UNIT 10 : FOUNDATION AND EXPANSION OF THE SULTANATE RULE

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 The Arabs of Sind

10.4 The Ghaznavids

10.5 The Ghoris

10.6 Let Us Sum Up

10.7 Further Reading

10.8 Answers to check your Progress

10.9 Model Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to:

- describe the Muslim conquest of India and the gradual rise of Islam in India,
- discuss the attempts of invasion under the Ghaznavids,
- discuss the inroads made by the Ghuris in India and the establishment of a Muslim empire, and
- explain the impact of the Turko-Afghan rule in the political and social life of India.

10.2 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier unit, we have discussed the literary, archaeological, numismatic sources of medieval India. In this unit, we will be discussing the foundation of the Sultanate rule in India. The political condition of India on the eve of the Sultanate rule was favourable for the spread of Islam and the

rise of Muslim dynasties.

There was an absence of any strong political force in India after the death of Harsha of Kanauj in 647 C.E., with numerous petty kingdoms surfacing in the scenario. This provided the required opportunity to the foreign powers to invade India.

10.3 THE ARABS OF SIND

On the eve of Arab invasion, India was politically weak. There was no unity among the kingdoms as many of the chiefs and the rulers had asserted their independence.

The Arabs played a crucial role in the spread of Islam in India with their conquest of Sind in the 8th century C.E. The Arabs had made many attempts to penetrate in India. However, it was in 711-712 C.E., that they could finally make inroads to India. The invasion of the Arabs is well recorded in the Chachnama and the writings of Al-Beruni.

There were a few factors that led the Arabs to India. First, the stories of India's prosperity had ignited their imagination and they were eager to loot and plunder the resources of India. Second, they were a staunch imperialist backed by the zeal of their faith (Islam). They were looking for adventure.

The ruler of Sind, when the Arabs attacked, was Dahar or Dahir. The governor of Irak, Al Hajjaj was angered by the action of the pirate of Debal and hence sent several expeditions to punish Sind. Dahir repulsed the initial attack upon which Hajjaj sent his son-in-law Muhammad ibn Kasim. Dahir suffered a heavy loss as he was deserted by his own men and hence Kasim stormed Debal and captured some strongholds. After a heroic resistance at Roar (712 AD), Dahir could not hold on and was killed in the battlefield. The invaders marched on the Brahmanabad and Aror. In the meantime, Dahir's widow queen, Rani Bai tried to offer resistance. However, she failed in her attempt and committed Jauhar or self immolation and the fort of Roar fell in the hands of the invaders. However, Kasim did not stop here and his next move was towards Multan. After appointing his governors he marched towards

Multan and it was only after a great defence offered by the Hindus that Multan was finally captured by him. Surprisingly the brilliant career of Kasim came to a tragic end when he was sentenced to death by the Khalifa.

With the death of Kasim, the Hindu chiefs of Sind made attempts to thwart the Arab influence. Khalifa Khalif Omar II promised to allow them to rule independently if they embraced Islam. But he broke his promise by killing Jai Singh, the son of Dahir even though the latter had embraced Islam. In the meantime Junaid, the Arab governor of Sind did try to continue to spread the spirit of Islam. However by 871 C.E., the Arab rulers of Sind and Multan declared themselves independent and the repeated attacks by the neighbouring Hindu powers like the Chalukyas and the Pratiharas led to the decline of Arab power. At the same time, the Abbasids succeeded as the Khalifa and their hold on the Arabs of Sind gradually lessened.

- **Impact of the Arab Invasion**

The Arab conquest of Sind did not have a deep political impact. The reason mainly was that- first, the Arab influence was limited to Sind and did not extend to the remote interiors of India; second, the desert surrounding Sind made the Arabs lose their interest in Sind along with their thirst for wealth.

There was not much development in the social and economic condition. Feudalism continued to thrive under the *iqta system*. The Hindus suffered from discrimination under the Islamic law. A huge amount of treasures were carried away from Sind. *Jizya* was imposed on the Hindus.

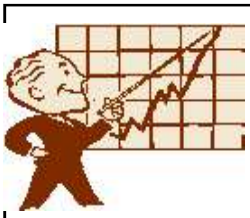
However, the conquest of Sind had a cultural impact. The Arab scholars gained knowledge in the field of astronomy, mathematics, medicine, chemistry etc., at the feet of the Brahmin and Buddhist monks. **Aba Maashar,** an Arab astronomer, studied Sanskrit and astronomy in Benaras. Works of knowledge like *Brahma Siddhanta* and *Kanda Khandaka* were translated in Arabic. The Arabs were equally mesmerized by the Indian music and culture. The architectural style of India also deeply influenced the Arabs.

