CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS
The Chandelas dynasty arose in the first quarter of the 8th century and survived as a powerful independent royal family until the close of the 13th century. At first owing allegiance to the Gurjara-Pratiharas, the Chandelas became independent when the pratiharas passed into decline in the second half of the 10th century. About the last quarter of the 10th and the first quarter of the 11th century, Chandelas rulers were able to establish their supremacy over large parts of central India. The boundaries of the Chandelas kingdom usually extended from the Betwa river on the west to the Vindhyas mountains on the east, and from the Jumna on the north to the Nerbada river on the south.

The Chandelas owe their importance to three basic factors- geographical, political and military.

Geography of any region is always a key to the understanding of its polity, society, economy, culture and military. The body of Bundelkhand is made of hard and black soil, vindhyan fastnesses and dense forests. Together with low spring level and deficient rainfall they militated against the emergence of a local centre of power, till the advent of the Chandelas who put in extra efforts to generate a surplus by tackling water problem, promoting trade, encouraging industry and tapping forest wealth. Even political unity is difficult to establish though
Gedi janapada of Buddha's time might have approximated to the idea in some respects. In between, the region was either a part of an empire or fragmented into several pockets of power-aryan side by side with non-aryan. Under the Guptas Bundelkhand was a district administrative unit and the arrangement was based on its geographic compactness. Identical may have been its position under the Mauryas, though we have no means to ascertain.

This geographical configuration largely influenced the history of the Chandellas. The kingdom stood very close to that fertile region of north-western India which lay to the north of the Jumna and the Ganges. While the country itself, divided by numerous ranges of hills, the spurs of the Vindhya mountains made it almost impregnable. The position of the Chandellas was further strengthened by the possession of the important and almost inaccessible forts of Ajaygarh, Mahoba and Kalanjara. The importance of these three forts of the Chandela kingdom is clearly evident from the history of the dynasty, and mention has already been made of the physical features of these places (Sukraniti, 12-13). Especially important was Kalanjara, which is about 800 ft. above the plain. The lower part of the ascent is tolerably easy, but the middle portion is very steep, while the upper part is nearly perpendicular and quite inaccessible (Archaeological Survey Report of India: 1892). Unfortunately for all its inaccessibility, the fort of Kalanjara had a serious drawback. The water supply of the fort was uncertain (Sukraniti:1882) and the failure of water supply
compelled the Chandelas to surrender to the Moslems in A.D. 1202 (Sukraniti: 1882).

In spite of all its advantages, the geographical position of the Chandel country had, however, a great disadvantage. It was very difficult for the ruler of such a region to build up a durable empire, owing to problems of communication and administration of such a hilly region; and the security of the kingdom depended almost entirely on the forts of Kalenjara and Ajaygadh. Once these were taken the whole region lay open to an invader. Moreover, the hilly tribes of the regions often caused trouble in the kingdom, and the reference to the subjugation of the sabaras, pulindas and bhillas in a Chandida inscription (Epigraphic Index C. 334) indicates a lack of strong local administration in outlying districts. The resounding success of the Kalacuris in the east during the reigns of Cangayadeva and Lakshmi Karan and the success of Prithviraja Chahamana in the west can partially be attributed to the failure of the Chandelas to build up a strong defence on their frontiers. A durable and strong all-round empire in India could only be acquired by a power which held the more fertile and level region of the gangetic doab.

The internal history of the Pratihara family in the first half of the 10th century (c. 908-960) seems to have been a story of continued family dissension coupled with foreign invasion. This made the authority of central government extremely weak. The
consequence was that the different provinces which had so long
acknowledged allegiance to the central authority found an opport
unity of making themselves independent. The contemporary Chandela
king Harsa played an important part in the political affairs of
that time. By re-establishing the Pratihara king on the throne of
Kanauj Harsa raised the Chandela family to a prominence which was
further enhanced by his son and successor Yasovarman. Yasovarman
inflicted a very severe blow on the rapidly declining power of the
Pratiharas by capturing the important fort of Citrakuta and
Kalanjara.

By this time Indian history had entered a new phase.
Owing to internal disorder, the Rastrakutas and the Pala could
not play any further important part in northern India. The Pratihara
dominance was crumbling. Fortune favoured the feudatories with golden
opportunities; and the Chandela rulers Harsa and Yasovarman made
best use of them. After the conquest of Kanauj and Citrakuta,
although the Pratihara emperor continued to enjoy the imperial
title, it was Yasovarman who was the defacto ruler of the empire.
The period of transition and political readjustment which had
always intervened between the fall of one imperial power and the
rise of another in India had already begun (H.C. Ray:1936).

The Gurjara-Pratiharas left a legacy of imperial ideas,
and their empire may be regarded as the first great political
entity created out of the large number of foreign settlers in India
who appear after the break-up of the Gupta empire. It was in fact
the first Rajput empire, the forerunner of the later Rajput kingdoms of the Candellas, Chalukyas, Kalachuris, Paramaras, Gahadavales and other minor families, who appeared on the scene and fought among themselves for the hegemony of north-west and central India that was lost with the decline of the Pratiharas.

The decline of the Pratiharas coincided with a revival of the Pala of Bengal under Gopala II, (c. 921-978) who again tried to enter the political stage of northern India. This brought them in conflict with the Candella rulers Yasovarman and Bhanga, whose inscriptions claim victories over the former. The attempt of the Palas, however, failed and, the fight for supremacy was confined to the Rajput dynasties.

