FIVE

The Age of Conflict (*Circa 1000–1200*)

The period from 1000 to 1200 saw rapid changes both in West and Central Asia, and in north India. It were these developments which led to the incursion of the Turks into northern India leading to their rule towards the end of the period.

By the end of the ninth century, the Abbasid caliphate was in decline. Its place was taken by a series of states ruled by Islamized Turks. The Turks had entered the Abbasid empire during the ninth century as palace-guards and mercenary soldiers. Soon they emerged as the king-makers. As the power of the central government declined, provincial governors started assuming independent status, though for sometime the fiction of unity was kept up by the caliph formally granting the title of *amir-ul-umra* (Commander of Commanders) on generals who were able to carve out a separate spheres of authority. These new rulers assumed the title of 'amir' at first, and of 'sultan' later on.

The continuous incursion of the Turkish tribesmen from Central Asia, the mercenary character of the Turkish soldiers who were prepared to switch loyalties and abandon an unsuccessful ruler without much thought, the strife between different Muslim sects, and between different regions made the period a restless one. Empires and states rose and fell in rapid succession. In this situation, only a bold warrior and leader of men, a person who was as adept in warfare as in withstanding intrigues could come to the surface.

The Turkish tribesmen brought with them the habit of ruthless plunder. Their main mode of warfare consisted of rapid advance and retreat, lightning raids, and attacking any loose body of stragglers. They could do this because of the excellent quality of their horses as also their hardihood so that they could cover incredible distances on horseback.

Meanwhile, the break-up of the Gurjara-Pratihara empire led to a phase of political uncertainty in north India, and a new phase of struggle for domination. As a result, little attention was paid to the emergence of aggressive, expansionist Turkish states on the northwestern border of India and in West Asia.

Kabul, Qandahar, and its neighbouring area to the south called Zabul or Zamindawar, were considered parts of al-Hind or India till the end of the ninth century. There were many Buddhist and Hindu shrines in the area, the most important being the 53.5 m colossal statue of Buddha at Bamiyan, with caves for residence of a thousand monks. The area upto the river Oxus was ruled by many dynasties, some of them claiming descent from Kanishka. These kingdoms, backed by a mixed population of local tribes, Hunas, Turks, exiled Iranians and Indians (such as Bhati Rajputs) offered stiff resistance to the Arab effort to enter the area for tribute, plunder and slaves. Consequently, there was continuous skirmishing on both sides of the border.

The Ghaznavids

Towards the end of the ninth century, Trans-Oxiana, Khurasan and parts of Iran were being ruled by the Samanids who were Iranians by descent. The Samanids had to battle continually with the non-Muslim Turkish tribesmen on their northern and eastern frontiers. It was during this struggle that a new type of soldier, the *ghazi*, was born. The battle against the Turks, most of whom worshipped the forces of nature and were heathens in the eyes of the Muslims, was a struggle for religion as well as for the safety of the state. Hence, the *ghazi* was as much a missionary as a fighter. He acted as a loose auxiliary of the regular armies, and made up for his pay by plunder. It was the resourcefulness of the *ghazi* and his willingness to undergo great privations for the sake of the cause which enabled these infant Muslim states to hold their own against the heathen Turks. In course of time, many Turks became Muslims, but the struggle against renewed incursions of the non-Muslim Turkish tribes continued. The Islamized Turkish tribes were to emerge as the greatest defenders

and crusaders of Islam. But the love of plunder went side by side with defence of Islam.

Among the Samanid governors was a Turkish slave, Alp-tigin, who, in course of time, established an independent kingdom with its capital at Ghazni. The Samanid kingdom soon ended, and the Ghaznavids took over the task of defending the Islamic lands from the Central Asian tribesmen.

It was in this context that Mahmud ascended the throne (998–1030) at Ghazni. Mahmud is considered a hero of Islam by medieval Muslim historians because of his stout defence against the Central Asian Turkish tribal invaders. The *ghazi* spirit, therefore, further increased during his reign. Secondly, Mahmud was closely associated with the renaissance of the Iranian spirit which grew rapidly during this period. The proud Iranians had never accepted the Arabic language and culture. The Samanid state had also encouraged the Persian language and literature. A high watermark in the Iranian renaissance was reached with Firdausi's *Shah Namah*. Firdausi was the poet laureate at the court of Mahmud. He transported the struggle between Iran and Turan to mythical times, and glorified the ancient Iranian heroes. There was a resurgence of Iranian patriotism, and Persian language and culture became the language and culture of the Ghaznavid empire, so much so that Mahmud himself claimed descent from the legendary Iranian king, Afrasiyab. Thus, the Turks became not only Islamized but Persianized. It was this culture that they were to bring with them to India two centuries later.

