

CC-5:HISTORY OF INDIA(CE 750-1206)

II. POLITICAL STRUCTURES:

(D). CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF EARLY TURKISH INVASIONS: MAHMUD OF GHAZNA; SHAHAB-UD-DIN OF GHUR

The period from 1000 to 1200 saw rapid changes both in West and Central Asia, and in north India. It were these developments which led to the incursion of the Turks into northern India leading to their rule towards the end of the period. By the end of the ninth century, the Abbasid caliphate was in decline. Its place was taken by a series of states ruled by Islamized Turks. The Turks had entered the Abbasid empire during the ninth century as palace-guards and mercenary soldiers. Soon they emerged as the king-makers. As the power of the central government declined, provincial governors started assuming independent status, though for sometime the fiction of unity was kept up by the caliph formally granting the title of amir-ul-umra (Commander of Commanders) on generals who were able to carve out a separate spheres of authority. These new rulers assumed the title of 'amir' at first, and of 'sultan' later on.

Towards the end of the ninth century, Trans-Oxiana, Khurasan and parts of Iran were being ruled by the Samanids who were Iranians by descent. The Samanids had to battle continually with the non- Muslim Turkish tribesmen on their northern and eastern frontiers. It was during this struggle that a new type of soldier, the ghazi, was born. The battle against the Turks, most of whom worshipped the forces of nature and were heathens in the eyes of the Muslims, was a struggle for religion as well as for the safety of the state. Hence, the ghazi was as much a missionary as a fighter. He acted as a loose auxiliary of the regular armies, and made up for his pay by plunders. The ghazis took over the Turks in tough battles. In the course of time, many Turks became Muslims themselves and these Islamised Turkish tribes emerged as the greatest defenders and crusaders of Islam. But the love of plunder went side by side with defence of Islam.

In the 9th and 10th centuries, most of Afghanistan was under the control of the Samanids. Among the Samanid governors was a Turkish slave, Alp-tigin, who started as the Governor of Balkh and in course of time, established an

independent Turkish kingdom with its capital at Ghazni, Afghanistan. He was succeeded by his slave and son-in-law, Subuktagin who established his own rule in Ghazni in 977 CE. The Samanid kingdom soon ended, and the Ghaznavids took over the task of defending the Islamic lands from the Central Asian tribesmen. It was in this context that Mahmud (son of Sabuktagin) ascended the throne (998- 1030) at Ghazni. He was the first ruler to get the Title of “Sultan” Mahmud is considered a hero of Islam by medieval Muslim historians because of his stout defence against the Central Asian Turkish tribal invaders.

Mahmud was closely associated with the renaissance of the Iranian spirit which grew rapidly during this period. The Samanid state had also encouraged the Persian language and literature. A high watermark in the Iranian renaissance was reached with Firdausi's Shah Namah. Firdausi was the poet laureate at the court of Mahmud. The Persian language and culture became the language and culture of the Ghaznavid empire, so much so that Mahmud himself claimed descent from the legendary Iranian king, Afrasiyab. Thus, the Turks became not only Islamized but Persianized. It was this culture that they were to bring with them to India two centuries later. While Mahmud played an important role in the defence of the Islamic states against the Turkish tribes and in the Iranian cultural renaissance, in India his memory is only that of a plunderer and a destroyer of temples.

Mahmud is said to have made seventeen raids into India between 1000-1027 CE. He started his invasion in India during the period when the Rajput power had declined. The main reasons behind conquest of India by Mahmud Ghazni were, firstly, to accumulate vast amount of wealth that existed in India. With the help of that wealth he wanted to increase the power and prestige of his Capital city, Ghazni. Also the plundered wealth from India helped him to continue his struggle against his enemies in Central Asia. Secondly, to spread Islam and destroy the temples of the Hindus in India. Infact he is also known as the shikan or destroyer of images. He also did not wanted the Indian rulers to regroup against him. Mahmud of Ghazni always attacked India during the hot summer season and returned back to Ghazni before the arrival of monsoon probably to avoid the flooding rivers of Punjab so that his forces would not get trapped there.

The initial raids were directed against the Hindushahi rulers who at the time held Peshawar and the Punjab. Their capital was at Udbhanda or Waihind (Peshawar). The Hindushahi rulers had been quick to see the danger to them of

the rise of an aggressive, expansionist state on their southwestern border. The Hindushahi ruler, Jayapala had, in alliance with the displaced Samanid governor of Ghazni, the Bhatti ruler of the area around Multan, and the amir of Multan, invaded Ghazni. But he had to suffer a defeat and the coalition built by him collapsed. In retaliation, the Ghaznavid rulers of the time laid waste areas upto Kabul and Jalalabad. In about 990-91, under Sabuk-tigin, the Shahis suffered a serious defeat. Following this Kabul and Jalalabad were annexed to Ghazni. As a Prince Mahmud has taken part in these battles. After his accession to the throne he resumed the offensive against the Shahis.

