal in 1915; Hakim Ajmal Khan (1868–1927), one of the founders of the Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi; Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958), one of the leaders of the Indian independence movement, who championed Hindu-Muslim unity; and Abdul Ghaffar Khan ('Bacha Khan'; 1890–1988), political and spiritual leader of the Pashtuns, associate and follower of Mahatma Gandhi, spent 45 years in prison.

Mahmud al-Hasan (1851–1920), co-founder of the Jamia Millia Islamia University, along with Deobandi leaders, organized the famous Silk Letter Movement, which plotted an armed coup and overthrow of British rule between 1913 and 1920. [18] The Sunni Islamic Deobandi movement was formed in one of the largest academic centres of the Islamic world, Darul Uloom Deoband, in 1867 as an anti-colonial movement and

spread mainly among Hanafi Muslims. [19] Today, Deobandism mainly protects Islam from *bid'ah* (innovation) and the influence of non-Muslim cultures in South Asian countries. There were many Muslims among Gandhi's followers who fought for independence of India and emancipation of Muslims.

Since Muslims needed political representation in British India, the All-India Muslim League was formed. [20] The idea of a party that would defend the interests of Muslims in Hindustan was put forward at the annual meeting of the All-India Muhammadan Educational Conference in Dhaka in 1906. [21] Until the 1930s, Muslims of India generally supported the idea of an undivided India, the political position shared by their countrymen. Everything changed after the poet and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) delivered his famous speech at the 21st session of the All-India Muslim League, introducing the idea of creating a Muslim state within independent India. [22] The idea of uniting four provinces in north-western British India was a follow-up to the two-nation theory – a Muslim ideology in colonial India that promoted the notion that Muslims and Hindus were two separate nations with their own customs, traditions, cultures and ways of life. The theory advocated the creation of separate countries for Muslims and Hindus within a decolonized British India. [23]

We should also mention Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), a Muslim politician, a famous fighter for independence and one of the initiators of the partition of British India. Jinnah was the leader of the All-India Muslim League from 1913 until its dissolution in 1947. When the Indian National Congress protested after the UK unilaterally involved India in WWII, the All-India Muslim League with the future founder of Pakistan at the helm supported the British war effort. In the 1940s, the party was the driving force behind the partition of India along religious and demographic lines and the creation of Pakistan as a Muslim state in 1947. [24] Gandhi opposed the division of the country on the basis of religion. [25] British India was divided into the

Dominion of Pakistan (in 1971 split into the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh) and the Union of India (from 1950 the Republic of India). The All-India Muslim League was officially dissolved in India, but continued in Pakistan as the Muslim League led by Jinnah. In India, the Indian Union Muslim League was formed, which is still active today.

Some critics argue that the British haste in the partition process contributed to the violence that followed. [26] No one envisaged major population movements, and the partition plan included safeguards for religious minorities on both sides of the border. The new governments failed to keep the wave of violence in check, many people died in the riots. What followed was one of the largest population movements in recorded history. At the time of partition in 1947, two-thirds of Muslims lived in Pakistan but a third lived in India. [27] According to the 1951 Displaced Persons Census, 7,226,000 Muslims moved to Pakistan from India and 7,249,000 Hindus and Sikhs moved to India from Pakistan. [28] At the lowest estimates, half a million people died and approximately 12 million became homeless. [29] The violent nature of the partition created an atmosphere of mutual hostility and wariness between India and Pakistan, which still affects political relations between the two countries.

Violence against Muslims

Since the partition of India in 1947, there have been a number of acts of violence against Muslim population by Hindu nationalists (Hindutva). The roots of such animosity against Muslims go deep into history: the Islamic conquest of India during the Middle Ages, the policies of the British Raj and the partition of Hindustan on the religious basis. [30] Many scholars believe that there are political motives behind violence, and it is part of the strategy of leading parties associated with Hindu nationalists, such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). [31] Some

researchers call such incidents pogroms and state terrorism in the form of “organized political massacres.” [32]

Most often, violence takes the form of Hindus mob attacking Muslims. The incidents are referred to as communal riots [33] and are described as sporadic sectarian violence between the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority. The causes of the attacks are also linked to the rise of Islamophobia in the 20th century. Most of the incidents occurred in the northern and western states of India, where communalist sentiments are strong. There have also been cases of retaliatory attacks against Hindus in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Since 1950, more than 10 thousand people have died in clashes between Hindus and Muslims.

Major anti-Muslim protests, riots and acts of violence in post-independence Indian history as listed below:

- Hyderabad, 1948. Following the annexation of the princely state of Hyderabad by the Union of India (‘Operation Polo’), more than 200 thousand people were killed. There were cases of violence against Muslims in particular. The killings are called the first genocide of Muslims in independent India. [34]

- Calcutta, 1964. More than 100 people died in the clashes, 70 thousand Muslims abandoned their homes. Segregation of Muslims significantly intensified after riots in the state. [35]

- Gujarat, 1969. According to official data, 430 Muslims perished. It is worth noting that Muslim chawls (low quality tenements) were attacked by Dalits (untouchables), who had lived in peace until that moment. [36]

- Bhiwandi, 1970. 192 Muslims were killed in clashes between the Hindu nationalist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Islamic party Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (as well as several similar parties). [37]

