

Invasions of Mahmud and their Effects on India

Ghazni was the capital of a large Turkish kingdom. Aptigin, a Turkish slave rose to become the ruler of Ghazni.

After his death in 963, his slave and son-in-law Subaktigin seized power and conquered many regions around Ghazni.

After his death in 997 his son Mahmud ascended the throne.

His swift and decisive conquests of Khorasan, Sistan and Ghur made him the most formidable power in that region. He now turned his attention on India. He is usually associated with 17 invasions in 25 years. His first invasion directed against the frontier towns was in the years 1000 and his last and most important was at Somnath Temple in 1025.

Usually four reasons are assigned to Mahmud's invasions:

- (1) He wanted to establish the glory of Islam by destroying the images of the Hindu gods and spreading Islam.
- (2) He wanted to loot the wealth of India for he loved wealth.
- (3) He wanted wealth also to meet the cost of the army and warfare for he wanted the expansion of his empire.
- (4) He wanted to satisfy his ego as one of the greatest conquerors of the world.

Important Invasions of Mahmud:

First invasion: Capture of frontier forts (1000 A.D.):

During his first invasion, Mahmud captured a few forts and towns of Khyber. He appointed his own governors and went back.

Second invasion: Victory over Jaipal of Hindushahi kingdom (1001):

A fierce battle near Peshawar was fought in which the invaders became victorious. Mahmud got 2, 50,000 'dinars' and 50 elephants. Lane Poole states, "Jaipal refused to survive his disgrace. Preferring death to dis-honour, he cast himself upon a funeral pyre."

Third invasion: attack at Bhera (1005):

The ruler Bijai Rai offered stiff resistance but was defeated. Finding himself helpless, the ruler committed suicide. Mahmud looted the kingdom and killed people mercilessly.

Fourth invasion at Multan (1006):

Mahmud invaded Multan which was under an Arab ruler and after seven days he conquered it.

Fifth invasion at Multan (1007 A.D.):

A grandson of Jaipal who had embraced Islam had been appointed the governor of Multan with a Muslim name. He renounced Islam and declared himself as an independent ruler. Mahmud invaded and defeated him.

Sixth invasion: Defeat of Anand Pal and his allies (1008-1009 A.D.):

Anand Pal was able to organise a confederacy of the rulers of Ujjain, Gwalior, Kalinjar, Ajmer etc. According to contemporary historians, “Hindu women sold their jewels and sent the money from distant parts to be used against the invaders.” Regarding the fate of the war Lane-poole states, “Anand Pal’s elephant took fright, the rumour ran that the ‘raja’ was flying from the field, vague suspicion and distrust spread about, and a general stampede ensued. Mahmud found himself pursuing a panic-stricken crowd. For two days, invaders slew, captured and despoiled to their hearts’ content”.

Seventh invasion: Conquest of Nagarkot—Kangra (1009 A.D.):

After his victory, Mahmud returned to Ghazni with such a vast collection of riches and jewels which “far exceeded the treasures of the mightiest king of the world.”

Mahmud’s invasion at Mathura (1018):

The city of Mathura was a beautiful city and a sacred place of the Hindus having about 1,000 temples. Mahmud wrote about this city. “If anyone should undertake to build a fabric like this, he would spend thereon one lakh packets of a thousand ‘dinar’ and would not complete in 200 years and with the assistance of the most ingenious architects”. As usual, Mahmud looted and broke down all the idols and destroyed temples.

Mahmud’s invasion at Somnath temple (1025):

Expedition of the Somnath temple made Mahmud a great hero of Islam. According to Lane Poole, “The attack of Somnath has made Mahmud of Ghazni, a champion of the faith in the eyes of Muslims for nearly two centuries, and the feat, has been embellished with fantastic legends.”

The temple's importance and wealth can be gauged from the fact that lakhs of visitors offered prayers and made huge offerings daily and also the temple had a permanent income from the revenue of ten thousand villages attached to it. The loot of the temple was worth 20 lakh dinars'. The idol of Shiva was broken into pieces.

Effects of Mahmud's Invasions on India

In the words of Al-Beruni, "Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country and performed those wonderful deeds by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust, scattered in all directions".

Prof. Habib observes, "The worst enemies of Islam had been its own fanatical followers of which Mahmud was one.

He showed to the philosophical Hindus the darker and the more tyrannical side of Islam and the Hindus, who would naturally judge a creed from the character of its followers, began to hate Islam for all times to come." Sir Woolsey Haig has observed, "He was the first to carry the banner of Islam into the heart of India and to tread the path which so many followed him."

Following were the important effects of Mahmud's invasions on India:

1. Mahmud's victories exposed the weakness of the Rajput rulers. It is an irony and sad commentary on the helpless political conditions of India that Mahmud roamed about in India without facing any serious resistance. "He took from India whatever he could and destroyed the rest."
2. Mahmud's invasion exposed the military weakness of India.
3. Mahmud carried huge wealth out of India and thereby weakened the economic condition of India.
4. Mahmud, by destroying idols, temples and beautiful places, gave a great setback to Indian art and sculpture.
5. Mahmud paved the way for foreign invaders to invade India.
6. Mahmud provided a foot-hold in India for the promotion of Islam in

7. Mahmud's invasions which were mainly directed upon Hindu temples cracked a feeling of ill-will among the Hindus towards the Muslims.

8. Along with Mahmud came several Muslim saints who preached lofty ideals of life. These Muslim saints called the 'Sufis' started the process of interaction between the Hindus and the Muslims.

9. Mahmud was accompanied by a famous historian Alberuni whose accounts serve as a very useful source of information about the various aspects of life in India.

10. A new chapter in the history of India began. Earlier all the invaders like the Sakas, Kushans and Huns were absorbed in the mainstream of India's life and lost their separate identities but the new Muslim invaders paved the way for establishing their separate identity.

Effects of Mahmud's Invasions:

Important effects of Mahmud's invasion were as under:

1. Punjab became a part of the empire of Ghazni.
2. Weakness of the Rajput's was exposed.
3. Mahmud's conquests paved the way for the Muslim conquest of India.
4. India's enormous wealth was plundered and taken away to Ghazni.
5. The invasions gave a severe blow to the art of India as several important temples were destroyed by the invaders.
6. Mahmud's invasion played an important role in the spread of Islam in India.
7. The frequent invasions further weakened the political stability.
8. In every invasion India lost thousands of soldiers.