
UNIT 6 ARAB CONQUEST OF SINDH, TURKISH INVASIONS, MAHMUD GHAZNI AND MOHD. GHOURI¹

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 The Rise and Spread of Islam in 7th-8th Centuries
- 6.3 The *Chachnama*
 - 6.3.1 The Narrative of *Chachnama*
- 6.4 The Conquest of Sindh
 - 6.4.1 Muhammad bin Qasim: the Conqueror and his Expeditions
- 6.5 Arab Administration
- 6.6 Arab Conquest of Sindh: A Triumph without Results?
- 6.7 Situation of Constant Flux in West and Central Asia
- 6.8 Ghazni Inroads in the North-Western Region of India
 - 6.8.1 Political Geography of North India in early 11th Century
- 6.9 Fall of the Ghaznavids and the Rise of the Ghurids in Central Asia and India
 - 6.9.1 Political Geography of North India in Early 12th Century
 - 6.9.2 The Battles of Tarain in 1191 and 1192 CE
 - 6.9.3 Movement Towards the Upper Ganga Valley
- 6.10 Reasons Behind Rajput Defeat and Turkish Victory
- 6.11 Comparison between the Ghaznavids and Ghurs
- 6.12 Summary
- 6.13 Key Words
- 6.14 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 6.15 Suggested Readings

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will know:

- the background for understanding the foreign invasions from Arabia in the early medieval period;
- the sources on the Arab conquest of Sindh;
- the reasons for the capture of Sindh by the Arabs;

¹ This unit has been taken from BHIC 132, Units 11 and 12

- the phases of conquest of Sindh;
- the nature of Mahmud Ghazni's invasions;
- reasons for the rise of Ghurid power;
- phases of conquest of north India by Mohammad Ghouri;
- reasons for defeat of the Rajputs;
- causes behind the success of Mohammad Ghouri; and
- difference between the Ghaznavids and the Ghurids.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the Units so far, we have studied about the social, political, economic or cultural aspects of Ancient India. Based on the unique traits of the period, historians have called it as Ancient history. Similarly, the period that followed had its own characteristic features to be termed as Medieval. The rise of Islam in West Asia and the Muslim conquests around the world occurred in the early medieval period. In this Unit, we will study one such inter-related development in the Indian subcontinent. This is the Arab conquest of Sindh in the north-western region of the subcontinent.

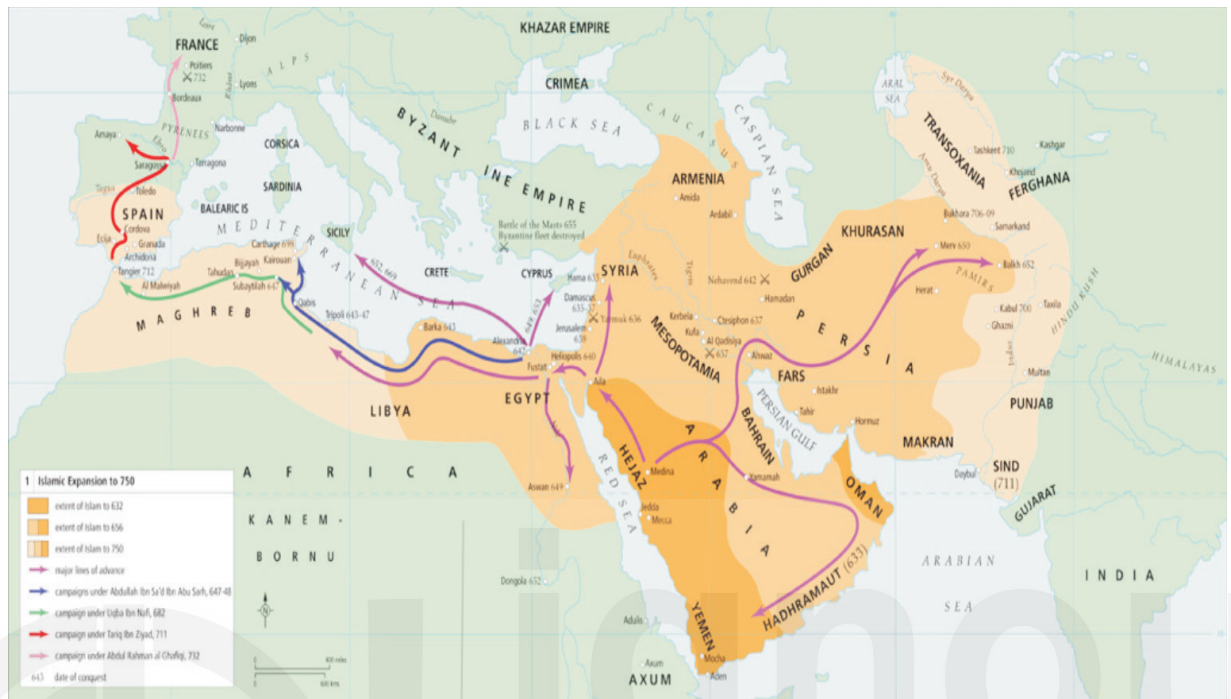
THE EARLY MEDIEVAL IN INDIAN HISTORY

The Early Medieval is a phase of transition from ancient to medieval period. In relation to north India, the period before the sultanate phase is termed as early medieval. Many historians also refer to it as post-Gupta period. It signifies a different chronological construct in Indian history that has characteristics of its own that are not found in the earlier or later phases. The use of such terms in academic circles is of more recent origin. Before its usage, the medieval period was mostly understood in terms of foreign or Muslim invasions and their rule in India. However, with in-depth micro-studies in medieval Indian history, it was realized that the various cultural traits found in the region cannot be aggregated together under a single term of medieval. In the beginning, Niharranjan Ray attempted a multi-dimensional characterization of medievalism. He envisaged three sub periods within the medieval, namely:

- (i) 7th to 12th century
- (ii) 12th to first quarter of 16th century
- (iii) first quarter of 16th century to the close of 18th century.

According to historians like B. D. Chattopadhyaya, the time-spans in history are culturally diverse enough not to be comfortably categorized together. Therefore, even these sub-periods can be broken into different periods with their own cultural traits. In line with such an argument, it can be said that the post-Gupta or early medieval carried distinct traits. For instance, 7th to 10th and 10th to 12th centuries can be differentiated on different grounds. One such ground is the Arab conquest of Sindh in the 8th century or the rise of Turkish invasion in north India between 10th to 12th centuries.

6.2 THE RISE AND SPREAD OF ISLAM IN 7TH-8TH CENTURIES



SPREAD OF ISLAM.

Source: <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/full/opr/t253/e17/images0195334012.spread-of-islam-the.1.jpg>

Islam was founded in the 7th century by Prophet Muhammad: an Arabian merchant from Mecca. At this time, the region of Arabia was inhabited by several warring Bedouin tribes following pagan faiths, worshipping many deities. They constantly fought with each other over economic or religious issues. However, Prophet Muhammad unified these Arabian tribes with his monotheistic teachings. Perhaps this was the biggest contribution of Prophet Muhammad in Arabia. Along with bringing this unity, his new faith greatly influenced the political and economic policies of the future Muslim states as well.

After his death, the rapid expansion of Muslim polity in and outside the Arabian peninsula happened under the Rashudin and Umayyad Caliphates. The expanded empire stretched from Central Asia across the Middle East and North Africa to the Atlantic. Some scholars opine that the political formation of a state in the Arabian Peninsula and religious unity and mobilization were the most significant reasons for the establishment of the largest empire in the pre-modern period. This empire formed by the Islamic Caliphate was around 13 million square kilometres. With Islam as their religion and the new empire as their booty, the Arabs lived amongst a vast array of people belonging to different races, among which they formed a ruling minority of conquerors. However, the gradual end of wars and the development of economic life produced a new governing class of administrators and traders, heterogeneous in race, language and ethnicity. This is how the Muslim population kept spreading in and around the Arabian peninsula. The conquest of Sindh in the Indian subcontinent was an extension of this endeavour by the Muslim world.

6.3 THE *CHACHNAMA*

As far as the historical sources on the Arab conquest on Sindh are concerned, there is a miserable dearth. Even the Arab sources only give brief, scant details or passing reference to this episode while discussing the rise and expansion of early Islam. The conquest is compressed into a few pages of the *Futuh al Buldan* of Al-Baladhuri. Al-Madaini gives plentiful information on the Arab conquest of Transoxiana, but Sindh finds little mention in his account. However, this dearth of the Arab sources on the theme is largely compensated for by the *Chachnama*, a Persian text written by Ali Kufi in 1226 CE. It is a reliable historical work that claims to be the translation of a lost Arab account dealing with the history of this conquest; it is only to the *Chachnama* that one can give the credit of providing detailed information on the Arab invasion of Sindh.

The *Chachnama* gives details on the history of Sindh from 680-718 CE. Etymologically, the term *Chachnama* means the story of Chach. Chach was the Hindu brahmana ruler of Sindh. This book was a Persian prose work written in the city of Uchch, which was the political capital of Sindh in those times. Presently, it can be located around 70 kilometres north of the port city of Karachi in Pakistan.

As an important historical source of Muslim India, the *Chachnama* has not received its due share of attention. Its partial translation in English was done by Elliot and Dowson, and a full translation from Persian to English was done in 1900 by Mirza Kalich Beg, the first Sindhi novelist. The first and only edition of the Persian text appeared in 1939.

The *Chachnama* has not been given adequate importance since most historians, like the colonial and the nationalist historians, have seen it only as a narrative on the advent of early Islam to the Indian subcontinent. However, Ali Kufi's claim of the *Chachnama* being a translation of an 8th century work in Arabic shows that it can be a repository of other types of information apart from that on the advent of Islam. In fact, the text indeed gives more information. Scholars like Yohanan Friedmann, Manan Ahmed Asif etc., who have read and analyzed it, contend that it has a wide variety of information, and no systematic attempt has been made to classify and analyse all the available data. After its detailed examination, they certified the fact that it has relevant information on the history of Sindh, its government and politics. Therefore, the scholars who have read this text realize the dire need to read and understand this medieval source in entirety, and refrain from seeing it only as a text on the advent of early Islam and its capture of Sindh.

6.3.1 The Narrative of *Chachnama*

As mentioned before, historians like Friedmann and Ahmed Asif have rejected the view of seeing it only as a history of conquest of Sindh. Their detailed study throws light on other aspects as well. Friedmann opines that the text may be divided into four parts starting from the varied details on the praise of Prophet Muhammad, the Arab warriors and the Arab manuscript describing Muhammad Bin Qasim's military exploits in Sindh. Further, it describes the Arab invasion of Sindh.

Starting from king Chach, it gives the intricate details on his successors. It enumerates the journey of a brahmana named Chach bin Silaj from being the

chief minister of the king of Sindh to his own rise to power with the queen's help after the king's death. As a king, Chach established a successful state of Sindh by capturing forts, signing agreements and winning over both the Buddhist and Hindu subjects. It was a mixture of his offensive, defensive and tolerant policies that enabled him to rule over Sindh for a long time. However, his success as a good ruler was undone by the war of succession between his two sons Dahar and Daharsia. As the text shows, Dahar came to power, and it was he who welcomed the Arab rebels, pirates and warlords to Sindh. This had raised the ire of the Muslim state of Iraq in the 8th century.

According to Ahmed Asif, this text is divided into three portions. The first one discusses three intertwined themes of the need of legitimacy for the king, the good counsel of the advisor and the requirement for creating a justly governed polity. The second describes the history from the Caliphs to Walid. It talks about the time of Caliph Umar (c. 634-644 CE) when the Muslim campaigns were led to Sindh and Hind. It gives intricate details on the governors dispatched to regions such as Makran, Zabulistan and Qandahar, as also the rebellious Muslim groups running away to the frontiers. The revolting troops conspiring against the state in Damascus have also been discussed. It is mentioned here that in order to fight such groups and assert political control over the region, the governor of Iraq had sent the young commander named Muhammad Bin Qasim to Sindh in 711 CE. This is when the regions of Makran, Dabol or Daybul, Nerun were attacked and taken over. The forces of raja Dahar were defeated in a battle fought at the banks of river Indus. After defeating the king of Sindh, Qasim also occupied the regions of Aror, Brahmanabad and Multan. This is how Dahar was avenged for supporting the Arab rebels and pirates against Iraq.

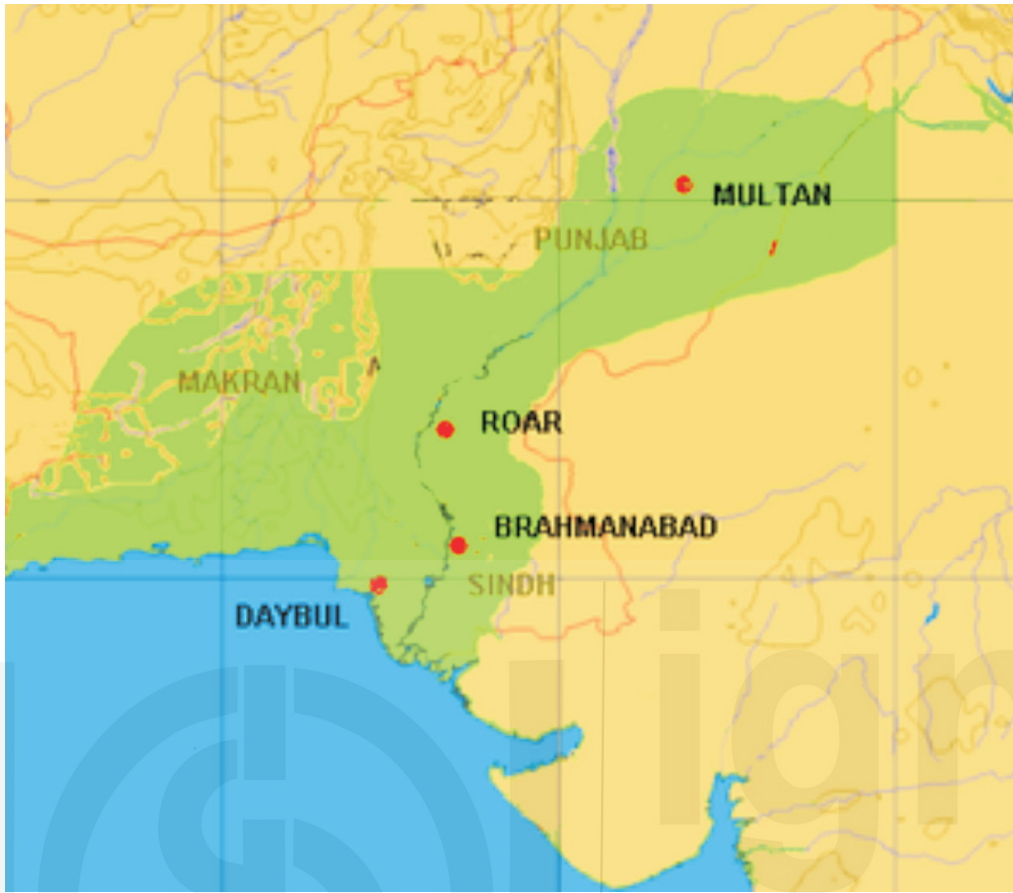
The end narrative discusses the downfall of Qasim at length. As it shows, Qasim was killed at the orders of the Caliph at Baghdad after being accused of sexual violence by the daughters of Dahar. The last portion of the text revolves around the themes of good governance, good advisory and the political theory needed for the creation of a successful polity. This part is a discussion of the military campaigns of both Chach and Qasim. According to Ahmed Asif, the text contains speeches on policy and taxation, private conversations between commanders and their prophecies and dreams. It also discusses the statements of significant men on political theory and governance.