However, some scholars deny the cultural impact of Arab as they

were limited to Sind and hence their cultural contact was not widespread to make any deep impact. Second, there is no ground to believe that the learned Indian texts were translated into Arabic. Third, Indian civilization had lost its earlier glory and hence its impact on the Arabs is overrated.

- **Reason for the success of the Arabs**

There were different conclusions as to the reasons behind the success of the Arabs. First, the people of Sind were a divided lot and they failed to resist the Muslim force from attacking them. Second, Dahir was highly unpopular due to his intolerance towards the people of different religious sects. Third, the Arabs were militarily well equipped while the Sindis were more preoccupied with their social inequalities and differences.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

Who was al-Hajjaj?

_____

2. Name the queen who resisted the Roar fort against Kasim.

_____

3. Mention the Indian texts of knowledge that were translated into Arabic?

_____

10.4. THE GHAZNAVIDS

While it cannot be denied that the Arabs were the first Muslim conquerors to invade the plains of India yet the fact that the Turks completed the unfinished business left behind by the Arabs cannot be ignored.

With the decline of the Abbasids house in Arab, local kingdoms like those of Sammanids emerged. The foundation of the Ghaznavid dynasty began with Alaptagin, a former slave of Abdul Malik, the Sammanid ruler of Bukhara. It was due to his ability that he was promoted to high ranking offices. However, with the death of Abdul Malik in 962 C.E., there followed a war of succession. In despair, Alaptagin left with his men for Ghazni and established the Yamini or Ghaznavid dynasty.

In 977 C.E., Sabuktagin, the slave officer of Alaptagin ascended the throne of Ghazni. He was a man of great capability and he proved it by conquering Lamghan and Sistan. In 994 C.E., he secured the province of Khorasan and planned to turn his expedition to India. However, he had to face the resistance from the Hindu Shahi kingdom. The ruler of the Hindu Shahi kingdom, Jai Pal gave a tough fight and for a moment peace was restored but not for long as Sabuktagin launched a massive attack on the Shahi kingdom. Consequently, Jai Pal had to surrender and sign a humiliating treaty.

After his death, Sabuktagin was succeeded by his son Mahmud. He earned recognition as a ruler from Khalifa Al-Qadir-Billal. The latter conferred on him the title of Yamin-ud-Daulah and Amin-ul-Millat. It was due to his loyalty to the Khalifa that he vowed to lead expeditions against India. According to Henry Elliot, Mahmud led 17 expeditions to India. In the year 1000C.E. Mahmud of Ghazni waged a war of destruction and plunder against India. He captured places as far distant as Saurastra of Gujrat.

Scholars like Smith are of the opinion that Mahmud had no intention to settle down and govern India and that his ambition lay in plundering the wealth of India. During his expeditions he unleashed a ruthless siege of property and destroyed many temples in Mathura, Brindaban etc. He attempted to conquer Kashmir but ultimately he gave up the project. His most famous expedition was against the Somnath temple. The wealth and treasures of the temple was looted along with the incessant slaughter of the innocent people. His last expedition was against the Jats.

His expedition points to his desire for military glory and to serve Islam. According to Dr. Ishwari Prasad, Mahmud was a champion of faith for his men and for the Hindus, he was a tyrant. He was, however, at the same time, a patron of letters and a devout Muslim. He brought many oriental scholars under his service. **Utbi** was a great literary personality in his court. **Firdausi**, the author of *Shahnama*, adorned his court too. Another important figure was **Al-Beruni** who accompanied Mahmud during his Indian invasion. He mentions the states of Kanauj, Bengal, Malwa, Gujrat and others and

writes that the people were not united in power. He writes that the Hindus believed in many gods and that the Brahmins were exempted from capital punishment. Widow remarriage was not common but child marriage did prevail. Al Beruni was profoundly impressed by Hindu learning. A university was set up at Ghazni by Mahmud. As a patron of art, he instructed for the building of madrassas and mosques.

While he was a brilliant soldier he failed as a statesman. It cannot be denied that he made no attempt in introducing any new changes in the administration, laws or institutional development and hence with his death, the super structure he had built, fell apart. He died in 1030 C.E..

The Ghaznavid dynasty could not last long due to the conflict and inability of Mahmud's successors to continue the legacy of Mahmud. Most of them were drawn towards worldly pleasures. The last ruler Khusrau Malik failed to defend Ghazni which passed away to the hands of the house of Ghor. With the capture of Lahore in 1186 C.E., Khusrau was imprisoned and executed which brought the Ghaznavid dynasty to an end.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

4. Who laid the foundation of the Ghaznavid dynasty?

.....

