Chapter II

Early Life and Education of Mahmud Ghaznavi

Mahmud became the Amir in 999 AD. Immediately after his accession he embarked on his amazing career of conquests. In the very first year of his rule he overpowered, the Samanids, and annexed the territory upto the Oxus. In 1001 C.E. he conquered Kohistan. In 1001 C.E. he had to fight against the Hindushahis. A sangunary battle took place near peshawar. In this battle the Hindushahis suffered defeat and Mahmud annexed the territory upto the Indus. Raja Jaipal having been defeated thrice forfeited the right to rule. He burnt himself to death. He was succeeded by his son Anand Pal. In 1002 C.E. Mahmud annexed seestan. In 1004 C.E. Mahmud crossed the Indus and defeated the Raja of Bhatia (modern Bhera). In 1005 C.E. he captured Ghur in the west and Multan in the east. In 1008 C.E. the Hindu Rajas made big effort to expel the Muslims from the soil of India. The Rajas of Ujjain, Gwalior, Kalinjar, Kannauj, Delhi and Ajmer sent contingents to aid Anandpal. A sanguinary battle took place in 1008 C.E. in the chach plain near modern-Hazro. The Hindus fought desperately but
the superior generalship of Mahmud won the day. The Hindu forces were annihilated and Mahmud annexed the territory between the Indus and the Jhelam. In 1018 C.E. Mahmud extended his conquests further west and Khawarzam shahs of Khiva became him vassal. In 1019 C.E. he confronted the Hindu Shahis again. The Hindu Shahis were defeated and Mahmud annexed their territories. Lahore was made the capital of the Ghaznavid Punjab. With the establishment of the Ghaznavid rule in the Punjab, north-west India became a Muslim state. With Lahore as the base, Mahmud conducted campaigns in India, and amassed considerable booty in such raids. In 1024 C.E. Mahmud led an expedition to Somnath. In 1026 C.E. on return from Somnath he annexed Sind. After the annexation of Sind a state emerged in northwest India which comprised the areas which now from Pakistan. In 1029 C.E. Mahmud defeated the Bawayhids and annexed Ray.

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

We have seen that, with the exception of the frontier provinces of Sind and Multan, India remained unaffected by the tide of Arab conquest. The establishment of Muslim rule in India was the work of the Turks, and the process was begun by the Turkish rulers.

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

Rise of the Turks

In spite of their initial success the Arabs had not been able to extend their dominion beyond Sindh and Multan. In fact, their rule dwindled into insignificance by the middle of the ninth century A.D. It was left to the Turks to complete the work begun by the Arabs. The Turks had, a short
time before our period, embraced Islam and possessed all the zeal and narrow mindedness of the neophytes. They were intrepid, brave, full of boundless energy and push and thoroughly materialistic in their outlook. Islam had given them a thin veneer of religiosity. They were inordinately ambitious and their qualities and faults combined to make them eminently fit for founding a big military empire in the east.

**Accession of Mahmud**

Sabuktigin died in 997 A.D. and was succeeded by his famous son, Mahmud, though not without a war of succession between him and his younger brother, Ismail who was nominated heir their dying father. Mahmud was born on 1st November 971 A.D., and was, at the time of his accession in 998 A.D., twenty-seven years of age. At that time his kingdom comprised Afghanistan and Khurasan. Mahmud secured the formal recognition of his sovereignty from the Caliph of Baghdad (al-Qadir Billah). He was also given the title Yamin-ud-Daulah and Amin-ul-Millah. His dynasty is, therefore, known as the Yamini dynasty.

