HOW GEOGRAPHY DICTATES STRATEGY

Basic Facts

The general principles of war in their basic truth are the same in all ages,—namely, how to get at the enemy's armed force, crush it, and thus destroy that people's will to continue the war. Civilisation changes with time and the weapons of war change with advancing civilisation. But wars are always decided by three cardinal factors:

First—the Terrain for both strategy and tactics;

Second—the character and mental development (miscalled race) of one people compared with their opponent's; and

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1 What is the practical use of the study of the history of past warfare to a soldier of today? Is it an idle diversion of his mind or an unprofitable act of pedantry? No; for if it were so, an intensely practical nation like the English would not have founded chairs of military history (like the Chichele Professory at Oxford), nor made the military historian a necessary member of a Staff College. The Navy is the senior service in Great Britain, and the importance of military (in which term I include naval) history in its proper functioning is thus clearly set forth in a recent issue of the Times (Lit. Supplement, May, 30, 1952) in discussing the life of Sir Herbert Richmond, an experienced admiral and erudite scholar, who may well be called "the Mahan of England." The Times writes:

The Navy, he thus came to realize, existed as an instrument of war; and it therefore behoved its officers to learn how to use it in that capacity. Finding no guidance in that direction from the Admiralty or senior officers, he turned to "History, not as an end in itself, but as a means of learning something about strategy" (as he wrote later). And having absorbed many lessons on matters of principle which history had to teach, he sought by discussion and argument with his brother officers to apply those principles to the actual conditions of this developing mechanical age and to evolve a theory of war for their present guidance. Seeing clearly the need to evolve a doctrine of war if the Navy's effort was not to be misdirected and wasted when the test came, Richmond was an enthusiastic advocate of the creation of a Naval Staff. (This was done by Mr. Churchill in 1912 and Richmond was appointed to it as Assistant Director of Operations next year. The World War came on 4th August, 1914).

This is a civilian's sufficient apologia for venturing into this field. Here is a practical necessity why the wars of India in the past ages should be studied by the soldiers and sailors who are to defend the free India of today.
Third—the difference in arms and equipment between the two sides. This last includes organisation and trained leadership. No doubt, the genius of a "heaven-born general" can overcome many of the difficulties in these respects, but such geniuses are a rare gift of fortune to a nation, and we cannot normally count on them.

'North Indian Plains

A look at the map of India will at once explain to us how geography has laid down some inexorable laws for the time and manner of conducting military operations in our country. First note the basic difference between Hindustan and the Deccan, that is, the lands respectively north and south of the Vindhya range. In any school atlas of India, we see a green belt shaped somewhat like a horse-shoe, stretching north-westwards from Calcutta by way of Patna, Allahabad, Delhi to Lahore and then southwards to Karachi. This is the fertile plain of India. From Calcutta to Lahore the distance is 1,300 miles and yet the difference in height above sea-level between these two cities is only a thousand feet, or in other words the ground rises only nine inches in one mile of road.¹

The next features, to strike our eye on the map of India are the yellow patches of dry plateaus and deserts, whose colour fitly suggests sand and bare rock, treeless for most part of the year. Cutting these are many black lengths of the hills,—the Himalayas guarding the entire north, with the Sulaiman Range closing the north-western frontier down to the Arabian Sea, the Vindhya (and in a more broken shape the Satpura Range with their outcrops like the Kaimur hills) running west to east and dividing the peninsula in the middle. The short and low Aravali Range running diagonally borders the Sindh-Rajputana desert and overlooks the plain of Agra-Delhi at its northern end.

¹ This would not be surprising in the Bengal Delta, but a thousand miles upcountry from Calcutta, the ground formation is the same in the Delhi district: "The river Jamuna enters this district at a height of some 710 feet (at the north end) and leaves it at about 630 feet above sea-level, with a course within the Delhi limits of rather over 90 miles and an average fall of between ten and eleven inches to the mile." (Delhi Gazetteer of 1883-84, p. 3).
Deccan Hills

In the Deccan proper, the Western Ghats protect the entire western coast as a long wall parallel to the Arabian Sea, while the more broken Eastern Ghats do the samething but in a lesser degree to the vast Eastern Karnataka plain. From the Sahyadri Range in the west with its continuation the Anamalai Hills in the extreme south, spurs run eastwards into the plateau, like ribs from a spinal column; and between every two such spurs flows a stream collecting the rainfall of its bordering hills and carrying it down to the Bay of Bengal as a vast many-branched ever-widening river, the great Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri.

Thus Nature has cut the Deccan up into many small isolated compartments, each with poor resources and difficulty of communication with its neighbours. Hence, invading armies are slowed down in their march in such a terrain and usually starved out even when they have penetrated to any of these nooks.1

These Deccan hill ranges, particularly the Sahyadri, are often crowned by lofty forts, towering above the lowlands on some cliff with steep scarped sides and artesian water supply on the flat top or sides. These forts are Nature’s gifts to which the people can retire for safety when defeated in a pitched battle in the plain below. From these shelters nothing could expel them before modern artillery, if only they had laid in provisions or could smuggle in food at night by the back door.

Therefore, the North Indian plains have been generally the seats of vast empires, under monarchs claiming to be universal suzerains and reducing their neighbours to feudatory vassalage. The Deccan, on the contrary, except for a few

1 A north to south advance in force is impossible in most parts of the Deccan, as Napoleon found in Spain, in which Peninsula, exactly like the Deccan, long parallel mountain chains (called sierras) run west to east, cutting the country up into isolated districts, and an army from France after crossing the Pyrenees can reach any city in the south only after painful climbing up and dismounting from several parallel hilly barriers on the way. The command of the sea alone enabled the English to easily transport their troops to any part of the Spanish-Portuguese Peninsula by landing in either the east or the west coast ports and following the valleys between the sierras.
short periods, has been divided into small isolated kingdoms, each confined to its own corner and unable to present any united opposition to a foreign invader. 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 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. Not so in the Deccan; here the national resistance can be, and has often been, more obstinate and successful.

**Campaigning Season**

The physical geography of India has also dictated the campaigning season. There can be no movement during the three months of rain, 15th June to 15th September. The rivers are then in high flood, the roads are turned into mud pools, and the fields are sub-merged, with the higher villages standing up like islands surrounded by a sea of water.¹

Every year when the rainy season ends with the month of September, the river levels fall, and the crops ripen, the invasion begins. Ancient Hindu tradition, followed by the Marathas almost to our own days—only obeys geography when it prescribes the Dasahara day, early in October, as the auspicious time for a king to set out on conquest, *dig-vijaya*. In a month or so the crops are being harvested, so that the invaders can live off the country without burdening themselves with supplies. The herbage has not yet been blasted by the summer sun, so that their elephants and horses can get green fodder. And the falling river level enables them to cross the rivers by fording them at the upper reaches of the streams flowing down from the Himalayas—at Rupar, Buria-Mustafabad, Hapur &c.—without having to build bridges or boats or lose time on the bank.

A force of practised horsemen, mounted on the superb

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¹The early English travellers wrote of our monsoon season as winter, from its likeness to the season of rain snow and hail storm in England.
horses of the Khurasani or Iraqi breed, marching in a compact body of 8,000 men (like the army that brought Babur to Delhi) or 24,000 men (like Ahmad Shah Durrani’s own troops at Panipat)—could make a rapid dash through the level green belt, skirting the foothold of the Himalayas and reach Delhi without a halt. The Indian infantry, and even our cavalry mounted on country-born small ponies, could not come up quickly enough to bar the enemy’s path, and if they gave battle, they were hopelessly defeated, because infantry cannot manoeuvre with the speed of cavalry; while mounted troops can at will avoid hand to hand fight with an enemy advantageously posted or in superior numbers, or wheel round and attack some weak spot of the Indian line of battle. The invader’s superior mobility bewildered the Indians and frustrated their previously formed plan of operations; the cities lying behind the fighting front could not be defended against enemy forces that made a rapid detour round the main Indian Army facing the frontier.
CHAPTER II

ALEXANDER AND POROS: SOCIETY & ARMY CONTRASTED

The fight between Alexander and Paurav (326 B.C.) is the first Indian battle of which we have any description written by men practised in the art of observing things in an objective scientific manner and recording them with accuracy. But this record is from one side only; the other party do not appear at the bar of history, not even through later traditions.

But to us Hindus, the reports of Alexander's campaigns in the Punjab have an absorbing interest, because they show us—though in broken glimpses and not as a complete picture, the state of society and Government among the descendants of the Vedic Aryans who had come to colonise that province during the preceding ten centuries. We know of Aryan society as it was in the north-west about 1000 B.C. (the central date of the collection of the Vedic hymns), and we also know of Hindu society as it was in the North Indian plains in the age of Samudra-gupta and Kalidas (say, 375 A.D.), but nothing with precision about the period between them. The Greek writings help us to light up this dark gap in our knowledge of our forefathers' life, though in a fragmentary manner.

What picture do we get here of the society and—government of the descendants of the Aryans who had passed in stream after stream for centuries through the Punjab to Mathura and Ayodhya, Kashi and Pataliputra, leaving behind them a string of colonial settlements in the Land of the Rivers? The first thing that strikes us is, that there was as yet no vast single empire, but only a multitude of small States—Khandarajya in Sanskrit,—some under petty kings, but most others tribal republics or village communities each living in isolated local independence.

Every king had his immediate neighbour as his enemy, and that neighbour's enemy as his ally. Even his own
kinsmen were not always his friends; the younger sons of a king had no profession except to conquer some fresh territory, or when that was not possible to cut up the parent kingdom into principalities of their own. Paurav's own nephew was in rebellion against him, and he had to be subdued with Macedonian help after Paurav had made terms with Alexander. The creation of these apanages by younger sons was a perpetual source of domestic feuds, as we see among the Rajput clans seventeen centuries later. The political solidarity of a vast kingdom or empire with consolidated sub-kingsdoms, compact boundaries, powerful resources and a strong integrated defence organisation, was wanting, and hence the military weakness of the scores of small units which chequered the political geography of the Punjab.

The mass of the people were not combined into one common nation. Each colony represented only one group of immigrants left behind in the wake of the Aryan push to the east, or some pre-Aryan aboriginal tribe that had survived the shock of Aryan conquest and stood like an island amidst the sea of Vedic settlements in the land. Every such settlement lived an isolated self-sufficient life like a trade guild or small sept (i.e., sub-division of a clan, in the course of time hardening into a new caste). The Indian tribe that the Greek called Oxydrika, I take to mean Shudras or non-Aryans living outside the pale of the Vedic social system. Alexander found no district in the Punjab with a geographical name, but all were known by the names of their ruling tribes, i.e., the name of the tribe with the plural suffix an, such as mousik-an, and even in the middle ages Jhang-i-Sialan or the city of Jhang colonised by the Sial tribe.

Alexander found some kingdoms but many cities in the Punjab. Each city was walled round and conducted its defence by means of mercenary soldiers who lived in it and were noted for their bravery and fidelity to their employers. This was also the policy of the city republics of Italy in the later middle ages.

Sometimes the community was larger. A number of cities all inhabited by one tribe such as the Malavas (Greek, Malloi) and their subject aborigines formed one State, with rivers on
their two sides helping them to stand forth as a clearly marked geographical unit, but no such natural boundary separated them from another tribe lower down in the same doab.

The Greeks called these tribal republic or village communities, "independent", that a kingless. The Sanskrit name for such political units aratta (A-rashtri) appears in the Greek writings in the form of adraisti or aratroi. These tribal republics, though patriarchal in their ancient origin, were now without any patriarchal head and could be more correctly described as baronial oligarchies with no king over the barons. The nearest parallel to their polity was that of the Sikh misls in the same region in the late 18th century, before the rise of Ranjit Singh who fused the misls into one kingdom and made the Punjab unconquerable by the Afghans. Such was not the happy lot of that province in the age of Poros. Divided we fell.

The Punjabi warriors are described by the companions of Alexander as darker and taller than the other Asiatic peoples they had met with, and the bravest enemy they had ever encountered. Is not this a forecast of the Sikh soldiery, born of the same Jat race?

No Buddhist was encountered in the Punjab in Alexander's time; all the people were Hindus and image worshippers like the Greeks themselves.

They marched to battle carrying before them as their standard the image of Hercules. It is clear that by this the Greek writers means Krishna and not Balaram, whom the Greeks identified with their god of wine Dionysos—Bacchus. Megasthenes likens him to the Theban Hercules, whose emblem was the eagle, corresponding exactly to garuda, the bird of Krishna. Garuda-topped standards were presented to Samudragupta (c. 350 A.D.) as his Allahabad pillar inscription records.

The Brahmins (translated into Greek as philosophers) were priests by profession, and had cities of their own in the Multan district and southwards. Though they no longer fought like their Vedic ancestors, they were inspired by the same lofty spirit; they roamed about the country inciting the people to resist the foreign invaders, and turning the public
contempt upon those princes who had joined the Mlechcha conqueror. For this Alexander regarded them as his chief enemies and hanged many of them when he caught them, besides massacring the population after storming any city of the Brahmins. (Plutarch).

This disunited, narrowly self-centred, mainly rustic population had to oppose the greatest General of the age, at the end of his unbroken series of victories from Greece to the gateway of India. Empires like the Persian, martial tribes like the Afghans and Turks, sea and desert, forest and rock alike had failed to arrest his progress. Macedonian soldiers, originally trained and hardened in battle by his father, had been turned into a body of matchless veterans under his own banners in a series of stiff fights from Asia Minor to the Swat Valley.

In the Middle East, the kings subjugated by him had sent contingents of their best troops to serve under him. The most valuable fighting material among the mercenary tribes of western Asia had been hired by him. Thus the army that he led against Poros had not only a core as hard as adamant, but was also strengthened by light forces of many races which enabled him to vary his tactics at every corner of the battlefield.

Above all shone the resplendent genius of the greatest Commander of men that the antique world had produced, able to knit together all these diverse elements and make them obey one will. The perfect co-operation of all the branches of his army in the battlefield ensured his victory, and that co-operation could be so prompt and faultless only as the result of discipline practised for years before. No tribal levy, improvised for national defence under the threat of invasion, can show this solidarity.

In the first written description of a battle between Asiatics and Europeans, the Ionian father of song has noticed their difference of character which had the most decisive influence on their fighting capacity. This battle was joined on the shore of the Dardanelles, where Asia faces Europe: As it started, “The Trojans marched with clamour and shouting like birds, as when there goes up before heaven a clamour of cranes which flee towards the ocean. But on the other side, the Achaians
marched in silence, breathing courage, eager at heart to give succour man to man” (Iliad, book ii, A. Long’s translation). The Indian defenders of the Punjab were brave, but each man fought to the death in isolation, exchanging blows hand to hand and unable to make a mass movement in concert with their brethren of other corps.