In a furious battle near Peshawar in 1001(Battle of Waihind), Jayapala was again defeated. Mahmud advanced to the Shahi capital, and thoroughly ravaged it. Peace was made by ceding the territory west of the Indus to Mahmud. Soon after, Jayapala died and was succeeded by his son, Anandpala. According to some later accounts, Jayapala had entered a funeral pyre following his defeat because he felt he had disgraced himself.

Despite these setbacks, the Shahis were still strong enough to offer serious resistance to Mahmud's efforts to penetrate into the Punjab. Mahmud also had to counter the attacks of non-Muslim Turks from Central Asia. However, in a decisive battle near the Indus in 1009(Second Battle of Waihind), Anandpala was defeated and Mahmud devastated his new capital, Nandana, in the Salt Ranges, and overran his fort called Nagarkot . Anandpal was allowed for some time to rule from Lahore as a feudatory. But in 1015, Mahmud advanced upto Lahore, plundered it, and ousted Anandpal. Soon, Ghazanvid territories extended upto the river Jhelum. Earlier, the Muslim kingdom of Multan had also been overrun. In this struggle, the Shahis were supported only by the Muslim ruler of Multan. Mahmud's fast moving cavalry was a major reason behind his success and strategically he annexed Punjab to have easy access to India.

Thus, the struggle against the Shahis was a prolonged one, and the Shahis put up stout resistance. By 1015, Mahmud was poised for an attack on the Indo-Gangetic valley. During the next half a dozen years, Mahmud launched a series of expeditions into the Indo-Gangetic plains. These raids were aimed at plundering the rich temples and the towns which had amassed wealth over generations. From the Punjab, Mahmud raided Thanesar the old capital of Harsha. His most daring raids, however, were against Kanauj in 1018, and against Somnath in Gujarat in 1025. In the campaign against Kanauj, he sacked

and plundered both Mathura and Kanauj. The following year, he invaded Kalinjar in Bundelkhand, and returned loaded with fabulous riches. He was able to do all this with impunity due to the fact that no strong state existed in north India at that time. No attempt was made by Mahmud to annex any of these states.

Between 1020, and 1025, Mahmud was engaged in Central Asian affairs. In 1025, he made a plan for raiding Somnath which had a fabulously rich temple and attracted lakhs of pilgrims. It was also a rich port. The objective was also to create a sense of awe and shock among the Rajputs because he marched via Multan and Jaisalmer with a regular cavalry of 30,000. Meeting light opposition on the way, he reached Somnath. The commander of the city fled at his approach, but the citizens put up a stout resistance. Mahmud broke the Sivalingam, and ordered parts of it brought back with him to Ghazni. Evading the attempt of some Rajput rulers to block him on his way back, he had to counter the marauding bands of Jats in Sind. He returned to Ghazni loaded with immense wealth. Mahmud returned the following year to punish the Jats who had harried him on return to Ghazni. He died at Ghazni in 1030 CE.

It is not correct to dismiss Mahmud as just a raider and plunderer. The Ghaznavid conquest of the Punjab and Multan completely changed the political situation in north India. The Turks had crossed the chain of mountains defending India in the northwest and could make a deeper incursion into the Gangetic heartland at any time. Following the death of Mahmud, a powerful empire, the Seljuk empire, came into being. The Seljuk empire included Syria, Iran and Trans-Oxiana, and contended with the Ghaznavids for the control of Khurasan. In a famous battle, Masud, the son of Mahmud, was completely defeated and had to flee to Lahore for refuge. The Ghaznavid empire now shrank to Ghazni and the Punjab. Although the Ghaznavids continued to make plundering raids into the Gangetic valley and Rajputana, they were no longer in a position to pose a serious military danger to India. Simultaneously, a number of new states arose in north India which could counter the Ghaznavid raids. Though the 17 invasions of India undertaken by Ghazni did not show any systematic effort to conquer the sub-continent, yet it exposed the military weakness of the Indian rulers, also the repeated invasions weakened the frontiers which created opportunities for other Afghan and Turkish rulers to invade India. One such ruler was Mohammad Ghori.