Among the princes of the various dynasties that were struggling to capture the sceptre of the effete Pratihara Princes (c. 950 A.D. or 1936) the most outstanding was the Candella ruler Bhanga. There is no doubt that Bhanga inherited a position which had been strongly founded by his father Yasovarman. The empire was further strengthened by Bhanga with the annexation of the fort of Gwalior and extension of the dominion in all directions. But before the Candellas could firmly establish themselves as the supreme power in north-west India they had to contend with the Noslems.

It has been pointed out by Dr. R.C. Majumdar that the Pratihar empire owed its birth to a struggle against aggressive Islamic inroads into western India through Sind.
their mission, and successfully resisted the Moslem attacks at a time when they seemed irresistible (Journal of the Department of Letters: X, 71, 72). After the decline of the Pratiharas this heavy burden fell on the shoulders of the Sahis of Afghanistan and Punjab, and with the fall of the Sahis the Candelas had to face the invasion of redoubtable Sultan Mahmud. Dhanga, however, did not come into direct conflict with the Moslems, as the latter were too deeply engaged in war with the Sahis to attack him.

Dhanga's successor Canda had a very short reign. He was succeeded by Vidyadhara, who was undoubtedly the most powerful prince of his time. Vidyadhara realised that a fight with the Moslems was inevitable for attaining imperial power. The slaying of Rajyapala of Kanauj was only a stepping-stone to his ultimate object, which could not be achieved without including the Gangetic doab in his kingdom. Sultan Mahmud understood Vidyadhara's intention and wasted no time in attacking the Candelas kingdom. Vidyadhara was probably not unprepared. The vast army he collected for the battle suggests that he was fully alive to the consequences of his attack on Rajyapala. Mahmud's first invasion was not fully crowned with success. He had to undertake a second expedition after two years. No doubt Mahmud succeeded in his attempts, but his campaign against Vidyadhara was not as spectacular as his other successes. Nevertheless, Vidyadhara's ambition received a severe setback. The failure of Vidyadhara was very unfortunate, for, as Dr. Ray says, the Candelas might have succeeded in combining a considerable portion of northern India.
under their rule, "and thus created some unity in the confused currents of its history during this period. Unfortunately for them, they were confronted by one of the greatest military leaders that the Turks have ever produced (Ray, H.C., 1936).

The significance of this period of Candella history, from the reign of Bhanga to that of Vidyadhara (c. 950-1025), lies in the fact that the mantle of Imperialism which had dropped out of the hands of the Prahitas, seems to have fallen on those of the Candellas. But this position the Candellas were not destined to enjoy for long. Vidyadhara's successors were weak and unworthy of the situation, and almost with Vidyadhara's death, the supremacy in northern India passed out of the Candella hands.

During the reigns of Vijayapala and Devavarman the Candellas not only lost the initiative in the struggle for supremacy, but also virtually lost their independence to the Kalacuris, who were then the dominant power in north-west India. The accession of Kirtivarman to the Candella throne was marked by a revival of the Candella power and the decline of the Kalacuris. The failure of Lakshmikarna Kalacuri to build up a strong empire in northern India was due to the alliance of other Rajput dynasties against him, and Kirtivarman Candella played a prominent part in bringing about the downfall of Lakshmikarna. But Kirtivarman could not establish the Candellas as the supreme power in northern India though he provided an opportunity for his successors to do so. The weak reigns of Sait Kirtivarman, Jayavarman and Pr. thulivaran, however, saw this opposition lost and the Candravarnas under the strong rule of
Govindaendra (c. 114-1155) emerged as the strongest power.

The reign of Madanavarman once again revived Candella hopes of gaining supremacy over other dynasties and establishing an empire in northern India. Inscriptions of Madanavarman show that he spared no energy to extend the Candella kingdom in all directions. The consequence of such an expansion was obvious: Madanavarman came in conflict with the Gahadavala and the Caulukyas. The conflict with the Gahadavala was only the continuation of a struggle that started soon after the death of Kirtivarman. This tragic quarrel between the Candellas, Gahadavala and the Caulukyas was very unfortunate for the future course of Indian history. The Moslem invaders had been having a very lean time since the death of Sultan Mahmud. A united effort of Govindaendra Gahadavala, Jayasimha-gideharaja and Madanavarman Candella, aided by the other Hindu dynasties, might easily have ousted the Moslems from India once and for all. But that was not to be, and dynastic struggles took the place of any united action by the Hindu dynasties. The result was that none of the dynasties could achieve its ambition, and in course of half a century, one by one, they fell easy prey to the Moslem invaders. By the beginning of the 13th century the Gahamanas, the Gahadavala and the Caulukyas had succumbed to the Moslem invaders. The turn of the Candalas came in A.D. 1202, when the fort of Kalarjara fell to Qutbuddin and Paramardi died. Paramardi's successor Trailokyavarman, however, succeeded in winning back the fort of Kalarjara from the Moslems within three years and continued to rule as an independent king. By A.D. 1212, large parts of the
Kalacuri territories were annexed by Trailokyavarman. In A.D. 1233 Trailokyavarman probably resisted another Muslim attack on his kingdom. But these successes were hardly of any real importance. With the failure of Prithviraja Chahaman in the battle of Tarain in A.D. 1192, the fate of all the Hindu dynasties was virtually decided and the hope of a strong united empire in northern India was lost for a long time to come. Like some other Mughal dynasties in different parts of northern India, the Chandellas continued to rule in Bundelkhand until the 14th century but their great days were over. Their history is clear that the part played by the Chandellas in the politics of northern India was by no means a small one.