And the brain of the Macedonian army was made up of the most learned men among the greatest civilised nation of the ancient world. Alexander himself was Aristotle’s pupil, and he carried in his train Greek philosophers, scientists, doctors, engineers, catapult-workers, and mechanics who could take to pieces 30-oared galleys, transport them by land and quickly join them together to float on the river eighteen miles away. There were also an efficient staff-corps, transport organisation and intelligence service. Besides, many Indian spies were lured by money to bring him news of their own side.

When we come to compare the arms and equipment on the two sides, we feel as if men of the Bamboo Age were fighting men of the Steel Age.

The army that Alexander took with himself was originally the creation of his father, Philip of Macedon. “It was Philip who first created a national army on a broad basis not only of cavalry and infantry, but of archers and all kinds of light-armed troops, so that he had at his disposal many mobile elements which could be used in a great variety of ways in conjunction with the heavier phalanx”. (Cambridge Anc. History, vi 206).

**Invading Army**

The elements of Alexander’s army:—

**Companions:—** The companions (Gr. Agema) of the Sovereign, or personal guards of the King, were the most esteemed arm of the Macedonian army. It consisted of choice cavalry and the sons of the nobility were enlisted in it. This corps enjoyed the first place in the army like the Household cavalry of France and the Guards of England. “At the beginning of the campaign this body consisted of 1,500 men, but in the course of the war their number was increased, perhaps
to 5,000 (McCrandle, 57 n.). Rider and horse were cased in armour.

_Hypaspists:_—The title means "bearers of the round shield", as distinct from the _hoplites_ who carried oblong shields. They were mercenaries and used as heavy infantry, but as they were not so heavily armed as the hoplites, they were more rapid in their movements. Their spears were shorter, their swords longer and their armour lighter than those of the phalanx. The _agma_ or royal escort, contained the corps of royal foot-guard, to whom the Hypaspists were joined.

_Hoplites:_—Heavy infantry; they had formed the backbone of the famous Spartan army. They wore armour, and carried a sword, a spear, and an oval shield, which covered the whole body. Well-trained, well-equipped, densely massed for fight, they often proved irresistible.

_Phalanx:_—This was the most notable element in the Macedonian army. The soldiers wore full defensive armour, viz., a helmet, a breast-plate, and two long curved plates (greaves) protecting the thighs but not covering the lower legs. Their arms were a long sword (four feet), a long shield, and distinctive spear called _sarissa_ (like our _barssa_ but in name only). This spear was 24 feet in length and weighed at six feet from its but-end, so that when balanced in the soldier's hand at that point, it projected 18 feet before him. Hence, the spearheads of the next six ranks, each standing three feet behind, projected in front of every soldier of the first line. As the phalanx charged, it presented the appearance of a gigantic porcupine, or a moving forest of seven successive rows of glittering steel points. The _chevaux de frise_ and _abbatis_ of modern Europe were not so deadly an obstacle and they were pinned down to one place.

Philip reduced the formation of the _phalanx_ to sixteen deep. When a man in the front ranks fell, a fresh soldier from the 8th or still hinder ranks (who used to hold their spears uplifted for freedom of movement) rushed forward to fill the vacant place, so as not to let the column lose its compactness and uniformity. Philip's object in making the phalanx a less dense mass than the usual Greek hoplite infantry, was that it
should give up the old policy of "carrying the day by sheer weight, but get room for a more skilled play of weapons and keep the enemy's front engaged, while the other troops won the victory by freer movements". (CAH. vi 205).

Archers:—Alexander had bodies of mounted archers and javelin-men. They were light-armed and very useful for skirmishing and harassing the enemy ranks from a distance. In addition to Thracian and Thessalian light cavalry called Agrianians, he had also Scythian archers enlisted in Asia. These oriental archers (when they entered the Roman service a few centuries after Alexander's death) are described as "mainly cavalry, armed with the most dreaded weapon of antiquity, the composite bow of the Iranian and Turkish nomads." [Camb. A.H. xii. 216.]. "These archers shot equally well dismounted and at the gallop, ... and their missiles pierced cuirass and shield with ease." (Ency. Britn., 11th ed., ii. 363).

Artillery:—Gunpowder was then unknown, but Alexander's engines, called Balists and Catapults, worked by the hand, threw stones and darts to the distance of 300 yards, and often proved very effective in his sieges.

In the Indian Army there were:—

(i) Chariots:—This was the proudest arm of the Indian forces, and a Rathi enjoyed the honour of a knight in Medieval Europe. Each chariot was drawn by four horses, and carried six men, namely, a shield-bearer and an archer on each side, and two drivers armed with javelins. When the chariot could not move and the fighting was at close quarters, the drivers dropped the reins and hurled dart after dart against the enemy. But these cumbersome wooden structures had to be built heavy in order to carry six men and their arms. They could not move fast like our one-horse ekkas or two-horse tangas, which are two-wheeled and of light structure.

In the battle with Alexander, the Indian chariots proved to be of hardly any use, as the heavy and incessant rain of the night before had turned the ground into a marsh and the chariots kept sticking in the mudpools, immovable by reason of their enormous weight. When the drivers lashed the horses to make a move, the excited animals only overturned them into
the mud. Some cars in the course of fast driving were overthrown by the treacherous sodden surface of the field. (Q. Curtius.)

(ii) Infantry:—The Indian infantry was variously armed, most of them with bows and some with javelins, but many carried sword and shield only. Megasthenes thus describes them. "The Indian infantry have a bow equal in length to the man who carries it. Placing this down to the ground and stepping against it with the left foot, they discharge the arrow, drawing the string far back. Their arrows are little less than three cubits long, and nothing can withstand one shot by an Indian archer, neither shield nor breastplate. They carry on their left arm tragets of raw ox-hide, narrower than the men who carry them, but not much inferior in length. Others have javelins instead of arrows. All wear a sword broad and not less than three cubits in length." They had on their side no machine for throwing stones or darts, nor any very long spears or pointed pikes like the Macedonian sarissa, 24 feet in length. Their only hope of repelling the enemy with missiles lay on their large bows. But on that fateful day these proved unavailing, because these extremely weighty bows could not be strung nor discharged without resting one end of them on the ground, and the rain sodden Kari plain presented them with no hard surface for this purpose. Thus, while they were helplessly fumbling the bow-string, the enemy was upon them and cut them down. The English longbow arches had no such disadvantage on the damp field of Agincourt.

Even in defence, the Indian infantry was handicapped by inferiority of equipment. Unlike the Macedonians, they wore no armour, and thus had no metallic plate to protect their heads and breasts. Their shields were made of a coiled cane branch frame (Greek word wicker-shield), with a cover of raw ox-hide, but not metal coated. Hence, in the battle of Platea, the Asiatic infantry taken by Xerxes to Greece, were butchered like sheep by the Greeks. "The wicker-shields of the Asiatic bowmen were no defence. At close quarters the Spartan hoplite's armour and Dorian spear soon decided the issue." (Cambridge Anc. Hist., iv 340).
Thus in the battle with Alexander, our infantry, like our chariot arm, was neutralised, except during the last stage of hand to hand fighting, when the larger reach of the Macedonian swords and spears robbed the Indians of every chance of returning blows with effect.

(iii) Cavalry:—The cavalry mounted on short country-born ponies, was the weakest arm of Poros's army. On the other hand, the horsemen of Alexander were superior not only in number but immeasurably so in efficiency, the height and strength of their horses (of the choice Arab and Kabul breeds), and the armour protection of both rider and mount. There were no mounted archers on the Indian side, to match the Scythian bowmen on horses serving Alexander for hire. The Indian cavalryman carried two darts, like what the Greeks called saunia (i.e., not more than 9 feet long) and a shield smaller than that of the infantry. * (Megasthenes quoted by Arrian, p.419).

These facts decided the issue in the initial cavalry encounter, and prevented any attempt at rear-guard defence by the Indians after their defeat at the end of the day.

(iv) Elephants:—Each elephant carried three fighters and only one driver, so that the elephant became uncontrolled like a derelict ship when the mahut was shot off its back by long range missiles. (Tarn, i.96). On the other hand, each chariot carried a second driver as a reserve.
CHAPTER III

ALEXANDER’S BATTLE WITH POROS: STRATEGY AND TACTICS

Paurav (Greek spelling Poros) was the noblest of the Indian kings of his time. He ruled over the upper Jech Doab, or the land enclosed by the Jhelum river (Greek ‘Hydaspes’, from the Sanskrit Vitasta) on the west and the Chenab on the east. His greatest enemy was Ambhi (Greek Ohphi), the king of Taxila (near modern Hasan Abdal), and his ally was Abhisar, the king of Rajaur and Jamu. After overcoming the last two, Alexander called upon Poros to pay tribute and wait upon the Macedonian conquerer at his own frontier. By this envoy Poros sent back the reply that he would comply only with the second of these demands, and when Alexander entered his realm he would meet him but come armed for battle. (Q. Curtius).

Alexander, determined to crush his spirit of independence as an offence to himself, marched down to the west bank of the Jhelum and encamped at a place opposite Poros’s camp on the other bank, about the middle of May, 326 B.C.

“The Macedonians had their native wives and children with them, and there were scientific men and experts, camp-followers and traders; with the auxiliary services, and the contingents supplied later by Indian princes, there may well have been (as tradition suggests) 1,20,000 souls in the camp on the Hydaspes. The army had become a moving state.” (Professor Tarn).

The Jhelum at this point was a very swift stream, fully half a mile in breadth, and the approaching monsoon rain would soon make it impassable. On the eastern bank stood Poros’s huge war elephants (85 are mentioned by the Greeks) near the water’s edge, and behind them were massed his infantry and cavalry ready to oppose the landing of the Macedonians. As Alexander said, the uncouth shape of the elephant
and their violent trumpeting and movement of the trunk would have frightened his horses into jumping from their boats into water. So, a crossing in the face of such a foe was not practicable.

Alexander pondered, surveyed the west bank up and down, and played a master stroke of strategy to steal a passage 17 miles upstream, unopposed by the enemy. For this purpose he halted there for five weeks and deluded the enemy by daily making false demonstrations of crossing the river there, with marching of troops and loud noises, but not actually embarking. Though he at last succeeded in making Poros believe that the Macedonians did not mean business and meant to retire baffled. Thus the Indian army was thrown off its guard and slackened its vigilance.

Meantime, Alexander had chosen the place for his secret crossing at a spot 17 miles upstream from his camp, where a high bluff covered with trees on the west bank at a sharp bend in the river and a wooded island in midstream facing it, shortened the distance to be ferried over and fully concealed his movements from Poros's camp. Here long row-boats had been conveyed by being taken to pieces, transported inland on carts, joined together again, and kept concealed in the jungles for the day of need. Also numbers of skins had been collected which were to be stuffed with dry grass, stitched, and made to serve as floats or pontoons, on which planks were to be laid for ferrying the horses over.

One dark night Alexander started from his camp in secret with nearly three-fourths of his troops, the remaining forces being left behind in the camp under Krateros with orders to keep up Poros's delusion that Alexander was still there and also to detain a part of the Indian army to oppose his crossing after Poros had learnt that Alexander had actually come over to his side of the river and the Indian king would march out to give him battle.

By following a sunken road some distance parallel to the river bank, Alexander reached the appointed place without the enemy and most of the people in his own camp knowing of his march. Then he safely crossed over to the wooded island in midstream. Here a most violent thunder storm with a deluge
of rain burst upon his men and it was also discovered, to heighten their terror and perplexity, that the island did not touch the east bank, but the narrow and shallow channel on that side had been turned by the rush of water from the hills into another raging torrent, which had struck the east bank, flooding its low-lying beach and causing huge land slips by undercutting the high bank.

Nothing daunted, Alexander cheered his troops and made them cross this second channel also, himself leading in the first boat, and transporting the horses on the inflated skin rafts. On the east bank the landing was at last effected by wading through breast-high water where the night’s rain had flooded the low beach and formed a bay. Only one boat was lost, by being dashed against a rock and sunk. All the others crossed in safety. By this time the sun had risen, the rain ceased, and the night gloom was dispersed. It was a symbolic reward of such an iron-willed leader of men and the tough soldiers who followed him.

Alexander’s crossing of the Jhelum was a feat of strategic genius equalled only by Marlborough’s piercing the Ne Plus Ultra lines in France, but it was carried out under far greater difficulties and even more faultlessly accomplished. If it be objected that Marlborough was matched against an equally civilised and well-equipped foe, while on the Jhelum Greeks fought barbarians, it must be remembered that Alexander was struck in the midst of his journey by such an unexpected fury of the elements as would have baffled any one except such a heaven-born general and his hard-bitten soldiers.

Forming his troops in order on the dry land, Alexander advanced with his cavalry towards Poros’s camp down the bank, ordering his infantry to follow more slowly. Half the way had not been crossed when he sighted an Indian force coming up to reconnoitre. It was a corps of 1000 horses and 60 chariots, under a son of Poros. The young prince was hopelessly out-numbered, getting no time to form a line and adopt tactics of defence, Alexander attacked him with his cavalry charging by squadrons while his horse-archers turned the enemy’s flanks. The prince was killed with 400 of his men, the rest fled away to carry the fatal news to Poros. "The chariots were captured,
horses and all, for they proved heavy in the retreat and useless in action itself by having stuck fast in the clay". (Arrian.)

Poros was at first distracted, by one enemy force threatening to cross the river and fall on his camp from the west and the great conqueror himself coming down upon him with his main army by land from the north. But at last he decided to leave a few elephants and a small force in his camp to oppose the landing of Krateros, and himself marched with the remaining troops to meet Alexander on the way.

The encounter took place on the Kari plain. When Alexander leading his vanguard of cavalry sighted the army of Poros, he halted for some time beyond bowshot of the enemy, in order to allow his infantry to come up and recover their breath, while he himself rode along the Indian front to reconnoitre.

There stood Poros's troops drawn up in battle order on a dry sandy patch of the Kari plain, their left obliquely inclined towards the Jhelum and their position clear of the mud pools here and there on their right and rear. On their extreme left were the quicksands of Sukaytur.

In the front of the Indian line were stationed 85 elephants with fighters on their howdabs (which the Geeks likened to castles), a hundred feet apart from one another, the spaces between them being filled by the best-equipped infantry (called men-at-arms by the Greeks). Behind this front line was massed other infantry, but the vast number of foot soldiers could not at all be crowded into the space behind the elephants,—two large bodies of infantry projected on the right and left wings, in line with their brethren in the centre but with their front unprotected by any elephants. These two wings were further extended right and left by the Indian cavalry, probably 3,000 strong in two equal divisions, which formed the extreme wings of the Indian army.