6.4 THE CONQUEST OF SINDH

The region of Sindh is located on the south-eastern-zone of present-day Pakistan. This area on the western coast of the Indian subcontinent has a long history. Since ancient times, it has been a hotbed of trade and commerce. The Arab merchants had active trade relations with their Indian and Southeast Asian counterparts. They knew of the sea routes to the western coast of India. To be precise, these merchants sailed from Siraf and Hormuz on the Persian Gulf to the mouth of the Indus, and thence to Spara and Cambay, and further to Calicut and other ports on the Malabar Coast. They brought back tidings of Indian wealth and luxury goods like gold, diamond, jewelled idols etc. to Arabia. Therefore, as India had been famous for its riches for long, the Arabs wanted to conquer it. After their "Islamization", they

had the proselytizing zeal that made them overrun many regions in the Middle East, Europe, Africa and Asia.

**Arab Conquest of Sindh,
Turkish Invasions,
Mahmud Ghazni and
Muhammad Ghouri**



Source: Wikimedia Commons (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_bin_Qasim).

The penetration of the Arabs in the coastal towns of Sindh in Indian subcontinent had started as early as 636 CE during the reign of Caliph Umar, the second successor of the Prophet. The pillaging expeditions such as the one in Thane (near Mumbai) in 637 CE continued for a long time. However, such expeditions were only plundering raids and not conquests. A systematic Arab conquest happened only in 712 CE during the reign of the Umayyad Caliph al-Walid. It was then that Sindh was incorporated into the Muslim empire.

As mentioned before, along with the aspiration to own Indian riches, the reason for the conquest of Sindh was the desire of the Arabs to spread Islam. But, the immediate cause was the Sindhi pirates who had plundered some Arab ships near the coast of Dabol/Daybul or Karachi. Historical evidences show that these ships carried gifts sent by the king of Ceylon for the Caliph of Baghdad, and also al-Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq. This was sent to establish cordial relations with Hajjaj. However, the ship was plundered by the pirates near the mouth of the river Indus, and the Arabs were detained at the port of Dabol. A demand for restitution was made to Dahar, the king of Sindh, to compensate for the outrage and to punish the offenders. But, he refused to do so. He showed his inability to control the pirates as a reason behind his refusal. Nevertheless, he was not trusted, and was rather accused by Baghdad of protecting the pirates. So, Hajjaj took the permission of Caliph Walid to attack Sindh. Thereafter, three military expeditions, one after the other, were led against the king. It was in the third expedition by Muhammad Bin Qasim in Debal that Dahar was defeated and killed. Subsequently, all the

neighbouring towns of Nirun, Rewar, Brahmanabad, Alor and Multan were also captured. This is how the state of Sindh was finally conquered by the Arabs in 712 CE.

6.4.1 Muhammad bin Qasim: the Conqueror and his Expeditions

Qasim was a 17 years old Umayyad general who had led the conquest of Sindh. This adolescent conqueror followed in the footsteps of Alexander in carrying a new faith and a new culture into the Indus basin. He has been mentioned in the *Chachnama* between the years 709-711 CE when Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq, had made him the head of an expedition against Sindh. Qasim was the nephew of Hajjaj, and being an able commander he was appointed by his uncle as the head of the frontier district of Makran. He was given a mission of conquest in the direction of Sindh. Qasim's expedition against Sindh was prepared with utmost care. The backbone of his force consisted of 6,000 men of the *gund* of Syria, and also various other contingents. Shiraz was the base for planning the eastward campaign. Under Hajjaj's orders, Qasim had stayed there for months concentrating on his troops. From here, he moved eastward with Muhammad ibn Harun (who died during this march), his predecessor in the command of the frontier district. As the Arab sources show, the Indus basin was ruled by a king named Dahar in the 8th century. He was the son and successor of king Chach. The Arab forces wanted to conquer this basin. According to the *Chachnama*, Chach had a vast empire that extended from Makran, Kashmir, etc. But, his son's dominions were not as expansive, and it only comprised of the lower Indus region consisting of cities like Brahmanabad, Aror, Debal, etc. Therefore, the huge empire established by Chach could sustain only till his lifetime. After him, it was reduced to a small state under king Dahar, especially after the Arab invasion.

As a general, Qasim reached the delta of the Indus besieging the city of Debal by land; the additional war materials reached him by sea. Debal was a great city on the mouth of river Indus that was ruled by a lieutenant of king Dahar. After this, the forces proceeded upwards in the Indus valley. They reached Nirun (near to present-day Hyderabad in Pakistan), and it surrendered peacefully. After this, many other regions like Sadusan, Sawandri, Basmad, etc. were captured. Finally, Qasim aimed to tackle Dahar himself by crossing the river Indus. On his part, Dahar along with his strong army valiantly fought the invaders for many days. However, he was badly defeated and killed by the Arab forces. Subsequently, the capital of Brahmanabad, and also Alor were captured. Moving further northwards towards the eastern bank of the Indus, Qasim aimed to conquer Multan. The *Chachnama* mentions that Hajjaj had directed Qasim to capture Multan as the final goal.

As a matter of principle and policy, even after getting a series of victories in Sindh, this conquest by Qasim did not blindly lead to *en masse* conversion to Islam. Though the Arab conquests in Debal and Multan were followed by massacre, there were examples like Alor, Nirun, Surast, Sawandri, etc. that saw negotiations and settlement between the victor and the vanquished. The principle of tolerance and religious freedom practiced by Qasim in Alor paved the way for the co-existence of conquering Islam with the religion and culture of India. As the *Chachnama* says, Qasim followed a policy of tolerance towards the defeated population. He allowed religious freedom to both the Brahmanic and Buddhist

people. He preserved the privileges of the priests from both religions. It shows Qasim to be upholding the Indian social tradition of privileging the brahmanas. In fact, *Chachnama* mentions that he used to call the brahmanas as “good and faithful people”, and after the siege of Brahmanabad they were reappointed to the same positions as they had held under the Hindu dynasty. Furthermore, these positions were also made hereditary by him. The common people were also left free to worship as per their wish, provided they paid the Arabs the same taxes as they had paid to raja Dahar. In short, he did not meddle with the social systems of Sindh, and agreed to maintain peace in many regions. Such a policy was followed by Qasim under the instructions of Hajjaj who believed in granting religious freedom to people. Therefore, as the *Chachnama* states, Qasim had left Brahmanabad in an orderly and peaceful condition to proceed northward towards Alor. Such a policy of flexibility and tolerance was particular to Islam during its initial period of conquest, and its followers practiced it.

6.5 ARAB ADMINISTRATION

After being conquered, the region of Sindh saw the Arab form of administration. This was the same pattern that was practiced by the Arab conquerors in the other regions they had conquered. Scholars opine that this pattern of administration was more liberal than the later systems. This was mainly because the school of Islamic law in the earlier centuries was not as strict.

The Arab rule of the early medieval period was lenient and flexible. The Arab victors or conquerors followed a general policy of keeping the local practices unhindered. As one of the creators of the Arab system of administration, Caliph Umar disallowed the Arabs from either interfering with the local administration or acquiring landed property in subjugated areas. Even though the chief military general of a conquered region was made its governor, he could not have interfered with its civil administration. It was mainly in the hands of the local chiefs, who mostly were non-Muslims. Such an arrangement of Qasim made after his victory over Dahar was known as the ‘Brahmanabad Settlement’. It mainly comprised of the treatment of the Hindus as “the people of the book” or the *zimmis* (the protected ones). This settlement was mainly the work of Hajjaj under the instructions of the Caliph. It was outlined that since the *zimmis* had agreed to pay taxes to the Caliph, they were taken under the latter’s protection. They were given the permission to follow their faith and worship their own gods. Also, the Arab rulers or administrators were disallowed from snatching away their property. Such a pronouncement was mainly the result of a plea from the people of Brahmanabad to repair their temple and practise their religion. This request to Qasim was forwarded to Hajjaj, and Hajjaj, in turn, consulted the Caliph on it; the latter adopted a policy of tolerance which, in turn, was diligently carried forward by Hajjaj and Qasim. The aforementioned cases of Qasim’s tolerant policy towards the brahmanas and the native tradition can be understood in this light.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Who was Ali Kufi and why is he important to the study of Indian history?

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2) What is the *Chachnama*?

3) Match the following

i) Person	Known As
Palmaldevi	Umayyad General
Muhammad bin Qasim	Governor of Baghdad
al-Hajjaj	Brother of Walid
Sulaiman	Princess

6.6 ARAB CONQUEST OF SINDH: A TRIUMPH WITHOUT RESULTS?

The Arab conquest of Sindh has been seen as “a triumph without results” by scholars like Stanley Lane Poole, Elphinstone, etc. because there was no major victory for either the Muslim Arabs or the Indian rulers. They opine that this victory of the Arabs was without any impact or result on the history of the Indian subcontinent. It could not affect the political or military conditions of the rest of India. The Arab rule only got confined to the Sindh region, and the Indian rulers ruled their states without fearing or ousting the Arabs from their frontiers. The influence of the Arabs was restricted to only a small part of the subcontinent. They could not get a foothold in the Indian subcontinent, unlike the Turks who had established a full-fledged state a few centuries later (i.e. the Delhi Sultanate from 12th century onwards).

However, the scholars critiquing this viewpoint have given varied arguments for refuting it. They hold that even though the conquest did not have any substantial effect on the political geography of India, it had definite political influences on both sides. As seen before from the sources, Muhammad bin Qasim was as able an administrator as a warrior. After his victories, he maintained the law and order of a region, and believed in placing good administration under the Muslim rule. The arrangements made by him with the non-Muslims provided the basis for later Muslim policy in the subcontinent. Under the able guidance from his uncle Hajjaj, he had given socio-cultural and religious freedom to the defeated population. By the time Islamic law had been codified, stringent provisions were given for the idolaters. The reason why we find these provisions were not followed on the Hindus was mainly due to the tolerant policies of Qasim. He exhibited the political acumen to keep the native social customs and traditions intact. Neither did it lead to forceful conversion of the non-Muslims nor to end the social institutions like the caste system etc. This was how the caste system remained untouched and was

followed as ever before.

The prevalence of such practices showed the internal weaknesses of the Indian social and political systems to the Arabs and the Muslim world. Therefore, these fissures in the social fabric were used by them to their own advantage. As discussed before, perhaps the brahmanas of Brahmanabad were termed as faithful people by him to continue their all-round support in running the Arab polity and administration. Undoubtedly, the Arab invasion did not affect the political set up of India then, but it definitely gave a good view of the social weaknesses of the region. These were used by the invaders a few centuries later.

Further, the cultural intermingling between the Indian and Arab cultures showed its effects on various other fields like literature, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, etc. Such contacts at an intellectual level led to the mutual growth and development of both the cultures. The earliest recorded Indo-Arab intellectual contact happened in 771 CE when a Hindu astronomer and mathematician reached Baghdad with a Sanskrit work called *Brahma Siddhanta* by Brahmagupta. This text was translated into Arabic with the help of an Arab mathematician, and was named as *Sind Hind*. It had the greatest influence on the development of Arab astronomy even though three other works on mathematics were also translated into Arabic. In mathematics, the most important contribution of the Indian culture to Arab learning was the Arabic numerals.

Similarly, even greater attention was given to Indian medicine by the Arabs. At least 15 Sanskrit works were translated, including those of Charaka and Sushruta. The Indian doctors were given great prestige and honour at Baghdad, and so they were found in good numbers there. Manka was one such doctor who had earned prestige and money by curing the ailing Caliph Harun-al-Rashid.

Further, astrology and palmistry also gained Arab attention, and many books from these fields were translated into Arabic. They, too, have been preserved in the Arab historiographies. Other translations were from the fields of statecraft, art of war, logic, ethics, magic, etc. This is how the famous *Panchatantra* was translated and known as the story of Kalila and Dimna in Arabic.

Indian music had a considerable influence on Arabic music even if no translated works have been found. The work of an Arab author named Jahiz reveals the appreciation he got at Baghdad. He called the music of the people of Indian subcontinent as pleasing. Another such reference on Indian music was from an Arab author who talks about an Indian book on tunes and melodies. It has been suggested by some scholars that many of the technical terms for Arab music were borrowed from Persia and India. Likewise, even Indian music incorporated many Perso-Arab airs like *Yeman* and *Hijj*.

As against the availability of such information from the Arab works on the vibrant relations between the Indian and Arabic cultures, it will be unreasonable to call the Arab conquest of Sindh as a triumph without results. In other words, it would be incorrect to give leverage to the political consequences alone and negate the socio-cultural or other impacts or results.

6.7 SITUATION OF CONSTANT FLUX IN WEST

The successful invasion of India by the Muslim Turks like Mahmud Ghazni and Muhammad Ghouri in the 11th and 12th centuries respectively can be seen as the climax of the background prepared by the conquest of Sindh in the 8th century.

