

# THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TURKISH RULE IN INDIA

*You must have often read about kings winning or losing battles. Do you know what actually happens in a battle? Discuss in your class the reasons for somebody winning or losing a battle. Everyone should express their views.*

## Mahmud Ghaznavi

It was the time of many small and big kingdoms and *samantas* in India. Chauhana, Tomara, Gahadwala, Chandela and Chalukya dynasties ruled over north India. They called themselves Rajput dynasties.

• *Locate Iran, Afghanistan, Khorasan and Turkistan on the map on page 227*

We have mentioned these areas because it was from these regions that Turks came to establish their rule in India. Why did they come to India? Which Turkish rulers came to India?

Mahmud Ghaznavi was the first major Turkish ruler to wage wars on the Rajput kingdoms. He did not want to rule over India. His ambition was to expand his kingdom in Iran, Afghanistan and Khorasan by defeating the other Turkish rulers.



If Mahmud Ghaznavi did not want to rule over India then why did he fight the Rajput kingdoms? He fought them because he wanted to collect wealth to build his army. For this purpose he attacked different Rajput kingdoms 17 times between 1000 and 1025 AD. Every time he plundered these kingdoms, he returned with vast booty. In this process he defeated many kings and usurped their wealth. He also attacked and plundered those temples and Buddhist monasteries which had become the repositories of wealth.

Besides amassing wealth, Mahmud felt that by defeating the Hindu kings and destroying the temples he would earn religious merit. In this manner he wanted to establish his superiority among other Muslim rulers. However, it is interesting to note that he had hundreds of Hindu soldiers in his army and one of his commanders was a Hindu called Tilak.

• *Why do you think Mahmud attacked the Rajput kingdoms of India?*

## MUHAMMAD GHURI

Muizzuddin Muhammad Ghuri was the first Turkish ruler who came with the intention of establishing his kingdom in India. He was the ruler of Ghur in Afghanistan. Muhammad was at war with another Turkish ruler who was the Shah of Khurasan.


Muhammad and Shah were both Turks. Yet both wanted to expand their kingdom by

defeating the other. When Muhammad Ghuri realised that defeating the Shah would be difficult, he decided to expand his kingdom elsewhere.

- Find Ghur and Ghazni in map on page 232. To which direction of Delhi are they located?
- What differences do you find between Mahmud Ghazni and Muhammad Ghuri?

First Ghuri defeated and occupied Multan city in Punjab. Then he advanced to Gujarat through the deserts of Rajasthan. Gujarat was a very prosperous region in those days. It was ruled by Bhima of Chalukya dynasty. He defeated Muhammad Ghuri. Muhammad returned barely saving his life.

Muhammad did not give up hope inspite of this defeat. He reviewed his defeat and after careful planning and preparation decided to occupy Punjab. By 1190 A.D. Muhammad controlled the whole of Punjab. His kingdom extended upto Bhatinda where he appointed his officers and deployed his army.

- Indicate the places ruled over by Muhammad Ghuri in the map with the following sign 
- After looking at the map can you tell why it was easier for Muhammad to annex Punjab and not Gujarat?
- Fill up the following table after reading the map.

Kingdoms of north India in 1200 A.D.