While Mahmud played an important role in the defence of the Islamic states against the Turkish tribes and in the Iranian cultural renaissance, in India his memory is only that of a plunderer and a destroyer of temples. Mahmud is said to have made seventeen raids into India. The initial raids were directed against the Hindushahi rulers who at the time held Peshawar and the Punjab. Their capital was at Udbhanda or Waihind (Peshawar). The Hindushahi rulers had been quick to see the danger to them of the rise of an aggressive, expansionist state on their southwestern border. The Hindushahi ruler, Jayapala had, in alliance with the displaced Samanid governor of Ghazni, the Bhatti ruler of the area around Multan, and the amir of Multan, invaded Ghazni. But he had to suffer a defeat and the

coalition built by him collapsed. In retaliation, the Ghaznavid ruler of the times laid waste the area upto Kabul and Jalalabad.

In about 990–91, under Sabuk-tigin, the Shahis suffered a serious defeat. Following this, the provinces of Kabul and Jalalabad were annexed to Ghazni. As a prince, Mahmud had taken part in these battles. After his accession to the throne (AD 998), he resumed the offensive against the Shahis. The Shahi ruler, Jayapala, had, in the meantime, strengthened his position by bringing Lohavar (Lahore) under his control. Thus, the Shahi rule extended from Peshawar to Punjab.

In a furious battle near Peshawar in 1001, Jayapala was again defeated. Mahmud advanced to the Shahi capital, and thoroughly ravaged it. Peace was made by ceding the territory west of the Indus to Mahmud. Soon after, Jayapala died and was succeeded by his son, Anandpala. According to some later accounts, Jayapala had entered a funeral pyre following his defeat because he felt he had disgraced himself. The story that he had been taken prisoner by Mahmud and then released seems doubtful.

Despite these setbacks, the Shahis were still strong enough to offer serious resistance to Mahmud's efforts to penetrate into the Punjab. Mahmud also had to counter the attacks of non-Muslim Turks from Central Asia. However, in a decisive battle near the Indus in 1009, Anandpala was defeated and Mahmud devastated his new capital, Nandana, in the Salt Ranges, and overran his fort called Nagarkot (wrongly confused with Nagarkot in Himachal which Mahmud never reached). Anandpal was allowed for some time to rule from Lahore as a feudatory. But in 1015, Mahmud advanced upto Lahore, plundered it, and ousted Anandpal. Soon, Ghazanvid territories extended upto the river Jhelum. Earlier, the Muslim kingdom of Multan had also been overrun. However, an attack on Kashmir by Mahmud in 1015 was foiled due to weather conditions.

Thus, the struggle against the Shahis was a prolonged one, and the Shahis put up stout resistance. In this struggle, the Shahis were supported only by the Muslim ruler of Multan who had been harrassed by slave taking raids from Ghazni, and belonged to a sect which Mahmud considered heretical, and hence an enemy. It is noteworthy that apparently none of the Rajput rulers came to the aid

of the Shahis, although in order to exaggerate the scale of Mahmud's victory, the seventeenth century historian, Ferishta, mentions that many Rajputs rulers, including those from Delhi, Ajmer and Kanauj aided Jayapala in 1001. However, Ajmer had not been founded by then, and Delhi (Dhillika) was a small state. Likewise, the Gurjara-Pratiharas of Kanauj whose sway had extended upon Thanesar at one time, were in a much weakened condition. Thus, the Shahis fought virtually alone.

By 1015, Mahmud was poised for an attack on the Indo-Gangetic valley. During the next half a dozen years, Mahmud launched a series of expeditions into the Indo-Gangetic plains. These raids were aimed at plundering the rich temples and the towns which had amassed wealth over generations. The plundering of this wealth also enabled him to continue his struggle against his enemies in Central Asia. He also did not want to give time to the princes in India to regroup, and to combine against him. Mahmud's raids into India alternated with battles in Central Asia. For his plundering raids into India the *ghazis* came handy to him. Mahmud also posed as a great *but shikan* or 'destroyer of the images' for the glory of Islam. From the Punjab, Mahmud raided Thanesar the old capital of Harsha. His most daring raids, however, were against Kanauj in 1018, and against Somnath in Gujarat in 1025. In the campaign against Kanauj, he sacked and plundered both Mathura and Kanauj. The following year, he invaded Kalinjar in Bundelkhand, and returned loaded with fabulous riches. He was able to do all this with impunity due to the fact that no strong state existed in north India at that time. No attempt was made by Mahmud to annex any of these states.