In the 11th and 12th centuries with the rise of Turks in Central Asia and their subsequent invasions in India they were able to gain a foothold on the north-western frontiers. Islam could enter India due to the plundering raids by Mahmud Ghazni and Muizzuddin Mohammad Ghouri. The invasions by Muslim Turks started with mere plunder and loot by Mahmud Ghazni in early 11th century. It went on to see its climax in the establishment of first Muslim state in India by Muizzuddin Mohammad Ghouri in the late 12th century. We will discuss here different phases of invasion, conquest and expansion of the Muslim rule in India, as also the factors aiding such phenomena. As seen earlier, the Abbasids had been the most powerful empire in West Asia since the 5th century CE. However, this situation started changing from the end of 9th century. It was mostly because of the dissipation of its energy and resources in fighting the heathen Turks of Central Asia. The empire got fragmented into several aggressive fledgling states ruled by both non-Turk rulers and Turkish kings or *Sultans*. All these states accepted the suzerainty of the Caliph or *Khalifa*² who received his formal legitimacy through the grant of *manshur* (formal letter).

Now most of these Muslim rulers called themselves *Sultans*. On the other hand,



Map of the Region and Principal Localities of Transoxiana in 8th Century. Source: Guy Le Strange (1905). *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate: Mesopotamia, Persia, and Central Asia, from the Moslem Conquest to the Time of Timur*. New York: Barnes & Noble. Credit: Cplakidas. Photo Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Transoxiana_8th_century.svg).

² The chief Muslim civil and religious authority vested in a person regarded as Prophet Muhammad's successor and a leader of entire *ummah* (community). The Caliph ruled in Baghdad until 1258 and then in Egypt until the Ottoman invasion and conquest of 1517; the title was then held by Ottoman *sultans* until it was abolished in 1924 by Atatürk. The central religious text of Islam – *Quraan* – uses the term *Khalifa* twice. Firstly, it refers to God creating humanity as his *Khalifa* on Earth. Secondly, it addresses King David as God's *Khalifa* and reminds him of his responsibility and obligation to rule with piety and justice.

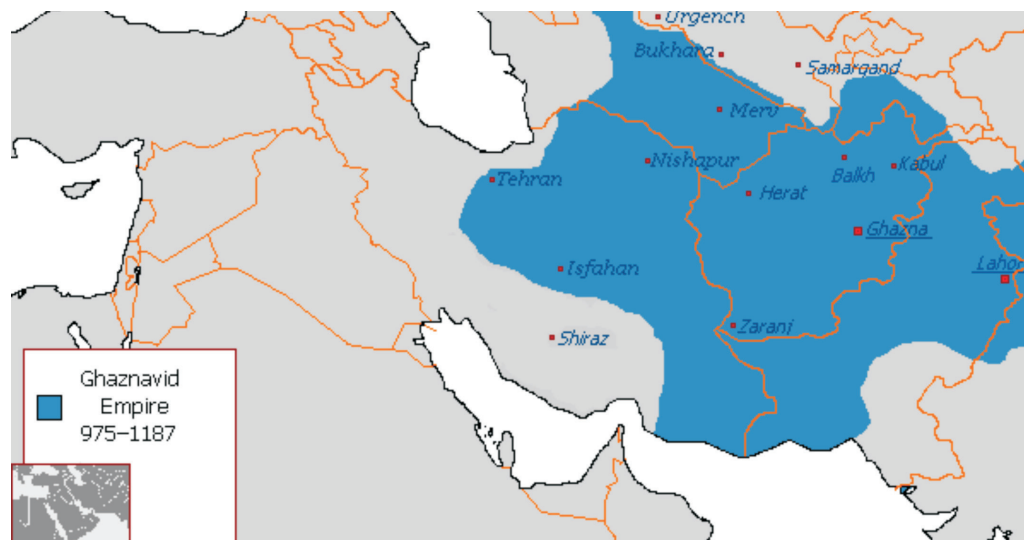
in the 8th century the Turkish nomads had been infiltrating into Transoxiana: the region between Central and East Asia (it is known as *Mawaraun Nahr* in Arabic sources and *Fararud* in Persian). As they had superior military skills they were converted to Islam and recruited as mercenaries, palace guards and slaves by Abbasid Caliphs and Iranian rulers. Gradually, these Islamized Turkish commanders also got “Persianized” in language, etiquettes, administrative policies etc. It means that this Turkish governing class had assimilated Persian culture and was proud of its racial origin. They were bilingual in speech. Ultimately, they became the ones to expand their power in both West Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

After the fall of the Abbasid empire in this region the situation was just like that in north India in the post-Gupta period. It was ruled by many rulers, each fighting with the other for expansion of one’s own territory and power. Also, in such states even the ambitious officials tried dethroning the king to usurp power for themselves. This is how many dynasties rose and fell. Amidst such political flux in West and Central Asia the main factor behind the strength and survival of any dynasty was its military power and efficiency. Therefore, we see many dynasties coming to power one after another. This is how the Samanid dynasty ruled from c. 874 to 999 CE.



Samanid Dynasty. Credit: Arab League. Source: Wikimedia Commons. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Samanid_dynasty_\(819%E2%80%9393999\).GIF](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Samanid_dynasty_(819%E2%80%9393999).GIF)).

It was established by an Iranian noble from Balkh who was a convert. He had governed regions like Samarkand, Herat etc. in Central Asia and Afghanistan. This dynasty was followed by that of the Ghaznavids who ruled from 962 to 1186 CE.



Ghaznavid Empire at its Greatest Extent in c. 1030 CE. Credit: Arab League. Source: Wikimedia Commons. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ghaznavid_Empire_975_-_1187_\(AD\).PNG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ghaznavid_Empire_975_-_1187_(AD).PNG)).

It was founded by Alp-tigin/Alp-tegin: a Turkish slave under the Samanids. Further, the Ghaznavids were defeated by the Seljukid and also the Khwarizmi dynasties. In fact, the latter also established a vast empire that was shattered by the ruthless Mongol attacks of Chengiz Khan/Genghis Khan.

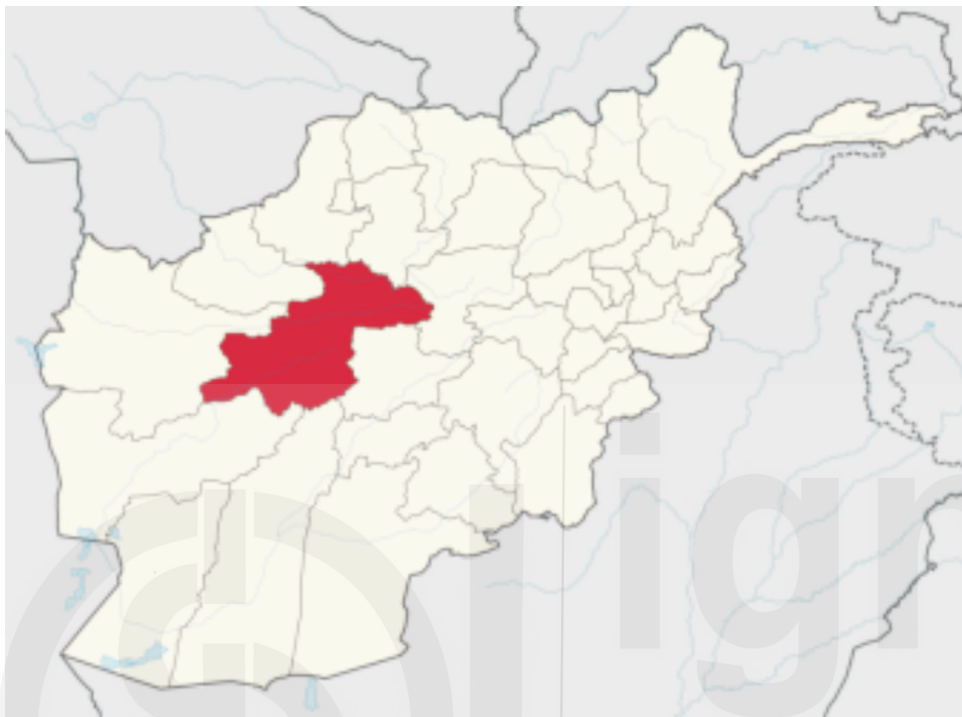
As seen above, there were constant skirmishes or wars between different groups of Islamized Turks to expand their territories. All of them exhibited good military skills in the battlefield and competed with each other for power. Satish Chandra mentions certain factors that favoured and increased military efficiency of the Turkish warriors of Central Asia. One needs to know these factors since these were some of the reasons behind their success against Indian monarchs:

- a) First important reason was the availability of finest breed of horses in the steppes of Central Asia. They were the best varieties in the entire world and they were bred by sturdy, disciplined warriors. They were imported into Arabia and India because the native breeds there were not as good as the Central Asian ones. The people of Ghur enjoyed far-reaching fame as horse-rearers.
- b) Second cause was easy availability of war implements. The region of Ghur (also spelled Ghowr or Ghor) – one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan – and its neighbouring areas were rich in metals, especially iron. The people of Ghur specialized in production of weapons and war-equipment and exported them to neighbouring lands. In the words of the anonymous author of *Hududul Alam*³, “From this province come slaves, armour (*zirah*), coats of mail (*jaushan*) and good arms.” According to another writer of that time the entire region from Ghur and Kabul to Qarluq/Karkluk/Qarluk/Karluq – a prominent Turkic tribal confederacy west of Altay mountains in Central Asia – was metal-working. Therefore, war implements and materials were easily available to the Turkish warriors. When Mahmud Ghazni attacked Ghur in 1020 CE its chief Abul Hasan Khalaf brought him shields and cuirasses and a tribute of

³ In Arabic it means “Boundaries of the World” or “Limits of the World”. It is a 10th century work on geography authored in Persian by an unknown author from Jowzjan/Jawzjan/Jozjan, one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

arms was levied on him. The value of Ghurid arms was identified and admired by Mahmud and he employed Ghurid officers as experts in siege-warfare. Thereby, the supply of good-quality horses and war materials to the Turks helped them in their military pursuits everywhere. Ghur had very recently opened its doors to Muslim cultural interface and possessed two most significant and crucial requisites of war in the middle ages – horses and iron.

**Arab Conquest of Sindh,
Turkish Invasions,
Mahmud Ghazni and
Muhammad Ghouri**



Map of Afghanistan with Ghor Highlighted. Credit: TUBS.
Source: Wikimedia Commons (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ghor_in_Afghanistan.svg).

- c) Another factor responsible for the success of Turkish warriors was their *Ghazi*⁴ spirit. This was seen for the first time in West Asia when the Turkish warriors had to constantly fight against the non-Turkish nomadic warriors called the Turkmen or *Turkomans*. At this time the region of Transoxiana was under Iranian rule and its surrounding areas were inhabited by Turks and non-Muslim nomadic *Turkomans*. There were constant fights between the Turks and the *Turkomans* like Guzz or Oguzz etc. living in the Kara-Khitai (Central Asian steppes). During this period the Turkish emperors made continuous inroads into the Turkmen areas for capturing slaves who were in great demand in the slave-markets of Herat in present-day Afghanistan, Sistan in present-day Iran, Samarqand/Samarkand and Bukhara in modern-day Uzbekistan. Ghur had a reputation for supplying slaves to these markets. The warriors who were involved in such raids were free to earn through plunders in such expeditions. However, another aim of the Muslim Turkish warriors behind such loot and plunder was to spread Islam amongst the non-Muslim population and so, they were known as the *Ghazis*. Hence, we see that the *Ghazi* spirit was first employed and exhibited in fighting the Central Asian nomadic tribes and later it was deployed against the “non-believers” in India. Mahmud Ghazni – a plunderer from Afghanistan – embodied and displayed the same spirit in

⁴ Islamic term for a warrior. It was a title ascribed to the Muslim warriors or champions and used by several Ottoman *Sultans*.

his raids in India. Few historians view his invasions and conquests in Indian subcontinent as some sort of a Holy War for which there was no dearth of volunteers to aid and assist in. His triumphs were popularly known all over the East and some 20,000 warriors came to him from the land beyond the Oxus⁵, praying and urging to be granted the privilege of fighting for Islamic faith, and possibly, attaining the crown of martyrdom for this lofty and noble cause. With a huge army strengthened and solidified by such zealots he undertook and fought his greatest campaign in India in 1018 CE and forayed into farther east than ever before.

6.8 GHAZI INROADS IN THE NORTH-WESTERN REGION OF INDIA

As understood so far, the Turkish and non-Turkish hordes from Central Asia constantly competed with each other to expand their spheres of influence in their surrounding areas. In such endeavours they also conquered many regions in Afghanistan. This is how Alp-tigin – a commander of the Samanid rulers in Khurasan – marched towards Ghazni in south Zabulistan in 963 CE and proclaimed himself as an independent ruler.

The Hindu Shahi kings of Afghanistan allied with former Samanid governor of Ghazni, Bhatti emperors near Multan as well as the Muslim *Amir* of Multan to protect their borders and territories.

They had helped the Hindu Shahi ruler named Jayapal since they were constantly pestered by slave raids of the invaders of Ghazni. Sabuktigin/Sabuktigin/Sebuktingin – Alp-tigin’s successor – had the same intention in Hindu Shahi areas since 977 CE. Consequently, by the end of the 10th century Zabulistan and Afghanistan were already conquered. The conquest of these areas laid the foundation for the Turkish inroads in India.

Further, Ghazi raids were continued since 999 CE by Mahmud Ghazni (also known as *Sultan* Mahmud bin Sabuktigin) – Sabuktigin’s successor. Interestingly, the title “Mahmud Ghazni” is not found on his coins which simply designate him as *Amir Mahmud*, nor was it given to him by the Caliph. He deserved this title based on his conquests in Persia and Transoxiana. He fought a furious battle against Jayapal in 1001 CE. It was a battle of cavalry and skilful military tactics. Jayapal was severely routed by Mahmud’s forces and his capital of Waihind/Peshawar was devastated. Nevertheless, perhaps the latter made peace with the former and only conquered the territory west of the Indus. However, this defeat gave a severe jolt to Jayapal and he died some time later. According to the sources he self-immolated in a funeral pyre as a result of humiliation of his defeat because his subjects thought that he had brought disgrace and disaster to the Shahi dynasty.