Poros had two hundred war-chariots still with him; these were posted into two equal divisions of a hundred each on his right and left, beyond the elephants, and in front of the infantry of the wings. The total strength of the Indian army was about 33,000 and of the Macedonian a little over 15,000 (Tarn.) In the centre of the line of elephants, on the tallest elephant in the field could be seen the towering figure of Poros,
nearly seven feet in height, "his armour embellished with gold and silver set off his supremely majestic person to great advantage. His courage matched his bodily vigour, and his wisdom was the utmost attainable in a rude community," as the polished Quintus Curtius Rufus acknowledges.

After reconnoitring the enemy's formation, Alexander quickly marshalled his own ranks. On his extreme right he concentrated all his cavalry, over five thousand strong, consisting of four complete regiments of the Macedonian horse (the best troops in his army) two of them under Koinos and two under himself and next to them on the left the thousand horse-archers serving as very flexible and useful light cavalry. His centre was formed by the infantry, first a corps of light infantry, next the Hypaspists (under Selukos) and then five battalions of the Phalanx (under Antigonus, Kleitus, Meleager, Attalus and Gorgias). Finally another corps of light infantry formed the extreme of his left wing,—which last, as can be easily seen, was made very much weaker than his right wing because it was this right wing and centre that he intended to do the real work for him.

The Indian army lay on the defensive a huge inert mass, wanting to observe their enemy's action. Alexander, on the other hand, seized the initiative, thus enjoying the advantage of attacking or drawing back at any point as suited his interest, and varying his tactics with every change in the tide of the battle. His plan was not to throw away his soldiers by hurling them against the hard core of the enemy's line, namely, the centre protected by the elephants and supported by the enemy's best infantry. So, he held the Phalanx stationary before the Indian centre as a threat paralysing its movement to aid any wing, while he sought a decision by first attacking the Indian left wing. He would begin by tempting the Indian cavalry (1,500 on the left) to come out of its defensive position, and while it was thrown into temporary disorder by movement he would overwhelm it by superior numbers and tactics. It was only after this decision had been reached on the Indian left wing that the Macedonian centre (all infantry) should attack the men opposite to them. This was exactly the policy of Wellington who in his Maratha battles (as later in the Peninsula) made
it a point never to attack the enemy when holding a defended position, but only when they were on the move and thrown into disorder by the broken ground.\(^1\)

**Combat Opens**

When the fighting became general, the Indian chariots drove at full speed into the middle of the battle, to aid their friends. Some Macedonian foot soldiers, first exposed to this charge, were trampled down, while the charioteers were hurried from their seats, when the chariots in rushing into action jolted over broken and slippery ground. Some of the horses also took fright and precipitated the carriages not only into the sloughs and pools of water but even into the river itself. (Q. Curtius). So, this arm of the Indian army could achieve nothing useful and soon ceased to exist. In that clash of myriads of men, only 200 chariots could have done little service, even if they had not been bogged.

**Centre Attacked**

As soon as the Indian cavalry was driven off its post by Alexander and Koinos, the phalanx advanced (as previously ordered by Alexander) and attacked the line of elephants and the infantry men forming the centre. Then began the most stubborn and murderous part of the fight. The elephants were driven against the attacking infantry, and the onslaught of these huge uncouth monsters was a kind of warfare of which the Macedonian soldiers had no experience before. The elephants charged and “wherever they turned went crushing through the Macedonian phalanx though in close formation” (Arrian). Some of the enemy they lifted up with their trunks and hurled down to the ground or trampled under foot. The front line

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\(^1\) The Combat opened with Alexander sending his mounted archers (one thousand archers) to attack the Indian cavalry opposite (about 1500) and throw them into confusion with a storm of arrows and charges of horses. Behind them he himself advanced with two full regiments (and the Royal Guard, 2300), while he sent off two other cavalry regiments (2000 men) under Koinos with order to ride round the back and left flank of his archers and attack the cavalry of the Indian left in the rear, while they were entangled with Alexander himself in front. As the battle opened the cavalry on the extreme right of the Indian army, rode away from their posts to succour their brethren on the left.
of the Macedonian army quailed, but it was for a moment only. Alexander's light troops and varying tactics enabled him to master this danger.

As Q. Curtius describes the scene,—"These animals inspired great terror, and their strange dissonant cries frightened not only the horses, which shy at everything, but the men also, and disordered the ranks, so that the victors began to look round for flight. Alexander thereupon despatched against the elephants the lightly armed Agrianians and the Thracian troops, more serviceable in skirmishing than in close combat. They assailed the elephants and their drivers with a furious storm of missiles, and the phalanx, on seeing the resulting terror and confusion, steadily pressed forward".

Seeing the first confusion of the phalanx in the struggle with the elephants, the Indian cavalry, so long sheltering behind their elephant line, wheeled round and charged Alexander's cavalry on their left. But the Macedonians, being "far superior in personal strength and military discipline (and I must add, the size and spirit of their horses), again routed them and drove them back upon the elephants." Alexander's genius was shown by his use of a mass of heavy cavalry acting in small tactical units, as the striking force. This had led to his victories over the Persian royal armies. The close cooperation between foot and horse, which was a characteristic of Macedonian battle tactics, had been learnt from the Theban general Epaminondas. "The originality of Epaminondas's tactics lay in this that he had discovered the master principle that the quickest and most economical way of winning a military decision is to defeat the enemy not at his weakest but at his strongest point". [C.A.H. VI. 358 and 82.]

The whole of Alexander's cavalry had now been gathered into one command and did great havoc among the Indians cooped up in their centre. The elephants too, being now huddled together within a narrow space trampled down friends and foes alike as they wheeled and pushed about. Many of the elephant drivers had been shot down, some of the elephants had been wounded, and being thus rendered frantic and without a guide the animals roamed over the field aimlessly, attacking all who lay in their path. Their victims now
were mostly Indians, because, “the Macedonians, who had a wide and open field and could therefore operate as they thought best, gave way when the elephants charged, and when the beasts retreated followed at their heels and plied them with darts; whereas the Indians who were in the midst of the animals, suffered far more the effects of their rage”. At last the utterly exhausted elephants retreated but still keeping their faces to the enemy “like ships backing water” and trumpeting. (Arrian).

The fight had raged for over three hours now, with increasing crowding and confusion on the Indian side. Central command and co-operation among their parts had vanished; everywhere a mingled fight was going on. In the Indian army, “The king’s authority was unheeded, and the ranks being broken, as many took the command upon themselves as there were scattered bodies of troops. Every one began to dictate some tactics of his own”. No common plan of action was after all concerted.” (Q. Curtius).

**Indians Routed**

The Indian cavalry was mostly cut up. But the heaviest slaughter was among our infantry. They were hopelessly butchered, as their enormous bows could not be strung by resting one end on the soft ground, and the Macedonian spears were much longer than the Indian swords. At the closing stage of the struggle, Poros gathered his remaining friends together and rallying his forces near about advanced with some elephants to prolong the contest. The battle continued doubtful for some time longer, the Macedonians some times pursuing, and some times fleeing from the elephants.

At last, while the blood of the Indian army was ebbing out and the elephants were worked off their feet or wounded, the end came. At the right moment Alexander surrounded with his cavalry the whole of the enemy’s line and gave the signal that his infantry with their shields linked together so as to give the utmost compactness to their ranks, should advance in a solid column. The Macedonians were now pressing upon the remnant of Poros’s army from every side. All turned to flight, wherever they could find a gap in the cordon of Macedonian cavalry (Arrian). It was the eighth hour of the day.
Poros had maintained the contest so long as he had a single follower left. Two of his sons and most of his gallant friends (one of whom was named Pitak or Spittak) had fallen by this time. As the enemy came up to him, he began to hurl upon them the spears of which he had kept a supply on his elephant, but he himself was exposed as a conspicuous target to the arrows and darts of enemy. He had received nine wounds before and behind, the worst of which was in his right shoulder where he was unprotected by armour. "Faint from the great loss of blood, his hands dropped the darts rather than hurled them. At last he turned his elephants head and began to retire, soon afterwards falling down senseless in his howda. According to one account, his sagacious elephant retired of itself when its master collapsed on its back.

In this time Krateros had arrived across the river with the full battalions of the phalanx (3,000 strong) from Alexander's camp, and he now took up the pursuit with these fresh troops. It was Blucher arriving after Waterloo had been fought and won by Wellington; and the pursuit was carried on with vigour. Alexander had issued orders that no quarter was to be given to the enemy, but all were to be killed, resisting or unarmed and surrendering themselves as captives.

Poros himself was taken prisoner and made a friend by Alexander's generous policy. The loss on the Indian side is exaggerated by Arrian to 23,000 men, while the Macedonian loss is minimised to 80 infantry and 230 horsemen. Diodoros gives a more sober estimate, 280 cavalry and more than 700 infantry slain on Alexander's side, and in the Indian army upwards of 12,000 men killed and 9,000 taken prisoner. This last figure proves how effective and relentless was the pursuit of and exhausted leaderless army by the fresh troops of Krateros.

As Professor Tarn admits, "Alexander's losses were carefully concealed (in his despatches), but there is conclusive proof of the desperate nature of the battle with the elephants and its effect on the minds of the generals, specially on that of Seleukos.

Plutarch, the best ancient biographer of Alexander, confirms this view and adds, "The combat with Poros abated the spirit of the Macedonians, and made them resolve to proceed no further in India."
CHAPTER IV

ISLAMIC INVASIONS

Muslim Conquest

The Turkish invasions of India from Mahmud of Ghazni onwards have followed this uniform pattern and the result has always been the same,—India’s final weakness against smaller but superiorly accoutred, mounted and led bodies of invaders. Before the blazing sun of the Indian summer can come to our aid, the invading horsemen from the cold northwestern hills have had five clear months (October to February) to do their work; they have overthrown the Hindu monarchies on the frontier, sacked cities (seldom stopping to besiege forts on hills), struck terror among the population, and retired to their mountain homes, enriched with plunder and the cession of some Indian district on the western frontier where they at first planted some local prince as a tribute-paying vassal.

The course of Turkish advance into India is plainly visible in our history. Before the Eastward Push of Islam began, the Kabul valley beyond the Khyber Pass was the kingdom of a Buddhist dynasty, probably Scythian, called Turki Shahi, which was followed by a Hindu Shahi line of kings. These latter were overthrown by an Arab family professing Islam, and their descendants were pushed beyond the Indus to Und (or Wahind, north of Attock). As yet Ghazni was a Buddhist district; but a Turki General of the Kabul Sultan made it a Muslim State, while the unconverted remnant of the Buddhist population took refuge in the obscure region on the shore of the Ab-i-Istada lake, and it was some centuries before they were Islamized.

The Ghazni ruler gained Kabul. And from Kabul as a base, the Turkish horsemen with some Afghan followers attracted by the hope of plunder, invaded the Hindu province next to its eastern frontier and plundered and weakened it as the result
of the first year's campaigning. The defeated Hindu Raja made peace by promising to pay tribute and to recognise the Ghazni Sultan as his overlord. Next autumn the raid was repeated and further penetration into Hindu India effected. If the previously humbled Raja of the frontier district defaulted in paying his tribute,—which was quite likely in his impoverished finances, or if he showed any manly spirit, he was destroyed in the second year's invasion and that province was annexed and placed under a Muslim Viceroy. Thus arose the first centre of Muslim power in India, and from it went forth year after year every autumn at first raiding and ultimately conquering parties to the Hindu Kingdom next on its eastern frontier, which in the course of two or three years suffered the same fate. Lured by reports of the fabulous wealth to be gained by plundering the Hindus, thousands of trans-frontier Turks and Pathans flocked to the conquering Sultan's banners every autumn, asking for no pay but only permission to plunder in his train. Thus the base of Muslim power in India was generation after generation shifted south-eastwards by the same process of raid, feudatory subordination, and full annexation, till the Muslim advance dashed against the hills of Assam.

If in any year the invaders from the north-west were unexpectedly held up by the Hindu defence, they could easily call up reinforcements from their own State just across the border, or retire baffled to come back next autumn in renewed strength to make victory sure. Their line of communication with Central Asia, the breeding ground of their soldiers and horses,—was kept unbroken behind them. But the opposite was the lot of the small Hindu States, divided by love of local independence and the practice of their ruling Rajas not to tolerate a Hindu overlord, and torn by the jealous feud of clan against clan, caste against caste. Hindu religious philosophy may be sublime, but it does not teach the perfect social solidarity and equality of the faithful which is the noblest gift of Islam.

*Turks and Their Wars*

The enemy tribes that broke into India from the north-west were mounted archers and spearmen—at first Scythians
such as Sakas, Huns and Parthians, and from 1000 A.D. onwards Muslims known by the race-name of Turks. These invaders were accompanied by bands of Afghans as their servants, who formed a second line and were converted to Islam a century or two later than the Turks.

Islam gave to its followers (as H. A. L. Fisher has pointed out) three characteristic virtues which no other religion has inspired so successfully, and which imparted to natural soldiers like the Arab, Berbers, Pathans and Turks, a wonderful military efficiency. These were: First, complete equality and social solidarity, as regards legal status and religious privileges. Thus all distinctions of caste and race were swept away and the sect was knit together like the members of one vast family of brothers. Secondly, fatalism, springing from an absolute reliance on God and the belief that what Allah wills must triumph over every human effort. This bred contempt of death in fighting. Thirdly, freedom from drunkenness. Wine drinking is a sin according to the Quran and a crime punishable by the State in Muslim countries. On the other hand, wine drinking was the ruin of the Rajputs, Marathas, and other Hindu soldiers, and made them incapable of far-sighted military planning, conducting surprises, and even guarding their own camps with proper precaution.

The arms and horses of these trans-border invaders gave them indisputable military superiority over the Indians. Their provisions, also, were carried by fast-trotting camels, which required no fodder for themselves but fed on the roots and leaves on the wayside, while the Banjara pack-oxen of the Hindu commissariat were slow and burdensome.

The Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. I. P. 331, tells us—

"The Turkoman horse is the noblest in the whole of Central Asia, and surpasses all other breeds in speed, endurance, intelligence, faithfulness and a marvellous sense of locality. The Turkoman horse is tall, with a long narrow body, long thin legs and neck. . . . On their predatory expeditions the Turkmans often cover 650 miles in the waterless desert in five days. . . . They owe their powers to the training of thousands of years in the endless steppes and deserts, and to the continual plundering raids, which
demanded the utmost endurance and privation of which horse and rider were capable.”

