



Mahmud Ghazni

For Prelims: Muhamad Ghazni, Fall of Gaznavids and rise of Ghurids, Plunder of Somnath Temple.

For Mains: Muhamad Ghazni and the Plunder of Somnath temple.



Who was Mahmud Ghazni?

- Sabuktigin's son was **Mahmud of Ghazni**, renowned as the first independent ruler of **Ghazni**.

- **Mahmud Ghazni** continued the **Ghazi** invasions starting in **999 CE**.
- The title “**Mahmud Ghazni**” is not found on his coins which simply designate him as **Amir Mahmud**.
- **Fight with Jayapal:**
 - He fought a furious battle against **Jayapal (Pala Dynasty)** in **1001 CE**.
 - It was a battle of **cavalry** and skillful **military tactics**.
 - **Jayapal** was severely routed by **Mahmud’s forces** and his capital of **Waihind/Peshawar** was devastated.
 - **Jayapal** was succeeded by his son **Anandapal/Anantpal** who continued to challenge **Turkish** raids in his territory.
- **Fight With Anandapal:**
 - Before entering **Punjab**, **Mahmud** still had to contend with **Anandapal’s forces** near the **Indus**.
 - After a tough interface his army conquered the **upper Indus** in **1006 CE**.
 - **Anandapal** lost the battle and himself suffered much financial and territorial loss.
 - This was his last resistance to **Mahmud**.
- **Annexation of Lahore and Multan:**
 - However, in **1015 CE**, **Mahmud** even annexed **Lahore** to extend his empire up to the **Jhelum River**.
 - **Multan** which was ruled by a **Muslim Sultan** was also conquered despite **Anandapal’s** alliance with him.
 - This is how **Mahmud** made his way towards India by conquering **eastern Afghanistan** and then **Punjab** and **Multan**.
 - After **Punjab** he made three expeditions in the **Gangetic plains** for acquisition of wealth.
- **Expedition to Gangetic Plain:**
 - He made two more raids in the **Ganga valley** in **1019** and **1021 CE**.
 - Next in line was his aim to acquire wealth through his raids in the **Gangetic plains**.
 - The first one was to break a **Rajput alliance** in the **Gangetic valley**.
 - Towards the end of **1015 CE** he marched along the Himalayan foothills and defeated a local Rajput ruler at **Baran** or **Bulandshahr** with the help of some feudatory rulers.
 - **Mahmud** defeated both the **Hindu Shahi** as well as the **Chandela rulers**.
 - The **Rajput king of Gwalior** had provided help to the Hindu Shahi emperor against **Mahmud**.
 - Such expeditions in **north India** were not aimed at expanding **Mahmud’s empire** beyond **Punjab**.
 - They were only to plunder the wealth of the states on one hand and make the upper Ganga doab as a neutral territory without any powerful local stronghold on the other.
 - The wealth looted and earned from plunders in India helped him against his enemies in **central Asia**.
- **Others:**
 - Mahmud’s last major raid was on **Somnath temple** in **Saurashtra** on the **western coast of Gujarat** in **1025 CE**.
 - However, Mahmud’s desire to conquer Kashmir remained unfulfilled with the defeat of his forces in **1015 CE** due to unfavorable weather conditions and this was his **first defeat** in India.
 - He even extended his empire in **Iran** and additionally got more recognition from the **Khalifa at Baghdad**.
 - He was a bold warrior who had great military capabilities and political achievements.
 - He had turned the small state of **Ghazna/Ghazni/Ghaznin** into a vast and wealthy empire comprising most parts of the present-day **Afghanistan, eastern Iran** and **north-western parts of the Indian subcontinent**.
- **Death of Mahmud Ghazni:**
 - When **Mahmud Ghazni** acquired **malaria** during one of his expeditions in **April 1030**, he was **58 years old**. Due to further issues, He contracted **tuberculosis**, which caused his death.

How did the Ghaznavids in Central Asia and India fall, and the Ghurids rise?

- Despite the **wealth plundered** from India, **Mahmud** was unable to become a **good and capable ruler**.
- He built no lasting institutions in his state and his rule outside **Ghazni** was tyrannical.
- An unexpected rise of Ghurids at a small and isolated province of Ghur located between Ghaznavid empire and that of the Seljuqids was an unusual development in the **12th century**.
 - It was one of the **least developed regions** of the present-day territory of **Afghanistan**.
 - It lay **west of Ghazni** and **east of the Herat province** in the fertile valley of the **Herat/Hari River** in **western Afghanistan**. Since it was a hilly tract of land, the main occupation was mostly **cattle-rearing** or **agriculture**.
 - It was **“Islamicized”** by **Ghaznavids** in the late **10th** and the early **11th century**.
- The **Ghurid rulers** or the **Shansabanids** were humble pastoral chieftains. They tried to make themselves supreme in the middle of the **12th century** by intervening in **Herat** when its governor had rebelled against the **Seljuqid king** named **Sanjar**.
- The **Ghaznavids** felt threatened by this act of the **Ghurids**, they captured and poisoned the brother of the **Ghauri emperor Alauddin Hussain Shah**.
- Subsequently, he captured **Ghazni** (city) by defeating the **Ghaznavid ruler Bahram Shah**.
- The city of **Ghazni** was plundered and thoroughly destroyed.
- For the same reason **Alauddin** was given the **title of Jahan Soz (“world burner”)**.
- This marked the fall of **Ghaznavids** and the **rise of Ghurids**.

What is the occurrence of Somnath Plunder?

- In **1025-26 CE**, **Mahmud** undertook his final **invasion of Gujarat** and consolidated his successes with the plunder of the very wealthy **Somnath temple**.
- It is claimed that **100,000 pilgrims** would congregate there at any given time, **1,000 Brahmanas** would service the temple and look after its treasures, and **hundreds of dancers and singers** would perform in front of the **temple's gates**.
- The **well-known Linga**, a **pillar-stone** with **brilliant jewels** and **illuminated gems candelabra**, was in the **garbhagriha**.
 - It was mirrored in the lavish hangings that decorated the shrine and were embroidered with precious stones in the shape of stars.
- He continued his laborious march from **Multan to Anhalwara** and then on to the coast, battling and killing along the way, until he finally arrived at the temple fortress that the waves of the **Arabian Sea** had washed.
- He and his soldiers stormed the walls, killing roughly **50,000 Hindus**, undeterred by the overwhelming strength of the men serving as guards and in service to the shrine.
- The **invader-troops** plunderer's who accompanied him on his vengeful journeys to India and beyond received a reward of a million pounds' worth of treasure when the temple-gates were raised at **Ghazni**.
- **Mahmud of Ghazni** was hailed as a **pioneer of the Islamic faith**, who opposed the **Hindu belief-system**, in the eyes of every **Muhammadan** for nearly **nine centuries** as a result of the **destruction of Somnath**.