



ARAB & TURKS INVASION

Class 11th Tamil Nadu Book

Chapter 15

LESSON 15

EARLY MEDIEVAL INDIA

Learning Objectives

Students will acquire knowledge about

- 1. A brief history of the Rajput kingdoms.*
- 2. Causes and results of the Arab conquest of Sind.*
- 3. Mahmud of Ghazni and his invasions.*
- 4. Mahmud of Ghori's invasions.*
- 5. Causes for the failure of Hindu states.*

After the death of Harsha, there was no political unity in north India for about five centuries. The country was split up into a number of states which were constantly fighting and changing their frontiers. The important kingdoms in north India were Kashmir, Gandhara, Sind, Gujarat, Kanauj, Ajmir, Malwa, Bengal and Assam. In the early eighth century Kashmir was dominant. Then, the Palas of Bengal reigned supreme till the Pratiharas became the most powerful rulers of north India. But in the tenth century, the Rashtrakutas of Deccan tried to extend their power in north India but ultimately failed in their attempt.

Rajput Kingdoms

The dominance of Rajputs began from the seventh and eighth centuries and lasted till the Muslim conquest in the twelfth century. Even after that, many Rajput states continued to survive for a long time. In the period of Muslim aggression, the Rajputs were the main defenders of the Hindu religion and culture.

There are several theories about the origin of Rajputs. They were considered as the descendents of the foreign invaders and the Indian Kshatriyas. The foreign invaders were Indianized and absorbed into Indian society. Many legends of Rajputs support this theory. Therefore, it can be said that diverse elements constitute in the shaping of the Rajput clan. They became homogenous by constant intermarriage and by adopting common customs. They made war as their chief occupation. However, trade and agriculture also prospered. The Arab travellers refer to the prosperity of the land and the great trade of the cities. They built strong forts.

The Gurjara-Pratiharas were the earliest of the Rajput rulers. Its first great leader was Harischandra. He conquered extensive territory in Rajaputana and ruled with his capital at Bhinmal. The Gurjaras were in different branches. One branch ruled Gujarat and another at Avanthi. The Pratiharas involved themselves in a three-cornered contest with the Palas of Bengal and the Rashtrakutas of Deccan. Later the Pratiharas became weak. The Chauhans, the most valiant of the Rajput races, ruled Ajmir. Vighraharaj was their most important king, who occupied Delhi. Therefore the Chauhans faced the onslaught of the Muslims under Muhammad of Ghori. The Paramaras were also important Rajput rulers of this period. The most important king was Bhoja. His military conquests as well as cultural contributions remain notable in the history of Rajputs.

Constant fighting weakened the Rajputs. Also, they never united against a common enemy. Their lack of political foresight and constant rivalries prevented any combined opposition to the Muslim invaders.

Arab Conquest of Sind (712 A.D.)

The religion Islam was born at Mecca in Arabia. Its founder was Prophet Muhammad. But his teachings made the wealthy people of Mecca his enemies. Therefore, he migrated to Medina in 622

A.D., which was the starting point of the Muslim calendar and the Muslim era called hijra. After eight years he returned to Mecca with his followers. He died in 632 A.D.

The followers of Muhammad set up an empire called the Caliphate. The Umayyads and the Abbasids were called the caliphs. They expanded their rule by conquests and spread their religion Islam. In 712 A.D., Muhammad bin Qasim invaded Sind. He was the commander of the Umayyad kingdom. Qasim defeated Dahir, the ruler of Sind and killed him in a well-contested battle. His capital Aror was captured. Qasim extended his conquest further into Multan. Qasim organized the administration of Sind. The people of Sind were given the status of *zimmis* (protected subjects). There was no interference in the lives and property of the people. Soon, Qasim was recalled by the Caliph.

However, Sind continued to be under the Arabs. But the Muslims could not expand their authority further into India due to the presence of the powerful Pratihara kingdom in western India. Although the conquest of Sind did not lead to further conquests immediately, it had resulted in the diffusion of Indian culture abroad. Many Arab travelers visited Sind. Indian medicine and astronomy were carried to far off lands through the Arabs. The Indian numerals in the Arabic form went to Europe through them. Since Sind was a part of the Arab empire, the inflow of Indian knowledge was great.

Mahmud of Ghazni and his Invasions

By the end of the ninth century A.D., the Abbasid Caliphate declined. The Turkish governors established independent kingdoms and the Caliph became only a ritual authority. One among them was Alptigin whose capital was Ghazni. His successor and son-in-law Sabuktigin



PORTRAIT OF MAHMUD OF GHAZNI

wanted to conquer India from the north-west. He succeeded in capturing Peshawar from Jayapala. But his raids did not produce a lasting effect. He was succeeded by his son, Mahmud

Mahmud of Ghazni (A.D. 997-1030).

Mahmud is said to have made seventeen raids into India. At that time, North India was divided into a number of Hindu states. On the frontier of India, there existed the Hindu Shahi kingdom which extended from the Punjab to Kabul. The other important kingdoms of north India were Kanauj, Gujarat, Kashmir, Nepal, Malwa and Bundelkhand. The initial raids were against the Hindu Shahi kingdom in which its king Jayapala was defeated in 1001. After this defeat, Jayapala immolated himself because he thought that his defeat was a disgrace. His successor Anandapala fought against Mahmud but he was also defeated in the Battle of Waihind, the Hind Shahi capital near Peshawar in 1008. In this battle, Anandapala was supported by the rulers of Kanauj and Rajasthan. As a result of his victory at Waihind, Mahmud extended his rule over most of the Punjab.