The same thing was noticed by Shah Jahan’s generals who invaded Balkh and fought the Uzbekks and Alamans (Turkoman tribes). They have written,—“These ferocious robbers were not hampered in their marches by any baggage or provisions; the coarsest food sufficed for them. The deepest rivers they crossed by swimming their horses in a long line, the bridle of one being fastened to the tail of another, while the saddles, which were mere bundles of sticks, could not be damaged by water. The men crossed on rafts made from the reeds that grew, plentifully on the river-bank. The horses, as hardy as their riders, lived on the wild worm-wood (darmana) of the steppe and yet could cover forty to fifty kos a day on this fodder!” (Abdul Hamid’s Padishahnamah, Vol. II. p. 619.)

These were the Turkomans. Their southern neighbours, the Turks, were more civilised and a little,—but only a little, less hardy than they, but prized the Turkoman horses for their marching, besides purchasing Arab thoroughbreds. The Turks were so famous for the speed and vigour of their cavalry charges that in the Asiatic world the phrase Turk-sawar (i.e. Turkish horseman) became a general name for the richly accoutred superbly mounted dashing cavalry of any race. Even the 19th Dragoons of the English Army in India in 1802 are called in the Marathi and Persian records Turk-sawars, while the common Indian mounted troops are designated as mere fauj.

Now, for the weapons of the invaders. The composite bow (of two pieces joined together by a metal band) used by “the Iranian and Turkish nomads....was the most dreaded weapon of antiquity,” according to the Cambridge Ancient History (Vol. XII, p. 216). And such Oriental archers were enlisted in the army of the Roman Empire in the third century A.D.

“The Persian, Scythian, and Parthian bow was far more efficient than the Cretan (whose range was only 80 to 100 paces), while a javelin could pierce at 30 to 40 paces. The horse-archers in the Roman army (fourth century) discharged arrows “which pierced cuirass and shield with ease, and they shot equally well dismounted and at the gallop.”
(Encyclo. Brit. 11th ed. ii. 363). What had the Hindu army to oppose to these weapons.

Mounted archers were employed as light troops for harassing and bewildering the enemy. But the Turkish nobles themselves fought as heavy cavalry,—clad in armour for both man and horse, and wielding long spears. Their massed charge was irresistible on the plains of north India.

The tactics of our Turkish invaders had been first developed by the ancient Persian empire before its decline and defeat at the hands of Alexander. This “mode of warfare consisted in disordering the enemy by archery fire and then charging him with cavalry”—i.e., the armoured heavy cavalry in which the Persians excelled. (Cam. Anc. Hist. VI. 360.)

A typical Turkish battle—of the western Turks and not of India’s invaders, the eastern Turks, was that of Manzikert (fought in 1071 in farther Armenia) which is thus graphically described by Gibbon (Chap. 57):-

“The Turkish Sultan Alp Arslan’s hopes of victory were placed in the arrows of the Turkish cavalry, whose squadrons were loosely distributed in the form of a crescent. Instead of the successive lines and reserves of the Greek tactics,—the Eastern Roman Emperor Romanus led his army in a single and solid phalanx, and pressed with vigour and impatience the artful and yielding resistance of the barbarians. In this desultory and fruitless combat he wasted the greater part of a summer’s day, ... but no sooner had the standard been turned to the rear than the phalanx was broken. ... The Turkish squadrons poured a cloud of arrows on this moment of confusion and lassitude; and the horns of the formidable crescent were closed in the rear of the Greeks.”

This, with a few necessary changes, was exactly the tactics by which Prithvi-raja was defeated in 1192 at the second battle of Tarain.

Oman describes the above battle very clearly thus:—

The Seljuck army “was a great horde of horse-archers ... more than a hundred thousand strong. ... The Turks, after their usual manner, made no attempt to close or to deliver a general attack on the Imperial host. Large bodies of horse-archers hovered about and plied their bows against various points of the line. ... (At last in the evening) the Turks began to steal round
the wings and to molest the fighting line from behind. . . . The right wing in trying to face both ways, fell into disorder in the twilight, and at last broke up and fled. The victors at once fell on the flank and rear of the centre . . . and the Turks broke into the column and made a dreadful slaughter . . . the whole centre was cut to pieces. Thus (the Roman Emperor) paid the penalty for attacking a swarm of horse-archers in open rolling country, where he had cover neither for his flanks nor for his rear." Art of War in M. Ages (1st ed.) 217-219.

The eastward push of Islamic arms into India can be exactly traced in history. It followed one uniform pattern; at first for some years raids across the frontier, in the next stage invasions in force leading to pitched battles in which the nearest Hindu king was defeated and humbled into a vassal and his kingdom made a friendly base for further advance into Hindustan, and finally the vassal, after one last futile struggle, was extinguished and his kingdom annexed to the Muslim empire. Thus, our border provinces were nibbled away year by year, and the Islamic dominion pushed deeper and deeper into the North Indian plains. This process continued for centuries, till the foreign flood was arrested and driven back by the wild hills, jungles and earthquakes of Assam and the untamed valour of the Ahom race in the 17th Century.

When this eastward sweep of Islam began, Afghanistan and all North India were under the rule of Hindu kings. The Turki Shahi Hindu kings of Kabul lost that city and north-west Afghanistan to the Sultans of the Samana dynasty early in the 10th century. A Turki slave of this dynasty named Alp-Tigin founded an independent kingdom of his own at Ghazni (reign, 950-963). His son Sabuk-Tigin (r. 963-997) attacked Jaipal I, the Hindu king of Eastern Afghanistan, whose capital had been shifted to Ohind (Und), 15 miles north of Attock, where the Indus was easier to cross, because that place was above its junction with the Kabul river. In 990 Amir Sabuk-Tigin defeated Jaipal and compelled him to cede Jallalabad (Laghman district, in Eastern Afghanistan) and he thus approached the Khyber Pass. In 991, after defeating Jaipal again, near Kuram, the Amir took Peshawar and thus made a lodgement east of the Khyber Pass within easy striking distance of the Panjab plains,
which were now separated from him by the Indus river only. In an attempt to recover Peshawar, Jaipal was defeated (27th November, 1001). Stung by the shame of his successive defeats, the Hindu king abdicated and committed suicide (1002). His son Anandpal was defeated by Sabuk-Tigin’s successor, the famous conqueror Mahmud of Ghazni (reign 997-1030).

In 1004 Mahmud made himself master of Multan and Uch (west of Bahawalpur) and just below the junction of the Indus with the other four rivers of the Panjab. In 1005 Mahmud defeated Anandpal again and placed the old capital Und under a vassal of his own. With the Turks sitting astride the Indus, and holding a line of crossing places on it, the natural geographical defence of India was broken and the Muslim penetration of Hindustan became an easy thing. On 31st December, 1008, Mahmud crushed the forces of Anandpal somewhere between Und and Peshawar. The Hindu king had shifted his capital to Nandana. His successor, named Jaipal II, was defeated here and his capital placed under a vassal of the Ghazni Sultan. The permanent result of the many expeditions of Mahmud into India was the formation of North Panjab into a transmontane province of the Ghazni kingdom with Lahore for its governor’s seat. In this city Mahmud’s weak descendants took refuge when they lost their Afghan territories to the house of Ghor. It was these Sultans of Ghor who established the first Muslim empire in India. In 1186 Shihabuddin Ghor (also known as Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam) forced Khusraw Malik, the last crowned descendant of the mighty Mahmud of Ghazni, to surrender Lahore to him, only to be extinguished in prison.

With a Muslim dynasty planted at Lahore and able to draw hardy reinforcements from its dominions in Afghanistan, the safety of the plains of Hindustan was lost. Though no systematic invasion or raid in force was attempted during the 160 years from the death of Mahmud of Ghazni to the first invasion of Shihabuddin Ghor, individual Turkish adventurers used frequently to try their luck by raids into Delhi and other Hindu provinces further east. One expedition in great force was carried out by Tugha-Tigin, the chief minister of Masaud III (reign, 1099-1115) of Ghazni. This general “crossed the Ganges in
order to carry on a holy war against Hindustan and penetrated to a place where except Sultan Mahmud no one had reached so far with an army before.” (Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, i. 107). This language clearly implies many other but lesser raids from Lahore.

The disruption of government and the terror caused by these frequent Turkish forays are also proved by the levy of a tax on land called Turushka-danda, by the local Rajas of North India, for paying an annual blackmail to the Muslims beyond the frontier. (See the copper plate inscriptions of the Gaharwar kings of Kanauj). Its nature was the same as that of Danegeld in Anglo-Saxon England, collected for paying to the Scandinavian pirates who used to infest the country.
CHAPTER V

SHIHABUDDIN GHORI VS. PRITHVIRAJ

By the time that the Ghorı Sultan began his invasion of Hindusthan, a great change had taken place in the social organisation of this country. We now find a peculiar race, called Rajputs (i.e., sons of Rajas) and Kshatriyas by caste, holding the rulers' place all over the country from the Satlej to the Son river. Near the close of the 12th century, their clans were thus distributed:

The Chauhan Raja of Sambhar, with Ajmer as his chief town, had recently conquered Delhi (formerly held by a Tomar chief) and formed a large kingdom which stood as the first western barrier to the advance of the Turks. East of him lay the large kingdom of Kanauj under a Raja of the Gaharwar clan (later to be called Rathor) and embracing all the country south-eastwards up to Benares. South of the centre lay the lands of the Chandel clan in what came later to be called Bundelkhand, with their chief forts Mahoba and Kalinjar. But within this area there were constant feuds between clan and clan, king and king, and the Hindu Powers could offer no united opposition to the foreign invaders, except on a few rare occasions, and even then their confederated forces were too ill-knit and too slowly mobilised to win decisive success.

The gallant Prithviraj Chauhan, lord of Ajmer and Delhi, had fought a long war with Paramardi, the Chandel Raja, and captured his city of Mahoba. Later, he had mortally offended Jaychand, the Raja of Kanauj by defeating his ambition to declare himself Paramount Sovereign by the ceremony of Horse-sacrifice. ।(ashwa-medh) and carrying off his daughter at a "Bride's choice" (Swayambar). But most Rajas of North India flocked to his side when he first stood up to oppose the Muslim invaders. The bone of contention between the two Powers was the fort of Bhatinda, 100 miles south of Lahore and 180 miles north-west of Delhi, which had once been the last capital of
the Hindu kings of North Panjab and now stood as the border fortress of the kingdom of Ajmer-Delhi. Shihabuddin Ghori took it in 1190, left a garrison of 1,200 horses in it under Qazi Zia-ud-din, and set out on his return home. But he was soon called back from the way by the news that Prithviraj at the head of a vast allied force was advancing to recover it. Shihabuddin, without waiting for reinforcements turned back at once with what forces he had with himself to anticipate the enemy and rapidly advanced to Taraori, 125 miles south-east of Bhatinda and twelve miles south of Thaneshwar. 1

The first great battle for the lordship of Hindustan followed. The Hindus greatly outnumbered the Turks, and this superiority enabled them to overlap their enemy’s line of battle on the two flanks. The battle joined as the Hindus gave the signal for attack by blowing conchshells from the backs of elephants, while the Muslims struck their kettledrums carried on camels and sounded their trumpets. The impetuous charge of the Rajputs scattered like a cloud the Muslim vanguard, composed of “Afghan and Khokar braggarts”.

Advancing further, they turned both wings of the Turkish army and inclining inwards dispersed their opponents and threatened the centre, where the Sultan commanded in person. Large numbers of his horsemen began to slip away, not daring to face the roaring tide of Rajput cavalry flushed with victory. The Sultan was urged to save himself by flight as he had no supporter left. But scorning such cowardly counsel, he made a reckless charge into the body of Rajputs before him, hewing his way with his sword, and followed by a small body of devoted companions. Govind Rai (the Governor of Delhi), who led the vanguard of his brother Prithviraj, on sighting Shihabuddin

1 Prithviraj “defeated Md. Bin Sam Ghori at Naraina, seven miles from Karnal and three from Taraori. This village is situated on the Nai Nadi. Next year the Sultan returned and defeated and killed Prithviraj on the same spot.” “Tiraori (sic).” Here Azam Shah, son of Aurangzib, was born. In memory of him the place was named Azimabad. A wall round the town, a mosque, and a tank, said to have been built by Aurangzib are still in existence. The old highway ran through Tiraori, and there is a well preserved old royal sarai here. (“Karnal Dist. Gazetteer, 1884, pp. 27 and 264). Taraori is a railway station 9 miles north of Karnal city and 12 miles south of Thaneshwar station. Nai Nadi flows in two branches close on the west of the walled village of Taraori. Indian Atlas, Sheet-18 S.W.
from a distance, drove his elephant towards him. The two leaders met in a single combat. The Sultan's lance knocked out two of Govind Rai's front teeth, while the Hindu Chief hurled a javelin which inflicted a severe wound on the upper arm of Shihabuddin and forced him to turn his horse's head round in agony and weakness. However, he was saved from falling down, by a Khalj youth who leaped upon his horse from behind, kept him on the saddle with his arms, and urging the horse on by word of mouth, carried him away to the base in safety. The rout of the Turki army was complete, but such a victory did not yield its full fruits as the Rajputs were incapable of making a relentless pursuit, and their ponies were outpaced by the Khurasani horses of the Muslim army. Prithviraj merely followed up his victory by laying siege to Bhatinda, which held out for thirteen months and at last capitulated. (probable date September 1192).

Sultan Shihabuddin set himself to avenge this defeat. Arrived at home he publicly disgraced and cashiered all his captains who had shown such cowardice at Taraori. In a year and a half he raised for the next Indian expedition a vast force of Turki and Afghan military adventurers, estimated by an eye-witness at “120,000 cavalry clad in armour” (Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, i.465.) When he reached Peshawar he had the wisdom of pardoning his lately dismissed captains and summoning them to his side for a chance of wiping out their disgrace. They gladly joined him with their contingents. The day after their arrival, with his strength now raised to its utmost, he began his march towards Delhi.

The Hindu army this time was much smaller than in the first battle. Prithviraj had delayed in mobilising his force; many of his former allies were too lazy or indifferent to fight again for him, and his domestic enemy, the Raja of Kanauj, held off in unpatriotic pride. With what forces could be readily collected Prithviraj took his stand near the old battle field of Taraori on the bank of the Saraswati.

Shihabuddin, avoiding Bhatinda, now in enemy hands, on his way, arrived some ten miles in front of the Hindu army. Here he received a friendly warning from Prithviraj, asking him to save his soldiers' lives by going back without fighting, as the
Hindu army, whose valour he had tested before, was large and was daily receiving reinforcements; at the same time the Raja swore by his gods that he would allow a safe passage to the Turki army without attacking it during the disorder of retreat.

Shihabuddin, "following the Prophet's words that war is a kind of deception (al harb khada)", played a cunning trick. He replied, "It is very generous and friendly of you to make this offer of peace. I am sending a messenger to my brother, who is the reigning Sultan, urging him to agree to make peace with you on the condition of Bhatinda, the Panjab and Multan remaining with the House of Ghur and the rest of Hindusthan under the Rajas. Pending the arrival of his reply, I beg you to suspend hostilities". (Firishtah).

