

MUHAMMAD BIN QASIM  
THE YOUNG COMMANDER  
OF ISLAM





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## PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

It is a matter of genuine satisfaction to the author that the purpose he had in mind when writing this series of books has, in a large manner, been achieved. These books have met a real need of Muslim youth both inside and outside the country and abroad.

They have now been thoroughly revised. Modifications and useful additions have been made where necessary. In their present form they will certainly make more enlightening reading.

*Fazl Ahmad*

*Central Training College.*

*Lahore*

*January 1967*

## PREFACE

“I am leaving behind two weighty things, viz., the Quraan and my way of life. If you hold fast to these you will never go astray.”

This parting advice of the Master ﷺ, when made the basis of life, has accomplished some of the rarest marvels of history. It has inspired generations of Muslims to the highest levels of thought and action. It has, during the centuries, produced the greatest of men and the noblest specimens of humanity.

The soul-stirring message of the Quraan and the example of the Master ﷺ have put on a new beauty in the context of each day. They seem ever capable of sweeping away the pettiness and shallowness that hound the path of human life. They enable man, as nothing else can, to take his destiny into his own hands, and rise to the highest sense of duty toward Allah and fellow-men. A life guided by these twin stars never fails to identify itself with the great on-going forces of history. This book gives a brief account of a life characterised by such a timeless quality. Mankind is, at present, passing through a period of unprecedented social change. Adjustment to the relentless requirements of a rapidly changing world-order is undermining old beliefs and customs

everywhere. Much of this is for the good. However, there is a very real danger that, in the inevitable social shake-up, some of the basic values may go by the board. No worse calamity could befall a culture. The best safeguard against such an eventuality is to remind ourselves constantly how those before us met the challenge of their times, without flinching an inch from the great tradition of the Master ﷺ. For light on our way to progress, we must turn to those immortal sons of Islam who showed to the world how the example set by the Master ﷺ could always be capable of a dynamic interpretation.

The set of short biographies, of which this booklet is apart, has been written with a double purpose in mind:

- 1) To acquaint boys and girls with the spiritual possessions of which they are to be the guardians, and
- 2) To provide easy and interesting reading material that may stimulate love and ability for independent reading. It is earnestly hoped that the youngsters who read this booklet will catch at least some sparks of the fire that inflamed the soul of our hero.

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## THE GATEWAY OF ISLAM

“Help! Help! O Hajjaj, help!” cried a helpless Arab woman, on the shores of Sindh, more than twelve hundred years ago.

“Hajjaj is too far away to hear your cries, foolish woman!” jeered back the heartless sea-robbers. “Even if your words do reach him, we are out of his reach.”

Not many days had passed before Hajjaj came to know about the sad fate that had overtaken a group of Arab women and children in Sindh. Soon he was able to lay his hands on those who thought they were beyond his reach. How this all took place, is one of the most thrilling stories of history. The cries of a helpless Muslim woman brought the banner of Islam to Sindh. With it came peace, freedom, justice, and other blessings of Islam. For the first time in their history, the people of Sindh had a taste of the good life. They learnt for the first time what it meant to be human. They almost came to adore the handsome young general who brought these blessings with him. They began to love Islam. The banner of Islam came to stay in Sindh. It has stayed there to this day.

Sindh was the first part of the sub-continent to be lit up by the light of Islam. In the wake of this light came the freedom and equality of man. For the first time since time began, the people of Sindh knew what it meant to live on a human level. People in the rest of the sub-continent were still doomed to sub-human lives. This rare good luck earned for Sindh, the title of ‘Bab-ul-Islam’ or ‘The Gateway of Islam’.

## HOW THE STORY BEGAN

### DAHAR GROWS BOLD

Before the rise of Islam, Mekran was part of the Iranian empire. The armies of Khalifah Hazrat Umar (RA) overran Iran. So Mekran also passed into Muslim hands. Hakam bin Umair Taghlabi (ra), the Arab general who took Mekran wanted to press on into Sindh. But the Khalifa Umar (RA) forbade this. He wanted to live in peace with his neighbours. Peace was more dear to his heart than the conquest of new lands.

The Muslims did their best to be friendly with the Raja of Sindh. But there was little response from the other side. When Dahar became Raja, he became all

the more active in creating trouble for Muslims. His plots led to a rising in Mekran. Dahar sent an army to help the rebels. The Muslim governor of Mekran was able to put down the rising and to drive back Dahar's hordes. However, he did nothing to punish Dahar. Shortly after this, Hajjaj bin Yusuf became the viceroy of the Khalifah's eastern provinces. He was a strong man. He was very hard on people who disturbed the peace of the land. He decided to end the risings in Mekran. So he sent a strong man as his deputy to the far off province. At this, a group of rebels fled from Mekran and took refuge with Dahar. The Hindu Raja was extremely kind to the rebels. This was an act of open enmity towards the Muslims. Hajjaj, however, overlooked it. This made Dahar believe that he was too powerful to care for the friendship of his Muslim neighbours.

### **ARAB TRADE**

Do you know that about five percent of the people of Ceylon are Arabs? Almost the whole population of the coral islands of Lacadev and Maldev is also Arab. Muslim population on the west coast of India is also mostly Arab. Where did these Arabs come from? They are the descendants of the merchants and traders who left their country and settled in these lands long, long ago. It was these merchants who handled the whole trade of India and the Far East with the West. They were daring seamen. Their boats went back and forth in the waters of the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, the Red Sea and even the Mediterranean. These boats went as far as the East Indies and China.

The Arabs were the sole masters of the seas till the end of the fifteenth century. They ruled the waves of the seas and served as a link between the East and the West. Arab seamen and merchants were to be seen in every important port of the world. Ever since the days of Khalifah Hazrat Muawiyya (RA), the Arabs had held sway over the high seas. They were undisputed masters of the sea-lanes of the known world. Then came the seamen and merchants of the West. Eventually, the Arabs lost their hold on the seas and also on the sea-borne trade. With the loss of sea power, the leadership of the world also slipped from the hands of the Muslims.

### **DEBUL**

Perhaps many of you have been to Karachi, our Federal Capital. About twelve hundred years ago, the place where Karachi now stands was under sea. The



Indus poured its water into the sea several miles to the east of this place. In the course of centuries, the sea has receded, leaving dry land.

In Dahar's days, Debul was the chief port of Sindh, as Karachi is today. There are no remains of Debul for us to see now. This is because a severe earthquake, in the thirteenth century, razed to the ground what was left in Debul. This ancient sea-port stood at a distance of about 35 miles to the east of Karachi.

Debul was well known for its big temple. The red flag of the temple, fluttering several yards above the steeple, could be seen from far in the sea. The temple had a huge dome and a spire forty yards high. It was above this spire that the flag fluttered proudly in the sea-breeze.

Debul was really a fortress. In the heart of the city stood the big temple. Inside the temple, there were the idols of several gods. As many as seven hundred Brahmans lived in the temple to look after the idols and to sing to them. On all sides of the temple sprawled the city of Debul. There was a strong stone-wall all around the city.

