

Mahmud Ghazni, The Pillager of Enormous Wealth From India

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Abstract: Mahmud Ghazni (998-1030 A.D) also known as Mahmud Zabuli was one of the greatest rulers of the eleventh Century. He became the first independent ruler of the Ghaznavid Dynasty. After coming into power, he carried as many as 17 raids in India. He defeated many Rajas in the eleventh century. His aim was not to rule over other territories by dilating his empire but he was interested in pillaging everything from the people of India. He was a brave and courageous man who tried to establish Muslim rule in India but he failed somehow to establish the Muslim rule in India. It is said that Mahmud Zabuli had destroyed many temples in India and had assumed different titles at different times. This article helps us to reconstruct the early history of Mahmud Ghazni and it also provides us the information about his early carrier, expeditions and accession of Mahmud Ghazni.

Keywords:- Mahmud Zabuli (998-1030 A.D), 17 raids, Ghazni, Turks, Muslim rule in India, Amin-ul-Milat, Yamin-ud-Daula, Expeditions.

I. Early Carrier of Mahmud Ghazni:

In the beginning Mahmud Ghazni vanquished the samanids and expand his territory up to oxus. He conquered Kohistan in 1001 C.E. Thereafter, Mahmud Zabuli faced Jaipal, a ruler of Hindushahi Dynasty. A battle was fought between them near Peshawar. The result was that Jaipal was defeated by Mahmud Zabuli. Jaipal was arrested and later on he was finally released but Jaipal could not tolerate the shock of humiliation and so he committed suicide by burning himself. Later on, Jaipal, the ruler of Hindushahi Dynasty was succeeded by his son, Anandpala.

It was during his eighth expedition in 1008 A.D, that the Hindu Rajas made a plan to overthrow the Muslims from India. So the Rajas formed an alliance in which the Rajas of Gwalior, Kannauj, Ujjain, Ajmer and Delhi sent aid to the son of Jaipal. The battle took place in 1008 A.D where Anandpala, the son of Jaipal was defeated by Mahmud Zabuli and after the victory, Mahmud captured the territory between the Indus and the Jhelum.

Mahmud Zabuli led another expedition against Somnath temple in 1025 A.D. Here the ruler was Bhima Deva I. When he came to know the Mahmud Ghazni was approaching towards him, he fled. Mahmud Ghazni finally died in 1030 A.D.

Mahmud died in 1030 C.E. after an eventful reign of thirty one years. At the time of his death, the Ghaznavid Empire stretched from the Beas to the oxus. He was one of the greatest rulers of the eleventh century. When Subuktigin came to power, Ghazni was a small principality. Between themselves Subuktigin and Mahmud raised the principality to the dimensions of an empire. {1}

II. Early Life and History of Mahmud Ghazni:

It was around 933 A.D that the Turk state was founded by Alaptigin. He made Ghazni his capital and started to rule from there. He was a slave and after his death, his son-in-law Subuktagin ascended the throne in 977 A.D.

The principality of Ghazni was founded in 963 A.D by an adventure named Alptigin. He started his Career as a slave of the samanids, whose power at one time extended from the Jaxartes to Baghdad and from Khawarizm to the borders of India. Alptigin died within a few months of achieving the crowning success of his life, and after an interval of about 14 years, his slave and son-in-law, subuktagin, occupied his throne (977 A.D). The new ruler was an enterprising military leader eager for conquests. His attention was naturally turned to the neighbouring principality of Jaipal, the Hindu Shahi {2} King, whose authority extended from Lamghan to the river Chenab.

Ghazni was the main centre of Mahmud who ruled after the death of his father subuktagin. Mahmud was the courageous young man. He led many expeditions in India. Some historians believed that Mahmud undertook expeditions only to spread the Islam but it might be true to some extent. Some other historians believed that he was interested only in pillaging the enormous wealth of India but he never thought of expanding his empire and ruling over other territories.

III. Acquisition of Mahmud Ghazni:

Mahmud Zabuli was born in 971 A.D. Mahmud Zabuli (998-1030 A.D) come into conflict with his brother Ismail after the death of his father subuktagin. Subuktagin had already declared his younger son Ismail as his next successor. Later on, Mahmud defeated his brother and himself ascended the throne in 998 A.D. Al-Qadir Billah Conferred on Mahmud Gazni, the title of Yamin-ud-Daula (the right hand of the empire) and Amin-ul-Milat (the custodian of the faith) and that's why his Dynasty was also called the yamini Dynasty. Mahmud was a brave and a brilliant military commander who led many expeditions in India. Every time he emerged victorious because he was a fearless ruler.

The above mentioned qualities must be possessed by an efficient general and one can find most of these qualities in Mahmud. Mahmud was brilliant commander in the field. As a dashing cavalry leader, he had no equal. Mahmud fought in the front ranks of his army and usually plunged into the thickest of the battle. "He is said to have received seventy two cuts and wounds". {3}

Mahmud Ghazni during his expeditions killed many of his enemies. During Multan expedition he got himself injured with his own sword. He never thought of loosing his life during his expeditions as he was a fearless man and that's why his soldiers were too inspired by him only because of his confidence and determination even in moments of extreme despair.

