Chapter III

Contemporary Political and Military Conditions of India

We find one notable difference in the political conditions of India at the time of the Arab invasion of Sind and that on the eve of the Ghaznavite penetration into Hindustan. At the opening of 8th century there was no foreign colony, much less a foreign power, in the land except few of Arab merchants on western coast whose primary vocation was trade. On the other hand in the 10th century there were two kingdoms on this soil, namely Multan and Mansura or Sind. The considerable portion of the population of these two kingdoms were follower of Islam. There were also colonies in southern India, particularly in Malabar where Hindu Rulers had foolishly permitted the foreigners to proselytize the native population. As was natural for these new converts to a foreign religion, the preferred the foreign ways of life also and had sympathy with fellow Muslims from Ghazni and Central Asia. Sabuktigin and Mahmud of Ghazni, as also Mahmud of Ghur, about 150 years later, were lucky to enjoy some kind of moral support from a section of the Indian people.
The history of the Arab kingdoms need not be related. Suffice it to say that they comprised the whole of modern Multan and Sind and threw off the Caliph’s yoke in 871 and since that date, enjoyed complete independence. In view, however, of their peculiar position in a foreign country they nominally preferred allegiance to the caliph for diplomatic reason.

There were dynastic changes in this kingdom, from time to time. At the beginning of our period, Multan was ruled by Karmathians and its ruler was Fathe Daud. He seems to have been a man of some ability. Sind proper was still ruled over by the Arabs. The neighbouring Hindu kingdoms, despite their political and religious experience at the hand of Arabs, had left them unmolested. Every where the Arabs and, curiously enough, new Hindu converts to Islam, were shown consideration and allowed to follow their religion and to make new converts. They constituted a power to be reckoned with.

There was indigenous rule in the rest of the country notable among them may be enumerated in the following:

**The Hindushahi Kingdom**

The 1st important Hindu kingdom extended from the river Chenab to the Hindukush mountains and included Kabul. “Its royal house had resisted, single handed, the Arab encroachment almost successfully for 300 years. It
was, however, compelled to abandon a part of Afghanistan, including Kabul and to shift its capital to Udbhanpur or Waihind.”¹ The king about the end of 10th century was the famous Jaipal who was a brave soldier and an able ruler. The condition of his kingdom obliged him to bear the Turkish onslaught from Ghazni.

Kashmir

The next notable kingdom was that of Kashmir. Its ruling family, the house of Utpala came into conflict with the Hindushahi kingdom and the Empire of Kannauj. The famous Kashmiri king Shankar Varman, extended the boundaries of Kashmir in several directions. He died fighting with the people Urasa, the modern Hazara district. His death was followed by a great confusion. The Brahmans of the valley, therefore, raised a member of their own fraternity, named Yasaskara, to the throne. His line came to an end within a brief period and was followed by that of Parvagupta during his time, his queen Dida, was the Virtual ruler. This powerful lady ultimately seized the throne and crowned herself as a queen. She ruled over Kashmir till 1003 when the throne passed to Sangrama Raja. Thus, when Mahmud of Ghazni was Lammering at the gates of India, the reins of Kashmir were in the hands of a woman and the condition of the country was far from satisfactory.
**Kannauj**

The imperial city of Kannauj had passed into the hands of a new dynasty known as the Pratihara dynasty, in or about 836 A.D., notable ruler of the Pratihara dynasty was Vatsaraja, who won the title of Samrat or emperor. He was succeeded by Nagabhattacha II who, too was a notable fighter. He defeated Dharmapala king of Bangal, but he suffered defeat at the hands of the Rashtrakutas. The Pratiharas continued to exercise sway over Kannauj and Madhyadish and to fight, sometime successfully and at others unsuccessfully, with their neighbours in the north and the south. The Pratihara king, Mahipala, was badly defeated by Indra III, the Rashtrakuta king of the Dakhin. He lost his capital Kannauj. He was, however, restored by a Chandela king. The Pratihara power was nevertheless a precarious hold over the upper Ganga valley and parts of Rajasthan and Malwa. The last king of this dynasty was Rajyapala. He was a feeble monarch and his capital, Kannauj, was invaded by Mahmud of Ghazni in 1018 A.D. The Pratiharas in, their early days had successfully fought the Arabs and defended the country against them, but they had grown effete and, in the early years of the 11th century so, they succumbed before the might of the Turkish.