He was succeeded by his son Anandapal/Anantpal who continued to challenge Turkish raids in his territory. Before entering Punjab, Mahmud still had to contend with Anandapal’s forces near the Indus. After a tough interface his army conquered

⁵ Oxus is the Latin name of a major river in Central Asia, popularly known as the *Amu Darya*, also called the Amu or Amo river. In ancient times it constituted the boundary between the modern Greater Iran and Turan.

the upper Indus in 1006 CE. The Punjab province was finally won over three years later in Chhachh/Chach plains on the eastern zone of Indus. This was followed by the over-running of Nandana/Nandna fort in Salt Range in present-day Punjab province of Pakistan to which the Shahis had shifted their capital after their previous defeat at Waihind. Despite the heavy losses of men and resources suffered by Mahmud's army, Anandapal lost the battle and suffered much financial and territorial loss. This was his last resistance to Mahmud. He was forced to sign a treaty with the Ghaznavids in 1010 CE and shortly a year later died a natural death.

The Bhingarh fort, also called the Reasi fort as it is located near Reasi which is a town at the bank of river Chenab to the north-west of present-day Jammu, was also captured but Anandapal was allowed to rule over Punjab as Mahmud's feudatory. However, in 1015 CE Mahmud even annexed Lahore to extend his empire up to the Jhelum river. Multan which was ruled by a Muslim *Sultan* was also conquered despite Anandapal's alliance with him. However, Mahmud's desire to conquer Kashmir remained unfulfilled with the defeat of his forces in 1015 CE due to unfavourable weather conditions and this was his first defeat in India.

This is how Mahmud made his way into India by conquering eastern Afghanistan and then Punjab and Multan. Next in line was his aim to acquire wealth through his raids in the Gangetic plains. Before studying Mahmud's victorious raids in this region it is imperative and significant to have an idea of northern Indian states during this period.

6.8.1 Political Geography of North India in Early 11th Century

From the post-Gupta period to the establishment of Delhi Sultanate the northern Indian region was divided into many Rajput states. Almost same was the case with south India. In fact, the north zone lacked a vast empire like that of the Guptas in this period. The political climate of this time was characterised by the tripartite struggle between Gurjara-Pratiharas, Palas and the Rashtrakutas.

Gurjara-Pratiharas and Rashtrakutas were two of the most powerful polities in India then. However, both of them had declined by the



Credit: w:user:Planemad. Source: John Keay, History of India, 2000, Grove publications, New York, p. 198. Photo Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Indian_Kanauj_triangle_map.svg).

middle of the 10th century. The sway of Gurjara-Pratiharas that once spanned from the Himalayan foothills in the north to Ujjain in the south and from Mongyr in the east to Gujarat in the west got confined to only present-day Uttar Pradesh by the second quarter of the 10th century. Meanwhile, a number of states mushroomed in north and central India; the most prominent among which were:

- Candelas of Kalinjar and Mahoba in the modern state of Madhya Pradesh,
- Chauhans/Chahamanas of Sakambhari or Sambhar in Rajasthan,
- Chalukyas of Gujarat (also known as Solanki dynasty in vernacular literature) with their capital at Anahilavada (modern Patan), and
- Paramaras of Malwa with Dhara (now Dhar) in western Madhya Pradesh as their capital which was later shifted to Mandapa-Durga (now Mandu), about 35 km. from the present-day Dhar city, after Dhara was sacked multiple times by their enemies.

Kashmir was ruled by queen Didda who reigned for 26 years⁶ and had old rivalry with Hindu Shahi dynasty due to which she did not offer help against the Ghaznavid inroads. Therefore, we can see that north India was thoroughly disunited against the foreign invaders. Precisely for this reason, undertaking raids in this region was all the more easier for Mahmud. After Punjab he made three expeditions in the Gangetic plains for acquisition of wealth. Towards the end of 1015 CE he marched along the Himalayan foothills and defeated a local Rajput ruler at Baran or Bulandshahar with the help of some feudatory rulers. After this he plundered the temple towns of both Mathura and Vrindavan.

Plunder of Mathura by Mahmud

The holy city of Mathura – an ancient home of Hindu worship – was filled with temples which Mahmud thought were “not built by man but by *Jinn*”; where colossal golden and silver idols flashed with jewels stood so gigantically that they had to be broken up in order to be weighed. He faced the town wall which was an exquisite structure constructed of hard stone and had opening on to the river Yamuna with two gates raised on high and massive basements to protect them from floods. On two sides of the city were thousands of houses with temples attached, all of masonry and strengthened throughout with bars of iron, and opposite them were other buildings supported on stout wooden pillars. In middle of the city was a temple – larger and finer than the rest – to which neither a painting nor description could do justice. He wrote about it in wonder and amazement:

“If any one wished to construct a building equal to it he would not be able to do so without expending 100 million *dinars* and the work would occupy 200 years even though the most able and experienced workmen were employed.”

⁶ She was the ruler of Kashmir from 958 to 1003 CE, first as a Regent for her son and various grandsons and from 980 CE as the sole monarch. We get most knowledge about her and her reign from the 12th century *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana: a legendary historical chronicle in Sanskrit of the north-western Indian subcontinent, particularly the rulers of Kashmir.

Orders were given for all temples to be burnt with naphtha and fire, crushed and levelled to the ground. The city was ravaged and plundered for 20 days. Among the spoils are said to have been five great idols of pure gold with eyes of rubies and adornments of other precious stones, together with a vast number of smaller silver images which, when broken up, constituted a load for more than a hundred camels. The total value of the booty has been estimated at three millions of rupees while the number of Hindus carried away into captivity exceeded 5000. Many of the temples, after being emptied of all their valuable contents, were left standing, probably because they were too massive for an easy destruction. Some historians allege that Mahmud spared them on account of their splendid beauty, magnificence and exuberance, basing their opinion on his glorifying and eulogistic tone in his letter to the Governor of Gazni quoted above.

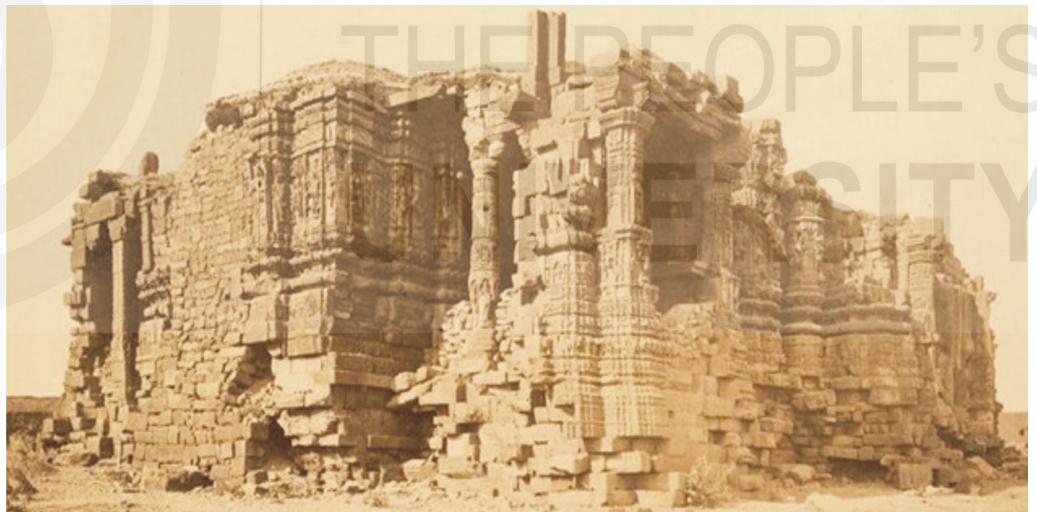
These spectacular victories were followed by his attack on Kannauj – capital of the Gurjara-Pratihara – reputed and touted as the chief city of Hindustan. This was the most stunning foray for him in the Ganga valley. The *raja* fled at a mere knowledge of the *Sultan*'s coming and seven forts of the great city on the Ganges fell during the span of one day. Of all its opulent and gorgeous temples not even one was spared. Nor were the neighbouring rulers any more fortunate, such as Chandala Bhor of Asi, Chand Rai, the Hindu raja of Sharwa – a kingdom that stretched in the Shivalik hills – collected his treasures and departed for the hills but was tracked down through forest by Mahmud. He brought home such booty and prisoners that the slave-markets of Persia were satiated and saturated and a slave could be purchased for a couple of shillings. The wealth looted and earned from plunders in India helped him against his enemies in Central Asia. He even extended his empire in Iran and additionally got more recognition from the Khalifa at Baghdad.

He made two more raids in Ganga valley in 1019 and 1021 CE but these were without much gain for him. The first one was to break a Rajput alliance in the Gangetic valley. The Rajput king of Gwalior had provided help to the Hindu Shahi emperor against Mahmud. Mahmud defeated both the Hindu Shahi as well as the Candela rulers. Further, he also moved on to defeat the Candela monarch Vidyadhar but nothing conclusive happened between the two and Mahmud chose to accept a nominal tribute from Vidyadhar.

It is to be understood that such expeditions in north India were not aimed at expanding Mahmud's empire beyond Punjab. They were only to plunder the wealth of the states on one hand and make the upper Ganga *doab* as a neutral territory without any powerful local stronghold on the other. Indeed, these raids thoroughly ravaged even the powerful Shahi and Candela territories. Mahmud's last major raid was on Somnatha temple in Saurashtra on the western coast of Gujarat in 1025 CE. It took him across the Thar desert in Rajasthan that had previously deterred most invaders from raiding it.

Plunder of Somnath by Mahmud

Mahmud undertook in the winter of 1025-26 CE his final invasion of Gujarat, crowning his triumphs by the sack of the inordinately wealthy Somnatha temple. It is said that a hundred thousand pilgrims assembled there at any given point of time, a thousand brahmanas served the temple and guarded its treasures and hundreds of dancers and singers performed before its gates. In the *garbhagriha* stood the famous *linga*, a pillar-stone decked with sparkling gems and lighted by jewelled candelabra reflected in the rich hangings embroidered with precious stones like stars that adorned the shrine. So long as this worshipful emblem stood inviolate in its pristine glory Mahmud could not rest from the iconoclasm he inflicted upon India, nor could his treasury boast of the finest gems from India. Hence, his back-breaking march continued across the desert from Multan to Anhalwara and on to the coast, fighting and slaughtering as he progressed, until he reached at last the temple fortress washed by the waves of Arabian sea. Undaunted by the sheer strength of men in guard in the service of the shrine, he along with his force scaled the walls, slaying about 50,000 Hindus. The great stone was cast down and its fragments transported to grace the conqueror's palace. The temple-gates were put up at Ghazni and a million pounds' worth of treasure was the reward for the invader-plunderer's men who joined him in his wrathful expeditions to India and beyond.



Somnatha Temple Ruins. Photograph taken in c. 1869 by D. H. Sykes from the Archaeological Survey of India.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ruins_somnath_temple.jpg. **Credit:** D. H. Sykes. **Photo Courtesy:** Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somnath_temple_ruins_\(1869\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somnath_temple_ruins_(1869).jpg)).

Somnath's devastation made Mahmud of Ghazni a champion and trailblazer of Islamic faith – a faith antagonistic to the Hindu belief-system – in the eyes of every Muhammadan for nearly nine centuries and the feat got associated and embellished with fantastic legends extolling him and his army.

The strength and scale of his successful military campaigns do not belie or undermine the difficulties faced by him and his troops while coming and even

more while returning back. His forces were led astray by the perfidious guides and a substantial number of men perished in the desert due to scarcity of water. Those who survived fell into the hands of the rapacious *Jats* of the Salt Range who hassled the exhausted soldiers as they toiled homewards, laden with the items of loot. Before the year was over Mahmud led his troops for the last time into India to punish the antithetical and protesting forces. According to the sources, he built a fleet at Multan, armed it with spikes and rams and placed 20 archers with naphtha bombs on each of his 1400 boats confronting and engaging the opposed army of the *Jats*, 4000 in numerical strength. By raining the naphtha he sank or burnt their vessels. However, these details could be fabricated or exaggerated because firstly, there could never be that many boats on the upper Indus and secondly, the mountain-tribes are not usually adept in fighting naval wars. Taking revenge from the *Jats*, whether by the way of land or water cannot be said with assurance, he returned to Ghazni where he died four years later in 1030 CE.

He was a bold warrior who had great military capabilities and political achievements. He had turned the small state of Ghazna/Ghazni/Ghaznin into a vast and wealthy empire comprising most parts of the present-day Afghanistan, eastern Iran and north-western parts of Indian subcontinent. Apart from his martial skills he was also a patron of Persian literature in the Ghaznavid Empire. Taking cue from the cultural centers of Samanid Bukhara and Khurasan he transformed Ghazni into a center of Persian learning by inviting poets and writers like:

- Firdausi,
- Alberuni,
- Uzari,
- Unsuri etc.

Such display of pomp and show by him and the grandeur maintained in his state of Ghazni was made possible mostly due to the wealth amassed from his plundering raids in India.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Which factors favoured and increased military efficiency of the Turkish warriors?

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- 2) Throw light on Rajput disunity in north India in the 11th century.

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6.9 FALL OF THE GHAZNAVIDS AND RISE OF THE GHURIDS IN CENTRAL ASIA AND INDIA

It was seen that despite the amount of wealth plundered from India, Mahmud could not become a good and capable ruler. He built no lasting institutions in his state and his rule outside Ghazni was tyrannical. Perhaps this was the reason as to why the Ghaznavid historian Utbi⁷ said in reference to Khurasan/Khorasan⁸ when it was under the sway of Mahmud:

“Affairs were characterized there by nothing but tax levies, sucking which sucked dry and attempt to extract fresh sources of revenue without any constructive measure. Hence, in sometime Khurasan was pauperized since water had been thrown on her udder, not a trickle of milk could be got nor any trace of fat.”

An unexpected rise of Ghurids at a small and isolated province of Ghur located between the Ghaznavid Empire and that of the Seljukids was an unusual development in the 12th century. It was one of the least developed regions of the present-day territory of Afghanistan. It lay west of Ghazni and east of the Herat province in the fertile valley of Herat/Hari river in western Afghanistan. Since it was a hilly tract of land the main occupation was mostly cattle-rearing or agriculture. It had remained a pagan region surrounded by Muslim principalities. However, it was “Islamicized” by Ghaznavids in the late 10th and the early 11th century.

The Ghurid rulers or the Shansabanids were humble pastoral chieftains. They tried to make themselves supreme in the middle of the 12th century by intervening in Herat when its governor had rebelled against the Seljuqid king named Sanjar. Further, as the Ghaznavids felt threatened by this act of the Ghurids they captured and poisoned the brother of the Ghurid emperor Alaaddin Hussain Shah. Subsequently, he captured Ghazni by defeating the Ghaznavid ruler Bahram Shah. The city of Ghazni was plundered and thoroughly destroyed. For the same reason Alaaddin was given the title of *Jahan Soz* (“world burner”). This marked the fall of Ghaznavids and the rise of Ghurids.