Mahmud Ghazni was the brilliant commander of his soldiers. He always stood in front of his soldiers while fighting in the battlefield. He had well organised army which comprises of

both senior and junior officers. During that time it was the duty of a leader to lead his army which played an important role in the battle field to suppress the enemies.

“Battles now are so vast, so complex and so dependent on the handling of reserves that a general-in-chief can no longer lead his army into action; he directs it from an elaborately headquarters which may be 100 or more miles behind the battle front and the leadership of his men is delegated not to his senior, but to his most junior officers”. {4}

IV. Important Expeditions of Mahmud Zabuli:

1. In 1001 A.D, Mahmud Ghazni defeated Jaipal, the ruler of Hindushahi Dynasty.
2. In 1008 A.D, Anandpala, the son of Jaipal was defeated by Mahmud Ghazni in the battle of waihind.
3. In 1014 A.D, Mahmud Ghazni led another expedition against the ruler of Thanesar where he destroyed the Chakra Swami temple.
4. In 1018 A.D, Mahmud Ghazni attacked Mathura where he defeated many rulers including Chandrapala.
5. In 1025 A.D, Mahmud Ghazni led another expedition against somnath. The somnath temple was demolished. Here Mahmud Ghazni looted enormous wealth.

Mahmud Ghazni fought a battle with the king of Chandela in 1019 A.D. He was not only a great leader but also a great strategist. He was very clever and confident and that's why he was able to defeat and kill his enemies surprisingly.

His genius was evident in the battle against Chandela king in 1019, when he reached the bank of Ram Ganga river there was a confederacy of kings for fighting against him. He did not lose his heart and immediately decided to embark his soldiers on the other side of the river. Mahmud thus gave surprise to his enemy. When his soldiers all of a sudden embarked and attacked them. This surprise attack created stampede and panic in the Enemies ranks. According to Havell, “Mahmud was endowed with all the qualities of a Prince and reflected luster upon the faith.” {5}

The above mentioned statement clearly shows that there was no doubt of being his military genius. He always made the immediate plans and took the final decisions within no more time to suppress his enemies in the battlefield.

V. As a Great patron of Art and Literature:

Mahmud Ghazni (971-1030 A.D) was a great patron of art and literature. He patronised some people in his court.

1. Firdausi was his court poet who composed ‘Shahnama’.
2. Alberuni, a scholar in his court who wrote ‘Kitab-ul-Hind’.
3. Abu Nasr-al-utbi, the court historian of Mahmud Ghazni who wrote ‘Tarikh-i-Yamini’ or ‘Kitab-ul-yamini’.

VI. Conclusion:-

Mahmud Ghazni (971-1030 A.D) led many expeditions in India against many rulers. In every expedition he emerged victorious because he was a brilliant commander as well as a great leader of his army. He possessed all the qualities which a leader must possess. He was a courageous man who faced all his enemies one by one and his fear expelled them from their own territories. He treated his army very friendly. Salaries were given to them in cash and at time. It was during his reign that joining army was looked as an honourable profession. Mahmud was not

only a great general but also a great leader. He died in 1030 A.D. His leadership made him victorious everywhere.

Mahmud Ghazni was a great leader. He had every virtue of a good leader. He was a man of infinite courage. "Inglorious ease was little to the warriors taste. He exposed his body to all the fatigues of marching, bivouacking and skirmishing on the border land of his extensive empire. His summers were usually spent on the plains of India. Never heat nor cold nor even the natural barrier could prevent him from waging a desperate war. The inaccessible mountains of Ghur, the snow-clad hill passes of Kashmir, the foaming rivers and the territorial rains of India, the alkaline wastes of Punjab, the parched deserts of Rajasthan, nothing stood in the way of his indomitable will. His rapid march surprised his Enemies. He thundered at the gates of Multan while the rebellion of Sukhpal was slumbering in security, and he surrendered the town Qusdar before its ruler was well aware of his approach. Even when he was in the grip of his fatal malady, the swiftness of his movement surprised Minichir and forced the Seljuks to clear out of Khurasan." {6}

Mahmud Ghazni conquered all the territories after defeating many rulers during his 17 expeditions. He only plundered the enormous wealth of India. He emerged victorious everywhere, from Ghazni to Punjab, Khurasan to Bukhara and to eastern coast in Gujarat.

Glossary:

- **Ghazni: A city in central Afghanistan.**
- **Raid: A surprise attack on enemy by soldiers.**
- **Expedition: A journey by a group of people for a specific purpose.**
- **Amin-ul-Milat: The custodian of the faith.**
- **Yamin-ud-Daula: The right hand of the Empire.**
- **Conquer: To defeat or to take control through the use of force.**

References:

1. Prof. Masud-ul-Hasan, History of Islam, vol. I, Adam Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, edition 2010.
2. The Hindu Shahi Dynasty was founded in the third Decade of the ninth century by Lalliya. Jaipal's reign roughly covered the period 965-1002 A.D.
3. Nizamuddin, "life and Times of sultan Mahmud of Ghazni," P.199.
4. Ibid., P.292.
5. Havell cited by V.D. Mahajan, "The Delhi Sultanat", P.35.
6. Ibid., P.304.