Place	Dynasty
Anhilwada	
Ajmer	
Delhi	
Kannauj	
Lakhnauti	
Khajuraho	
Dhar	

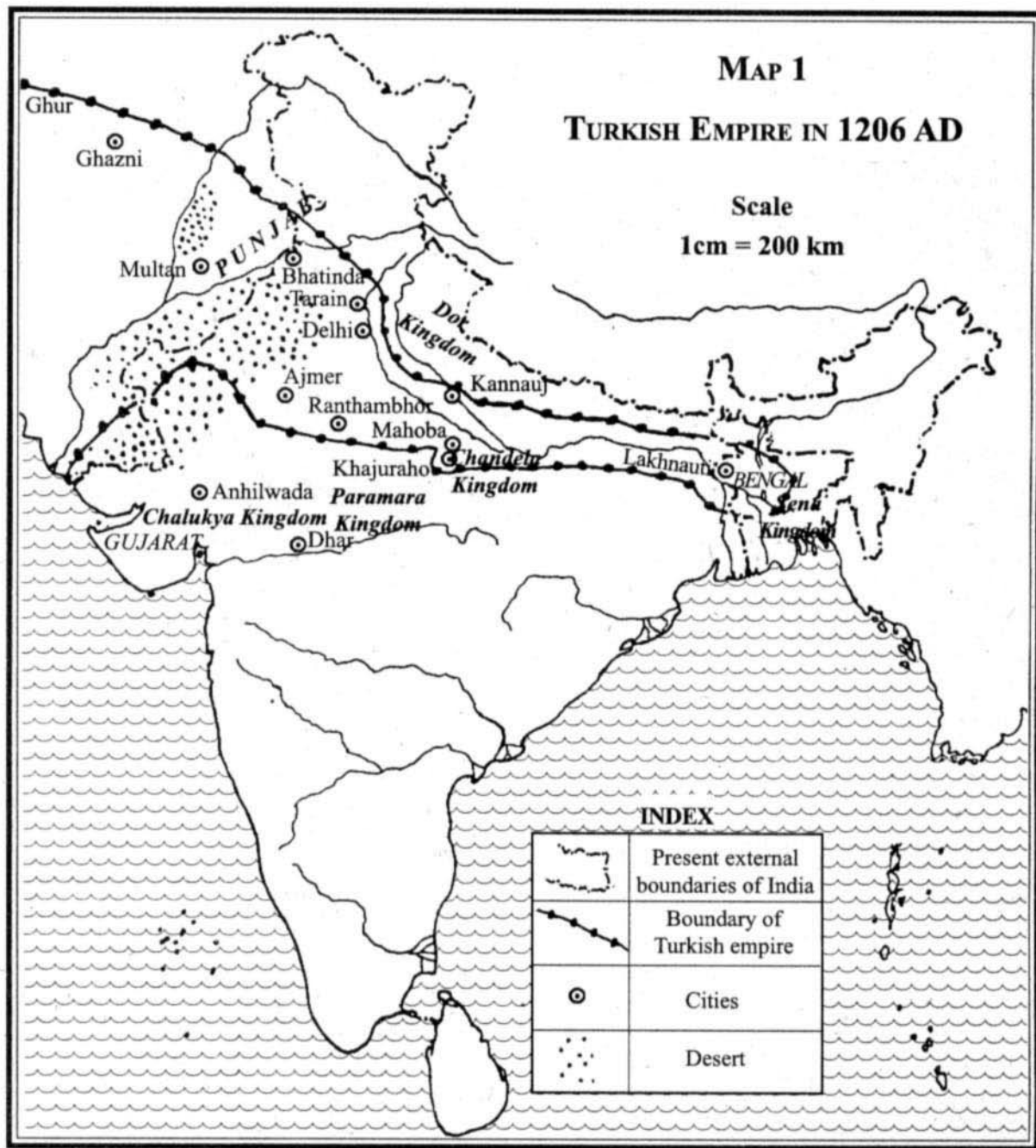
## PRITHVIRAJ CHAUHAN

Around the time of Ghuri's invasion the rulers of the Chauhan dynasty of Ajmer were also busy expanding their kingdom. By 1150 AD they had defeated the Tomar dynasty of Delhi. Its most famous ruler Prithviraj Chauhan defeated the Chandela ruler of Bundelkhand at Mahoba. Aalha and Udal had fought in this battle and lost their lives in defence of Mahoba. In their memory even today folk songs called *Aalha* are sung during monsoon.

- Do you know the story of Aalha and Udal? Find out and tell others in the class.

Like the Turkish rulers, Rajput kings also kept fighting each other. After his victory at Mahoba, Prithviraj wanted to fight with Jaichand of the Gahadwal dynasty of Kannauj. But Jaichand was too powerful and Prithviraj could not muster enough strength to fight him. So, Prithviraj moved towards Gujarat to expand his kingdom. But the Chalukyan king Bhima defeated Prithviraj just as he had defeated Muhammad Ghuri earlier.





Based upon Survey of India Outline map printed in 1979. The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of 12 nautical miles measured from the appropriate baseline.  
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• **Mark the places over which Prithviraj ruled in the map.**

Prithviraj returned to Delhi after being defeated by Bhim. Now into which direction could he expand? His attention was drawn towards Punjab. But Muhammad Ghuri had a firm hold over it. Hence it was natural for Prithviraj and Muhammad to go to war with each other.

