

CHAPTER 15: INDIA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN BASIN

Coming into India from the north through the Khyber Pass were numbers of invaders, including Alexander the Great, nomadic Turks, and Muslims. Muslim traders began to establish small communities in the major cities on the west coast of India and soon the Turkish migrants and some Indians began to convert to Islam. Then in the 1200s Mahmud of Ghazni invaded northern India and established control over the area. His successors expanded that territory and it became an Islamic state known as the Delhi Sultanate. The south of India remained Hindu and relatively free of Muslim influence although politically divided. The large Chola kingdom (850-1297 C.E.) conquered Ceylon and dominated the waters of the South China Sea. In 1336 two Indian brothers established the Vijayanagar kingdom (1336-1565 C.E.), covering much of the same territory. Although the brothers were originally Muslim, they converted their Hindu faith and the south remained Hindu. One of the greatest influences on India was not a person but nature in the form of the monsoons. These spring and summer rains bring the water India needs, and the development of reservoirs and canals used to store and transport this water led to huge population growth and, with it, urban growth. Trade in metals, spices and crops first developed internally in southern India.

The Hindu temples that operated not only as religious centers but also as tax collectors and banks helped propel this expansion. The caste system played a part in trade by helping immigrants find a place in society. Trade boosted expansion of the caste system, creating new sub castes (*jatis*) for the new professions and people. The trade in the Indian Ocean basin was linked to this internal trade as part of a vast trade network. The trade in the basin was multi-product and cross-cultural, including silk from China, spices from Southeast Asia, cotton from India, horses from Arabia, and gold and slaves from east Africa.

Religiously India was split between the Muslims in the north and the Hindus in the south. The Sufi missionaries allowed the old rituals and the bhakti movement tried to bring Islam and Hinduism together. Indian influence reached into Southeast Asia in a number of ways. Merchants spread the Muslim and Hindu religions, the Funan of the Mekong River area adopted Sanskrit, and the city of Angkor reflected a Hindu world view. Islam was spread by the Sufis and eventually Melaka became the most powerful Islamic state in the fifteenth century.

Overview

During the postclassical period there emerged in India no long-lasting imperial authority, as there had in China and the Islamic world. Regional kingdoms were the norm. Nevertheless, Indian society exerted a profound influence on the cultures of south and Southeast Asia. Through the extensive trade networks of the Indian Ocean basin, Indian forms of political organization, religion, and economic practices spread throughout the region. Several developments in India during this era gradually spread throughout the larger culture zone:

- Dramatic agricultural growth fueled population growth and urbanization. These phenomena, combined with specialized industrial production and trade, resulted in unprecedented economic growth for the region.
- India's central position in the Indian Ocean basin resulted in it becoming a major clearinghouse for products of the voluminous maritime trade network that encompassed east Africa, Arabia, Persia, southeast Asia, and Malaysia, as well as the entire Indian subcontinent.
- Islam originally appeared in India through a variety of conduits, and it eventually became the primary religion of one quarter of the population. From India, Islam, along with Hinduism and Buddhism, spread to southeast Asia and the nearby islands.

Chapter Outline

I. Islamic and Hindu kingdoms

- A. The quest for centralized imperial rule
 - 1. North India
 - a. Tension among regional kingdoms
 - b. Nomadic Turks became absorbed into Indian society
 - 2. Harsha (reigned 606-648 C.E.) temporarily restored unified rule in north India
- B. Introduction of Islam to northern India
 - 1. The Sind were conquered by Arab Muslims and passed to Abbasids
 - 2. Muslim merchants formed small communities in all major cities of coastal India
 - 3. Turkish migrants and Islam: Turks convert to Islam in tenth century
 - a. Some moved to Afghanistan and established an Islamic state
 - b. Mahmud of Ghazni, Turk leader in Afghanistan, made expeditions to northern India
 - 4. The sultanate of Delhi (1206-1526 C.E.)
 - a. Mahmud's successors conquered north India, 1206
 - b. Established an Islamic state known as the sultanate of Delhi
 - c. Sultans' authority did not extend far beyond the capital at Delhi
 - d. Islam began to have a place in India
- C. The Hindu kingdoms of southern India
 - 1. The south: politically divided but relatively peaceful
 - 2. The Chola kingdom (850-1267 C.E.) was a larger kingdom; ruled Coromandel coast
 - a. At its high point, conquered Ceylon and parts of southeast Asia
 - b. Navy dominated waters from South China Sea to Arabian Sea
 - c. Not a tightly centralized state; local autonomy was strong
 - d. Began to decline by the twelfth century
- D. The kingdom of Vijayanagar (1336-1565 C.E.)
 - 1. Established by two Indian brothers
 - 2. They renounced Islam in 1336 and returned to their Hindu faith