### **SEA-STORM OVERTAKES ARAB SHIPS**

Walid was the Khalifah of Islam when Dahar ruled over Sindh. The Khalifah lived in Damascus. He had a powerful Viceroy, Hajjaj, to look after his eastern provinces. Walid's empire spread from Portugal to the frontier of Sindh. Arab sailors were the masters of the seas everywhere. Many of them had settled on islands, in the Indian Ocean and other seas. They kept sailing back and forth between these islands and the mother country. They carried on trade between different lands. This trade was vital to the Arabs as well as to other people.

One year, some Arab ships, set sail from Ceylon. Several Arab merchants and their families were on board. They were going for Haj. Each year, when pilgrims went to Makkah, the Raja of Ceylon sent gifts for the Khalifah. These ships were carrying the rich gifts of the Raja for Khalifah Walid.

The ships were heading towards Basra. All of a sudden, a severe storm overtook them off the coast of Sindh. They were forced to seek shelter at the port of Debul. The sea-robbers of Sindh saw an opportunity to plunder. The ships were laden with rich cargo. There were a good amount of women and children on board. The robbers feared no serious resistance.

So the sea-robbers attacked the ships, looted the cargo and killed many of the men. Several women and children were taken as prisoners. A few men, however, managed to escape. They reached Basra and told Hajjaj their tale of woe. They told him a helpless woman had cried out for help and had been mocked at by the cruel robbers. Hajjaj was deeply moved.

“I must do something to help this Arab woman,” he exclaimed.

Soon Hajjaj took up this matter with Dahar. He wrote to him telling him what the sea-robbers of Sindh had done. He pointed out that as the ruler of Sindh, it was his duty to deal with the robbers and to secure the immediate release of Arab women and children. The letter also called upon Dahar to make good the Arab losses.

Dahar did not take the letter very seriously.

“Hajjaj is a long way off,” he thought to himself, “an impassable desert lies between him and me. I can easily put him off.” So he said in his reply, “I am helpless in the matter. You are free to deal with the robbers as you think fit.”

### **UNSUCCESSFUL INVASION OF SINDH**

Dahar thought that his reply would end the matter. He had many times caused trouble in Mekran and Hajjaj could do him no harm. Little did he know that this time Hajjaj meant business. It was a question of the safety of his sea-lanes. The greatness of his people had much to do with their mastery of the seas. The seas had to be kept safe for trade. If Debul became a danger-spot, it would mean the end of Arab trade in the east and that would shake the foundations of Arab greatness. Hajjaj was determined to fight this danger. The price of the fight did not matter.

Hajjaj wrote to Khalifah Walid and explained what had happened at Debul. He sought the Khalifah’s permission to send an expedition to Sindh. The Khalifah knew that the expedition was going to prove very costly. But the honour of Islam and the safety of his people were at stake. So he allowed his Viceroy at Basrah to take action against the sea-robbers of Debul.

The Arab expedition marched under Ubaidullah. Passing through Mekran, they entered Sindh. Dahar knew full well that the expedition had been sent not against him but against the robbers on whom he himself could not lay hands. Nevertheless, he sent an army to beat back the Arabs. The small Arab

force was no match for the army of Dahar. Ubaidullah fell fighting and most of his men perished as well. The expedition failed.

However, Hajjaj was undaunted. He fitted out another expedition under Budail. This time the Arabs were prepared to face the Hindu army. Budail was a fearless general and he put up a tough fight. But to his dismay, a great surprise was in store for him. The Arab horses became unmanageable at the sight of Indian elephants. Budail's own horse got terribly frightened and threw him down. The Arab commander was slain and his men had to fall back to Mekran.

The two defeats in Sindh had little effect on Hajjaj's determination. If anything, they made his resolve all the more strong. The two failures made certain that the preparation of a third expedition needed far greater attention and thoroughness. Hajjaj decided to give personal attention to every detail of the third expedition. He was the most feared man of his time. He was known for his firmness and thoroughness. He never made a compromise with his enemies nor did he believe in half-measures. It was this man that Dahar had unwittingly angered. Little did the Hindu Raja know that that he had chosen to cross swords with a man who would give him no quarter.

## **MUHAMMAD BIN QASIM SETS OUT**

### **THE YOUNG-COMMANDER OF ISLAM**

Police action against Dahar needed careful thought and preparation. The first task that faced Hajjaj was the choice of a capable general. Two of the commanders had already failed. The third campaign must succeed. On its outcome hung the future of Arab sea-trade. Hajjaj's own honour was also at stake. He had sought the Khalifah's permission to punish the enemies of Islam. The enemies were still at large, though the Khalifah's treasury had borne the expenses of the two expeditions. These considerations made Hajjaj give very careful thought to the choice of the commander.

At last Hajjaj's choice fell upon his youthful nephew, Muhammad bin Qasim.

Muhammad was also his son-in-law. He was barely seventeen and was at the time the Governor of Rayy, in Persia. From early boyhood, he had given promise of rare ability as a leader of men. Hajjaj had seen ample proof of this ability in the way the youthful Muhammad had managed things at Rayy. Hajjaj

could find no better man to lead his army to Sindh. Muhammad would no doubt make a boy-commander, but that did not matter. There had been boy-commanders in Islam before. Usama bin Zaid (RA) was also a boy-commander, appointed by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself. So Hajjaj finally made up his mind to put his youthful son-in-law in command.

Muhammad got orders to get ready for his new responsibility. The task was a difficult one. Muhammad had to march into the strange land of the Hindus, across wide desert tracts. He had to fight an enemy made over-bold by two easy victories. He was to be among alien people with whom he had nothing in common. His handful of men could be easily overwhelmed by the sheer weight of numbers. These and similar other considerations were enough to unnerve even a tried general. But Muhammad was made of something different. He was as cool and prudent in dealing with men as he was fearless in battle. No task could be too difficult for him. With calm confidence he made over charge at Rayy and set off to Shiraz, where he was to join his army. The youthful commander of Islam was on his way to Sindh.

### **THE ARAB ARMY**

Hajjaj was determined to leave nothing to chance. He put under Muhammad's command the best of the armies of the Khalifah. The army consisted of 6000 Syrian horses and a camel corps of equal strength. Three thousand camels carried the baggage of the troops. The baggage contained everything that the men were likely to need. The Arab troops were fond of vinegar. This could not be had in Sindh. Hajjaj soaked flakes of cotton wool in vinegar and had them dried. When again soaked in warm water, they could supply vinegar. In short, Hajjaj tried to provide for the smallest needs of his men.

At Shiraz, Muhammad decided to send his artillery by sea. This included a huge Manjrique known as the *Arus* (Bride). It was so big that five hundred men were needed to work it. Gun-powder was unknown in those days. The artillery of those days was made up of Manjriques. A Manjrique was a sort of wooden cannon. It hurled big pieces of stone at the enemy.

From Shiraz, Muhammad marched at the head of the troops, towards Mekran. On his way through Mekran, he was joined by the surviving men of the first two expeditions.