Between 1020, and 1025, Mahmud was engaged in Central Asian affairs. In 1025, he made a plan for raiding Somnath which had a fabulously rich temple and attracted lakhs of pilgrims. It was also a rich port. The objective was also to create a sense of awe and shock among the Rajputs because he marched via Multan and Jaisalmer with a regular cavalry of 30,000. Meeting light opposition on the way, he reached Somnath. The commander of the city fled at his approach, but the citizens put up a stout resistance. Mahmud broke the *Sivalingam*, and ordered parts of it brought back with him to Ghazni. Evading the attempt of some Rajput rulers to block him on

his way back, he had to counter the marauding bands of Jats in Sind. He returned to Ghazni loaded with immense wealth.

It is difficult to say whether Mahmud's attack on Somnath presaged an attack on Rajasthan and Gujarat. Mahmud returned the following year to punish the Jats who had harried him on his return to Ghazni. He died at Ghazni in 1030.

It is not correct to dismiss Mahmud as just a raider and plunderer. The Ghaznavid conquest of the Punjab and Multan completely changed the political situation in north India. The Turks had crossed the chain of mountains defending India in the northwest and could make a deeper incursion into the Gangetic heartland at any time. The reason why they were not able to extend their conquests into the area for the next 150 years was due to the rapid changes which took place in Central Asia as well as in north India during the period.

Following the death of Mahmud, a powerful empire, the Seljuk empire, came into being. The Seljuk empire included Syria, Iran and Trans-Oxiana, and contended with the Ghaznavids for the control of Khurasan. In a famous battle, Masud, the son of Mahmud, was completely defeated and had to flee to Lahore for refuge. The Ghaznavid empire now shrank to Ghazni and the Punjab. Although the Ghaznavids continued to make plundering raids into the Gangetic valley and Rajputana, they were no longer in a position to pose a serious military danger to India. Simultaneously, a number of new states arose in north India which could counter the Ghaznavid raids.

The Rajput States

The rise of a new section called the Rajputs and the controversy about their origins have already been mentioned. With the break-up of the Pratihara empire, a number of Rajput states came into existence in north India. The most important of these were the Gahadavalas of Kanauj, the Paramaras of Malwa, and the Chauhans of Ajmer. There were other smaller dynasties in different parts of the country, such as the Kalachuris in the area around modern Jabalpur, the Chandellas in Bundelkhand, the Chalukyas of Gujarat, the Tomars of Delhi, etc. Bengal remained under the control of the Palas and, later, under the Senas. The Gahadavalas of Kanauj gradually squeezed the Palas out of Bihar.

At its height, the Gahadvar kingdom extended from Mongyr in Bihar to Delhi. The greatest ruler in the dynasty was Govind Chandra who ruled in the first half of the twelfth century. He made Kanauj his capital, with Banaras remaining a second capital. Persian sources of the time call Govind Chandra the greatest ruler of Hindustan. The Gahadvars are reputed to be the biggest defenders against the continued Ghaznavid raids into the doab. Govind Chandra was succeeded by Jai Chandra who had to contend with the rising power of the Chauhans.

The Chauhans who had served under the rulers of Gujarat established their capital at Nadol towards the end of the tenth century. The greatest ruler in the dynasty was, perhaps, Vigraharaj who captured Chittor, and established Ajmer (Ajayameru), and made it his capital. He built a Sanskrit College at Ajmer, and the Anasager lake there. Like the Gahadvars, the Chauhans, too, offered stout resistance to the Ghazanavid raids. Vigraharaj captured Delhi (Dhillika) from the Tomars in 1151, but allowed them to rule it as feudatories. Vigraharaj also came into conflict with the Paramars of Malwa where the most famous ruler, known in legend, was Bhoja. Both Vigraharaj and Bhoja were patrons of poets and scholars. Vigraharaj himself wrote a Sanskrit drama. Bhoja had to fight his neighbours to the north as well to the south. He is credited with writing books on philosophy, poetics, yoga and medicine.