The ruse proved a complete success. The simple trustful Rajputs swallowed the bait, and believing the invader's pacific tone to be due to his fear of their valour and a sense of his own weakness in numbers, they made no preparation for action and even neglected the common alertness necessary in the face of an enemy. Shihabuddin, on his part, lost no time. He matured his plan for attacking the Hindus the very next morning, because, while his army was now at its fullest strength, every day's delay meant some addition to his enemy's ranks and the consumption of his own provisions in idleness. He, therefore, set his army in motion some hours before day-break, covered the intervening miles unmolested and secured a lodgment in front of the Hindu camp before they could take the alarm.

It was the early dawn of a winter's day. The deluded Hindus were totally off their guard. Most of their soldiers had come out of their quarters into the waste land around for answering the call of nature or taking their morning bath. But so vast and sprawling was the Hindu camp that the surprise caused no disaster to it, especially as Shihabuddin held his men in hand instead of dispersing them by dashing attacks. The aggressor, however, gained two great advantages;

(1) He seized the tactical initiative and forced the Hindus to fight on the ground and in the manner of the Turk's own choosing, instead of the defenders delivering any attack planned
and prepared for before. In fact, all day long the Rajputs had to dance exactly as Shihabuddin played the tune.

(2) The Hindus had to fight on empty stomachs.

This last needs explanation today. It was the Hindu practice to prepare for a pitched battle by waking at 3 o'clock in the morning, performing the morning wash and worship, eating the cooked food (pakwan) kept ready beforehand, putting on arms, and marching out to their appointed places in the line of battle at sunrise. (See Mahadi Sindha's preparations before setting out for the battle of Tunga or Lalsot, 1787). But in the second battle of Taraori, the Rajputs could take no breakfast; they had to snatch up their arms and form their lines as best as they could in a hurry.

Shihabuddin's plan of battle was to give the Rajput cavalry no chance for their shock tactics which had proved irresistible in his first encounter with them, but to make them move as he willed. He had left his heavy baggage, stores, elephants and non-combatants in his camp, ten miles behind, and advanced in light kit with his fighters only. His cavalry, all archers, were placed in four divisions of about 10,000 men each, who formed his vanguard, right and left wings, and rear (by which last term I understand the advanced reserve, called iltmish in the Turki language, whose duty it was to support the van or any wing from behind, when hard pressed). They were ordered to advance turn by turn and keep the Rajputs in play by shooting at them from a distance, but when the Indians advanced to engage them they were to feign flight and retreat beyond a horse's course, so as not to be entangled in combat. The real striking force of Shihabuddin was a corps of 12,000 steel-clad warriors, select men mounted on superb horses, kept under his personal command, as "strength in reserve," in the centre, a short distance behind the front line of attack. They were to be launched at the right moment to decide the issue.

These Parthian tactics bewildered and baffled the Hindus. They spent all their energy and time in the futile game of chasing and trying to catch up the elusive Central Asian horsemen before them. In this fashion the battle, or rather the series of skirmishes, raged from 9 o'clock in the morning till 3 o'clock in the afternoon, at the end of which the Hindus were utterly dis-
spirited by the futility of their exertions and exhausted from hunger and thirst. Their rigid caste rules prevented them from being readily refreshed with food and drink in the battle front.

After such an unconquerable lassitude had seized the Hindu ranks, Shihabuddin gave the signal. His 12,000 choice heavy cavalry advanced like a solid wedge smashing their way through the loose-knit wavering Rajput ranks. Nothing could stand before such shock tactics. In a twinkling of the eye the battle was over. The Hindus broke into a hopeless flight in which tens of thousands of them were cut down unresisting. Govind Rai, the leader of the van had been killed earlier, and now Prithviraj himself, who had changed his elephant for a horse, was swept away by the tide of fugitives, captured on the bank of the Saraswati, and put to death in cold blood, to appease Shihabuddin’s wrath. With him fell many others of the 150 Hindu Rajas who had joined the national confederacy. Legend and song have preserved the names of only some of these martyrs of liberty, such as Malesi, the Kachhwa chief.
CHAPTER VI

MILITARY ORGANISATION OF TURKS

Timur's Invasion 1398

During a period of three centuries and a half from 1192 to 1526, the first Turki empire of North India passed through a course of conquest, advance and consolidation under its early rulers, but gradually it lost its vital energy and lapsed into stagnation and dissolution, at last yielding the throne to an Afghan immigrant clan. This period differs in three respects from the next epoch in our history, which is called the Mughal Empire:

First, the political connection between Delhi and Afghanistan was lost, and recruits could no longer be regularly drawn from that country across the frontier passes by the Indian Government.

Secondly, baronial rebellion weakened the central Government, except under a few strong rulers.

Thirdly, fire-arms were unknown in war.

Then for 212 years, from 1526 to 1738, North India enjoyed a stable centralised Government, which spread over a part of the Deccan also, and kept the feudal vassals under control. It used fire-arms in war and began to import European arts, technique and teachers, and held Afghanistan under its sway. But in 1738 Nadir Shah’s invasion shook this political fabric to pieces, detached Afghanistan once more from India, and by encouraging the Maratha inroads and the Sikh upheaval, prepared the way for the downfall of the native sovereignty and the establishment of British domination.

Zengis Khan’s Army

The Mughal empire of Delhi was founded by Zahiruddin Babur, sixth in the line of descent from Timur, and he inherited the tradition of Timur. To understand Babur’s army and tactics we must study those of Timur, and to understand Timur’s
military power aright we must go back to the war-machine of Zengis Khan (Chingis), who was Babur's ancestor in the female line. Each improved upon the organisation and technique of his predecessor, with certain necessary modifications. For instance, Timur had much more civilised tools than Zengis, and Babur had a very much smaller army and territorial resources than Timur, which were compensated for by his possession of a novel instrument of wonderful efficiency, namely fire-arms, unknown to his opponents. Zengis Khan (1154-1227 A.D.), showed his genius by uniting under one banner countless hordes of savage nomads,—Tartars (also called Mongols), Turks and other Scythian races. He imposed iron discipline over this miscellaneous multitude,—totalling seven lakhs of armed men, according to the chroniclers. His success was due to his strict organisation, unfailing choice of able lieutenants, and his wise policy of allowing complete religious toleration to every creed in his camp. No other general in history has shown such power of making so many diverse tribes and sects unite in forming one compact military machine.

His military organisation was based on five principles:—First, the regular division of troops into compact bands of regiments (Turki word Kushun, nominally one thousand), and brigades (Turki word Tuman, nominally ten thousand), each under a head and duly graded. Secondly, the enforcement of strict discipline by constant inspection and ruthless punishment of offenders. Thirdly, unfailing selection of able lieutenants, each of whom could independently command a distant detachment, while co-ordinating with the general plan of the campaign. Fourthly, the creation of a corps d'élite of the royal guards, as the most efficient striking force. And, fifthly, the development of speed of movement, which was almost incredible in the case of such vast numbers in that age of barbarism.

"In the utterances ascribed to him, Chingis only emphasised his services to the establishment of order and discipline among his people and in the army ... Under Chingis Khan order was created everywhere and to each (man, woman and child) his position was allotted—thus replacing the disobedience prevailing everywhere before his time." (W. Barthold in En-
cyclop. Islam, ii. 858). “Each officer and soldier was made responsible, under pain of death, for the safety and honour of his companions.” (Gibbon, Ch. 64). “Of special importance for the military success of the Mongols was the creation of a numerous bodyguard (whose number reached 10,000, in 1206), with well-defined rules of their conduct in the Khan’s camp. Discipline was maintained with the greatest strictness. A valuable means of maintaining discipline and of training and testing the soldiers, were the hunting expeditions organised on a great scale, in which all the prescriptions of military discipline were observed with the same exactness as in actual warfare.” “Chingis, when Emperor, was able to surround himself with a narrower circle of men from among his vassals, on whom he could rely as upon himself.” (W. Barthold.) Zengis Khan thus conquered the eastern world from the Adriatic to the Yellow Sea planted Tartar rule over Russia for two centuries.

Timur’s Organisation

Timur, who rose to be Asia’s world-conqueror two centuries after Zengis Khan, belonged to a more civilised age and a more stable political system than those of his Tartar predecessor. He was the chief of the Chaghtai or eastern branch of the Turks, while the Sultans of Constantinople belonged to the Osmanli or western branch of the same race. Zengis was illiterate and most of his tribesmen had not yet shed their ancestral religion of paganism or spirit-worship. Timur and his Turks were Muslim converts with fiery zeal for propagating their new faith by the massacre and plunder of infidels. Islam enabled him to form intimate contacts with the rest of the Muhammadan world and thus strengthen himself easily with the services of the learned men of Persia, Arabia and Egypt, as brethren of the faith. Nor was he a mere soldier; “he organised the administration and the army on rational basis”—and this ensured his unfailing success in a civilized world. (L. Bouvat in Encyclop. Islam. iv. 779).

By the time of Timur’s invasion of Delhi (1398), the early Muslim conquerors of India had reached a sad state of decline. Two centuries of life in the ease and plenty of the soft climate
of India had sapped their desert vigour and hardiness. The Delhi kingdom had not yet hardened into a strong and compact State, owing to the frequent disloyalty of the feudal barons and the civil wars caused by disputed succession, while their ill-subdued Hindu subjects were constantly rising in local rebellions which, though suppressed in the end, acted as an eternal drain on the resources of the Government. These early Turks and Afghans held India like an army of occupation; there was as yet no Indian nation, and no national defence was possible.

Timur had a first-rate military genius. He was also fortunate in gathering round himself a band of lieutenants of the highest capacity, each of whom he could safely trust with branch operations beyond his personal guidance. None of his opponents enjoyed this advantage. This conqueror’s ruthless massacres of defeated enemies and surrendering civil populations, and authorised atrocities on the helpless people in his path, created a terror which cowed all thought of opposition to him. Utter desolation spread wherever his arms could reach, and even in advance of his path.

Timur’s horsemen could ride 150 miles in one day and night, and march an average of 80 miles daily for a week together. This speed made their tactical dispersion and concentration for action an easy problem for their general, while it disconcerted all the defence plans of their enemies. Rivers,—except the raging floods during the Indian monsoon months, July to September,—formed no obstacle to these Turks. They swam their horses across them in a string, the tail of one horse being joined by a string to the head of the animal just behind it as they breasted the stream. Where necessary, Timur also built bridges of wood or of boats over the larger Indian rivers.

No doubt, his numbers alone,—92 squadrons of a thousand armour-clad cavalry each, would have overwhelmed his Indian opponents in the end. But Timur’s strategy gave him immediate victory. His policy was always to seize the initiative. His incredibly swift movements and sharp decisive blows paralysed his enemies and confounded all their plans of battle and evacuation alike.
Timur Advances

Timur's invasion of Hindustan occupied only five months' time. After crossing the Indus on 24th September 1398, he proceeded south along the Jhilam river till near Jhang-i-Maghiana he crossed (10th October) the union of these two streams and entered the Rechna Doab. Pushing on further south he entered the Bari Doab after crossing the Ravi near Talamba (55 miles south of Jhang and 50 miles north-east of Multan) on 13th October. This town submitted but was sacked and the people massacred. On the 19th the march was resumed towards Multan.

Earlier in the year, his grandson Pir Muhammad (the son of Prince Jahangir) had been detached against the strong fortress of Multan. The prince first captured Uch (60 miles south of Multan) and then laid siege to Multan, which defied him for six months. At last this fort also fell, but the Indian monsoon bursting soon afterwards caused great loss of men and horses to the detachment, and it was the 26th of October before the victorious prince could join his grandfather.

Next day the whole army began to cross over to the east bank of the Bias. On 1st November, 1398, Timur resumed his advance. One division of his army went towards Delhi by the Dipalpur route with orders to halt at Samana till joined by him. The second division, ten thousand select horsemen under Timur himself, pushed on towards Samana, by way of Pak Pattan, Khalis Kotali, Bhatner (which was stormed on 12th November after a 80-mile forced march in one day and night), Firuzabad fort, Sirsa, Fathabad, Tohana (18th November), to the bridge of Kohtila on the Ghagar river. Here the left detachment joined Timur. The heavy baggage and women were lodged in Samana, and

1 The Bias at that time flowed 25 miles north-west of its present bed, and the Ravi ten miles south of its modern channel, in the longitude of Talamba. Timur's movements were Talamba to Jal (on the Bias, opposite Shahpur)—crosses the Bias to Janjan (?), 8 miles from Multan-Sahwal-Aswan-Jawah-Dipalpur. The nearest approach to the word Janjan which I find in the survey map is Jakhar, 80 miles north-east of Multan and 25 miles n.e. of Talamba, while Shahpur is midway between Talamba and Jakhar. Harappa of pre-historic ruins is only 12 m. due east of Jakhar.
the combined fighting force reached Panipat on 4th December.¹

Four days later (8th December) his advance guards reached the hillock on which stood Firuz Tughlaq's palace of Jahanuma, later known as Pahari, less than half a mile west of the Lahore Gate of Shah Jahan's city. The Jamuna flowed close to this hill in that age.

At this time Delhi, the capital of the Tughlaq Sultans, was a walled city known as Jahanpana, the north western gate of which opened on the Hauz-i-Khas; it lay six miles due south of the centre of the modern Connaught Circus. There was no habitation on the vast tract north and east of it, which were later covered by Old Delhi or Purana Qila of Sher Shah, Mughal Delhi or Shah Jahanabad, and New Delhi of the British regime. It should be remembered that the Jamuna in 1398 flowed two miles west of its present bed, by the side of the now ruined capital of the Khilji and Tughlaq kings. The low-lying land between the city and the river used to be flooded every year in the rainy season, and when in September the water receded, a wild jungle of Jhau, babul, and other shrubs sprang up there. This tract lay as a vast wilderness, broken only by a few stray huts of the nomadic shepherds (Gujars) and hermits' groves.

His Encampment

On 9th December, Timur crossed the Jamuna to the east bank by a ford at Palla (a village 6 miles east of the Narela railway station, and now two miles west of the Jamuna bed). From the crossing place he marched ten miles south along the east bank and established his base at Loni, a large town nine miles north-east of the nearest point in Shah Jahan's Delhi on the west bank. This Loni was a grand mart where the grain from the fertile Ganga-Jamuna Doab used to be collected for sale to the capital across the river. Moreover, there were rich

¹ Pak Pattan, 70 m. e. of Talamba, while Dipalpur is 28 m. n. e. of P. Pattan. Bhatner, 75 m. s. e. of P. Pattan. Sirsa, 44 m. due e. of Bhatner. Tohana, 55 m. n. e. of Sirsa. Samana, 45 m. n. e. of Sirsa. Panipat, 70 m. s. e. of Samana. (in straight lines).
pastures around it, which could feed the invader's horses and camels, while the Delhi side was arid and barren. For this reason, 360 years later, Ahmad Shah Durrani halted with his army in the Doab for one year, before recrossing the Jamuna and fighting the Marathas at Panipat.