By now the Ghurids wanted to break free of the Seljuqids and fight for their control over the rich areas of Khurasan and Merv. Like the Ghaznavids they were also unpopular for their burdensome levies on people. This made it difficult for them to maintain their authority and order in the region. Apart from this, they were constantly at loggerheads with the other Turkish tribes across the Oxus river. These were the broad reasons behind their inroads into India in the latter half of the 12th century. Ghiyasuddin Muhammad who became the ruler of Ghur in 1163 CE made his younger brother Muizzuddin Muhammad the king of Ghazna. On the other side he himself concentrated on the Central and West Asian matters.

⁷ Full name: Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad al Jabbaru-l ‘Utbi (or *al-Utbi*).

⁸ Region to the north-east of greater Iran that includes parts of Central Asia and Afghanistan. The term simply connotes “East” (literally “Sunrise”).

6.9.1 Political Geography of North India in the Early 12th Century

Arab Conquest of Sindh,
Turkish Invasions,
Mahmud Ghazni and
Muhammad Ghouri

In the 12th century north India saw the same disunity between different Rajput states that was evidenced in the 11th century during the Ghaznavid raids. One of the powerful states of this period was that of the Cahmanas or Chauhans. It tried to expand its territories towards Delhi, Mathura, Gujarat, Rajputana etc. The Chauhan king Vigraharaj conquered Chittor and also Delhi from the Tomar monarchs in 1151 CE and tried annexing the area between Delhi and Hansi as well, which was a disputed zone between the Tomars and the Ghaznavids. The Chauhans faced the Ghaznavid raids.

Prithviraj III, popularly known as Prithviraj Chauhan or Rai Pithora in folk legends, was the most prominent and reputed emperor of this dynasty. He ascended the throne possibly at the age of 16 and rapidly expanded his empire in Rajputana⁹. Many of the petty Rajput states were conquered. He also led an expedition towards the Candelas of Khajuraho and Mahoba. As had been witnessed in the 11th century the Candelas formed the most powerful state spanning the north and central regions of India. They had a proud history of giving a tough fight to even the Ghaznavids. The battles of the famous warriors Alha and Udal who died fighting saving Mahoba from the Chauhans have been mentioned and extolled in the literary pieces of *Prithviraj-Raso* and *Alha-Khanda*. However, since these works were written much later, their narratives are doubted by the historians. Nonetheless, what is worth believing is that in reality the Candelas were thoroughly defeated by the Chauhans. The latter were also aspirational about defeating their old rival – the Chalukyas of Gujarat – but to no avail. Henceforth, they tried fulfilling the same ambition in Ganga valley and Punjab.

At this time the Gahadwalas ruled over the northern plains with their capital at Kannauj. As per the oral narratives which are historically unreliable and unauthentic, the main reason behind rivalry between both the political powers was abduction of the daughter of the Gahadwala *samrat* Jai Chand. According to the story his daughter Sanyogita was abducted by Prithviraj Chauhan in her *svayamvara* which raised the ire of Jai Chand. However, since this tale is not corroborated by other historical sources like literary works, inscriptions etc. it is not trusted. The chief cause of rivalry may have been Prithviraj's urge to annex the Ganga plains.

In a nutshell it could be conclusively argued that the northern and central states of India were thoroughly divided and they could not unify against the foreign invader, Muizzuddin Muhammad Ghori. Consequently, it was not so difficult for the Ghurids to defeat the Chauhans in 1192 CE. As had been mentioned earlier, Ghori was made to ascend the throne of Ghazna by his elder brother Ghiyasuddin in 1173 CE. He almost followed the same route to India as the Ghaznavids. In other words, Muizzuddin too started moving towards India from the north-western region. At first he conquered Multan in 1175 CE from the Carmathians or Karamati whose state boundaries spread from north-west portion of the Indian subcontinent

⁹ Literally meaning "Land of the Rajputs", it was a region that included mainly the present-day Indian state of Rajasthan, parts of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat and some adjoining areas of Sindh in the modern-day southern Pakistan.

up to Iran further west. In next couple of years he captured Uchch and moved on to Neharwala in Gujarat.



Top: Statue of Prithviraj Chauhan at Ajmer, Rajasthan.

Source: Prithvi Raj Chauhan.JPG. Photo Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons. ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prithvi_Raj_Chauhan_\(Edited\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prithvi_Raj_Chauhan_(Edited).jpg)).

Below: Prithviraj Chauhan statue at Qila Rai Pithora, Delhi. Credit: Ashish Bhatnaagar.

Source: Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prithviraj_Chauhan_III_statue_at_Qila_Rai_Pithora,_Delhi.jpg).

As known from before, during this period Gujarat was ruled by Chalukyas and they badly defeated the Ghurids near Mt. Abu. The Chalukyas had requested the Chauhans for help against the Ghurids but to no avail. Prithviraj declined to help since he saw the Chalukyas as much an arch-rival as the Ghurids. After the debacle experienced in Gujarat, Ghori changed his action-plan. He chose to subjugate the Ghaznavids first at the north-western borders of India. After defeating them at Peshawar in 1179-80 CE he marched towards Lahore to beat the Ghaznavid ruler Khusrau Malik that he did in 1181 CE. Subsequently, Malik was allowed to rule Lahore for some time since Ghori was busy expanding his control over parts of Punjab and Sindh. However, very soon even Malik was put to death by the Ghurids.

6.9.2 The Battles of Tarain in 1191 and 1192 CE

After these victories in the north-western region Ghori captured the fortress of Tabarhinda in Punjab. Tabarhinda was strategically important for the security and protection of Delhi. Perhaps for the same reason, without wasting any time Prithviraj Chauhan reached Tabarhinda to reverse the situation. The war fought between the two forces in 1191 CE is known as the First Battle of Tarain. Not only did Prithviraj win, he also left Ghori badly wounded. However, Ghori was saved by a Khalji horseman who carried him to safety. With this triumph Prithviraj took the Ghurids for granted and surmised that like the Ghaznavids the Ghurs would also rule only the frontier areas outside India. The Ghurid attack on Tabarhinda was treated only as a frontier attack by him and he maintained complacency in not ousting the Ghurid forces from the outlying areas. This cost him dearly some time later.

Turkish forces attacked for the second time in 1192 CE which is known as the Second Battle of Tarain. This time Ghori came with good preparations. He had carefully planned his moves to defeat the Chauhans. His army consisted of 120,000 men who were fully armoured and equipped. A 17th century historian named Ferishta reveals that Prithviraj's forces consisted of 300,000 cavalry, 3000 elephants etc. Such figures may be gross exaggerations to show the challenge and scale of Ghori's victory on Prithviraj. Ferishta also claimed that Prithviraj sought help from the other "*Rais* of Hind" who joined him against Ghori. Given the fact that Prithviraj's expansionist tendencies had annoyed most of his neighbouring states, it is difficult for the historians to accept Ferishta's claim. Also, since not even one of the friendly *Rais* is named by him, this assertion of his is doubtful. Perhaps Prithviraj's army consisted of his feudatories who may have supplied their military forces to him. His decentralized army was inferior to the disciplined and centralized army of Muizzuddin.

Satish Chandra opines that the Second Battle of Tarain was "more a war of movement than of position". He explains it by saying that the "lightly armed mounted archers" of Muizzuddin kept harassing the "slow moving forces" of Prithviraj and created confusion by attacking from all sides. The Chauhan ruler was badly defeated in this war and he was caught by the Turkish forces near Sarsuti or Sirsa in the present-day Hissar district of Haryana. Minhaj Siraj mentions that he was captured and executed after his defeat. However, a modern scholar named Hasan Nizami on the basis of available numismatic evidence refuted this claim of Siraj and opined that Prithviraj was still allowed to rule in Ajmer after

his defeat. On the basis of Prithviraj's coins that reveal these words – “Sri Muhammad Sam” – on the obverse Nizami has contended this. According to him, Prithviraj was executed only after his rebellion sometime later. Therefore, all the narratives on his execution that are not based on historical sources are aberrations and doubtful.

6.9.3 Movement towards the Upper Ganga Valley

After the battle Muizzuddin adopted a cautious policy and at many places still continued the indigenous rule. He placed Govindraj's son as a vassal in Delhi. If Ferishta is to be believed, Govindraj was the Tomar chief of Delhi and he had helped Prithviraj in the Second Battle of Tarain. He had died in this battle. Further, Prithviraj was reinstated at Ajmer as a vassal. On the other hand, important places were kept under Turkish control. Muizzuddin had annexed whole of the region between the Siwalik area and Ajmer, Hissar and Sirsa. He had placed Hissar and Sirsa under the charge of one of his loyal slaves named Qutubuddin Aibak. Having the plan of moving towards the upper Ganga valley, the Turks had realized the importance of the strategic location of Delhi and, therefore, wanted to keep it in Turkish hands. Henceforth, the revolts at Ajmer and Delhi by Prithviraj's son were immediately quelled. Thereafter, Delhi was kept under direct Turkish control and the Tomar vassal was removed in 1193 CE when he was found to be involved in treason. Along with Delhi, now Ajmer was also taken away after defeating Prithviraj's brother Hari Singh who had been leading the Rajput resistance against the Turks. Further, Ajmer was also placed under a Turkish governor and Prithviraj's son named Govind was forced to move to Ranthambhor.

After putting Delhi and Ajmer under Turkish control, the Ghurids planned to attack the most powerful kingdom in India then, i.e. the state of the Gahadvalas of Kannauj. With his return to India in 1194 CE Muizzuddin captured the neighbouring regions of Delhi in the upper *doab*, namely Meerut, Baran or Bulandshahar and Koil or Aligarh. This upper *doab* area was ruled by the Dor Rajputs and the region had been attacked sometime after the Second Battle of Tarain. Though the Gahadvala king Jai Chand could have helped his neighbouring states once again he chose to stay away. Rulers like him who rather rejoiced at or stayed neutral to the defeats of the Chauhans and others forgot that they may also be attacked if the Turks were not stopped. Such disunity between the different Rajput states cost India heavily. Most of the states were conquered by Muizzuddin without much effort.

Further, even the Gahadvalas were attacked. In 1194 CE the Muzzi forces marched towards Kannauj and Benaras. A battle was fought at Chandawar in the modern Etawah district. The exaggerated figures in the contemporary literary works on Jai Chand's army show it to be consisting of 80,000 armourers, 30,000 cavalry, 300,000 infantry, 200,000 archers etc. Nonetheless, the Gahadvalas were badly defeated. Kannauj was also sieged in 1198 CE. The defeat was followed by plunder, especially of the fort of Asni in Fatehpur district which was a treasure-house of the Gahadvalas. Even Benaras was plundered and its temples were looted and destroyed.

The defeat of the Chauhans and the Gahadvalas in the Second Battle of Tarain and the Battle of Chandawar respectively were biggest victories for the Turks,

since these were the most powerful foes for them. The Turks laid the foundation of the Turkish rule in the Ganga valley with these victories. Even after the two wars there was resistance to the Turkish invasions in the Ganga valley but these minor revolts were easily suppressed.

To consolidate and protect their stronghold of the upper Ganga valley the Turks attacked its western and southern regions. They tried to conquer the strategic forts between Delhi and Malwa. Therefore, Bayana was sieged in 1195-96 CE and the strong Gwalior fort was also besieged within a couple of years. Likewise, Bundelkhand, Khajuraho, Mahoba and Kalinjar were conquered from the Candela rulers. As mentioned earlier, the Candela state was also powerful but to no avail. The Turkish forces also started expanding towards east and west of their stronghold of the upper Ganga valley. Muizzuddin's forces sieged Anhilwara in Gujarat in retaliation to the *Rai* who had assisted in a Rajput rebellion earlier. Towards the east, even Bihar and Bengal were conquered by Muhammad-bin-Bakhtiyar Khalji.

Despite such expansion in all directions, the Turks were mostly unable to control the conquered areas that were far away from the stronghold of Delhi and the upper Ganga valley. This problem cost them very heavily due to fresh Central Asian developments in 1204 C.E. In this year the Ghurid Turks were badly defeated by the pagan Kara Khanid Turks of Samarqand at the Battle of Andkhui near the Oxus river. The rumours of Muizzuddin's death in this battle led to the revolt of the Khokhars in Punjab and he was coaxed to come back to suppress it. He successfully quelled the rebellion but on his way back from Punjab to Central Asia he was killed by the Karamatias. However, his death did not stop the expansion of Turkish rule in India as was seen in the case of the Ghaznavids. In fact, his loyal slaves conquered more territories in India to extend their rule in India, thereby establishing the first Muslim state in India i.e. the Delhi Sultanate.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) Match the following:

i) Dynasty	Ruler
Chauhan	Jayapal
Hindu Shahi	Vigraharaja
Candela	Jai Chand
Gahadvala	Prithviraj
ii) Dynasty	Region
Chauhan	Delhi
Tomar	Bundelkhand
Candela	Ajmer
Chalukya	Kannauj
Gahadvala	Gujarat

- 2) Discuss the factors that led to the Turkish military success in India and elsewhere.

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6.10 REASONS BEHIND RAJPUT DEFEAT AND TURKISH VICTORY

Several reasons have been assigned for defeat of the Rajputs and success of the Turks in India. Initially, this debate started with the British historians who were trying to understand Indian history in depth. Primarily, they stuck to two reasons for Turkish victory over the Rajput rulers. These factors were military power and expertise of the Turks and pacifist nature of the Rajput rulers. They opined that Ghurid armies consisted of men who were drawn from war-like tribes residing in the mountainous areas between the Indus and Oxus rivers in Central Asia. Also, they had got military training and expertise by fighting against the fierce tribes of Central and West Asia. By drawing a comparison between the Turks and the Indians the British historians held that the latter lacked such training as they were pacifist in nature. Alternatively, the Indians were not used to fighting wars like the Turks and therefore, the Rajputs were defeated by them. Also, the lack of unity between them added to the advantage of the invaders.

However, other historians have rejected this explanation by citing that the early medieval period from 8th to 12th century was one of warfare and violent internal struggles between the different states within India. This in itself proves that the Rajputs were not pacifist or of docile temperament, and they did not lack martial spirit or bravery.