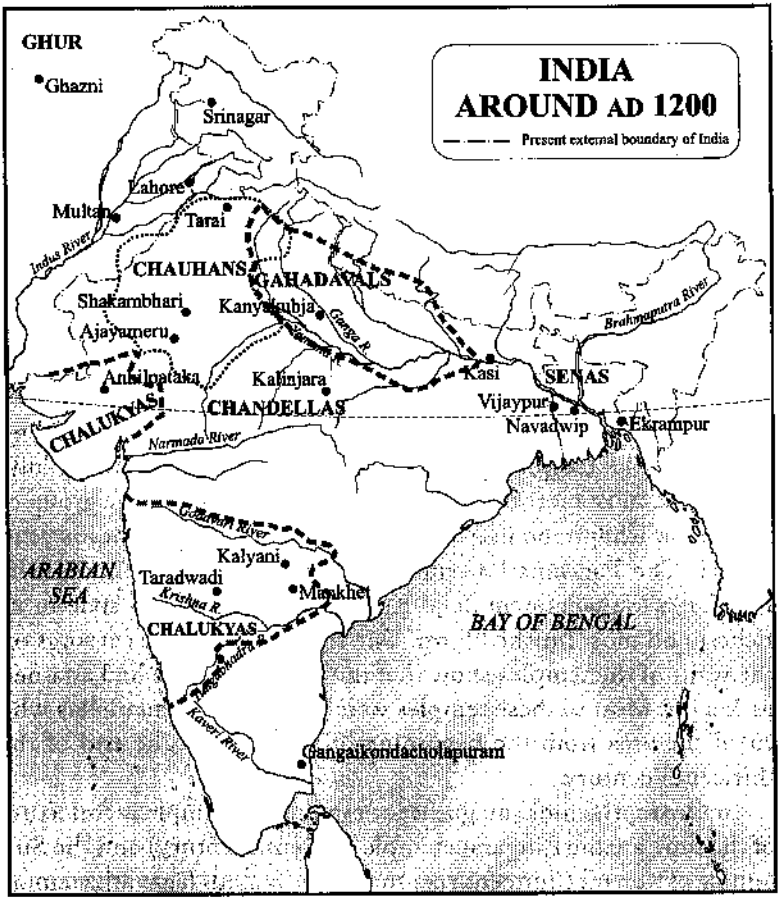
The most famous among the Chaụhan rulers was Prithviraj III who ascended the throne at the young age of eleven in or about 1177, but took the reins of administration in his hands when he was sixteen. He immediately embarked on a vigorous polity of expansion, and brought many of the smaller Rajput states under his sway. However, he was not successful in his struggle against the Chalukyan ruler of Gujarat. This forced him to move towards the Ganga valley. He led an expedition in Bundelkhand against its capital Mahoba. It was in this struggle that the famous warriors, Alha and Udal, lost their lives. The Chandel ruler of Mahoba is said to have been supported in this struggle by Jai Chandra of Kanauj. The Gahadvars had also contested the attempt of the Chauhans to control Delhi and the Punjab. It was these rivalries which made it impossible for the Rajput rulers to join hands to oust the Ghaznavids from the Punjab.

The basis of Rajput society was the clan. Every clan traced its descent from a common ancestor, real or imaginary. The clans generally dominated a compact territory. Sometimes, these settlements were based on units of 12 or 24 or 48 or 84 villages. The chief would allot land in the villages to his sub-chiefs who, in turn, would allot it to individual Rajput warriors for the maintenance of their family and the horses. Attachment to land, family and honour (*maan*) was a characteristic of the Rajputs. Each Rajput state was supposed to be ruled over by the *rana or rawat* in conjunction with his chiefs who were generally his blood brothers. Though their fiefs were supposed to be held at the pleasure of the ruler, the Rajput notion of sanctity of land did not permit their resumption by the ruler, except in special circumstances, such as rebellion, absence of an heir, etc.

The Rajput organisation of society had both advantages and disadvantages. One advantage was the sense of brotherhood and egalitarianism which prevailed among the Rajputs. But the same trait made it difficult to maintain discipline among them. Feuds which continued for several generations were another weakness of the Rajputs. But their basic weakness was their tendency to form exclusive groups, each claiming superiority over the others. They were not prepared to extend the sense of brotherhood to non-Rajputs. This led to a growing gap between the Rajput ruling groups and the people most of whom were non-Rajputs. The Rajputs form only about ten per cent of the population in Rajasthan even today. The proportion of the Rajputs to the total population of the areas they dominated could not have been much higher during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The Rajputs treated war as a sport. This and struggle for land and cattle led to continuous warfare among the various Rajput states. The ideal ruler was one who led out his armies after celebrating the Dussehra festival to invade the territories of his neighbours. The people, both in the villages and in the cities, suffered the most from this policy.

Most of the Rajput rulers of the time were champions of Hinduism, though some of them also patronized Jainism. They gave rich donations and grants of land to Brahmans and temples. The Rajput


INDIA
AROUND AD 1200
Present external boundary of India
GHUR
Ghazni
Srinagar
Lahore
Multan
Tarai
Indus River
CHAUHANS
GAHADAVALS
Shakambhari
Kanyakubja
Ajayameru
Ganga R.
Yamuna R.
Brahmaputra River
Anhilpataka
Kalinjara
Kasi
SENAS
Vijaypur
Navadwip
Ekrampur
CHALUKYAS
CHANDELLAS
Narmada River
Godavari River
Kalyani
ARABIAN SEA
Taradwadi
Malkhet
Krishna R.
CHALUKYAS
BAY OF BENGAL
Kaveri River
Gangaikondacholapuram

rulers stood forth as protectors of the privileges of the Brahmans and of the caste system. Thus, the system of charging a lower rate of land revenue for Brahmans continued in some Rajput states till their merger in the Indian Union. In return for these and other concessions, the Brahmans were prepared to recognise the Rajputs as descendants of the old lunar and solar families of the kshatriyas which were believed to have become extinct.