Hajjaj kept himself constantly in touch with his nephew. Swift horses galloped back and forth, carrying letters to and from Hajjaj. Muhammad's letters took seven days to reach Basra and he wrote to his uncle every third day. Hajjaj, too, was constantly sending out directions.

Marching on and on, Muhammad crossed the frontier of Sindh, not far from the modern Darbeji. There was no sign of Dahar's troops. So the Arab army continued its march toward Debul.

### **THE FALL OF DEBUL**

It was a quiet day in the autumn of 711. The sea-port of Debul hummed with busy activity. In the middle of the town stood the idol temple. As many as 3000 shaven Brahmans served the temple. There was in addition, an armed force of 4000 Rajputs to guard the town. A strong stone wall protected it on all sides. Thus guarded and protected, Debul stood proudly in the mild autumn sun. It was before this city that Muhammad bin Qasim appeared after a long and weary march.

Muhammad found his artillery waiting for him at the port. The fleet sent by Hajjaj had reached Debul before his army came. The Arab fleet had proved too strong for the sea-robbers of Sindh. They, who had looted a merchant ship, felt powerless before the naval strength of Hajjaj. They had not even dreamed that the Arabs could take punitive action against them. But the unexpected happened! The wails of a helpless Arab woman had reached the ears of Hajjaj! The Arabs had come to help her! With the day of reckoning clearly in sight, the robbers took refuge in the safety of Debul. There was no one to check the entry of the fleet into the port. The Arab artillery was safely brought on shore. The giant *Arus* towered above the other Manjriques and was ready to go into action.

### **THE SIEGE**

Debul was taken by complete surprise. However, it was ready to withstand any storm. The town was a strong fortress. It was fully protected by solid fortifications. Then there was the Rajput armed forces to defend the city. Above all, there was the god of the temple. There was little doubt in the minds of the Hindus that the idol god alone was enough to beat back any enemy attacks. Fortified with this belief, they shut the gates of the city and the Arabs laid siege to Debul.

For several days the siege went on. Small parties of the Hindus sometimes came out and brisk fighting took place. But the main Hindu army refused to come out for a trial of strength. However, Hindu spirits remained high. It seemed impossible to take the town by storm.

Muhammad wanted to finish with Debul as quickly as possible. For that he needed to know the true state of things inside the town. Fortunately for him, a Brahman defected from the temple. He was brought before the youthful Arab Commander. With tact and kindness Muhammad was able to win his sympathy. Before long the Brahman was ready to tell the real secret of Hindu morale.

“You cannot take the town,” he said, “unless you do something about the talisman prepared by the Brahmans.”

“What talisman?” asked Muhammad in surprise.

“Well,” went on the Brahman, “you see the forty yard high steeple of the temple and the great red flag flying from it. You also see the thick staff of the flag. At the base of this staff, the Brahmans have placed a talisman. No harm can come to the town as long as the flag is there.”

The story told by the Brahman proved to be of great help to Muhammad. It put him on the right track. He came to know that Hindu spirits would remain high as long as the red flag was intact. He must do something about the flag.

It was not very difficult to smash the flag. Muhammad at once called Jawiyya, the chief of his artillery, and ordered him to make the flag-staff his target. Jawiyya shortened the foot of the ‘Bride’ so that it could hit the flag-staff. The third stone struck it and shattered its base. The talisman was broken and the great red flag was no more.

### **DEBUL TAKEN**

The Hindus had put all their hopes in the talisman, which they thought was invincible.

The destruction of the talisman came to them like a stroke of lightning. They could hardly believe their eyes. They had believed their idol-god to be all powerful. They had believed the talisman to be their best defence. But these beliefs had shattered to pieces. The alien invader seemed more powerful than

anything they had known. Utter confusion spread in the town. In despair, the Rajputs rushed out of the city and made a wild attack on the Arabs. However, they were beaten back with heavy losses.

Muhammad was determined to put an end to this siege. He ordered his men to follow up their victory in open fighting by an all-out attack on the town. Ladders were at once planted against the city walls and up went the Arabs on the stone fortifications. The next moment hand-to-hand fighting was going on in the streets of Debul. The Rajputs and the Brahmans fought desperately. For three days the fighting went on. At last the Hindus begged for peace and Debul fell to the young Arab general.

Proud Debul, the wide-open gateway of Sindh, now lay at the feet of the Arabs. Muhammad could have sacked it and put its inhabitants to the sword. But he was tolerant. He treated the Hindus kindly. Their temple was left untouched. The priests were left alone. The Hindu governor of the town, who had begged for mercy, was allowed to continue as governor. In short, the young conqueror of Debul showed unheard-of tolerance and kindness to the fallen foe.

Before leaving Debul, Muhammad laid out a Muslim quarter in the town. Here he built a masjid. This was the first masjid to be built in the land of the Hindus. It was a common Arab practice to plant Muslim colonies in the land they conquered. These colonies became the centres from which the light of Islam spread all around. By their warm human sympathy and kind manners, the inhabitants of the Muslim colonies proved to be the best missionaries of Islam.

But even after the fall of Debul, there was no trace of Dahar and his army. Muhammad had orders to teach this vain Raja a lesson. He could not leave Sindh without an encounter with the Raja. So after placing an armed force of 4000 in Debul, he marched on into the interior of Sindh to deal with Dahar.

### **ARAB ADVANCE INTO SINDH**

The fall of Debul fulfilled an important Arab objective, Arab prisoners at Debul were set free. The armed forces at this port made the Arabian Sea safe for Arab seaman. But the safety was seeming rather than real. Dahar was still unbeaten. He had made no secret of his hostility toward the Arabs. In fact, even the fall of Debul failed to teach him a lesson. He openly made light of the Arab victory. That convinced Muhammad that his task was not complete as long as Sindh

was in Dahar's hands. Dahar seemed bent on undoing what Muhammad had done, the moment the latter turned his back. The young Arab commander had to deal with this threat. Without this, his mission remained incomplete.

### **DAHAR'S LETTER**

The fall of Debul made Dahar very angry. He lost his temper and addressed the following letter to Muhammad:

“The taking of Debul is no great success. There is nothing to feel overjoyed at this victory. Debul is a town inhabited by mean people. It is a town of merchants and traders who know nothing about the art of war. It does not mean much, if you have defeated these people. Two Muslim armies came to Sindh before you. The commanders of both of them were killed. If you do not withdraw from Sindh forthwith, you too will meet the same fate. Do not be misled by what you saw at Debul. Stronger people inhabit other parts of Sindh. We are a brave people. Our soldiers fight to the last man but never give in. Our troops are numberless. They are armed with the best of weapons. Moreover, we have elephants and horses. I do not think you have any of these things. So if you care for your life, better withdraw even now. That would be the best thing for you to do. After all, why should you risk your life and the lives of your men? I hope you will listen to my advice.”

This letter of the Raja was very revealing. It proved the worst fears for Muhammad. It showed that Dahar had no respect for the Arabs. It was Muhammad's duty to win that respect or a perpetual threat would hang over the Arab sea-lanes.