Some other historians like Jadunath Sarkar and Mohammad Habib have traced Turkish success to the Indian social structure and also the one newly created by Islam in India. Sarkar emphasized on the characteristics imparted by Islam to the Muslim groups like the Arabs, the Pathans, the Turks, etc. that prepared the foundation of their victory in India. He argued that unlike the caste-divided society of India the Islamic social system was based on equality and social solidarity in legal and religious fields. He also held that absolute faith in God in the Islamic system gave a drive and a sense of mission to the Muslims. It provided a strong bond of unity between different groups of people and imbued them with a strong sense of mission and fighting spirit. A somewhat similar view was given by Mohammad Habib on the basis of the observation of an 11th century Arab writer named Alberuni on Indian caste system. Habib argued that resistance to the Ghurid invasions by Hindu rulers was undermined by two factors:

- 1) Since the caste system allowed only the warrior kshatriyas to participate in wars, it seriously impaired the military effectiveness of Hindu kingdoms.
- 2) The caste system discounted the social unity of Hindu society vis-a-vis its Muslim counterpart that believed in equality. Therefore, a section of the urban

masses of the Muslim society accepted Islam for a better social status. Such views have also been rejected since the historical sources show that groups like *Jats*, *Meenas* and *kuvarnas* (lower castes) were also included in the Rajput armies. Also, sources supporting mass conversion of vaishyas and sudras to Islam around the 12th century do not exist. Additionally, they show that like the Hindu rulers the Muslim conquerors were also indifferent to degraded status of the lower castes.

Further, the Turkish military tactics and technology have been seen as another reason behind the Turkish victory. As mentioned before, the Central Asian regions like Ghur were renowned for their metal deposits and manufacture of weapons and other commodities of warfare. The use of iron-stirrup that enabled horsemen to use spears without being thrown off the horse was known to the Turks. The use of such armaments like iron-stirrup or crossbow was, perhaps, not widely known, especially in India. Over and above this, as has been said earlier, the good breed of Central Asian horses vis-a-vis Indian horses has also been cited as a reason for military efficiency of the Turks. Many scholars have also named the unique Turkish tactics of warfare on the battlefield as a reason behind their success. However, scholars like Peter Jackson have declined to give utmost importance to Turkish military tactics and technology.

The causes behind the defeat of Rajputs and victory of the Turks are to be understood by enlarging one's frame of reference. We should not restrict ourselves to only one particular reason or to the events happening since the Second Battle of Tarain. One has to understand the happenings in north-western region of India since the early 11th century. The invasions and plundering raids by Mahmud Ghazni happened in India only after breaching the outer defences, namely Afghanistan and Punjab in the north-western region of India. By having a hold over these regions Mahmud could plan out his further inroads into India. Here, disunity between various Rajput states can be seen as a major factor behind Mahmud's victory. As seen before, the internal rivalries were so strong that the regional kingdoms remained disunited even after Mahmud's death. Their disunity, as also the raids by Mahmud's successors continued in Rajasthan, Ajmer, Kannauj, Benaras etc. in upper Ganga valley. The only repose of relief for the Rajputs was that unlike the earlier time they could succeed in ousting the successors.

Analysing the socio-political system of the Rajputs, Satish Chandra has given plausible reasons of their defeat. He contends that irrespective of not being inferior in numbers or in the quality of mounts and weapons, the Rajputs lacked proper organization and leadership. Their armies did not have a unified command since they were supplied by different feudal lords to the ruler. On the contrary, the Turkish *Sultans* were used to maintaining large standing armies which were paid in cash or by means of the *iqta* system. They bought and trained slaves for warfare who were loyal and devoted to their *Sultans*.

Another reason for Rajput defeat mentioned by Chandra is the lack of a strategic perspective of the Rajputs. As he says, Alberuni had mentioned in his writings, "The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation but theirs, no kings but theirs, no science like theirs. They are haughty, foolishly vain, self-conceited and stolid. Their haughtiness is such that if you tell them of any science or scholar in Khurasan or Persia they think you both as ignoramus and a liar."

Chandra holds that this sense of insularity restricted the Indians from going to the West or Central Asia and bring back scientific or social knowledge from there. Such an attitude was due to *kali varjya*: ban on Hindus from crossing the salt seas or travelling to countries where the *munja* grass did not grow. Therefore, neglect and ignorance of the outside world and also the lack of strategic perspective “led to long-term repercussions of which the Turkish conquest was, perhaps, the first but not the last consequence”.

Thus, the defeat of Rajputs by the Turks is to be understood by broadening the horizons to be able to see the long-term perspective. Disunity amongst the Rajput rulers, their weak military organization and leadership vis-a-vis the Turks, as also their inferior military tactics/technology were not the only reasons for their defeat. It was also rooted in the defective social organization that led to the growth of states that were structurally weak in comparison to the Turkish states. The aforementioned Hindu insularity rooted in Indian cultural ethos barred the development of a strategic perspective. Hence, the foreign invaders could not be kept away from the Indian soil through military or diplomatic means.

6.11 COMPARISON BETWEEN THE GHAZNAVIDS AND THE GHURS

In the interpretation of early medieval Indian history the Turkish invasions from northern and western frontiers of India is widely known. Frequent attacks by Mahmud Ghazni and Muizzuddin Muhammad Ghouri are largely discussed and understood. However, differences between them are not discussed so commonly. Nonetheless, few scholars like Satish Chandra, who have briefly touched upon it, at least acknowledge the distinction between them. Largely, he has discussed these differences in the context of their invasions and other activities in India. He extols Mahmud as a better general than Muizzuddin since he had never seen a defeat in India. But he praises Muizzuddin for being a tough fighter whose spirit was not defeated even after facing defeats. He argues, “Muizzuddin could recover and take lessons from his defeats, and change his entire approach which showed both a dogged tenacity of purpose and a grim sense of political realism.” Chandra exemplifies his argument with Muizzuddin’s defeat at Anhilwara. After this defeat Muizzuddin was seen to have changed his entire approach towards India by shifting his gaze from Rajasthan to Punjab. The same tenacity, approach and preparedness were seen after his defeat in the First Battle of Tarain leading to his resounding victory in the Second Battle. Further, Chandra gives credit to Mahmud for laying the foundations on which Muizzuddin could build and achieve his mission in India. He contends that by breaching the outer defences of India by defeating the Hindu Shahis in Afghanistan and conquering Punjab, Mahmud had laid the roots of Turkish expansion in India. Chandra’s close study does help one in distinguishing Mahmud from Muizzuddin rather than only seeing them as invaders with similar mission and activities in India.

However, an attempt to intricately differentiate between the two invaders, their processes, methods and the underlying designs outside India has hardly come under the purview of most historians till late. The discussions on them have mostly been concentrated around their plundering raids or attacks on the north and western

regions of India or their military tactics. Therefore, a gap remains in understanding the pre-sultanate history of north-western India and its intricate linkage with the developments in the regions of Afghanistan, West and Central Asia.

Thankfully, in the recent times this gap has been filled by the in-depth analysis by scholars like Peter Jackson and Sunil Kumar. In fact, Kumar has vividly studied the pre-Sultanate India and its northern and western regions to understand their underlying, interlinked political and economic processes. His nuanced approach has brought out distinctive features of the Ghaznavid and the Ghurid systems. Some of these are as follows:

- 1) Even though their military and political systems were based in Afghanistan and both lacked in internal resources, their political systems were quite different. The ruling family of the Ghaznavids comprised of Turkish military slaves who, perhaps, had come to eastern Afghanistan from the Samanid capital of Bukhara. They created an authoritarian political regime that ignored its local ties and rather strengthened its links with Khurasan in eastern Iran or Persia. After gaining more political strength they tried aping the grandeur of Persian culture and learning. Kumar contends that historical sources of the period reveal that Mahmud even carried his interpreters with him during his campaigns into Ghur. On the contrary, the Shansabanids or the Ghurids were of more humble origin and designs. As mentioned before, they were pastoral chieftains from Ghur: a poor and scarcely developed region of Afghanistan. It was a region between Ghazni and Herat that was “Islamicized” by the Ghaznavids. Nonetheless, neither did the Ghurids have the same wherewithal nor the aims like that of the Ghaznavids to imitate Persian culture and glory in their state.
- 2) Almost the same level of difference was seen between their forms of governance. While the Ghaznavids tried their best to maintain a centralized form of governance, the Ghurids even at the peak of their power in the 12th century had only military commanders for administrative purposes. In comparison to the Ghaznavids, the Ghurids rather followed a decentralized form of governance in which even during the zenith of their strength and power they gave governorship to all the males of the ruling family. These military governors, indeed, functioned as autonomous *sultans* or kings in their provinces and their royal administrative posts and titles were given as a mark of honour to them.
- 3) Further, their reasons for invading India were also found to be different. The Ghaznavids only intended to plunder and loot the riches from India. Their ambition of getting territorial gains was restricted to Sindh, Multan, Lahore etc. on the north-western frontier and did not extend eastwards towards the Indian heartland. This was clearly seen from the shifting of their capital to Lahore after their defeat at the hands of the Seljuks at Dandanqan in 1040 CE.

6.12 SUMMARY

The rise of Islam in the early medieval period had far-reaching political, socio-economic and cultural implications around the world. Its first contact with the

Indian subcontinent in the 8th century is mostly known from the Persian text named *Chachnama*, a source that enumerates the history of Sindh in general. The descriptive account of the conquest involves the discussion of a young general named Muhammad Bin Qasim, who valiantly conquered the region of Sindh. The text elucidates the tolerant and broad minded approach of this Muslim conqueror towards the vanquished Hindu population. However, his rise as well as fall depended upon his relations with the Caliphate, and the change of the Caliph led to his decline and many other able and promising Arab conquerors. Such politics at the court of the Caliphate greatly affected the fate of Arab conquests in the Indian subcontinent and around the world. The containment of the Arab empire to the north-western region of India should be understood under this light.

In this Unit we discussed the situation of the constant political flux in West and Central Asia after the downfall of the Abbasid empire in the 9th century. This period was characterized by continuous upheavals between different Turkish and non-Turkish tribes. Amidst this, the Ghaznavid dynasty rose to power in Ghazni and it plundered neighbouring areas including India. Mahmud Ghazni as one of the Ghaznavid kings raided India 17 times to plunder its wealth. He did not have any territorial ambitions in India. However, the next Turkish invader in India – Muizzuddin Muhammad Ghouri – aimed to conquer India. After defeating Prithviraj Chauhan in 1192 CE he gained access to Delhi. Keeping Delhi as the centre of his operations, within a decade, he conquered many areas in eastern, central and western India. This is how he laid the foundation of first Muslim state in India – the Delhi Sultanate.

This period in Indian history was characterised by utmost disunity between different Rajput states. Be it the Arab, Ghaznavid or Ghurid invasions of India, the disunity aided invaders in their plunders or conquests. Historians opine that lack of unified resistance from the Indian side was one of the biggest reasons behind the success of Muslim invaders. Good availability of arms, ammunitions, equipments and horses in Central Asia can be counted as another factor behind the Turkish success. Also, their tactics and technology of warfare was mostly superior to that of the Indian rulers. However, over and above all these causes is the lack of strategic perspective and social solidarity that had cocooned the Indian, mostly the Hindu society, to not understand good or bad side of the outside world.

6.13 KEY WORDS

Aid	: Help
Climax	: Most important point of something; culmination
Cocooned	: Surrounded in a protective way
Containment	: Action of preventing the expansion of something
Dearth	: Shortage
Elucidate	: Throw light on
Endeavour	: Attempt
Etymology	: The study of the sources and development

Omayyads	: The dynasty of Caliphs which ruled from 661-750 CE.
Pronouncement	: A formal and authoritative announcement or declaration
Proximity	: Nearness
Repository	: A place where things are stored
Resounding	: Unmistakable; loud enough to echo
Silk Route	: Overland route starting from China, passed through the north-west frontier of India, across Central Asia and Russia to the Baltic.
Tatars	: A nomadic tribe
Tenacity	: Ability to grip something firmly
Tidings	: Information
Vanquished	: Defeated
Vis-a-vis	: In comparison to

**Arab Conquest of Sindh,
Turkish Invasions,
Mahmud Ghazni and
Muhammad Ghouri**

6.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1) See Section 6.3 | |
| 2) See and Sub-section 6.3.1 | |
| 3) Palmaldevi | Princess |
| Muhammad bin Qasim | Umayyad General |
| al-Hajjaj | Governor of Baghdad |
| Sulaiman | Brother of Walid |

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) See Section 6.7
- 2) See Section 6.8

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| 1) i) Chauhan | Prithviraj, Vigraharaja |
| Hindu Shahi | Jayapal |
| Gahadvala | Jai Chand |
| ii) Chauhan | Ajmer |
| Tomar | Delhi |
| Candela | Bundelkhand |
| Chalukya | Gujarat |
| Gahadvala | Kannauj |

6.15 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 7 SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL IMPACTS: ARAB AND TURKISH INVASIONS¹

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Social, Cultural and Technological Impact of Arab invasions of Sindh
- 7.3 The Coming of the Turks
- 7.4 Social, Cultural and Technological Impact of Turkish Invasions
- 7.5 Summary
- 7.6 Key Words
- 7.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 7.8 Suggested Readings

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will know about:

- the background for understanding the Arab and Turkish Invasions;
- new perspectives on the arrival of Islam in India; and
- social, cultural and technological impact of both the Arab and the Turkish invasions.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we had read about the invasions in India by the Muslim invaders from the Arab and Central Asian regions in early Medieval and Medieval periods. These attacks have been seen in a monochromatic light as only attacks without any meaningful results. This unit will try to analyze the impacts of these attacks, if any. These have been largely categorized into social, cultural and technological impact or results.

7.2 SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL IMPACT OF ARAB INVASIONS OF SINDH

The Arab conquest of Sindh has been seen as “a triumph without results” by scholars like Stanley Lane Poole, Elphinstone, etc. because there was no major victory for either the Muslim Arabs or the Indian rulers. They opine that the victory

¹ Dr. Jaya Priyadarshini, PhD from Center of Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Dr. Khushboo Kumari, Academic Counsellor, Non Collegiate Women’s Education Board (Bharati College), University of Delhi

of the Arabs was without any impact or result on the history of Indian subcontinent. Such an understanding arose from the fact that their victory could not affect the political or military conditions in the rest of India. The Arab rule got confined to the Sindh region and the Indian rulers ruled their states without fearing or ousting the Arabs from their frontiers. The influence of the Arabs was restricted to only a small part of the subcontinent. They could not get a foothold inside the Indian subcontinent, unlike the Turks who had established a full-fledged state a few centuries later (i.e., the Delhi Sultanate from 12th century onwards).