The history of Ancient India is one of almost continuous warfare broken by occasional periods of short lived peace. The doctrine of Nandala which epitomises the Hindu conception of interstate relations, is essentially a doctrine of strife and struggle. And it was no mere abstract theory, but embodied the experience of political leaders through countless generations. The factors which contributed to this frequency of warfare were various. A more potent factor was the Hindu ideal of Vijigisa. Ancient texts inculcate times without number that fighting constituted the essential function of a king (Manu Samhita vii-98) that Pacifism and kingship so to say, were contradiction in terms. A king's highest duty was not to shun war but to get ready to smite his foes. Like a snake swallowing up mice, says Vasishana a pre-Kautilya author on politics "the earth swallows the king who refuses to fight and the Brahman who is unduly attached to wife and children (Sam·iparavii 57.3). Like a fisher-
ing and killing fish, a king can never attain prosperity without tearing the vitals of his enemy and performing other violent deeds. The armed might of your foe should be completely destroyed by ploughing it up and mowing it down or otherwise afflicting it by famine, starvation and third (Mahabharata: 1919). Elsewhere it is emphasised that "no respect is due to a king that does not somehow or other subdue his enemies. He sinks like co. in the mud, and is helpless as an ant (Mahabharata:1919). There is, it is said again "absolutely no rule but conflict for one of the warrior castes".

This incessant harping on war as an instrument of policy was not without purpose. In the congeries of small states into which India was habitually divided, often without natural frontiers marking them off into separate geographical units, military strength was the only guarantee for the continued existence of a kingdom. It was a guarantee not merely against strong rivals in the neighbourhood, but against the subtler forces of internal disintegration. But there was perhaps a deeper reason behind this ceaseless advocacy of war. The Hindus, it is well known, had evolved a synthesis out of the heterogeneous mass of customs, traditions, values, tastes and beliefs, held by the various tribes and races inhabiting this vast continent. This synthesis was already a well-established fact before the rise of Maurya empire, and was never seriously disturbed till the advent of Islam. But there was nothing corresponding to this cultural unity in the political sphere. From very early times, therefore, men longed to set up a common political organisation for the whole of India, giving birth to the concept
cakravartin or sarvabhauma (paramount sovereign). "Monarchy at its highest", says the Atharva Veda (VIII. 41), "should have an empire extending right up to natural boundaries; it should be territorially all-embracing, up to the very ends, uninterrupted, and constitute and establish one state and administration in the land up to the seas. Kautilya defines a cakravartin as one holding sway over the whole land "extending north to south from the Himalayas to the sea and measuring a thousand yojana across (Kautilya Arth. 1919). Whether they consciously believed it or not, most of the great war lords of ancient India seem to have acted in pursuance of this ideal. The motive force behind the endless campaigns and expeditions of the Mauryas and the Guptas, of the Gurjara Pratihars, the Palas and the Pashtrakutas does not seem to have been mere ambition, a passion for conquering for the sake of conquering, but conscious or unconscious urge to bring the whole country under one single hegemony. The success attained was often partial and temporary. It was because the forces of disintegration were too strong to be permanently surmounted. The vastness of the country, the difficulty of intercommunication, the selfish ambition of local chiefs, the lack of general ideas and common interests, the almost total absence, in a word, of all the sources from which every government must draw its life and strength, this general condition rendered all attempts at empire-building infructuous. But nonetheless the ideal was there, consciously held by some, unconsciously by almost all; and its existence accounts for, to some extent at any rate, the frequency of internecine strife in ancient India."
Concurrently with the king's duty to fight, ancient writers have stressed and eulogised the soldier's duties as second to none. The Santiparva (63, 24) says: "Among men the highest duties are those performed by the warrior caste. The whole world is subject to the might of their arms. All the duties, principal and subordinate of the three other orders are dependent for their observance upon the duties of the warrior." And the essence of the warrior's duty, like that of the king, lies in fighting. No matter how challenged, the warrior, who is true to his salt, must respond. He must, moreover, never think of fleeing from the battle-field. "The gods headed by Indra send calamities unto those who forsake their comrades in battle, and come home with unwounded limbs (Mahabharat Santiparva (1919), p. 97, 20). No only do they get disrepute in this world, but are condemned to eternal hell after death (Sukraniti:1914). Shisma roundly asserts that those who seek to save their own life by deserting their comrades should be slain with staves or clods, or burnt in a fire of dry grass, or slaughtered like a beast (Mahabharat: 1919, Santi, p. 97, 21, 22).

On the other hand, the man who dies a soldier's death on the battle-field is promised forgiveness of all his sins and the thrilling delights of a sensual paradise. The following passage from the Mahabharata is illustrative of sentiments shared by all, and expressed almost everywhere:

"The men their lives who bravely yield
don't upon the battle-field,
and their enemies fall all together near"
There nymphs divine these heroes meet,
with witching smiles and accents sweet,
Run up and cry in emulous strife,
'Make me', 'nay, me', 'nay, me' 'thy wife'.

(Indian antiquity: 772, X-92)

Sukra asserts that the great position that is acquired by sages after long and tedious penances is also attained by warriors who meet death in war. "This is at once penance, virtue, and eternal religion. The man, who does not flee from battle, does at once perform the duties of the four asramas". In this world, the author adds, to men go beyond the solar sphere in heaven, viz., the suster ascetic and the soldier who is killed in battle with his face to the foe (Sukraniti:1914). Such is the burden of teachings of the ancient authors. The warrior must kill or be killed in the fight; there is to be no third alternative. If he conquers the foe, he attains to fame and glory in earthly life; if he is defeated and killed in the fray, he is transported straightaway to heaven (Rgveda Samhita: 1911).