**The Palas of Bangal**

Devapala of the Pala dynasty died after thirty-nine years of reign,
sometime between 833 and 878 A.D. His successors were weak and the kingdom of Bangal rapidly declined under them. The degenerate later Pala kings came into conflict with the Pratiharas of Kannauj and brought sufferings of Bengal. Mahipala I who ruled Bangal in the first quarter of the 11\textsuperscript{th} century, was a contemporary of Mahmud of Ghazni. He succeeded in restoring, at least partially, the fortunes of his family, but a part of Bangal had already fallen into the hands of the powerful vassals who only vaguely recognized the over-lordship of the Pala kings. While Mahmud of Ghazni was wasting north-western India with fire and sword Bengal was threatened by the powerful Tamil ruler Rajendra Chola. In this warfare Bengal had the worst of it. It, however, remained immune from the Ghaznavite invasion owing to its distance.

The Dakhin Kingdom

The progress of the people in Southern India was marred by constant warfare among the ruling families. The early Chalukyas in the Dakhin had fallen in the struggle for supremacy, in 753 A.D., at the hands of the Rashtrakutas warfare with their neighbours, had given place to the later Chalukyas in 973 A.D. Similarly, the great Pallava dynasty had fallen towards the end of the 9\textsuperscript{th} century. The principal kingdoms in the south during our period were the later Chalukyas kingdom of Kalyani and the Chola kingdom of Tanjore. The founder of the later Chalukya dynasty was
Taila II who claimed descent from the early Chalukyas of Vatapi. He made Kalyani, in the Nizam’s dominion, his capital. His successors were involved in a struggle with Cholas of Tanjore. His son Rajendra Chola, was a great warrior and conqueror. He made extensive conquest in southern and northern India and was considered one of the greatest rulers in the country. While the Cholas and the Chalukyas were involved in a bitter conflict in the south, mighty empires in Hindustan were crumbling before the might of Mahmud of Ghazni.

**Minor States**

Beside the above there were several other small states in Northern India, notable among them, being the Chalukyas of Gujarat, the Chandelas of Bundelkhand and the Parmars of .

For nearly three centuries after the advent of the Arabs our country enjoyed immunity from foreign invasion. This long freedom foreign interference produced a feeling in the minds of our people and rulers that India could never be threatened by a foreign power. External vigilance, which is said to be the price of freedom, not only slackened but almost reached the vanishing point. The rulers neglected their armies. They failed to fortify the north-western frontier and to make an effective arrangement for the defence of the hilly passes through which foreign armies could enter the country. Side by side with this, the people of India failed to keep
in touch with the new military tactics and with the newly invented systems of warfare. Secondly for the same reason, the people lost completely the sense of patriotism and national order, which develops under the threat of danger from abroad. That was not an age of territorial patriotism, but whatever patriotism was disappeared owing to a false sense of security. Thirdly, a kind of narrow mindedness became the characteristic of the people from the 8th to 11th centuries of the Christian era. They believed that they were the chosen people and all other people were unfit to be associated with them. “The famous scholar Al-Biruni, who came to the country in the reigns of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni and studied Sanskrit and Hindu religion and thought, had to note with surprise that, Hindus believed that there is no country like theirs n nation like theirs, no king like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs. He adds that the ancestors of the Hindus were not narrow minded as the present (11th century) generation. He was also struck by the fact that the Hindus did not desire that a thing which has once been polluted should be purified and thus recovered”. ²

During this period this country was practically isolated from the rest of the world. Owing to this people ceased to come into touch with foreign lands and, therefore, remained ignorant of the happening, political, military and cultural, in the outside world. Want of contact with dissimilar peoples and
cultures bred stagnation and made the civilization decadent. In fact, a slow but sure decadence began to manifest itself in every aspect of the life of Indians during this period.