The period after the eighth century, and particularly between the tenth and twelfth centuries, may be regarded as marking a climax in temple building activity in north India. Some of the most magnificent temples that we have today can be traced back to this period. The style of temple construction which came into prominence was called the *nagara*. Though found almost all over India, the main centres of constructions in this style were in north India and the Deccan. Its main characteristic feature was the tall curved spiral roof over the *garbhagriha* or the deity room (deul). The main room was generally a square, though projections could be made from each of its sides. An anteroom (*mandapa*) was added to the sanctum sanctorum and sometimes the temple was enclosed by high walls which had lofty gates. The most representative temples of this type are the group of temples at Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh and at Bhubaneshwar in Orissa. The Parsvanatha temple, the Visvanatha temple and the Kandarya Mahadeo temple at Khajuraho illustrate this style in its richest and most finished form. The rich and elaborate carvings on the walls of the temples show that the art of sculpture had attained its height. Most of these temples were built by the Chandellas who ruled the area from the beginning of the ninth to the end of the thirteenth century.

In Orissa, the most magnificent examples of temple architecture of the time are the Lingaraja temple (eleventh century) and the Sun temple of Konark (thirteenth century). The famous Jaganatha temple at Puri also belongs to this period.

A large number of temples were built at various other places in north India—Mathura, Banaras, Dilwara (Abu), etc. Like the temples in south India, temples in north India also tended to become more and more elaborate. They were the centres of social and cultural life. Some of them, such as the temple of Somnath, became extremely

wealthy. They ruled over many villages, and took part in business activities. In addition to temples, the Rajput rulers also built many fine palaces, powerful forts, and works of public benefits, such as stepped wells (*baolis*), bunds, etc.

The Rajput rulers also patronized arts and letters. Many books and plays were written in Sanskrit during the period under their partonage. Vastupala, the famous minister of the Chalukyan ruler Bhima in Gujarat, was a writer and a patron of scholars and the builder of the beautiful Jain temple at Mt. Abu. Ujjain and Dhara, the capitals of the Paramara rulers, were famous centres for Sanskrit learning. Many works were written in Apabhramsha and Prakrit which represented the languages of the region. The Jain scholars made significant contributions in this direction, the most famous among them being Hemachandra who wrote both in Sanskrit and Apabhramsha. With the revival of Brahmanism, Sanskrit supplanted Apabhramsha and Prakrit among the upper classes. However, literature in these languages, which were nearer to the spoken languages, continued to be produced. The modern north Indian languages, such as Hindi, Bengali and Marathi began to emerge out of these popular languages during this period.

The Turkish Conquest of North India

After the Ghaznavid conquest of the Punjab, two distinct patterns of relations between the Muslims and the Hindus were at work. One was the lure for plunder which resulted in raids into the Gangetic valley and Rajputana by the successors of Mahmud. The rulers of the Rajput states put up a spirited resistance against these raids and won victories against the Turks on a number of occasions. But the Ghaznavid state was no longer a very powerful state, and the gaining of a number of victories against it in local battles made the Rajput rulers more complacent. At the second level, Muslim traders were allowed even welcomed in the country since they helped in strengthening and augmenting India's trade with the Central and West Asian countries, and thus increasing the income of the state. Colonies of Muslim traders sprang up in some of the towns in north India. In the wake of these came a number of Muslim religious

preachers called the Sufis to Punjab. The Sufis preached the gospel of love, faith and dedication to the one God. They directed their preachings mainly towards the Muslim settlers but they influenced some Hindus also. Thus, a process of interaction between Islam and Hindu religion and society was started. Lahore became a centre of Arabic and Persian languages and literature. Hindu generals, such as Tilak, a barber by caste, commanded the Ghaznavid armies in which Hindu (Jat) soldiers also were recruited.

These two processes might have continued indefinitely but for another large-scale change in the political situation in Central Asia. Towards the middle of the twelfth century, another group of Turkish tribesmen, who were partly Buddhist and partly pagan, shattered the power of the Seljuk Turks. In the vacuum, two new powers rose to prominence, the Khwarizmi empire based in Iran, and the Ghurid empire based in Ghur in northwest Afghanistan. The Ghurids had started as vassals of Ghazni, but had soon thrown off their yoke. The power of the Ghurids increased under Sultan Alauddin who earned the title of 'the world burner' (*jahan-soz*) because during the middle of the twelfth century he ravaged Ghazni and burnt it to the ground in revenge for the treatment that had been meted out to his brothers at Ghazni. The rising power of the Khwarizmi empire severely limited the Central Asian ambition of the Ghurids. Khurasan, which was the bone of contention between the two, was soon conquered by Khwarizm Shah. This left no option for the Ghurids but to look for expansion towards India.