There are reasons to think that these maxims, which appealed at once to the basest and the highest in man, left a deep impress on the life of the military communities. They prepared the warriors for suffering and pain, restraint and violence, blood and tears—prepared them to embrace the horrors of destruction and terrors of the tomb cheerfully. Referring to the Maharastria country, the Chinese pilgrim, Huen Tsang, says: "Whenever a general is despatched on a military expedition,
although he is defeated and his army is destroyed, he is not himself subjected to bodily punishment; only he has to exchange his soldier's dress for that of a woman much to his shame and chagrin. So many times these men put themselves to death to avoid such disgrace". Ulbi relates how Jayapala king of Mathinda, was on two successive occasions defeated by Subuktagin and his more famous son, Sultan Mahmud and how, smarting under a sense of shame and dishonour, he caused a funeral pyre to be erected and perished in its flames (Elliot: 1772). Pirisha adds that a custom prevailed among the Hindus that when a Raja was overpowered twice by strangers, he became disqualified to reign (Brigg's (John): 1772).

The code of military honour included other articles besides victory or death on the battle-field. Wounded and armless opponents, for instance, were to be considered as exempt from slaughter. It was also regarded as a gross offence to refuse quarter to an armed enemy, who had ceased fighting and asked for mercy. Such a person might be imprisoned, but never wounded or slain (Mahabharat: 1919 Santiparva 45,12,96,13). Similarly, it was forbidden to slay one who was weary or asleep, one who was walking along a road unaware of danger, one who was greatly enfeebled by wounds or stricken with grief, one who lingered trustfully, as well as the insane, the wounded, servants, camp-followers, old men, children and women (Manusamhita: 1920, VII-90-94). Moreover, prisoners of war were to be cared for and treated with humanity. The Santiparva (95,12-14) lays down that
captured opponents should either be sent to their homes, or if
brought to the victor's quarters, should have their wounds
attended to by skilful surgeons, and when cured, set at liberty.
Further, weapons which caused unnecessary pain or which inflicted
more suffering than was indispensable to overcome the foe were
condemned. "When a king fights with his foes", says Haru (VII, 90)
"let him not strike with instruments concealed, with barbed or
poisoned weapons, the points of which are blazing with fire". The
seizure or destruction of enemy's property unless imperatively
demanded by the necessities of war was also prohibited. Temples
and their property in places under military occupation and the
private property of individual citizens were on no account to be

To what extent these conventions of chivalry were observed
in actual practice we do not know. It is probable that, like
the Hague and Geneva conventions in modern times, these rules
were often forgotten in the bitterness of the conflict. Instances
are on record of villages and towns being burnt and destroyed,
in which combatants and non-combatants alike suffered (This
several southern kings are recorded to have burnt and plundered
Citrakuta (Ep. Ind. IX, 179; Ind. Ant. XII, 221). The eastern
Calukya prince Cunaka-Vijayasity is known to have occupied and
burnt the capital city of the Pastrakutas. The Cambay Plates of
Govinda IV record the devastation of the city of Mahodaya by
Indra III (Ep. Ind. IX, 28). Somesvaradeva of Nagavamsa is stated
to have "burnt Vengi like the great Arjuna who fired the Khandava
forest" (Ep. Ind. X, 26). Bilhana's Vikramankadevacarita describes a war waged between Vikramaditya VI and his brother Jayasimha. In course of this war, it is stated, "villages were plundered and burnt and their inhabitants dragged into captivity" (Ind. Ant. V, 373). of the desecration of temples and sanctuaries by relentless conquerors, (Thus the Hathi-Gumpha Inscription tells us that when king Nanda conquered Kalinga, he carried the throne of Jina belonging to Kalinga as the highest trophy. A Gavarnad Inscription (d. sake 993-4) informs us that Rajendra-cola, when he invaded Velava, burnt down many temples, and defiled and damaged the Jain sanctuaries erected by Parmandi (Ex. Ind. XV, 345). and of the imprisonment of women in violation of the precepts of the Dharma-sastra (Bana tells us that the king of Malwa, after defeating and slaying Grahavarman Maukari, cruelly misused the latter's queen, Rajyasri, "confining her like a brigand's wife, with a pair of iron fetters kissing her feet" (Haracarita, tr. by Cowell, p. 153). The Caudavaho (p. 191, vv. 695-697) proudly records that Yasovarman, after having routed and killed the king of Cuda, carrier the ladies of his harem into slavery and made them ply the camaras over him in public durbar. The Bilhari Cedi Inscr. refers to the "crowds of captive women of enemies who again and again were made prisoners" (Ep. Ind. II, 265, v. 25). It was sometimes a matter of boast for prasasti-karas that the wives of vanquished princes were lingering in the prisons of their patron kings (Ep. Ind. I, 136). There are instances also of the use of treachery and fraud, of broken pledges, of cruel assassinations in cold blood. War is, and has
always been, inherently brutal in its nature. If it "opens up the most fruitful field to all virtues," as Frederick the Great remarked, it also evokes the meanest instincts of human nature.

