

Similarities and Dissimilarities between Mahmud and Ghori

Before we discuss the statement of Lane-poole regarding Mahmud and Ghori, it would be pertinent to have a brief comparison between their similarities and dissimilarities.

This comparison would help us to find in what respects Ghori is an obscure as compared with Mahmud.

Similarities:

1. Both came from Ghazni.
2. Both were Turkish invaders.
3. Both were brave, hardworking and great conquerors.
4. Both plundered the wealth of India.
5. Both inflicted atrocities on non-Muslims.
6. Both used archers and cavalry in their army.
7. Both took recourse to any means—fair or foul—to win a war.
8. Both, by and large, gave the slogan of ‘Jihad’ (Holy war) to acquire military success.

Dissimilarities:

Mahmud was a great conqueror and he never faced any defeat in his 17 invasions of India. On the other hand, Ghori had to face a number of defeats. Not only this he lost his life at the hands of his enemy in India and did not reach his kingdom of Ghazni. Even in Central Asia, Mahmud was more successful and Ghori had to face defeat.

Mahmud did not try to establish his empire in India. He was more interested in plundering the wealth of India. Mahmud was more of a fanatic who wanted to spread Islam in India. He destroyed temples and idols of Hindu gods. His attacks were mostly directed on the religious places of the Hindus. Ghori on the other hand directed his attacks on important towns and forts.

Estimate of Both:

When we compare the military qualities of Mahmud and Ghori, we can certainly say that Ghori is an obscure figure and he stands no comparison with Mahmud. Similarly in the matter of

spreading Islam, Mahmud was more aggressive and he destroyed several places of worship of the Hindus, broke their idols and converted them to Islam. So as a fanatic Muslim, Mahmud outshines Ghorī. Mahmud's objective in invading India, according to the contemporary historian Utbi was to spread Islam. He was given the title of 'Idol Breaker'.

Though such claims are disputed by several modern historians, yet to his contemporary Muslim historians, "Mahmud was undoubtedly a great Ghazī and the greatest monarch of his age." For ages he has been considered the 'worst plunderer of temples' by the Hindus in general.

Mahmud was a great patron of art and literature while Ghorī was a mere military commander and a politician. Ghazni under Mahmud was a great cultural centre. Famous architects, artists, poets and scholars flocked to his court. As observed by Lane-poole, "Napoleon imported the choicest work of art from the countries he subdued to adorn his palace, Mahmud did better, he brought the artists and poets themselves to illuminate his court." Among the most important scholars of his court mention may be made of two historians, Alberuni and Utbi, poets and scholars like Firdausi, Unsari and Baihaqi.

Mahmud founded a University at Ghazni with a vast collection of valuable books of various languages.

Mahmud set up a museum at Ghazni. He awarded scholarships to scholars. Mahmud built a number of 'madaras' (institutions of higher learning) and mosques.

The most famous of his monuments is the 'Celestial Bride', the great Jama Masjid of Ghazni. It was verily 'a wonder of the East' and attracted people from far and wide for a visit.

On the contrary, Ghorī showed very little interest in art and literature.

Thus from the point of view as a conqueror, as a patron of art and literature and as a promoter of Islam we can certainly share the views of Lane-poole, "compared with Mahmud, the name of Muhammad Ghorī has remained obscure. He was no patron of letters and no poet or historian vied one another to praise his magnificence and power."

On the other hand if we make a comparison on the basis of an empire builder, the name of Mahmud would remain obscure. Lane-poole himself has stated, "Of the two tides of Muhammedon invasion that surged into India, Mahmud's had left little trace'. He has further

observed, “Mahmud was no constructive or far-seeing statesman. We hear no laws or institutions or methods of government that sprang from his initiative.”