



Chapter 1

When, Where and How

Learning Objectives

- To be familiar with the changing names of the subcontinent
- To understand how historians use different sources for reconstructing the period
- To learn about the political, social, economic and religious conditions of the period

Set Sail

Try to find out the history of the city you live in. How will you go about it? Where will you go looking for information, who will you talk to? What sources will you use for finding detailed information about your city?

Introduction

Medieval period in India spans from eighth to eighteenth century CE. The period between eighth to twelfth century CE is the transition period. This period witnessed the rise and fall of empires in different parts of the subcontinent. In the north, there were incursions from across the mountains, which led to the emergence of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire. The southern empires of the period included those of the Cholas and the Vijayanagar. It was during this period that some major caste groups such as Rajputs and Kayasthas evolved. It was also during this period that the consolidation of Hindu society took place with the help of the Bhakti movement, while Islam underwent a reform with the rise of the Sufi movement. Medieval period also witnessed the fall of Buddhism and Jainism. There

was a further decline in the status of women around this time. This period also saw the emergence of new patterns of towns, which were very different from those that existed in Ancient India.

Nomenclature

India has one of oldest continuous cultural traditions in the world. We have read that during ancient times that India was known as *Jambudvipa*. It literally means the land of rose-apple trees. *Puranas* refer to *Jambudvipa*. Even one of the Ashokan **inscriptions** refers to India as this name. India was also known as *Bharatvarsha*. This term also appears in another context. In the Rig Veda, the term *Bharata* refers to the main tribe which took part in the Battle of the Ten Kings. The area inhabited by them was called the *Bharatvarsha*.

Vocab Help

Span: the length of time for which something lasts; **Inscription:** something written or engraved on a solid surface for the public



The arrival of the Sultans

In the *Avesta*, India is known as *Heptahindu* which is equivalent to Rig Veda's *Saptasindu*. Then India was also known as *Aryavarta*, which essentially referred to the Gangetic Plains and its peripheries, the region which witnessed the emergence of the earliest kingdoms and republics.

The Persian Sassanian Inscription of King Shapur I in the third century CE talks about *Hndstn*, from which was derived the name *Hindustan*, although it did not refer to the subcontinent but only to the north-west part of India.

In 1017, Al-Beruni travelled to the Indian subcontinent and wrote a book on it, called *Ta'rikh al-Hind*. Its literal translation is History of India.

Under the rule of the Arabs, Turks, Afghans and Mughals in the medieval times, the region came to be known as *Hindustan*. It mostly comprised the land beyond Sindu river and North India. It was Babur the founder of Mughal Empire who first referred to the Indian subcontinent as *Hindustan*.

Info Capsule

Yin du is the current Chinese word for India. It sounds similar to Hindu and Sindhu.

Political Conditions

Harshavardhana was the last imperial ruler of northern and central India, while Pulakesin II of the Chalukyas was the last imperial ruler of south India in the ancient period. After them, there started a scramble for territorial possessions among their ex-feudatories and other princes, which caused further political upheaval of the country. Eventually there emerged three points of power—the Rashtrakutas of Deccan, the Gurjara-Pratiharas

of Malwa and the Palas of Bengal. Later the Gurjara-Pratihara chief, Nagabhata, laid the foundation of dynasty in Kannauj, though it lasted only for a while. His successor, Rajyapala, succumbed to Mahmud of Ghazni.

Info Capsule

The period from 647 CE to 1200 CE of Indian History is called the Rajput Period.

India was fragmented into over one hundred regional kingdoms and small principalities. The repeated changes in the ruling dynasties in the same region acted as a **deterrent** to the development of a feeling of loyalty or emotional attachment towards the rulers especially amongst their subjects. There was no military power in the country that could keep the warring princes under check and coordinate their activities against foreign invaders.

The country witnessed some political stability with the advent of the Delhi Sultanate in 1206 CE.

Social Organisation and Attitude

During the Sultanate rule, influence of Islam became visible. Hindus began to learn Persian, the official language of the rulers, and Persian words found their way into the vocabulary.

Task 1

Picture Talk



A woman being carried on a palanquin

Imagine you are the lady inside the palanquin. What are you thinking? What are your feelings? What would you have written in your diary about the night of your travel in the palanquin?

Vocab Help

Deterrent: a thing that discourages or is intended to discourage someone from doing something

Women were mostly confined to the four walls of the house. Child marriage was a prevalent custom among all sections of the society. Polygamy had both social and legal sanction. Bonded labour was prevalent.

