

Book Review-1

Aijaz Ahmad, *History of Haryana: Ancient, Medieval and Modern Period, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Limited, 2025, pp. 265, Rs. 1200 (Hardbound).*

After independence, India focused on national consolidation and integration. Before independence, the British had drawn the boundaries of states in a haphazard manner, ignoring the country's multilingual and multicultural diversities. The leaders of independent India gave priority to cultural differences in the nation-making process, which resulted in the linguistic reorganisation of states. On the basis of language, many new states were created. One of them was Haryana. In 1966, after the reorganisation of the erstwhile state of Punjab, Haryana emerged as a full-fledged state of the Indian Union. However, Haryana has a much older historical heritage. Aijaz Ahmad, in his book titled *History of Haryana*, discusses the region's historical evolution. The author mentions that it has been written as a textbook for undergraduate and postgraduate students, as the syllabuses of many universities in northern India include the history of Haryana. The book under review is divided into twenty-one chapters and covers a long period, spanning from ancient times to the colonial era, including the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal rule in the medieval period.

The first chapter of the book is devoted to discussing the historical sources of different eras—India in general and Haryana in particular. While examining ancient sources, the author mentions numerous literary and archaeological evidences, as well as the accounts of foreign travellers. It should be noted here that excavations at major archaeological sites in Haryana have unearthed a wealth of artifacts, providing deep insights into ancient Indian history and culture. For the medieval and modern history of Haryana, the author draws attention to various literary works, buildings and monuments, and archival and official documents. From the second chapter onward, the author begins to discuss the chronological history of Haryana. The second chapter examines Haryana during the Harappan Civilization. The discussion focuses on major Harappan sites in the region, such as Rakhigarhi, Banawali, Mitathal, Balu, Daulatpur, Bhirrana, Kunal, and Bhagwanpur. In this chapter, the author provides an overview of the urban life of the Harappan people of Haryana, including town planning, roads, buildings, and the drainage system. The chapter also describes their economic life—agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, trade, and commerce—as well as aspects of social life, such as social classification, food habits, clothing, entertainment, and funerary practices in brief. In addition, the political and religious life of the Harappan communities in Haryana is discussed.

In the textbooks of ancient Indian history, the account of the Harappan Civilization is invariably followed by an account of the Vedic culture. This generally encompasses the long-standing debate over whether the Aryans were indigenous to India or migrated from outside and an analysis of their religious and social life. In this book too, the pattern is no different. The next chapter deals with Haryana during the Vedic period. The author states that the rivers Saraswati and Drishadvati were ideal for the agricultural life of the Aryans and are reported to have irrigated much of the Haryana region. Evidence of Aryan settlement has been reported in Kurukshetra, Jind, Narwana, Hisar, Fatehabad, Hansi, Karnal, Panipat, Gohana, Sonapat, Rohtak, and Jagadhri. He further states that "most parts of the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda were composed in the Haryana region, and therefore, every incident described in these texts represents the history of the Aryans of the Haryana region." However, this statement seems more of a hypothesis or speculation than any established scholarly fact. During the Vedic period, a kingdom was established by a king named Kuru in Haryana. The epic Mahabharata centers on the Kuru dynasty. The place received its name as Kurukshetra from the Kuru clan, and it was here that the Mahabharata war is said to have taken place.

The author devotes the fourth chapter to describing three of the most important ancient republics of Haryana: Yaudheya, Agra, and Kulinda. A short account of Maharaja Agrasen is also given in this chapter. Then, the author proceeds to explain the history of the Pushyabhuti dynasty of Thanesar, which is a part of Haryana today. Particular importance is given to Harshavardhana, and some details about his conquests and administrative policies are given. After the death of Harshavardhana, his empire dissolved. Haryana then came under the rule of Kannauj ruler Yashovarman and later the Pala king Dharmapala. The history of Haryana during the subsequent rule of the Pratiharas, Tomaras, and Chauhan dynasties is also traced by the author. He opines that because of less political stability in the area and scarcity of a strong central authority, noteworthy socio-economic advancement could not be achieved in that age. Thaneswar was invaded by Sultan Mahmud and his successors during the rule of the Tomaras. Later, the Chauhans established a strong presence in Haryana with their power peaking during Prithviraj III's reign. However, in 1192, Muhammad Ghori defeated Prithviraj in the Second Battle of Tarain. Delhi and Haryana then came under Turkish control. The local groups including the Jats, the people of Sirsa, Ahirwal, and Mewatis resisted the Turkish rulers and took up arms but were subsequently defeated. This sequence of events is briefly described in the book under discussion. In the eighth chapter, the author discusses Sultan Balban's invasion of Haryana, which is followed by the discussion regarding the first (1526) and second (1556) Battles of Panipat that took place in the region. One chapter has also been dedicated to Hasan Khan Mewat, the ruler of Mewat in Haryana, who was defeated by the Mughals in the Battle of Khanua (1527). Following this, Mughal rule in Haryana was

consolidated.

The rebellions that took place during the rule of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, especially the Jat and Satnami uprisings in Haryana, are described in a chapter by the author. After the death of Aurangzeb, Mughal power in Haryana deteriorated, while the Maratha influence penetrated deeper into the region. During the eighteenth century, a number of princely states emerged within Haryana, and later Haryana came under British control. The author discusses these developments over a number of chapters. Moreover, the 1857 rebellion that spread throughout North India during the reign of the British East India Company also reached Haryana, and to explore the implications of this uprising on the region, the author has devoted a chapter. As a punitive measure, the Haryana region was merged with the Punjab province by the British government after 1857.

The eighteenth chapter is devoted to the growth of political consciousness and the nationalist movement in Haryana. The next chapter emphasizes the Unionist Party, which was established in 1923 to address the plight of farmers. Sir Chhotu Ram of Haryana played an important role in founding this party. In the next chapter, further light is thrown on the activities of the Unionist Party. Besides this, the author briefly discusses major national movements such as the Rowlatt Satyagraha, the Khilafat-Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, and the Quit India Movement. In the last chapter, he throws light upon the Prajamandal Movement in Haryana.

Finally, it should be reiterated that this book does not offer original research. There is little evidence of specialized or innovative scholarly work having taken place, and the text serves largely as a general textbook. In seeking to cover such a long period of history in a single volume, the book cannot engage in an in-depth discussion of Haryana's history. This book may be considered suitable for a limited range of undergraduate students; however, it offers very little analytical depth and can scarcely be recommended for postgraduate study.

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