On the 12th of the month Timur led a small party of 700 armour-clad horsemen down to another ford below Loni, where he crossed over to the Delhi side to reconnoitre and choose a site for delivering battle. After looking out from the Jahannuma hillock, as he was returning, a Delhi force of 4,000 horse, 5,000 foot and 75 elephants attacked his rear-guard of 300 cavalry. The Turks being outnumbered retreated fighting and thus drew their enemies nearer to the ford. Timur sent up reinforcements from the east bank, who completely routed the Delhi force after assailing it with arrows and then charging again and again, and pursued the fugitives to the walls of Delhi.

On the 14th Timur shifted his camp from Loni to a place on the same bank opposite the north point of the modern Red Fort, after massacring the lakh of Hindu prisoners collected in his camp, lest they should endanger his safety while he was engaged in his battle with the Delhi Sultan.

Next day, leaving one man out of every ten to guard his camp and baggage on the east bank, he crossed over to the west bank with his fighting force, and pitched his camp between the river and the Pahari hillock. The Turkish soldiery had been seized with terror from the current stories of the ferocity and power of the Indian war-elephants, which were said to twine their trunk round an armour-clad trooper and hurl him with his horse into the air. Timur took extraordinary precautions to counter the offensive of these beasts and thus heartened his men. Immediately after reaching his camping ground, he ordered his captains to concentrate their men round his own tents, so as to form a small compact circle, easier to defend. The periphery of the camp was divided among his captains and each of them immediately set to digging a deep trench in front of his own sector. Trees were cut down and their branches used in forming an abatis behind the trench. Where
the nature of the ground did not allow digging, planks were set up to complete the line of circumvallation.\textsuperscript{1} The many hundreds of buffaloes seized during the campaign and used as draught-animals, were placed behind the abatis, with their necks and feet tied together. So also were the camels. These were most effective steps in breaking any charge of the elephants.

This work being completed in six hours, by captains and common soldiers working shoulder to shoulder, Timur rode round inspecting the line, and then ordered a strict watch to be kept all night and every officer to remain at his appointed place. But no night-attack was attempted from the Indian side, though the Karaunas then ruling at Delhi belonged to a race famous for their skill in making surprises and ambuscades; they knew that the Turkish night watches on superb horses were patrolling round Timur's camp.

Timur's force was counted at Samana as 72,000 horsemen. Since then he had had no casualties, and therefore in the battle of Delhi he had at least 55,000 (more probably 60,000) first rate cavalry at his command. The Delhi Sultan's wazir Mallu Khan had only 10,000 cavalry followed by 40,000 infantry and 120 elephants.\textsuperscript{2} These foot soldiers were rustics taken from the plough, Jats, Gujars and Meo robbers; their favourite weapon was the bamboo staff, though many of them carried a rusty sword also. There were archers among them, but the Indian bow could not pierce like the famous bow of Central Asia, and their arrows were stopped by the armour and even the leather-coats of the Turkish horsemen. Years of civil war and disorder had made the Delhi Government too poor to maintain a large army or to properly equip what men they entertained. Their sole reliance was on the herd of elephants trained in war and famous for their power as rank-breakers (saf-shikan) and cavalry-dispersers.

\textsuperscript{1} The Zafar-namah of S. Yezdi says (Bib. Ind. ed. p. 96).—"He made a fort with the branches of trees and chappar (thatch) and placed the buffaloes before the ditch." Not supported by Timur's autobiography.

\textsuperscript{2} Akbarnamah (Eng. tr. I. 244) Sharfuddin Yezdi's Zafarnamah (Pers. text, I. 83).
Battle of Delhi

The night of 15th December passed in peace. Next morning Timur ordered his generals to marshal their ranks. After inspecting them, he sent his vanguard ahead to reconnoitre. Two Indians captured by them gave him news about the enemy's strength and disposition. Soon afterwards the Delhi army was sighted in the distance advancing to combat. Timur rode up to the top of a near-by hillock, surveyed the field with his eagle glance, and returning to his place in his battle line gave the order to advance.

Timur's army was drawn up in the regular Turki plan which continued to be followed up to the last days of the Delhi Empire under Babur's dynasty. There were five main divisions,—the Vanguard (harawal), the Right Wing (baranghar), the Left Wing (jaranghar), the Centre (Kul or Ghol) and the Rear-guard (chandawal). In front spread a line of mounted skirmishers (garawal). But the most useful corps was the iltmish or advanced Reserve, posted on the two flanks of the centre, just clear of the rear of the Right and Left wings, or sometimes in front of them. This iltmish, by its timely addition of fresh troops and its dashing gallantry, very often turned the scale in dubious battles. In the typical Turkish battles, at the outer end of each wing a body of agile light cavalry was placed to make a detour (taulqama) round the enemy's flank and take him in the rear, when in Gibbon's words "the two horns of the crescent closed in the rear."

Timur's van and wings were commanded by high-spirited princes of his house (his grandsons), supported by old and experienced generals, while he himself took post under the great imperial banner in the Centre, whence he sent off adjutants directing the tide of battle. The Delhi army was thus drawn up: the Right Wing under Malik Muin-ud-din, the Left under Taghi Khan, the Centre under the Sultan (Mahmud Tughluq) with his Wazir Mallu Khan, and the rearguard. His 120 elephants were spread out before the entire front line.

Timur's plan was to make an oblique attack and first disperse the enemy's vanguard and left wing, and therefore he delayed action against the Delhi centre and right,—probably
because their left front was not so well protected by elephants and the road to Delhi lay along the right of the advancing Turks, so that it was easier for Timur to make a detour by that side than by the broken eastern or riverward flank. Therefore, when setting his troops in motion he first pushed up his iltmish to strengthen his van and right, and issued tactical instructions to all his divisional commanders.

As the Delhi army came up beating its drums and cymbals, shouting and raising clouds of dust, a select body of Turki horsemen detached itself from the van, and making a detour to their own right hand, secretly behind the scrub, took the Delhi Vanguard in the rear, scattered it by their sudden charge and slew 600 of the men. Next his Right Wing fell upon the Delhi Left. The Turki heavy cavalry by their showers of arrows threw the enemy into disorder and then attacked sword in hand. The Indian elephants were boldly tackled, their drivers shot down, and even the trunk of one beast cut off by Timur's grandson! This wing broke and fled away.

By this time Timur's left wing had engaged the Indian Right, which also was broken after a vigorous fight and pursued to the gates of Delhi. Meantime, the Indian centre had boldly advanced to attack Timur's main division, the Centre, driving a line of fierce war elephants before it. Its two flanks were uncovered by the defeat and flight of both wings, while fresh troops pushed up by Timur from his rear arrived to stiffen his fighting centre. Timur now gave his finishing stroke; he sent up the royal bodyguards from his own side to cut their way through the confused crowd of fighters and fugitives before them and reinforce the front line.

The end is best described in the conqueror's own words: —

"They brought the elephant-drivers down to the ground with their arrows and killed them. Then they attacked and wounded the elephants with their swords. The soldiers of Sultan Mahmud and Mallu Khan showed no lack of courage, but bore themselves manfully in the fight; still they could not with-

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1 As Timur in advancing kept touch with his entrenched camp in his left rear, his battle front was not parallel to that of the Indians, but his right extreme struck the left extreme of the Delhi force at an acute angle. The battle began with an oblique attack due to natural causes.
stand the successive assaults of my soldiers. Seeing their own plight... their courage fell and they took to flight."

Next Delhi humbly submitted to Timur, but the city was sacked and its people massacred by his soldiers for four days together. This victory was followed by a campaign in the Doab of which the most remarkable feature was the success of the Turkish horsemen in overcoming Indian resistance in boats and river islands; though the Turks had no flotilla of their own, their arrows proved most effective long-range missiles in crushing the stationary Indians.
CHAPTER VII

BABUR’S INVASION: FIRST PANIPAT, 1526

A hundred and twenty-five years after Timur’s invasion, his sixth descendant in the direct male line, Zahiruddin Babur began the Turki conquest of India. Babur had led an adventurous life with much fighting and many reverses ever since the age of twelve, but shown wonderful tenacity in recovering his own. At last losing his paternal dominion, the small State of Fargana, he had established himself in Kabul (1505), and from this base he began a series of raids into the Panjab which was then governed by Daulat Khan on behalf of the Lodi Sultan of Delhi. Daulat was faithless to his master and courted Babur in the hope of making himself independent, but in the end his ally crushed him and seized the Panjab for himself (1525). Next year Babur marched into Hindustan to found a new empire at Delhi which his descendants held till 1857.

Ibrahim Lodi, the Afghan Sultan of Delhi (accession in 1517) was a brave man; but his government was torn by the rebellions of his kinsmen who fought and conspired to make themselves independent in their respective districts or to oust him from the throne. To these constant dissensions was added what Babur calls “the rustic stupidity” of the Afghans, so that no effective stand could be made by them against Babur’s hardy seasoned troops organised in strict discipline and orderly gradation and led by a military genius of the first rank.

From Lahore Babur marched rapidly to Panipat, capturing the Lodi posts on the way and defeating two detachments sent by Ibrahim in advance of himself, one north-west of Delhi and the other eastwards into the Doab.

Against such a swift-paced compact enemy force, Ibrahim Lodi moved in the lordly Indian fashion, making one march of two or three miles and then halting for two days. His camp was one vast disorderly moving city. It was an exact precursor of the march of Emperor Muhammad Shah’s army to meet
Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1747, as graphically described by Anandram Mukhlis. At last he contacted Babur's army which had reached Panipat on 12th April, 1526. The decisive battle was fought eight days later, and during this interval there were only skirmishes between patrols.

The Rival Forces

Babur's strength in this battle is not definitely stated in his Memoirs. The court historian of Akbar says that it was 12,000 cavalry, but that must have been the number of his choice Turkish horsemen or first-class troops. To these we must add his foot musketeers and Indian allies, as well as the hordes of Afghan and Turki adventurers drawn to his standard by the lure of gold. Lt.-Col. Wolseley Haig estimates Babur's forces in this battle at 25,000 men.

Ibrahim Lodi’s army was reported in popular rumour to be one lakh of men and one thousand war elephants. These round numbers are manifestly inflated and require severe reduction. A Government distracted by years of civil war and local rebellion, had not money enough to keep a lakh of good cavalry, and Babur himself admits that Ibrahim's miserliness (more correctly his State bankruptcy) had prevented him from increasing his forces by hiring sehbandi or militia men for this battle. It would be a fair conjecture to number the Delhi army as 20,000 well-equipped State cavalry and 20,000 baronial levies, mounted on sorry country horses. Behind these were a motley crowd of some 30,000 foot soldiers, retainers and other classes, some armed with pikes and swords, most with bows, and many with bamboo rods only, like the Jat peasant recruits.

On Babur's side there were fire-arms, an absolutely new weapon in North Indian warfare.

Babur drew up his forces east of the town of Panipat, with his face to the south. His front was protected by a laager of 700 baggage carts, the wheels of every two being tied together in the Turki fashion with ropes of raw ox-hide, instead of iron chains. Between every two carts (about 16 yards) five or six shields (called mantlets) on wooden tripods were set up, behind
which match-lockmen were to stand when firing. His right flank was protected by its joining the houses of Panipat town, and his left flank was defended by ditches—which I take to mean the dried *nalas* of the Jamuna river which had receded eastwards after the monsoon floods. Where there was no such natural protection he planted *abatis* with branches cut from the abundant jungle of that region. At distances of an arrow’s flight sally-places were left open in the laager for a hundred or more horsemen to pass through. At that time the bed of the Jamuna was only two miles east of Panipat and not ten miles as now.

Babur’s army was divided into vanguard, left wing, right wing, and centre. He commanded the centre, riding in its main mass with separate divisions on his own right and left flanks. Besides these there were two bodies of select Turkish horsemen at the outer ends of the right and left wings, whose task it was to turn the enemy’s flanks and take him in the rear, this tactic being known by the Turki word *taulqama* or ‘the horns of the crescent closing in the enemy’s rear.’ In addition to these divisions, there were two smaller bodies known as the *iltmish* or easily disposable reserve, placed near the two shoulders of the centre; their duty was to go promptly and reinforce any hard-pressed wing. These arrangements had been practised during his march for some days before, so that there was no delay or confusion in each soldier taking up his appointed place on the day of battle.

The Delhi army set out in battle array from its camp at break of day and covered the intervening four miles in three hours. Babur’s men, falling in at the first news of the enemy’s advance, waited in calm confidence for the encounter. The enemy’s movements indicating that they intended to attack Babur’s right wing first, he promptly pushed reinforcements up to it. The Afghans at first advanced swiftly onwards, but on coming close enough to see Babur’s front line defences, they abruptly checked themselves, being uncertain what to do next. Their pace slackened and they lost the advantage of a shock charge. The sudden halt in their front ranks threw the long tail of their army into disorder.

At this moment Babur struck. His turning parties made a
detour on the right and the left and on reaching the enemy's rear began to rain arrows on their dense masses. At the same time his right and left wings advanced and engaged the enemy before them at close quarters. The elephants on which the Indians chiefly relied proved of no use; their drivers were shot down or galled with arrows and the beasts wounded and forced to turn back, treading down their own men. The attack on Babur's right wing was pressed home with desperate courage, in order to sever his connection with the city of Panipat, turn his flank through this gap and reach the main body of his troops, avoiding his laager and guns in front. But he repeatedly pushed fresh troops into this wing and here also the Afghan attack failed.

In the next stage of the battle Babur's centre engaged the enemy centre, preventing it from sending any help to its own hard-pressed wings. The matchlockmen of Ustad Ali Quli (centre front) and the carted guns of Mustafa Khan Rumi (left of the centre) worked havoc among the densely crowded Afghan ranks. The Indian army was now entirely surrounded and pushed back into a disordered circle. The Afghans fought with the desperate fury of trapped beasts: some of their captains even attempted counter-charges here and there. But it was all in vain; the mischief of wrong tactics and inferior arms could not be remedied, though six thousand of their men fell in a circle round their dead king Ibrahim Lodi. Then their host broke up in flight; a relentless pursuit followed in which slaughter, plunder and abduction were carried to the very gates of Delhi. Pyramids were built with the heads of the slain; Timur's example was followed by his great-grandson's grandson.

