

Babur's Rule in India (1526-30)

Babur (1483-1530) whose original name was Zahir-ud-Din Mohammad, came to be known by his pet name 'Babur' – a Turkish word which means a tiger. He belonged to Farghana, a small Kingdom in Central Asia.

From 1519 to 1524, he led four expeditions to India but without any significant results. His fifth invasion which marked his success completely changed the political history of India. It had far-reaching consequences.

The battle of Panipat made him virtually the ruler of entire India.

Vulnerable Political condition of India on the Eve of Babur's Invasion:

A struggle for political supremacy among several warring powers in India was going on. Babur who had an ambition to rule India fully realized this condition and decided to try his luck. Situation is described here in brief.

Delhi:

Ibrahim Lodi, the ruler of Delhi, lacked power and political diplomacy. He had created many enemies. He was not on friendly terms with several Afghan and Turk nobles. Rana Sanga of Mewar was his sworn enemy.

Punjab:

Daulat Khan Lodi, the governor of Punjab distrusted Sultan Ibrahim Lodi. To settle scores with him, he invited Babur from Kabul to invade India.

Sind:

The province of Sind had become independent of the rule of the Delhi Sultanate. There was a good deal of confusion and lawlessness in the state.

Kashmir:

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, there began a stage of anarchy in Kashmir.

Mewar:

Sangram Singh, popularly known as Rana Sanga, was the ruler of Mewar. He aspired to capture the throne of Delhi and Agra. He is said to have invited Babur to invade India. He was perhaps under the delusion that Babur like his ancestor Timur would invade, loot and go back to Kabul.

Chief reasons that led Babur to invade India:

These may be listed as under:

1. Chaotic political condition of India.
2. Temptation to acquire enormous wealth of India.
3. Legal claim on account of Timur's invasion on India — Babur a descendant of Timur.
4. Insufficient income from Kabul — Babur's earlier possessions.
5. Fear of Babur regarding Uzbek's attack on his empire of Kabul.
6. Babur's ambition of capturing territories.
7. Invitation from some Indian nobles and rulers to attack India.

First Battle of Panipat (April 21, 1526 A.D.):

After conquering Punjab, Babur proceeded towards Delhi and met the army of Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat — now a town in Haryana, 85 Kilometers north-west of

Delhi. Babur, in his 'Memoirs' mentions that with a small army of 12000 picked horsemen he defeated Ibrahim's army of about one lakh soldiers. Whatever be the statistical details, all historians agree that Ibrahim's army was far greater in numerical strength.

For about a week, both the armies faced each other and engaged in skirmishes before the real battle started on the morning of April 21, 1526 and by noon it was over. Ibrahim Lodi's army was destroyed and he died in the battle field along with his 15000 soldiers. (Estimates vary). Pleased at his victory Babur wrote, "By the grace and mercy of Almighty God, this difficult affair was made easy to me and that mighty army, in the space of half a day was laid to dust."

Causes of Babur's Success and Ibrahim's Failure:

1. Absence of any strong power in India:

As Dr. Ishwari Prasad has put it, "In the beginning of the sixteenth century, India was a confederacy of a number of small independent states which could easily fall prey to any strong and determined invader."

2. Babur's efficient artillery:

According to Rush brook Williams, "If it could be possible to emphasize anyone of the factors as being the most important cause of his (Babur's) victory, one would surely have to assign the first place to his artillery".

3. Inefficiency of Ibrahim as a military commander:

Babur himself has observed, "Ibrahim was an inexperienced Youngman, careless in his movements who marched without order, halted or retired without plan and engaged in the battle without foresight".

4. Tulghuna method of warfare-formation of the army in the battle field:

Babur took the position in the centre between the left and right wings. On the right and left extremities of the entire front line were two flying columns to wheel round on the enemy and attack them on the sides or at the rear. Along the front of the entire line, were placed the artillery on the right side and the musketeers on the left.

The Afghan army came straight rapidly marching, but as they came near the Babur's frontline, they hesitated and halted, but their soldiers behind pressed on creating a little confusion. Babur did not let go this opportunity and his flying columns wheeled round, reached at the back and delivered a violent attack at the rear while the right and left wings started charging the enemies at the front.

At this very time, the artillery from the right and musketeers from the left started the attack. The centre of Ibrahim's army became helpless under the attack and the rest of the army was surrounded on all sides by the rains of bullets and arrows.

5. Babur's well-trained and disciplined army:

There is no doubt that Ibrahim's army lacked proper training and discipline. His army was a mixed crowd of soldiers.

6. Horses versus elephants:

Babur's war horses were more swift in action as compared with the war elephants of Ibrahim.

7. Disunity among Indian rulers:

Babur had not to face a united army of Indian rulers. He defeated them one by one and captured their kingdoms.

8. Unpopularity of Ibrahim Lodi:

Ibrahim's treatment with his Amirs (nobles) was most discourteous and insulting and they wanted to get rid of him.

9. Babur's personality:

Babur was determined to capture Delhi. He was indefatigable and had enormous capacity to inspire his soldiers. Babur's warm personality generated loyalty of his army.

Far-reaching effects of Babur's Victory at Panipat:

1. Foundation of a new dynasty:

The victory of Babur laid down the foundation of the Mughal dynasty that lasted for more than two hundred and fifty years in India.

2. Fatal blow to the Afghan rule:

In the words of Stanley Lane-Poole the biographer of Babur, "The battle of Panipat became a tomb for the Afghans of Delhi. Their state was destroyed and their strength was absolutely crippled."

3. End of the Lodi rule:

The battle of Panipat was decisive. Ibrahim Lodi was killed in the battle field along with 15000 soldiers. With his death the Lodi rule came to an end.

4. Wide use of artillery:

After the battle of Panipat, the use of artillery became current in India.

5. Capturing enormous wealth:

According to Lane-Poole (1899), Babur gathered such booty as surpassed all dreams.

6. Fulfilment of Babur's ambition:

Babur's long desire of conquering India and getting its wealth was fulfilled.

7. Enhancing Babur's dignity:

The battle of Panipat proved that Babur was a great military commander.

8. End of Babur's bad days:

According to Rush brook Williams, "After being successful in this battle, the bad days of Babur came to an end. Now he had not to bother about his personal safety or throne".