**His Character**

Mahmud was an extremely ambitious young man. It is said that on the occasion of his investiture by the Khalifa he took a vow to undertake every year an expedition against the infidels of India. He tried to fulfill this vow.
Mahmud was not gifted with kingly looks. He was a man of medium height and of strong build, but was rather ugly looking. He did not possess extraordinary personal prowess. Nevertheless, he was a great general and also an equally good soldier. He was an extremely intelligent and strewed man, endowed with the royal gift of judging human character. His outstanding virtues were cool courage, prudence and resourcefulness. He was, moreover, a man of restless activity and overpowering ambitions. He possessed a habitual air of command and was adept in statecraft. He considered no body as indispensable and used every one he came into contact with as an instrument for the attainment of his object. Professor Mohammad Habib says that his outlook on life was essentially secular and that he was not a man to follow the Muslim Ulema blindly. He was not, according to this learned author, a fanatic. Mahmud’s life and his deeds, however, demonstrate the fact that he was, without doubt, devoted to his religion and that he believed that he was serving the cause of Islam in carrying unprovoked war into the territory of the Hindu idolators. His court historian, Utbi, looked upon Mahmud’s expeditions to India as jihad, that is, holy war for the extirpation of idolatry and propagation of Islam. “Sultan Mahmud”, he writes in his Tarikh-i-Yanini “at first designed in his heart to go to Sijistan, but subsequently preferred to engage previously in a holy war against Hind”. Utbi adds that he called a council of his officers
“in order to secure a blessing on his design of exalting the standard of religion, widening the plain of right, of illuminating the words of truth and strengthening the power of justice”. These words clearly show that Mahmud’s contemporaries believed that one of the main objects of his aggressive policy against our country was to serve his religion. There were, of course, other reasons. Mahmud was an ambitious man and wanted to rule over as big an empire as a man could possibly create. He was fond of wealth, as all powerfull people are, and he had heard of the stories of India’s fabulous riches. He was, moreover, a warrior thirsting for military glory. Besides, being a realist, he might possibly have considered the continued existence of a hostile Hindu power in his immediate neighbourhood as a menace to his independent existence, or at any rate, to his policy of expansion. For all these reasons Mahmud decided, almost immediately after his accession, to pursue a policy of aggressive warfare against Hindustan.  

“Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi was a king who attained varieties of worldly prosperity and the fame of his Justice and government, and the sound of his fortitude and country-subduing qualities, reached beyond the hall of planet Saturn. In prosperously carrying on war against the kings, he exalted the standards of the religion of the faithful, and in his laudable endeavours for extirpating heretics, he rooted out oppression and impiety. When he
entered into battle his heroism was like a torrent, which rushes over even and uneven places without heed, and during the time that he sat upon the throne and was successful in his undertakings, the light of his justice, like the rays of the sun, shone upon every one. His wisdom during the nights of misfortune like a star, pointed out the way and his sword pierced the joints of his enemies like the hand of fate.”

“Mahmud was born 10 Muharram 361 Hijri (1 November, 971 A.D.) and was therefore 27 years of age when he deposed his brother and ascended the throne in 998 A.D.”. His father Subuktigin a great General and was very loyal to the king Alaptagine. His mother was a daughter of one of the grandees of Zabulistan, and for this reason he was called ‘Zabuli’. Some writers are of the opinion that Mahmud was not the real son of subuktigin, but if he was of this kind, he was not called ‘Mahmud-uz-Abli’ by the poet of his court.

There is not much literature available about the basic education of this great general. “He remembered the whole Quran by heart and he was very learned in the field of Hadis (Tradition) and fequah (Theology). His preceptor was Bu Ali Sina”.6

“The gift of commanding personality had been denied to Mahmud. He was man of medium height with well proportion limbs but the small pox marks on his face deprived him of all external beauty and grace. Mahmud was no
‘pahilwan’ feats of personal prowess were beyond his strength, though his frame bore all the hardships entailed by his continuous campaigns. But he did not subject himself to more discomforts on his campaigns than was absolutely necessary, and his travelling camp surprised his subject by its splendor. He was too good a general to endanger his personal safety, by needless heroism nevertheless when the occasion required, he mounted on elephant and plunged bravely into the thickest of the enemy lines. His unquestioned supremacy over his fellowmen was due to the qualities of the mind the acuteness with which he unrivalled a complicated situation and read the character of those around him, the restless activity of a man determined to be great combined with the instinctive behaviour of one born to command. A king had to be reserve, but Mahmud never cast off the veil even before his most intimate companions.”

His outlook was essentially a secular one and he was too conscious of his position as the head of the state to allow priesthood to become supreme. His persecution of the heretics apart from the pressing demand of the orthodox may have been due to his conviction that their immoral doctrines would shake the foundations on which Muslims society was based and greed or money and powers not an enlightened desire for the spread of Islam, was the motive of his Indian campaigns. A deep and inspiring faith in the one and unseen God, Mahmud certainly had and it brought him the
consolation he needed. Apart from that it would be safe to assume that the shared the rationalistic tendencies of his friend Ahmad Hussain bin Mikal (Hasnak), who refused to believe in any mystifying nonsense, and the firmness which he protected Hasnak from the Caliph confirms this view.