The subsequent raids of Mahmud into India were aimed at plundering the rich temples and cities of northern India. In 1011, he raided Nagarkot in the Punjab hills and Thaneshwar near Delhi. In 1018, Mahmud plundered the holy city of Mathura and also attacked Kanauj. The ruler of Kanauj, Rajyapala abandoned Kanauj and later died. Mahmud returned via Kalinjar with fabulous riches. His next important raid was against Gujarat. In 1024, Mahmud marched from Multan across Rajaputana, defeated the Solanki King Bhimadeva I, plundered Anhilwad and sacked the famous temple of Somanatha. Then, he returned through the Sind desert. This was his last campaign in India. Mahmud died in 1030 A.D.

Mahmud was not a mere raider and plunderer of wealth. He built a wide empire from the Punjab in the east to the Caspian sea on

the west and from Samarkand in the north to Gujarat in the south. The Ghaznavid empire roughly included Persia, Trans-oxiana, Afghanistan and Punjab. His achievements were due to his leadership and restless activity. Mahmud was considered a hero of Islam by medieval historians. He also patronized art and literature. Firdausi was the poet-laureate in the court of Mahmud. He was the author of Shah Namah. Alberuni stayed in Mahmud's court and wrote the famous *Kitab-i-Hind*, an account on India. His conquest of Punjab and Multan completely changed the political situation in India. He paved the way for the Turks and Afghans for further conquests and made deeper incursions into the Gangetic valley at any time. He drained the resources of India by his repeated raids and deprived India of her manpower. The exhaustion of India's economic resources and man power had its adverse effect on the political future of India. The Hindu Shahi kingdom was guarding the gates of India against foreign invaders. Mahmud destroyed it and thus India's frontiers became defenceless. The inclusion of Punjab and Afghanistan in Ghazni's kingdom made the subsequent Muslim conquests of India comparatively easy.

Muhammad Ghori

The Ghoris started as vassals of Ghazni but became independent after the death of Mahmud. Taking advantage of the decline of the Ghaznavid empire, Muizzuddin Muhammad popularly known as Muhammad Ghori brought Ghazni under their control. Having made his position strong and secure at Ghazni, Muhammad Ghori turned his attention to India. Unlike Mahmud of Ghazni, he wanted to conquer India and extend his empire in this direction.

In 1175, Muhammad Ghori captured Multan and occupied whole of Sind in his subsequent expeditions. In 1186 he attacked Punjab, captured it from Khusru Malik and annexed it to his dominions. The annexation of Punjab carried his dominion eastward to the Sutlej and led his invasion of the Chauhan kingdom.

The Battle of Tarain (1191-1192)

Realising their grave situation, the Hindu princes of north India formed a confederacy under the command of Prithviraj Chauhan. Prithviraj rose to the occasion, and defeated Ghori in the battle of Tarain near Delhi in 1191 A.D. Muhammad Ghori felt greatly humiliated by this defeat. To avenge this defeat he made serious preparations and gathered an army of 1,20,000 men. He came with this large force to Lahore via Peshawar and Multan. He sent a message to Prithviraj asking him to acknowledge his supremacy and become a Muslim. Prithviraj rejected this proposal and prepared to meet the invader. He gathered a large force consisting of 3,00,000 horses, 3000 elephants and a large body of foot soldiers. Many Hindu rajas and chieftains also joined him. In the ensuing Second Battle of Tarain in 1192, Muhammad Ghori thoroughly routed the army of Prithviraj, who was captured and killed.



PORTRAIT OF PRITHVIRAJ
CHAUHAN

The second battle of Tarain was a decisive battle. It was a major disaster for the Rajputs. Their political prestige suffered a serious setback. The whole Chauhan kingdom now lay at the feet of the invader. The first Muslim kingdom was thus firmly established in India at Ajmer and a new era in the history of India began. After his brilliant victory over Prithviraj at Tarain, Muhammad Ghori returned to Ghazni leaving behind his favourite general Qutb-uddin Aibak to make further conquests in India. Aibak consolidated his position in India by occupying places like Delhi and Meerut. In 1193 he prepared the ground for another invasion by Muhammad Ghori. This invasion was directed against the Gahadavala ruler Jayachandra. Muhammad routed Jayachandra's forces. Kanauj was occupied by the Muslims after the battle of Chandawar. The Battles

of Tarain and Chandawar contributed to the establishment of Turkish rule in India.

Causes for the failure of Hindu kingdoms

The causes for the downfall of Hindu states have to be analysed historically. The most important cause was that they lacked unity. They were divided by factions. The Rajput princes exhausted one another by their mutual conflicts. Secondly, many Hindu states were declining in power. Their military methods were out of date and far inferior to those of Muslims. Indians continued to rely on elephants while the Muslims possessed quick-moving cavalry. The Muslims soldiers had better organization and able leaders. Their religious zeal and their greed for the greater wealth of India provided stimulus to them. Among the Hindus, the duty of fighting was confined to a particular class, the Kshatriyas. Moreover, the Hindus were always on the defensive, which was always a weak position.

Learning Outcome

After learning this lesson the students will be able to explain

- 1. A brief history of the Rajput kingdoms in northern India.*
- 2. Arab Conquest of Sind and its results.*
- 3. Causes and results of the Mahmud of Ghazni's invasion of India.*
- 4. Mahmud of Ghori and his capture of Indian territories.*
- 5. Causes for the failure of the Hindu states against Muslim invasions.*