In the domain of religion also, which must always be the fountain head of right conduct and morality, perceptible degeneration crept in. The great Shankaracharya, who had organized Hinduism and given it a common philosophical background, had failed to purge it of great evils that had crept into it. “Vamamarga Dharma had become popular at this period, specially in Kashmir and Bengal. The followers of this creed indulged in wine, flesh fish and women, and they believed in the motto of eat drink and be merry. The vicious ideas of this school had permitted some of our educational institutions, particularly the University of Vikramashila in Bihar. Another evil which can be traced in its exaggerated from to this period was the ‘Devdasi’ system. Every important temple had a number of unmarried girls dedicated to the service of the deity. This bred corruption and temple prostitution became common.\(^3\) Tantrik literature, which was obscene in the extreme, developed rapidly in this era. It produced an adverse effect on morals. It was not considered derogatory by the greatest of scholars of this period to write obscene books. A minister to one of the kings in Kashmir wrote a book named, Kuttimi Matam’ or ‘opinions of a go-between’. Another great Sanskrit scholar Kashmendra published
‘Samaya Matraka’ or the autobiography of a prostitute. All this led to moral degeneration among the upper and the middle class people.

**Mahmud’s Small Ventures**

Historians are divided in their opinion regarding the numbers or the dates of his expedition. Whenever possible he made one year ad the general consensus of opinion is that he mad twelve such expeditions. Hindu authorities never mention distinctly his proceedings, which are known only from the account left by Mohammadan authors.

“His first attack was of course upon the frontier towns of the Khaiber pass. In September 1001, Mahmud left Ghazni with 15,000 horse and advanced to Peshawar where Jaipal I of the Punjab was prepared to meet him with 12,000 horses 3000 foot and 300 Elephants”.

Jaipala was marking time as he was expediting reinforcement from the tribal areas. Mahmud realized the situation and went into immediate action. The Hindus could not withstand the impetuosity of the Muslim horse and before noon they were routed, leaving 15,000 dead in the field or killed in pursuit. Jaipala was taken prisoner with his family and their Jewels including a necklace of enormous value worn by the raja formed part of Mahmud’s plunder.

He then advanced to Waihind, which to be identified with Udabhandha, the capital of the Shahis, Mahmud followed the tactics of his father and
dividing his troops into a number of regiments sent them to attack in successive waves. The Hindus put up a brave resistance but were once more defeated. Jaipal was set free on promising to pay 2,50,000 dinars and 25 elephants, but at the ransom was not at once forthcoming he was obliged to leave hostage for its payment. His son Anandpal sent the stipulated ransom and elephants to Mahmud and Jaipal and the other wastage were set free. With proud despair of his race Jaipala refused to survive his disgrace. Preferring death to dishonour he cast himself upon a funeral pyre.

He was succeeded by his son Anandpal (AD 1001) who continued the struggle with the foreigners but without successors.

Mahmud again invaded India in A.D. 1004 he marched from Ghazni to punish Bajra for his failure to support him. It is difficult to locate Bajra today. Some scholars identity it with Uch and Bhatinda. It was ruled by Baji Ray who put up a very brave fight Mahmud took Bhatiya by storm, and pillaged the city. “Baji Ray stabbed himself to death to escape capture by the Muslims. His head was carried to Mahmud and his troops were put to the sword”.\(^5\) Mahmud remained there for sometime, making arrangements for the permanent annexation of the state he started for Ghazni in 1005 when all the rivers were in spate. While crossing them he lost his plunder and much of his baggage. His passage was also obstructed
by Abul Fateh Daud, the ruler of Multan. “Mahmud marched against him in 1005 in autumn and in order to avoid the passage of the river in their lower waters marched by way of Und in the dominions of Anandpal, however, opposed his advance but was defeated and fled into Kashmir, and Mahmud pursued his way through the Punjab, plundering the country he advance”. The Sultan now advanced to Multan through the Shahi kingdom plundering the country.