On the whole, however, it would seem that wars in ancient India were characterised by less violence and savagery than wars elsewhere. There is no recorded instance of such wanton and cold-blooded atrocity as Athens perpetrated against Melos, Corcyra and Mytilene, or the wearers of the Cross against the defenders of the Crescent in 1099 A.D. Such incidents of war as the indiscriminate slaughter of all men of military age or the enslavement of women and children of the conquered state were hardly known. These wars, moreover, did not usually lead to any great political changes. On the whole, the chiefs were considerate of each other's rights. It was a well-established maxim of statecraft that a victor should acquiesce in the continuance of the laws, beliefs and customs of the vanquished peoples, and that instead of seeking the extermination of the defeated dynasties he should be content with their submission and tribute (Kautilya Arth. 1919, Bk. VII.16). Kalidasa tersely describes this policy as one of "uprooting and replacing. This was also the Kautilyan ideal of dharmavijaya (Kautilya Arth. 1919, Bk. XI.1) and the typical Hindu method of creating unity out of diversity in the political sphere. The history of India, especially from the Gupta period onwards, offers numerous illustrations of the application of this policy. Samudragupta's Deccan expedition, for instance, was one; the conquest of the Pandyan kingdom by
Parantaka I was another. Conscious that this was perhaps the best way of harmonizing the conflicting interests of imperialism and local independence, later-day empire-builders seem to have transformed this policy into a tradition. "The Indians", writes Sulaiman (9th century A.D.) "sometimes go to war for conquest, but the occasions are rare.... when a king subdues a neighbouring state, he places over it a man belonging to the family of the fallen prince, who carries on the government in the name of the conqueror. The inhabitants would not suffer it to be otherwise (Eliot 1772). The pursuit of this policy, however, had to important results. It led to the growth of that class of feudatory chiefs— the svantasa, maha-svanta, and maharaja—who figure so prominently and so profusely in the records of Gupta and post-Gupta India. It is also the reason why some of the princely families in India can boast of an ancestry unequaled by any royal house in Europe.

Broadly speaking, moreover, these wars seldom involved any grave disturbance either to the social equilibrium or the economic life of the people. It is a fact of paramount importance to remember that in India the social, economic and religious life of the people pursued their course irrespective of the activities of the state, and, consequently, wars and campaigns were generally regarded as the business of chiefs and kings and the professionals who chose to serve them. The bulk of the people were indifferent to the fortunes of war, and did not believe that they had any great interest whether their king "was called Harold or was called
William”. This was partly due to the growth of despotism, which
became the prevailing form of government, and the consequent
dissociation of the people from the activities of the state, and
partly to the comparative immunity from violence and molestation
which the wealth-producing classes in the country enjoyed. As early
as the 4th century B.C. Megasthenes noticed this peculiar trait
of Indian warfare. At the very time when a battle was going on,
he says, the neighbouring cultivators might be seen quietly
pursuing their work,- "perhaps ploughing, gathering in their
crops, pruning the trees, or reaping the harvest”. We have an
Indian corroboration of this assertion in an incidental statement
occuring in the Abhidharma-kosavyakhya. "Philosophers", we are told,
"while destroying the opinion of their adversaries must carefully
respect the principles of logic, because these principles are
useful to them; just as kings, while destroying the soldiers of
their enemies, respect the field-labourer who is the common help
of both armies. Hsun Tsiang affirms that although there were
enough of rivalries and wars in the 7th century A.D., the country
at large was little injured by them.

In the history of warfare, India has given us a unique example.
A question which inevitably faces every student of
India’s past, especially of her military system, is- what were
the causes which led to the fall of the Indus; why, in other words,
did the Indian states fall an easy prey to the Muhammadan Turks
in the 11th and 12th century A.D.? It is difficult to answer this
question in a few paragraphs. These causes were so numerous and
so involved, they were at work through so long a time, the full
understanding of their operation requires so extensive a knowledge
of the laws which govern the growth and decline of peoples, that
a volume may be required for a clear presentation of the subject.
A brief account of the matter is made still further difficult
from the fact that the fall of the Hindus has been very often
made the subject of partial and incomplete treatment in order to
prove some particular point, perhaps to make vivid the disabling
effects of the doctrines of ahimsa and karma; perhaps to make
manifest the malign influence of caste on the life of the people.
Undoubtedly, the doctrine of ahimsa tended to create in certain
sections of the people a deep abhorrence to all forms of violence;
and the theory of karma, as popularly interpreted, produced a
fatalistic outlook and disinclination for effort. But it would
be as erroneous to attribute the downfall of the Hindus to the
effects of these doctrines, as it is to ascribe to Christianity
the downfall of the Roman empire. In both cases other and deeper
causes were at work, sapping the foundations of vitality and
strength; and just as the Roman empire would have fallen, as it
did, even if Christianity had not found many adherents within
its borders, so would the Hindu states have succumbed to the
Muhammadan Turks, even if they had never known the doctrines of
ahimsa and karma.

Undoubtedly also, the caste system exercised a pernicious
influence on the life of the people. It divided the community into
classes separated by intractable barriers, inhibited freedom of
choice, promoted rigid sectional attributes and impeded the growth
of a common national consciousness. Nevertheless to explain the
downfall of the Hindu states by this one premise is to simplify
a problem which is inherently complex. It should be borne in mind
that in spite of the prevalence of the caste system, Chandragupta
Maurya drove out the remnants of the Greek hosts left behind by
Alexander and beat back Seleucus Nikator, Chandragupta and Yasodhara
charman repulsed the Huns, the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar
checked the onrush of the armies of Islam for well over two hundred
years (1336 to 1556 A.D.), and the Marathas became a mighty power
on the ruins of the Mogul empire. Some writers would have us
think that the caste system, by restricting the field of recruit-
ment, diminished the fighting strength of the Hindu states, and
thus prevented them from becoming what may be called "nations in
arms". It has been already shown that the theory that troops
were recruited from the Ksatriyas alone has no foundation in fact;
and a "nation in arms" is an entirely modern concept- a legacy
of the French Revolution to the world. Nor is there much truth
in the statement that caste prevented the growth of a feeling "that
fighting for or defending one's own country was everyone's
business and not of a particular class of people (Modern Review,
30 January 1930) for such consciousness was equally absent in other medieval
countries and communities where hereditary caste system of the
Indian type was never known. In medieval Europe, for instance,
fighting was almost wholly done by the feudal knights, and at the
beginning of the modern age, by professional standing armies
maintained by absolute monarchs. As in India, so in Europe down
to the eighteenth century, the mass of the people seldom mixed
themselves up in wars undertaken by their masters.