5. In his campaign against India, Sabuktagin had to face resistance from which king? Name him.

.....

6. Who authored the Shahnama?

.....

10.5. THE GHORIS

It has already been mentioned that the successors of Mahmud often came into direct conflict with the Ghoris. The principality of Ghur consisted of the west centre of Afghanistan, mainly a pastoral land comprising hard

working people. During the time of Shansbani dynasty, there were frequent attacks on the Ghazni territories. It was during this conflict that the Ghaznavid king Baharam killed Qutubuddin Muhammad and Saifuddin of the Shansbani dynasty. This action angered Alauddin Hussain, the youngest brother of the deceased princes who took revenge on Ghazni by burning down the city and villages. He was succeeded by his sons, Ghiasuddin and Muizuddin. It was Muizuddin better known a Muhammad Ghuri who launched a massive campaign against India.

While Muhammad bin Qasim and Mahmud made inroads to India, yet it was Muhammad Ghuri who built a Muslim empire. Muhammad Ghuri began his illustrious career by conquering Multan in 1175 C.E., and the very next year he occupied Uchch (Sind). In 1178 C.E., he made an attempt to reach South India by passing through Nahrwala but he had to face tough resistance from Mul Raj II, the desert chief of Nahrwala and Bhimdeva of Gujrat. Soon after he gave up all attempts and concentrated on strengthening his position in Multan, Sind and Punjab. In 1179 he attacked Peshwar and next he captured Lahore then ruled by Khusrau Shah, the last Ghaznavid ruler. He later marched to Debal in Sind and thus with its capture, Muhammad Ghuri established his base in Multan, Sind and Punjab.

The Indian princes grew alarmed at the Turks knocking outside the Punjab frontier. Fearing a Muslim invasion Prithvi Raj, the Chauhan king of Delhi and Ajmer, allied with other Hindu rajas and tried to resist Ghuri and his army. In the first battle of Tarain in 1191 C.E., Muhammad Ghuri and his men were fiercely defeated. The Rajputs proved their strength and valour and forced Ghuri to retreat.

The second battle of Tarain was fought the very next year in 1192 C.E. This time Muhammad Ghuri returned with a strong army and revealed their strategic skill by inflicting a heavy defeat on the Hindu chiefs led by Prithvi Raj. Delhi and Ajmer were occupied soon and annexed to the existing kingdom of Muhammad Ghuri. The second battle of Tarain marked a milestone in Indian history as it opened the gates of India to the Turks. After

annexing Delhi and Ajmer, Mahammad Ghuri left its administration in the able hands of his general Qutubuddin Aibak and he himself withdrew to Ghazni.

In 1194 C.E., Ghuri marched against Kanauj. The ruler of Kanauj, Raja Jai Chandra had earlier stayed aloof when Prithvi Raj Chauhan was fighting Ghuri in the second battle of Tarain. However, in the battle of Chandwara, Jai Chand was killed and with his death, the Rajputs panicked and fled the battlefield. Muhammad Ghuri proceeded next to the fortress of Asni and then to Benaras. The temples were destroyed and its treasures plundered. In 1195-96 Ghuri defeated the Jadon Bhatti Rajputs and occupied a portion of Bihar.

During his absence, it was Aibak who continued the quest of invading India. He conquered Badaun, reoccupied Benaras, Chandwara and Kanauj. In 1202-03 C.E., he invaded Kalinjar, the military capital of Paramardi Deva, who was the ruler of the Chandela dynasty of Bundelkhand. The Chandela fought hard but the fort of Kalinjar fell into the hands of the invaders. In the meantime, Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji, a commander of Aibak, made elaborate plans of conquering Bengal and Bihar. King Indruman fled without giving a fight and Odantapuri, the capital of Bihar, was easily occupied. However, in this process, many Buddhist monasteries were destroyed and monks and Hindu Brahmans were put to death.

Khalji next drew his attention to Bengal which was ruled by Lakhsmana Sena of the Sena dynasty. Khalji reached the royal palace with a handful of men and launched a surprise attack creating havoc on the city and its people. The king acted cowardly and made a quick exit fleeing for his life leaving his possessions behind. The whole city fell in the hands of Khalji. However, he did not make any attempt to bring the whole of Bengal under his control.

Khalji next made an aim for the Himalayas and entered into a pact with the Kamrup king for assistance and guidance in his adventure. However, Khalji and his men suffered heavy losses during the march and even though they tried to retreat but while doing so they were attacked by the Kamrupa king. Khalji managed to reach Deokot and remained confined to bed due to serious illness. It was here that he was killed in his deathbed.