The defeat of Anandpal unnerved Daud who shut himself up in Multan. The Sultan besieged the city for serve days and Daud had to buy to buy peace by consenting to pay yearly tribute of 20,000 golden dirhams and adjuration of the faith of the Ismaili sect.

At this time his Northern Province was invaded by Turks of Transexiana under Ilak Khan. He appointed Sukhpal, a grandson of Jaipal as Governor of the Indian province and himself marched to Khurasan to meet the invader Sukhpal accepted Islam and took the name of Nawasa Khan.

We are not concerned with details of Mahmud’s campaign against Ilak Khan who was driven across the Oxus, but it is interesting to note that a large number of Indians formed part of the victorious army.

As Mahmud returned to Ghazni in 1007 he learnt that Awasa Shah had apostatized and made an alliance with the Indian kings. Sultan immediately
marched to India to deal with the rebel. Nawasa Shah was captured and his treasures amounting to 40,000 dirhams were confiscated.

“In the following year AD 1008 Mahmud resolved further to Chastise Anandpal for his opposition to the passage of the Muslim army through his dominions on its way to Multan, and in the autumn of 1008 marched to Peshawar”. Anandpal followed his father’s example and organized a confederacy of Hind kings, including the rulers of Ujjain, Gwalior, Kannauj, Delhi and Ajmer, who took the field with a host which was larger than that opposed to Sabuktigin, and was under the supreme command of Visala-bera, the Chauhan Raja of Ajmer. Mahmud had never yet encountered such an army, and he hastily entrenched his camp and waited forty days facing the constantly sculling forces of the Hindus.

Each day brought fresh re-enforcement to the confederacy and it became a problem feeding so large a force. This was alleviated by the devotion of the women-folk who sold their jewels to enable their husbands to keep the field.

Mahmud protected his of following his usual tactics strove to entice the enemy to attack him in his own strong position. In this he succeeded and the Hindus attacked on December 31, 1008. The camp was stormed by a rush in force of the Khokhar tribe of the Punjab, who slew three or four thousand Muslims in a few minutes. Victory seemed to be within the grasp
of the Hindus when it was snatched from their hands by one of those unlucky accidents which have so other determined the fate of Indians battles. Anandpal’s elephants took fright, the rumour ran that the Raja was feeling from the field and a general stampede ensued. Instead of retreating before a victorious army, in the turn of an instant Mahmud found himself pursuing a panic-stricken crowd, the Mohammadan cavalry pursued them for two days and nights, killing eight thousand and capturing enormous booty. Loosely, organized confederates of Hindu contingents each under its own independent chief always proved incapable of withstanding the attack of fierce foreign cavalry obeying one will.

On a snow-covered spur of the Himalayan ranges, stood the fortress of Kangra or Bhimnagar and also known as Nagarkot. Its modern name is Kot Kangra. The fort was surrounded by a moat and was considered impregnable to mortal power. Its temple was rich in treasure presented by chiefs and devotees from different parts of India over the centuries. After some parleying the gates were opened to Mahmud on the third day after his arrival, and the booty which fell into his hands is “Said to have amounted to 700,000 dinars”.

A pavilion of silver and a canopy of Byzant time lion reared upon pillars of silver and gold also fell into his hands. With this plunder the returned to Ghazni and held and exhibition in the palace court. The entire world
flocked to Ghazni to see the fabulous wealth of India. Mahmud annexed all the territories to the west of the Sind including the Shahi capital Udabhandha.

Mahmud led an expedition against Narayan situated in Rajasthan in 1009. Cunningham identified Narayan with Narayanpur, in the old Alwar state. The Raja surrounded after a stiff resistance.

