

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO  
ISLAMIC HISTORY AND CULTURE

The word 'history' is derived from the Greek word 'istoria' which means information or inquiry. History is a systematic account of the origin and the development of the human kind. It is the result of the interplay of man with his environment and his fellow men. It is the living past of man. It can also be seen as an attempt made by man through centuries to reconstruct, describe and interpret his own past.

History is so multi-faceted a subject that no comprehensive definition of it can be given except in general terms. Most definitions of history point to its nature and scope or to the value of its study.

Aristotle, the great philosopher probably gave the first formal definition. He said, "History is an account of the unchanging past."

E.H. Carr characterised history as "a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past."

History is a branch of learning which helps man to mould his future. It provides an awareness of the development of human beings in economic, social, political and cultural fields and gives a sense of direction for the future.

“History is a science that investigates and presents in their context of psycho-physical causality, the facts determined by space and time of the evolution of men in their individual as well as typical and collective activity as social beings”- **Ernest Bernheim**.

“History is nothing but the biography of great men and that it is a record of human accomplishment particularly of great souls” – **Thomas Carlyle**.

“History is the art of choosing from among many lies that one which most resembles the truth”- **Rousseau**.



Collect as many definitions as possible on history, discuss the features of the subject of history based on the definitions and develop your own definition.

### Historiography

Historiography literally means the art of writing history. It is nothing but the history of history or the history of historical writing. Historiography tells the story of the successive stages of evolution or development of historical writings. It includes the evolution of the ideas and techniques associated with the writing of history and the changing attitudes towards the nature of history itself.

### Sources of History

The materials from which the information about the past can be collected are called the sources of history. The sources can be divided into material and literary sources.

#### Material Sources

- Coins
- Pottery

- Cloths
- Remains of dwelling places and cities
- Ponds
- Dams
- Wells
- Forts, palaces and temples
- Inscriptions on rocks, walls, forts, pillars, metal and terracotta plates
- .....
- .....



**Archaeology** is the scientific study of people and their culture in the past by analysing their artefacts, inscriptions, monuments and other remains.



*Fig. 1.1: Coins and palm leaves*



Epigraphy is the study of inscriptions.  
Numismatics is the study of coins.

**Literary Sources**

- ◆ Travelogues
- ◆ Poetry
- ◆ Biographies
- ◆ Autobiographies
- ◆ Diaries
- ◆ Records
- ◆ Religious texts and legends
- ◆ .....
- ◆ .....

## ISLAMIC HISTORY

Islamic History is a comprehensive and multi-dimensional discipline which contains all aspects of lives and achievements of the Muslim community as a whole. The subject matter of Islamic History contains the history of Arabia before Prophet Muhammad, the development of Muslim society under the prophet and the pious Khalifas and the society under various dynasties up to the present century. It also deals with the life and cultural contributions of Muslims.

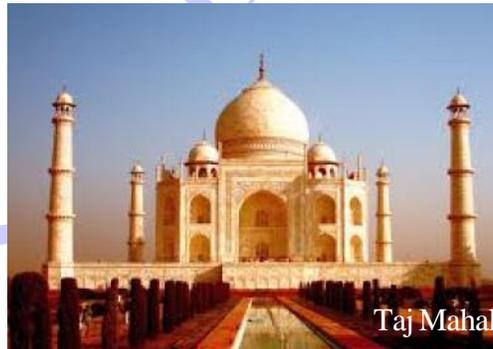


'Tarikh' is the corresponding Arabic term to the English word 'History'. It usually means 'the past'. 'Tarikhul Islam' is the common term used by Arabic historians to denote Islamic history which means the history of the Islamic people. In documenting the history of their people, the Arabs followed the rational approach.

### Culture

The gradual spread of Islam made it a great culture. "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, custom and any other capability or habits acquired by man as a member of society." Islam contributed much in the field of culture and civilization. Muslims had their own contributions in science and literature. Their fame also rests in the field of painting, architecture, music, performing arts, etc. According to P.K. Hitti, "Moreover they were the medium through which ancient science and philosophy were recovered, supplemented and transmitted in such a way as to make possible the renaissance of western Europe."