### **MUHAMMAD'S REPLY**

To this letter, Muhammad sent the following reply:

“You are proud of your elephants, your horses and your troops. You boast of your weapons and equipment. We, on the other hand, put all our trust in Allah. He will protect us. He will grant us victory and honour.

“You backed the Iranians against us. You caused risings against us in Baluchistan and Mekran. You even sent your troops there. We overlooked all these things and took no action against you.

“Then some of your subjects looted our ships. They took our women and children as prisoners. Thereupon we requested you to punish the robbers and



to set free the prisoners. You did neither of the two things. On the contrary, you sent back word that we ourselves should deal with the robbers. At this we sent out two expeditions against these evil men. But each time your troops came out to fight and they killed our commanders. What right had you to act in this way? Your action left us with no choice but to invade Sindh. On entering Debul, we found our women and children in your jails. That clearly showed that you were at the back of the robbers who looted our ships. What excuse have you for that?

“I have brought all these things to the notice of the Khalifah. He has ordered me to punish you for your evil deeds. So get ready for a final trial of strength. I will fight you to the bitter end, even though it may cost me my life.”

### FALL OF NIRUN

From Debul Muhammad led his troops toward Nirun, an important fort about seventy-five miles to where the modern Hyderabad stands. Dahar's son Jai Singh, was the commander of the fort.

Dahar had thought that his letter was enough to strike terror in the youthful Arab commander's heart. That hope proved false. The young Arab general refused to be cowed down by his vain boasts and sent a reply that made Dahar tremble. So Dahar wrote to his son, Jai Singh, telling him to leave the fort at Nirun and join him in the strong fortress of Brahmanabad. By combining all his forces, Dahar hoped to be more than a match for the Arabs.

Jai Singh placed a priest in charge of Nirun and himself joined his father. Seven days march brought the Arabs to Nirun, early in 712. The priest left in charge of the fort knew how strong the Arab army was. He also knew that his people would be treated kindly if he gave in without a fight. So he opened the gates of the fort. Arab forces entered Nirun without shedding a drop of blood.

Dahar's agents had tried their very best to paint the Arabs as black as they could. They had started false stories of Arab cruelty. It was a pleasant surprise for the inhabitants of Nirun to find that their conquerors were the best of men. They were extremely kind and sympathetic and did their utmost to make the people happy. By his kind treatment, Muhammad won the hearts of the people. Such kindness in rulers was a thing unknown in Sindh. Muhammad rested his troops for a few days, took fresh supplies and then set out on his onward march.

## FALL OF SEHWAN

The Arab forces were now heading toward Sehwan, about eight miles to the north-west. Sehwan was an important town, populated mainly by priests and traders. Bajhra, the governor of the town, was a cousin of Dahar. He decided to defend the town. The people, however, thought otherwise. Reports of what had happened at Nirun had travelled faster than the Arab troops. The people of Sehwan knew full well they had nothing to lose by a change of masters. If anything, the Arab rulers were far more humane and just than Dahar and his agents. Arab rule was a blessing as opposed to the tyranny of Dahar. However, Bajhra refused to listen to what the people said and stuck to his plans.

As the people of the town were not with him, the governor of Sehwan could not come in the open to check the Arab advance. He rather chose to shut himself up in the town. For seven days the siege of the town went on. Gradually Bahjra's difficulties grew. He had a more difficult time with his people than with the Arab army. At last he could no longer hold his own. He quietly fled one night through the north gate of the city and crossed the Kumbh, which then flowed more than ten miles to the east of Sehwan. He continued his flight and took refuge with Raja Kaka of Sisam. Sisam, the centre of the Jats, stood on the banks of the Kumbh.

The people of Sehwan were glad to get rid of Bahjran. They raised shouts of joy as Muhammad bin Qasim entered the city. The youthful Arab commander was extremely nice to them. He left alone their temples and the priests. On condition of paying the jizya (protective tax), they got full security of life and property and the freedom of faith.

## CONQUEST WITHOUT SWORD

Muhammad was still at Sehwan but the stories of his justice and good rule were rapidly sweeping across Sindh. Suddenly several towns and cities saw their chance of throwing off Dahar's hateful yoke. They could have all the blessings of Arab rule for the mere asking. Cities and towns around Sehwan were quick to send their agents to the young Arab commander. They poured into Sehwan and sought the protection of the standard of Islam. This protection was freely granted, on condition that jizya be paid regularly.

Parties of priests from different parts of Sindh came and pledged loyalty on behalf of their people. Muhammad was amazed to find how bitterly most

people hated Dahar. So much so, that many of the people offered to fight against the hated Raja under the Arab flag. Soon Muhammad Thaqfi, an Arab officer, raised an army of 4000 men from amongst the subjects of Dahar.

Through his kindness and justice, Muhammad was able to bring under his flag almost the whole of Sindh to the west of the Indus. With the exception of Debul, nowhere else did he have to use the sword. The young general of Islam knew how to conquer men's hearts. This proved a more powerful weapon than the sword.

The remarkable achievements of Muhammad bin Qasim in Sindh is a landmark in Muslim history. India was the first country where Muslim conquerors had to deal with a whole nation of idolaters. Muhammad treated the Hindus with tolerance. He left their temples untouched and allowed them freedom of religion and worship. He granted the Hindus the same rights as had been granted by Islam to the Jews and Christians.

Hajjaj, however, was a zealous Muslim. He was very hard on idolaters. He was for an all-out drive against idolatry. He strongly urged upon his young nephew the need for uprooting idolatry. He even reproached Muhammad for neglecting his duty to Allah. "Idolaters are unclean," Hajjaj said in his letters, "they should not be treated at par with the People of the Book." The young commander, however, pleaded for a softer policy. "If the Hindus are to be guided out of their age-old error," he pointed out, "they should be treated like human beings." Results showed Muhammad to be in the right. His tolerance won for him the love and respect of the Hindus. It brought under his flag a great part of Sindh, without the use of the sword. It also prepared the way for the final overthrow of Dahar.

### **PREPARATIONS FOR THE FINAL BLOW**

Muhammad was now practically the master of western Sindh. The only city in this part of Sindh that had not fallen to him so far was Sisam. Here the principal followers of Dahar were busy in their plots against the Arabs. Dahar's cousin, Bahjra, was the most active among them. At his bidding, the jats attacked the Arab camp one night. They were beaten back. Muhammad followed them to the stronghold of Sisam. After holding out for two days the city fell. Bahjra and other leading followers of Dahar were killed. Kaka, the chief of the jats, submitted and was treated with honour and kindness. The Jat chief was so completely won over that he became an ally of the Muslims.

Muhammad's supply line was now safe. He could safely go across the Indus and cross swords with Dahar.

Hajjaj had throughout been in close touch with the events in Sindh. Orders were received from him that Muhammad should return to Nirun. From here he was to cross the main stream of the Indus, which flowed some distance to the east of the city. Across the Indus River, in the strong fortress of Brahmanabad, Dahar stood ready to halt Muhammad's advance.

