

Political condition of India on the eve of Turkish Invasion:

- The Indian subcontinent was a mosaic of many kingdoms of varying size and strength.
- The neighbouring kingdoms constantly indulged in warfare for the extension of their territories.
- These kingdoms were not bound by any principle of unity.
- Though some of these kingdoms were quite extensive and powerful but they could not present any tangible opposition to the Turkish invaders.
- The chief kingdoms that existed on the eve of Turkish invasion were the following:
 1. The Arab kingdoms of Sindh and Multan.
 2. The Brahmin Hindu Shahi Kingdom:
 - The Brahmin dynasty of the Shahiyas ruled over an extensive territory spread from the river Chenab to Multan and including the NWF.
 - The Hindu Shahi Kingdom had played an important role in resisting the advance of the Arabs in North India for nearly 200 years.
 - The rise of Ghaznavid empire in Afghanistan, the Hindu Shahis were forced to give up a part of their territory including Kabul and shift their capital towards the right bank of river Indus.
 3. Gurjara-Pratihara.
 4. Rashtrakutas.
 5. Palas.
 6. The kingdom of Kashmir:
 - Kalhana's Rajtarangini (12th century) gives a detailed account of the kingdom of Kashmir.
 - After the death of Ashoka, Kashmir became an independent kingdom.
 - The greatest ruler of Kashmir was Lalitaditya (725-755 AD) who defeated Yashovarman, the ruler of Kannauj 740 AD.
 7. The Rajput kingdoms:
 - With the disintegration of Pratihara empire, a number of Rajput kingdoms emerged in North and Central India.

- On the eve of Turkish invasions, the Rajputs ruled major parts of northern and central India.
- Where and how the Rajputs originated is still a mystery.
- According to some scholars, the Rajputs were of foreign origin.
- This suggested by the efforts that were made by the Brahmins to give them Royal lineages and grant them Kshatriya status.
- They were provided with Genealogies, which connected them either with the Solar (Suryavanshi) or Lunar (Chandravanshi) or Fire (Agnivanshi) race.
- In this way Royal respectability was conferred on them.

Ghaznavid and Ghurid Invasions

Ghaznavids:

- Ghaznavids (977-1186 AD) was a Muslim Turkic dynasty of Mamluk origin that ruled in Khorasan, Afghanistan and north western India (modern day Pakistan).
- The dynasty was founded by Subuktgin upon his succession to the rule of Ghazna after the death of his father-in-law, Alptigin, who was an ex-general of the Samanid Empire.
- As the Samanid dynasty weakened, Subuktgin consolidated his position and expanded his domains as far as the Indian border.
- His son Mahmud (ruled 998-1030 AD) continued the expansionist policy, and by 1005 the Samanid territories had been divided.
- The Oxus (Amu Darya) river formed the boundary between the two successor states to the Samanid empire, the Ghaznavids and the Qarakhanids.

Mahmud of Ghazni:

- Ghaznavid power reached its zenith during the Mahmud's reign.

- He created an empire that stretched from the Oxus to the Indus valley and the Indian Ocean.
- In the west he captured Iranian cities of Rayy and Hamdan from the Buyids.
- A devout Muslim, Mahmud reshaped the Ghaznavids from their Pagan Turkic origins into an Islamic dynasty and expanded the frontiers of Islam.
- The Persian poet Firdausi completed his epic Shahnama (book of kings) at the court of Mahmud about 1010 AD.
- Mahmud is said to have made 17 raids into India.
- At that time, North India was divided into a number of Hindu states.
- On the frontier of India, there existed the Hindu Shahi kingdom which extended from Punjab to Kabul.
- The important kingdoms of North India were Kannauj, Gujarat, Kashmir, Nepal, Malwa, Bundelkhand.
- The initial raids were against the Hindu Shahi kingdom in which its king Jayapala was defeated in 1001 AD.
- After his defeat, Jayapala immolated himself because he thought that his defeat was a disgrace.
- His successor Anandapala fought against Mahmud, but he was also defeated in the Battle of Waihind, the Hindu Shahi capital near Peshawar in 1008 AD.
- In this battle, Anandapala was supported by the rulers of Kannauj and Rajasthan.
- As a result of his victory at Waihind, Mahmud extended his rule over Punjab.
- The subsequent raids of Mahmud into India were aimed at plundering the rich temples and cities of northern India.
- In 1011, he raided Nagarkot (Kangra) in the Punjab hills and Thaneshwar near Delhi.
- In 1018, Mahmud plundered the holy city of Mathura and also attacked Kannauj.
- He wanted to make Ghazni, a principality of Afghanistan, into a region building formidable power in the politics of Central Asia.