Khaleela wa Dimna	Literary work	Ibn Muqaff
Kanun fi Tibb	Medicine	Avicenna
Tahafut al Tahafut	Philosophy	Ibn rushd
Tariq ur Rasul Wal Muluk	History	Jarir al Tabari
Muajab al Buldun	Geography	Al-Idrisi
Al-Jabr al Muqabalah	Mathematics	Al Qawarsmi
Al ashhr maqalath al Ain	Ophthalmology	Hunayn bin Ishaq
Kitab al Rahma	Alchemy	Jabir ibn Hayyan



## Sources of Islamic History

The main sources of Islamic History are the Qur'an and the Hadith. Material and literary sources such as architectural monuments and historical works are also used.

Historical works include:

- Diwanul Arabs (The pre-Islamic poetry)
- Ayyamul Arabs (The days of the Arabs - Tales of battle days of tribes)
- Tabaqat (Group Relating History)
- Sira Literature (Biographies)
- Houwaliyat (Chronicles)
- Khabar (Historical Anecdotes)
- Ilmu Ansab (Genealogy)

## Some important works on Islamic History

Sirathul Rasulallah - Ibn Ishaq



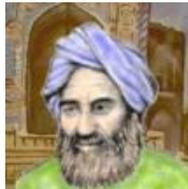
Thariq-ul-Rasul-wal-Muluk - Al Tabari

Muqadhima - Ibn Khaldun



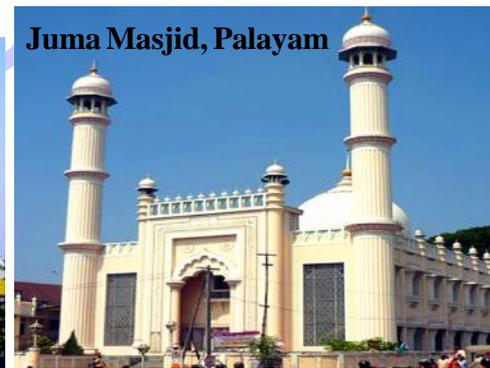
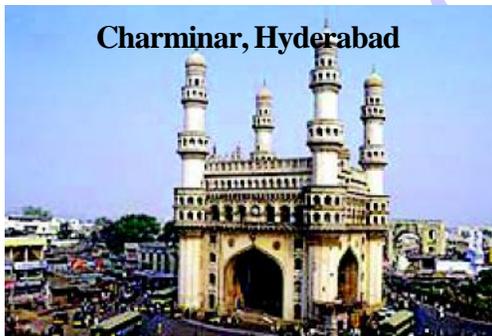
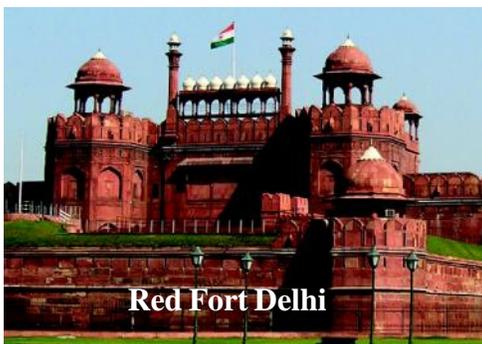
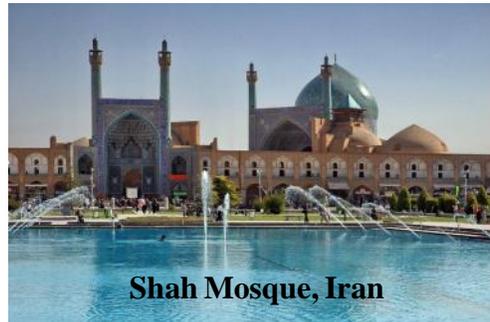
Akbar Nama - Abul Fazal

Kitabul Hind - Al- Biruni



Thuhfathul Mujahidin - Shaik Zainudin

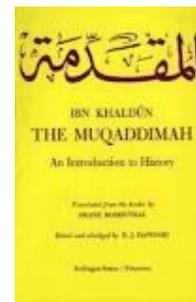
**Architectural Monuments**



**Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406)**

Ibn Khaldun was the most celebrated historian of the medieval period. His greatest work is 'Universal History'. His fame rests on 'Muqadhimah', an introduction to his great 'Kitab ul Ibr'. He is considered the 'Father of Sociology'.