II. Production and trade in the Indian Ocean basin

- A. Agriculture in the monsoon world
 - 1. The monsoons (rains in spring and summer)
 - 2. Irrigation systems were needed for dry months
 - a. No big river in south India; waterworks included dams, reservoirs, canals, wells
 - b. Stored rainwater in large reservoirs connected to canals
 - c. One reservoir constructed during the eleventh century covered 250 square miles
 - 3. Population growth: 53 million in 600 C.E. to 105 million in 1500 C.E.
 - 4. Urbanization took place in Delhi and other large port cities
- B. Trade and economic development of southern India
 - 1. Internal trade
 - a. Self-sufficient in staple food
 - b. Metals, spices, special crops found only in certain regions
 - c. Through trade, south India and Ceylon experienced rapid economic growth
 - 2. Temples and society in south India
 - a. Hindu temples served as economic and social centers
 - b. Possessed large tracts of land, hundreds of employees
 - c. Temple administrators were to maintain order, deliver taxes
 - d. Served as banks; engaged in business ventures
- C. Cross-cultural trade in Indian Ocean basin
 - 1. Dhows and junks--large ships involved in maritime trade in Indian Ocean
 - 2. Emporia, Indian port cities, were clearinghouses of trade and cosmopolitan centers
 - 3. Trade goods
 - a. Silk and porcelain from China
 - b. Spices from southeast Asia
 - c. Pepper, gems, pearls, and cotton from India
 - d. Incense and horses from Arabia and southwest Asia
 - e. Gold, ivory, and slaves from east Africa

4. Specialized production
 - a. Production of high-quality cotton textiles thrived
 - b. Other specialized industries: sugar, leather, stone, carpets, iron and steel
5. The kingdom of Axum was a Christian empire centered in Ethiopia
 - a. Resisted pressures of Islam; stayed prosperous through trade
 - b. Controlled Adulis, most prominent port on Red Sea
- D. Caste and society: caste provided guidance in absence of centralized political authority
 1. Caste helped to integrate immigrants (Turks, Muslim merchants) into Indian society
 2. Caste and social change: guilds and sub castes (*jatis*)
 3. Expansion of caste system, especially to southern India

III. The meeting of Hindu and Islamic traditions

- A. The development of Hinduism
 1. Hinduism predominated in southern India, Islam in the north
 2. Vishnu and Shiva
 - a. Decline of Buddhism benefited Hinduism
 - b. The growth of Vishnu and Shiva cults (and other gods associated with them)
 3. Devotional cults: to achieve mystic union with gods as a way of salvation
 4. Shankara: philosopher (ninth century) who preferred disciplined logical reasoning
 5. Ramanuja: philosopher (eleventh and twelfth centuries) believed that understanding of ultimate reality was less important than devotion
- B. Islam and its appeal
 1. Conversion to Islam occurred in a slow and gradual way
 - a. Some converted for improving their lower social statuses
 - b. Often an entire caste or sub caste adopted Islam en masse
 - c. By 1500, about 25 million Indian Muslims (1/4 of population)
 2. Sufis
 - a. The most effective missionaries, they had a devotional approach to Islam
 - b. Permitted followers to observe old rituals and venerate old spirits
 - c. Emphasized piety and devotion
 3. The bhakti movement
 - a. Sought to erase distinction between Hinduism and Islam
 - b. Guru Kabir (1440-1518), important bhakti teacher, taught that Shiva, Vishnu, and Allah were one deity

IV. The influence of Indian society in southeast Asia

- A. The states of southeast Asia
 1. Indian influence in southeast Asia
 - a. Indian merchants brought their faiths to southeast Asia
 - b. Ruling elite of southeast Asia adapted some Indian political traditions
 - c. The states sponsored Hinduism and Buddhism
 - d. Showed no interest in Indian caste system
 2. Funan (first to sixth century C.E.) in the lower reaches of Mekong River (Cambodia/Vietnam)
 - a. Drew enormous wealth by controlling trade
 - b. Adopted Sanskrit as official language
 - c. Decline of Funan in sixth century
 3. Srivijaya (670-1025 C.E.) was established on Sumatra after the fall of Funan
 - a. Maintained sea trade between China and India by navy
 - b. Chola kingdom of south India eclipsed Srivijaya in the eleventh century
 4. Angkor (889-1431 C.E.)
 - a. Kingdom built by Khmers at Angkor Thom, later Angkor Wat
 - b. The city was a microcosmic reflection of Hindu world order
 - c. Turned to Buddhism during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries
 - d. Thais invaded the capital in 1431, and Khmers abandoned it
 5. Other states: Singosari (1222-1292 C.E.) and Majapahit (1293-1520 C.E.)
- B. The arrival of Islam in southeast Asia

1. Conversion to Islam was slow and quiet
 - a. Ruling elite converted in cities while rural residents retained their traditions
 - b. Islam was not an exclusive faith in southeast Asia
 - c. Sufis appealed to a large public in these countries
2. Melaka was powerful Islamic state during fifteenth century