“In A.D. 1011 he visited Multan, where his authority was not yet firmly established, brought the province under more efficient control and extinguished the still glowing embers of heresy”.9 “Meanwhile Anandpal had died and had been succeeded by his son Jaipal II who made the fortress of Nandana his chief stronghold and in 1013 Mahmud invaded India to attack him”.10 There was a heavy snowfall which blocked his passage. The mountains and valleys appeared almost level under the treacherous white mantle. After an arduous march over very difficult terrain the Sultan approached Nandana. He now divided his cavalry into three groups under command of Amir Nasar. Anslanjazib and Abu Abdullah, Mohammad. Altuntash was placed in charge of the central part of the army. On hearing of Mahmud’s advance Trilochanpala retired into mountains leaving his son Bhimpala to oppose Mahmud. Bhimpala took up a tactical position on a narrow mountain pass and the Sultan did not succeed in dislodging the Shahis easily from this position. The veterans
from Oxus and the Afghan spearman bored into the gorge like a gemilet into wood, but it took several days of hard fighting before the place was carried.

Trilochanpala fled into the Kashmir valley to organize resistance but he was again defeated and fled to Sirhind in eastern Punjab. Mahmud forcibly converted to Islam a large number of Hindus and carried off to Ghazni a large number as prisoners. Men in high position in India were sold there as slaves to serve the shopkeepers.

“Then followed a weary marched in 1014 across the stern dissert of Rajputana to Thanesar, a days journey from Delhi between Ambala and Karnal. Jaipal had to allow Mahmud a safe passage through his kingdom in accordance with a treaty he had concluded earlier. But he warned Bijaypala the Towar Raja of Delhi, in whose kingdom Thanesar was situated, the approach of the invader. The Sultan was apposed by a Raja, named Rama the chief of Dera, as he approached a mountain pass through which the river Sutlej flowed. But he was dislodged from the steep pass where he waited with his splendid troop of Ceylon elephants behinds a rapid river. But Mahmud was no novice in tactics. He forded the river and crowned the heights on either side and while detachment fell upon his enemy’s flank the Sultan’s main body flung itself into the ravine and the position was stormed. The Hindus fled and their famous elephants were
captured. After brushing aside this opposition the Sultan resumed his march”.  

Mahmud marched with such rapidity through the Punjab that he reached Thaneswar before the Hindus could rally their forces. The city fell Mahmud plundered it of its vast treasures. He next intended to invade Delhi, but he was overruled by his general staff who advised him not to advance so far into India until the annexation of the Punjab should have furnished a base of operation within its borders. Mahmud did not send any expedition against India in 1016 and 1017 as he was engaged in operation in Khavarizm and in the northern province of his empire”. It was not until 1018 that he was able to turn his attention to India. He now prepared to penetrate further into the country than on any former occasion and to plunder the rich temples of Hindustan proper. With an army of 100,000 horse raise in his own dominion and 20,000 volunteers from Turkistan, Transoxiana and the confines of Khurasan”. He marched from Ghazni and guided by the Lohara Raja of Kashmir, crossed the Indus and rivers of the Punjab. On December 2 he crossed the Jammu and pursued his march southwards. Avoiding Delhi, he followed the eastern bank of the Jamuna and reached Baran, modern Bulandshahar in Uttar Pradesh. The ruler of the place Hardat fled from the fortress. The garrison found resistance of o avail and purchased peace by paying the Sultan a great quantity of treasure.
and thirty elephant. From Baran he passed to Mahaban on the eastern bank of the Jamuna in the Mathura district. It was ruled by a prince named Kulachandra of the Yadu dynasty. Kulachandra put up a brave fight but he was defeated. He killed his wife and son and then killed himself”.  

Mathura the holy city of Krishna, was the next victim the city was surrounded by a stone wall, in which were magnificent temples all over the city and in the middle, there was a temple larger and finer than the rest. The idols included five of red gold, each five yards high the eyes formed of priceless jewels. The Sultan gave orders that all the temples should be burn and levelled to the ground. Thus perished works of art which must have been among the noblest monuments of Ancient India pressing eastwards, the Sultan’s army reached Kannauj the imperial city of northern India, then under the rule of Rajyapala–Parihar. The Raja had already fled at the mere bruit of the Sultan’s coming, and the seven forts of the great city fell in one day. The inhabitants were put to the sword and of its gorgeous shrines not a temple was spared.