Towards the middle of the twelfth century, another group of Turkish tribesmen, who were partly Buddhist and partly pagan, shattered the power of the Seljuk Turks. In the vacuum, two new powers rose to prominence, the Khwarizmi empire based in Iran, and the Ghurid empire based in Ghur in northwest Afghanistan. The Ghurids had started as vassals of Ghazni, but had soon thrown off their yoke. The power of the Ghurids increased under Sultan Alauddin who earned the title of 'the world burner' (jahan-soz) because during the middle of the twelfth century he ravaged Ghazni and burnt it to the ground in revenge for the treatment that had been meted out to his brothers at Ghazni. The rising power of the Khwarizmi empire severely limited the Central Asian ambition of the Ghurids. Khurasan, which was the bone of contention between the two, was soon conquered by Khwarizm Shah. This left no option for the Ghurids but to look for expansion towards India.

In 1173, Shahabuddin, Muhammad (1173-1206) (also known as Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam) ascended the throne at Ghazni, while his elder brother was ruling at Ghur. Ghori being a very ambitious ruler, was not satisfied with only Ghazni and wanted to expand his empire to gain more power and control. He knew the prevailing political, social, religious, military situations of India and he also knew about the enormous wealth that India had. He also had the desire to spread Islam in India. Thus for all these reasons he carried out a number of invasions to establish his rule over India. It is important to note here that Muhammad Ghori unlike Mahmud of Ghazni was very much interested in establishing a permanent empire in India and not merely looting its wealth. His campaigns were well organised and whenever he conquered any territory, he left a general behind to govern it in his absence. His invasion resulted in the permanent establishment of Turkish Sultanate in the region lying north of the Vindhyan Mountains.

Mohammad Ghori proceeding by way of the Gomal pass, Muizzuddin Muhammad conquered Multan and Uchch. In 1175 CE he led his first expedition against Multan, which was largely successful. In the same campaign, he captured Uchch (in Upper Sindh) from the Bhatti Rajputs and established a fort there. In 1178, he attempted to penetrate into Gujarat by marching across the Rajputana desert. But the Gujarat ruler Solanki Bhima II of the Chalukya Dynasty defeated him at the battle of Kayadara near Mount Abu and completely routed him. Muizzuddin Muhammad was lucky in escaping alive. He now realised the necessity of creating a suitable base in the Punjab before

venturing upon the conquest of India. Accordingly, he launched a campaign against the Ghaznavi possessions in the Punjab. By 1190, Muizzuddin Muhammad had conquered Peshawar, Lahore and Sialkot, and was poised for a thrust towards Delhi and the Gangetic doab.

First Battle of Tarain(1191 CE)

Mohammad Ghori's possession of Punjab and his attempt to advance into the Gangetic Doab brought him in direct conflict with the Rajput ruler Prithviraj Chauhan who had already overrun many small states in Rajputana, captured Delhi and wanted to extend his control over Punjab and the Gangetic Doab. The immediate cause of this battle was the conflict over capturing Tabahinda. In the First Battle of Tarain Prithviraj Chauhan defeated Mohammad Ghori and captured Tabahinda or Bhattinda but he did not make efforts to garrison it effectively.

The Second Battle of Tarain(1192 CE)

This Battle proved to be a turning point in Indian History as Mohammad Ghori defeated Prithviraj Chauhan. Though Prithviraj Chauhan tried to escape he was captured near Saraswati. He was allowed to rule over Ajmer for some time but soon was executed on charges of conspiracy. Thus Delhi and Ajmer came under complete Turkish control.

The two Battles of Tarain were followed by the Battle of Chandwar. In this battle Mohammad Ghori defeated Jaichandra, the ruler of Kanauj. This event laid the foundation of Turkish rule in Northern India. After this conquest Ghori returned to Ghazni to look into the matters of the Western frontiers. The affairs of India were left in the hands of his trusted slave and newly appointed Viceroy, Qutub-ud-din-Aibak.

Qutub-ud-din-Aibak went on to conquer Gujrat for which he had to defeat Bhima II, followed by Bundelkhand where he defeated the Chandellas. Simultaneously, Mohammad Bakhtiyar Khilji who was another general of Mohammad Ghori captured Bihar in 1197 CE and Bengal in 1202CE. He also destroyed the Universities of Nalanda and Vikramshila. Khilji went on to become the viceroy of Bengal and Bihar. Ghori had to once again return to India to suppress the revolt of the Khokhars in 1205 CE. Ghori was killed on his

way back to Ghazni from India. The reign of India passed on to Aibak who laid the foundation of the Slave Dynasty.

REFERNCE

Chandra , S , History of Medieval India (800-1700)