The immediate causes of the fall of the Hindu states may
be roughly divided into two groups: first, political causes;
second, military. Among political causes may be mentioned the
fact that the commencing years of the eleventh century, when the
Turkish tempest beat upon the western flank of the Hindu world,
were an age of decaying dynasties and of kingdoms that were falling
to pieces. After the break-up of the Gurjara-Pratihara empire,
northern India split up into many small kingdoms. Some of them
were formed by tribal chiefs, some by military adventurers; their
boundaries were shifting, and they were continually at feud with
one another. This division and disunion did not make it easy for
the Hindu princes to unite for a common defence and repulse of the
enemy. Mr. McNickle’s remark that “if Alexander had found India
united in arms to withstand his aggression, the star of his good
fortune would have culminated with the passage of the Indus” is
not wholly inapplicable to Muhammad-bin-Kasim, Sultan Mahmud or
Muhammad of Ghur. This division and disunion also enabled the
crafty invaders from the north to exploit the differences within
the country, for the dread of the foreigner was apt to be less than
the dread of the strong neighbour.

But the disruptive forces did not merely split up the
country into numerous small kingdoms; they worked deeper than that.
Even since the days of the Guptas feudal tendencies had been
steadily developing in northern India, and there are good reasons to think that with the passing away of the old powerful dynasties, they reached their maturity about the eleventh century A.D. The consequence was that the numerous kingdoms, into which northern India was divided, were themselves subdivided into a multitude of territorial fragments, ruled over by petty chiefs or lords. The exact relationship between the overlord and the feudatory chiefs cannot be determined with any amount of exactitude; but in broad outline it does not seem to have been very different from what obtained between kings and their vassals in feudal Europe. That is to say, while enjoying virtual autonomy in their own domains, the feudatory chiefs were bound by some kind of allegiance to their overlord and were expected to help him in times of war. There is, however, ample testimony that the feudatories were often intensely jealous of one another and did not look upon their subordination with equanimity. Whenever due to external or internal reasons there was a decline in the fortunes of the overlord's family, the more powerful among the feudatory chiefs threw off their dependence and forced the smaller vassals in their neighbourhood to change their allegiance. In fact, most of the Hindu states of this period seem to have been organised on such unstable, semi-feudal basis. Consequently the armies with which they fought, being mostly composed of the retainers of their subordinate chiefs, lacked that uniformity of organisation and unity of control and command which is one of the essential requisites of success in war.
This brings us to a consideration of the military causes.

"The Hindu defenders of their country", V.A. Smith rightly remarks, "although fully equal to their assailants in courage and contempt of death, were distinctly inferior in the art of war, and for that reason lost their independence (Smith; V.A.: 1923). Success in war, it is well known, depends primarily on three factors, viz., moral qualities, organisation and equipment, and leadership. An exact comparison and assessment of the Hindus and their northern antagonists on these three counts would be a difficult task. The contemporary or semi-contemporary Muhammadan chronicles, from which the story of the military operations of the time is mostly derived, are often one-sided and misleading in their statements. Yet certain facts seem to stand out in glaring light, and certain inferences are possible on the basis of those facts.

By moral qualities are meant virtues like courage, energy and determination. Although the Hindus were not lacking in these virtues, the Muhammadan Turks seem to have possessed them in a larger measure. It is an amply-proved fact of history that during the simpler and more primitive stages of racial and tribal existence the moral qualities of courage and self-sacrifice, the complete subordination of individual advantage and individual comfort to the good of the community, are most apparent as a natural growth and seem to need least artificial cultivation. A civilized and prosperous community, on the other hand, is not a congenial soil for the natural development of these virtues; and the Hindus were
infinitely more civilised and prosperous than the Turks. Moreover, with this rude vigour of semi-civilised barbarians they combined the fierce religious zeal of neo-converts. "The great missionary creed of Muhammad, which to the Arabs and Persians had become a familiar matter of routine, was a source of fiery inspiration to the fresh untutored men of the steppes. To spread the faith by conquest doubled their natural zest for battle and endowed them with the devoted valour of martyrs (Lane Feres:1884). "The best soldier", said Oliver Cromwell, "is the soldier who knows what he is fighting for and loves what he knows". Like Cromwell's Ironsides, the Turks derived strength and fortitude from the belief that they were fighting on behalf of God, and that God's benign protection was always with them. The Hindus, on the other hand, lacked a common ideal for which to fight and die. Nationalism and patriotism, as controlling forces of history were not yet born, here or elsewhere; and the very nature of their religion, which was a blend of many different elements - a synthesis of diverse customs, thoughts and beliefs - made them incapable of being fanatically intolerant. It is true that common antipathy against the foreigners, who plundered and destroyed their temples and sanctuaries, and who trampled under foot all that they had for ages held dear and sacred, united on a few occasions some of the ruling princes in a common endeavour to cast out the intruders; but it was not a strong enough cohesive force to survive a disaster or keep in check the disruptive tendencies within the country. In short, the absence of a higher, ennobling ideal rendered the Hindus incapable of
combined effort, involving any continuous strain of risk or hardship.

