

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

The instinct of self-preservation which is so strong even among the lower animals has been present in Man ever since the dawn of human history. From the Paleolithic times he has been fighting and defending himself against Nature and wild beasts, and with his steady march from barbarism to civilization and the gradual development of intellectual pursuits he has discovered weapons first to defend himself, then to defend his family and clan and finally his own territory and nation. In India which is the home of one of the oldest civilizations of the world, the people passed through all the processes of individual, clan and territorial fighting in the different stages of their interestingly long and complicated history. The object of this work is to portray as far as possible a picture of the military system of ancient India and her methods of national defence with special reference to Northern Indian history from the accession of Harsha in Kanyakubja till the accession of Qutubuddin Aibek in Delhi¹.

With awesome mutism the silvery plains of North India have been witness to a countless battles for her mastery since the days of the *Rigveda*. Kingdoms rose and fell in never-ending succession. That explains the dedication of one fourth of the Rigvedic hymns to Indra, the God of War² That is the *raison d'être* for the glorification of war so

eloquently indulged in by the two great epics- the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as well as the Puranas.

War affects the destiny of nations and lives of millions. It is not a simple affair and its proper study bristles with complex problems. Any worthwhile study of warfare is bound to be dubbed as incongruous when done independent of major factors affecting it i.e., geographical, socio-philosophical and political. Therefore, before elaborating on warfare in the early mediaeval period of Indian history, it is incumbent upon us to peruse these factors in some detail.

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTOR

We first take up the geographical factor. Geography has been defined as science of the earth and all life upon it. Its scope is extremely wide. However, for the assessment of warfare in a particular country, a broad knowledge of its geography will suffice. The major elements which are to be considered for this purpose are: location, size and shape, climate, physiographic, people, economic development and communications. This is essential because every aspect of geography affects military operations, strategy as well as tactics. Military geography embodies the study of the physical geography with a view to assessing its suitability for strategical maneuvering. The lay of the land and distribution of vital resources are as vital as are the means of

communications³

Shape and Size

The accounts of Greeks testify that the Indians had a very accurate knowledge of the shape and size of their country. The whole of India was described to Alexander by Indian who knew it well. Patrokles, who held the government of the northeast satrapies of the Syrian empire under Saleukas Nikator and Antiochus Sotar, himself collected information about India which was lauded by Eratosthenes has described India as a “rhomboid or unequal quadrilateral in shape with the Indus on the west, the mountains on the north and the sea on the east and south.”⁴

Diodorus reckoned the extent of India from east to west as 28,000 stadia and from north to south 32,000 stadia. This comes to 60,000, all put together. The Mahabharata likens the shape of India to that of an equilateral triangle. This triangle was divided into four small equal triangles, the base of which is formed by the Himalayas and the apex by the Kanya Kumari. Astronomers, such as Parasara and Varahamihira divided India into nine divisions (Nava Khandas). This division along with their chief regions in brackets were, Central (Panchala), East (Magadha), South-east (Kalinga) South (Avanti), South West (Anarta), West (Sindhu-Sauvira), North-west (Harahura), North (Madra) and North-east (Kuninda). The Puranas generally agree with the nine fold

division of the country. But the three early Puranas, viz. Vishnu, Yaju and Matsya stick to the Mahabharata's division of India into five regions. The later was the generally accepted division in the early centuries of the Christian era. It was also adopted by the Chinese pilgrims, including the celebrated Yuan Chwang who visited India in the seventh century AD.⁵

Five divisions of "Five Indias," as they are termed by the Chinese, are given below:

- I. Northern India included Punjab, Kashmir, the neighbouring hill states and the whole of eastern Afghanistan.
- II. Western India comprised western Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kachh, portion of the adjoining coast on the lower course of the Narmada river and Sindh.
- III. Central India included the whole of the Gangetic region from Thaneshwar to the head of the Delta and between Himalaya mountains and the river Narmada.
- IV. Assam, Bengal, together with Sambhalpur, Orissa and Ganjam formed Eastern India.
- V. Southern India included the whole of the Peninsula from Nasik on the west and Ganjam on the east to Kanya Kumari on the South.⁶

This arrangement is simpler than that of the nine divisions. The

Chinese borrowed their system from the Hindus who likened their country to the lotus flower, the middle being the Central India, and the eight surrounding petals being the other divisions.⁷

According to the *Vishnu Purana* “the country that lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called Bharat ... ”⁸. India lies in the north of Equator and the tropic of Cancer girdles her in the middle. Himalayas and its off-shoots form the moundatin barrier of the sub-continent. On the west it separates the Indus valley from Persia, Seistan, Makran and Baluchistan with the help of the Kirthan, Sulaiman and Safedkoh ranges. Further north the Hindukush safeguards the borders. Pamirs and Karakarom intervene between Kashmir and Turkistan. Radiating from Pamirs, the Himalays extend throughout the north upto Brahmaputra. On the eastern most limits of India, the mountains fold round, run from north to south, separating Bengal and Assam from Burma.⁹

Whereas the natural boundaries of India in the north and the south are well marked, on the west they have often been changing. For quite some time eastern Arian or the large part of the Afghanistan formed part of India. During his visit to India (629-645 AD) Yuan Chang found that the king f this country was of kshatriya caste.¹⁰ During the whole of the tenth and early years of the 11th century AD Kabul valley was ruled over

by a Brahmana dynasty. No wonder that the population of eastern Afghanistan is of Indian descent. The Indian element, which had braved the foreign aggressions for centuries, could no longer subsist after the slaughter began at the hands of the Ghanavids.¹¹

Area

Yin-tu or India, according to Yuan Chwang, measured 90,000 Li in circuit¹², “which is more than double the truth.”¹³ Indian encircles an area of about fifteen hundred thousand square miles and is thus equal in extent to the whole of Europe excluding Russia. The coastline stretches beyond three thousand miles and the length of its mountains is 1500 miles. India has the highest mountain on the surface of earth. Its plains are low and alluvial, high table lands, dense forests as well as vast sheets of dry deserts. It has the hottest of the plains as well as coldest of the hill stations.¹⁴

Climate and Products

There is almost every variety of climate and natural product in India. Its mountains have lofty summits eternally covered with snow. The lower mountainous region abounds in thick green forests. The plains have extremes of temperature and fertility. There are hot, arid deserts in the south-west. The rich alluvial plains of the Ganga lay between the Himalayas in the north and the Narmada in the south. The plains alternate

with wild hilly regions and table-lands. Seasons vary from the extremely hot to the bitterly cold.¹⁵ The rains bring nourishment to the soil, but hamper military operations on a mass scale.

A medieval Arab writer thus speaks of this country- “India... is the most agreeable abode on the earth and the most pleasant quarter of the world. Its dust is purer than air, and its air purer than purity; its delightful plains resemble the garden of paradise, and the particles of its earth are like rubies and coarals.”¹⁶

Geography and Warfare

In India the course of warfare has to an exceptional degree, been dictated by the geography, particularly its climate and influx of population.¹⁷ Although there is lack of natural boundaries within her frontiers yet the invader has to be extremely careful. The Indus valley, which is a world in itself, has on its east a mighty desert which would lead the invader has to be extremely careful. The Indus valley, which is a world in itself, has on its east a mighty desert which would lead the invader into an inhospitable region. Its parched solid and merciless sun make survival extremely difficult. Her inhabitants were hardly, restless and ferocious fighters. Across the Aravali range, only a few hundred miles away from the heart of arid desert, is the Ganga valley, which has the means of supporting the densest population. It has been the centre of

Indian Civilization from very early times. The bounties of nature have made man averse to hard toils. To this valley of gold, there is but a narrow entrance. "The Aravali hills from the south-west and the Shiwalika (Sapadalaksa) from the north-east approach each other across the plain separating the Punjab from the Ganga valley leaving a conveniently narrow gap, not more than a hundred miles in width."¹⁸ Through this bottleneck alone the Ganga Valley, popularly called, Hindustan could be approached from the west by the attacking hordes. The fate of Hindustan was decided right at the entrance to the valley i.e. the plains of Karnal District of Haryana, comprising the famous battle-grounds of Panipat and Tarain. "For once the invader set his foot inside the flat river-country of the Ganga, defence was necessarily at a disadvantage."¹⁹ Vast cavalry forces can easily sweep as they have done age after age in the past-through the green belt from the Khaibar Pass via Delhi to Bengal's capital; without meeting with any natural obstacle, if any the forts on the way are by-passed. In these plains, empires have fought empires, and India's fate has been decided by one single gigantic clash of arms.²⁰