From Kannauj Mahmud marched to Manaich which is identified with a place of same name, 14 males north-east of Etawah. Some scholars identify it with Marjjhawan, 10 miles off Kanpur. The fortress strongly garrisoned and was reduced after a siege of 25 days. The gallant defenders killed their wives and children ad sallied forth from the fort to perish on the swords of the enemy.
“After plundering Manaich, Mahmud attacked Asni, a fortress in the immediate neighbourhood, defended by deep ditches and a dense Jungle, that is to say an enclosure of quickset bamboos similar to that which now surrounds the city of Rampur in Rohailkhand and forms an impenetrable obstacle. Asni was the stronghold of a powerful chief named either Chandpal or Chandal Bar, who had recently been at war with Jaichand. On hearing of Mahmud’s approach he fled, leaving his capital a prey to the invader”.

The Sultan next advanced to Sharva which Cunningham indentifies with Sirasawa near Saharanpur. Its ruler Chand Rai was a powerful monarch. But when he learned the ominous tramp of the Turkish horsemen, gathered up his treasures and move for the hills. Flight did not save him, the enemy tracked him through the forest, and coming up with him at midnight attacked him. The fort was despoiled and demolished and the inhabitants put to the sword. The Sultan carried home immense booty and so many prisoners of that the slave market of Persia was glutted and a servant could be bought for a couple of rupees.

After his victory over Chand Rai, which took place in January 1019, Mahmud returned to Ghazni. He founded the famous ‘Jami Mosque’ known as ‘The Bride of Heaven’. He also established a university and a museum close by.
The cowardly flight of the Kannauj Raja angered his fellow Rajas, who under the command of a Chandel prince Nanda, Raja of Kalinjar combined against Rajyapala, slew him and replaced him by Trilochanpala. When Mahmud heard of this, he marched in 1021 at the head of an army against Kalinjar, the capital of Nanda. A confederacy of the Indian kings was organized this time also. Bhimpal, the fearless son of Jaipal II of the Punjab, also joined the confederacy. But instead of opposing Mahmud on his western frontiers, where he would have been beyond the reach of help from his allies, he withdrew to the banks of Jamuna when they could have supported him. Here Mahmud found him encamped and hesitated to attempt the passage of the swollen river as it was very deep and its bottom full of mud. But eight gallant soldiers of Mahmud army with their contingent succeeded in crossing the river, surprised the Hindus and put them to flight. “Mahmud whose way was cleared before him, crossed Jamuna and Ganges and found Nanda waiting on the bank of the Sai with an army of 36,000 horses, 1,05,000 foot soldiers and 640 elephant”.  

Before this host Mahmud’s heart failed him for a moment. In great awe and fear he prayed to God for victory. His prayer appeared to have gone not in vain as Nanda fled the camp during the night without any ostensible reason. It may be surmised that he probably lost faith in the sincerity and honesty of his allies which was nothing very unnatural in those days of
mutual distrust and jealous. Mahmud took to plundering of the Hindu camp, and carried off to Ghazni 580 elephants and an enormous booty.

Later in the same year he again invaded Kashmir which he had failed to capture on a previous occasion. He besieged and did not fare better this time also and raised the siege. He did not return at once to Ghazni but entered the Punjab to punish Bhimpal for joining the Hindu confederacy against him. The enemy however did not attack Lahore but dispersed in the countryside to cut off supplies reaching the capital. Bhimpal fled, took asylum in the court of the Chauhan Raja of Ajmer. The Punjab was formally annexed to the Turkish empire and Mahmud may, therefore, be formally called an Indian ruler. After a century and a half his descendants being ousted from Ghazni found