Hajjaj's orders were carried out to the letter. Muhammad bin Qasim returned toward Nirun and started preparations to cross the Indus River. He left Nirun and halted on the west bank of the river, opposite a fortress of the enemy. His plan was to make a quick advance. However, a number of difficulties stood in his way. In the first place, it was not easy to get enough boats for crossing over. Immediately the work of making boats was taken in hand. To add to the difficulties, scurvy broke out among the Arab troops. With tireless efforts the epidemic was brought under control. At the same time a strange disease struck the Arab horses. Hundreds of them died of the dreadful disease. However, these difficulties failed to deter Muhammad. If anything, they proved a spur to his courage and determination.

These difficulties delayed the passage across the Indus River by some months. Hajjaj, however, was sending useful advice all the time. He also sent two hundred horses and a supply of vinegar. Vinegar restored health to the suffering troops. Boats were also ready by this time. By June 712, the Arab army was ready to cross over and have a trial of strength with Dahar, the proud Raja of Sindh.

### **DAHAR'S AMAZEMENT**

When his preparations were complete, Muhammad sent some men to Dahar. They were to ask the Hindu Raja whether he would like to cross the river and fight on the western bank. In case he did not want this, he was to be requested to allow Muslims to cross the Indus River. Among the envoys was a Brahman from Debul, who had embraced Islam.

Dahar received the Muslim envoys. As per the Muslim way, they did not bend low before the Raja but walked straight up to him and greeted him, saying, "Peace on him who follows the guidance." The proud Raja took this as an unpardonable insult. He looked upon himself as a demi-god and expected

people to treat him as such. The strange behaviour of the envoys made him lose his temper. He was all the more angry with the Brahman whom he knew so well. "What has made you forget court manners?" he roared out at the man.

"I am now a Muslim," spoke back the revert to Islam, "It is against my faith to bow low before anyone except Allah. Nothing debases a man more than bowing low before a man like himself."

This answer made Dahar boil with rage. Fixing his bloodshot eyes on his former subject, he thundered out.

"If you had not been an envoy, I would have cut off your head."

Dahar thought over the message delivered to him. He was unable to make up his mind. Then he sought the advice of his courtiers. They were divided in their opinion. Some said, "Never allow the Arabs to set foot on the eastern bank of the Indus. If they once get a foothold east of the river, it will be impossible to push them back."

Others were of a different view.

"Let the Arabs cross over," they said. "This will enable us to pin them down and kill them down to a man. Once they are on this side of the river, they will find themselves in a death trap. Our armed might will deal crushing blows and the mighty Indus, at the back, will rule out the possibility of retreat. There will be no way of escape for the invaders."

Dahar calmly heard both views. For quite some time he was undecided. There was good deal of weight in each point of view. Then he suddenly made up his mind.

"Tell your commander," he said addressing the envoys, "We will neither come to the western bank nor allow the Arabs to cross over."

The announcement came as a surprise to some of the Raja's own men, who had heard his boasts. However, the truth of the matter was that Dahar was haunted by a strange fear of the Arabs. With all his preparations, he was not sure of his success.

## **DAHAR'S PREPARATIONS**

Dahar's preparations were both thorough and impressive. He wanted to take no chances with the mysterious power of the invaders.

Ever since Muhammad bin Qasim came to Sindh, the Raja had been busy collecting forces to deal a smashing blow to the Arabs. Muhammad's unusual success in western Sindh made Dahar step up his preparations. He was sure that he could, without much difficulty, wipe out a few thousand Arabs. The thing that really troubled him was the popularity of the Arab rule. Dahar's own subjects and followers were turning against him. Many of them were even willing to fight him under the flag of Islam.

Dahar saw his only chance in raising a huge army. An avalanche of men, elephants and horses he thought, would carry all before it. He hoped to crush all opposition by sheer weight of numbers. His agents went from place to place, inciting people to unite in the face of common danger. From all over the country troops and war materials were rushed to Brahmanabad. Thus Dahar was able to raise an army of 50 000 men, horses and elephants. As the Arab forces stood ready to cross the river, a huge avalanche of men and beasts started rolling from Brahmanabad to Rawar, to check the Arab advance.

Dahar's plan was to block Arab passage across the river, at all costs. If he succeeded in this, he thought, he would still be safe, east of the Indus River. In time he hoped to be able to drive out the invaders.

## **PASSAGE ACROSS THE INDUS RIVER**

Dahar's reply made it clear to the youthful Arab leader that the Hindu Raja was bent on mischief. As usual, he wrote to Hajjaj for advice. Hajjaj was quick to suggest a novel but workable plan. He sent detailed directions for the preparation of a floating bridge. His orders were that a fleet of strong boats got ready. These should be joined together to form a bridge and the army should march over it.

Acting on these directions, Muhammad had a number of boats made out and got them tied to one another with strong ropes. In this way he prepared a bridge of boats long enough to span the river. One end of this bridge was fastened to strong poles on the river bank. Strong parties of archers were then placed in the boats on the other end and the bridge was slowly pushed into the current of the river. The current carried this end of the bridge to the

opposite bank. Dahar's men sucked in their breath when they saw the wonderful Arab plan succeed. All the same, they did their utmost to prevent a landing. Muslim archers, however, soon cleared the eastern bank of enemy troops. As the floating end of the bridge touched the eastern bank, the archers jumped off their boats and fastened this end of the bridge, too, to strong poles.

Passage across the Indus River now became very easy and safe. In a few hours the whole Arab army was on the eastern bank of the river. Dahar's plan, by which he set such store, had badly failed!

### **BATTLE WITH DAHAR**

Dahar felt uneasy when he heard of the Muslim landing. But he made a show of courage and determination to check the further advance of the Arabs. He was camping at Rawar, not far from the river. The two armies lay facing each other for several days. The Hindu army was no less than five times as large as the army of Muhammad bin Qasim. Moreover, the Arabs were fighting in a strange land. Despite all the advantages clearly on his side, Dahar did not seem to be very sure of the outcome. An unknown fear gripped his heart. But he also saw, to his cost, that delay was causing misgivings among his followers. For months he had prepared to strike at the Arab conqueror. He had to act quickly and strike hard now that the conqueror stood at the door of his stronghold.

So on June 20, 712 A.D., Dahar mounted his elephant and ordered the attack. Muhammad knew beforehand what grim struggle lay ahead. He had, therefore, made a will that if he fell fighting, Mahraz bin Thabit should take his place as commander. The spirit of the young commander proved catching. From top officers down to the humblest of men, everybody was determined to fight to the last. A wonderful elation filled the heart of each man. Every Muslim had unshakable faith in Allah and was ready to lay down his life for His cause. Dahar and his army, on the other hand, depended on their superior numbers, their horses and their elephants.

Dahar felt sure that the Arabs would be unable to stand before the crushing weight of numbers. In this he was soon dismayed. The Arabs hit back very hard. Both sides got desperate and terrible fighting went on for hours.