In 1173, Shahabuddin, Muhammad (1173–1206) (also known as Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam) ascended the throne at Ghazni, while his elder brother was ruling at Ghur. Proceeding by way of the Gomal pass, Muizzuddin Muhammad conquered Multan and Uchch. In 1178, he attempted to penetrate into Gujarat by marching across the Rajputana desert. But the Gujarat ruler completely routed him in a battle near Mount Abu, and Muizzuddin Muhammad was lucky in escaping alive. He now realised the necessity of creating a suitable base in the Punjab before venturing upon the conquest of India. Accordingly, he launched a campaign against the Ghaznavid possessions in the Punjab. By 1190, Muizzuddin Muhammad had conquered Peshawar, Lahore and Sialkot, and was poised for a thrust towards Delhi and the Gangetic doab.

Meanwhile, events had not been standing still in north India. The Chauhan power had been steadily growing. The Chauhan rulers had defeated and killed a large number of Turks who had tried to invade Rajasthan, most probably from the Punjab side. They had also captured Delhi (called Dhillika) from the Tomars around the middle of the century. The expansion of the Chauhan power towards the Punjab brought them into conflict with the Ghaznavid rulers of the area.

The Battle of Tarain

Thus, a battle between these two ambitious rulers, Muizzuddin Muhammad and Prithviraj was inevitable. The conflict started with rival claims for Tabarhinda. In the battle which was fought at Tarain in 1191, the Ghurid forces were completely routed, Muizzuddin Muhammad's life being saved by a young Khalji horseman. Prithviraj now pushed on to Tabarhinda and conquered it after a twelve-month siege. Little attempt was made by Prithviraj to oust the Ghurids from the Punjab. Perhaps, he felt that this was another of recurrent Turkish raids, and that the Ghurid ruler would be content to rule over the Punjab. This gave Muizzuddin Muhammad time to regroup his forces and make another bid for India the following year. He rejected the proposal said to be made by Prithviraj to leave Punjab under the possession of the Ghurid ruler.

The second battle of Tarain in 1192 is regarded as one of the turning points in Indian history. Muizzuddin Muhammad had made careful preparations for the contest. It is said that he marched with 1,20,000 men, including a force of heavy cavalry, fully equipped with steel coats and armour; and 10,000 mounted archers. It is not correct to think that Prithviraj was negligent of the affairs of the state, and awoke to the situation when it was too late. It is true that at that time Skanda, the general of the last victorious campaign, was engaged elsewhere. As soon as Prithviraj realised the nature of the Ghurid threat, he appealed to all the rajas of northern India for help. We are told many rajas sent contingents to help him, but Jaichandra, the ruler of Kanauj, stayed away. The legend that this was because Prithviraj had abducted Jaichandra's daughter, Sanyogita, who was

in love with him, is not accepted by many historians. The story was written much later as a romance by the poet, Chand Bardai, and includes many improbable events. As we have seen, there had been an old outstanding rivalry between the two states. Hence, it is not surprising that Jaichandra stayed away.

Prithviraj is said to have fielded a force of 3,00,000 including a large body of cavalry and 300 elephants. The strength of the forces on both sides may have been exaggerated. The numerical strength of the Indian forces was probably greater, but the Turkish army was better organised and led. The battle was mainly a battle between cavalry. The superior organisation skill and speed of movements of the Turkish cavalry and their mounted archers and heavy cavalry ultimately decided the issue. A large number of Indian soldiers lost their lives. Prithviraj escaped, but was captured near Saraswati (Sirsa). The Turkish armies captured the fortresses of Hansi, Saraswati and Samana. Then they attacked and captured Ajmer. Prithviraj was allowed to rule over Ajmer for some time, for we have coins of this period giving the date and the legend 'Prithvirajadeva' on one side and the words 'Sri Muhammad Sam' on the other.

Soon after, Prithviraj was executed on a charge of 'conspiracy', and Prithviraj's son succeeded him. Delhi also was restored to its Tomar ruler. But this policy was reversed soon after. The ruler of Delhi was ousted and Delhi was made a base for further Turkish advance into the Ganga valley. Following a rebellion, a Muslim army recaptured Ajmer and installed a Turkish general there. Prithviraj's son moved to Ranthambor and founded a new powerful Chauhan kingdom there.

Thus, the Delhi area and eastern Rajasthan passed under the Turkish rule.

Turkish Conquest of the Ganga Valley

Bihar and Bengal

Between 1192 and 1206, Turkish rule was extended over the Ganga-Jamuna doab and its neighbouring area. Bihar and Bengal were also overrun. In order to establish themselves in the doab, the Turks had

first to defeat the powerful Gahadavala kingdom of Kanauj. The Gahadavala ruler, Jaichandra, had been ruling over the state peacefully for two decades. Perhaps, he was not a very capable warrior because he had earlier suffered a reverse at the hands of the Sena king of Bengal.