### BATTLE OF TARAIN

Prithviraj prepared to attack Bhatinda. On hearing this, Muhammad, too, moved towards Bhatinda from Ghur.

In 1191 AD, the armies of the two rulers fought at a place called Tarain. Muhammad was defeated and he escaped for his life and Prithviraj established his control over Bhatinda.

For one full year Muhammad made preparations and raised a strong army. In 1192 AD he attacked Prithviraj again. Prithviraj asked his neighbouring rulers for help and some of them did help him. In this way Prithviraj was able to collect more than three lakh soldiers. In his comparison Muhammad's army consisted of just one lakh twenty thousand soldiers. However, Muhammad had a strong cavalry. Both horses and their riders were covered with armour made of iron and they were very mobile in the battle.

Muhammad set up his camp at some distance from Tarain. He kept the heavy objects of his army, rations, bullock carts, etc. in this camp and also stationed 10,000 cavalry men there so that they could be summoned at the time of need. He then proceeded to Tarain with the rest of his army.

Prithviraj had divided his army into four parts. Prithviraj himself was in the middle with his troops. His *samanta* Govindrai was ahead of him along with his elephants. Troops were kept both to the right and left of Prithviraj. In contrast with Muhammad, Prithviraj had

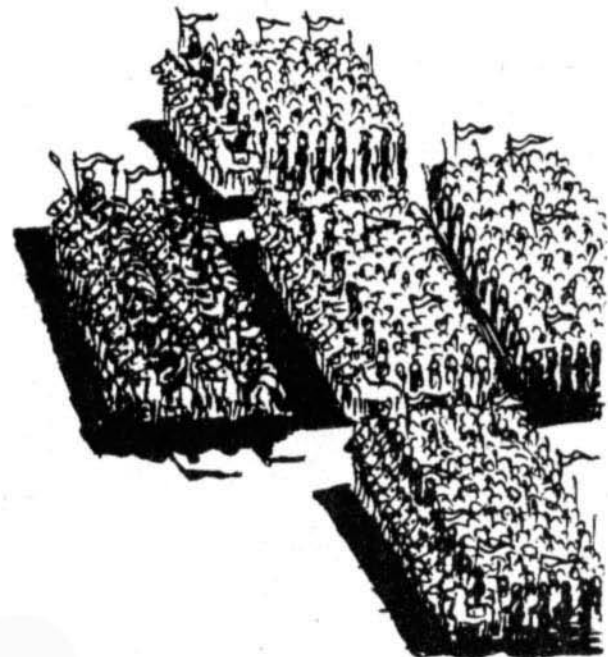
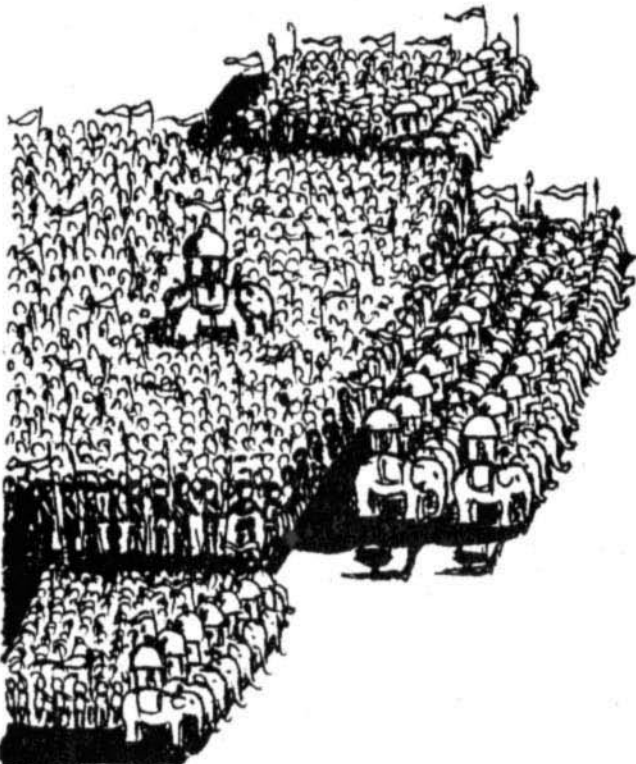
fielded the whole of his army at Tarain.