Dahar's chief hope lay in his elephants. In two former occasions, it was the elephants that had put the Arabs to rout. But the lesson of those defeats had not been lost on the Arabs. They had by now found out a remedy for the elephant danger. With kerosene oil, they made a chemical preparation. Cotton was dipped in it. This cotton was wrapped round arrowheads and was lit up before the arrow flew. Dahar's elephants were made the target of these burning arrows.

Dahar sat proudly on his elephant. Arab archers were ordered to make his elephant their special target. Dahar was, however, surrounded on all sides by a thick wall of elephants. At last an Arab succeeded in planting a burning arrow in Dahar's howdaj. Immediately the howdaj caught fire. The impact of the fire made the elephant mad with pain. In vain Dahar and his men tried to control the beast. The elephant was unmanageable and made a wild rush toward the river. With great difficulty the mahout stopped the flight in mid-stream. The terrified beast was at last made to get out of the water and to face the enemy once again. The battle now raged on the river bank.

Dahar seemed really desperate. Like a wild cat he fell upon the Muslims and killed many of them. Dahar's example stirred men into fearless action and fighting became more furious than ever. Arab marksmen, however, kept a special eye on Dahar. At last he was struck by an arrow and fell from his elephant. Dahar managed to mount a horse and the fighting re-started with full fury. Just as the sun was going down, an Arab soldier cut down a horseman of the enemy. He did not know his victim but the Hindu army knew who he was. He was none other than Dahar, who had fallen, fighting bravely. Immediately the Hindus lost heart and fled from the field. Some of them fled to Aror, the capital. Dahar's son, Jai Singh, with a large number of troops, fled to Brahmanabad. Muhammad bin Qasim won a complete victory.

### **DAHAR'S DEAD BODY FOUND**

Muhammad knew that Allah, and not himself, was the real author of the victory. Jumping down from his horse, he fell to his knees and bowed his head in thanksgiving. Then he made a quick round of the battlefield. He ordered that the dead bodies of the Muslim martyrs be picked up and laid to rest.

Many of the Hindus were taken prisoners. They were asked to identify the body of their Raja from amongst the dead. This they did on the following morning.



Muhammad bin Qasim now entered Rawar. As usual, he was extremely nice to the people. But before the victor entered the city, Dahar's wife, Rani Bai, had burnt herself alive along with her handmaids. The news made the conqueror very sad. However, he assured the people that they would be treated as kindly as the people of other cities.

### **FALL OF BRAHMANABAD AND AROR**

The victory of Muslim arms at Rawar was going to have far-reaching results. The chief purpose of the Arab expedition was to set at liberty the Arab women and children put in jail at Debul. If Muhammad stayed on after the fall of that city, it was because of Dahar's haughty attitude.

The victory at Rawar made Muhammad the unquestioned master of Sindh. The whole of the Indus Valley now lay at his feet. He could deal with it the way he liked. However, the young conqueror of Sindh acted with marked tolerance. In this, he was guided by the teachings of Islam. His uncle, Hajjaj, also gave him sage advice in the matter. Hajjaj was a great administrator. He knew how to handle things in conquered land. He gave his nephew the full benefit of his own ripe experience.

### **HAJJAJ'S ADVICE**

Hajjaj was taken to uproot idolatry from the conquered lands. However, he laid an equal stress on public well-being. In a letter to the Conqueror of Sindh he wrote.

“The first thing you should do is to make your military bases strong. Next, to look to the needs of the fighting men. Whatever money is left should be spent to promote public well-being. Remember! A country can be happy only if its inhabitants - the merchants, the craftsmen and other workmen are happy. Do all you can to make these people happy. If you want to win the love of the people of Sindh, treat them kindly.”

After the fall of Nirun, Hajjaj wrote as follows:

“The inhabitants of Nirun have submitted. Treat them kindly. Try to win them over. Try to promote their well-being. If those who took up arms against you, seek refuge, don't hesitate to forgive them. Keep your promise, so that people know you can be trusted. If once you go back upon your word, you will lose respect. People will stop trusting you.”

In another letter, Hajjaj wrote:

“If you want to keep the land in your hands, be good and kind to the people. Reward generously those who do good to you. Try to understand your enemies, be sensible in your opposition to them. The best advice I can give is that all should know how brave and fearless you are.”

### **FALL OF BRAHMANABAD**

The thumping victory at Rawar did not make Muhammad bin Qasim lose his head. The advice of his uncle and the teachings of Islam were his guides throughout. He was as kind hearted and tolerant as ever. He made it known to the people that those who laid down arms would be forgiven. Many took advantage of this offer. The defeated Hindu army, however, rallied at Brahmanabad under Jai Singh, Dahar's son.

The stronghold of Brahmanabad stood in the modern district of Hyderabad. Its ruins may still be seen in the Shahdadpur Tehsil of this district.

Jai Singh and his army fought desperately. But being unable to face the Arabs in open battle, they shut themselves up in the city. Muhammad bin Qasim laid siege to the city. Jai Singh held out for some time. Realising before long that he was no match for the conquering army, he quietly fled from the city one night. Nevertheless his army put up a tough fight but was beaten, with more than 8000 killed. Brahmanabad was occupied. Rani Ladi, another wife of Dahar, and Suryadevi and Parmaldevi, two maiden daughters of Dahar, fell into Muslim hands. They were treated with all the honour due to them. Afterwards Muhammad bin Qasim married Ladi.

The fall of Brahmanabad marked the end of serious opposition to the Arabs. The victor now devoted himself to the administration of Lower Sindh. He placed his governors in Rawar, Sehwan, Nirun and other places. The governors had strict orders to follow the example of their leader in being kind and just to the people.

### **FALL OF AROR**

Muhammad bin Qasim had yet to deal with one more pocket of resistance. This was Dahar's capital, Aror. The city stood some eight miles to the south-east of modern Rohri. This stronghold was held by Fufi, a son of Dahar. Fufi believed that his father was still alive and had fled to Hindustan to collect an

army. The inhabitants of Aror thought likewise. Muhammad bin Qasim wanted to avoid bloodshed. He wanted to tell the people that Fufi was misleading them. So he sent his wife, Ladi, to speak to the people and explain to them the real facts.

“Raja Dahar, my former husband, was slain at Rawar,” she explained to the people. “I myself saw his dead body. His head was cut off and sent to Hajjaj.”

“We refuse to believe you,” shouted back the people angrily. “You have gone over to the invaders. You have joined hands with the ‘unclean’ strangers. We cannot trust you.”

Fufi refused to submit. Naturally the only cause before the Arabs was to lay siege to the city. The siege went on for several weeks. By and by truth began to dawn on Fufi. At length no doubt was left in his mind that his father was actually dead. His courage began to fail and he fled from Aror one night. Finding their leader gone, the people, too, lost heart and Muhammad took the city by storm.

### **HELPLESSNESS OF THE IDOL**

The people of Aror received kind treatment at the hands of the victor. There was no killing, nor was any damage done to the temples.