After Tarain, Muizzuddin returned to Ghazni leaving the affairs in India in the hands of one of his trusted slaves, Qutbuddin Aibak. During the next two years, the Turks overran parts of upper doab, without any opposition from the Gahadavalas. In 1194, Muizzuddin returned to India. He crossed the Jamuna with 50,000 cavalry and moved towards Kanauj. A hotly contested battle between Muizzuddin and Jaichandra was fought at Chandawar near Kanauj. We are told that Jaichandra had almost carried the day when he was killed by an arrow, and his army was totally defeated. Muizzuddin now moved on to Banaras which was ravaged, a large number of temples there being destroyed. The Turks established their hold over a huge territory extending up to the borders of Bihar.

Thus, the battles of Tarain and Chandawar laid the foundations of the Turkish rule in north India. The task of consolidating the conquest thus won proved, however, to be an onerous task which occupied the Turks for almost fifty years. We shall study this in a subsequent chapter.

Muizuddin lived till 1206. During this period, he occupied the powerful forts of Bayana and Gwaliyar to guard the southern flank of Delhi. A little later, Aibak conquered Kalinjar, Mahoba and Khajuraho from the Chandel rulers of the area.

With a base in the doab the Turks launched a series of raids in the neighbouring areas. Aibak defeated Bhima III, the ruler of Gujarat, and Anhilwara and a number of other towns were ravaged and plundered. Though a Muslim governor was appointed to rule the place he was soon ousted. This showed that the Turks were not yet strong enough to be able to rule over such far-flung areas.

The Turks, however, were more successful in the east. A Khalji officer, Bakhtiyar Khalji, whose uncle had fought at the battle of Tarain, had been appointed in charge of some of the areas beyond Banaras. He had taken advantage of this to make frequent raids into Bihar, which was at the time in the nature of a no-man's land. During

these raids, he had attacked and destroyed some of the famous Buddhist monasteries of Bihar, Nalanda and Vikramasila, which had no protector left. He had also accumulated much wealth and gathered many followers around him. During his raids, he also collected information about the routes to Bengal. Bengal was a rich prize because its internal resources and flourishing foreign trade had given it the reputation of being fabulously rich.

Making careful preparations, Bakhtiyar Khalji marched with an army towards Nadia, a pilgrim centre where the Sena ruler, Lakshmana Sena, had built a palace, and to which he had gone on pilgrimage. Turkish horse-merchants had become a common sight in those days. Pretending to be a horse-merchant, Bakhtiyar Khalji made a sudden attack on the palace, and created a great confusion. The Sena ruler Lakshmana Sena had been a noted warrior. However, taken by surprise and thinking that the main Turkish army had arrived, he slipped away by a back door. The Turkish army must have been near, for they soon arrived and overpowered the garrison. All the wealth of the ruler, including his wives and children were captured. These events are placed in 1204. Bakhtiyar then marched and occupied the Sena capital, Lakhnauti, without any opposition. Lakshmana Sena moved to Sonargaon in south Bengal where he and his successors continued to rule.

Although Bakhtiyar Khalji was formally appointed the governor of Bengal by Muizzuddin, he ruled over it as a virtually independent ruler. But he was not to enjoy this position for long. He foolishly undertook an expedition into the Brahmaputra valley in Assam, though writers say that he wanted to lead an expedition into Tibet. The Magh rulers of Assam retreated and allowed the Turkish armies to come in as far as they could. At last the tired and exhausted armies found they could advance no further and decided to retreat. They could find no provisions on the way, and were constantly harassed by the Assamese armies. Tired and weakened by hunger and illness, the Turkish army had to face a battle in which there was a wide river in front and the Assamese army at the back. The Turkish armies suffered a total defeat. Bakhtiyar Khalji was able to come back with a few followers with the help of some mountain tribes. But his health and spirits were broken. He was mortally sick and confined to the bed when one of his own amirs stabbed him to death.

While Aibak and the Turkish and Khalji chief were trying to expand and consolidate the Turkish gains in north India, Muizzuddin and his brother were trying to expand the Ghurid empire into Central Asia. The imperialistic ambitions of the Ghurids brought them into headlong conflict with the powerful Khwarizmi empire. In 1203, Muizzuddin suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Khwarizmi ruler. This defeat came as a blessing in disguise to the Turks, for they had to big goodbye to their Central Asian ambitions and to concentrate their energies exclusively on India. This paved the way for the emergence after some time of a Turkish state based exclusively in India. In the immediate context, however, the defeat of Muizzuddin emboldened many of his opponents in India to rebel. The Khokhars, a warlike tribe in western Punjab, rose and cut off the communications between Lahore and Ghazni. Muizzuddin led his last campaign into India in 1206 in order to deal with the Khokhar rebellion. He resorted to large-scale slaughter of the Khokhars and cowed them down. On his way back to Ghazni, he was killed by a Muslim fanatic belonging to a rival sect.

Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam has often been compared to Mahmud of Ghazni. As a warrior, Mahmud Ghazni was more successful than Muizzuddin, having never suffered a defeat in India or in Central Asia. He also ruled over a larger empire outside India. But it has to be kept in mind that Muizzuddin had to contend with larger and better organised states in India than Mahmud. Though less successful in Central Asia, his political achievements in India were greater. But it was Mahmud's conquest of the Punjab which paved the way for Muizzuddin's successes in north India. Considering that the conditions facing the two were very different, no useful comparison can be made between the two. The political and military motives of the two in India were also different in important respects.

Neither was really concerned with Islam. Once a ruler submitted, he was allowed to rule over his territories unless, for some other reasons, it was necessary to annex his kingdom in part or in whole. Hindu officers and soldiers were used by Mahmud as well as by Muizzuddin. But neither scrupled to use the slogan of Islam for their purposes, and to justify their plunder of Indian cities and temples in the name of religion.

Causes of the Defeat of the Rajputs

The defeat of the leading states of north India within a short space of about 15 years by the Turkish armies also needs some explanation. It may be stated as an axiom that a country is conquered by another only when it suffers from social and political weaknesses, or become, economically and militarily backward compared to its neighbours. Recent research shows that the Turks did not have any superior weapons at their disposal as compared to the Indians. The iron-stirrup which had changed the mode of warfare in Europe, as we have noted earlier, had spread in India from the 8th century onwards. The Turkish bows could shoot arrows to a longer distance, but the Indian bows were supposed to be more accurate and more deadly, the arrowheads being generally dipped in poison. In hand to hand combat the Indians swords were considered to be best in the world. The Indians also had the advantage of elephants. Perhaps the Turks had horses which were swifter and more sturdy than the horses imported into India.

The weakness of the Indians were social and organizational. The growth of feudalism, i.e., rise of the local landed elements and chiefs had weakened the administrative structure and military organisation of the Indian states. The rulers had to depend more on the various chiefs who rarely acted in coordination, and quickly dispersed to their areas after battle. On the other hand, the tribal structure of the Turks, and the growth of the *iqta* and *khalisa* systems, enabled the Turks to maintain large standing armies which could be kept in the field for a long time. Also, the Indians were not accustomed to move as an organized body of horsemen which could cover long distances and fight and manoeuvre. Nor, does it seem, the Rajputs had large bodies of mounted archers, or heavily armed cavalary. But for these factors, the Rajput states, many of which had greater human and physical resources at their disposal than the Ghaznavid and Ghurid empires, would not have suffered defeat, or would have been able to recover if they had been defeated in a battle.

The social and organizational structure of the Turks also gave them many advantages. The *iqta* system which grew slowly in West Asia, implied that a Turkish chief was allotted a piece of land as *iqta*

from which he could collect the land revenues and taxes due to the state. In return, he had to maintain a body of troops for the service of the ruler. The grant was not hereditary, and was held at the pleasure of the sultan who could transfer him to any place. The sultan drew revenues directly from pieces of land which were called *khalisa*. This enabled him to maintain a large standing army. While states rose and fell in West Asia as in India, in West Asia, unlike the Rajput states, in each state the armed forces were more highly centralized. Many of the Turkish officers were slaves, who had been trained for warfare, and grew in the Sultan's service, and on whom the Sultan could place total trust.

In terms of personal bravery, the Rajputs were in no way inferior to the Turks. In this context, the role of religion and caste in the military organization should not be unduly exaggerated. While the Turks were imbued with the '*ghazi*' spirit, the Rajputs considered retreat in battle to be a dishonour. Also, caste did not prevent non-Rajputs, or the *kuvarna* (lower castes) from taking part in the battles so that Rajput armies were larger in numbers to those fielded by the Turks.

Finally, the Rajput defeat at the hands of Muizzuddin Muhammad should be seen in the context of the past few centuries. From the end of the tenth century, the Turks had started reconnoitering India. The Rajputs did put up spirited and prolonged resistance, and defeated the Turkish armies a number of times. But the Rajputs lacked what might be called 'strategic vision'. Once the outer bastions of India—Kabul and Lahore, had fallen to the Turks, no concerted attempt was made by the Rajputs to recover them. Thus, little effort was made to push the Ghaznavids out of the Punjab. The gaze of the Rajputs remained fixed on India, and they paid little attention to developments outside, specially to Central Asia which had often played a key-role in shaping the history of India.