Other eminent Muslim historians were Al-Tabari, Al-Masudi, Al-Waqidi, Al-Baladuri, Ziauddin Barani, Afifi, Khallikan, Abu Fazal, Shaik Zainudin Makhdum etc.



**Arnold Toyanbee** called the Muqadhima 'a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place'.

The British philosopher **Robert Flint** wrote on Ibn Khaldun 'as a theorist of history he had no equal in any age or country until Vico appeared, more than three hundred years later. Plato, Aristotle and Augustine were not his peers, and all others were unworthy of being mentioned along with him.'

## ISLAM

Islam was the youngest of the Semitic spiritual traditions and Muhammad was its last Prophet. He propagated the doctrine of 'oneness of the God' that is 'Tawhid', and his last Prophethood. This basic belief is exposed in the statement La Ilaha Illa Allah Muhammed ur Rasulullah (There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah). Islam liberated human thought. It changed the attitude and approach of mankind, upholding the principle of unity and brotherhood of man regardless of his birth, gender, nationality, language and colour of skin. Islam declared that the entire human race has one and the same parentage-Adam and Eve. Islam does not make any distinction between the realm of the physical world and the world of spirituality. Both are integral parts of one and the same. Hence the Prophet was the spiritual head as well as the head of the state. The political system after him (the Khilafat) became the most powerful one to influence the course of history of Asia, Africa and Europe.

### **Tawhid**

Tawhid is the essence of the teachings of Islam. It means that there is only one supreme Lord of Universe. He is omnipotent, omnipresent and sustainer of the world and mankind.

### **The Meaning of Islam**

Islam is an Arabic word that denotes submission, surrender and obedience. As a religion, Islam stands for complete obedience and submission to Allah - that is why it is called Islam. The other literal meaning of the word is 'peace' and this signifies that one can achieve real peace of body and mind only through submission and obedience to God.

### Articles of Faith

Beliefs in :

- Oneness of God
- The Angels of God
- The Scriptures of God
- The Prophets of God
- The Day of Judgement
- The supremacy of God's will (predestination)

### Five Pillars of Islam

The five pillars of Islam remain the core and obligatory practices of Muslims

#### 1. The profession of faith.

A Muslim is one who proclaims "there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of God". It affirms Islam's absolute monotheism, an uncompromising faith in the oneness of God. The second part of the confession of faith is the affirmation of Muhammad as the messenger of the God, the last and final Prophet.

#### 2. Prayer.

Five times each day, Muslims are called to worship God by Muazzin (caller to prayer) from mosques. Muslims individually or in group, can perform their prayers (Salat-Arabic, Namaz-persian). The times of the prayer are daybreak, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and late evening. Ritually, prayer is preceded by ablutions (Wudu) that cleans the body. A special feature of the Friday prayer is a sermon (Khutuba) preached from a pulpit(Mimber).