There was a big temple in the middle of the city. Muhammad expressed a desire to see it. The chief priest led him inside. In the middle of the big hall, there was a stone image, riding a horse. The image was dressed in the best silks and was wearing golden bracelets, set with jewels. People were lying on their faces before the idol-god.

The sight was shocking to the Muslim general. He did not want to injure the feelings of his Hindu subjects. However, he wanted very much to show them that the idol was unable to do anybody any good or harm. Presently he thought of a clever but harmless way of doing this. When the chief priest was not looking, he took off one of the bracelets from the idol’s arm. He then asked the priest how the god happened to lose one of his bracelets. To this the priest had no answer. He hung down his head in shame. Quickly Muhammad again put the bracelet on the idol’s arm and quietly walked out of the temple. By this innocent joke the young victor hoped to prove to the priest and the worshippers that their idol-god was utterly helpless even to help itself!

As was the Arab practice, Muhammad bin Qasim laid out an Arab quarter in the city and built a masjid in the middle of it. From Aror, he marched on to Sukkar. This city fell without any fighting. Continuing his march eastward, the Conqueror of Sindh came to the land of the five rivers.

### **CONQUEST OF WEST PUNJAB**

West Punjab was part of Dahar's kingdom. Multan was the most important city in this part of the kingdom. After occupying Aror, Muhammad marched toward Multan. On the way, he reached a fortress. Here a cousin of Dahar, Kaksa by name, who had fled from Aror, was taking refuge. Unable to offer resistance, Kaksa submitted to the Arab leader. Such was the treatment he received that Kaksa became one of the most trusted friends of the Conqueror. His advice proved of great value to the Muslims in the battles that followed.

Advancing north-eastward, the Arabs came to a strong fortress on the bank of the Beas. The governor of the fortress was a nephew of the ruler of Multan. For seven days he stoutly defended the fortress. At last he fled to Sika, another fortress.

Muhammad crossed the river and attacked Sika. The siege of the town went on for seventeen days. The Hindu armed forces fought desperately. So tough was the fighting that the Arab general lost twenty-five of his best officers and 215 men. At last, the Hindu commander fled to Multan and the town fell.

### **SIEGE OF MULTAN**

From Sika, Muhammad passed on to Multan which was ruled by a cousin of Dahar. The Conqueror of Sindh sent him a message saying, "We have taken the whole of Sindh. If you too, give in, you will receive the best of treatment. But if you choose to fight, you and your people will suffer."

To this the ruler of Multan replied, "I am strong enough to defend my city. I will never give in without a fight."

The Hindu army marched some distance from the city to check the Muslim advance. A brisk battle took place. The Hindus soon found themselves defeated on the field of battle. So they shut themselves up within the walls of the city and the siege of Multan began.

The siege went on for several weeks. The Hindus showed no signs of weakness. On the other hand, provisions and supplies of the Muslims were rapidly

running out. This got them thinking hard for a way to cut short the siege. Just then a Hindu deserted from the city and came to the Muslim camp. He was brought before Muhammad bin Qasim.

“I will tell you,” he said, “how you can bring the people of Multan to their knees. They get their water supply from yonder canal, which flows underground into the city. Cut off the water supply and Multan will cry for mercy.”

The plan was immediately tried. It was not long before the garrison (armed forces) gave in. Soon Multan was in Muslim hands. The fighting men were put to the sword. They deserved this punishment because they had turned down the offer of peace and brought untold suffering on the people. The six thousand priests of the city were imprisoned but the citizens were spared.

### **THE HOUSE OF GOLD**

The great temple at Multan was one of the most well-known temples in the country. People came to it from far and near. They brought rich offerings for their idol-god. Over the years, heaps of gold and silver got amassed in the temple. All this gold lay secretly buried.

The idol-god was made of solid gold. A Brahman told the victor about the untold treasures buried underneath the idol. Immediately the idol-god was removed and the ground from under it was dug. The Brahman was right. The Arabs found such quantities of gold buried underground that they could hardly believe their eyes. Multan proved to be a mine of gold for the victors. Hence they gave the city the name of ‘The House of Gold.’

The victor sent the fifth part of this treasure to Hajjaj. The rest was distributed among his men. The booty that Hajjaj got from Multan alone was valued at twelve million dirhams. The expeditions to Sindh had cost him no more than six million dirhams. This left him with a net gain of six million dirhams.

As the rich booty lay before him, Hajjaj thanked Allah and said, “We have avenged the death of our countrymen. Over and above that we have got six million dirhams and Dahar's head in the bargain.”

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF MULTAN**

Before he captured Multan, Muhammad bin Qasim was master of lower Sindh only. The capture of Multan, in 713, laid at his feet upper Sindh and the lower

Punjab. Multan also supplied the base from which the young victor could overrun the rich plains of Hindustan. The young conqueror seemed bent on carrying the blessings of Islam to the farthest corner of India. He knew from his experience in Sindh how eager the Indian masses were to enjoy the good life promised by Islam. But events at home were taking a seeded turn. The heyday of the young hero was rapidly drawing to a close. His career of conquest was going to cut short.

### **ANOTHER HINDU DEFEAT**

From Multan Muhammad Qasim planned to march onto Hindustan. A Hindu Raja, whose kingdom lay to the south, was disturbed by what happened at Multan. He thought it wise to crush the growing Arab power before it became too strong. So he put a huge army under the command of his son, Har Chandra, and ordered him to strike at Multan. The Hindu host was already on the march when Muhammad came to know about it. He lost no time in meeting the enemy. At the head of a large force, he marched towards Udaipur. The Hindu host was utterly defeated. So crushing was the defeat that the danger of a Hindu attack from the south was forever gone. The Conqueror of Sindh could now safely lead his men further east.

### **HAJJAJ'S DEATH**

All was ready for a march into the heart of Hindustan when the news of Hajjaj's death reached Sindh. The news made Muhammad very, very sad. Hajjaj was his uncle and father-in-law. But he was much more to him than this. It was Hajjaj who had given him a chance to show his rare abilities. Again it was Hajjaj to whom he had turned for advice throughout the campaign. He had been paying personal attention to every small detail of the campaign. He had been sending men and supplies to far off Sindh, whenever the need arose. This source of guidance and help now laid dried up.

All Arabs in Sindh felt much the same as their young leader. No one could be very sure about the future. Events soon proved these fears to be true. Orders were received from Walid, the Khaifah, that further advance be stopped. Hajjaj was one of the most trusted and the ablest officer of the Khalifah. Walid thought that the success in Sindh was solely due to Hajjaj. Now that Hajjaj was no more, the Khalifah thought it was wise to call a halt in Sindh. He knew almost nothing about the monumental talents of the young Conqueror of

Sindh. This was pretty bad for the high spirits of a conquering army. But worse things were to follow.

### **WALID'S DEATH**

In the year 715 Walid passed away. He was succeeded by his younger brother, Sulayman. The new Khalifah was deadly against the men who were close to Walid. Hajjaj was one of these men. But Hajjaj had died before Walid's death and Sulayman's hand could not reach him. So his hand fell heavily on the relatives and trusted men of Hajjaj.

