Chapter VII

Conclusion

What Mahmud was as a politician or as a king is not the question here. An effort has been to assess and evaluate Mahmud Ghazni as a general. He has been acknowledged as a great general by many authoritative historians. Mahmud was brilliant commander in the field. As a dashing cavalry leader he had no equal. Mahmud was a seasoned soldier fear did not find any place in his heart. His army won against the rulers of India like a comb through a poll of hair. Forts and cities surrendered as the great Sultan passed by; object chiefs placed their flowers at his disposal, he fought when necessary, more, often triumphed by mere prestige, good number of historians who consider Mahmud as a good general. As a matter of fact all these historians have based their views on the successful results of his invasions. No doubt Mahmud was successful all through, but this can not be the conclusive proof of his qualities of generalship. We find as a result of the study of Mahmud’s actions that Battles fought by Mahmud wore not like a battle between two kings. Mahmud never aimed to rule. His only aim
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was to capture wealth. We do not see any special military Mahmud’s battle and his tactics did neither show any special genius nor it contributes anything to the then existing art of warfare. His object was always one; too narrow and too small.

It was always to capture wealth and run away. R.C. Majumdar writes that, “Mahmud appears to the historian of India as an instable invader. He was neither a missionary for the propagation of religion in this country nor an architect of empire. The main object of his eastern expeditions seems to have been the acquisition of the wealth of India”.

However the analysis of Mahmud’s battles from the point of view of his art of warfare shows all his battles were raids. His attacks created a great shock and his further course of action was used to be under the spell of that shock. The speed and the style of raids can be said to be of Blitzkrieg type.

These characteristics very well suited Mahmud’s aim. And one thing of great importance which Mahmud can be said to have contributed to the art of warfare is that he utilized maximum economy of force and mending in his battles. He employed exclusively those methods which were conducive for the attainment of his primary aim and totally ignored all conventions of battle field which were not directly connected with his basic single aim.

Thus we conclude that Mahmud was the man around which the whole
Ghaznavide empire moved. He was a pivot of Ghaznavide empire. It was only personal valour and qualities of Mahmud that his army was always victorious. The proverb is quite apt in this context that an army of Jackels lead by a lion is better than an army of lions lead by a Jackel”. Mahmud was a lion, and he leads an army of lions. It has been very rightly said that in the ultimate analysis it is the man who matters not the men.

Thus, to conclude it may be said that altogether, Mahmud himself was a great general.

**Conquests of Sultan Mahmud**

The province of Multan was under the rule of the Carmathians who did not acknowledge allegiance to the Caliphs of Baghdad. They maintained friendly relations with Sabuktigin, but there was a breach with Mahmud at the time of his expedition to Bhatinda. It is probable that Daud, the ruler of Multan, opposed the passage of Mahmud’s army through his territories. In 1006 A.D. Mahmud marched across the Punjab to Multan; Daud fled, but the garrison of Multan did not submit without resistance. The citizens were spared on payment of a heavy fine, but the carmathians were massacred. The charge of Multan was left in the hands of Sukhpal, a grandson of Jaipal, who had gone to Ghazni as a hostage and embraced Islam. Within a short time, however, he abjured Islam and raised the standard of revolt. Mahmud came to Multan in 1008, subjugated Multan, and kept Sukhpal in confinement. Daud also was captured and imprisoned.
His Achievements

Sultan Mahmud ruled over his vast dominions as an absolute despot. The supreme executive, legislative and judicial authority in the empire was concentrated in his hands. He naturally consulted his ministers on state affairs, and in practice not only consultation but also delegation of powers must have been found necessary. The Sultan’s will had the force of law. He was the highest court of appeal for his empire. He was his own commander-in-Chief, and in most cases he personally led the campaigns. The fact that he successfully maintained order throughout his scattered dominions shows that he was gifted with considerable administrative ability.

A genius for war he undoubtedly possessed. It did not consist in new inventions of military value; it consisted in the infusion of a new life into the old system which he had inherited. He was essentially a leader of men. His army was made of diverse racial and religious groups – Arabs, Afghans, Turkomans, Hindus; but his capable leadership organized them into a harmonious whole. He displayed his military capacity not only against the Hindus, but also against the hardy people of Central Asia and the traditional valour of Iran.

Mahmud was a poet and scholar of some reputation. His intellectual alertness and religious interests led him to take part in the religious and
literary discussions of the scholars at his court. His patronage was enjoyed by many Muslim scholars and poets, among whom Al-Biruni, Firdausi, Ansari and Farrukhi deserve special mention. He invited scholars and collected literary works from all parts of the Muslim world. He founded a university at Ghazni.

Mahmud was a worshipper of genuine piety, and he punctiliously performed his religious duties. In the case of his Muslim subjects he never allowed any deviation from belief in the orthodox Sunni doctrines. The persecution of the Carmathians was a necessary result of his policy. The Hindus were, however, granted toleration. Separate quarters were assigned to them in Ghazni, and they were permitted free observance of their religious ceremonies. The destruction of Hindu temples in India was a part of his military programme, the chief incentive being provided by the wealth accumulated by the priests.

Mahmud did not make any systematic attempt to annex Indian territories; the annexation of the Shahi kingdom was almost an accident rendered necessary by geographical and military factors. As long as this kingdom retained its independent existence Mahmud could not proceed to the Ganges – Jamuna Doab, the most flourishing region in Northern India. When the power of the Shahi kings was crushed, Mahmud brought their territory under his own administration, and thus ensured the safety of his
route to Northern and Western India, Mahmud may have clearly grasped the fact that his empire had already become unwieldy, and that the addition of other Indian territories would make it altogether unmanageable. He was undoubtedly conscious of the administrative problems created by the vast size of his empire, for before his death he divided it between his two sons instead of safeguarding its unity. Moreover, Mahmud must have realized the difficulty of exterminating the rule of such powerful dynasties as the Chandellas and the Chaurukyas. The occupation of their territory was far more difficult than the plunder of isolated cities and temples. Still Mahmud may rightly be regarded as the founder of the Turkish power in India and the forerunner of Mahmud of Ghur and Babur.