- In a short period of 25 years, he made 17 raids.
- He destroyed many temples, example Somnath temple in Gujarat (1025 AD) as they were the depositories of vast quantities of wealth.
- Mahmud did not make any systematic effort to capture India.
- However, he may be seen as the founder of Turkish rule in India to the extent that his expiditions opened India to conquest from the north west.

Impact of Mahmud's Invasion:

- Exposition of India's military weakness.
- Exposition of India's political disunity.
- Weakening of the economic condition of India as Mahmud carried huge wealth out of the country.
- Great setback to Indian art and sculpture owing to the destruction of idols in temples.
- Opening of India to foreign attacks.
- Opportunity for Islam to set its foothold in India.
- Arrivals of Muslim Saints, called the Sufis, providing the impetus to greater Hindu Muslim interaction.
- Mahmud's son Masud I (ruled 1031-1041) was unable to preserve the power or even the integrity of the Ghaznavid empire.
- In Khorasan and Khwarizm, Ghaznavid power was challenged by the Seljuk Turks.
- Masud suffered a disastrous defeat at the Battle of Dandanqan (1040 AD) when all the Ghaznavid territories in Iran and Central Asia were lost to the Seljuks.
- The Ghaznavids were left in possession of eastern Afghanistan and northern India, where they continue to rule until 1186 AD, when Lahore fell to the Ghurids.

Ghurids and their Advance into India:

- The rise to power of the Ghurids at Ghur, a small isolated area located in the mountain fastness between the Ghaznavid empire and the Seljuks, was an unusual and unexpected development.
- Like Ghaznavids, the Ghurids too were unpopular in Khorasan on account of their financial levies and found it difficult to maintain their authority there.
- Thus, the perpetual conflict with the Seljuks and the Turkish tribes across the Oxus were the factor which impelled the Ghurids towards India.
- In 1163, Ghiyasuddin Mohammad assumed the throne of Ghurid empire.
- Recalling a Turkish tribal tradition, he appointed his younger brother, Muhammad Ghori (real name Muizz-ud-din), ruler of Ghazna.
- This unique partnership enabled one brother, Muhammad Ghori, to engage all his energies for the conquest of India, and the elder brother, Ghiyasuddin to concentrate on Central and West Asian problems.
- Muhammad Ghori's first invasion in Indian subcontinent started with the conquering of Multan and Uch in 1175 AD.
- In 1178 AD, he attempted to penetrate Gujarat by marching past Rajputana deserts but failed heavily.

Battle of Kayadra (1178 AD):

- The Rajputana Chalukyas (also called Solankis) ruled North Gujarat and South Rajasthan with Anhilwada (modern Patan district of Gujarat) as their capital.
- In 1178 AD, Muhammad Ghori attacked the region.
- According to historians, either Mularaja II or his brother Bhima II was the king at that time.
- In this battle, the Chalukyan forces defeated the Ghurid invaders led by Muhammad Ghori.
- The Chalukyan forces included the armies of their feudatories such as Nadula Chahmana ruler Kalhandeva, the Jalore Chahmana ruler Kiritipala and the Arbuda Parmara Ruler Dharvarsha.

- Meanwhile, in North India, the Chauhans were trying to expand towards Gujarat and also towards Delhi and Mathura.
- As such, they had to bear the brunt of the plundering raids of Mahmud Ghazni's successors.