The comparatively inferior morale of Hindu India became evident as the drama unfolded itself. Sultan Mahmud met with stubborn resistance in his first encounters with Jayapala (1001 A.D.) and Chandapala (1008 A.D.); but the resounding victories which he won against the kings of Shatinda (Rathindah) seem to have sent a thrill of consternation among the other ruling princes of India. Their demoralisation, indeed, became so complete that sometimes we hear of them fleeing their capitals and hiding themselves in forests and inaccessible hills without striking a single blow (Elliot: 1772). The panic with which they were seized is strikingly illustrated in a letter which Bhimpal is said to have written to the Candella king, Canda, "Sultan Mahmud", runs the letter, "is not like the rulers of Hind, and is not the leader of black men. It is obviously advisable to seek safety from such a person, for armies flee away before the very name of him and his father. I regard his bridle as much stronger than yours, for he never contents himself with one blow of the sword, nor does his army consent itself with one hill out of a whole range. If therefore you design to contend with him, you will suffer, but do as you like— you know best. If you wish for your own safety, you will remain in concealment (Elliot: 1772). One notices a similar demoralisation overtaking the Hindu princes after the second battle of Parain (1192 A.D.), where Prthviraj with his confederate hosts had fought and lost. There was no
long-lasting organised resistance after this great disaster; instead of pusillanimity, vacillation and weak surrender. The Dabhoi Inscription (c. 1200 A.D.) remarkably illustrates the dread of the Hindu princes of this period when it says: "So many god-like kings are there on this earth; but they all become uneasy at heart even at the mention of the Turuska king (Epigraphic Indica: I.26).

Nor in battle efficiency were the scales exactly even between the Hindus and the Turks. Although the weapons used by the two adversaries were much the same, they do not seem to have been wholly on a par in the matter of equipment. As it has been pointed out before, whereas the Hindus put excessive reliance on the "illusory strength of elephants, their enemies depended for their success on the skilful use of a well-trained and well-equipped cavalry. The cavalry gave the Muslim forces an overwhelming superiority in mobility, an advantage emphasised by the vastness of the theatre of war and the peculiarities of its terrain. It enabled the Turkish generals to employ what is known as shock tactics, and gave them such elements of tactical advantage as surprise, advantage of ground and simultaneous attack from several quarters. In the matter of organisation, too, the Turks were at an advantage. They fought under one undivided command and obeyed one will. This rendered combination among the subordinate leaders possible; and on this combination their success in no small measure depended. The Hindu armies, on the other hand, as stated above, were often organised on a semi-feudal basis; and feudal
contingents are seldom as effective in action as they are impressive in size. It is probable also that the confederacies which were formed by some Hindu kings, as in the time of Jayapala, Anandapala and Prthviraja, suffered from a similar organisational weakness. We may well believe that the troops of the allied states were not trained and organised on uniform lines and prepared for being moulded into one army.

But nowhere is the contrast between the two adversaries more evident than in higher leadership. Hindu generals like Jayapala, Anandapala and Prthviraj were endowed with great gallantry and personal courage. But they were surprisingly lacking in strategical enterprise and tactical initiative. It is curious that throughout this long-drawn struggle they never posted frontier guards along the narrow passes of the northern frontier and never sought to cut off the enemy by an ambuscade while passing through the hills. Prthviraja, the last of the stalwarts, who has become a hero of poetry and romance, had won military laurels for himself before his engagement with Muhammad of Ghor, and he seems to have based on this limited experience an exaggerated belief in his own military abilities. It is sad to reflect that after the first battle of Tarain (1191 A.D.) in which he won a signal victory over his Muhammadan adversary, he did not press his advantage to the farthest limit. Instead he halted his troops, leisurely besieged the fortress of Sarhind, and neglected to take adequate precautions against the return of
the Chorian chief. It is true that when next year Muhammad came back with a yet larger force Prthviraja fought out the issue with courage and determination; but no gallantry and no heroism can save a people from the results of neglecting war preparation. Moreover, a common mistake which most Hindu chiefs of this period seem to have committed was their persistent adoption of defensive tactics. It was a mistake which robbed them of the chief elements of tactical advantage and surrendered them to the enemy. The Hindu chiefs forgot that an army condemned to eternal defensive can never deal a decisive blow. They forgot that the moral force of a confident anticipation of victory lies ever with the attack.

The Turks, on the other hand, were more fortunate in their generals. Both Sultan Yekmad and Muhammad of Chor were men capable of animating their troops with a spirit of deep devotion. They appealed not merely to their greed and lust, but awakened in them an indomitable sense of duty towards religion. Moreover, not only did they possess the traditions of Parthian strategy, but also a complete system of tactics carefully elaborated to suit the requirements of the age. In craft and resourcefulness, too, they far surpassed their Indian antagonists. Above all, whereas the Hindu love of vyuhas committed the armies of India to a cult of positions and defensive tactics, they regarded it as a fundamental proposition of warfare that offence was better than defence, that the sword was better than the shield. It will be too much to believe that the Muhammadan generals did not commit mistakes; yet a ruthless offensive spirit seems to have so saturat-
ed the minds of the Chahnavite and Ghorian officers and men that it sufficed, notwithstanding errors in detail, to guide them in the right path of victory.