The private life of Sultan certainly shows him to be anything but the paragon of virtue idolized by Muslim fanatics. He was morally neither better nor worse than most of the princes who preceded and followed him. He shared their fondness for war and wine and woman as well as their appreciation of poetry ad music.

He was not above quarrelling with his officers for the possession of Turkish slaves and scandal which may or may not be true credited him with illegitimate children. However, main concern of this work is not to deal with his personal and private life. Here an effort has been made to study the factors which throw light on the generalship of Mahmud Ghaznavi.

A Strategic Overview

The weakening of spiritual zeal has shown in all religions at various stages, and is painfully obvious in the history of Islam from the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate in the 9th century to the Mongol conquest of Muslim Asia, and the growth of mysticism in the thirteenth century. It was a period
of great achievement in the science, literature and art and the area of human knowledge was enlarged by scholars trained in the philosophy of Plato ad Aristotle”.

It was a period when political activities were on their prime stage. Kingship had become a political game. Empires were established and pulled down, cities were inhabited and ruined. In fact, it was a period of refinement and culture of an attracting materialistic civilization, not of bigot. The missionary zeal of the Muslims of this time had evaporated in the signal success it achieved and the creed that had come into the world or elevation of the lower classes was being used as a bulwark for the protection of vested interests and the continuation of time honoured abuses.

The condition of the Ghazni was also very poor during this period. There was so many political powers who raised their heads. “The order of Baghdad ceased to command the implicit obedience that had been yielded to them in the good time of Harun-al-Rashid” Spain had become independent. A rival caliphate had been established by the Falimids of Egypt.

There were so many minor dynasties at Ghazni during this time. These minor dynasties always engaged in fighting with each other. In these minor dynasties the most powerful of them was the Samanid Dynasty founded by
Amir Ismail Somani in 911 A.D. The Samanids, with their capital at Bokhara, held an insecure sway over Transoxiana and Khorasan, their power being almost constantly defied by rebellious governors and in subordinate officials. Beyond the Jaxartes the unconverted Turks and Tartars were ruled by their tribal chiefs, the most powerful of whom was the Khan of Kashghar. In the eastern Persia the Shiate Dynasty by Ruknuddaulah Daylami in 933 and gradually expanded its power in Iraq till even Baghdad came with its graph. And except these minor dynasties there were so many other dynasties like Siljoquei and others. They were always at war with each other.

The noted historians derive the lineage of all the Sultans of Ghaznin from Nasiruddin Subuktigin, who was the slave of Alaptigin. “During the period of the prosperity princes of the house of Samani, Alaptagin raised himself from a low origin to state of authority, and in the reign of Abdul Malik bin Nuh he was appointed governor of Khurasan but during the reign of Mansur bin Abdul Malik owing to some mistrust which he had formed of that Prince, Alaptagin left Khurasan and exalted the standard of his desire towards Ghaznin, and conquered that country.” Alaptagin passed there full sixteen years in prosperity, and when he died, he was succeeded by his son Abu-Ishak who delivered over all the affairs of the country. Both civil and criminal, to Subuktigin, who was distinguished above all the ministers
of Alaptagin for his bravery and liberality. Abu Ishak had lived but a short
time, when he died. The chief men of Ghazni saw the signs of greatness
and nobility, and the fires of felicity and prosperity in the forehead of
Subuktigin, who widely spread out the carpet of Justice and rooted out
injury and oppression and who by confirming different favours on them,
had made friends of the nobles, the soldiers and the leading men of the
state. Several times he led his army towards the confines of Hindustan and
carried off much plunder from the infidels. In the year 367 H. (977 A.D.)
he took bust and kusdar, and after these events according to the request of
Sultan Nuh Somani, he turned his attention towards Khurasan.