- Moradabad, 1980. According to official data, 400 Muslims died in clashes between the police and Muslims; unofficial estimates run as high as 2500. The conflict was sparked by the

refusal of the police to remove the pig from Idgah (a special structure for performing Eid prayers). [37]

- Nellie (Assam), 1983. More than two thousand Muslims (official estimates) perished in the pogrom after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi granted voting rights to Bengali Muslims. [37]

- Gujarat, 1985. Riots that led to the death of more than 100 and displacement of 12 thousand Muslims began after the state announced a change in its policy that increased the benefits to people from lower classes. [38]

- Hashimpura, 1987. 50 Muslims were killed by the police during the Meerut Hindu-Muslim riots. In 2018, 16 police officers were sentenced to life imprisonment. [39]

- Bhagalpur, 1989. About a thousand people died and 50 thousand were displaced as a result of public tensions over a disputed piece of land plot in Ayodhya. The site of the Babri Masjid is often believed to be Rama's birthplace. It is the deadliest outbreak of anti-Muslim violence in India to date. [40]

- Bombay, 1992. The demolition of the Babri Masjid by Hindu nationalists resulted in the death of 575 Muslims. Many researchers believe that the riots were orchestrated and that Hindu rioters received information about the location of Muslim dwellings and businesses from closed sources. [41]

- Manipur, 1993. Approximately 100 Muslims died in riots between the Meitei Muslims and the Meitei Hindus. [42]

- Gujarat, 2002. The burning of a train carrying Hindu pilgrims in Godhra by a group of Muslims was followed by a three-day outbreak of violence. According to official figures, 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus were killed in the riots. [43] The incident is often referred to as an act of state terrorism and ethnic cleansing. [44] In 2011, 31 Muslims were found guilty of setting fire to the train. [45] The drama film *Godhra* (2023) is based on the theory about an anti-Muslim conspiracy that was first put forward by the commission investigating the incident. A BBC documentary about Narendra Modi's role in the riots was banned in India. [46]

- Malegaon, 2006. In the explosions at a Muslim cemetery adjacent to a mosque 40 people were killed and more than 125 injured. The Hindu extremist group Abhinav Bharat was found responsible for the attack. [47]

- Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradesh), 2013. In the clashes between Hindu Jats and Muslim Jats at least 62 people were killed, 200 were injured and over 50 thousand were displaced. [48]

- Assam, 2014. In three days (May 1–3), an unknown perpetrator shot dead 32 Bengali Muslims using an AK-47. [49]

- Delhi 2020. Riots sparked by protests against an anti-Muslim citizenship law (part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist policy) [50] left 36 Muslims dead and hundreds injured. [51]

When discussing Islamophobia in India, one should also mention so called "Love Jihad," a Hindutva conspiracy theory, according to which Muslims seduce (and sometimes even kidnap) non-Muslim Indian women in order to convert them to Islam. [52] The conspiracy theory was concocted by Hindu nationalists in 2009 in Kerala to instil mistrust of Muslims. An investigation found no evidence to support the allegations, but it did nothing to stop rumours from spreading to neighbouring states. [53] The right-wing BJP party and pro-government media continues exploiting the rumours as a justification for repressions against Muslims. [54] To promote the subject of "Love Jihad", Bollywood produced a drama film "The Kerala Story" (2023). [55]

Demography

As of 2021, there are 209 million Muslims in India. India is the country with the third largest Muslim population in the world (after Indonesia and Pakistan) and the country with the largest Muslim minority (14.6 per cent of the total country's population). [56] According to the 2011 census, Muslims form a majority in Lakshadweep (96.6 per cent) and Jammu and

Kashmir (68.3 per cent). Muslims make up a significant percentage of the state's total population in Assam (34.2 per cent), West Bengal (27 per cent) and Kerala (26.6 per cent). High concentrations of Muslims can also be found in the states of Uttar Pradesh (19.2 per cent), Bihar (16.9 per cent), Jharkhand (14.5 per cent), Uttarakhand (14 per cent), Karnataka (13 per cent), Delhi (12.9 per cent) and Maharashtra (12.9 per cent). The state with the largest Muslim population is Uttar Pradesh with nearly 38.5 million Muslims. [57]

As for the population growth rate, it should be noted that according to the latest estimates, Muslims in India have the highest birth rate in the country (2.36), [58] so the percentage of Muslims from the total population of the country is growing with every passing year. According to projections from statistical centers, by 2100 the Muslim population will rise to minimum a little over 280 million (17 per cent of the country's population) to maximum almost 350 million (21 per cent of the population).

In terms of denominations, the majority of Indian Muslims (over 85 per cent) are Sunni, while the largest minority (over 13 per cent) are Shia. Most Sunnis belong to the Hanafi madh'hab (school). According to some sources, India's Shia population is the second largest in the world after Iran. Sufism is also widespread among Muslims in India. There are also small communities of Ahmadyya, Quranists and Bohra Shia across the country.

In conclusion, there is significant segregation of Muslims in the country, which started in the 1970s after the first communalist riots. In larger cities, Muslims were forcibly resettled to ghettos or segregated areas. [59] This can be seen in Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and many cities in Gujarat where there is a clear socio-cultural demarcation between Hindu and Muslim areas. Due to the lack of cross-cultural interaction, there has been an increase in stereotyping, and living in ghettos has drastically reduced economic and educational opportunities for Muslims.

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