#### 3. Almsgiving (Zakat)

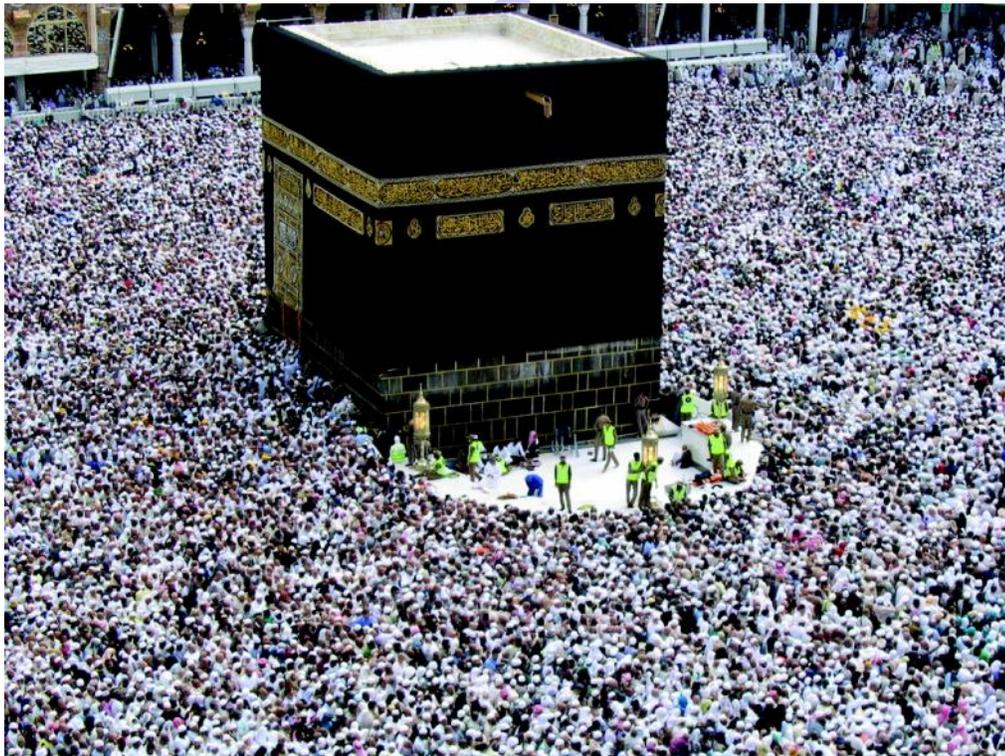
All capable adult Muslims are obliged to pay zakat in accordance with their wealth. A certain percentage of the accumulated wealth and assets is to be given to the poor. During the period of Islamic rule zakat was collected from individuals and distributed to the deserving people.

#### 4. The fast of Ramadan.

Every year during the month of Ramadan, Islam prescribes a rigorous fast during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. All adult Muslims in good health should observe from dawn to sunset, abstinence, not only from food, drink and sexual activity but also from all kinds of wrong doings. The month of Ramadan comes to an end with a great celebration, Eid -ul-Fitr.

#### 5. Pilgrimage: the Hajj.

Ramadan is followed by the beginning of the pilgrimage season. Every adult Muslim who is physically and financially able is expected to perform the annual pilgrimage (Hajj) to Makkah at least once in his or her lifetime. The hajj takes place during the twelfth month, Dhul Hajj of the Hijra calendar. Tenth Dhul Hajj is another day of celebration, Eid al Adha.



*Fig 1.2 Ka'aba during Hajj*



*Fig 1.3 Delhi Juma Masjid on the day of Eid*

### Islam in India

It is considered that Islam came to India for the first time in Kerala through the Arab who had commercial connection with Kerala. The local rulers with their liberal welcoming policy provided all facilities to the Muslim Arab merchants. It was the Hindu rulers of Kodungallur, who supported the Muslims to build the first mosque in India. Subsequently Islam spread into different parts of India. The Indian Muslims had contributed much in the development of socio-political and cultural sphere of India.

### Muslim Population

According to the Global Religious Landscape Report (Dec. 2012), the P.E.W. Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, USA, there are an estimated 1.6 billion Muslims around the world, making Islam the world's second-largest religious tradition after Christianity.

The Middle East-North Africa region has the highest concentration of Muslims than any other region of the world: 93% of its approximately 341 million inhabitants are Muslims. In the sub-Saharan Africa it is 30% and in the Asia-Pacific region it is 24%.

**Regional Distribution of Muslims**

*Population by region as of 2010*



*Percentage of world Muslim population in each region as of 2010*



Population estimates are rounded to the ten thousands. Percentages are calculated from unrounded numbers. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Global Religious Landscape, December 2012

Muslims make up a majority of the population in 49 countries around the world. The country with the largest number (about 209 million) is Indonesia, where 87.2% of the population identifies as Muslim. India has the world's second-largest Muslim population in raw numbers (roughly 176 million) and Muslims make up 14.4% of India's total population.

### Assesment question

1. "History is an unending dialogue between the Present and the Past"-  
Substantiate
2. What is meant by sources of History? Mention its classification with examples.
3. Islamic History deals with the life and culture of Muslims. Explain.

### Further Activity

Write the history of the locality where your school is situated.

### Areas

- Occupation of the people
- Urbanisation
- Customs and rituals
- Educational development
- Religion, mosques, churches and temples
- Festivals
- Art forms
- Agriculture

Collect data for the last 50 years from various sources.

Collect coins of the different countries and different periods. Categorise the coins in the chronological order and write a historical report.