Muhammad Ghuri was in the meantime involved in a conflict with the Turks at Andhkhud in 1204 C.E., which ended in his defeat. This defeat gave a fatal blow to the reputation of Muhammad Ghuri. Indeed there were rumours that he was killed and this gave an opportunity for the Khokhars to revolt in Multan and Lahore. Muhammad Ghuri returned to India and along with Aibak brought down the enemy (Khokhars) to the grounds. They were slaughtered in large numbers and others were sold as slaves. In 1206 AD, on his way back to Ghazni, Muhammad Ghuri was assassinated. The Shansbani dynasty could not stand for long after his death.

Muhammad Ghuri proved himself to be statesman and not a fanatic ruler like Mahmud of Ghazni. His diplomatic abilities enabled him to establish a Muslim empire in India. Despite his defeat at Tarain and Nahrwala he did not give up his political ambition and his conquests had a solid permanent base than those of any of his predecessors.

The Turkish conquest had a great impact on the Indian political scene. The centralised form of monarchy, which was the ideal of the Turkish rule, broadened the political horizon of India. Another impact as described by some scholar was the urban revolution. The Turkish Government did away with the caste based social life and rather encouraged all people from all walks of life to join hands in building new cities. The military administration also went through many changes. Recruitment was now thrown open for all social classes. The armies were to be centrally paid and administered. The foot soldiers were replaced by mounted lightning men or *sawaran-i-muqatala.* Similarly, the conquest had a major effect in bringing uniformity in the tariff regulations, currency distribution, legal system and language.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

When was the second battle of Tarain fought?

.....

8. Who was Indruman?

.....

9. Name the Chandela ruler who resisted Aibak in his advance to the fort of Kalinjar?

.....

10. In which year was Muhammad Ghuri assassinated?

.....



10.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through this Unit, you have learnt that–

- The Arabs invaded Sind with the sole objective of plundering its wealth and treasures and left no permanent mark on the Indian political life.
- The Ghaznavid dynasty made progress under the reign of Mahmud who led as many as 17 expeditions against India. However, these expeditions were driven by religious motives along with the greed for treasures.
- It was only during the rule of Muhammad Ghuri under the Shansbani dynasty that gave a definite shape to the establishment of a Muslim empire. Muhammad Ghuri emerged as a conqueror and an able statesman.
- These early Muslim invasions prepared the way for the rise of the Delhi Sultanate and usher in a new era in the Indian history.



10.7 FURTHER READING

1) Mahajan, V.D. (Reprint 2007): *History of Medieval India.* New Delhi, India: S. Chand & Company Limited.

2) Maiti, Provatansu and Kumar Saha, Prabhat. (2000). *Medieval India (1206 AD-1707 AD).* Calcutta, India: Sreedhar Publishers.

3) Majumdar, RC., Raychaudhuri, HC. and Datta, K. (2007). *An Advanced History of India.* Delhi, India: Macmillan.

10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Q. No. 1: Al Hajjaj was the Governor of Irak who ordered an expedition against Sind

Answers to Q. No. 2: Queen Rani Bai

Answers to Q. No. 3: Brahma Siddhanta and Kanda Khandaka

Answers to Q. No. 4: Alaptagin

Answers to Q. No. 5: Jai Pal

Answers to Q. No. 6: Firdausi

Answers to Q. No. 7: 1192 C.E.

Answers to Q. No. 8: Indruman was the ruler of Bihar when Qutubuddin Aibak attacked Bihar

Answers to Q. No. 9: Paramardi Deva

Answers to Q. No. 10: 1206 C.E.

10.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

(A) Very Short Questions (answer within 50 words):

Q.1. Who was the last ruler of the Ghaznavid dynasty?

Q.2. Who was Dahir?

Q.3. Against whom did Mahmud lead his last expedition?

Q.4. What do you understand by the term "Sawaran -i-Muqatala"?

Q.5. Who fought Muhammad Ghuri in the battle of Tarain in 1191 C.E.?

(B) Short Questions (answer within 150 words):

Q.1. What was the main motive behind the Arab invasion of Sind?

Q.2. Mention the famous expedition of Mahmud?

Q.3. Why do you think that Mahmud failed as a stateman?

Q.4. Why was the second battle of Tarain a turning point in Indian history?

Q.5. What was the condition of India on the eve of the Turko-Afghan invasion of India?

(C) Long Questions (answer within 300-500 words):

Q.1. Describe in detail the early Muslim invasions of India.

Q.2. Explain in details the effect of the Turko-Afghan invasion of India.

Q.3. Discuss the achievement of Muhammad Ghuri in building a Muslim empire in India.

❐❐❐❐