Early Fire-Arms

There is much confusion of thought on the subject of the early use of fire-arms in India and many ludicrous statements have found a place in our books in consequence of it. All this is due to our writers' failure to distinguish between fire-works and fire-arms, or in other words between combustible and explosive agents. Fire-arms truly so-called must have the propelling
power of their shot in some explosive substance, their missile must not be hurled by the hand, or by some dart-throwing machine. Secondly, they must discharge some solid projectile which will penetrate and not merely burn. Missiles that merely burn have been in use in the world's history from long before the Christian era; such were the Greek fire (a combustible substance which water cannot quench), fire-balls (that is ignited cotton balls steeped in oil, resin or naphtha and tied to the point of an arrow and shot into the enemy ranks), or even live coal or burning sulphur put in a pot and thrown by the hand like a rugby ball.

These were not fire-arms. Nor can that name be applied to the old rockets (hawai), fire-wheels (charkhi) and squibs (pataka) which our boys set off on Diwali nights. Though gunpowder is used in making them, they are merely fire-works. They can start a fire though not in every case, but not penetrate any obstacle. Another defect of these fire-works when used in war is that their direction of flight and accuracy of aim are entirely left to chance. Such fire-works had been in use among the Afghans of Bengal from before Babur's invasion, evidently learnt from the Portuguese mariners, or even the Chinese. Babur vaguely describes them, when he writes of his victory over the Afghans in Bihar—"Bengalis have a reputation for fire-working, (atish bazi); we tested it now; they do not fire counting to hit a particular spot, but fire at random." (Tuzuk, p. 672).

For accuracy of aim and penetration, the missile has to be a solid metal ball or stone, inserted in a long tube and its propelling power created by the explosion of gun-powder in a closed chamber behind the shot. Thus the gun originated. The guns were of two kinds: for smaller missiles and shorter ranges, straight shooting (with a low trajectory) was necessary, hence the hand-gun now known as the musket. But for heavy missiles intended for smashing obstacles, vertical firing was necessary: hence the origin of the big howitzer (called mortar). One big gun used by the Ottoman Turks at the siege of Constantinople in 1453, fired stone balls weighing 700 lbs. Babur's Persian Chief of Ordnance in 1526 cast an iron mortar at Agra
which sent a stone shot 1,600 paces, or 1,400 yards, three-fourths of a mile.

Babur’s fire-arms at Panipat consisted solely of hand-guns and light pieces resting on forks (falconets), because he had transported his weapons from Kabul on the backs of camels. He had no mortar with him, because as he says, “Three or four elephants have gone dragging without trouble the carriage of a mortar which it takes four or five hundred men to haul.” (Memoirs, p. 489). His only large mortar was cast by Ustad Ali Quli at Agra in October 1526, and first used in the battle of Khanwa,—where (I believe) it was fired not more than thrice in the whole course of the day. It burst after firing on 24th November, 1527.

In the earlier stages, the field-guns or artillery proper had no wheeled carriage for each piece, but a number of them were carried together in one ordinary baggage transport cart. This was the case with Babur.

The hand-gun came into practical use in Europe in 1446, and was of a very rude construction. It consisted of a simple iron or brass tube fixed in a straight stock of wood and having a touch-hole bored at the top. A match for firing it was made of cotton or hemp spun slack, and boiled in a strong solution of saltpetre. Afterwards the touch-hole was placed at the side of the barrel, with a small pan underneath to hold the priming powder. These guns were at first called hand-culverins and weighed about 10 lbs., throwing leaden bullets of an ounce or so. In the latter part of the 15th century the hand-gun was made into a matchlock by the addition of a cock to hold the match and a trigger to bring it down on the powder-pan. The stock was also curved so that the piece could be aimed and fired from the shoulder. These were called harquebus in France and hackbut in England, and their length was only three feet, with a very short range.

In 1520 the Spaniards developed the musket, which at first meant a weapon six-feet long, weighing about 15 lbs. and firing a two ounce bullet with an effective range of 400 paces. The barrel rested on a portable fork at the time of firing. “The unwonted penetration of their bullets disordered the ranks of their enemy’s men at arms. The Spanish musketeers were
broken up into small parties, which moved about rapidly, giving
turns and making volte-faces here and there from one side of
another.”

The rockets (ban) used in Babur’s time continued to be
very popular with the Asiatic armies, especially the Marathas
and the fighting monks of Rajputana, called Naga Sannyasis
and Vairagis. These monks boasted that at the battle of Tunga
(1787) they shot 35 rockets into Mahadji Sindhia’s army
(which was fighting with De Boigne’s improved artillery).
These rockets (ban) must not be confounded with the hawai
which are set off at modern marriages and Diwali celebrations.
Their flight was most erratic, and whether their shot fell on the
enemy or was thrown by the recoil among the friends behind,
depended entirely on chance. In fact, their only effect was
to frighten raw infantry, cause a stampede among horses, and
very rarely set fire to the enemy’s munitions or tents by one
lucky shot in a thousand. Humayun’s fire-arms at the battle
of Bilgram (1540) are thus described by Mirza Haider
Dughlat (Tarikh-i-Rashidi, Eng. tr. by Elias, p. 474):

“Among the equipments of the Emperor were 700 carts
(gardun) each drawn by four pairs of bullocks and carry-
ing a swivel (Zarb-zan) which fired a ball of 500 misqals
(4-1/4 lbs.) weight. They would strike anything that was
visible at the distance of a parasang (3 miles).”

Among Akbar’s improvements of his fire-arms were the
greater use of wheeled carriages for his artillery, the lengthening
of the barrel of the hand-musket (reaching 6 feet 3-1/4 inches in
total length), and the increase of “harquebuses on forks,” i.e.,
resting on a hook fixed in a wall or a frame on the back of an
elephant or a camel (called ganjnal and shutarnal. “These
wall-pieces sometimes weighed as much as 50 lbs. and had
bullets of 3 or 4 oz. weight” (Lloyd’s Review of the History of
pp. 685-686 Irvine’s Army of the Indian Moguls. Abul Fazl’s
Akbarnamah. Blochmann’s tr. Vol. I Egerton, Handbook of
Indian Arms. For the Greek fire, see Bury’s note in his edition
of Gibbon’s Decline and Fall, Vol. vi. p. 540 (Appendix) and
Omar’s Art of War in M. Ages, 1st. ed., 546.)
Chapter VIII

BABUR AND RANA SANGA, 1527

The battle of Khanwa was the supreme test of Babur’s generalship. His soldiers marched to it disheartened by defeat in patrol actions, terrified by stories of Rajput valour and astrologers’ prediction of adverse stars, and weakened by the desertion of timid allies. Facing him was an enemy more than double his own numbers and flushed with unbroken success. If he was defeated or even forced to retreat after a drawn fight, the shock of his failure would shatter his new-born empire of Delhi to pieces. But he had one weapon which the Rajputs could not match, these were his mortars and matchlocks, which were then absolutely unknown in North India. Above all shone his military genius and experience of war earned by incessant fights since the age of twelve. On the Rajput side there was valour no doubt, but no generalship, no brain in the directing staff, no cohesion of the parts.

Babur’s Precautions

In this campaign Babur advanced to the decisive battle step by step, guarding his camp and men and fortifying his position every evening, so as to defeat any night attack and also to ensure a safe base in the event of a forced retreat. His battle formation also looked like a fortified encampment, minus its ditch (for which there was no place in a moving fields, but possessed of a mobility in its defence tools impossible in a fortress.

Babur’s plan of battle at Khanwa was to turn his army front into a fort or laager of carts guarded by fire-arms, and to sit tight there during the first stage and break by his matchlock-fire and stone-hurling mortars wave after wave of Rajput assault, till the assailants were decimated and worn out and their leaders slain. When that final stage came and the enemy ranks were found shaken, he would assume the offensive and
come out of his laager. That was exactly the situation at the
close of Waterloo, when Wellington gave the order, "The
whole line will now advance." Therefore, after drawing up his
line of battle Babur issued strict commands to all his captains
not to make any move nor to allow any soldier to take one step
out of his position except on order from himself. The Bakhshi
(field-marshall) stood by his side and sent out couriers and aides
to convey Babur's orders to the different commanders with every
change in the tide of battle.

Tactics Of The Battle

For the first three hours, the only hand-to-hand fighting
was on the two wings, on their extreme ends unprotected by
fire arms, while the Mughal centre kept the enemy back by
gunfire, to which the Rajputs had no missile reply. The
superior numbers of the Rajputs and the terror inspired by their
early successes over Babur's detachments, held him back from
turning the enemy's flanks by his favourite taulqama or pincer
movement.

A treacherous desertion at the outset upset Rana Sanga's
pre-arranged plan of combat. Silhadi, a Rajput adventurer,
who had made himself master of Raisin and Sarangpur, and
often changed sides during that troubled time, had lately turn-
ed Muslim to save his estate but joined Sanga with his contin-
gent (30,000 on paper, but probably not more than 6,000 in
muster). He went over to Babur's side from his post in the
vanguard (left wing) of the Hindu army. This misfortune en-
forced a hurried consultation and change of plan on the Rana,
and the issue of new orders to his divisions. The second dis-
staster to the Rajputs came when the Rana lost consciousness from
a severe wound. This event I am inclined to place in the
fourth hour of the battle (about 1 p.m.), when Babur noticed
"the accursed infidels to remain confounded for one hour," which means that there was a lull in the fighting; it was also
the time for the second or great namaz of the day (when fight-
ing always slackens). At the end of this lull, the desperate
Rajputs, abandoning the love of life set out on their famous
last "death ride," which ended in their destruction. The su-
The Rival Forces

In the morning of the battle (17th March, 1527) Babur drew up his forces in the following order:—First, the baggage-carts of the army (700 at Panipat, probably 1,000 at Khanwa), were placed in one line in front about 40 feet apart, but tied together in the Turki fashion with thongs cut out of raw hide (for want of iron chains). Between every two carts, five or six movable shields (in European war called mantlets), fixed to wheeled tripods, were placed, behind which the musketeers sheltered when firing. In the line of linked carts, openings were left at distances of an arrow’s flight (about 60 yards) for a hundred horsemen to sally out. The mortars, falconets (small field-guns), and foot-musketeers formed the second line behind the carts. In the third line stood the regular heavy cavalry, his main weapon of attack.

Ustad Ali Quli was posted in front of the centre with his mortar and other wheeled guns, or what was called the Jinsi topkhana under the Mughal empire, while his rival Mustafa Khan (a Turk from Asia Minor), stood apart from him, in front of the centre of the right wing, with his musketeers and swivel-guns (Zamburak), or the Dasti topkhana of later days. The cavalry was formed into three main divisions,—the right wing (under Prince Humayun, probably 5,000 strong), the left wing (under Mahdi Khwaja, probably 3,000) and the centre (under Babur himself, about 10,000 strong) with his own detachable left and right flanks. In addition to these, there were two bodies of specially chosen cavalry not more than a thousand each,—which I may call commando troops—posted at the extreme ends of the two wings, for dealing the famous Turkish blow of taulgama by turning the enemy’s flanks and taking him in the rear. We read of no special reserve (iltmish
in Turki), nor of any rear-guard, nor vanguard distinct from the centre front. The Indian allies of Babur were posted in his left wing, which had a good deal of its front uncovered by firearms.

As the Rajputs surged up towards Babur's centre in a vast tumultuous shouting crowd, they saw before them a flash like lightning, then a roar of thunder, and lastly a huge hot stone ball came hurtling through the air like a burning meteor, which hit them at a range of six furlongs and crushed everything in its path. Even elephants could not stand before it. It was the first shot from Ustad Ali-Quli's mortar cast only six months before. Those Rajputs who had galloped up closer to the front were stabbed by small fire-flashes which vomited a hail storm of burning slugs and stone chips spreading like grape-shot through their ranks. These were the musket-bullets. The Rajputs had never seen anything like it before. Their advance upon the centre was stopped for the rest of the day and they tried to probe the enemy's wings instead.

"When guns were first used the noise they made on discharge must have produced a bewildering fear in those without previous experience of them; more especially would this be the case with horses and other animals. . . . There is always the ever-present fear that the stroke will fall without giving any evidence of whence it came." (Encyclop. Brit. xx. 189).

Thus both armies operated only on the flanks,—the Rajputs because they could not advance against the thunder and lightning in front of them, and Babur because he was wise enough not to throw away the advantage of his stationary line of carts and musketeers, which alone could stop the impetuous rush of the Rajput desperadoes and their infuriated elephants whereas if his horsemen had been advanced into the open plain at this stage, before the enemy had been decimated and convulsed, his army would have been swallowed up in the ocean of the Rajput cavalry and his fire masked by his own men.

**Rajput Attack How Met**

The Rajputs durst not assault the fortress-looking centre, but galloped upon the two wings, driving their elephants in
front. The first impact was on the Mughal right wing, but Babur’s eagle eye detected their plan and he at once pushed up reinforcements to this wing, which repulsed the attack, while its right hand section and taulqama corps by a counter-attack pushed the Rajputs back almost to the rear of their own centre. The Rajputs came up again in another wave of assault. By this time their disposition and distances having become known, Mustafa Khan opened fire upon them with his match-locks. Still the Rajputs continued fighting in broken groups, but Babur sent up fresh troops in support of his men. As his secretary describes the scene, “Band after band of pagan troops followed each other to help their men, so we in our turn sent detachment after detachment to reinforce our fighters on that side.”

Simultaneously with this first attack, the left wing of Babur was charged by the Rajput right. Here also desperate fighting took place, the combat ebbing and flowing as each side reinforced its men. In the end Babur’s left wing commando (taulqama) strengthened by additions from the vanguard, counter-charged and penetrated as far as the Rajput rear. But at this stage, the pincer movement was not completed, “the two horns of the crescent” did not close, and Babur’s men rode back to their own posts. More and more troops were sent from Babur’s centre to meet the enemy pressure on this wing which was originally very weak in number.

In the centre the Rajputs continued to fall without being able to retaliate in the least or advance to close grips. They were hopelessly outclassed in weapon and their dense masses only increased their helpless slaughter, as every bullet found its billet.

