

4. The Central Islamic Lands

1. What were the features of the lives of the Bedouins in the early seventh century?

Answer:

- The Arabs were divided into tribes and were nomadic (Bedouins).
- The Arabian tribes were led by a chief who was selected based on his family connections, personal courage, wisdom and generosity (*murawwa*).
- Each tribe worshipped its own god or goddess as an idol (*sanam*) in a shrine (*masjid*).
- The Bedouins moved from dry to green areas (oases) of the desert in search of food (mainly dates) and fodder and water for their camels.
- Some settled in cities and practiced trade or agriculture.

2. What is meant by the term 'Abbasid revolution'?

Answer:

- Muawiya founded the Umayyad dynasty in 661CE. The Umayyads tried to centralise the Muslim polity and suppressed rebellions in the name of Islam.
- However, in 750 CE, a well-organised movement, called *dawa*, brought down the Umayyads and replaced them with another family of Meccan origin, the Abbasids.
- The Abbasids were the descendants of Abbas, the Prophet's Uncle. They portrayed the Umayyad regime as evil and promised a restoration of the original Islam of the Prophet.
- The Abbasids revolution broke out in Khurasan in eastern Iran and changed the political structure and culture of Islam.

3. Give examples of the cosmopolitan character of the states set up by Arabs, Iranians and Turks.

Answer:

Followings are some of the cosmopolitan characters of the states set up by Arabs, Iranians and Turks:

(i) The Arabs declared Jews and Christians protected subjects of the state (*dhimmis*) and given a large measure of autonomy in the conduct of their communal affairs. Thus, the Arabs allowed the multi-cultural practices.

(ii) In the Turkish state, the Ghaznavid sultanates had recruited Indians for their army; one of the generals of Mahmud was an Indian named Tilak.

(iii) In the Iranian state, the Abbasids reorganized the army and bureaucracy on a non-tribal basis to ensure greater participation by Iraq and Khurasan.

4. What were the effects of the Crusades on Europe and Asia?

Answer:

- The Crusades left a lasting impact on two aspects of Christian- Muslim relations.
- Due to the bitter memories of the conflicts related to the Crusades, the Muslim state started showing the harsher attitude towards its Christian subjects.
- In the areas of mixed populations (Muslims, Jews and Christians), religious conflicts intensified.
- The greater influence of Italian mercantile communities (from Pisa, Genoa and Venice) in the trade between the East and the West continued even after the restoration of Muslim power.

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

5. How were Islamic architectural forms different from those of the Roman Empire?

Answer:

Islamic architectural forms:

- Religious buildings were the greatest external symbols of the Islamic architecture.
- Mosques, shrines and tombs from Spain to Central Asia showed the same basic design - arches, domes, minarets and open courtyards - and expressed the spiritual and practical needs of Muslims.
- The mosque had a distinct architectural form - roof supported by pillars- with an open courtyard (*sahn*).
- In the mosque, there were separate halls where sermons were delivered during noon prayers on Friday.
- The same pattern of construction can also be seen in caravanserais, hospitals and palaces.
- The Umayyads built 'desert palaces' in oases, such as Khirbat ai-Mafjar in Palestine and Qusayr Amra in Jordan.
- The 'desert palaces' served as luxurious residences and retreats for hunting and pleasure.

Roman architectural forms:

- The Roman architecture reflected the practical need for military and entertainment.
- For example, amphitheatre was constructed for military drill and for staging entertainments for the soldiers.
- The Colosseum was built for the gladiators who fought wild beasts. It could accommodate 60,000 people.

6. Describe a journey from Samarqand to Damascus, referring to the cities on the route.

Answer:

- If a traveller sets out his journey from Samarqand to Damascus (in Syria), he has to pass through cities such as Merv and Nishappur in Iraq, and then, Isfahan, Basra and Baghdad in Iran. Damascus is located at a distance of 838 kilometers from Baghdad.
- Samarqand was a prospering city due to its location on the Silk Road between China and the Mediterranean.
- However, Damascus, Isfahan and Samarqand were older towns and they later developed significantly as Islamic civilisation flourished.
- These cities expanded and their population increased as the foodgrains and raw materials (cotton and sugar) were available in abundance for urban manufacturing.
- A vast urban network developed, linking one town with another and forming a circuit.
- The cities had two building complexes, standing as symbols of cultural and economic power: the congregational mosque (*masjid al-jami*) and the central marketplace (*suq*).
- The markets had shops in a row, merchants' lodgings (*fandug*) and the office of the money-changer.
- The cities were also homes to administrators (*ayan* or eyes of the state), and scholars and merchants (*tujjar*).
- However, ordinary citizens and soldiers lived in their quarters outside the city circle; they had their own mosque, church or synagogue (Jewish temple), subsidiary market and public bath (*hammam*).
- The houses of the urban poor were also located at the outskirts of the cities, with their own markets and caravan stations.
- There were inns for people to rest when the city gates were shut, and separate cemeteries were maintained for the poor people.