Sulayman did this on personal grounds. Walid and Sulayman were real brothers. Their father, Abdul Malik, had said in his will that Walid should be Khalifah after him and Sulayman should succeed Walid. On becoming Khalifah, Walid tried to set aside the father's will. He wanted his own son, rather than his brother, to succeed him. Hajjaj was Walid's right-hand man. He encouraged the Khalifah in this plan. However, the plan fell through because of Hajjaj's sudden death. Sulayman neither forgot nor forgave the sins of Hajjaj. If Hajjaj himself was beyond his reach, the Khalifah was determined to punish his friends and relatives.

Sulayman's action did much harm to the cause of Islam. In the heat of anger, he forgot the broader interest of his people. He began undoing much of what Walid had done. Under Walid, the Muslim Empire had expanded rapidly both in the east and the west. In the east Hajjaj and Muhammad bin Qasim carried the standard of Islam to the Indus Valley. In the west, Musa bin Nusair and Tariq bin Ziyaad ﷺ carried this standard to Spain, and from there to Southern France. Under Sulayman, the expansion suddenly stopped. The new Khalifah dismissed the able generals who had made these conquests. The only fault of these heroes of Islam was that they had been appointed by Walid.

### **MUHAMMAD BIN QASIM'S DISMISSAL**

Sulayman dismissed the brave young Conqueror of Sindh and sent a new governor in his place. The new Khalifah ordered that Muhammad bin Qasim be put in chains and sent as a prisoner to Iraq.

When those orders reached Muhammad, the young hero was all-powerful in Sindh. He was loved by the army and the people alike. It was easy for him to disobey the Khalifah. Nobody in Sindh wanted him to go. He could throw off

the nominal yoke of Sulayman and become an independent ruler. Or even give up the command in Sindh, he could refuse to be taken prisoner. The people of Sindh almost worshipped him. He could live there as a free citizen and no one could lay hands on him.

It was open to Muhammad bin Qasim to do any of these things. But he was a true son of Islam. The words of the Holy Quraan, "Obey Allah and the Rasul and those from among you who have been raised to authority," rang in his ears. He could not disobey the command of Allah. Silently but boldly, he carried out the Khalifah's orders. He knew what fate awaited him in Iraq. But he accepted his fate with a smile. With cool courage, he gave up all he had won with his sword and allowed himself to be put in chains. He thereby set a lofty example of a keen sense of duty to Allah and to his country.

### **TRAGIC END**

Salih was the Viceroy of the eastern provinces under Sulayman. He was one of the bitterest enemies of Hajjaj. A brother of Salih had been slain by the order of Hajjaj. Salih was determined to avenge his brother's death by killing as many of Hajjaj's men as he could lay his hands on.

As soon as Muhammad bin Qasim reached Iraq, Salih shut him up in the prison at Wasit. No attempt was made to bring any charges against him. To be related to the late Hajjaj was the worst crime in the eyes of the men then in power. But even at this dark moment, the young hero was not sorry for himself. He was only sorry for his people. All he said was, "Alas! I have been lost to my people. It is a pity they have lost a young man who was of service to them in battles."

A little later he said, "Today I am in chains, but I don't feel sad. I am the one who defeated great warriors and put to the sword many a brave young man."

The gallant young Conqueror of Sindh never came out of prison. It is not known how he met his end, but he was certainly tortured to death. Thus ended a career so full of promise and so devoted to the highest ideals.

At the time of death Muhammad was in his early twenties. His sun set long before it was even midday. History will never forgive the men who committed this act of barbarity.



## A NOBLE SON OF ISLAM

Muhammad bin Qasim is undoubtedly one of the noblest sons of Islam. The most remarkable thing about him is that he combines the innocence of youth with the highest level of achievement. He was hardly seventeen when he led an army into Sindh. In a little more than three years, he not only conquered the whole of Sindh but also gave it a just and good government. These great achievements were attained in a strange, far off land, with the help of a few thousand countrymen. History has very few examples to put beside this one.

The young Conqueror of Sindh found himself in a land where men were denied the status of human beings. For centuries the rulers of Sindh had treated the people like dumb-driven cattle. The rulers were the masters of the people, not their servants. All power was in the hands of a few. The whole wealth of the country was for them. All good things of life belonged to them. This handful of men made up the upper class. They were the princes, the nobles and the priests. The masses of the people belonged to the lower class. Their lot was pitiable. They were born to serve. They had no right to a decent life. All their lives, they had to toil for their masters. They had to know their place. It was unthinkable for them to ask for anything as of right.

Muhammad bin Qasim strongly felt for the down trodden masses and gave them human rights. Before he came, they could not carry a sword. They had to go bare-headed and barefoot. If they rode a horse, they had to go without a saddle. They were forced to collect fuel for their rulers. The Arab rule did away with all these inhuman practices. All citizens were given equal rights. For the first time in history the Hindu masses knew what it meant to be equal before the law. They had their first taste of freedom. The Arab rule brought with it the blessings of Islam. It brought a new hope and new horizons for the down-trodden.

The blessings of Arab rule were meant for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The Hindus were amazed at the treatment they received. Their temples remain intact. The property of the temples remain untouched. The government even took upon itself the repair of the temples. Three percent of the income from land revenue was set aside for the upkeep of the temples. The priests continued to enjoy the rights they had enjoyed before.

Most of the government posts were filled by the Sindhis. Those who accepted Islam had to pay the poor-rate (Zakaat). The non-Muslims had to pay jizya.

This was a very light tax as compared with the poor-rate. The rich Hindus had to pay fifteen rupees per year, middle-class Hindus paid seven rupees per year and the poorer Hindus had to pay only four rupees a year. Zakaat or poor-rate came to much more than that. Muslim citizens had not only to lay the poor-rate, they could also be called for military duty. On the other hand, the jizya freed the non-Muslims from military duty.

By his kind and just rule, Muhammad bin Qasim won the hearts of the Hindus. They loved and respected him even more than the Muslims did. In fact, they came to look upon him as a god. It was hard for them to believe that a man could be so good. They made his images and put them in their temples. When the young hero came to know about this, he forbade the practice.

One cannot help wondering at the ready obedience of Muhammad to an unjust order of the Khalifah. If he so chose, he could easily save his life and also his future. For all purposes, he was the ruler of the lands he had conquered. The Khalifah could not remove him by force. But Muhammad chose to respect the Khalifah's authority though he knew what it was going to mean. He prized the unity of his people more than he prized his own life.

The cool courage with which the young hero met his unjust fate, is beyond praise. He understood the temper of his age, and without a word of bitterness, passed through the hardest of ordeals to which a man can be subjected.

The young Conqueror left Sindh after a few years stay. However, his good name lived on. Today, after more than 1200 years, not only we Pakistanis but Muslims all over the world feel proud of him. It was he who first brought the light of Islam to India. Thus, in a stricter sense, it is he who was the first founder of Pakistan.

Allah's peace and blessings be on this gallant, young Conqueror of Sindh, who so selflessly worked for the greater glory of Allah!