Economic Conditions

There was general economic prosperity. At the dawn of medieval period, mineral wealth and agriculture formed the backbone of economy. The ruling elite was affluent. There existed great disparity of wealth between the upper classes and the masses.

As a result of growing urbanisation during this period, trade and commerce was well developed. The use of gold and silver still remained for the most part confined to the commercial transactions at the higher level. The masses traded commodities through barter system.

Religion

Followers of different religions started living in close quarters. This led to an interchange and fusion of ideas, beliefs and practices. Continuous interaction of various religions saw the simultaneous rise of two reformist movements, Sufism and Bhakti. Both stressed upon mystic realisation of God within oneself and union with God through true devotion.

Sources of Medieval Period

History is constructed by historians after studying various sources that have come down to us from the past. Some sources of information on the medieval India are coins, books, buildings, etc. Sources can be broadly divided into two broad categories, namely literary and archaeological.

Literary Sources

Literary sources constitute the body of written records in the form of chronicles, commentaries, royal orders, farmans, folklore, dramas, autobiographies, biographies, etc. The literary sources of the early part of medieval India are

Vocab Help

Archive: a place where historical records are kept; **Indigenous:** naturally relating to a place or country; **Foreign:** belonging or connected to a country that is not one's own; **Travelogues:** observations and experiences put together by travellers visiting a place

found in the form of manuscripts. Manuscripts are handwritten records preserved in the **archives**. The literary texts are divided into various categories, for instance the **indigenous** and **foreign** accounts. Another category of the literary sources are the **religious** records as left by the religious teachers, reformers and their disciples.

There are dramas and folklores in the form of *Kathasaritsagar*.

Most of the original sources of the Islamic period are found in Persian, Arabic and Turkish. Some examples are autobiographies like *Tuzuk-i-Baburi* or *Baburnama* by Babur and *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* by Jahangir, etc.

Biographies like Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi*, Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Muntakhabul-Tawarikh* by Badauni form some important sources. Other important works are *Prithviraj-raso* of Chand Bardai, Bilhana's *Vikramankadeva Charita* and Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*.

Royal orders and farmans issued by the court of Jahangir and Aurangzeb also throw valuable light on the working of the Mughal administration.



Manuscripts of some texts belonging to the Mughal period

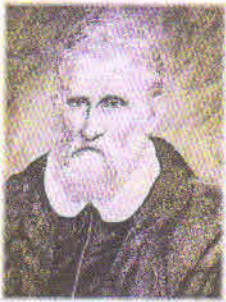
Accounts of Foreign Travellers

The **travelogues** of this period are another important source. Ibn Battuta's *Rihla* describes the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq. Abur Razzaq wrote an account on the conditions of the kingdom of Vijayanagar. The accounts of the European travellers are also significant. Some of the major works were produced by Marco Polo and Nicolo Conti, both of whom were from Italy. The latter left a significant account of the kingdom of Vijayanagar and its wars

with the Bahamani kingdom. Ralph Fitch wrote a graphic account of the court of Akbar. A number of European travellers visited the court of Jahangir. Father Xavier, Captain William Hawkins and Sir Thomas Roe were among the visitors.

Archaeological Sources

Archaeology is the study of old material remains left behind by people. These include old monuments like palaces, temples, buildings, coins, utensils, weapons, ornaments, inscriptions, etc. These are



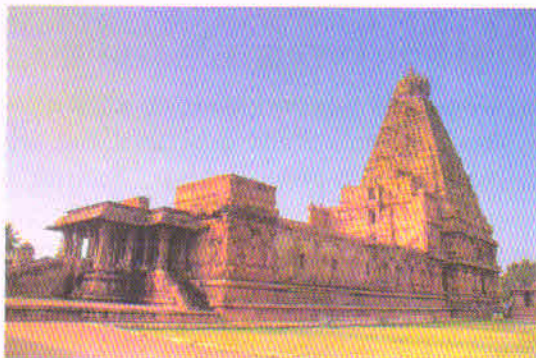
Marco Polo

generally obtained by digging the surface of the earth. The people who study such old material remains are called archaeologists.

Monuments, old buildings and artefacts tell us about the social and economic life of the people. They also throw light on the prevailing architectural styles, engineering skills of the people and the materials used in the construction of buildings, which gives us an insight about the level of development of the society. Some important archaeological sources of this period are the Agra Fort in Agra, the Red Fort in Delhi, Amer Fort in Jaipur and the Fort of Jaisalmer.