However, some other scholars refute this viewpoint, and they hold that indeed there were multifarious effects on the life and times of the region. They have given varied arguments in support of this view. It is believed that even though their conquest did not have any substantial effect on the political geography of India it had considerable impact in other fields.

Cultural Impact of Arab Invasions

Chachnama, the Persian text written by Ali Kufi in 1226 CE is a major historical text on the history of Sindh. It has good information on its government, politics, etc. However, the details given on the advent of Islam in the Indian subcontinent had been over-emphasized in the colonial and national understandings to an extent that *Chachnama* has only been seen as a text on the conquest of Sindh and the advent of Islam in the subcontinent. This has led to a skewed understanding of this medieval source in general. Nevertheless, scholars like Yohanan Friedmann, Manan Ahmed Asif, etc. who have read and analyzed it contend that apart from the details on Sindh conquest, it is also a repository of other sorts of information on the history of Sindh. A nuanced reading of this and other texts from the Arab peninsula show that the Arab conquest of Sindh had led to overarching social and cultural impacts on both the Indian and Arab worlds. In this regard, Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui holds that —

“...the regions of Sindh and south Punjab (Multan territory) conquered by the Arabs in the beginning of the eighth century AD (812-13), under the command of Muhammad bin Qasim al-Saqafi underwent rapid socio-economic and demographic changes, owing to the imposition of a different system of governance, the introduction of a new legal system that ensured impartial justice irrespective of caste and creed and the addition of foreign settlers’ colonies to the old caste towns. The settlers included, besides officers and army men, merchants who were engaged in overland and overseas trade between different countries as far as China in the east and regions of Africa in the west. The foreign trade thus not only gave a boost to trade and commerce in the region but also led to the modification of indigenous crafts and the introduction of new ones.”

As *Chachnama* shows, Muhammad bin Qasim had not interfered with the caste system. Yohanan Friedmann, a scholar who has read and analysed the *Chachnama* in depth holds that ‘Qasim gave his unqualified blessing to the characteristic feature of the (traditional) society which he encountered and sanctioned both the privileges of the high-caste and the degradation of the lower ones.’ He upheld the Indian social tradition of privileging the brahmins. He used to call the brahmins as “good and faithful people”, and after the siege of Brahmanabad, they were reappointed to the same positions as they had held under the Hindu dynasty. Furthermore,

these positions were also made hereditary by him. The notables were given the title of Rana. The common people were also left free to worship as per their wish, provided they paid the Arabs the same taxes as they had paid to raja Dahar. He allowed them to build temples, celebrate their festivals and ceremonies, and to treat the Brahmanas with kindness as before. Similarly, the treatment of the Jats was as bad as under the Hindu rulers of Sindh. As Friedmann says —

“They were obliged to wear coarse clothing and to move around barefoot. If they were apprehended wearing fine clothes, they were fined. They were supposed to take their dogs with them when they went out. This was to be done so that they were recognized. They were burnt alive with their family when they were caught stealing. They were not allowed to ride horse; and if they did, they rode without saddle and reins. They were infamous for committing highway robberies. Due to such reasons, Muhammad Qasim considered them as wicked people, and continued with their low status in society.”

In short, he did not meddle with the social systems of Sindh, and agreed to maintain peace in many regions. Such a policy was followed by Qasim under the instructions of Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq who believed in granting religious freedom to people. Therefore, as one understands from the *Chachnama*, Qasim had left Brahmanabad in an orderly and peaceful condition to proceed northward towards Alor. Such a policy of flexibility and tolerance was a characteristic of Islam during its initial period of conquest.

It is important to reiterate this policy of tolerance of Arab conquerors by examining the phenomenon of Islamic proselytization. As known from the sources, religious conversion had brought about social change among the people of Sindh. Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui says in this regard

“The reference to *Maula-i-Islam*, a term used to refer to a person of high status who had converted to Islam, tends to reveal that not only did the downtrodden people take to the new faith for freedom from caste restrictions but some local chiefs also entered the fold of Islam.”

Siddiqui mentions that due to religious tension between the brahmanas and Buddhists, many of the Buddhists living in Sindh had converted to Islam when they had come in contact with the Arabs. In fact, they had befriended the Arabs even before or during the Sindh conquest. Here, Muhammad Illafi, the lieutenant of Muhammad bin Qasim who had led to a liaison between the Buddhist chiefs and the Arab governor is especially important. Due to his agility, many Buddhist chiefs had acknowledged the suzerainty of the Caliph. This was mainly because of the brahmana ruling elite who used to oppress the Buddhists in general. As Siddiqui says, such an atmosphere of goodwill and friendship later helped in the consolidation of Muslim rule in the conquered territories, and was not alone due to Islamic proselytization alone. Such peaceful interface between the Arabs and the Indians in Sindh region led to cultural exchange between India and the Islamic world. He further says that the urban ethos represented by the Arab settlers in their colonies, led to the old towns playing an important role in the process of acculturation in the entire region of Sindh and Multan. The egalitarian atmosphere of Islamic faith fascinated the low caste people in Hindu society. It led to their conversion to a new faith that maintained equality among all its followers. The

communities of these local converts and Arabs comingled with each other to boost the urban culture of the region.

However, the influence of Islam could not penetrate into the countryside, and rather remained confined to the urban areas. On the other hand, the population in the countryside kept following their ancestral religion. It was only in the tenth century that Muslim missionaries entered this region, and worked amongst the urban and rural people to win their trust for converting them to a new faith. Even though the conversion of the people was partial, the converts ruled their region till its annexation by the Ghaznavid Sultanate in 1025 CE.

Apart from the socio-religious impact of the Arab invasion, there were considerable intellectual influences as well. At a larger level, the cultural intermingling between the Indian and Arab cultures encouraged the intellectual cultures of both the regions. This is to say that it showed its effects in various fields like literature, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, etc. Such contacts at an intellectual level led to the mutual growth and development of both the cultures. The earliest recorded Indo-Arab intellectual contact happened in 771 CE when a Hindu astronomer and mathematician reached Baghdad with a Sanskrit work called *Brahma Siddhanta* of Brahmagupta. This text was translated into Arabic with the help of an Arab mathematician, and was named as *Sind hind*. It had the greatest influence on the development of Arab astronomy even though three other works on mathematics were also translated to Arabic. In mathematics, the most important contribution of the Indian culture to Arab learning was the Arabic numerals.

Similarly, even greater attention was given to Indian medicine by the Arabs. At least fifteen Sanskrit works were translated, including those of Charaka and Sushruta. The Indian doctors were given great prestige and honour at Baghdad, and so they were found in good numbers there. Manka was one such doctor who had earned prestige and money by curing the ailing Caliph Harun-al-Rashid.

Further, astrology and palmistry also gained Arab attention, and many books from these fields were translated into Arabic. They too have been preserved in the Arab historiographies. Other translations were from the fields of statecraft, art of war, logic, ethics, magic, etc. Also, the famous *Panchatantra* was translated and known as the story of Kalila and Dimna in many Arabic and Persian traditions. The Indian games of *chausar* and chess were transmitted to the Arab and other regions of the world.

Sindh also contributed towards the popularization of Sufism. The great, early sufi named Bayazid of Bistam had a Sindhi as his spiritual teacher. He used to say – “I learned the lessons of science or *ilm-i-fana* or annihilation and *tauhid* or unity from Abu Ali of Sindh and Abu Ali learned the lessons of Islamic unity from me.” The link between Sufism and Sindh is well known.

Indian music had a considerable influence on Arabic music even if no translated works have been found. The work of an Arab author named Jahiz reveals the appreciation got by the Indian music at Baghdad. He called the music of the people of Indian subcontinent as pleasing. Another such reference on Indian music was from an Arab author who talks about an Indian book on tunes and melodies. It has been suggested by some scholars that many of the technical terms for Arab music were borrowed from Persia and India. Likewise, even Indian music incorporated many Perso-Arab airs like *Yeman Hiji* and *Jangla*.

There is a paucity of sources connecting the history of Sindh and Multan after the recall of Muhammad bin Qasim. However, the works of Arab travelers and geographers provide some information. Travelers like Masudi and Ibn Haukul who visited western Pakistan in the first quarter of tenth century agree to the presence of Arab colonies at Mansura, Multan, Daybul, Nirun, etc. The non-Muslims were said to be in good numbers in Daybul and Alor, and they were at good terms with the Arabs. Unlike the historians of Delhi Sultanate, the Arab travelers called the non-Muslims as *zimmis* and not *kafirs* or infidels. It is known from the sources that after the conquest of Sindh and Multan, cow slaughter was banned. The reasons behind it was the aim to preserve cattle wealth, or even to show regard for Hindu sentiments. Some Hindu chiefs even showed interest in Islam. For example, in 886 CE, a Hindu king commissioned an Arab linguist from Mansura to translate the *Quran* in local language.

As far as the adoption of local cultures is concerned, it can be said that the Arab rulers adopted local practices to a greater extent than the Ghaznavids did at Lahore or the Turks and Afghans at Delhi later. Similar to the Hindu rulers of Sindh, the Arab ruler of Mansura used to maintain war elephants, and ride in elephant driven chariots. The dresses of the Arabs of Mansura were like that of the people of Iraq; but those were quite similar to that of Hindu *rajās* as well. They also wore similar earrings and long hair.

Further, after Muhammad Qasim, there were no large-scale Arab immigrations, and any Arab or mutual influences gradually faded away. However, Sindh and Multan remained in touch with the Arab world, especially by way of long-distance trade and Islam. There was vibrant trade between Sindh and other parts of the Muslim world, with caravans going to Khurasan, especially via the Kabul and Bamiyan route. Sindhi Hindus were excellent traders and had good share in this trade. Alor in Sindh is mentioned as a great commercial center. As a part of the Muslim region, Sindh and Multan contributed almost five times to the Abbasid exchequer than Kabul. Further, the active trade relations of the Arabs were much more extensive and far reaching. After the rise of Islam, there were many colonies of the Muslim Arab traders in the major ports of Cambay, Chaul and Honawar on the west coast of India. Hajjaj, the governor of Baghdad who had led the Sindh expedition was indirectly responsible for maintaining a large colony of Muslim traders in south India. After assuming the governorship of Baghdad, many of his political enemies had settled down on the southern coast of the Indian subcontinent, in order to seek refuge from him. The Nawayat community settled on the Konkan coast of Mumbai, and Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu is one such community. Other Muslim groups which settled on the Bay of Bengal can trace their roots to the eighth century.

The largest Arab settlement on Indian coast was in Malabar region; its presence in the same region is seen even till today. The conspicuous presence of the Muslim Arab population was the result of the conversion of a local ruler. All such Muslim colonies on various coasts were important for providing the base from which traders, sailors and missionaries went to the Far East thereby spreading Islam in the Southeast Asian regions like Malay Peninsula and Indonesia. The eastward movement from the Middle Eastern or South Asian regions was popular since ancient times, and was linked to both spice trade and religion. This is how Indian

religions like Brahmanism or Buddhism gained ground here. Similarly, the rise of Islam through Arab trade can be easily linked to this trend that saw the displacement of both Brahmanism and Buddhism since eighth century. Bali remains Hindu till today, and Malaysia and Indonesia are mostly Muslim, and owe their present religious and literary tradition mainly to the influences emanating from the Muslim colonies on the coastline of the subcontinent. The Muslim emigrants such as traders, sailors and religious leaders/men from Arabia, Persia, coastal regions of Gujarat, Malabar, Coromandel and Bengal are specifically important in this development.

Technological impact

Another impact of the arrival of the Arabs was in the field of technology. Since they came as invaders, their technological know-how can be seen mainly in the field of weaponry and warfare. As has been seen in the earlier Units, the technology of the Indian forces was not as good as those of the invaders, and this became a major reason behind the former's defeat.

Two different weapons came with the Arabs in their invasion in 712 CE. The first one was *Naphtha* or Greek fire which was obtained by distillation from crude petroleum. They had seen its use in their unsuccessful attacks on Constantinople in 671-78 CE. Subsequently, they had learnt to use it. As the *Chachnama* says about Sindh attack, there were nine hundred naphtha throwers or *naft-andazan* in the Arab army. They used to set alight the naphtha-tipped arrows to attack the Sindh troops.

Manjaniq or mangonel/trebuchet was another such weapon. *Chachnama* mentions its usage in the description of the attack on the port of Daybul in Sindh. *Manjaniq* was used to throw stones at the temple pinnacle. It consisted of a wooden beam pivoted on a wooden stand, and the short arm of the beam had a counterweight put on it. The long arm had a sling suspended at its far end which carried the missile, usually a round and large piece of stone. The long arm, pulled down manually, would raise the weighed short arm. If the rope was released after this, the short arm would have fallen, making the long arm ascend fast, shooting the missile out of the swinging sling. This weapon known by the Arabs from the Constantinople war was simpler in version. It was modified for a better and more efficient use. It was also used by the Chinese and Mongols. A modified version of the same weapon using lesser manpower was also used by the Delhi Sultanate in the fourteenth century. The different types of mangonels used by them were called *manjaniq*, *maghribi* and *arrada*.

Such weapons were one of the main reasons behind the Sindh victory by the Arabs. The inferior tactics and technology of weapons and warfare used by Indians helped the Arab army all the more.

As against the availability of such information from the Arab works on the vibrant relations between the Indian and Arabic cultures, it will be unreasonable to call the Arab conquest of Sindh as a triumph without results. In other words, it would be incorrect to give leverage to the political consequences alone and negate the socio-cultural or other impacts or results.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Social, Cultural and
Technological Impacts:
Arab and Turkish Invasions

- 1) Was there any social impact of the Arab invasion of Sindh?

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- 2) Discuss the cultural effects of Arab presence in Sindh after the invasion.

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7.3 THE COMING OF THE TURKS

The Arab inroads into India in the eight century was followed by Turkish penetration by 1192 CE. The early medieval period from 10th to 12th centuries is an important period in Indian history as it served as a preparatory phase for the final establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in 1206.

The encounter between the Turkish and Indian cultures happened in two phases.