Battle of Tarain (1191 and 1192 AD):

- After consolidating his position in Sindh and Punjab, in 1191 AD, Muhammad Ghori attacked and captured the fortress of Tabarhinda which was strategically important for the defence of Delhi.
- Realizing its importance and without giving the Turks time to consolidate, Prithviraj III immediately marched towards Tabarhinda.
- In the battle, Prithviraj III attained a complete victory, Muhammad Ghori been saved, according to a contemporary account, by a Khilji horseman who carried the wounded Sultan to safety.
- After his victory, Prithviraj III did not try to pursue the dispirited Ghurid army, either because he did not want to venture into hostile territory far away from his base or because he thought that, like Ghaznavids, the Ghurids, too, would be satisfied to rule over the Punjab.
- Thus, he treated the siege of Tabarhinda only as a frontier fight and was satisfied with capturing it.
- Chauhan ruler Prithviraj III treated the struggle with Muhammad Ghori as only a frontier fight is strengthened by the fact that after his victory, he made little preparations for a future contest with the Ghurid chief.
- The Second Battle of Tarain in 1192 is regarded rightly as one of the turning points in Indian history.
- Muhammad Ghori had made careful preparations for the contest, disgracing many Amirs who had not stood firm in the field of battle earlier.
- It is difficult to form a precise estimate of the forces of the two sides.
- According to the information from the contemporary chronicler, Minhaj-us-Siraj, the army of Muhammad Ghori had 120000 men fully equipped with steel courts in armour.
- A 17th century historian, Ferishta places Prithviraj's forces at 3000 elephants and 300000 horsemen and a considerable infantry.

- However, we may conclude that the forces fielded by Prithviraj III were larger than those brought to the field by his opponent.

Causes of defeat of Prithviraj III in Second Battle of Tarain:

- The Battle of Tarain was more a war of movement than of position.
- The lightly armed mounted archers of Muhammad Ghori kept harassing the slow moving forces of Prithviraj III and attacked from all sides.
- Prithviraj III suffered complete defeat.
- Prithviraj III lacked the insight into the real motives of Muhammad Ghori and mistook him as any other plunderer.
- His expansionist policies on assuming the throne alienated many of the rulers of northern India even though some of them had supported him in the battle.
- Prithviraj's camp suffered from the weaknesses of Rajput policy such as lack of political unity, weak leadership etc.

Battle of Chandawar:

- In 1194 AD, Muhammad Ghori advanced towards Kannauj and Banaras with 50000 horsemen.
- The battle was fought at Chandawar in modern Etawah district.
- Jaichand, who is not known to have been a great warrior, suffered disastrous defeat.
- After great slaughter and plunder, the fort of Asni (Fatehpur District) which contained the Ghadwala treasure house was plundered.

Causes of the defeat of the Rajputs:

1. Breach of Natural Defences:

- By the conquest of Afghanistan and the Punjab, Mohammad Ghazni breached the outer defence of India.

- It enabled hostile forces to stage their forces in the area, and to make forays into the vital areas of India at will.
- Thus, India was technically put on the defensive.

2. Lack of Strategic consciousness among Rajputs:

- The Rajput states showed a singular lack of understanding or strategic insight.
- Thus, no effort was made by them to join together to oust the Ghaznavids from the Punjab even after the death of Mahmud, when the outbreak of internal struggles among his successors led to the loss of their control over most of western central Asian territories.
- On the other hand, even in their weakened conditions the successors of Mahmud remained tactically on the offensive, raiding Indian territories in Rajasthan up to Ajmer and beyond, and the Gangetic areas up to Kannauj and Varanasi.

3. Lack of Political Unity:

- The lack of strategic consciousness may be explained by a lack of political unity or by the absence of a dominant power in north west India.
- This should not, however, be confused with size or resources. In terms of size and resources, many of the Rajput principalities of the time were superior to almost any of the successor states which arose in western central Asia after the downfall of the Abbasid Empire.

4. Growth of feudalism in Indian society:

- The growth of feudalism i.e. rise of local landed elements in chiefs had weakened the administrative structure and military organization of the Indian states.
- The rulers had to depend more on the local chiefs for military mobilization who rarely acted in coordination.
- On the other hand, the tribal structure of Turks and the growth of Iqta system enabled the Turks to maintain large standing armies for a long period of time.

5. Poor Organization and weak Leadership:

- Although the Rajput forces were not inferior in numbers or in the quality of their mounts and weapons, they were definitely inferior in terms of organization and leadership.
- The large Rajput armies which face the Turks do not have a unified command, being brought to the field and led by their own feudatory rulers.
- It was difficult to command such heterogeneous forces.

6. Inherent weaknesses of Rajput military:

- The Rajput forces tended to be heavy, slow moving mass, centered on their elephants.
- They were beaten by swift cavalry forces which attacked their flanks and rear.
- The Turks were reputed to be most skilful horsemen in the world.