Bengal, which is a country of 'plenty,' is remarkably well-provided with natural defences, Entrance to it has also been made narrow by the northern spurs of Vindhya and the southern ones of the Tarai. Her

climate, numerous swift flowing rivers and rivulets with seasonal floods, are a great obstacle to the northerners.”²¹ On the west, almost unbroken chain of hills and trackless forests extend to a great length towards the sea; on the east he is shut off by the Brahmaputra which leads to another narrow valley, equally fertile but whose uneven soil, flooded streams and moist air are a death trap to the western invader.”²²

Lack of adequate knowledge of Indian geography proved disastrous to many foreign invaders. Muhammad Ghorī’s earlier attempts at invading India provide a good illustration of this fact. At this juncture a word about the route from Afghanistan to India will not be out of place. The familiar route was not through the well-known Khaiber pass or the Bolan or the lesser known Kurram and Tochi passes, but through the Gomāl which led to Dera Ismail Khan and from there to upper Sind-Sagar-Doab. This is borne out by the fact that during the 13th century the first military target was Multan or Uch and not Lahore or Peshawar, Kurram, Tochi and Gomāl passes provided the shortest route to the Punjab. Such is not the case with the Khaiber pass, which involved a long detour through the north. This route had become unsafe at the hands of ever hostile tribes inhabiting northern Sind-Sagar-Doab. In his first expedition Muhammad Muizzuddin Ghorī could conquer Multan and Uch. In his next expedition he tried to penetrate through western

Rajasthan. Pressure from the Turks had kept the Rajputs preoccupied during the last half a century. The defeat and destruction of 'Turuska' army by Anahilladeva, a contemporary of Bhima I of Gujarat, and also at the hands of Kalhara, whose inscriptions range from 1161 to 1179 AD, bring out clearly the importance of geographical factor in the warfare of northern India. Unmindful of the fate of his predecessors on the treacherous track of conquest, Muhammad Ghori directed his forces against the Chalukyas of Gujarat. He reckoned that his conquest of Gujarat would provide him a key to the Indian hinterland and facilitate his plan of out-flanking Ghazna vids of the Punjab. Passing through Multan and Unch in 1178 AD he dashed across the great desert and arrived at the foot of Mount Abu with an army exhausted and work out. There he found the Rajputs under the Standard of Mulraja II eager to thwart his design. In the ensuing action, fought near the village of Kayadra on the ground of enemy's choosing, he suffered a signal defeat and was lucky to escape home. The geography had thus pronounced its dictates. It showed to him that there was only one feasible approach to Hindustan and that lay through the Punjab. Accordingly, the next few years witnessed his steady advance through Khusrau Malik's dominions. Preshawar fell in 1179 AD, Sialkot in 1185 AD and Lahore AD. Three years thereafter, he could advance his ambitious designs against India proper.²³

Before Muhammad Ghori, the Arab arms had as woefully sunk to the sands of Sindh. This was not because the Arabs had lost their martial vigour by which they had conquered mighty empires of Europe and Asia. It was because they had failed to grasp the true geographical factor affecting conduct of war in India. The Arab invasion was a failure. “It attacked from the wrong quarter, entered on the least productive province.”²⁴ To drive the point home we other example also. Bahlm, the governor of Punajb, captured Nagaur and accomplished by ten sons set out against his master Bahram, he was “swallowed up in a quick sand near Multan” after having been defeated by Bahram. And again, Muslim soldiers were defeated by Arnoraja of Sakambhari and Ajmer died of exhaustion... and not a few perished of thirst in the waterless desert. Some found their graves in the shifting sands of Rajasthan.²⁵ The valour of man should, therefore, learn to contend with the force of geography.

The last major geographical factor of war in India is the climate. Since the monsoon rains and before that burning heat of India, made military operations virtually impossible during May-September, the best campaigning seasons was between October and November when “the crops were ripe, the herbage green and it was possible to live off the country.”²⁶

During the period covered by this work (606 A.D-1206 AD) social

conditions in India underwent numerous changes. The caste system was becoming more rigid and we find distinguished rulers attempting to keep people confined to their spheres of work as enjoined by their respective castes. Harivarman and his son Adityavarman of the Maukhari dynasty have been depicted (in the Harsha inscription of 555 AD of Isanavarman) as perpetuating and enforcing moral laws and the laws of Varnasrama in the Country. The injunctions of the *smrtis* were proudly implemented by the Maitrakas of Valabhi. That Prabhakaravardhana employed his army to enforce caste system, shown by the Banskhera inscription. The enforcement of the system became such a vital duty of the kings that 'Parivarjitra-vernasankara' became almost a stock-expression in the discretion of rulers particularly of north India²⁷.

This division of society into four distinct categories decided by the accident of birth had its roots in the Vedic doctrine of divine creation of the social order²⁸ "It rooted in intelligence psychology and was almost inevitable in the circumstances in which it arose²⁹

The specific features of the later caste system, like ascendancy of brahmanas, details of dress and etiquette for each caste group and the segregation of the lowest class as untouchables, can be traced back to the oldest *smrtis*. The system came to be widely accepted by the people as there are no traces of any class struggle excepting the founding of sects

like Lingayat in Kanara in the 12th century AD. This is presumed to be the only known anti-brahmana movement of its kind.³⁰

The later restrictions on inter-caste marriage and impurity of the sudrahood were also in accordance with the preachings of the older *smritis* and not any radical innovations. It is felt that of the old social restrictions and disabilities mark “India’s supreme effort on the intellectual plane to meet the challenge (the most formidable she had encountered so far) to the existence of her soul and her culture presented by the destructive inroads of the new invading races with their programme of wholesale subversion of the indigenous social and religious order.”³¹

The brahmanas, who were at the top of the social ladder, were fond of the refinements of learning and were satisfied in living a life of continence and of seclusion. They remained unmoved by ‘honour or reproach’ and their fame spread far and wide. They were treated ceremoniously by the princes of the land and could not be ordered to attend the court. Relying on perfect virtue they concentrated on the cultivation of arts and sciences and did not mind to lead life of hardship. “Though their family be in affluent circumstances, such men make up their minds to be like vagrants and get their food by begging as they go about. With them there is honour in knowing truth (in having wisdom)

and there is no disgrace in being destitute...”³²

During the period under review (600-1200AD) among the Kshatriyas the Rajputs became the shield anchor of the Hindu society. In fact many apparent complications in the caste system were due to their emergence as a class in the Indian Society. They included a section of the foreigners whose influx had been admitted into the Indian framework of caste. Some of the earlier foreign immigrants rank as low grade kshatriyas in the legal codes. But those who came after the eclipse of the early Gupta empire and established principalities independent, normally found a place among the thirty six clans of the Rajputs.³³ The visas were composed of those who tilled the land and carried on trade. With the passage of time they came to control the state purse.

