CHAPTER XI

MUGHAL CONQUEST OF BENGAL

Battle Of Tukaroi, 1575

The Emperor Akbar, after extending his rule from Delhi and Agra to the middle of northern India, through Oudh and Jaunpur, came up against the north-eastern corner, Bihar and Bengal. This province was then ruled by the Afghan house of Karrani who had seized it during the decline of Sher Shah’s dynasty. Sulaiman Karrani (who died in 1572) had wisely saved his throne by professing himself a vassal of Akbar. But his young and hot-headed son Daud Karrani; in foolish pride, cast off his allegiance to Akbar and declared his independence.

An imperial army under Munim Khan (entitled Khan-i-Khanan) advanced into Bihar and laid siege to Patna, in which city Daud had shut himself up with his army. Akbar joined him there on 3rd August, 1574, and three days later took by assault the fort of Hajipur (facing Patna and on the north bank of the Ganges), which victory made Patna untenable. That very night Daud and his generals fled away from Patna in disorder by the land route. Munim Khan gave chase, capturing all the strong places on the way without any resistance, till he reached Tanda (in the Malda district) which was then the capital of Bengal and the latest location of the old historic city of Gaur, on September 25, 1574.

From this base, the Mughal Commander-in-Chief sent out detachments which wrested west, north, central and south Bengal from the local Afghan officers, while their King Daud fled away to Orissa. Thereafter the imperial officers sickened of campaigning in the pestilential climate of Bengal, slackened their exertions; internal dissensions and desertions further weakened them. Munim Khan was too old and weak to control them. So, Akbar sent Raja Todar Mal, as sagacious as brave, with orders to strengthen him and by invading Orissa
to crush Daud and put an end to the Afghan menace. Burdwan was made the advance base of the imperial army in Bengal.

**Battle of TUKAROI**

![Map of Battle of Tukaroi](image)

Tukra village of modern map marked as X is Mogalmari in a map of 1840.

Meantime Daud returned from Orissa with his army to the Midnapur district to fight the Mughals. Todar Mal advanced from Burdwan to Garh Mandaran (8 miles due west of Arambagh in Hooghly) and thence to Cheto, where Munim Khan joined him with the rest of the imperial army. Daud's position was Garh Haripur, eleven miles south-east of the Dantan rail-
way station. The battle was fought near the village now called Tukra Qasba, nine miles east of Dantan railway station and three miles west of the important village of Nanjura (Nahanjara in the latest map). This Nanjura is now two miles west of the modern Midnapur-Contai branch road, being separated from that road by the village of Palasia (some 8 miles northwest of Egra town). But in the days before the railway, the old Midnapur-Contai road passed through Nanjura and the Jaleswar-Tamluk road cut the above road only three miles north of Nanjura, (map of 1840). Haripur is also given some 8 miles south-west of it. Tukra has been misspelt in Persian writing as Tukaroi. There is no reason for calling it the battle of Mughalmari; though the maps give three Mughalmaris in the Jaleswar and Midnapur districts, none of them was the site of any major Mughal-Afghan battle, according to history.

Daud had fortified his camp at Haripur by digging a deep trench around it and throwing up breastworks, in Afghan fashion. He had also barricaded the regular road from Midnapur southwards at strategic points, and as this road ran through a jungle the advancing Mughal army could be easily ambushed anywhere on it. The imperial soldiery were disheartened and refused to fight, clamouring for peace with the enemy. Todar Mal and the Khan-i-Khanan harangued and argued with them and cajoled them into a fighting mood. It was dangerous to go straight forward upon Daud's position, and therefore the Mughal chiefs, helped by men with knowledge of the locality, discovered an obscure circuitous path. This route was improved by pioneers, and then the army, making a wide detour by their left, i.e., south-eastwards, arrived at Nanjura, a village close to the Contai-Midnapur road and 11 miles east of Dantan railway station.

Thus Daud's flank was turned and his rear could be cut by the Mughals now after one day's march. He had already sent off his family and impedimenta to Katak and lightened his force. He now advanced from his camp to challenge the enemy at their halting place. The encounter took place on the plain of Tukaroi, ten miles south of the angle formed by the B. N. railway line and the branch road from Dantan to Contai.
The Battle Described

The course of the battle can be clearly followed from the Persian histories. The Mughal chiefs had decided not to fight that day, as the stars were inauspicious. They had merely sent out the usual vedettes in front of their camp, when they were surprised to see the enemy rapidly advancing in full force. Munim Khan hurriedly ordered his troops to be drawn up in battle array. He followed the customary formation: the Vanguard (under Alam Khan), the Advanced Reserve or Ilmish (under Qiya Khan), the Centre (under Munim Khan), the Left Wing (under Ashraf Khan and Todar Mal), and the Right Wing (under Shaham Khan). But before the imperial army had completed the marshalling of its ranks, Daud precipitated the battle with a furious charge of elephants in a long line under Gujar Khan, upon the Mughal Vanguard. "As the tusks and necks of the elephants were covered with black yak-tails and the skins of the animals, they produced horror and dismay; the horses of the imperial van were frightened on seeing these extraordinary forms, and hearing the terrible cries, and turned back. Though the riders exerted themselves, they were not successful and the troops lost their formation." Akbarnamah, iii. 176). Khan Alam was slain and his division was scattered. The impetus of the victorious Afghan van similarly broke the imperial Ilmish and even swept away the Centre itself. Munim Khan and other officers fought desperately receiving repeated wounds, but their followers "did not behave well". At last, the tide of fugitives swept away the commander-in-chief five miles behind the front. The Afghans of the vanguard, after pursuing him for half a mile, turned aside to plunder his camp; they even went beyond it and dispersed in the attempt to overtake the Mughal camp-followers who were trying to escape with their pack animals.

This ruined the Afghan cause. Daud durst not follow up Gujar Khan's successful charge by pushing into the opening made by him in the Mughal centre and taking the imperial left wing in flank, as he feared that the retreat of the Khan-i-Khanan was merely a ruse for luring him into the jaws of death between his enemies' two wings. The Afghan right wing under
Sikandar merely made a half-hearted frontal demonstration against the Mughal left wing, and then "fled without coming to blows", because here Todar Mal and other officers held their ground firmly and presented a bold front. When Daud himself arrived in support of his Right wing he could do no better. Meantime the severely shaken Mughal divisions had been rallied; everywhere brave men had formed themselves into small knots and facing round were attacking the Afghans with arrows from horseback in Turk fashion. One of these missiles killed Gujar Khan, and thereafter the Afghan vanguard melted away in a minute. Munim Khan himself returned to the field and completed the tally on his side.

At the other extremity, the Afghan left wing had attacked and somewhat shaken the imperial right division: Shaham Khan, the commander of the latter, himself "lost firmness on hearing of the boldness of Gujar and of the confusion of the imperial [central] army, and was turning back." [Akbarnamah, iii. 178]. But he was heartened by his braver subordinates, and this wing turned and fought the Afghans boldly. "In a short space of time the enemy [in front of them] was driven off and the victors proceeded against the (Afghan) centre." Threatened in front and left, with his vanguard dispersed beyond recall or sight, Daud could not maintain the contest long; his ruin was completed when news came of the fall of Gujar Khan and the flight of his division. The entire Afghan army now broke and fled in hopeless rout. The Mughals gave chase, slaying and plundering without opposition. "The plain became a tulip-garden from the blood of the slain."

Next day, the Mughal generalissimo, then in his 82nd year and suffering from senile decay (according to Abul Fazl), vented his wrath by killing all the prisoners taken and building eight towers with their heads. Daud fled to Katak, without being able to make a stand anywhere before the pursuing imperial army under Todar Mal. On 12th April he came out of that fort and made a complete submission.
Chapter XII

Battle of Haldighat, 1576

Babur’s grandson, Akbar, who reigned over the empire of Delhi from 1556 to 1605, was the greatest ruler of India after Asoka, a born general and administrative organiser, a far-sighted statesman and a noble-hearted humanitarian. His aim was to make India strong by uniting all its parts under one sceptre and one reformed system of government. He, therefore, came up against the numberless petty chieftains of this continent of a country, who cherished their local independence above everything else. But Akbar won most of them over by his generous policy and crushed the others. The Rana of Mewar, the head of the Sisodia clan and the highest in honour among the Rajput tribes, refused to become Akbar’s vassal. But the Emperor captured his capital Chitor after a memorable and bloody siege (1568) and occupied the eastern and more fertile half of his kingdom. Against the Rana, the Emperor sent Man Singh, heir to the Kachhwa house of Amber (later Jaipur) whose family had a hereditary feud with the Ranas of Mewar for past violations of territory. This Kachhwa family had recently risen to the highest rank and power by entering the Mughal service and displaying exceptional capacity for war and government under the Crown.

The Rana, Pratap Singh, took refuge in the western hills and forests of his dominion, in the rock-fortress of Kumbhalgarh (also called Kamalmer) and made his base at Gogunda (1757 feet above sea level), a town 16 miles north-west of Udaipur. It was necessary for Akbar to drive the Rana out of this post, in order to secure an easy route for the conquest of Gujrat from his own province of Malwa.

Man Singh, after calling in the Mughal detachments and mobilising his army at his base Mandalgarh (in Eastern Mewar), marched by way of Mohi (south of Raj-samund Lake) to the large village of Khamnor, south of the Banas river,
and seven miles west of the famous temple of Nathdwarā. This place is only 14 miles north of Gogunda, being separated from the latter by a spur of the Aravali chain, called the Haldighat, because its rock when crushed yields a bright yellow sand looking exactly like the turmeric (haldi) powder with which Indians spice their dishes. The Rana met the threat by advancing towards Khamnor and delivering battle on 18th June, 1576.

Rival Armies

The Rana's army is estimated by the eye-witness AI Badayuni at about (bamiqdar) three thousand horsemen, without any mention of infantry. The only foot-soldiers on his side were the Bhil bowmen of Punja (the chieftain of Merpur) who stood in the rear of the Rajput troopers, like the Pindharis behind the regular Maratha cavalry. Their number did not probably exceed 400, and they had no influence on the combat, because Bhils are not used to fighting pitched battles on open plains, but always ply their arrows from the cover of trees and rocks, and that day the Mughal army did not penetrate into the hills, so that the Bhils had no occasion to draw their bows.

It would be as fair a guess as we can make today to take Man Singh's total command as about ten thousand men. Out of these, some four thousand were his own clansmen (Kachhwas of Jaipur), one thousand (or less) were other Hindu auxiliaries, and five thousand (or a little more) Muslim troops of the imperial service. This proportion is a reasonable inference from the relative numbers of the officers of different races named in the contemporary Persian histories of the battle. Each side possessed elephants of war, but the Rajputs had no fire-arms, while the Muslims used a certain number of muskets of the improved pattern introduced by Akbar but no wheeled artillery or heavy ordnance (mortar).

The current Mewari tradition gives Man Singh eighty thousand men and the Rana twenty thousand out of whom only eight thousand survived. The proportion of four to one is the only thing correct here. These inflated figures are of a piece with the story that Pratap's horse Chetak jumped upon
Man Singh’s elephant as a tiger climbs up a hunter’s elephant and that one of its legs was cut off, after which it hobbled on three legs for two miles carrying its heavily armour-clad master on its back, till it fell down dead. Is not this a copy of Chevy Chace:—

For Witherington needs must I wayle,
As one in doleful dumpes;
For when his legs were smitten off,
He fought upon his stumpes.

The imperial army was thus marshalled: In the front rode a line of skirmishers, some 85 chosen heroes, led by Sayyid Hashim of Barha. Then came the Vanguard of brigaded Rajputs and Mughals, the Kachhwas under Jagannath and the Central Asian Mughals under Bakhshi Ali Asaf Khan (a Khawaja of Kazvin), a strong iltmish (advanced reserve) under Madho Singh Kachhwa, the Centre under Man Singh himself, and the Left Wing under Mulla Qazi Khan (later surnamed Ghazi Khan) of Badakhshan and Rao Lonkarn, the baron of Sambhar, with a band of the Shaikhzadas of Fathepur-Sikri (kinsmen of the saint Shaikh Salim Chishti). The strongest point in their line—in fact the pivot on which the imperial army turned—was the Right Wing, composed of the Sayyids of Barha, famous for their hereditary valor, which gave them the right to stand in the most dangerous and honourable position, at the right hand of the generalissimo. The Rear was formed by Mihtar Khan, at first at a great distance behind the front. Leaving out the Indian Muslims of Barha and Fathepur, the imperial troops were all crack horsemen and archers, from Central Asia, Uzbaks, Badakhshis, Qazzaqs and other tribes.

The Rana’s Vanguard (about 800 horsemen), was commanded by Hakim Khan Sur (with his Afghan brethren), Bhim Singh, the baron of Dodia, Ramdas Rathor (a son of Jaimal, the martyred defender of Chitor), one Chundaot baron and some others. His Right Wing (say, 500 strong) was led by Ram Sah Tonwar, the dispossessed Rajah of Gwalior, with his three gallant sons and Bhamo Shah, the Minister, with his brother Tarachand. In the Left Wing (say, 400 strong) were
Bida Mana and other Jhala clansmen. Pratap himself commanded the Centre (some 1,300 strong) mounted on his famous charger Chetak. In the Rear stood the Bhil bowmen of Punja, preceded by a group of bards (charan), priests (purohit), traders (mahta) and others usually counted as civilians, but who fought and bled like the best soldiers by caste.

In locating the actual site of the combat we are helped by some fixed points supplied by Al Badayuni: (1) The Mughal left wing was posted at the mouth of the pass (dahna-i-ghati), which was south-east of Khamnor, and therefore the imperial battle line stretched westwards from this point to a bend in the Banas river. (2) The Rana came into the field from behind the defile (az‘aqb-i-dera), and therefore he had passed the preceding night east of the range (at Lohsing according to the Mewari accounts). (3) The Rana’s Vanguard under Hakim Khan Sur began the battle after debouching from the west side of the hill (qiblaruia-i-Koh). Therefore, the first clash of arms took place north-west of the Haldi range and not south-east of it. (4) The division under Pratap himself issued from the waist of the pass (az-mian-i-ghati) after Hakim Sur, and formed its wings in the plain.

When I visited Haldighat in October, 1934, my guide from Khamnor told me that the Rajput dead were washed and cremated at the now dried up tank called Rakt-ka-Tal, which was really their smashan and not the place where they had fought and fallen.

Tactics

Rana Pratap Singh staked his all on a desperate frontal charge, he kept no disposable reserve nor rear guard, for any emergency. Indeed, his total strength (only one-third of the Mughal numbers) was too small to permit him such a measure of precaution without greatly weakening his two attacking columns and taking the momentum out of his attack. Hence, his initial success could not be followed up, nor his check in the second stage ridden down. In fact, he followed what Captain Liddel Hart has called, “the wild-boar rush of Marshal Petain” in the First World War.
When the fighting became general, Raja Ram Sah Tonwar swerved from his original position in the right, where he had no work after the flight of his opposite number, the commander of the imperial left wing, and always pressed into the field in front of Pratap Singh, thus shielding the Rana's person, till he was slain by Jagannath Kachhwa. After the Mughal Vanguard and Left Wing had been scattered and their Right pressed hard, the main battle raged in the Centre. Here the Kachhwäs of Amber grappled with the Sisodias of Mewar with the indescribable bitterness and fury which civil war between men of the same race usually breeds; challenges and taunts were hurled from one side to the other, and their captains had again and again to dash to the front and fight single combats, the battle line swaying to and fro with every such movement.

During this second stage of the battle, the Muslim cavalry hovered round the ring, shooting their arrows and bullets with unerring effect into the mingled crowd of contending Rajputs in the centre, and cynically remarking. "On whichever side a man falls, it is a gain to Islam because it is one Hindu the less." (General Ali Asaf Khan's assurance to Al Badayuni).

The Rana's last resource was his war-elephants, and when these were overcome by the shooting off of their drivers, and the Mughal pressure on three sides began to drain the life blood of the Sisodias, striking down all their leaders one after another and finally the wounded Pratap Singh had to be led out of the field, the end came.

It was three hours after sunrise on the 18th of June, when the two armies first clashed together. From the western mouth of the pass issued a raging torrent of Afghans under Hakim Khan Sur and Rajputs under Ramdas, the son of Jaimal. The Afghans attacked with the burning rage of exiles against the usurpers of their homes. The impetuosity of this charge swept away the Mughal front line of sikrmishers (only 85 men) in a twinkle and rolled them up upon the vanguard which itself was shaken and forced to give ground. Owing to the broken ground, jungle and crooked foot-tracks here, the Mughal cavaliers were huddled together in confusion, unable to deploy and counter-attack.

At the same time the imperial Left Wing was broken by
the attack of Raja Ram Sah and Bhama Shah; their opponents, Shaikhzadas of Sikri and Lon Karn's corps fled away "like a flock of sheep" from their post and passing by the Vanguard took refuge in their Right Wing. Both Qazi Khan and the Shaikhzada captain were wounded. The Right Wing itself was furiously attacked by Bida Jhala, but here the obstinate valour of the Sayyids of Barha upheld the imperial cause in spite of heavy slaughter by the Jhalas. This firm stand was rewarded; Man Singh's advanced reserve under Madho Singh galloped up to reinforce the hard-pressed Vanguard, which was also strengthened by the coming of Qazi Khan from the Left Wing and Sayyid Hashim from the front with a few staunch followers who had refused to flee. The battle line was thus stabilised and the fighting now became general.

By this time the two Centres were engaged, Rana Pratap and Man Singh each pressing forward with his men. The momentum of the Sisodia onset had been spent and the rival hosts were now locked together in a death embrace, and hand to hand fighting raged all over the field. "The warriors on both sides yielded up their lives but preserved their honour," as Akbar's Court historian admits: The Dodia baron, Bhim Singh, forced his way up to Man Singh's elephant and challenged him with the shout, "I am Dodia Bhim Singh, Come on, if you dare." He paid the price of his loyalty with his life.

**Elephant Combats**

The deadlock could be removed only by employing four-footed artillery. The Maharana sent his famous elephant "the rank-breaking Lona" to clear a path. Man and horse quailed before it. But the imperialists countered the move by driving forward their own "Pearl among elephants" (Gajmukta) to oppose it. "The shock of these two mountain-like forms threw the soldiers into trepidation, and the imperial elephant was wounded and about to fly when ... a bullet struck the driver of the enemy's elephant and he turned back. But just then Pratap Tonwar brought forward Ram Prasad, which was the head of their elephants, and threw down many gallant men." At this time of wavering, two of the Mughal elephants, Gajraj
and Ran-madar, were brought up to oppose Ram Prasad. But the driver of Ram Prasad was hit by an arrow in a vital place and thrown down to the ground by the shock of the charge. Then Husain Khan, the faujdar of the imperial elephants, with the greatest agility leapt from his own elephant on to the back of Ram Prasad and made prize that noted elephant, which had often been praised in Akbar's Court.

The hand-to-hand combat was now resumed. Kachhwa fought Sisodia in deadly rivalry. Ram Sah Tonwar (the ex-king of Gwalior) with his three gallant sons, who always kept in front of the Rana, "performed such prodigies of valour against the Rajputs of Man Singh as baffle description. Similarly, the young heroes who acted as the bodyguard of Man Singh performed such exploits as were a perfect model." This is the grudging testimony extorted from the bigoted Al Badayuni, an actor in this fight. In the heat of their onsets, the two supreme commanders once approached each other, but happily never came within reach of their spears. The Maharana was mostly opposed to Madho Singh Kachhwa, who led the all-important reserve. "Showers of arrows poured on the Rana who was wounded" by arrow and spear.

It was now mid-day. The contest had raged obstinately for three hours, and the Sisodias who had been under arms and moving for six hours, began to faint from the intense heat of mid-summer in that treeless plain shut round by hills. There were woeful losses on their side; Ramdas Rathor met with his father's heroic end by falling on the field. Ram Sah of Gwalior with his three sons—Salivahan, Bahan and Pratap Tonwar—perished "after showing extreme obstinacy of resistance, and there was none left to be his successor." (Al Badayuni). There were many others among the noble slain, of lesser note but no less valour than these.

The Final Scene

One act of the purest Rajput devotion was to light up the closing scene of Haldighat. By this time the tide of battle had turned irrevocably against the Maharana: his wings had been crumpled up and crowded upon his centre, which was
hemmed round on three sides by the exultant imperialists. In the confusion the hope of Mewar himself was all but surrounded by the enemy and about to be cut off. But it was not to be, so long as there remained a single Rajput true to his chieftain. Realising the crisis, Bida, the Jhala baron, promptly snatched away the royal umbrella from over the head of Pratap Singh and rushed forward with it shouting that he himself was the Maharana and defying the imperialists to face him. The ruse succeeded; the Mughal captains, each eager to win the honour of being the Maharana’s captor, crowded round Bida. The pressure on Pratap Singh was released, and his faithful adherents seizing his bridle turned his horse’s head and led their wounded chieftain out of safety through the pass in their rear. Bida met with the death he had coveted. With his fall the struggle ended; the remnant of the Mewar army dissolved and fled through the pass or up the hillside, leaving 350 of their number to consecrate with their life blood the Thermopylae of Rajasthan. On the generally accepted calculation that the wounded are three times as many as the slain, the Mewar army that day endured casualties to the extent of 46 per cent of its total strength. From this we can judge of the fury of the fight. The imperialists lost about 150 slain and 350 wounded.

The Result

In the end, Haldighat proved a barren victory. No doubt the Mughals occupied Gogunda, but they could not oust the Rana from his north-western hills (Kumbhalgarh and Deosuri), nor could they occupy Gogunda long for want of provisions, the hostility of the population and the insecurity of the roads. As soon as the Mughal army of occupation withdrew, the Maharana came out of hiding and re-occupied the western part of his kingdom, while Chitor and eastern Mewar remained in Mughal hands. This uneasy state continued till after the death of both Akbar and Pratap Singh, when Jahangir granted an honourable peace to Pratap’s son and successor, Amar Singh.
CHAPTER XIII

THE LAST MUGHAL-PATHAN BATTLE,

DAULAMBAPUR, 1612

This is in many ways the most interesting Indian battle of the days before the English. For one thing, we have information about the strategic movements leading up to it and the equipment, tactics and actual course of the battle, with a minuteness of detail and accuracy of observation which are unequalled by any other of our battles before or after it. The report was written by a high military officer who fought in it and his record has been preserved ungarbled since then in a unique Persian manuscript.¹

Daud, the last Karrani Sultan of Bengal, after his defeat by Akbar at Tukaroi (1575) made his submission, but rose again and was killed near Rajmahal (July 10, 1576). One of his ministers named Qutlu Lohani (Mian Khel) built up a small principality for himself in North Orissa by expelling Akbar's officers. When he died (in 1590), his followers, then led by his nephew Khawajah Usman Lohani were defeated by the imperial viceroy, Rajah Man Singh, exiled from Orissa and settled in the Khulna district on the South Bengal coast. Here they raised trouble, but were forced to migrate to the Dacca side of the great river, where Usman founded a new capital at Bokainagar in North Mymensingh. The Mughal pressure continued, and Usman, after losing Bokainagar, trekked further north with his followers and took shelter in South Sylhet, with his new seat at Patan Ushar (in

¹ Baharistan-i-Ghaibi (author Mirza Nathan, Shitab Khan), in the Biblio, Nationale of Paris, First English summary published by me in J.B.O.R. Society 1921; a full Bengali account of the battle by me in the Prabasi magazine (Agrahayan, 1328.) Full English translation by Prof. M. I. Borah, Baharistan-i-Ghyabi, 2 Vols. (Govt. of Assam, 1938),—dangerously incorrect at places, (e.g., i. 174, he translates that Usman had planted only one big cannon in his front battery, while the text gives the plural number.)
the modern Maulavi Bazar Sub-division). The other Afghan chiefs, long settled in that region, were his natural allies.

In 1612, Islam Khan, the energetic imperial governor of Bengal, launched a great plan for crushing Usman and putting an end to the Afghan menace from the Sylhet side. From Dacca he detached one strong column (under Shaikh Kamal) against Bayazid Karrani, the chieftain of the older Afghan settlers in Sylhet, who had taken Usman under his protection, in order to prevent him from coming to the aid of his ally. A second army division was despatched against Usman under Shujait Khan Chishti. It was made up of a large number of horse and foot, among whom were 500 choice cavalry of the Governor's personal contingent, 4,000 musketeers, and about 100 elephants, accompanied by the whole of the imperial fleet in the East Bengal waters and the naval contingent of a vassal zamindar, and the artillery,—which maintained easy connection with the base at Dacca.

Shujait Khan marched from Dacca to Sarail (7 miles north of Brahmanberia town), where he left the fleet behind. Thence the army marched along the Meghna river for about 34 miles north-eastwards to Taraf (in the hills of South Sylhet) and next arrived at Putia-juri (5 miles north of Taraf) on 2nd February, 1612. Here he received more reinforcements from Dacca, consisting of 1,000 cavalry and a large body of musketeers, besides provisions. After another march of some five miles he arrived near Daulambapur, where he contacted the enemy. I identify this place as a village one mile north of the large lake called Hail Haor, and about five miles south of the modern town of Maulavi-Bazar; Uhar lay 13 miles west of it.

Usman had come out of his capital and entrenched his camp here. The place was admirably suited to the Afghan type of defensive war and the Afghan genius for making the best use of the terrain. A long narrow bog protected his front from the Mughal camp, which lay two miles away. A grove of large and thick betel-nut trees stood on the border of the marsh, and the Afghans by tying planks to these trees, formed a machan or raised battery on which large guns were mounted.

On 12th March, 1612, the Imperial army advanced from
its camp towards the marsh, in this order of battle:—The Vanguard was under Mirza Nathan (later surnamed Shitab Khan), the Right Wing under Iftikhar Khan, the Left under Kishwar Khan, the Centre under Shujait Khan himself and Ihtimam Khan, the Admiral, and the Advanced Reserved under Shaikh Qasim (the son of Shujait) with orders to support the Vanguard at need. All the big artillery was left behind in the camp and only a number of light pieces were carried along by the Vanguard, slung from poles borne by boatmen or mounted on the backs of elephants (swivels).

Usman’s strength is computed by Nathan as 5,200 horsemen, 10,000 infantry and 140 elephants (from which figures we must make some deduction for inflation). He himself commanded the Centre, his brother Wali the Left, and his favourite slave Sher-i-Maidan the Right Wings, and two other brothers and a nephew his Vanguard. Usman’s plan was to turn his camp into a fort with the long marsh before it as the ditch and the line of betel-nut trees on the water’s edge as the rampart, with guns mounted on raised batteries of planks. These guns were trained on the known fords over the creek and under cover of their fire the Afghans could safely cross the water and attack the Mughals, while the imperial troops trying to reach the Afghan camp would be destroyed in the course of wading through that place in column formation. Inside this vast camp tents were pitched, groves arranged for sheltering and concealing the war-elephants, and food and munitions stored for the army. Hillocks and jungles guarded his two flanks against any turning movement from a distance.

The Afghans had so successfully camouflaged their camp that the Mughal army had no knowledge of their enemy’s battle line. As the imperialists approached the scene, Murad Beg Aimaq (a Central Asian horse-archer leading the front scouts), on sighting the group of Afghans near the betel-nut grove, pointed it out as the enemy’s main position. (But it was really their Left Wing). Immediately a wave of tumult passed through the imperial Vanguard, their pre-arranged plan of combat was thrown to the winds and a confused fighting began. The Van parted into three, one body swerving to the right in order to fight a party of Afghans who had boldly
crossed the 'jhil' (marsh) near the betel-nut trees on to the Mughal side of the water. A second portion, without orders, hastened in the opposite direction and mingled with the front lines of their Left Wing, creating uncalled for disorder there. But the main body of the Vanguard remained steady under its commander Mirza Nathan, who, however, could not fire his light guns planted in the ground and loaded, because of the mingled crowd of friends and foes before him.

To make matters worse for the Mughals, their big guns of position in the trenches two miles behind, now opened fire, hitting their own men in the front line from behind. Thus Shaikh Achha was killed and two other officers of the Right of the Van who had been engaged with the Afghan assailants were forced to retreat. For a time the close fighting ceased between the two Vanguards in the centre, who stood facing each other across the creek.

At the very opening of the battle, a disaster was brought down upon the imperial Right Wing by the indiscipline of its commander and the cowardice of its regular cavalry. Iftikhar Khan, proud of holding the most honourable post in the royal army, at the right hand of the commander-in-chief, had vowed to strike the first blow and deny that glory to the Vanguard. Therefore, as soon as the cry arose, "Our Van is advancing", he darted out of his own post at the core of the Right Wing, with 12 select heroes before him, 30 of his own troopers around and 14 devoted servants behind. Crossing the 'jhil' at his extreme right, by an obscure and unguarded ford which his local Muslim servant had spied out before, he reached the opposite bank in safety and fell on the Afghan Left Wing (commanded by Usman's brother Wali) like tigers. Though the rest of Iftikhar's command held back in cowardice, he and his 56 followers convulsed this Afghan Wing by their reckless fury. Wali gave ground and was about to flee, when Usman saw the danger and hastened to the spot with 2,000 horsemen and famous elephants, rescued his brother and enveloped the handful of Mughals. A most stubborn and cruel fight raged here. A powerful elephant of this Mughal wing was brought up across the 'jhil' to support Iftikhar, but it was at last 'made mince-meat of' by the crowd of Afghan horse and foot fight-
ing on their own ground. Iftikhar himself was killed and his small band of heroic comrades annihilated. The contest on the Afghan side of the ‘jhil’ ended.

But the struggle had not been in vain; it had a decisive effect on the battle. One of the servants of Iftikhar sacrificed himself to avenge his master. Pressing close to Usman he gave him a mortal wound with his arrow, but paid the price of his daring with his own life. (Later, in the afternoon, Iftikhar’s body was carried back by seven of his devoted retainers, three of whom fell in the attempt).

All this time a severe battle had been raging at the opposite end of the Mughal line. Sher-i-Maidan, the commander of Usman’s Right Wing, crossed the ‘jhil’ by a ford before him and fell upon the imperial Left Wing (under Kishwar Khan), driving away like chaff those men of the Mughal Vanguard who had rushed into its front only to create confusion. With unchecked momentum he next penetrated to the centre of this Wing where the General Kishwar Khan was slain ‘owing to the weakness and cowardice of his soldiers.” The imperialists of this wing took to flight, and were chased up to their base camp. Turning back to the battle-field before the ‘jhil’, Sher-i-Maidan attacked the rear of the imperial Van from its left side. “A great confusion arose.” But Mirza Nathan made such a bold stand that the exhausted Afghan horsemen of Sher-i-Maidan at last fled away to their own side.

But soon afterwards, the fighting was resumed in a more extensive and obstinate form. Usman’s son Mumriz now arrived on the field with a vast force by the same route as Sher-i-Maidan (at the extreme right of the Afghan army). His famous war-elephants, the pride of Bengal, on being driven in front, at first caused havoc among the Mughal ranks. But the best elephants of the imperial army were brought up to counter these beasts, and a battle of indescribable confusion and ferocity raged all over the field,—the Mughals now huddled together, now scattering to avoid the path of the rushing mountains. The soldiers of the two sides were mingled together; brave captains challenged each other and fought single combats, and the famous elephants of the two sides were similarly matched against each other. On the whole, the
Bengal elephants proved their mastery and there were severe losses on the imperial side, most of the highest officers being killed or wounded.

"As the cavalry was engaged with the cavalry, the infantry with the infantry, and elephants with elephants, none could come to the help of others . . . In short, from early morning till midday, hand to hand fighting was carried on." But in the course of time the mounted archery and elephant-borne swivel guns on the Mughal side, turned the tide in their favour. Many of the Afghan elephants were killed or disabled, their drivers shot off and the concentration of their cavalry broken up. At last, "when the Afghans found that the imperialists would not yield their ground, they became very much disappointed and took to flight," closely pursued by the Mughals up to the water's edge.

Thereafter a desultory fight continued till the afternoon. It was not known to the imperial army whether Usman was alive or dead, because his sons carried on the war undismayed by his death. "The warriors on both sides were extremely tired of this hard fought battle and had lost the power of rushing forward. Arrows, bullets and cannon-balls were kept showering from both sides," but the better artillery and marksmanship of the Mughals got the better of the enemy.

The hand to hand fighting had ceased by midday; the exchange of fire across the 'jhil' continued till midnight when it died out on the Afghan side. Some six hours before dawn, the Afghans secretly evacuated their camp, carrying away all their elephants, artillery and infantry as well as the corpse of their chieftain. Then only did the Mughals learn that the victory was theirs.

In this battle, two principles of war are well illustrated; First, that other things being tolerably well matched, the character of the general decides the issue of the fight. Secondly, the fully equipped "regular" Mughal army with its heavy cavalry and guns is reduced to impotence in the swamps and jungle of East Bengal, if the opposite side can make a clever use of the terrain and its advantages for the defence. The Bengal Afghans fought this battle with inferior numbers, poorer equipment and inadequate munitions. Their soldiers were
mostly East Bengal rustics many of whom had only recently changed their bamboo rods for sword and shield. The loss of their contact with Chittagong and Noakhali had robbed them of the means of increasing their fire-arms and gun powder by purchase from the Portuguese; and their horses were sorry country ponies. And yet the genius of their leader Khwaja Usman and the fighting spirit of their race almost caused a disastrous defeat of the superior force of the imperialists.

At Daulambapur the uneven and marshy ground, no doubt, proved a handicap to the imperial cavalry who could not follow their usual tactics suited to dry open plains. The disorder was made worse by their war elephants getting out of control, and thus impeding cavalry action. But when everything has been said, the fact cannot be denied that Shujait Khan failed in a General's duty to hold his divisions strictly together and control the battle, with the result that each wing commander acted as he liked or was forced to act. If his four thousand foot musketeers had been tactically employed, they alone could have neutralised twice number of Afghan horsemen.

The memoirs of Mirza Nathan illustrate the notorious jealousy raging among the imperial officers in Bengal (notably between the General and the Admiral.) The Moghul army was sick of campaigning in the unhealthy climate of East Bengal and had no heart in its work. During this battle the foot musketeers (Hindus of Bihar) rebuked the Mughal cavalry (Central Asians) for holding back and deserting their captain.

The most memorable fact of this battle was the bold front presented by the Indo-Afghans and their continued fighting for the whole day, after their chief had fallen in the forenoon. They even kept Usman's death a secret from their enemy till next morning. Thus they succeeded in keeping their camp unviolated by the enemy till they could fully evacuate it under cover of the night. This was an astonishing performance for an Asiatic army.
Chapter XIV

TALIKOTA, JAN. 5, 1565

Talikota is rightly called the most decisive battle of South India. It effected a revolutionary change in the history of the entire Deccan. It shattered the great Vijaynagar empire into fragments, turned that splendid capital into a desolate wilderness, and left the Hindus of southern India so disunited and crushed that they could never again raise their heads in full sovereignty.

To the military student this battle is of interest as repeating the story of Alexander’s victory over Porus in its essential features, though differing in some particulars, such as the use of artillery and elephants on both sides. Here we have again the sure triumph of a choice cavalry force over a multitude of ill-armed rustic infantry. Here again true generalship overcame a fourfold superiority in mere numbers, though the arms were of the same kind on both the sides.

The Rival Armies Contrasted

The crushing defeat of Vijaynagar was the natural effect of the Hindu armies neglecting the cavalry arm and long range missile weapons, and their leaders riding on elephants instead of swift horses of the best breed. The Hindu infantry was strong only in number, mustering hundreds of thousands, but they formed a neglected arm; the men were without armour or even coats; their bodies were naked except for a loin cloth and a turban, and their weapons were the Indian bow, made of bamboo, which could send an arrow only a short distance. Their cavalry numbered (on the average) about one-twentieth of their infantry and they were mostly mounted on countrybred ponies, unable to bear the weight of armour or lend momentum to a charge. Their horsemen plied the sword and the short spear (only six feet long), so that they could hit the enemy
only when they came close enough to fight hand to hand.

The Vijaynagar army had a branch of firearms, consisting of large pieces of ordnance, rockets and muskets, but except for the rockets (which acted rather like playthings), this department was manned entirely by foreigners—Portuguese half-castes and black Christians from Goa. The famous Kalapiadas or Karnataki foot musketeers, recruited from the Berad and other wild tribes, came into being a century later. The artillery of Vijaynagar was antiquated and cumbersome when compared with the improved and modernised firearms of the Sultans of the Deccan who frequently corresponded with their brother Shias of Persia and through the Persian Gulf with Turkey (the best-armed Muslim Power in the world.) W. Haig speaks of “Nizam Shah’s wonderful train of 700 guns.”

The foreign cavalry of the Deccani Sultans’ armies were mounted on powerful horses of the Arab breed, purchased through the Portuguese by way of Chaul and Goa. We read that a few years before this battle, Adil Shah of Bijapur had bought up all the Arab horses imported for sale at the port of Goa. The Vijaynagar Emperors formerly used to buy every year 13,000 horses of Ormuz and country-breds at the western ports, but that practice had been abandoned during Ram Raja’s regency of 40 years.

Moreover, the Muslim troopers coming from Iran and Turan were fully armour-clad and plied the terribly effective composite bow (made of steel or two horns joined together with a metal clasp) which shot arrows with a longer range and greater penetrating power than the bamboo bows of the Hindus. This Muslim cavalry force was also stiffened by a certain proportion of men carrying long lances (16 feet) and javelins of metal which could reach riders on elephants, and easily push back opponents seeking hand to hand combats with swords and short spears.

Ram Raja had formed a corps of Muslim cavalry by enlisting six Muslim mercenary captains who had left the service of the Deccan Sultans with their retainers. He had cherished them well, but they were Indo-Muslims, men of a lower type of intelligence and martial skill than the newly arrived foreign mounted archers of Iran and Turan who formed the backbone
of the Sultans' armies. In fact, they were Indian Pathans or Ruhelas whom we find a century later dominating the army of Adil Shah.

*Why the Hindus were Defeated*

The contrast in the opposed generalship was still greater than that in equipment or arms. On the allied side there was the towering genius of Ikhlas Khan of Ahmadnagar, Kishwar Khan of Bijapur and Mustafa Khan of Golconda, and the matchless skill of Chelebi Rumi Khan, Nizam Shah’s artillery chief, the whole confederacy was welded together by the iron will and controlling power of Husain Nizam Shah. Hence, in this battle the tactical combination of heavy cavalry with artillery was perfectly timed and most effective.

On the Hindu side cohesion among the three divisions was lost as soon as the battle started. The Vijaynagar army depended solely on three aged generals,—Ram Raja over eighty and his brothers Tirumal and Venkatadri each above 60 years. They had not under them a group of dependable divisional brigadiers, capable of seizing the initiative or rallying the men with changes in the tide of battle. And thus, their supreme leader’s fall meant the rout and destruction of the entire army; no orderly retreat, no defensive rearguard action, nor even a stand to protect the national capital could be attempted by the Hindus.

The lesson taught by this battle has been thus put by Lt. Col. Sir Wolseley Haig:—“The voctory of the Muslims against such overwhelming odds has the appearance of a miracle, but the superiority of their artillery and of their troops, especially the foreigners (i.e., Iranis and Turanis) helps to explain it. Their cavalry was better armed, better mounted, and excelled in horsemanship, and the mounted archers, of whom the Hindus seem to have had none remaining, were probably at least twice as efficient as cavalry equal to them in other respects, but armed only with sword or lance. The main strength of the Hindu army was its infantry, ill-armed, ill-clad, ill-trained, and deficient in martial spirits.” (Cambridge History of India, iii 450.)

When the famous Bahmani empire of South India began
to decline, early in the 16th century, independent Sultanates were founded by its rebel officers at Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golkonda, besides two smaller ones. These three began to expand their territories at the expense of the Hindu empire of Vijaynagar, which stretched from sea to sea in their south. There were frequent wars between the two sides, the Raichur doab between the Tungabhadra and the Krishna rivers being the chief bone of contention, and many atrocities were committed by both sides in the course of these wars. At last in 1574 Husain Nizam Shah, the Sultan of Ahmadnagar, thirsting for revenge, formed an alliance with the Sultans of Bijapur (Ali Adil Shah I) and Golkonda (Ibrahim Qutb Shah) for a joint war to crush the power of Vijaynagar. The Barid Shahi Sultan of Bidar joined the Golkonda forces, but his contingent was too small to count.

Muslim Strategy: Krishna Crossed By Surprise

The armies of the three confederates assembled in the plain outside Bijapur, and after ten days of feasting and planning there, set out on 24th December, 1564, to invade Vijaynagar territory on the other side of the Krishna. They reached Talikota, a town on the eastern bank of the Don river, 48 miles south-east of Bijapur on the 27th. Next day marching south-westwards from Talikota they arrived at the north bank of the Krishna at Tandadgi, 24 miles from their last station and 9 miles south of the large town of Mudde Bihal. The best ferry over the river was here, four miles east of the village of Tandadgi and six miles below the point (Sangam) where the Malprabha falls into the Krishna.

But meantime, Ram Raja, the regent and de facto ruler of Vijaynagar, had arrived there and fortified the southern bank of their river with trenches and batteries of big guns which commanded the crossing. The army and material resources of his empire lay behind, to resist the Muslim invasion.

The Hindus were obsessed by the Maginot Line mentality and thought only of defence. They fortified their post and remained inactive within their own limits to see how things would turn up. The Muslim generals, on the contrary, show-
Battle of Talikota

Route of Muslim Army

NALATVAD

MADRI

RAXASAI

INGALGI

ISLAMPUR

HALKAWADA

FERRY

FERRY

FERRY

BATTE FIELD 6m.

MUDDE-BIHAL

TANGADGI

SANGAM

Gm to Mahabharat

RM KRISHNA

Sangam

Miles
ed a masterly spirit of enterprise and rapidity of action. By a stroke of strategic genius, they deceived the Hindus and "stole a crossing over the river" (as has been aptly put in a parallel case by a historian of Alexander's campaign against Porus.) If the confederated Sultans had tried to force a crossing there, it would have only led to a useless massacre of their men; so they formed a subtle plan. Giving out that they would not cross the Krishna there, but go to an undefended third ferry further down the river, they marched eastwards along the north bank for two days in succession. On seeing this move of his enemy Ram Raja also marched parallel to them along the south bank withdrawing his guns and guards from the ferry opposite Tandadgi.

After two marches, the Muslim generals on the third day (2nd January, 1565) sent a small detachment to continue the advance in the same easterly direction, while a strong body of their cavalry turned back to make a forced march in the opposite direction to the first ferry. It was composed of picked men mounted on the fleetest and hardest horses and led by Husain Nizam Shah, with mobile artillery (camel-swivels and elephant-borne pieces, called gajnal.)

Being concealed from the eyes of the Hindu spies on the south bank by the dust and tumult raised by their brethren making the deceptive march, these horsemen reached the Tandadgi ferry in the course of twelve hours. There was none to oppose them there, only the silent abandoned trenches of Ram Raja on the opposite bank. Nizam Shah, without waiting for the rest of the army to join him, at once forded the Krishna, occupied in force both ends of the ferry, and sat astride the river. In the course of the next day (3rd Jan.) the rest of the Muslim army arrived and the men, guns and baggage were all safely transported to the southern bank.

No time was lost. The next day (4th January) the three Sultans, drawing up their troops in battle formation and leaving their camps behind, marched along the south bank, seeking the enemy out. Meantime, Ram Raja, astonished by his enemy's strategic victory over him, had turned back to meet them on the way. But, on coming in contact with them he refused battle on that day and fell back to his own camp, decid-
ing to fight on the morrow. Thus the Muslim army gained full one day to rest and refresh themselves after four continued marches.

Location Of Battle-Field—Formation Of Troops On Two Sides

The encounter took place at noon, on Friday, 5th January, 1565, the second of Jamadi-us-Sani 972 A.H. at some distance (about 6 miles) south-east of the village of Rakasgi (which stands eight miles east of Tangadgi), and by joining the names of these two places we get the correct location of the field miscalled Talikota. Fifteen miles south of Talikota is the town of Nalatvad, and 6 miles further south stands the village of Ingalgli on the north bank of the Krishna, where the river after flowing east from Sangam takes a sharp bend to the north. After crossing the river here to the south bank, 14 miles further south-east stands the large city of Mudgal. A straight line connecting Ingalgli with Mudgal cuts through the battle field. (Sewell, p. 200 n and Degree Sheet——, scale 1 in. = 2 m.).

The two armies were so vast that the actual scene of the contest must have occupied an area six miles in width and four miles in depth.1

The Muslim army was reported by a Portuguese writer to consist of 50,000 cavalry and 3,000 infantry. The last figure included the men who worked the guns, totalling 600 pieces from large ordnance to hand-guns. They had also a number of elephants, both champion-fighters and transport beasts. The spearhead of the Muslim attack was a select corps of Khurasani and Turkish horsemen about eight thousand strong.

The Hindu army is calculated by Indian writers at colossal

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1 Sewell hazards a guess that the Sultans crossed at Ingalgli. I disagree. I also follow the Burhan-i-Maasir (against Firishtah) in making Venkatadri the leader of the Hindu Right Wing and the antagonist of Qutb Shah, (p. 967 of my ms.) The original Persian texts of the Burhan and Firishtah have been used by me, rejecting Briggs's grossly incorrect trans. of the latter and King's condensed version of the former. Tazkira-ul-muluk gives no detail of the campaign though its author saw desolate Vijaynagar only ten years after this battle.
figures which stagger the imagination, anything up to one million. A sober estimate would be 60,000 horsemen of all sorts, a host of hardy but ill-armed, ill-trained footmen just exceeding one lakh, and 1,000 elephants and some antique guns and hundreds of rockets. A corps of mercenary Muslim horse-archers, probably 2,000 in number and fairly well-mounted, were on this side. But the remaining troopers of Vijaynagar rode small country-breds and mares, every subject in the realm who possessed a horse having been summoned by Ram
Raja to join his banners; these men mostly fought with sword and short spear.

The confederated Muslim army was divided into its three national component parts,—the Golconda troops under Ibrahim Qutb Shah and his general Mustafa Khan with the small Bidar quota formed the Left Wing; the Bijapuris under Ali Adil Shah I and his general Kishwar Khan Lari the Right Wing, while the Ahmadnagar force under Husain Nizam Shah and his general Ikhlas Khan formed the Centre with the powerful artillery train under Rumi Khan Chelebi planted in front. The guns were thus arranged: 200 big pieces of ordnance were taken out of their carts and planted in the first line, being joined together by chains and ropes, with spaces left at intervals to allow the passage of cavalry (exactly the tactics of Babur.) Some distance behind them was the second line of 200 medium-sized guns (called Zarb-zan), and similarly behind these 200 smaller swivels (called zambrurak) which were larger than hand-muskets. These were kept loaded and primed, and a screen of 2000 expert Turkish horse-archers was spread before the first line to deceive the Hindus and lure them unsuspecting up to the very muzzles of the big guns. The mass of their troops, all cavalry, with elephants were retired behind the guns.

**Battle: First Stage**

It was already noon when the battle began. After the invariable preliminary of big gun fire and rocket discharge, which did little harm, the two wings of the Vijayanagar army made an impetuous charge upon their respective opposites. The weakest part of each army faced its enemy at the northern end of the line. The Muslim Left Wing here was composed of the troops of Qutb Shah (and Barid Shah) who were ranked among the Deccani Muslims as the poorest in quality and their leadership almost contemptible. W. Haig calls Qutb Shah “a broken reed”. They were attacked by Venkatadri, the least worthy of the three regent brothers of Vijayanagar; his conduct after this defeat showed him to be a selfish coward. He was not the man to exert himself to the utmost and “lose or gain it all.” It is clear that when the tumultuous first assault
of the Hindu Right Wing forced the Golkonda troops back, the victorious impetus was not continued, the enemy were not routed, but they rallied after retreating a short distance and then held the ground till the end. Thus they immobilised this Hindu Wing till all was over elsewhere.

At the southern end of the line, where Adil Shah was assailed by the Hindu Left Wing under Tirumal, the fighting was the most obstinate and bloody of the whole afternoon. Tirumal and his gallant son Raghunath fought on till they were severely wounded,—the father being blinded by an arrow and the son probably so wounded as to have to be carried away bleeding from the field. In fact, these two heroes pass out of history after this battle, which clearly means that they died soon after it. Here the Bijapuri defence was led by a spirited Persian general Kishwar Khan Lari, the veteran of many wars in India. The attack of Tirumal at first shook the Bijapuri cavalry and forced it to give some ground. But Kishwar Khan adopted the Cossack tactics of Central Asia; his horse-archers wheeled round in their flight and plied their arrows with deadly effect on the Hindu crowd following them in disorder. After full three hours of this ding-dong fighting, the Hindu Left Wing broke and fell back defeated. Ali Adil Shah seized the respite and without a moment’s delay sent Kishwar Khan with his 5,000 foreign horse-archers to the Centre “with the speed of wind and lightning” to join Nizam Shah’s cavalry in the last decisive charge of the day.

All this time, the Muslim Centre, their strongest division, had held. At first, following the Turkish tactics, a body of 2,000 horse-archers, called the Qarawwal, had been sent forward by Husain Nizam Shah to engage the Hindu Vanguard in front of Ram-Raja’s Centre. They were at once charged by the Hindus in a tumultuous body, and after some exchange of blows, fell back slowly. This was a trick of war, for, as they fled to their own side, the Hindus arrived at their heels in reckless pursuit, close to Nizam Shah’s front line of guns. The cavalry screen withdrew to their own rear through the intervals left for the purpose between the guns, and Rumi Khan discharged his pieces among the swarming mass of the enemy, with murderous effect, and they fell back battered and torn.
Battle: Decisive Final Tactics

Thus after swaying to and fro for three hours, the battle went against Ram Raja all along his line. A pause in the combat followed. Ram Raja was too old and weak to mount horse or elephant (Firishta). So, he had been carried into the field in a sedan-chair (litter or palki). Nizam Shah at the height of the dubious combat had set up his special royal tent in front of his post, which proclaimed to the world that he would not leave the place without either victory or death. Ram Raja, on his side, planted a pavilion and sat down on a throne under it with heaps of money and jewels by his side, out of which he promptly gave handfuls to his men who fought well. Harangued by him, the brigadiers of his Centre rallied their men and led a second attack upon the Muslim Centre, in a huge mass, the rear ranks pushing the front lines forward.

For this manoeuvre the Ahmadnagar artillery chief was prepared and coolly waiting. As soon as the wild Hindu multitude came within point blank range he discharged his guns, loaded with bags full of thick slug-like copper coins instead of shot, and after this one salvo 5,000 Hindus lay dead and writhing in a human mound before the Muslim Centre. This "whiff of grape" finished the Hindus and their last venture was quenched in blood.

Seizing this psychological moment, a large and compact force of select Khurasani horsemen who had been carefully reserved for this last stroke, now issued through the intervals between the guns and forming line crashed into the crowd of the Hindu horse, foot and elephantry under Ram Raja's own command. Indescribable confusion and dust enveloped the field; no command could be heard or even issued, and the Turki cavalry (5,000 men under Kishwar Khan the Persian joined to 2,000 men of the same race in Nizam Shah's pay) pierced through the helpless leaderless enemy crowd without a check, with an elephant corps following close behind. All order was lost.

A wild elephant of Nizam Shah charged and overtook the sedan-chair into which Ram Raja had now entered to escape. His bearers dropped it in terror and fled away. He was taken
prisoner by Chelebi Rumi Khan and brought to Hussain Nizam Shah who at once cut off his head and exposed it on the point of a lance to the view of all the field.

The leaderless Vijaynagar army broke in helpless rout. Venkatadri alone made a safe retreat to the capital with the utmost haste. The rest of that vast army continued to be massacred in pursuit till the early sunset of that winter evening put a stop to their slaughter. Tradition counted the Hindu dead as one lakh of men. But 16,000 slain and thrice that number wounded, would be as correct an estimate as it is possible for us to make. But the empire of Vijaynagar ceased to exist and its capital was turned into a howling wilderness.
Chapter XV

Battle of Bhatvadi

The battle of Bhatvadi is very famous in Maratha history. It no doubt raised Malik Ambar’s fame and power to the highest pitch and surrounded his last years with a blaze of glory. But it was a mere skirmish with plan and concerted action only on the victor’s side and disunion, cowardice and slackness on the part of his enemies, so that we can hardly dignify it with the name of a battle. We also know no precise detail about the course of the fighting. I reconstruct the story from the contemporary Persian history of Fuzuni (written in 1640) and Jahangir’s Autobiography (1626). It has no lesson of strategy or tactics to illustrate, but only teaches us how a coalition should not conduct war.

Malik Ambar, an Abyssinian slave of extraordinary ability for war and administration alike, made himself the regent for the puppet Nizam Shahi Sultan of Ahmadnagar, after the capital of that State had been annexed by Akbar. At first victorious over the generals of Emperor Jahangir, and the Bijapur (Adil Shah) and Golkonda (Qutb Shah) forces, he was humbled by that Mughal Emperor’s eldest son Shah Jahan and forced to restore all his conquests from the Mughals (1621). When Prince Parviz, the next Viceroy of Mughal Deccan, left for Delhi (1624), Adil Shah bribed him with 12 lakhs of rupees to detach the entire expeditionary force of the imperialists in the Deccan and their Maratha auxiliaries to help him in recovering the province of Bidar, which Ambar had conquered and an old Nizam-Shahi possession lately annexed by Adil Shah.

The mercenary Mughal generals accompanying the Bijapuri Wazir Mulla Muhammad Lari, set out from Malwa to invade Ahmadnagar territory. But Ambar, with marvellous energy for an old man of eighty first struck. Marching out, he exacted a heavy contribution from the Golkonda Sultan
and then swiftly turned back to raid the environs of Bijapur city. But finding that now at last the hired Mughal contingent under Md. Lari from the north and a Bijapuri army under Ikhlas Khan from the east were converging upon him, he slipped back to his own kingdom and took shelter in the fort of Bhatvadi, about ten miles south-east by east of the fort of Ahmadnagar, and on the western bank of the Keli Nadi, a small feeder of the Sina river.

The three confederated armies, Mughal, Adil Shahi, and Qutb Shahi, came and sat down before Bhatvadi. There was no union of heart or of command among them. The only concern of the Delhi generals was to get as much money out of the Bijapuri Sultan and do as little work for him as possible; they were estranged, because he could not satisfy their greed fully after having paid 12 lakhs of rupees to their prince. Even the Bijapuri army formed a house divided against itself, as Ikhlas Khan, the commander of its Abyssinian section, was jealous of the Minister Mulla Md. Lari and constantly quarrelled with him. The Golkonda troops had no fighting value except against uncivilised petty jungle chieftains. Thus about two months passed in inaction.

Malik Ambar played a waiting game in his defence. By letting out the water of the Bhatvadi lake, he barred the path before the Mughal army; the excess of mud weakened his enemy, but though his men were fewer, his heart remained confident. The rainy season invested the ground with a mantle of water. Scarcity of food reached the extreme in the two besieging camps. For two or three nights together neither beast nor man got any food, till at last no strength for movement was left in their bodies. A large convoy of treasure and provisions sent by Adil Shah could not approach the camp for fear of Ambar's troops. Many soldiers and even officers, unable to bear the privation any longer, deserted to Ambar, and his good treatment of them encouraged more desertions from the besieging armies.

Soon Ambar's men began to make successful raids on the enemy posts at night. The invading troops were utterly demoralised and no captain would go out to bring provisions in. At last Mulla Md. Lari sent out a large detachment with all
Battle of BHATVADI

AHMADNAGAR

SHAHAPUR

BHINGAR

ARANGAON

Ry. Stn.

TRAN-MANMAO RLY. LINE

Road

TISGAON AND SHEWGAON TO KEUL NADI TO SHETHI PATHAN

MILES

N
his best cavalry under Mustafa Khan to escort the treasure and provisions from Bijapur waiting at a distance, and thus fatally weakened himself for the day of combat.

With this growing increase in Ambar's numbers and the spirit of his captains and a corresponding decrease in his enemy's, his attacks became more frequent and more open. As the historian Fuzuni writes. "The Mughal army laboured under several difficulties from which Ambar's troops were free, namely, famine and hunger, disunion, two hearts, two languages, excess of rain. These ruined them."

On the fateful day, Mulla Md. Lari was urged by the imperial generals to join them in a desperate attempt to cut their way through the ring of the enemy and ride hard to their base at Ahmadnagar. When he came back to the Bijapuri army, he found their chief Ikhlas Khan in despair and proposing surrender to the enemy. But by this time the battle had already joined. The aged Minister found that his policy of war with Ambar by an alliance with the Mughals had utterly failed, and he had nothing to show in return for the twelve lakhs of his master's money which he had spent in buying their barren aid. His Court rival Ikhlas Khan was exulting at his failure and blaming him for the ruin of their troops. So, in utter disgust with life, he left Ikhlas Khan and spurred his horse alone (with only three kinsmen following) towards Ambar's ranks and found the soldier's death that he coveted.

It happened in this way. In the morning the Delhi generals thinking that there would be no fighting that day, were passing their time in idleness and off their guard, when a force of Ambar's regular cavalry (Ambar's guard corps of Abyssinian youths) were sighted at a distance, looking as if they were retreating after breaking off an engagement. So the Mughals took no heed of them, nor got ready for self-defence. That body of cavalry, after skirting the Mughal detachment, suddenly turned round and fell on the Bijapuri troops and after a severe fight broke them. At that time Mulla Md. Lari was slain (by his Bijapuri rival's partisans from behind, according to one report) and the defeat of his side became a hopeless rout. The Marathas in Adil Shahi pay fled away without fighting.
It was a most complete victory achieved in an incredibly short time. Ikhlas Khan and 24 other leading commanders of Bijapur were taken prisoner, and among the imperial generals, three were captured, while the others "saved themselves from whirlpool" by hard riding to the Mughal frontier, abandoning everything in their camp.

I reject the statement of the poet Paramanand, a Maratha court flatterer, who wrote 54 years after this battle that Shahji Bhonsle took the leading and even the sole part, in fighting for Ambar and ensuring his victory. No contemporary and no Muslim authority mentions it. Fuzuni, writing in 1640, says that the cavalry of Ambar that delivered the attack were Turkha or Turks, technical name for foreign heavy cavalry, the exact opposite of the Maratha light horse.
CHAPTER XVI

WAR FOR THE DELHI THRONE
(1658-1659)

This war of succession among Shah Jahan’s sons is an interesting subject for military students, because it was a civil war in which the troops, organisation and leaders were of the same race and education and both the sides were backed by the resources and prestige of a government,—a provincial government in the case of the rebels and the Central State in the case of the other side. The signal difference in the character of the rival generalship alone accounts for the glaring difference in the result, when the forces were nearly matched in numbers and equipment.

The Emperor Shah Jahan after a long and prosperous reign of 30 years fell very ill in September 1657. He had already completed 67 lunar years of age, and when his life was despaired of, his three younger sons, who were governors of provinces, prepared to contest the throne against their eldest brother Dara Shukoh, who was in attendance on their ailing father at the capital. Of these four princes, the ablest and most experienced by far was Aurangzib, then Governor of Mughal Deccan. He cleverly completed his preparations for war, but at the same time concealed his plans and deceived his two brothers, by not crowning himself but promising to help the other two who had crowned themselves,—Murad in Gujrat and Shuja in Bengal.

Leaving the Deccan at the head of a highly efficient and organised army and a band of very able officers, he crossed the Narmada at Akbarpur (3rd April, 1658) and entered Malwa, on the way to Delhi. Meantime Dara Shukoh, who had been declared heir to the throne by the invalid Emperor, had taken charge of the administration at the capital, without crowning himself. He sent three armies from there against his three rebellious brothers—under Mirza Raja Jai Singh against Shuja,
under Qasim Khan against Murad, and under Maharaja Jaswant Singh against Aurangzib. The last two generals were to unite and oppose the two princes, if the latter formed a junction. Jaswant and Qasim Khan, in consequence of their slothful habits, lack of news service, and Qasim Khan’s jealousy and faithlessness, failed to keep Murad and Aurangzib apart and the two princes united their forces at Dipalpur on the way (14th April). Thus the rebel strategy was successful and this was the first blow at the Government troops.

Contact at Dharmat

From Ujjain, the capital of the province of Malwa, Jaswant advanced 14 miles south-westwards to Dharmat, a village on the western bank of the Gambhira rivulet, and close to the modern railway junction Fatehabad-Chandrevati. Aurangzib and Murad came up here and gave him battle on 15th April, 1658, the morning after their arrival.

The two armies were nearly matched, being about 35,000 men each, but Aurangzib was immensely superior in artillery, as he had taken over Mir Jumla’s entire ordnance, experienced in long warfare in the Deccan and served by skilled European gunners. Jaswant, on the other hand, despised fire-arms as unworthy of a heroic race like the Rajputs. Nearly half his army, that is Qasim Khan’s Muslim troopers, were in secret league with Aurangzib and turned traitors in the fight. Jaswant also choose his ground very badly; his Rajputs were densely packed in a narrow space with ditches and entrenchments on their flanks, so that they could neither manoeuvre freely nor gather momentum for a charge. His plan was to skirt the enemy’s artillery and by a wild gallop come to close quarters with Aurangzib’s troops, disregarding the gunfire during the first few minutes of the charge. His post was also within range of the enemy’s artillery planted on a higher ground.

Battle formation

Aurangzib’s vanguard was composed of 8000 steel-clad warriors under his eldest son Muhammad Sultan and two very
experienced generals, with some divisional guns. The main artillery was ranged before the vanguard. The right wing was formed by Prince Murad Bakhsh’s contingent and the left by Multafat Khan (Aurangzib’s own men). The centre was led by Aurangzib himself, with Shaikh Mir (right) and Saf Shikan Khan (left) guarding its two flanks with separate corps, this left flank having some guns of its own. *The very useful advanced reserve (iltmish) consisted of Aurangzib’s personal guards, very dependable men,. In front of the van spread the skirmishers (qarawwal), a loose body of horsemen from the scouts and the men of the royal hunt.

Jaswant’s vanguard was in two heavy columns (side by side), totaling 10,000 horsemen. Of these the division of Qasim Khan (4,000) may be written off as non-existent; the other column, composed of Rajputs under Mukund Singh Hada and six other Hindu leaders, did most of the fighting and sacrificed themselves. The centre was led by Jaswant at the head of 2,000 brave Rathors, with other Rajputs in support. His right wing under Rai Singh Sisodia was a Rajput force, and his left under Iftikhar Khan contained Muslim troopers of the imperial service. The advanced reserve was also composed of Rajputs, but the front skirmishers were a body of horse-archers of Central Asia. His artillery was negligible and had no real effect on the fighting.

Battle of Dharmat, 15th April, 1658

Aurangzib, marching slowly and in perfect order, came in sight of the stationary imperial army two hours after sunrise, and at once began to shoot down the Rajputs densely packed in columns, without space to open out. The Rajput losses began to mount every minute. Then their vanguard, led by Mukund Singh Hada, Ratan Singh Rathor and other clan-chieftains, made a wild charge upon Aurangzib’s artillery. Sacrificing many men to the point-blank discharge, the remnant pressed on and bore down all opposition, the Prince’s chief of artillery was slain and the gunners put to fight. Then the victorious Rajputs fell upon the front ranks of Aurangzib’s vanguard. Here an obstinate hand to hand combat
raged for some time, and the Rajputs swept onwards and penetrated to the heart of this enemy division.

But Aurangzib’s war-hardened troops kept their ground firmly, the chiefs on their elephants, while the Rajput assailants whirled round them like small eddies. In the end the force of Rajput impact was broken on striking the dense mass of Aurangzib’s steel-clad troopers and “the ground was dyed crimson with blood.”

During the agony of this contest, no reinforcement came to the Rajputs from the main bodies of Jaswant or Qasim Khan, while Aurangzib pushed up his advanced reserve to aid his van and himself came nearer with the centre to back them. The men of his van, at first shaken and pushed back by the wild Rajput charge, now rallied and turning back formed a wall closing the path of retreat to the Rajput attack. The two flanks of Aurangzib’s centre advanced ahead of their master and struck this Rajput body in the waist from two sides. Hopelessly outnumbered, assailed in front, right and left, and cut off from the rear, the Rajputs of Mukund Singh and Ratan Singh were slaughtered after performing frantic deeds of valour; all the six chiefs engaged in this charge were slain.

Meantime, Aurangzib’s gunners, returning to their pieces after the Rajput flood had swept on to another point of the field, concentrated their fire on Jaswant’s centre, where the men “sacrificed their lives like moths in a flame”, unable to defend themselves.

When the fortune of war had taken this turn, three captains from the right flank of Jaswant’s centre and his vanguard, left the field with their followers and took the way home. Murad Bakhsh had already attacked and taken possession of Jaswant’s camp in his rear, and next advancing fell on the left wing of the imperial army, whose commander was slain and his men put to rout.

Jaswant had by this time seen his right, left and van melt away, and his ally Qasim Khan was openly getting ready to leave the field and seek his own safety by submission to Aurangzib. The victorious princes made a convergent move in the three divisions, upon Jaswant’s centre. In this hopeless situation Jaswant took to flight, and the battle ended in the
utter rout and loss of camp and baggage of the Emperor's army. On the side of the defeated nearly six thousand men fell in the field, being mostly Rajputs; nearly all of their captains were killed and only one Muslim general.

Aurangzib showed the same quickness of movement and spirit of enterprise after this victory as before it. The very day after the battle, he marched 14 miles to Ujjain (16th April), and thence reached Gwalior on 21st May. Here he learnt that his direct road to Agra was barred by Dara Shukoh who had planted guns and run trenches on the bank of the Chambal near Dholpur to deny him a crossing. Aurangzib, therefore, under the guidance of a local zamindar decided to make a detour to Bhadaoli, 40 miles east of Dholpur and there cross the Chambal at an obscure and unguarded ford. The very evening of his arrival at Gwalior, he sent a strong detachment with artillery which by a forced march all night reached this ford next day, crossed over and secured the other bank. The main army under the two princes followed this route in two days, undergoing a loss of 5,000 men (mostly followers) from the hardships of the broken waterless tract. But the strategic success was complete: by this one stroke Dara's elaborate entrenchments and batteries at Dholpur were rendered useless; his enemies were now within easy reach of Agra and he was forced to abandon his heavy guns and fall back on the capital to defend it.

Samugarh, 29th May 1658

With a newly raised and very raw army Dara gave battle to his brothers on the sandy plain of Samugarh, near the south bank of the Jamuna, 8 miles due east of Agra Fort. His army numbered about 50,000 men. Its backbone was formed by the Rajput contingent and Dara's old retainers, but nearly half of this vast host belonged to the Emperor's service, and these Muslims were jealous of Dara's favour to the Rajputs and secretly in league with Aurangzib, the champion of Islam. Dara's artillery was drawn up in one row along his entire front, behind it stood the foot-musketeers, next the elephants, and last of all the dense masses of cavalry. In opposition to this
host stood Aurangzib’s veterans and excellent train of field pieces, the men flushed with victory and the officers trained to obey one commander of iron will.

The battle began at a very hot summer noon. After the usual exchange of cannonade, Dara ordered a charge. His left wing under Rustam Khan, issuing in front of his guns, formed a dense column and attacked the opposing artillery. But Aurangzib’s ordnance chief Saf Shikan Khan and the musketeers posted behind the guns, stood their ground well and received the charge with one deadly volley, which checked Dara’s cavalry and forced Rustam Khan to swerve to his right and try to pierce Aurangzib’s vanguard. But Bahadur Khan with the right flank of that prince’s centre had hurried up to fill the gap between his artillery and vanguard, and he brought Rustam Khan to a halt. In the close fight that followed, Bahadur Khan fell down wounded, and his division was shaken, but for a moment only; because very soon Islam Khan came to its aid from the right wing and Shaikh Mir with the advanced reserve. In the end Rustam Khan was outnumbered and borne down; he fell dead among a heap of the slain and the small remnant of his band fled back.

At the same time a more terrible and more successful fight was waged against Aurangzib’s left. There the Rajputs of the imperial vanguard under Chhatra Sal Hada and Ram Singh Rathor attacked Murad Bakhsh, driving a wedge between the two allied brothers. Murad himself received three wounds and his elephant’s hauza was stuck full of arrows like a porcupine’s back. Ram Singh and many other Rajputs fell in this hand to hand fighting, but Murad’s division was borne backwards.

The victorious Rajputs then galloped on the centre and fell upon Aurangzib as he was hastening to the support of Murad. His bodyguard offered a most stubborn defence and the Rajputs, now worn out by toil, sadly thinned in numbers, and mounted on tired horses, were overcome by these fresh men. One by one all the Rajput leaders fell, but their followers made a frantic struggle like “ravening dogs”, till all of them perished on the spot.

When the battle opened and Dara’s left wing and vanguard rushed to the attack, that prince quitted his position in
the centre, rode through his own artillery and went towards Aurangzib’s right wing in order to support the charge of Rustam Khan. He thus lost control over his far-flung divisions, there was none left at the centre to give directions and everything fell into confusion. Moreover, in his present position he obstructed the fire of his own artillery, while Aurangzib’s guns continued to mow down his men without any chance of reply. The baffled prince turned to his own right in order to avoid the enemy artillery in front of him and reached Shaikh Mir’s division (Aurangzib’s Advanced Reserve). But he made a short halt before charging, owing to the broken sandy ground and the fatigue of his over-exerted men; thus, his force lost its momentum and the vigour of the intended onslaught was greatly slackened. Seeing the enemy ranks before him fully dressed and ready to repel him, he abandoned his forward movement and turned aside towards his own right wing in order to back Chhatra Sal.

Thus, Dara only made a long movement across his entire front from the extreme left to near the extreme right. The frightful heat and thirst struck down his men and horses during this unprofitable manoeuvre and the survivors were too exhausted to fight.

Then came the last stage of the battle. Aurangzib’s vanguard had kept its proper position all this time and husbanded its strength. And now, on seeing Dara’s two wings and vanguard overthrown and his centre in disorder and out of its proper place, Aurangzib’s vanguard sprang forward to attack Dara, while his right wing wheeled round to envelop that luckless prince, and his batteries from right and left converged their fire on this doomed division. This was the beginning of the end. Dara’s own elephant now became a target for the enemy’s balls; and so he changed to a horse. At once all was over with him; his troops on seeing his hauda empty, concluded that their master had fallen, and they broke and fled away in the utmost disorder.

No victory could be more complete. Ten thousand men had fallen on Dara’s side and all his baggage and guns were captured. The havoc among the faithful Rajputs was terrible, ‘in the two battles of Dharmat and Samugarh twelve princes
of the Hada royal family together with the head of every Hada sub-clan gave up their lives.' The treachery of Khalil-ullah Khan (in command of Dara's right wing) who went over to the enemy during the crisis of the battle, confirmed a victory which was due to superior generalship and better troops.

Battle of Khajwa, 5th Jan., 1659

From Samugarh Dara fled to Agra and thence to the Panjab and Sindh. Aurangzib after his victory took possession of Agra fort, imprisoned his old father, crowned himself Emperor at Delhi (21st July, 1658) and set out for the Panjab on the heels of Dara Shukoh. His other brother Shuja (governor of Bengal and Bihar) had been surprised and routed near Benares (14th February, 1658) by Dara's eldest son. But now, on hearing of Aurangzib's absence with his main troops in the far-off Panjab, Shuja planned an attack upon the undefended Delhi province. So, at the head of 25,000 cavalry and some artillery he started from Patna at the end of October, but moved so slowly as to reach Khajwa in the Fatehpur district, 95 miles north-west of Allahabad on 30th December. Here he found his path barred by Aurangzib's eldest son Sultan Muhammad. In the meantime Aurangzib, on hearing of Shuja's invasion, had hastened back from the Panjab and strongly reinforced his advanced division near Allahabad. On 2nd January, 1659, the Emperor himself joined his son at Kora, eight miles west of Shuja's position, and on the same day Mir Jumla from the Deccan arrived to aid him as his most "faithful friend" (yar-i-wafadar). On 4th January, Aurangzib, marching his army in perfect order, arrived one mile in front of Shuja's camp, and the battle was fixed for the morrow.

A few hours before sunrise on that eventful day, Jaswant Singh (Maharaja of Jodhpur), the commander of the imperial right wing, with his 14,000 Rajputs, rose in tumult, deserted his master, and went away looting the part of imperial camp which lay in his path. