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Reasons and Consequences of Ghaznavids' Invasion of India

Abstract

During the history of India, there had been relations between Indians and Muslims. With the foundation of independent rulerships in the east of Iran during the 3rd and 4th Islamic centuries, the form of Muslim Arab commanders' direct attacks on the Indian lands changed into non-Arab warrior emirs' conquests (against the infidels). Arising of Ghaznavids in the east of the Islamic lands and the thought of conquering India by Sultan Mahmud was the beginning of this trend. Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi launched sixteen or seventeen attacks on the wealthy country of India. Of course, these attacks were started by Sabuktigin and reached their peak during the time of Sultan Mahmud and were continued by his successors severely. The reasons for these military expeditions can be dealt with from three different but related aspects:

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Firstly, India was a rich and wealthy country in which Ghaznavids' wars (against infidels) meant access to a lot of wealth which could be a powerful support for the survival of the Ghaznavid army-based government. Secondly, one of the main reasons could be religion; that is, the invasions were launched for the sake of spreading the religion of Islam through which they wanted to gain legitimacy. Thirdly, there was a problem resulted from the presence of the army in the center of the government.

The present research deals with the reasons and consequences of Ghaznavids' invasion and conquest of India which continued throughout the Ghaznavid dynasty. The first attack was launched from the north of India, and the way Ghaznavid encountered and governed the Indian conquered lands was different from that of other conquerors.

Keywords: Ghaznavids, India, Sabuktigin, Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, Somnath.

Introduction

The Ghaznavid Dynasty was founded after the Turk slaves reached higher posts, such as commander-in-chiefs, in the Samanid court; they then took over the state of Khorasan. The real founder of the Ghaznavid Dynasty is, in fact, Sabuktigin. It was in his time that the Ghaznavid sovereignty expanded. Of course, his time can be considered important because he was the beginner of India's conquest. Moreover, he could defeat King Chipland capture India for the first time. Indeed, this was the beginning of Ghaznavids' numerous invasions of India. After his death, Sultan Mahmud was crowned. He launched sixteen or seventeen invasions of India's territories. According to Ghaznavid historians, the reason why Sultan Mahmud invaded India several times was spreading of Islam, and throwing infidels' sovereignty, but with respect to severe economic necessities, the fundamental aim was expansion of their territories and access to the valuable spoils of war. Also, propagation of the Persian language and making the soldiers engaged in the war were among the main goals that Sultan Mahmud had in his mind. The most important victory was Sultan's conquest of Somnath.

This article tries to answer the question about the political, military, social, cultural and economic reasons for Sultan Mahmud's invasion of India. The method utilized in the present paper is the Library Method, and sources of valuable materials which belong to the Ghaznavid era together with sources such as Otbi, Beyhaghi, and Ibn-eAthir, as the research primary source, and sources such as Spuler, Bosworth, Foroozani as the secondary source have been used.

Reasons of Ghaznavids' Attention to India and Their Numerous Attacks on It

Ghaznavid's numerous invasions of India were neither the first victorious attacks nor the last ones. India's wealth and its social structure attracted every adventurous conqueror. One of the main events of Sabuktigin's rule was the beginning of Ghaznavids' conquests in India, which continued during the time of Mahmud and his successors. By implementing the policy of Islamic planning, Sultan Mahmud's several military expeditions which were carried out as 'holy wars' against infidels for the sake of Allah, received legitimacy. According to Ibn-e Athir, "He made the war against infidels as pretext for fighting with Muslims." (Ibn-eAthir, vol.21, 1992[1371]: 182)

Since Mahmud had accompanied his father in their attacks on India, he knew that the Indian army, due to the lack of military order and training, could not resist before an orderly and trained army. (Dolafoz, 1927: 85) So, he launched his first major and wide spread invasion of India's lands in 1002 AD. Following the way of western Greek kings, Kabul and Kushans' great kings, kings of Hayate and Muslims of the first Islamic era and Afghan Lodi leaders, Sultan Mahmud spread his conquering toward east of Afghanistan and beyond the Sindh River in the vast country of India for uplifting the word of Allah, based on what his father had done. (Bosworth, 1985, 2, 360; Jalali, 1972: 18-19) After these military incidences, the Persian language became gradually prevalent in India. Soon after, two main cities of Lahore and Multan became gathering of the Persian language poets. At those times, Ghaznavids took possession of a lot of war prisoners and spoils by sale of which they gained a large amount of money. In a short term, Ghaznavids' economic situation was optimized. (Sadarengani, 1999: 3) In addition to being interested in the spread of Islam, the economy issue

was appreciated by the conquerors. Abbasid caliphate confirmed this policy, too, because victory in India by those who followed the Islamic sect of sunni, increased the Caliph's interest. (Selim,2004: 130) The book, 'Ghaznavids from Arising to Collapse' states that the residents of Ghaznavid's eastern domain were non-Muslims, so the aim of Islam propagation not only motivated religious warriors to join Sultan's army but it justified his attacks as well. Repeated military expeditions not merely provided food for armies and satisfied Sultan's desire of gaining unique spoils and jewelries, but also made the name of Sultan famous as an idol-breaker warrior against idol worshippers even to the far-reaching regions of Islamic domain. (Foroozani,2005:112) Another book, 'Tarikh-e Yamini' (history of Yamini) mentions, "In 389A.H. (about 1045 AD) when Sultan Mahmud was recognized by Abbasid caliph in Baghdad, and received the title of 'Yaminud- Duleh' and 'Amin ul- melleh' and after he gained enough power, he vowed to invade India in order to help the men of religion and abolish the infidels. He considered these military actions as a means of his government's survival and reinforcement. (Otbi, 1424:138) Of course, the soldiers of Sultan's army were not the mere factor of conquering and gaining the spoils of war, but several other groups of people took part in the conquests, who are known as 'Motwae' (war volunteers) in the history. However, those volunteers did not join the war without expectations; in addition to the spoils of war they received, they were paid an amount of money by the government. Sultan Mahmud did not want to spread his conquests from west and south-west which were in the limits of the Caliph's domain, because he had introduced himself as a supporter of the Caliph and a follower of his orders. North and east sides, due to the presence of Mogul and Turk warrior tribes, were not worthy of experience. Moreover, yellow-skinned Turks such as Ghuzz and Taghuzghoz and other tribesmen were present in the way. However, Sultan Mahmud maximized his domain by removing Iranian emirs (rulers). Additionally, there was no reason or interest which might motivate Sultan to launch any military action on the above mentioned regions; instead, he decided to follow the way of his father and launch an invasion of the wealthy country of India. (Selim,2004: 129)

Ghaznavid and Abbasid Caliphate

Among the Abbasid caliphs, Al-Qader was the most uncompromising about his sect of Ahl-e Sunnat (Sunni). He issued a formal declaration saying that every sect other than Sunni was a deviation from original Islam. This was a common point between Sultan and Caliph that reinforced their relations. Sultan read the name of Caliph Al-Qader in 'Khutbatul- Salatul Jom'a' (Sermon in the Prayers of Friday); by doing so, he increased his popularity before the Abbasid Caliph. Good news about his repeated victories against infidels caused Caliph to grant Sultan many titles, some of which were 'Amir ul-Mo'menin' (the Leader of Faithful Men), 'Nezamud- Din (Order of Religion), and 'Nasirul-Haqh (Helper of Righteousness). When Fatimid caliphs conquered Egypt and founded a new caliphate, dividing of the Islamic world between two centers of caliphate intensified political-religious wars; especially when Al-Qader reached the position of caliphate, the tension between Fatimids and Abbasids rose; Sultan took Abbasids' side, and then by intensely opposing the Carmathians, he placed himself in the Caliph's heart. Eventually, Caliph Al-Qader sent him a precious robe of honor which had no precedents until that time. (O'tbi, 1424: 138) When Sultan Mahmud was crowned, he demonstrated in favor of Ahl-e Beyt. (Family of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon them), and in order to serve Muslim saints and raise the word of Islam, he vowed to conquer India. To show the power of his government, Sultan felt compelled to decide on the conquest of India which was a rich and vast country. (Selim, 2004: 129) On the other hand, the problem of exporting internal crises as well as the war spoils-based economic system forced him to do so.

The relation with caliphate did not remain good for long. An unexpected incidence caused the relations of Sultan with the Abbasid Caliph to get cold. With the order of Sultan, his minister, Hasanak, went to Hejaz (Arabia) as Amir ul-Hojjaj (leader of pilgrims to Mecca) in 414 A.H. But because of undesirable situations, Hasanak, when returning home, changed his way and went to visit the Fatimid governor of Sham (Syria) and came back through Musel without visiting the Abbasid Caliph. (Beyhaqi, 1977: 265-227) At that time Sham was under the reign of Fatimid caliphs, and this behavior annoyed the Abbasid

Caliph. Therefore, they sent the gifts given by the Fatimid government to the court of the Abbasid Caliph in order to be destroyed there. Although this satisfied the Caliph more or less, the Caliph's prejudice increased implicitly not explicitly.

Hindus Embracing Islam

One of Ghaznavids military objectives in India was spread of Islam. After Ghaznavid's conquest of India, religious scholars and mystics ingress and egress began in order to preach Islam and invite Hindus to Islam. (Hekmat, 1958: 63) Social conditions, of course, were suitable for embracing Islam. Islam quickly spread in India due to two major reasons. Firstly, Islamic principles were based on justice and equality, and men were preferred only due to being God-fearing and having knowledge, while the Indian society suffered from the caste system (a system which divides people into classes according to their wealth, rank, origin of the family, and so on). Secondly, religious scholars in the religions of Christianity or Islam (priests, clerics) did not belong to a certain class of people, while in Hinduism only the Brahman Class could receive those kinds of spiritual positions. These two mentioned factors had an important part in the progress of Islam in India. (Chand, 1995: 205) However, the great and powerful rulership which came into existence by Yaminud-Doleh Sultan Mahmud and inherited a part of Samanid Dynasty's domain, was an Islamic, military and Persian speaking government which had no national or ethnical origin. It spread the religion of Islam among Hindus for more than a half century.

Afterwards, because of attacking and taking Hindus temples, a violent, aggressive, destructive and inflexible face was drawn for Islam. It was during that time when the pace of embracing Islam by Hindus decreased. M.Ghobar states, "Sultan Mahmud was a prejudiced Muslim and his military expeditions originated from his prejudice. What some people say that it was because of gaining the war spoils that he invaded India cannot be correct because he spent them in the construction of mosques and religious schools. His real aim had been Islam propagation. But now a days, exerting force and pressure for the sake of spreading a religion cannot be justified. Historical realities show that he did not do anything to those idols and temples which were not used for religious purposes and were considered as signs of historical

culture, such as Buddha idols of Bamiyan which existed in the heart of an Islamic domain, but he destroyed those idols of temples which were worshipped. Naturally, breaking the idols, destroying the temples and forcefully forbidding the people of other religions or sects, made them annoyed.” (Ghobar,1996: 96)

The main reason for Hindus resistance against conquerors was the issue of destruction of their idol-temples. Hindus could not endure any disrespect so they resisted, and the warriors resorted to force and compulsion. Those events very soon devastated the face of Islam before Hindus. During his life time, Sultan Mahmud added the entire provinces of Sind and Punjab to his domain. He has been introduced as an Islamic ruler who invaded India in order to spread the religion of Islam; that is why most Muslims praise him, while a lot of Hindus hate him.

Ghaznavid’s Preliminary Conquest in India

Sultan Mahmud’s father, Sabuktigin, had passed the stages of progress from the position of the general chamberlain of the Samanid court. (Otbi, 1424:27;Shabankareie, 1984: 38) After the capture of the Bust region, he proceeded toward Khazdar (also pronounced Hozdar and Qozdar, an area near Ghazhe; it belonged to India, now to Pakistan) and conquered it. Then, he proceeded into the internal lands of India. Chipal, the king of India, fought against Sabuktigin. After several battles, finally Chipal sent a messenger requesting peace, and proposed to pay annually a sum to Sabuktigin’s treasury and obey his orders. Sabuktigin accepted his request. But as Mahmud, the senior boy of Sabuktigin, opposed that, Chipal sent another representative with a message saying,“you have heard and seen that Hindus do not fear of death or of being killed. If you are driven to extremities, they will burn their treasuries, and then kill themselves. Thus, those who have invaded us, gain nothing but soil and ash.”(Otbi,1424:30)When Sabuktigin heard those speeches, he asked his son to forget about the revenge. Eventually, a peace contract was signed between Chipal and Sabuktigin. Hindus paid one million dinar shahi (currency unit)and five elephants as ransom. Also they gave Sabuktigin some trading cities and some important castles. But when Sabuktigin’s army left the region, Chipal broke his promise and detained Sabuktigin’s men who had

remained there instead of their hostages who had gone with Sabuktigin. When Sabuktigin was informed of news, he invaded the land of Chipal, took a group of people in captivity and occupied the most prosperous area of Chipal's country, Lamhan. On the order of Sabuktigin, Mahmud along with two brothers of Sabuktigin set out for fighting against Chipal who had invaded Sabuktigin's domain in order to compensate their defeat. The battle lasted twenty days. Eventually, Sabuktigin's army gained the victory. After the victory, according to a peace contract signed between the two sides, four castles in Chipal's territory were given to Sabuktigin; also, one hundred elephants were bestowed to him. (Hamedani, 2005: 16)

After this event, the name of Sabuktigin entered on the currency coins as well as in the 'Khutba' (Sermon) of Friday Prayers. Afghan and Khalan tribes residing in those regions presented their obedience to Sabuktigin. (Ibn-e Athir, 1992: 21-102; Malkom, 2001: 200) Ghaznavid sovereignty expanded during Sabuktigin's rule. After the peace treaty between Samanids and Qarakhanids, which took place by Sabuktigin's mediation, he went to Balkh where he became ill and finally on his way going back to Ghaznin, in a place called Madarmooy, passed away and was buried in Ghaznin in the Islamic month of Sha'ban, 387 A.H. (Shabankare'ie, 1984: 24; Gardizi, 1984: 375)

Sultan Mahmud's Conquests in India

At the time of Sultan Mahmud, the vast country of India lacked a central government, and local rulers with special titles controlled the power in their own regions throughout the country. One by one, those regions were conquered by Sultan Mahmud, including Peshawar, Bahatia Multan and so on. He conquered Peshawar in Shawwal 391 A.H. (September 1001 AD), captured Bahatia in 395 A.H. (1004 AD), conquered Multan in 396 A.H. (1005 AD), and occupied the Shokupal Castle in 399 A.H. (1008 AD). Due to the large number of victories and captives and the huge amount of spoils, and its reflection in the Muslim world, he gained great fame and gained the nickname of 'Kasirul-Ghazavaat'.

Sultan Mahmud's other conquests in India include: Conquest of the Bahim Nagar Castle in 399 A.H. (1008 AD) (Mustofi, 1985: 393; Mir Khand, 1960:22); and the Narian Castle and opening of a trade way

between Khorasan and India (jurfazoghani,1978: 311);occupation of Multan for the second time in 401A.H. (1010 AD) and Tahansir area and destruction of temples in 402 A.H. (1011 AD) (Astarabadi,2008: 91-2, 96; Zarrin-koob,1989: 240); conquering of the Nandoona or Nardian Castle in 404 A.H. (1013 AD) (jurfazoghani,1978: 331-2; O'tbi,1424: 84); conquest of Kashmir and lohkoat in 406 A.H. (1015 AD) (Astarabadi,2008: 98-99; Foroozani,2005: 118); occupation of Matorra and Qanno'j in 409 A.H. (1017 AD) (Tatawi, 2003: 206-8); military expedition to Nanda in 412 A.H. (1021 AD) (Birooni, 1998: 1,155; Shabankare'ie,1984: 55); occupation of Noor and Qirat states in 412 A.H. (1021 AD)(Gardizi,1984 :401);conquest of Lahore City in 412 A.H. (1021AD)(Astarabadi,2008:107);and invasion of Gualyar and Kalanjar in 413 A.H. (1023AD) (Gardizi,1984:43); and his military expedition to Somanath, the state of Gujarat, in 416 A.H. (1025 AD). (Ibn-e Athir, 1992: 22,58; Qazvini,1992: 144)

Results of Mahmud Ghaznavi's Invasion of India

One of the main results of Sultan Mahmud's invasion of India was prevalence of Iranian culture in India. Actually Ghaznavids' powerful appearance along with a sustainable military-political strategy in the east, even though under the title of 'jihad' (holy war against infidels), caused expansion of Islamic empire toward the northern and eastern regions of India. At the time of Sultan Mahmud, not only Ghaznavids' domain in India expanded but the door of Islam was opened to east and south-east. Sultan's domination on a part of the Silk Road resulted in the development of cultural interaction with India and China. On its peak of magnificence, Ghaznavid ruling domain stretched from India and the Indian Ocean coasts to Kharazm, Gorgan, Rey, Esfahan and Kerman. Ghaznavid vastempire, by removing many barriers and borders, had provided the ground for the interaction of different cultures, and by dispatching expeditions to India, Ghaznavids were the agent of Iranian literature and culture propagation in those areas. In those military expeditions, there were groups of cultural and literary scholars who accompanied the Ghaznavid kings. One of the most popular odes of Farrukhi Sistani illustrates a long travel with Sultan Mahmud to Multan and Somnath.(Farrukhi Sistani, 1956:66)

With their material and spiritual assistance, the Ghaznavid kings played an important role in the development of Iranian culture in India.

Ghaznavid courts are famous in history due to the presence of great writers and poets. In the courts of Sultan Mahmud and Sultan Masoud, Persian was the formal language of the government; the caliphs' orders were translated into Persian, and the documents which were issued by Sultan Mahmud and had to be sent to Baghdad, the center of caliphate, were first compiled in Persian; then, translated into Arabic. (Beyhaqi, 1977:413;Spuler, 1970:445)Another important result of these numerous military expeditions to India was the great evolution in geography-related literature. Since India was the country of strange things, wonders and amazement, it possessed certain attractions for geographic text writers who, by long and hard journeys, patiently collected scientific and geographic information and recorded different customs and traditions of the nation. Travels in India provided proper opportunities for them, because a lot of different nations lived in that country. Those collected data about the India's lands appeared in some great books such as 'Rahle', 'Masalek va Mamalek', and 'Suratul-Arz'.(BastaniParizi,1977: 45) What had been stated in those books caused many people to travel to India. Estakhri, the author of the popular book of 'Masalek va Mamalek', by traveling to mostcities of India and the Sind State, has explained their mosques and idol-temples, as well as their numerous religions, and then by introducing their productshas shown their way of trading. (Estakhri, 1989: 148-154)The core of the Ghaznavid army was primarily made up of Turks, as well as thousands of native Ghazna in south of the Hindukush Mountains; a new larger military training center was established in Bost. Weapons were made. After capturing and conquering, Ghaznavids began to employ Indians in their army. Ghaznavid administrative traditions and military practices came from Abbasids. Due to their access to the Indus-Ganges plains, Ghaznavids developed the first Muslim army, during the 11th and 12th centuries, to use war elephants in battles. In those military expeditions, a group of cultural and literary scholars accompanied the Ghaznavid kings. They played an important role in the development of Iranian culture in India. Mahmud was introduced in India as a great leader that was there to spread Islam. Many Muslims

have praised him, but many Indians know him as a destructive conqueror.

Conclusion

Ghaznavid kings' fame has been because of their numerous invasions of India. Many invasions had been launched by Sabuktigin. Sultan Mahmud started his first widespread invasion in 392 A.H. (1002 AD). He attacked India sixteen or seventeen times. Ghaznavids' repeated victories were followed by the weakness in Hindus' morale. Even when Sultan Mahmud was faced by Chhalukya who had a powerful army, the battle proceeded in favor of the Ghaznavid army who then gained an important victory. Sultan's biggest and most important victory was the conquest of Somnath, which was considered as a prominent victory of Islam. In fact, through Sultan Mahmud's conquests, Islam spread to most areas. Ghaznavids developed their economy by the war spoils and their capital Ghazni became one of the most important cities of that era. Actually, the time of Mahmud can be considered as the golden time of Ghaznavids. After Sultan Mahmud, his successors continued his conquests of the Indian lands; however, none of them could reach Mahmud's power and popularity. Then, gradually their status began to decline, and eventually with Ghori's repeated pressures on them, the remaining of the Ghaznavids were driven away to India where they could not do anything important to survive and finally were fallen down by Ghori's.

Due to some reasons, the trend of conquests in India by Ghaznavids took place quickly among which the weakness of local control can be mentioned. Hindus did not have a powerful central government, so Ghaznavids could invade those local rulers one by one and occupy their territory easily. Different insights over the two religions of Islam and Hinduism, the Turk's behavior in presenting the new religion of Islam to Hindus, and undesirable and violent behavior of the Ghaznavid army commanders caused hatred of Hindus towards the conquerors and even Islam itself.

The treasures of temples motivated Sultan and his soldiers to launch military actions; also, Abbasid caliph's spiritual support caused his repeated attacks to be continued. These conquests resulted in the migration of Turks to India which was done under the pretext of

religious affairs, trade, and even military tasks. Also, Hindus were forced to go to the Ghaznavid domain as war captives or as ordinary and professional workers. Although because of race-mixing and lapse of time, the effects of those migrations are not considerable, the context of interaction and replacements is obvious. After removing the borders of local rulerships, many stable and mobile Bazaars were created in Ghaznavids' domain.

At the early periods of the Ghaznavid Dynasty, Iranian business flourished because it was situated in the way to China and India from the Arabian subcontinent, Mesopotamia, Africa, and Europe, and vice-versa. Ghaznavids' numerous attacks on India caused the country to lose its defensive power and suffered from crises resulted from encounter between the remaining of the Ghaznavid government and their old rivals.

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