Sharply distinguished from the upper classes were the *chandalas*, who lived in separate quarters, away from others and struck a piece of wood to warn people when they entered the market place. The existence of impure or untouchable castes is vouched by Alberuni. Even the foreigners were regarded as maleccha or impure; any contract with them was forbidden “be it by sitting, eating and drinking with them, because thereby, they (Hindus) think, they would be polluted.”³⁴ This ascertain of Alberuni appears to be correct although it is contrary to the situation prevailing in the proceeding centuries. We find that one of the chief

distinctions of Indo-Aryan culture was its catholicity and a great power of assimilation. After coming in its touch the Greeks, the Sakas, the Parthians, the Kushanas, and the Hunas, had all merged in the mainstream of Indian society. The last crowning act of Hindu catholicity was its absorption of Buddhism.³⁵

Whatever the merits of the caste system in the beginning, the rigid caste system did irreparable damage to the Indian Society. The division of people into close compartments hit at the very root of national and patriotic sentiments, so much so that various provinces of India came to be regarded as foreign countries by the people of other regions. For example, when Harsha of Kashmir (1089-1101 AD) wanted to get rid of Kandarpa and besieged him at the fort of Lahora, the latter thus spoke to the King's emissaries: "The King, whose mind is ruled (by others), should send my family (to me). Then I shall deliver the castle and go abroad." Having been jointed by his relations, he proceeded to Varanasi.³⁶

The alleged invitation extended to Muhammad Ghori by Raja Chakradev of Jammu towards the close of our period, may also prove the point. Like mediaeval Europe India too came to be divided horizontally.

Whereas in European countries class interests came to be subordinated to the national interests, nothing of the sort happened in India. The class interests were perpetually kept alive by the caste system. To cap it all,

“The caste system with its superstitious outgrowths and purificatory ceremonials, brought about that narrowness of outlook and haughty exclusiveness which have been noticed by Alberuni.³⁷ Prohibiting foreign travel and intercourse with outsiders caused among other things, the political downfall of India. This point will be discussed fully in a later chapter.

Religion and Outlook towards Life

The Gupta Age is usually regarded as an era of *brahmanical* revival. Although some of the rulers claimed to have revived Hinduism, yet truly speaking, it was a period of culmination of florescence rather than of renaissance.”³⁸ The most important feature of religious life during the Gupta period was the commencement of *bhakti* (intense devotion to God) and the love of fellow beings. These became most manifest elements of Saivism and *Vaisnavism*, expounded by the Gita and the *Sveasvatra upanisada*. There was widespread feeling of tolerance, peace and amity among various sects. People practiced charity and had, except the low castes and had, except the low castes, accepted non-violence as the creed.

Bana Bhatta, the celebrated court writer of Harshvardhana, mentions Jains of both sects Digambaras and Svetambaras; *Vaisnavas*, both Bhagvatas and Pancharatras. He also mentions Saugatas or

Buddhists, Maskarins and adherents of various philosophical schools including Sankhya, the Lokayatika, the Vaisesika, the followers of Vedanta and Nyaya. Bhddhism was generally losing ground; its monasteries in the north-west might have been destroyed by the Hunas. With the deification and acceptance of Buddha as an in carnation of Narayana-Vishnu, by the Vaisnavite pantheon there was little of distinction between the Buddhist laity and his *brahmanical* gods. The growth of Tantricism reduced a great deal of distinction between Vajrayana Buddhism and certain types of Salvism and Saktism. The rise of saint-poets who were also zealous reformers and worshippers of Vishnu and Shiva, did yeoman's service to Hinduism. With the demolition of once imposing Buddhist establishment by a new rare of conquerors, in the 12th century AD and thereafter, Buddhism vanished from the land of its birth. Although Buddhism was now dead and gone, yet the legacy of abject surrender to the invaders that it left in India continued to have its reverberations, at least in the first two centuries of our period. In this connection an episode recorded by Yuan Chwang may be of some interest. When the Huna tyrant Mihirakula attacked the kingdom of Baladitya, the latter said to his ministers," "I hear that these thieves are coming and I cannot fight with them (their troops); by the permission of my ministers, I will conceal my poor person among the bushes of the morases".³⁹ Mihirakula did come following him to the

morass and was himself taken prisoner. However, his liberty was restored and he was allowed to go. What a devastating influence this episode could have had on military history and the thought currents in north India can be better imagined than explained.

The Jainism continued to enjoy popularity for a long time in Bengal, certain regions of Uttar Pradesh and Western India. Amoghavarsha (815-77 AD), one of the greatest Rashtrakuta rulers, liberally patronized the sect. Bijala Kalachurya of Kalyana (1156-1167 AD) and Kumarapala Chalukya of Anhilvara (1143-1172 AD) were also patrons of Jainism.⁴⁰

The multiplicity of religious sects in India is attested by Al-Idrisi, an Arab traveller of the 11th century AD. According to him, “Among the principal nations of India, there are forty two sects, some recognize the existence of a Creator, but not of prophets; while others deny the existence of both; some acknowledge the intercessory powers of graven stones, and other worship holy stones on which butter and oil is poured. Some pay adoration to fire, and cast themselves into flames. Others adore the Sun consider it the creator and director of the world, some worship trees; others pay adorations to serpents, which they keep in stables, and feed as well as they can, deeming this to be a meritorious work. Lastly, there are some who give themselves no trouble about any kind of

devotion and deny everything.”⁴¹ Generally the people and the rulers were deeply religious except few exceptions. By the close of the 8th century AD the rigidity of caste system had grown complex. There may be some truth in the assertion of Elphinstone that the religion of the Hindus had become debased and their caste restrictions rigid.⁴²

In spite of this social change Indians were not only inclined to justice but they never departed from it in their action. Well known were their good faith, honesty and fidelity to engagements. This is the reason why Al-Idrisi in the 11th century AD, wrote that peoples from all countries flock to India; hence there was all round prosperity. To bring out their characteristic love for truth he states that when a man meets another, who owes him something, he draws a circle on the ground and asks his debtor to enter the same, which the latter always does and he cannot leave that circle without satisfying his creditor or obtaining necessary remissions.⁴³

Alberuni dialates upon the customs of Hindus on punishments and compares them with those of the Christians. These customs, according to him, are based on the principles of virtue, abstinence from wickedness and non-violence. So much so that they would make over their shirt to the robber of their coat, offer to him the second, who has beaten their first cheek, and to bless and pray for the enemy. “Upon my life this is a noble

philosophy,” bemoans the distinguished traveller, “but the people of this world are not philosophers...Who cannot be kept on the straight road save by the sword and the whip. And indeed ever since Constantine, the victorious became a Christian, both sword and whip have ever been employed, for without them it will be impossible to rule.”⁴⁴

Non-violence, self-abnegation and self-sacrifice had become the guiding principles of life, which came to be viewed as transitory and of least consequence. Yuan Chwang in his travels relates the story of Prince Maharastava who gave up his body to feed a hungry tigress. Stone tope stood on the spot where the Prince, pitying the feeble state of the tigress, pierced his body with a dry bamboo and gave his blood and the body to the starving beast.⁴⁵ It is recorded in the Yasatilaka that Yasodhara had to suffer grievously in many successive births for sacrificing even the past-model of a cock as an offering to the goddess.⁴⁶ The life came to be regarded worthless and its sacrifice an inconsequential act of human behaviour. The story of a Buddhist novice Adhimutta narrated in the Theragatha proves the point. He showed remarkable calm and eagerness to die when the robbers, who had seized him, were about to kill him for the appeasement of their deity.

The Arab traveller Al-Idrishi records that when a king dies they make a vehicle raised two palms above the ground; place the bier on it

along with the king and his crown and drag it round the city, with his head uncovered and the hair falling on the ground. The herald goes in front of the Vehicle saying. “People behold your king, so and so by name... He lived happily and mighty... He is no more, and all that he possessed has escaped from his hands. Nothing now remains to him... Remember he has shown you the way which you must follow.”⁴⁷ D.C. Gangully quotes a passage covering the same theme from the Prabandhchintamani of Merutunga, when Bhoja was a child and was about to be put to death on behest from Vakapati Munja of Malwa, he composed the following verse, after reading which Vakapati withdrew his earlier orders: “Mandhata that lord of earth, the ornament of the Kṛta age, passed away, where is that enemy of ten-headed Ravana, who made the bridge over the ocean? And many other sovereigns have three been, Yudhistira and others, ending with thee, O King, Not with one of them the earth passed away; I suppose it will pass away with thee.”⁴⁸

Belief in Superstition and Astrological Forecasts

In this caste-ridden and religion-dominated society superposition and astrology clouded the minds of common citizenry, soldiery and the ruling elite alike. When Sindh was invaded by Muhammad Kasim in 712 AD, Dahir sent for the soothsayer, who after compounding astrological calculations, replied that the victory shall go to the Arab Army, because