“Amir Subuktigin died at the city of Balkh in the month of Shaban 387 H.
(997 A.D.) and fourteen of his descendants occupied the throne after him,
Historians reckon the sovereignty of the Ghaznivids as beginning with the
conquest of Bust and they calculate that they flourished for 188 years.”11

By the will of the Amir Subuktigin his younger son Ismail was enthroned
Ismail was not very active in pragmatism and he was much interested in
religion and he had adequate knowledge also. He was a Molvi type man.
Mahmud, whose very time passed in the battle field was also absent at the
time of his fathers death. This tide reached Mahmud with his fathers will
for the kingship of Ghazni in favour of his brother Ismail. He became
vexed to here it as Ismail was not able for the kingship. Mahmud wrote a
letter of condolence in which he offered his brother that he can take any state like Balkh or Khurasan and leave Ghazni for him.

But his brother rejected this offer. So, after this Mahmud tried to solve this problem through compromise but this attempt of Mahmud was also ignored by his brother. Mahmud’s father in Law who was the Governor of Jazjanan negotiated between them. But Ismail did not accept his request also.

At last from Heart, Mahmud wrote a letter for negotiation but Ismail also rejected this offer. At last when there was no other way, mahmud decided to have a fight with him. His younger brother Abu Zafar Nasar was already with him and his father in law was also supporting him who had a potential army with all his potent Mahmud invaded Ghazni and Ismail also came to face him with all his army. At this time Mahmud also tried to negotiate with him but Ismail understood this offer as a weakness of Mahmud and declined to negotiate.

“Both armies fought in the battle field of Ghazni in March 998 A.D.”12 The fight was straight the difference was the only leadership, Mahmud was well experienced master in art of war and the other side was fighting under an inexperienced person who had no knowledge of art of war.

The same day, in the evening, Mahmud’s army attacked at the armies of
Ismail. By this final and fatal attack opponents army lost the battle and Ismail absconded from the battle field and he concealed him self in the fort Mahmud raided the fort and arrested Ismail. Ismail reigned only seven month on Ghazni.

India which had been the favourite battle field of Mahmud of Ghazni, its political condition was also not very good. India divided into so many big and small states, where there were so many kings alike. The biggest kingdom of this country was Hindushahi kingdom. The extension of this kingdom was from river Chenab to the Hindukhush mountains and included Kabul. The next notable kingdom was that of Kashmir. Its ruling family utpala came into conflict with the Hindushahi kingdom and Kanauj. The king was Shankar Verma. The other notable state was the imperial city of Kanauj. This state was ruled by the Pratihara Dynasty. The other state was Palas of Bengal. This state was ruled by Pala Dynasty. This dynasty was also engaged in battles with Prathiharas of Kanauj and brought sufferings in Bengal.

Except these dynasties there are so many small states. The Chalukyas of Gujarat, the Chandelas, of Bundelkhand and the parmars of Malwa. They had once been the feudatories to Kanauj, but had declared their independence during weak rule of the later pratiharas of the imperial city. There was a state in south which was also an important state of this time.
The Dakhin kingdom, firstly it was ruled by Chalukyas but these were fallen in struggle for supremacy in 753 A.D. with Rashtra Kutas. The later who were at constant war with their neighbours, had given place to the later Chalukyas in 973 A.D. Similarly, the great Pallav Dynasty had fallen. During that time king have no concept of sovereign India. They were happy with their small states.

The war was the policy of states. States always engage themselves in fighting, for the extension of their state and for their fame. The attraction of booty was also a great phenomenon. That is why every time when India was attacked and trampled by foreigners it looses her sovereignty.

So in the case of Mahmud when he attacked on India, every corner of India was ruled by separate kings. There was no concept of national interest and there was not a national consensus about the sovereignty of India. That is why Mahmud won all the battles against Indian Kings.

**Early Ambitions of Mahmud**

After the death of Subuktagin, the scepter of Ghazni passed into the hands of his eldest son, Mahmud, who quickly attained to the position of one of the mightiest rulers of Asia, famed in far-off lands for his riches, velour, and justice. To the qualities of a born soldier, he added boundless religious zeal which has ranked him among the great leaders of Islam. Mahmud was
indeed a fierce and fanatical Muslim with an insatiable thirst for wealth and power. Early in life he formed the resolve of spreading the faith of the prophet in distant lands and his investiture by the Khalifa further sharpened his zeal.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{References}

\begin{enumerate}
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