- *What do you understand by the statement that Govindrai was a samant of Prithviraj?*

Muhammad had divided his army into five parts. Like Prithviraj he was in the middle with his troops. There was a powerful column of cavalry and infantry with bows and arrows ahead of him. But he had troops on both his sides as well as in the rear.

- *In the picture try to figure out the places of Prithviraj, Muhammad and Govindrai.*

Govindrai started the attack. His elephants moved forward rapidly and began trampling the soldiers of Muhammad. Meanwhile the cavalry of Muhammad surrounded the elephants from three sides and began shooting arrows at them. Now the injured elephants could neither go forward nor turn left or right. So they turned around and started running back. Just think of the effect this had on Prithviraj's army!



When panic spread in Prithviraj's army the cavalry of Muhammad advanced and surrounded the army of Prithviraj. The cavalry of Prithviraj was not as efficient as that of Muhammad. Even his horses were of inferior breed. Prithviraj's army consisted mainly of elephants and infantry. They could not compete with the mobility of Turkish cavalry. Hot pursuits and massacres continued for several hours. Finally Prithviraj lost and fled.

### After the Turkish Victory

There are different opinions about the fate of Prithviraj. Some old texts say that Prithviraj was captured and killed. Some other texts say that he was allowed to rule at Ajmer as a subordinate of Muhammad for some time and later on killed. Yet another poem *Prithviraj Raso*, which was composed hundreds of years after this event says that Prithviraj was blinded and taken to Ghazni. However, in Ghazni Prithviraj killed Muhammad with the help of the poet Chand Bardai. But these things seem to be poet's imagination as we know that Muhammad Ghuri was killed by an assassin many years after the death of Prithviraj.

Whatever might have happened, after the battle of Tarain, Mohammad decided to build his empire in India. He resolved to subjugate the whole of north India.

Muhammad sent Prithviraj's son to Ranthambhor and allowed him to rule over a small principality. He himself began to rule Ajmer and Delhi.

• After studying the map tell us to which kingdoms could Muhammad Ghuri attack after controlling Delhi and Ajmer?

• By 1207 AD which were the kingdoms defeated and brought under the Turkish rule? Consult the map.

Often when victorious Turks entered the capitals of defeated Rajput kings, they plundered their palaces or temples before destroying them. They believed in Islam and according to Islam it is improper to build temples or idols for god. Turkish sultans or kings believed that they would earn religious merit and fame if they destroyed temples or idols. By destroying these temples they also wanted to demonstrate their power to the defeated people. They also enslaved soldiers of the defeated rulers and forcibly converted them to Islam.

After the moment of victory passed and the defeated people accepted Turkish power by paying taxes to the new rulers, the Turkish sultans permitted them to repair their temples. Then the Turkish sultans did not even forcibly convert their subjects to Islam. The Sultans believed that if they did so people would oppose them and they would not be able to establish a strong kingdom in India. This concern of the sultans is mentioned in many books of that period.

Islam does not believe in caste or untouchability. Therefore even the Sultans did not believe in the practice of untouchability. But this does not mean that they treated everyone with equal respect.

In spite of being Muslims they were proud of being Turks. They considered Turks to be the best. Apart from fellow Turks, they did not treat others with equal respect. Hence, Turks may not have treated anyone as an untouchable or impure. But they were definitely very proud of being Turks and considered others to be lower than them.

To keep their kingdoms strong, the Turkish sultans did not normally make defeated rulers into their *samantas*. They removed the defeated kings from power and began ruling those kingdoms themselves.

## Reasons for Turkish Success

Within 15 – 16 years Turks expanded their kingdom to the whole of north India. Historians have thought a lot about the reasons for the rapid success of the Turks. They have tried to find the answer as to how Muhammad, who came from distant Ghur, succeeded in establishing his rule from Punjab to Bengal in just 16 years and defeated Rajput rulers one after another. There were many Indian rulers before Muhammad Ghuri who had defeated their neighbouring kings. Rajput rulers were also known for their valour. But how did it happen that the Turkish army proved better than the bravest Rajput army?

Historians have given different answers for the defeat of the Rajputs and victory of the Turks. There is no consensus among historians on this question. Now let us examine the views of different historians and find the view that is most convincing.