Venus was behind the Arab leader and right in front of Dahir. On hearing this, Rai Dahir became furious. Upon this the astrologer advised him to order a gold image of Venus. That was duly made and fastened to his saddle in order that the Venus might be just behind him to bless him with Victory.⁴⁹

This faith in conjunction of stars remained undiminished throughout our period down to the days of Prithviraja III. Prithviraja was given Mangal Panchmi as the day of battle; “He made incantations to Rahu and Ketu to remove evil and produce auspiciousness. *Asta Chakra Yogni* and the transit of Bharani are auspicious for war; Guru Panchami and Ravi Panchami are inauspicious for the white marked (*Asta Mangal*, a horse with white mane, face, tail, breast and hoofs) horse of the lord. Indu and Buddha make war prosperous with the trident and the disc in their hands. An auspicious hour the king selected and marched forth; the valiant one at the rising of Krur (Mercury or Saturn.)⁵⁰

Economic Conditions

During the period preceding the Turkish conquest, economic prosperity of the country has been attested to at all hands. Agriculture was highly developed. The mention of a large variety of cereals grown and classification of crops and fields in standard lexicons prove it. Irrigation works like that of Anicut across Cauvery were also being

established in North India. Cotton stuffs and dressed animal... Skins produced in Gujarat, were imported by the Arabs. Gujarati ports along with those of the Coramandal Coast had become centres of international trade. The Yasastilaka faithfully provides us with adequate testimony of India's economic prosperity. Of particular interest is the description given by Somadev Suri of a mart owned and run by a priest for the benefit of foreign merchants to carry on their trade in India. The establishment was spread over an area of 4 miles. It had built in godowns for storing different varieties of merchandise and stalls for the cattle. Arrangements existed for the supply of firewood, water and fodder. The place was fortified and had moats, walls gates and ramparts.⁵¹ The richness of the Indian Cities and elegance of the courts of Indian Princes has been applauded by foreign travellers and the records of the age.⁵² Yuan Chwang in his travelogue makes repeated references to the fertility of land, the luxuriant crops and 'good' and affluent' circumstances of the people.⁵³ Rashidu-ddin, on the authority of Al-Biruni, paints a picture of India at the end of the 10th Century AD. He writes that Gujarat comprised 80,000 flourishing cities, villages and hamlets; the inhabitants were rich and happy.⁵⁴ The details of immense booty carried home by the Arabs and Mahmud of Ghazna provide yet another reliable measure of India's riches. It is; therefore, correct to assume that during normal times that land tillers had enough to eat and the country did not suffer at the hands

of Malthus' ghost of over-population. Contrary to this, evidence is available for the gross neglect of people immediately following the close of our period. The famines of early and mid-thirteenth century seem to have forced the people to have "either sold themselves or their children into slavery or even committed suicide by drowning themselves in rivers to escape the pangs of hunger."⁵⁵

This miserable plight of the famine hit people could be a direct outcome of the war-ravaged economy of the country. The old order had changed. The fates of the people were now in the hands of alien masters with their hearts and thoughts firmly fixed to their homeland. They were not yet acquainted with the fiscal system of their newly acquired dominions in India and hence could not rescue the people from the hell of their sufferings. No such instance had been recorded by the distinguished travellers of our period like Yuan Chwang and Alberuni, and their knowledge and impressions about Indian conditions were not the result of any superficial studies.

Literature

Although the literary excellence of the post-Gupta period did not compare well with the standards of Kalidasa, Vishakhadatta or Sudraka, the age did produce outstanding writers like Bharvavi, Magha, SriHarsha, Kshemendra and Krishna Mishra. Lyric poetry continued to flourish long

after Bhartahari, and the 12th century saw the composition of Jayadeva's Gitagovinda. Creditable works in other fields continued to be produced such as Dandin's prose romance Dasakumaracharita, Somadeva's Kathasaritsagara Santideva's ethical compositions and several works on political thought by Sukra and others.

In the field of historical literature contribution of the post-gupta period is worth mentioning. Notable among these are Harshacharita of Bana, Ramacharita of Sandhyakara Nandi, the Vikramankadevacarita of Bilhana and the Rajatarangini of Kalhana. Bhaskaracharya, a distinguished astronomer, flourished during the Yadava rule. Towards the close of the age we have a number of polymaths like Bhoja of Dhara, Somesvara III of Kalyana and Kshemendra of Kashmir, who showed their interest in diverse subjects.⁵⁶ It would, therefore, follow that during the period under review, there was no dearth of literary and scientific activity in the country.

Art and Architecture

Art and architecture provide a fairly accurate yard stick by which a nation's greatness can be measured. During the period 600-1200 AD architecture in India assumed an important role in the development of fine arts. Three major schools of architecture, viz, Nagara, Vesara and Dravida developed in the period. The testimony to an intense outburst of

architectural activity is borne by the elegant temples of Orissa, Khajuraho, Rajasthan, Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawar. The multifaceted development of Indian art is attested by Somadevsuri in the Yashatilaka, a celebrated work of our period.⁵⁷ The Kendariya, Laksmana and other temples at Khajuraho and the Lingaraja and Rajarani temples at Bhuvaneshwar may be noted as the finest specimens of the architecture of the period. The elegance and refinement of the two temples at Dilwara on Mount Abu is remarkable. “The rich exuberance of their decorative displays, almost super human skill, entitles them to rank as priceless treasures of art.”⁵⁸

Several schools of sculpture also developed in the period with their distinctive characteristics. Apart from the decorative patterns of plastic art we notice an exuberance of the cult images and other sculptures made in stone and metal. “Indian art offers the most vivid testimony to the wonderful resources in men and money possessed by the rulers....Amid and luxuries and comforts of worldly life, the thought of the world beyond never ceased to exercise a dominant influence.”⁵⁹ However, with the passage of time and as a direct consequence of the Muslim inroads the original artistic sense diminished under the influence of religion, whereby artists became merely the instruments in rendering to order, the complicated concepts of religion.⁶⁰ U.N. Goshal thus comments on the

deterioration in the field of fine arts: “By the end of 12th Century AD, Indian people appear to have undergone a lamentable decline. Literature and art, it would seem, lost much of their old creative power, while religion lay encumbered by a mass of forms and ceremonies and society was fixed in a rigid mould.”⁶¹

Hindu Militarism

The Vedas regarded wars as instruments of progress. Wars alone clear off the enemies from the road to prosperity. The Atharvaveda (XI.10.5) goads men for the holy war, thus: “Ye men rise up with your banners. Get ready; your foes are like deadly serpents. They are like monsters. Get on them.... Ye brave men make your enemies mad and kill their general with the half of your army.”⁶² Manu and *Yajnavalkya* lay down the dying in war was an act of the highest merit. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata equated it with a religious sacrifice; even the meanest when killed in battle earned salvation. According to almost all writers on Niti, war was mandatory for the king. War was natural to man and its absence for a long time was regarded as an abnormal situation. The literature of our period bears eloquent testimony in this regard. When Narad could not appease his lust for war on the earth he visited Indra in the heaven for this purpose. He was surprised to find Indra equally remorse for no warrior was coming to heaven as a result of their

martyrdom in battle.

The war was to be declared when troops were loyal and ready, even without a provocation from the opponent. This was rank militarism. Rapson, writing in the *Indian Antiquary*, observes that military expeditions formed part of the ordinary routine in a state where war was regarded as profession and the soldiers were hereditary members of the professional caste.⁶³ The all pervading spirit of vengeance played havoc, “Let widows weep, break their breasts; let women with untied hair strike their thighs and bewail. Let wolves and crows eat the enemies...”⁶⁴ so said an incantation of the *Atharvaveda*.

In its heyday, Buddhism did exert a softening influence on national mind and kings like Asoka came to eschew war and aggression. Asoka's was the lone voice in the wilderness of Aryan militarism. The only perceptible converts to the creed of non-violence were the mercantile classes who stood to lose from the wars. But it may be remembered that even Buddhism did not preach against war-craft. It is said when Ajatasatru of Magadha wanted to annihilate the vajjians, he was dissuaded from his design by the Buddha not because it was an aggressive act but because the vajjians were a democratic people. Obviously, the great lord did not oppose the idea of war.⁶⁵

Therefore, war as an instrument of state policy was never rejected

in India. In the centuries following the death of Asoka, migratory influx continued into India aggravating the frequency of wars. It reached its climax under the imperial Guptas. Harsha followed suit. Yuan Chwang narrates that whenever a general was defeated in war, he was asked to put on woman's garments. Many a general committed suicide with a view to escaping this ignominy.⁶⁶ The death of Harsha once again threw India into the cauldron of internecine warfare and the spirit of Indra, the War God, did not suffer diminution. The Garuda Purana enjoyed that "A king shall protect his subjects with the cultivation of sciences of money-making and warfare."⁶⁷ Even Jainism did not abhor warfare where the prestige of the country was at stake. Although some of the Rastrakuta and Chalukya rulers were inclined towards Jainism, never did they discard warfare. Again, writing about Prithviraja III, the author of the Prithvirajavijaya, states "Good fortune furnished him with opportunities to undertake several wars."⁶⁸

Death held no scare for a warrior. In a battle against Mahmud of Ghazna Beej, When deserted by most of his followers was about to be captured by the Muslims, killed himself with his own sword. Remnants of his garrison died fighting in a bid to avenge the death of their brave chief.⁶⁹

Marital traditions virtually permeated into the blood vessels of the

Indian people. A mother is quoted as saying that she would mutilate her breasts if her son deserted the battlefield. Therefore, we tend to agree with V.R.R. Dikshitar's rejection of reputed Maxmullar's contention that the "Hindus were mainly a community of philosophers "Whose mind was bent towards the other world, and who did not attach any importance to things mundane."⁷⁰

Notwithstanding its demerits marital traditions in India could be maintained throughout the age primarily because of the caste system. While the intellectuals could keep contemplating on philosophical doctrines in the hills and the forests, the traders in their shops and the tillers on their land, the life went on without competition. Life included a warrior's life. The Hindu genius set apart a whole community for warfare, which became a standing army of the nation. Every warrior was a knight by himself and when and when a war came there was no dislocation of the social and economic set-up. There were no food shortages. "There was no necessity for planning a new world order, as the old order was not affected in the least. It was not a people's war in which the king representing the whole nation plunged."⁷¹ Although it is true that war was the primary concern of the warrior caste, yet the nation that it was the concern of only that class is not correct. We shall quote numerous instances at an appropriate place to show that the other castes were not

wanting in marital spirit.

Causes of War

In a nation where militarism was a philosophy holiest of holy, where there was a standing professional army in the shape of a large kshatriya caste or the Rajputs of the later period; conscription was unheard of; to start a war no specific cause or pre-text was required. At all times, conquest was the chief ambition of Indian Princes. The peace was to be maintained only by the weak; on who was strong must wage war; as war was a continuation of state policy by other means.⁷² During the Rigvedic period we find that the extermination of non-Aryans who did not believe in the vedic gods, was considered to be an important cause of war.

However, with the Aryanisation of India, the declaration of war on the unbelievers was no longer necessary. As such Kamandaka does not include this in his list of causes of war amongst Aryans which according to him are:

“Usurpation of provinces, abduction of women, carrying away of vehicles and treasures, arrogance, morbid sense of honour, molestation of dominions, extinction of erudition, destruction of property, violation of laws, prostration of regal powers, influence of evil destiny, the necessity of helping friends and allies, disrespectful demeanour, destruction of a

friend and so on.⁷³

The chief motive of war amongst the Aryans was the love of war-glory. War was considered to be warrior's dharma and was the love of war-glory. War was considered to be warrior's dharma and was good for its own sake. Battles were fought to appease sense of vanity. Besides satisfying thirst for territorial aggrandizement, invasions were launched without questioning their propriety. Excuses were concocted when required. For example, Kalingraja expressing his desire to fight, asked his ministers to find out an excuse. They advised him to send his daughters seated in a chariot to various villages and capital towns. The war could be declared on a person who would dare detain them. It was done and was declared on the Assakaraja.⁷⁴

The women and particularly the *svayambara* ceremony (choosing of husband in public by princes) was another potent cause of bloodshed in north India. It is a sad commentary on Indian King Durlabraja son of Chamundaraja that when Mahmud of Ghazna was devastating north India, he should have quarreled over a bride. For, when Durlabraja won the hands of Chahamana princes in *svayambara* ceremony, he had to fight against a number of disappointed suitors⁷⁵ and again according to the Prthivirajavijaya, Kalvati, sister of Guvaka II (9th Century AD) had 12 suitors. She chose the king of Kanauj and married him. Guvaka had to

defeat the remaining princes and give their wealth to this sister as dowry.⁷⁶ In this connection the story of Prithviraja III's war with Jaichand over the abduction of latter's daughter is too well known to be recounted. The wars were fought not only for expansion of one's own territory but also to checkmate the designs of menacing enemy, who is equated with a serious malady.⁷⁷

What could be a pettier cause of war than the one related in the Prabhadkosa. Kumarapala had a sister who was married to Arnoraja. Playing chess one day with his wife, Arnoraja while lifting one of the pawns said in a jest, "kill these mundikas, kill these mundikas." This was taken as an insult by the queen as the word mundika could also mean Gujaratis who wore no headdress and also their gurus with shaven heads. Being reported of the matter, Kumarapala at once vowed to avenge this insult.⁷⁸ At times, receipt of peculiar articles as presents with particular markings from the hostile kings were considered provocations enough for the declaration of war. Those were: considered provocations enough for the declaration of war. Those were: "an iron ball, then letter marked with the emblem of a sword on the outside, and the presents wrapped in four pieces of cloth; or according to another interpretation, an iron ball and the presents and the letter, both marked with the figure of a sword and four encircling lines." Somadev

Suri explains the significance of each in his *Nitivakyamitra* (chap. 13): “Now the iron ball symbolized invulnerability of the sender; the four wrappings or the four encircling lines, the four-limbed army... and the sword, of course, the threat of war”. The result of this all embracing rank militarism was devastating for the country which had no central powerful authority to act as a deterrent element. The incorporation of martial traditions into the sacred law encouraged internecine warfare.⁷⁹ It protracted interstate feuds sapping national vitality. It allowed national vigour to run berserk and break glittering crowns at the hands of one another. It also made them succumb to the enemy blows one by one glorified by family bards.

We now propose to give a bird’s eye view of the major events in the political field during the vast expanse of 700 years from the ascendancy of Harsha to the fall of Prithviraja III.

THE POLITICAL SCENE

The curtain rises with the young Harshvardhana struggling to climb the political stage of north India. After the Guptas, the Maukharis rule over major parts of Madhyadesa with Kanauj as their capital. The Maitrakas rule over Saurashtra and Western Malwa and the Pushyabhutis or Vardhanas at Thaneshwar in the (East Punjab) Haryana of present day. The Huna incursions from the north-west had caused great upheavals.

Their advances were marked by rapine, massacre and incendiarism. Cities were bolted out of existence....“They valley of the Kabul and Swat rivers, one of the most flourishing centres of Indian Civilisation, was so completely devastated that the greater part of it has ever since remained outside the pale of civilization, fit only for the habitation of wild tribes...”⁸⁰. The honour of becoming shield bearers of Indian independence at that critical moment devolved upon the Mukharis under the stewardship of the illustrious Isanavarman,⁸¹ who succeeded in containing their turbulence to the portions of the Punjab. “The later Guptas could not help the disintegration of their empire due to the very ephemeral nature of their governmental system centered around the personality and competence of the rulers; political turmoil’s in Central Asia whose reverberations were always felt in the adjacent lands,”⁸² and “the outbreak of rebellion within, devastating invasions from without, the growth of a class of hereditary governors and other officials who commanded enormous influence in local centres... and dissensions in the imperial family itself.”⁸³

It was Harsha’s father Prabhakarvardhana, who had enlarged the bounds of his kingdom comprising perhaps the whole of Punjab and a part of Malwa and assumed the imperial title of ‘Paramabhataraka Maharajadhiraja. After his death in 604 AD, when his eldest son

Rajayavardhana donned the imperial regalia, his brother-in-law the Maukhari Grahvarman was killed by the king of Malwa assisted by Sashanka of Bengal. His sister Rajyasree was thrown into fetters. Rajayavardhana was able to avenge his brother-in-law's death by defeating the king of Malwa but he lost his life; whether at the hands of Sashanka through guile or in adherence to a promise, is a moot point. Recovering from the shock and dejection caused by the death and murders in the family, tragic though it was for the Young Harsha; he swore vengeance and set out against Sasanka with a mighty expeditionary force.⁸⁴

He succeeded in rescuing his sister in a short period of time. In accordance with the advice of Bodhisattava Avlokitesvara (Kuan-tza-tsai- "the Beholding Lord" of Yuan Chwang), he became king of Kanauj without actually using the imperial title of Maharaja.⁸⁵ Though he had lots of problems in his own kingdom, yet the desire of ending the order of small warring princely states and bringing them under one umbrella, was roused in him. By doing this he would be upholding the traditional Kshatriya ideal of '*digvijaya*'- conquest of the four quarters.⁸⁶ "Proceeding eastward he invaded the states which had refused allegiance and waged incessant until in six years he had fought the five Indias...."⁸⁷ Harsha was successful in establishing his suzerainty over the whole of

Gangetic valley⁸⁸ i.e., the complete modern Uttarpradesh, a large chunk of Bihar and Bengal (excepting Karnasuvarna), Orissa, and such of the portions of Punjab, Rajputana, Central and Western India for which Yuan Chwang does not mention the names of other rulers. But the measure of his colossal political influence cannot be gauged by the mere enumeration of his directly administered territories. He rightly earned for himself, the position of the Lord of the whole uttrapatha (Sakala Uttar-pathana).⁸⁹

It may, however, be noted that Harsha maintained a large army to which reference will be made in an appropriate place. His army was far in excess and disproportionate to the size of his empire. In addition, he strained his economy to the farthest limits by making excessive charities.⁹⁰ In addition, he maintained big monasteries and lived with great pomp and show. Devraj goes to the extent of saying that “Having bled the peasant white for his military campaigns and for his insatiable acts of charity Harsha left a trail of famine and desolation behind him. Little wonder that his empire collapsed soon after.”⁹¹

It was an age of mutual animosity and strife. An outstanding statesman with a strong mace was required to hold a vast empire together.⁹² But when Harsha died without an heir sometime in 647-48 AD, the distant provinces fell off one by one. “What followed next was a general scramble to feast on the carcass of the empire.”⁹³ Each petty

princeling tried to become an emperor at the cost of his neighbours. Empire of the later Guptas, in Magadha was revived by Adityasena, the Maukharis became supreme in Kanauj and in Valabhi, Dharasena IV became an independent king. Gradually numerous others lesser known principalities like those of the Gurjars-Pratiharas and Karkotakas of Rajputana, Punjab and Kashmir respectively came to the forefront. Thus was restored semblance of law and order in north India.⁹⁴

Adityasena of Madhyadesa, had signaled his accession to power by performance of the horse-sacrifice and strengthened his position by matrimonial alliance with the leading families of his age. He was succeeded by Deva Gupta, Vishnugupta and Jivita Gupta II, one after the other, but the outward expansion of the Gauda kings of the east ultimately led to the extinction of the house of Adityasena. The kingdom of Kanauj, however, was soon revived by the legendary Yasovarman. He ended the career of the Gupta King, subjugated Vangas of eastern and central Bengal and reached Narmada, in the south Rajputana and Thaneswar also formed part of his empire. However, to the bad luck of north India the career of this illustrious ruler was cut short by his erstwhile accomplice Lalitaditya of Kashmir.⁹⁵

In Kashmir Lalitaditya, of Karkotaka dynasty founded by Durlabhvardhana in the seventh century AD came to power in 724 AD.

His important expeditions were against the Tibctans, the dards, the Turks and Yashovarman. After vanquishing Yasovarman he advanced eastwards and trampled Magadha, Gauda, Kamrupa, Kalinga, Malwa and Gujarat. He also defeated the Arabs of Sindh. It were the victorious marches of his arms, which after the great imperials Guptas, founded the most powerful empire in north India but this time with its epicentre as Kashmir.⁹⁶ Lalitaditya died in 760 AD and his successors could not preserve their inheritance for long. The conquests of Lalitaditya and later Jayapida (776-817 AD) brought in its train immense flow of wealth. The accompanying peace and prosperity contained within it the germs of its own decay. After the enlightened reign of Avantivarman constant rebellions and civil wars caused by feuds became order of the day. “Death, famine and pestilence stalked the land... and state divided against itself, resting on a shattered economy could not be expected to maintain the large territories.”⁹⁷

This is the time when we turn our attention towards the western horizon of India where the mighty whirlwind of Arab hordes had uprooted and thrown to dust the Brahman dynasty of Sindh. The storm which had gathered over the sandy lands of Arabia in the first quarter or so of the seventh century, soon spread in all directions. In the resultant spate it submerged countries from Iran to Spain. The Arabs and their

Caliphs fired by the zeal of Mohammed's new faith cast their longing eyes on the rich ports of western India.⁹⁸ In the course of their numerous futile invasions, they came to know much about the country of 'Sind and Hind.' From the reign of Caliph Muawiyeh (661-680 AD) onwards it became a practice to designate a commander of an expeditionary force as Governor of Sindh in advance. Hajjaj was appointed governor of 'Iraq, Hind and Sind' by the Khalifa Abdul Malik, son of Marwan long before the alleged act of piracy near the port of Debal. Piracy, if it is occurred, came in very conveniently to serve as a pretext of holy war against Sindh where the Arabs had miserably failed for almost seventy years.⁹⁹

A word about Al-Hijjaaj and his capabilities, He was a school master of Al-Taif in al-Hijaj who had exchanged his pen with sword to serve as a pillar for the tottering Umayyad Crown. Abdullah ibn al-zubayr, a pretender, who had for nine years held the 'title and power of Caliph,' lay dead at his feet and upon his corpse he ascended to the governorship of Arabia. "In fact, no head proved too mighty... to crush, no neck too high for him to reach....Human lives to the number of 120,000 are said to have been sacrificed by the governor of Al-Iraq, who is represented by the Arab historians...as a blood thirsty tyrant, a veritable Nero..."¹⁰⁰

In the eight century, India had multiple divisions and subdivision

with fluid political boundaries. Geographically isolated, with no hope of assistance from the main land, Sindh presented an attractive objective to the war thirsty Arabs. “Sind under Dahar was a ramshackle political organization, utterly wanting in cohesion and inhabited by a heterogeneous population. A feudal state...whose governors were so independent of each other and of the central authority, their only liability, when they chose to fulfil it, was to render military assistance to the king of Sind...”¹⁰¹ Sindh fell, therefore, to the youthful Kasim’s disciplined soldiers who were determined to conquer or die for the faith. Dahar was too weak to stem the high tide of Arab invasion.¹⁰² Sindh fell but the Arabs, inspite of best of their efforts, could not make wider dent in the body-armour of India proper. Seeing the performance of Arab army elsewhere, the historians have shown surprise over this unusual phenomenon in India. But this is not so. “The real matter of surprise, however is that the vestige of Arab Authority, continued in Sindh for three hundred years.”¹⁰³ Even the Muslims felt that the Gujar-Pratiharas could have easily conquered strategically vital Multan, which dominated all routes of ingress from the north-west. They hesitated in doing so for fear of destruction of holy images at the Muslim hands at a Multan temple. It betrays their lack of intelligence about the happenings in the neighbouring kingdoms. They were devoid of foresight and statesmanship. They could have forestalled and thwarted Muslim designs

of the 10th-12th centuries if only they could see beyond their frontiers.¹⁰⁴

The Gurjara-Pratiharas

The formidable Arabs were stopped at the gates of India by the mighty Gurjara-Pratiharas who had settled in Rajputana a century and a half before them. There is ample evidence to show that the Arabs did all within their means to extend their stronghold in India but the Pratiharas stood as bulwark of Indian defence against them. It was Pratihara Nagabhata and also Chalukya king of Badami who successfully barred the Muslim entry into northern India and Deccan respectively. They beat back a powerful Arab expeditionary force of 725AD which had overrun Kutch, Kathiawar peninsula, northern Gujarat and southern Rajputana.¹⁰⁵ By 836 AD the Pratihara dynasty was firmly established in Kanauj and before the end of the 9th century their commands were obeyed all over the territory stretching from Pehoa in Haryana to Deogarh in central India, and from Una in Kathiwar to Paharpur in north Bengal.¹⁰⁶

The Palas

Bengal had lost its political cohesion after the death of Sasanka. At the beginning of eighth century, a king of Shaila dynasty was rolling over Bengal when it was invaded by Yashovarman and Lalitaditya. They were followed by a king named Harsha, probably of Kamrupa. These foreign incursion set in complete lawlessness in Bengal. Each landlord

established an independent principality. Out of this anarchy rose Gopala, elected by all barons. According to Dharmapala's declaration, the crown was offered to his father Gopala because of the people's apprehensions that in the absence of a king. They would become victims of the application of the principle of *Matsya Nyaya* and lose their identity. Gopala finally beat down the dust raised by clash of arms during the preceding period of chaos. As his and his successor's names end with the word Pala, the dynasty founded by him came to be known as the Pala dynasty. However, it was left to Dharmapala, son and successor of Gopala to raise his kingdom to dizzy heights of greatness and splendour.¹⁰⁷

At a time when the Palas were busy in founding a great empire in the east, the same processes were at work in the west under Vatsaraja, a Pratihara king one of whose known dates is 738 AD. As the Palas wanted to expand west ward and the Pratiharas eastwards, they were bound to clash sooner or later. The fight took place somewhere in the Gangetic-Jamuna Doab, in which the 'doorkeeper' Vatsaraja beat up the intruder Gopala or most likely his son Dharmapala. This germinated a perpetual animosity between the two giants of north India. while the close boxing-bout was on between the two contenders, a third heavy weight champion, the King Dhruva of the Rastrakutas of Deccan, appeared to claim the

‘National title’. Not able to bear incessant rain of blows, Vatsaraja ran away to hide himself in a safe corner of Rajasthan, whereas Dharampala curled his head within his Gauda hood. Thus commenced that protracted tripartite conflict for empire among Gurjara-Pratiharas, Palas and the Rastrakutas, which marked political turmoil of the 10th century. AD.¹⁰⁸ Al-Masudi lauds Pratihara kingdom, in the first few years of the 10th century (915-16 AD) but the fact remains that Mahipala had to pay heavily for his inherited hostility against the Rastrakutas. The vast kingdom of Bhoja and Mahendrapala finally lay prostrate at the feet of the Rastrakuta Indra III. The consequent loss of prestige suffered by the Pratiharas could not be regained by them. This led to the assertion of independence by their vassals. The authors of ‘The Age of Imperial Kanauj’ are right in their assertion that the Gurjara-Pratihara Empire and not that of Harsha was the last great empire in northern India before its conquest by the Turks. It even equaled the great Gupta Empire. Their greatest contribution to India was the effective check which the Pratiharas placed on the ambitious designs of the Muslims beyond the limits of Sindh. In the tripartite struggle, mentioned above, each one of them, “Like the waves of the sea rose to the highest point only to break down, the Pratiharas had a longer spell of success than either of their rivals....”¹⁰⁹ Among the powers, which rose over effete Gurjara Pratihara empire, were the Chandellas, Parmaras, Kalachuris, Chaulukyas,

Chahamanas, Guhilas and a score of small families. Not going into their detailed history, we shall make a passing reference to those who rose to exert some influence on the under- current of north Indian History of our Age.

In the period before the rise of Sultan Mahmud to power, Chandellas of Jajakabhukti (Bundelkhand) under Dhanga (954-1008 AD) and Parmara Vakpati Munja (974-995 AD) deserve special mention.

The Chandella power rapidly increased under Dhanga in the South central of northern India. The territories of Dhanga came to be bounded by Jamuna in the north, son on the east and Chambal in the west. But before he could extend his dominion in the North West, the Turks, like vultures, had fallen on the Indian frontier in that direction.¹¹⁰ It may be noted that the Chandellas were very suspicious of the designs of eastern states and always adopted a policy of crippling their resources like the Gurjara-Pratiharas. In their aggressive wars although they did not occupy Gauda, yet “their invasions created a situation in which it was possible for another family to occupy the territory of Bengal.”¹¹¹

Munja Paramara, was one of the greatest generals of his age. He fought all his life, and defeated among others Kalachuri Yuvaraja II, Guhilas of Medarata and Chahamanas of Nadol. His end came as a result of his own folly in flouting well known military principle of advancing

too far from his firm base. He was captured by Talia II and put to most tragic death,¹¹² the reference to which shall be made in another chapter. The Kalachuris, whose founder was Kokalla I in or about 845 AD rose to be a big power for only a short period and later remained confined to Madhyadesa only.¹¹³

Mulraja founded Chalukya dynasty sometimes in 942 AD with his capital at Anahilpataka. He was no great general but had lot of doggedness to preserve inspite of having been defeated by Munja and later by Kalachuri Lakshmanraja. His successor too had to wage defensive wars against the Parmaras and the Kalachuris.¹¹⁴

The Chahamanas (famous Chauhans of the late period) were the feudatories of Gurjara-Pratiharas and their most important branch ruled over sapadalaksa country with Sakambhari (modern Sambhar) as their Capital. Simharaja, whose known date is 956 AD, took up the title of Maharajadhiraja. His son and successor carried his victorious arms right up to Narmada.¹¹⁵

Another dynasty, which was destined to play heroic role in the Indian history later, was the Guhilas or Guhilots of Mewar. They were also vassals of the Pratiharas. It was Bhartipatta who threw off the Pratihara suzerainty sometimes in the middle of 10th century AD.¹¹⁶

Our discussion of the Indian political scene will not be complete

without a mention of Shahis of the Kabul valley. Their capital was shifted to Udabhandapura in 870 AD. Its founder Kallar is identified with Lalliya Sahai, whose glory outshone many rulers of north India, who found shelter in his capital city.¹¹⁷ The Shahis waged a brave and relentless fight against the Ghaznawids who could advance into India, who found shelter in his capital city.¹¹⁸ The Shahis waged a brave and relentless fight against the Ghaznawids who could advance into India only over their dead bodies.

At this stage we may also touch upon the institution variously termed as feudalism. The system as it existed in India did not quite fit with the definition of the term as known to the Western authorities. A.L. Basham calls it as 'Quasi-feudalism' where by Indians had a system of over-lordship, the vassals having their own vassals or petty chieftains.¹¹⁹ These jagirdar or Bhoktas had specified rights and duties. They received taxes, had title to the land and gained or lost power in accordance with the strength and competence of the rulers.¹²⁰ They were the source of strength when they chose to be loyal and when otherwise, brought speedy ruin of great empires in a matter of little time.

The brief review clearly brings out that towards the end of 10th century AD north India presented a spectacle of congeries of small states, "whose only political contact with their neighbour was when they fought

with each other or combined to destroy a hated and powerful rival”¹²¹

Let us now turn our attention towards hilly, could and not very productive lands along the North West frontier of India. Here the Turks were beginning to awake to consciousness of their newly acquired power which was to have serious consequence for India.

The Caliphate at Damascus had remained secure from the fear of armed invasions till the fall of Omayyad; where after, its seat of power was shifted to Baghdad by the Khaifas of the Abb asid line. This change in the seat as well as in the line of Caliphate saw changes in the political mentorship of the Muslim world. Persian officials, who were better educated and cleverer men, replaced Arab administrators in many of the key-posts. As the Caliphate grew weaker, Persians became independent and founded their own dynasties. Because of their fear of Persians and due to constant in-fighting of the Arabs of Mesopotamia, the caliphs looked for suitable bodyguards. The answer was not far to seek. The Turks, captured on the northern frontier, which were full of martial spirit and known for their hardihood, became hot favourites. Secured by the brave body of Turks, the Caliphs kept leading the life of ease and luxury. But “it was introducing the wooden horse into the Muslim Troy. The Turkish guards became the masters of the Caliphs; Turkish officers gradually acquired the control of provinces, and throughout the

Mohammadan Empire, from Egypt to Samarkand, Turks became a dominant race.”¹²²

Abandoning their native steppes, the Turks gathered in Persia and there ensued race for power in the Samanids kingdom. This scramble for power was in a way responsible for the Turkish invasion of India.¹²³ Alptagain, a high officer of the Samnids quarreled with his over-lord and moved to Ghazni a no man’s land’s and established there his own principality in 962 AD.¹²⁴

Alaptagin’s throne fell to the lot of his slave and son-in-law Subuktagin who was the first to launch an invasion of India. But it was Mahmud the son of Alaptagin who organized the Turks into the best fighting machine of their age and vowed to lead a holy expedition to India every year. “His iconoclastic zeal became nightmare to the Indian princes and has been very aptly expressed in the Mahoba inscription by the term ‘bhuvanati-bharam’- his weight appeared too heavy for mother earth...”¹²⁵ For more than thirty years, the Turks under him “pillaged, burned and devastated the rich plains, cities and temples of the Indus and the Ganga Valley.”¹²⁶ This was so as the people of the mountains were poor and the treasure of India presented to them irresistible temptation. “It was no wonder that they carried all before them, devoured the rich lands like a cloud of locusts and returned to their frozen homes with a

welcome, such as meets the mooring of an argosy.”¹²⁷ As a result, the Turkish power came to be established permanently in the western Punjab and northern Sindh. Multan and Lahore became their forward observation posts. These conquests of Mahmud demonstrated the hollowness of Indian Political set-up and India became a preserve of the Muslim hordes two centuries later.¹²⁸

Mahmud’s sack of Kannauj in 1018 AD dealt the last great blow to the tottering Gurjara-Pratihara kingdom, on whose carcass the hounds of Chadellas and the Kachchhapaghatas fell to feast. With the passing away of Trilochanpala around 1027 AD, finally ended the dynasty of the great ‘door-keepers,’ who had fully justified their title by guarding the gateways to India for over 200 years.¹²⁹

The raids of Mahmud’s successors kept the Rajputs on their tenter-hooks. However, as the Turks could not produce a leader even half as capable as Mahmud, they failed to make any serious impression on the Indian princes who relapsed into their old pastime of constant warfare. The successors of Vidyadhara lacked his foresight resulting in their failure to benefit from the weakness of their neighbours and gradually started losing their territories to the Dahala Kalachuri who in this period produced two outstanding rulers, Gangeyadeva Vikramaditya (1030-34 AD) and Laksmikarana (1041-79 AD). The latter equaled the marital

feats of great Harsha and those of later Parihara Nagabhata II and Bhoja I. But all hopes pinned on him were belied. His empire like that of Napoleon tumbled with him. Gahadvalas rose where Kalachuris fell and occupied the whole of modern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. But neither Govindchandra nor his successors had the vision and capability of empire-builders.

With the fall of the Parmarss in Central India, the Chalukyas of Anahilapattan and the Chahamanas of Sakamari rose to prominence. The latter entered Punjab sometimes before 1164 AD and stretched their arm right upto the banks of the Sutlej. By doing so they put their hand into the waspcomb of the waning Yaminis of Lahore and Gahadvalas of Kanauj and Benaras. Indians were now to suffer fresh inroads of Ghuzz-Turkomans¹³⁰ in the last quarter of the 12th century AD.

Within ten years of the idol-breaker's passing away, his Persian possessions had been snatched from his successors. The Western Turks Ghuzz and other Turkoman clans led by leaders as capable as or a shade better than Mahmud in organizing abilities appeared on the scene. The power that destroyed Ghaznawids grew up in their midst in the hills of Ghor. A family feud between the Ghaznawids and the Ghur Chiefs of Firoz-koh, ended in the sack of Ghazni by Al-ud-din Hussain 'Jahan-soz, (the world burner) who "burst into Ghazni on a wave of slaughter and

destruction... of all the noble buildings with which the kings had enriched their stately capital, hardly a stone was left to tell of its grandeur. The very graves of the hated dynasty were dug up and the royal bones scattered to the curse....”¹³¹ The idol of somnath and scores of other Indian gods defiled at the hands of Mahmud must have had a horse-laugh over the fate that be met the Ghaznawids.

India was now to witness the repetition of blitzkreige of the 11th century, AD. This time the leader of the enemy locust-swarm was Muizuddin Mahommad-ibn-sam, better known as Muhammad Ghori. He captured Multan in 1175 AD. The defeat of the year 1178 AD at the hands of Chalukyas did not dim his insatiable desire for conquest. He soon became the master of Peshawar in 1179 AD, which he took from the Ghaznawid Khusro Malik (1160-86 AD).

At this time, Prithviraja III (1179-92 AD) ascended the throne of Sakambhari. This redoubtable Rajput king was indisputably a great warrior. He held sway over vast territory including most of Rajputana. His kingdom extended from the Sutlej to the Betwa or perhaps to the Ken skirting the Jamuna in the north. His victories over the Chandellas and the Gahadvalas had raised him as a bulwark against the possible Turkish advance into the heart of India. Muhammad Ghori captured Lahore in 1186 AD and the swords of Shanasbanis abd Chahamanas were soon to

clash. The first encounter of encounter of 1191 AD at Tarain sent the Turk home, reeling and licking his wounds. He returned to avenge his defeat in the following year and settled his score at the very field. After the Chahamanas, defeat of the Gahadvalas was a matter of routine. The process of subordinating India was a long-drawn struggle, but surely it brought Muslim rule in India and the throne of Delhi continued to be occupied by Muslims for almost 668 years (1192 to 1858 AD). Therefore, while Mahmud's raids had left but a few scars on the body-politic of India, those of Muhammad Ghori, a man of humbler origin and a much inferior general, laid the foundations of a permanent Muslims rule in India.

A concise review of the cultural and military history of our period would reveal the dismal picture of society and political organization. While the literacy and artistic standards had shown some deterioration, the religion for a common man had been reduced to a set of superstitious beliefs with the evil of untouchability in the society. The Hindu society had been set into a rigid social mould in which everyone had to do and allotted due to the incident of birth. Politically, the country was woefully split into conglomeration of ever-fighting states. In the absence of a central authority, the ruinous concept of *Matsya-Nyaya* feasted on the fissiparous tendencies and mutual hostilities of the people. 'Law of the

fist' was order of the day. The right to survival was arrogated by the mightier and the weaker became merely matelotes to appease hunger of the big fish. The successive political doctrines of Sarvabhauma (ruler of the whole earth), chatruranta (ruler whose authority extends to four limits of the quarters) Chakravartin (of whose charka or wheel of the state chariot rolls everywhere) led to further enlarge the goals before warring kings who now set their sights at conquering all quarters rather than modifying their relationship from those existing between the vijigisu of a mandala to that of the raja-raja, the king of kings. With the rise of Sarvabhauma, the mandala should have disappeared. It never did. On the contrary it got linked with the Hindu theory of political Yajnas (sacrifices or rituals) like *asvamedha*, *rajasuya*, *vajapeya*, *purusamedha* and so on¹³². The kings, so as they become paramount rulers, went on waging senseless wars in their attempts to subdue those whom they thought they could. The price of such ventures was immense. The confusion was made more confounded by the onrush of the successive waves of poor, hungry, yet doughty warriors whose faith during this period happened to be accidentally, Islam. It is than against this background, or on this politico-cultural stage that we shall explain the intricacies of the simple looking art, nay, rather the complicated science of warfare. We shall thereafter, return to the discussion of the causes that led to the collapse of contemporary Indian arms against invaders from the North-west.

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