Babur’s Final Advance

This ding-dong fighting went on from 10 o’clock in the morning till half past twelve, when Babur saw that the time had come for him to assume the offensive. He let loose his choice guard corps so long kept in reserve behind the carts, “like tigers held back by leashes,” (as his secretary well describes them). They sallied out of the laager by the two open lanes on the right and left of the line of musketeers in the
centre and fell on the enemy’s centre from two sides. Next the matchlockmen of the Mughal centre issued from their shelter and attacked the Rajputs in front, doing havoc at close range. Finally the wheeled artillery was advanced and Babur himself followed them with his centre into the thick of the fight, his men swarming around him on all sides “like the waves of a surging ocean.” A mingled combat now ensued under clouds of dust and universal confusion, for about an hour. But steadily the Rajputs were pushed back, most of their captains who had rushed to the front to hearten their men fell, and even the supreme commander Rana Sanga was removed from the field senseless from his wounds.¹

Heavy Slaughter

The last duty of Hindu warriors had now to be performed. The Rajputs made a desperate charge on the right and left flanks only as before; but here their bravest were mown down and the battle ended in their irretrievable defeat. The remnant of their army dispersed “like carded wool” leaving heaps of dead on the stricken field. The wounded perished as they lay on the ground or fell down from exhaustion during flight. “Countless numbers of the bodies of Rajputs and their Muslims allies encumbered the road as far as Biana, and even beyond it towards Alwar and Mewat.”

The victors marched into the Rana’s camp, four miles ahead of Babur’s last halting place. But no relentless pursuit was possible after the long and dubious struggle, and daylight also failed soon after its end. Babur gave up the idea of invading Mewar, because of the mid-summer heat and the want of water and fodder on the way.

¹ The wound is said to have been inflicted by an arrow (tir.) I take it to be a bullet (tir-i-tufang), because the word tir is used in both senses.
CHAPTER IX

HUMAYUN VS. SHER SHAH

Napoleon once remarked, "In war it is not men that count, but the man". The truth of this saying is best illustrated by the career of Sher Shah Sur. Within ten years of Babur’s death, his son Humayun lost his Indian empire through sheer incapacity and weakness of character, though he had succeeded to the command of his father’s ever-victorious troops and the vast resources of the empire of Delhi. From a petty jagirdar’s cast-off son Sher made himself by his supreme capacity for war and administration alike and his genius for managing men, first the head of the Afghans in South Bihar and next of Bengal, and finally the conqueror of the Delhi throne. Humayun was defeated by him in two decisive battles,—Chausa (26th June, 1539) and Bilgram (17 May, 1540) and driven out of India, and Sher Shah ruled in his place for the rest of his life (1540—1545).

The Turks are natural soldiers, but they can fight only under good leadership, as Osman Pasha was to prove at Plevna (1877). Humayun was no leader. His character was a contrast to his father’s. A good-natured man, he lacked the iron will, the unrelaxed vigour, and the ruthless instinct of his nomad ancestors. The opium habit and the self-indulgent life of the richest monarch in Asia had sapped what little tenacity of will and decision of character he ever possessed, though he retained his personal courage to the last. His officers, once the glory of Babur’s army, had mostly perished in the Indian climate and the rest had begun to abandon him in despair. Thus when the conflict with Sher Shah came, his soldiers proved a flock of sheep without a shepherd, upon whom the Indo-Afghans fell with the speed and ferocity of wolves. No stand was made by the Mughal soldiers; taken utterly by surprise, most of them unaccoutred, and all in disarray and without any leader, they merely took to flight and perished in the river, unwounded by
the enemy. Hence, these two battles have nothing to teach the military student except what not to do in war.

*Chausa, 26th June, 1539*

On 16th August 1538, Humayun wrested from Sher Shah’s agent the city of Gaur, the then capital of Bengal. Here he spent six months in the enjoyment of ease and pleasure, while many of his soldiers were killed by the pestilent climate and most of those that remained alive were enervated. When at last he set out on return to Agra, he found his path hemmed round by Sher Shah’s moving bands in full control of the country. So, he came to a halt at Chausa (10 miles south-west of Buxar) on the frontier between Bihar and Banaras, at the end of March, 1539. For nearly three months he lay encamped in the fork between the Ganges in the north and the Karamnasa river in the west. Disease, hardship, and fear of the enemy prompted many of his soldiers to desert for their homes, and he opened negotiations with Sher Shah.

Then in the early morning of 26th June Sher Shah struck with consummate skill. He first of all deluded his enemies by signing a peace treaty and then threw them totally off their guard by undertaking a campaign against his local Hindu enemy, the Chero chieftain Maharatha. One large division of his army under Khawas Khan was sent away to attack the Chero strongholds far to the south, and on two successive nights Sher himself with the bulk of his army marched out of camp as if to support this column, but he used to return in the morning. Thus his troops were accustomed to making night marches in silence and without delay or disorder. On the third night, after leaving his camp, he marched at first for five miles away from Humayun’s position, then halted, divulged to his troops his plan of surprising Humayun’s camp that very night, and being joined by Khawas Khan as pre-arranged, he took a sharp turn eastwards, crossed the river unperceived some five miles below Humayun’s position and then riding due north penetrated the sleeping Mughal camp from three sides at the break of day. The surprise was complete; Humayun saved himself by abandoning all his artillery baggage and women to the enemy.
Eight thousand Mughals perished, and "the Mughal army was practically destroyed."

Bilgram, 17th May, 1540

Humayun’s next encounter with Sher Shah was at a place opposite the city of Kanauj, but some three miles distant from the bank of the Ganges, and near Bilgram. It was not a battle at all but a helpless panic flight, which covered the Mughals with unspeakable disgrace. I can best describe it in the words of Mirza Haidar Dughlat, who commanded one of the divisions of Humayun’s army on that day.

The Mughal camp being situated on a low-lying tract which the monsoon rains began to flood, it was decided to remove it to a higher ground; but the problem was how to effect the transfer of the vast artillery and other impediments and the tens of thousands of servants, without being attack by the enemy when disordered by movement.

Mirza Haidar writes—"I suggested that we must keep our forces (drawn up in the field) well under control, until we should see if the enemy came out of his trenches and advanced against us,...in which event a regular pitched battle would be fought with advantage to the Turkish heavy cavalry. The baggage and non-combatants were to be left in the old camp, but if the enemy did not move, these were in the afternoon to move to the new position selected for the camp, and the soldiers would last of all follow and occupy that place.

"On the 10th of Muharram, 947 (17th May, 1540) we mounted to carry the plan into effect. The carriages (swivels) and mortars and small (hand) guns were placed in the centre .... The artillery commanders placed the carriages and mortars in their proper positions, and stretched chains between them. Sher Khan came out in five divisions of 1,000 men each, and in advance of him were 3,000 men ... the whole less than 15,000. I calculated the Chaghtai force at about 40,000, all mounted on kipchak horses, and clad in iron armour. When Sher Khan’s army came out of its entrenchments, two divisions drew up (as the rear or reserve) and three divisions advanced against their opponents. On our side, ... when we
reached the ground we were unable to occupy it, for every Amir in the Chaghtai army had his camp-followers, a commander of 100 had 500 servants with him. In whatever place there was a conflict, the followers were entirely ungovernable. When they lost their masters they were seized with panic and blindly rushed about ... They so pressed us in the rear that they drove the centre upon the chains stretched between the chariots, and they and the soldiers dashed each other upon them; they broke through the chains, and the men posted by the chains were driven beyond them ... All formation was destroyed.

"Such was the state of the centre. On the right Sher Khan advanced in battle array, but before an arrow was discharged the camp-followers fled like chaff before the wind; and breaking the line, they all pressed towards the centre. ... The whole array was broken. While the centre was thus thrown into disorder, all the fugitives from the right bore down upon it. So, before the enemy had discharged an arrow, the whole army was scattered and defeated,—40,000 men fled before 10,000; the Chaghtai were defeated, in this battle-field where not a man, either friend or foe was wounded. Not a gun was fired." Vast numbers were drowned in trying to cross the Ganges,—only eight persons out of one thousand armed retainers in one corps survived. "The total loss may be estimated from this fact." (Tarikh-i-Rashidi, Elias tr., p. 475-'77).

This battle proved that the army that cannot take the offensive is doomed, and purely passive defence is futile. "War without strategy is mere butchery."—(Encyclo. Brit. 21, p. 840).
CHAPTER X

SECOND BATTLE OF PANIPAT, 1556

Sher Shah Sur had driven Babur's son Humayun out of India, but within ten years of his death his descendants lost their empire through family quarrels and baronial rebellions. The empire of Delhi shrunk into a small kingdom which was torn by disputed succession and the secession of provinces. The last of the Sur kings, Mubariz Khan, Sher's nephew, entitled Muhammad Adil Shah (popularly called 'Adili'), was entirely devoid of energy or capacity and devoted himself solely to the pursuit of pleasure. But his Government gained unwonted strength from his Hindu Minister, Himu Bhargav. This man was a Gaur Brahmin. Though this caste had supplied priests to the Hindu kings of yore, Himu's own family was poor and he made his way up in the Sur royal service by his conspicuous ability for war and civil administration alike. His honesty and devotion to the interests of the State and his strictness in putting down slack and corrupt public servants antagonised the degenerate old official nobility and his memory has been blackened by their false aspersions and the partisan writings of Akbar's court flatterers. Himu, in addition to being a highly efficient civil administrator, was also the best military genius on the Afghan side after Sher Shah's death, far-sighted in his strategic plans, keen-eyed and quick in his tactical decisions, cool in holding his strength in reserve, and fearless of danger in encouraging his troops by his personal example. In the internecine wars of the Afghans, he had fought 22 battles with the domestic enemies of his master and been victorious in all of them.

When Humayun returned from his exile in Persia and recovered Delhi and Agra (23rd July, 1555), Himu marched from the eastern provinces with a large army to recover these royal cities, leaving his master Adili in Chunar fort. Soon afterwards, Humayun died in Delhi on 26th January, 1556.
At the advance of Himu, Humayun’s governor of Agra evacu- cuated that city and fled to Delhi. In pursuit of him, Himu reached Tughlaqabad, a village five miles east of the Qutb Minar. Here Tardi Beg, the Mughal governor of Delhi came out and gave him battle on 7th October, against tremendous odds, as Himu was reported to be leading 1,000 elephants, 50,000 horses, 51 cannon and 500 falconets.

The Mughal army was thus drawn up: Abdullah Uzbez commanded the van, Haidar Muhammad the right wing, Iskan- dar Beg the left, and Tardi Beg himself the centre. The choice Turki cavalry in the van and left wing attacked and drove back the enemy forces before them, and followed far in pur- suit. In this assault the victors captured 400 elephants and slew 3,000 men of the Afghan army. Imagining victory already gained, many of Tardi Beg’s followers dispersed to plunder the enemy camp, and he was left in the field very thinly guarded. All this time Himu had been holding 300 choice elephants and a force of select horsemen as a reserve in the centre. He promptly seized the opportunity and made a sudden charge upon Tardi Beg with this reserve. At the impetuous advance of the huge beasts and the dense cavalry behind them, many of the Mughal officers fled away in terror without waiting to offer a defence. At last Tardi Beg himself took the same course.

Himu very wisely did not disperse his troops by attempting a pursuit, but stood in the field with his army drawn up like a solid wall. The victorious Mughal vanguard and left wing, on returning from their chase of their respective oppo- nents, saw that the day had been lost in their absence, and there was no general to rally and lead them; so they dispersed without renewing the fight. Himu now took possession of Delhi city.

The news of the disaster at Tughlaqabad reached the young Emperor Akbar at Jalandhar and he at once set out with all his forces to recover Delhi. The decisive battle was fought on 5th November, 1556, about four miles north-west of the scene of Babur’s victory, hence it is called the Second Battle of Panipat. From the way Himu sent forward his advance-guard with the greater part of his artillery to Panipat.
Akbar's advanced division led by Ali Quli Khan Shaibani came upon this force and by combining deceptive cunning with hard-hitting audacity\(^1\) completely deceived and overpowered the blunt Afghans who fled away abandoning their guns, without making any stand.

Undaunted by this initial reverse, Himu advanced to the fight, at the head of 30,000 Rajput and Afghan horsemen, comrades of his former victories. His 500 war elephants were protected by plate armour, and on their backs were placed musketeers and cross-bowmen. The commanders were men of valour and loyalty and proud of their past deeds. But he had no field-gun. Akbar himself then a boy of thirteen, marched with his guardian Bairam Khan twenty miles behind his fighting troops. The battle was fought by ten thousand Mughal cavalry under the command of Ali Quli Khan (later created Khan-i-Zaman) and without the help of Babur's profuse firearms. It was a ding-dong fight, and the heavily outnumbered Mughals would probably have been defeated, if the Afghan side had not lost its leader in the thick of the contest.

The Mughal right wing was under Sikandar Khan Uzbak, the left under Abdullah Khan Uzbak, the centre under Ali Quli Khan Shaibani, and the vanguard under Husain Quli Beg and Shah Quli Mahram (with Bairam's own contingent of Turks). Himu took post in the centre and gave the charge of his right wing to Shadi Khan Kakar and his left to Ramya (his own sister's son).

The battle began with an attack by Himu. The onset of the furious elephants shook the right and left wings of the Mughal army and many hard-fighting warriors fell on their side. The survivors did not flee, but Turk-like withdrew from the frontal fighting to avoid the elephants, and making a detour fell on the enemy horsemen's flanks, galling them with their superior archery and shaking them by their Parthian wheeling tactics. The Mughal centre too advanced, but coming to a plot of ground with a deep ravine in front, which was impassable for elephants, it stood on the defensive plying its mis-

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\(^1\) Our "ghazis added feline skill to the deeds of tigers", as Abul Fazl writes, which means a successful ruse followed by a bold demonstration. (*Akbarnamah*, ii. 59).
sile weapons on the foe powerless to reach it with either horse or elephant.

Meanwhile the flanking parties of Turks, mounted on superb horses, had penetrated the enemy ranks from side and rear and were slashing at the elephants’ legs or shooting off their drivers. As the Afghan attack slackened and the elephants fell back, Ali Quli led his cavalry out of its shelter and making a detour attacked the Afghan centre from behind. Himu who was surveying the battle field and directing the operations from the back of a lofty elephant, hastened to the threatened side, making every effort to restore the battle and “leaving no stratagem or heroic deed that his mind could conceive unattempted” (Akbarnamah, ii. 64). He made repeated counter-charges with his powerful elephants, overthrowing the Mughals in the direct line of his advance. But the war was taking toll of his strength; two of his bravest lieutenants, Bhagwan Das and Shadi Khan Kakar were killed before his eyes. The mixed fighting raged most stubbornly for some time, when an arrow pierced his eye. The blood sprouting from the wound was seen by the Afghans near him, but he pulled the arrow out, bandaged the eye with a scarf, and ordered the fight to go on, after which he fell down into the hauda in a faint. The fall of the leader ended the battle and the Afghan-Rajput army broke up in hopeless flight.

A Mughal captain seized Himu’s elephant and led it away from the battle-field to Akbar’s camp, about 8 miles in the rear. Here the half-unconscious champion of the Afghan throne was beheaded by Bairam Khan. Five thousand dead were counted on the field and many more were slain when fleeing.