Of the Muhammadan generals, who figure prominently in the annals of the time, Sultan Mahmud in particular deserves to rank as one of the great commanders in history. A man of infinite courage and of indefatigable energy of body and mind he never owned a defeat during more than thirty years of almost incessant warfare. He was not merely a great planner of campaigns and a shrewd marshaller of hosts, but the stoutest lance in his own army (Nazim Muhammed, 1931). It is amazing how with comparatively small armies he achieved conquests which added vast tracts of territory to the inheritance left by his father. He trusted to skilful tactics, to the mobility of his troops and to the rapidity of his marches to overcome the larger and more clumsy masses of his opponents (Nazim Muhammed, 1931).

Muhammad of Ghor, though not as great a captain as Sultan Mahmud, was certainly superior to his Indian antagonists. He seems to have known the great precept which modern military science has claimed as its own that "in a cavalry combat the side which holds back the last reserve must win". In the second battle of Tarain, which was his crowning achievement, he demonstrated the truth of this dictum and also the tremendous efficacy of shock tactics. Minhaju-s Siraj writes that "The Sultan drew up his battle array, leaving the main body in the rear, with the banners,
canopies and elephants, to the number of several divisions. His plan of attack being formed, he advanced quietly. The light unarmoured horsemen were made into four divisions of 10,000, and were directed to advance and harass the enemy on all sides, on the right and on the left, in the front and in the rear, with their arrows. When the enemy collected his forces to attack, they were to support each other, and to charge at full speed. By these tactics the infidels were worsted, the Almighty gave us the victory over them, and they fled (Elliot:1772). Finishta adds that the battle raged back and forth from sunrise to sun-set, and when the Hindu army was well-nigh exhausted by a continuous succession of shocks, Muhammad put himself at the head of 12,000 of his best horses, whose riders were covered with steel armour, and making one desperate charge, carried death and destruction throughout the Hindoo ranks (Briggs John:1772). It is thus clear that the second battle of Tarain, like the battle of the Hydaspes fought many centuries earlier between Porus and Alexander, was essentially a general's battle—the triumph of genius in command, not of mere valour.

At the commencement of this work we stated that throughout more than a millennium the art of war in India followed a stereotyped course, marked by no remarkable improvements in any of its branches. Strabo, borrowing from Megasthenes, says that the Indians did not pursue accurate knowledge of any kind, except that of medicine; and "in the case of some arts, it is even accounted vicious to carry their study far, the art of war, for instance."
But the causes of this static character of Hindu military system seem to have been deeper than a mere sense of its inherent viciousness. A similar lack of progress is noticeable in the political thought of India after Kautilya. These seem to point to the fact that the creative power of antiquity in certain spheres of speculation and achievement was exhausted. This exhaustion became manifest in other spheres as centuries rolled on. Having brought civilisation up to a certain point, the Hindus seem to have been able to carry it no further. Even in those fields where the most remarkable results had been attained, as, for example, in that of philosophy and metaphysics, nothing further seemed to be possible, except to work over the old results into new forms. Beruni bears testimony to the fact that by the 11th century the Hindus had completely lost their old genius for assimilation and absorption, and had become a grossly superstitious and vegetating people.

"According to their view," says the Muhammadan savant, "there is no other country on earth but theirs, no other race of men but theirs, and no created beings have any knowledge or science whatsoever. Their haughtiness is such that, if you tell them of any science or scholar in Thurasan and Beris, they will think you to be both an ignoramus and a liar." This dismal attitude of mind, which refused either to learn or unlearn anything - a characteristic of the Bourbons - this pathetic state of intellectual stolidity was at once a cause and symptom of decay. In the first century A.D. the Roman Tacitus wrote his Germania, telling his countrymen that the barbarians living beyond the Rhine and the
Danube should not be despised, and that they possessed certain intrinsic virtues which the more civilised Romans might cultivate with profit. The Romans paid no heed to that warning, with the result that their great empire was overwhelmed by the inflowing tide of vigorous fighting barbarism. The Hindus committed a similar blunder. They shut themselves up in a world of isolation; narrow, cramped, torpid. They set up insurmountable barriers which no gust of wind and no ray of light could penetrate. The result was stagnation; stagnation brought decay, and decay disaster. The saying of Emerson is ever true that a thing cannot be crushed by a blow from without until ready to perish from decay within.

In the end a few words may be said on the trend of events in North-Eastern and Central India during the transitional period between 9th to 12th century. If we take a superficial view it is very difficult to understand the real force of the ideas which were directing the military and political activities of the Rajput dynasties and we incline to agree with Smith that this was a period when "India reverted to her normal condition of anarchical autonomy (Smith, V.A.: 1924) if however we study the history of the period from a different point of view, we can understand the significance of the dynastic struggles. The objects of these struggles was the establishment of another imperial power. For more than two centuries this struggle continued until the moselm, largely helped by the situation which we
have described established their authority in northern India. Thus the legacy of the Empire left by the Pratiharas continued even after their decline. It is in this idea of empire that we are to find the significance of the inter-state struggles of the 11th and 12th centuries. It is strange that the Rajput dynasties, who could combine so well against another strong dynasty did not or could not combine their forces against the Moslems. The alliances that were made against the Moslem invaders were of a very loose nature without any real unity or whole-hearted concerted action. The collapse of the Chandela Rajpur dynasties marks the end of Hindu rule and the beginning of Moslem supremacy in India. Thus the military history of the Chandela Rajput dynasties of this (9th century to 12th century) period is of great importance for it links the period of the Pratiharas with that of the next great North Indian Empire- the sultanate of Delhi.
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