Coins of medieval period



Brihadeshwarar Temple at Tanjore

Temple Archaeology

Temples are a very important source of information. Temple building was an important activity in India. Temples like the Brihadeshwarar Temple, Tanjore and the Sun Temple at Konark are not only architectural marvels, but also enrich us about the cultural and religious history of the place.

Coins

Coins are another source of information which gives us a lot of information on the political and economic history of the place. The study of coins is known as numismatics.



Coins of the Sultanate period



Coins of the Bijapur kings



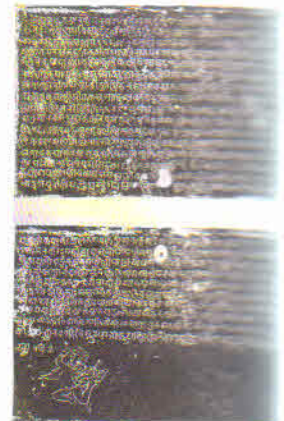
Coins of the Mughal period

Task 2

Imagine you are a historian who is reconstructing the history of the Agra Fort under the Mughals. Conduct a research on the Agra Fort and mention at least five things that you can deduce from the fort about the rule and life of the Mughals.

Inscriptions

Inscriptions are writings on stone surfaces, copper plates and walls of temples. They give information on the various aspects of life ranging from administration, to political and economic life. They are the most reliable sources of information as they give a first hand information of a place or event. The study of inscriptions is called epigraphy.



Copper plate inscriptions

HOLY TRINITY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Social Studies

Grade VII

Lesson1 When, Where and How (History)

V. Answer the following questions very briefly. (1 mark each)

1. What does Jambudvipa mean?

Ans:-Jambudvipa means the Land of rose apple tree.

2. During the medieval times 'Hindustan' referred to which part of the Indian subcontinent?

Ans:-During the medieval times 'Hindustan' referred to as North-west part of India.

3. Where are manuscripts preserved?

Ans:- Manuscripts are preserved in archives.

4. In which language did the medieval Indian authors write?

Ans:- Persian, Arabic and Turkish.

5. Name a few archaeological source of the medieval period.

Ans:-Some important archaeological sources are Red Fort in Delhi, Agra Fort in Agra, Fort of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan, etc.

6. What do you mean by historical sources?

Ans:- Historical sources are the ones which throw light on the history of a place or period. Most of these sources were commissioned by rulers.

7. What is the importance of epigraphy as a source of information?

Ans:- Epigraphically accounts are the most reliable sources of information as they give first hand information of place or event.

VI. Answer the following questions briefly.

1. What light do coins throw on the history of the period?

(2 marks)

Ans:- Coins tell us about the following things:

- Political and economic history of the period.
- Name of the king who issued them.
- Dates when they were issued.
- Metal used
- Some coins have religious symbols.

VII. Answer the following questions in detail.

1. How was India that is ' Bharat' perceived by foreigners ?

Ans:- Bharat, ie, India was referred to by different names by the foreigners Avesta calls it Heptahindu similar to the Rig Vedic Saptasindu, Persian Sassanian inscriptions refer to it as hindstn, from which was derived Hindustan

2. Describe the economic condition of medieval age in India.

Ans:-Economic condition of India in the medieval period was marked by general proesperity Mineral wealth and agriculture formed the mainstay of economy Ruling classes were rich and there was great disparity between the rich and the poor..

3. How should sources be used to write History?

Ans:- Sources which are used for writing History should be handled with great care lest they are influenced by personal biases. Sources should be first viewed in the light of who wrote them and for what purpose they were written.

4. How can literary sources of History classified? Give examples.(U)

Ans:- Literary sources form a rich body of written records. They can broadly be classified as royal orders, religious literature, secular literature and accounts of foreign travelers. These can be of various categories depending upon the type of content in them like autobiographical or bioglgical accounts, royal orders, farmans, reiligous accounts, dramas, folklore poetry etc.

5. Differentiate between archaeological and literary sources. (U)

Ans:- Literary sources is a rich body of written records. These normally have a perspective and are most of the time written after the incidnets have occurred. These at times may be tinged with the personal biases and mood of the writer.

Archeological accounts include monuments, buildings, temples, inscriptions, weapons, utensils, coins etc. These are the most authentic sources which convey a lot of details about the period, though indirectly.