“In the autumn of 1022 Mahmud again invaded Hindustan in order to inflict further punishment to Nanda of Kalinjar”.16 He marched through the Doab, crossed Jamuna below Delhi and was attracted by the strong fortress of Gwalior, to which he laid siege but, finding that the operation was likely to be protracted, permitted the Kachhwaha Raja to compound for a formal submission by a gift of no more than thirty five elephants, and pursued his way towards his real objective, Kalinjar, to the reduction of which he was prepared to devote more time.
After of protracted siege Nanda was permitted to redeem his stronghold for three hundred elephants which instead of being formally delivered, were mischievously driven in a body of towards the Muslim camp in the hope that they would throw it into confusion, but the Turks had by now some experience of elephants, and caught and manage them. According to a possibly mythical account of the event, their success compelled the unwilling admiration of Nanda, who addressed to Mahmud an encomiastic poem which was so highly praised by learned Hindus in the Muslim camp that its author was rewarded with the government of fifteen fortress, a great probably as hollow as the flattery which had earned it. After this composition with Nanda, Mahmud returns to Ghazni with his spoils.

This is a brief account of the Mahmud’s battles which he fought with Hindustani kings. There was a major battle also which is very famous the battle of Somnath. Every time when Mahmud attacked India we see that Indians were defeated in spite of double army than that of Mahmud.

There were so many demerits in our army like lack of leadership and war phobia, lack of concentration and so on. Conversely, Mahmud’s army though less in number was well trained and operating under the leadership of Mahmud, who was a great general.
Political Conditions

There was one notable difference in the political condition of our country at the time of the Arab invasion of Sind and that on the eve of the Ghaznavite penetration into Hindustan. At the opening of the eighth century there was no foreign colony, much less a foreign power, in the land except a handful of Arab merchants on our western coast whose primary avocation was trade. On the other hand, in the tenth century there were two foreign kingdoms on our soil, namely Multan and Mansura or Sind. Besides, a considerable portion of the population in these two kingdoms had been converted to Islam. There were also Arab colonies in southern India, particularly in Malabar, where the Hindu rulers had foolishly permitted the foreigners to proselytize the native population. As was natural for these new converts to a religion, they preferred the foreign ways of life and had sympathy with their fellow Muslims from Ghazni and Central Asia. Subuktigin and Mahmud of Ghazni, as also Mahmud of Ghur, about 150 years later, were lucky to enjoy some kind of moral support from a section of the Indian people.\(^{17}\)

For nearly three centuries after the advent of the Arabs our country enjoyed immunity from foreign invasions. This long freedom from foreign interference produced a feeling in the minds of our people and rulers that India could never be threatened by a foreign power. Eternal vigilance, which is said to be the price of freedom, not only slackened almost reached
the vanishing point. Our rulers neglected their armies. They failed to fortify our north-western frontier and to make an effective arrangement for the defence of the hilly passes through which foreign armies could enter the country. Side by with this, our people failed to keep in touch with the new military tactics and with the newly invented system of warfare. Secondly, for the selfsame reason, the people lost almost completely the sense of patriotism and national ardour, which develops under the stimulus of danger from abroad. That was not an age of territorial patriotism; but whatever patriotism there was, disappeared owing to a false sense of security. Thirdly, a kind of narrow-mindedness became the characteristic of our people from the eighth to the eleventh centuries of the Christian era. They believed that they were a chosen people and all other people were unfit to be associated with them. The famous scholar Al Beruni, who came to our country in the trains of Sultan Mahmud Ghazni and studied Sanskrit language and Hindu religion and thought, had to note with surprise that “the Hindus believed that there is no country like theirs, no nation like theirs, no king like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs”. He adds that the ancestors of the Hindus “were not so narrow-minded as the present (eleventh century) generation”. He was also struck by the fact that the Hindus did “not desire that a thing which has once been polluted should be purified and thus recovered”.

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During this period our country was practically isolated from the rest of the world. Owing to this fact our people ceased to come into touch with foreign lands and, therefore, became ignorant of the happenings, political, military and cultural, in the outside world. Want of contact with dissimilar people and cultures bred stagnation and made our civilization decadent. In fact, a slow but sure decadence began to manifest itself in every aspect of our life during the period. The Sanskrit literature of these centuries is much inferior in virility and taste to that of the fifth and the sixth centuries. Our architecture and painting and fine arts were similarly adversely influenced; our society, too, became static, caste rules became more rigid. Widowhood began to be rigorously imposed, remarriage of widows among higher classes almost completely stopped and food and drink taboos came into existence. The ‘untouchables’ were compelled to reside outside the towns.

In the domain of religion also, which must always be the fountain-head of right conduct and morality, perceptible degeneration crept in. The great Shankaracharya, who had organised Hinduism and given it a common philosophical background, had failed to purge it of great evils that had crept into it. Vamamarga Dharma had become popular at this period, specially in Kashmir and Bengal. The followers of this creed indulged in wine, flesh, fish and women and they believed in the motto of ‘eat, drink and be merry’. The vicious ideas of this school had permeated some of our
educational institutions, particularly in the University of Vikramasila in Bihar. An incident that book place at the above named university shows how deep the moral canker had gone into our life in that age. A student priest was found with a bottle of wine and, on being interrogated by the university authorities, he revealed that it had been given to him by a run. When the authorities decided to take disciplinary action against him, the members of the university split up into two parties and the result was trouble. When such an incident could take place at a highest seat of learning, the condition of the upper and middle class people, who lived in sloth ad luxury, can well be imagined. Our great mathas, which were originally great seats of learning and piety became centres of luxury and idleness many of the monks became licentious. The order of the sannyasis lost its significance, but the common people continued showing them reverence. Another evil which can be traced in its exaggerated from to this period was the devadasi system. Every important temple had a number of unmarried girls dedicated to the service of the deity. This bred corruption and temple prostitution became common. Tantrik literature which was obscene in the extreme, developed rapidly in this era. It produced an adverse effect on our morals. It was not considered derogatory by the greatest of our scholars of this period to write obscene books. A minister to one of the kings in Kashmir wrote a book named Kullini Matam or
‘Opinions of a Go-Between’ Another great Sanskrit scholar, Kshemendra, published Samaya Matraka or ‘the autobiography of a prostitute’. In this book “The heroine describes her adventures in every sphere of society, as a courtesan, as the mistress of a noble, as a street walker, as a go-between, as a false run, as a corrupter of the youth and as a frequenter of religious places”. All this led to moral degeneration among the upper and the middle class people. Probably the common folk were free from the debasing effect of current literature and Vamamarga religion.18

**Economic Conditions**

Economically the country was rich. Its great mineral and agricultural wealth had continued accumulating for generations, individuals had piled up riches and our temples were their store-houses; but there was great disparity of wealth. The topmost people that is, the members of the ruling families and their nobles and courtiers rolled in wealth and luxury. The merchant princes were millionaires and spent thousands of rupees in charity. Ordinary village folk were rather poor, though not in want. They were thrifty. They had a few belongings. Nevertheless the general life was economically prosperous owing to the accumulated wealth, peace and commerce. It was this fabulous wealth that tempted Mahmud of Ghazni to invade our country. Our rulers did not know how to ensure the great wealth of India by organizing a wise system of defence. The political structure
was also weak. The institutions, of course, were the same as in the time of Harsha; but there was a marked deterioration in the spirit in which they worked. The bureaucracy was corrupt and people, in general, enervated by a variety of debasing influences.

This was the condition of India at the time when Mahmud of Gazni invaded her. Though outwardly strong, she was unprepared for defending her religion and liberty.\(^\text{19}\)

**References**

2. Ibid., p.52.
3. Ibid., p.54.
6. Ibid., p.15.
7. Ibid., p.15.
10. Ibid., p.17.

Ibid., p.189.


Ibid., pp.4-7.

Ibid., p.7.