The first was in the form of invading raids by Mahmud Ghazni in early eleventh century. These invasions in a short period of time were in the form of plunder and loot of the Somnatha temple on the Gujarat coast. This loot was mainly aimed at enriching Ghazni, the home of Mahmud Ghazni in Afghanistan. The invasions led to immense damage to the temple, however, these raids were devoid of any intentions of spreading Islam or establishing a full-fledged Muslim state in India. The historical sources of this period do not specify any such intentions.

These Ghaznavid invasions were of a brief span, but their impacts were tremendous. As argued by Satish Chandra, the constant Ghaznavid invasions in the north-western region of India acted as a torchbearer for the later Turkish invaders like Muhammad Ghouri in invading India. Secondly, it helped in opening overland commerce between India and Central as well as West Asia. This accelerated the growth of towns in India, especially after the establishment of the Muslim state in India by Ghouri.

The impacts of the Turkish invasions in India were manifold, but these were not highlighted. The primary reason behind it was the divisive narrative and intent of colonial interpreters of Indian History. The British scholars or administrators like James Mill interpreted Indian History with the purpose of prolonging British rule over India. This was easily done by creating a rift between the Hindu and Muslims. Alongside, they even tried to depict that the British had come to India with the only intention of civilizing its people. Hence, to validate both the arguments, Indian history was categorized into three phases, namely Ancient, Medieval and Modern. They named the Ancient as Hindu, Medieval as Muslim and Modern was termed as British. The Medieval period was shown as a Dark Age, when the Muslim invaders penetrated India only to spread Islam; They led to the destruction of

Hindu temples, conversion of Hindu population, rape and murder of its women and children and so on and so forth. This was done to create a dichotomy between the two religions and their followers. Keeping in line with this communal interpretation, they showed the Arabs or Turks as only invaders with the crusading zeal of conversion and destruction.

However, scholars like Satish Chandra understood the scheme of polarization of Indian population by way of historical narratives. The new research carried out by contemporary historians like B. D. Chattopadhyaya, Richard Eaton, Finbarr Barry Flood, etc. tried to study the varied impacts of the Turkish invasion in India. The next section of the unit focuses on such impacts.

7.4 SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE TURKISH INVASIONS

In the words of Richard Eaton, one sees the evidence of a “creative conflict” when Muslim Turks encountered the non-Muslim peoples of Punjab and the Gangetic plains. It is to be understood that above expeditions not always led to the plunder and loot of wealth, massacre of masses, conversion of people, desecration of worshipping places etc., it also provided enough background and opportunities that led to different kind of impacts. Rather than seeing it as confrontation, it would be more fruitful to see the level of exchanges happening in different spheres. According to Satish Chandra, the processes of interaction between “Islam” and “Hinduism” can be posited at three different levels:

- 1) At the political level, including state formation.
- 2) At the level of the masses, involving religious movements and economic developments.
- 3) At the intellectual and cultural level, involving the middle sections and professionals.

Here an attempt will be made to study different kinds of impact at different levels.

Cultural Impact

Invasions can also be seen as a process of encounter between two different cultures. This process is always in two ways; One of confrontation and the other of healthy contact. In the context of Ghaznavid invasion of Punjab, Satish Chandra states that this conquest led to a setting of two distinct patterns of relations between the Muslims and the Hindus. One was the lure for plunder and other in the form of trade. The caravan routes between Khurasan and India were reopened as soon as military operations were over. Muslim traders augmented India's trade with the Central and West Asian countries which led to the development of towns in north India. The resultant outcome of this process was the coming of religious preachers called Sufis to the region of Punjab. The preaching was mainly directed towards the Muslim settlers, but in the process, they also influenced some Hindus, paving the way for the opening of a channel of interaction between Islam and Hindu religion and society.

Due to such interactions, Lahore too emerged as an influential centre for the development of Arabic and Persian languages and literature. The Persian language

was later adopted as the court language during the Ghaznavid period, and it continued to hold the same position throughout Muslim rule.

Further, religious sentiments posed no bar for the Ghaznavids in many areas. This was seen in the recruiting of non-Muslim soldiers in the Ghaznavid armies. In fact, in its military recruitment many Hindu soldiers were recruited, and it was commanded by several Hindu generals such as Tilak who was a barber by caste. He became a *confidante* of khwaja Ahmed Hasan Maimandi, the influential *wazir* of Sultan Mahmud.

During the 11th and 12th centuries the Muslim rulers of Lahore continued to issue the coins of their predecessors from the Hindu Shahi dynasty. These coins included Siva's bull called Nandi on one side, and Muhammad Ghouri's name in Devanagari script prefaced with the Sanskrit phrase *sri samanta deva* on the reverse side. According to Richard Eaton, such measures showed that the Ghourid rulers wanted to establish cultural and monetary continuity with north Indian kingdoms. Thus, the circulation of coins through many hands bearing the words and images, some kind of political ideology was communicated to their subjects. Secondly, another reason behind continuing the old coins was that the new rulers did not want any disruptions in commerce. Since coins were linked to trade and commerce, these new rulers from a different faith continued with the existing trade patterns.

Yet further, the cultural assimilation between the Hindu and Turkish cultures led to significant contribution in literary field. Mahmud Ghazni with his great military capabilities and political achievements had turned the small state of Ghazna into a vast and wealthy empire comprising of most parts of modern-day Afghanistan, eastern Iran and north-western parts of the Indian subcontinent. As an able ruler, he had transformed Ghazni into a center of Persian learning. He was inspired by the cultural centers of Samanid Bukhara and Khurasan. He invited poets and writers like Firdausi, Alberuni, Uzari, Unsuri, etc to Ghazni. Such display of pomp and show by Mahmud Ghazni was made possible with India's help. In other words, the grandeur maintained in his state of Ghazni was mostly due to the wealth amassed from Mahmud's plundering raids in India. India became one of the benefactors because the period between the Samanids and the Ghaznavids is seen as one of Persianization of kingship and administration, i.e. one of divine and monarchical kingship, centralization of power, bureaucratization and professionalization of army, etc. The successors of Mahmud initiated the diffusion of Persian culture into north India. In the words of Richard Eaton, "The entire gamut of Persianate institutions and practices which the Ghaznavids inherited from the Samanid rulers of Bukhara were brought to the area of Punjab which included the elaboration of a ranked and salaried bureaucracy tied to the state's land revenue and military systems; the institution of elite, or military, slavery; an elaboration of the office of 'sultan'; the courtly patronage of Persian arts, crafts and literature; and a tradition of spiritually powerful holy men, or Sufis, whose relations with royal power were ambivalent."

The occupation of the Punjab by the Ghaznavids allowed the Indo-Islamic culture of Lahore to receive the Persian influence which it has retained. The successors of the Ghaznavids made concerted efforts to connect their dynastic history not just with Islamic religious tradition but also with the Persian pre-Islamic past as argued

by Andre Wink. Even the Ghourid leaders shed their provincial identity and adopted a more cosmopolitan posture, embracing both the substance and the trappings of the Persianate bureaucratic and centralized state. This included proclaiming their sovereignty at the Friday prayer and using the imperial umbrella (*chahtr*) and kettledrums (*naubat*), both of them Persianate symbols of political authority. They also discarded the modest title of *malik al-jabal*, 'king of the mountains.' Muhammad Ghouri styled himself as 'the great sultan' (*sultan al-mu'azzam*). Thus, the theme of Perso-Islamic tradition of Kingship and Persianate traditions which attained a mature phase during the Sultanate period permeated due to the invasions carried out first by Mahmud Ghazni and later by Muhammad Ghouri.

Intellectual Impact

Due to Mahmud Ghazni's invasions, we have information of India's social, political, economic and religious conditions during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Writers like Firdausi, Alberuni etc. have written extensively about India's prevailing conditions during this era. Abu Raihan Mohammad bin Ahmad popularly known as Alberuni was a famous personality, a renowned philosopher, mathematician and a historian who accompanied Mahmud Ghazni during his invasions in India. His association with the ruler was less, but his accounts on Indian customs and traditions, as well as his remarks on the Islamic conquest are remarkable. Out of his many works like *Qanum-i-Masudi*, *Chronology of Ancient Nations*, the most important is *Kitab-ul-Hind* which throws light on the religion, sciences, social customs, culture, art, astrology etc. of the Hindus. Simultaneously, his account also mentions the attitude and behavior of the Hindus, especially the brahmanas. It also provides ample information about the destructive effects of Mahmud's Indian invasion.

Another effect of the Turkish invasion can be seen in the compilation of oldest surviving *Veda* manuscript in Nepal in 1040 CE. It shows that Nepal emerged as an important destination for the migration of brahmanas after the dislocation of Indian ruling groups due to Turkish invasions.

Social Impact

The available evidence on the Turkish invasion in the last decade of thirteenth century provides minimal or negligible information on the social impact of the invasion. Nonetheless, the picture that emerges provides a fragmentary view that hints at important developments.

The effect of the Muslim invasion on various Indian religions is highly debatable. The colonial interpretation focuses more on temple destruction, idol desecration and conversion of the native population. However, such a viewpoint has been negated by scholars like Mohammad Habib and others. He argues that Mahmudi agenda never involved conversion because there is no evidence to show that people were forced to follow a new faith altogether. He believes that reason for conversion was more economic than religious. Similarly, Richard Eaton states that no single reason can be attributed to explain conversion. It was rather a gradual, socializing process stretched over a long period of time. As it had happened in the sixth century BCE, the low castes were soothed by the equality followed by the new religion. Therefore, they took to conversion to get some respect from their brethren of the new faith.

Another important impact of Turkish invasion can be seen in the virtual disappearance of Buddhism by the twelfth century from the land of its origin. As R.S. Sharma says, during the 11th and 12th centuries, some Buddhist centres and monasteries known for their riches came to be attacked by the Turks. Also, a large number of Buddhist monks in Bihar were killed by the Turks especially by Bhaktiyar Khalji during his invasion of Bengal.

Further, as far as the caste system is concerned, it stayed intact in society. However, Alberuni's account shows that the power and position of the brahmanas associated with the ruling houses declined. This was because with the coming of the Turks many powerful ruling houses were dismantled. Their sovereign power was subjugated, and their position was made subordinate. So, the power and position of the brahmanas associated with these courts also declined. Nonetheless, as Alberuni mentions, the position of the priest employed in the religious institutions remained the same, and it was not affected.

As mentioned earlier, Mahmud Ghazni and Muhammad Ghouri brought with them the Persianate traditions to India. Iqta system was one of the integral political institutions of this tradition. Under this system, the empire was divided into several large and small tracts of land that were assigned to soldiers, officers, nobles, etc. This system was also seen during the times of the Delhi Sultanate. It was given in lieu of salary, but over a period of time it became hereditary in nature, as seen under Firoz Shah Tughlaq. It encouraged peasants to grow cash crops which led to the emergence of artisans and craftsmen in towns. The result was the flourishing state of trade and commerce. The regular flow of commodity led to the rise of merchant groups like *banjaras*, *caravanis*, brokers etc. With the coming of the Turks, the horse emerged as one of the important animals. It was used in fighting battles. Therefore, many jobs associated with horse came into prominence which basically dealt with making of saddles, horse shoe, etc.

Technological Impact

The Turks brought a lot of technological innovations with them. But their usage could be more proficiently seen from thirteenth century onwards. For example, craft production which includes spinning wheel and needle work, knowledge of sericulture, carpet weaving, discovery of paper, distillation methods, the building materials and techniques, military technology etc. came with the arrival of the Turks.

The establishment of Turkish rule led to the immigration of people from the regions of Iran, Iraq, Turkistan, Khurasan, etc. who brought with them not only rituals, customs and religion, but also their skills and dresses. Before the arrival of Turks, the art of stitched clothes was unfamiliar which can be verified from the account of Marco Polo wherein he reported that 'in all this Province of Malabar there is never a tailor, to cut a coat or stitch'. The coming of the Turks popularized the use of *Salwar Kameez* etc. in India. Moti Chandra concluded that 'jackets, tunics and trousers' became more common in the twelfth century owing to greater contact with the Arabs and Persians. Also, the discovery of Spinning Wheel (*charkha*) was a revolutionary step in the field of textile industry. The use of this mechanical device is known from the account of Isami's *Futuhu-s Salatin*. During the Sultanate period this device had played an important role in the expansion of cotton cloth production.

Under the head of military technology, mention could be made of horse-shoe (*nal*) of iron and steel which are mentioned in the verses of the Ghaznavid poet Mas'ud Sa'd Salman and the Persian poet Nizami Ganjawi.

In the field of architecture important technological innovations were the use of lime and mortar as cementing material and the use of arch and dome. The practice of constructing minarets to commemorate military victories was known at the Ghaznavid court. Also, during the time of Ghurid *sultans* one of the preeminent architectural monument was high minaret at Jam which is situated in central Afghanistan. Jam Minaret is believed to be a precursor of Qutb Minar in Delhi. The inspiration of the Minar came from the Ghorian minaret of Khwaja Siyah Posh in Sistan. It served as a memorial of victory and a mazinah to call the faithful to prayer.

As found in the case of Arab invasion, even the Turkish invasions had far reaching social, cultural and technological impacts. One of the significant differences between the two was the establishment of a full-fledged state by the latter in 13th century.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) How far do you agree with the view that Turkish invasions led to confrontation and conflict?

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- 2) Discuss the impact of Turkish invasions on the Indian Territory?

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7.5 SUMMARY

To conclude it can be said that the rhetoric of medieval Muslim invaders and rulers as iconoclastic and mere plunderer and looter is not correct and justified. In fact, any invasion has elements of both confrontation and interaction. Highlighting one and ignoring the other is uncalled for. In this context, it can be suggested that the annexation of Sindh had far-reaching commercial results. Similarly, the Turkish invasions resulted in the establishment of a long-standing state in India called the Delhi Sultanate.

7.6 KEY WORDS

Nomad : Groups of people who do not have settled habitation

Eurasian Steppes : A Geographic region on the borders of Europe and Asia

Shahnama	: A tenth century poetic work written by Firdausi in Persian
Persian wheel	: a water-lifting device used to lift water from some depth
Spinning wheel	: Device for spinning the cotton. This was moved with the help of crank-handle and had six spindles.
Iconoclast	: A destroyer of images used in religious worship
Inroads	: A hostile attack; a raid
Mamluk	: slave

7.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) See Section 7.2
- 2) See Section 7.2

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) See Section 7.4
- 2) See Section 7.4

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