### First opinion:

*“Turks were Muslims and they had come to India for spreading Islam. So, they fought with great zeal and this is the reason for their victory.”*

Now consider the following questions to examine this view :-

***Did Rajputs not fight with zeal?***

***Did Turks actually come to India to convert people to Islam? Did they do so?***

***Did they convert all the people to Islam after their victory?***

***Do you agree with this first opinion about the victory of Turks?***

### Second opinion:

*“Turks were united, hence, they won. Rajputs fought each other and were not united. Therefore, they were defeated.”*

Now consider the following questions to examine this view.

***Did Turkish rulers not fight with each other?***

***Did Turks command a larger army? Did Rajput rulers have a smaller army due to their internal differences?***

***Do you agree with this second opinion about the victory of Turks?***

### Third opinion:

*“As a result of the caste system in India those belonging to the lower castes were dissatisfied. Where Rajput rulers believed in maintaining caste distinctions Turks who were Muslims did not. Therefore, the low castes helped and cooperated with the Turks. This was the reason for the rapid success of the Turks.”*

Consider the following points in order to examine this view.

***Is it correct that the Turks treated every Indian with equal respect?***

***Did they give people who were considered untouchables position of power?***

***Do you agree with this third opinion about the victory of Turks?***

#### Fourth opinion

*"Turks won because they commanded a superior army. Their horsemen and horses were swift whereas the army of Rajputs were unwieldy and slow. So, they lost."*

To examine this view recollect the description about the battle of Tarain.

**Do you agree with this fourth opinion about the victory of the Turks?**

**If the Turkish army won due to the swiftness of its horses, why did Muhammad Ghuri lose to kings like Bhima and Prithviraj before?**

### LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

With the establishment of Turkish rule many people of Iran, Iraq, Turkistan, Khorasan, etc. came to India and settled down here. They brought with them not only their rituals, customs and religion, but also their skills, dresses and dishes. Over the years in the course of interactions with them the other people of India learnt many things from them and adopted them. You often wear *pajama* and *kurtas* or *salwar* and *kameez*. Before the coming of Turks the people of India did not wear such stitched clothes. They normally wore *dhotis* or *saris*. *Salwar kameez*, etc. came into use only after the coming of the Turks. Many of you would be fond of hot *halwa*, *pulav*, *samosa* or *kachori*. These dishes too came with the Turks and Iranians. They popularised the techniques of stitching dresses and preparing these dishes among the people of India.

The artisans of Iran and Iraq brought with them new methods of construction and Indian artisans adopted them quite readily. You will read about this in a later lesson.

Do you know what materials were used for writing in ancient times? People usually used palm leaves, bark of birch trees, silk, etc. People did not know how to make paper. The Iranians had learnt paper making from the Chinese and brought with them the technique when they came to India. Now paper was manufactured in India too.



Indian textile craftspersons also learnt some new techniques from the Turks. They learnt the use of the *charkha* for spinning yarn from cotton. Earlier spinning was done with the help of spindles and this took a long time. With the use of the *charkha* it was now possible to spin more yarn faster.

In these various ways a number of interesting elements were added to the culture of the people of India with the coming of the Turks.

The establishment of Turkish rule in India also enabled the scholars and artisans of Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Central Asia to learn a lot of things from the Indians. You may remember Alberuni who came to India with Mahmud of Ghazni. He and many other scholars like him learnt mathematics, astronomy, medicine, etc. from the Indian scholars and translated Sanskrit books into Arabic. Arab mathematicians learnt the use of zero and the decimal system based on it from Indians and rest of the world learnt it from the Arabs later on. Popular books like the *Panchatantra* were translated into Arabic and Persian and those people too derived pleasure from reading these delightful stories.



## EXERCISE

1. Where did Mahmud of Ghazni want to build his empire- in Iran, Khorasan or India?
2. Which rulers defeated Muhammad Ghuri after which he turned towards Punjab for establishing his rule?
3. Which rulers defeated Prithviraj Chauhan after which he turned towards Punjab for establishing his rule?
4. Where did the battle between Muhammad Ghuri and Prithviraj Chauhan take place? How many years ago was this battle fought? To which city is this place closer- Kolkata, Delhi, Bhopal or Jabalpur.
5. What was the difference between the armies of the Turks and the Rajputs?
6. One historian is of the opinion that Rajputs lost to Turks because they were not united and they usually kept fighting with each other. Would you agree with this opinion? Explain your opinion.
7. Write four important features of the behaviour of Turks after their victory.
8. Make a list of things which the people of India learnt from the people who came with the Turkish rulers.

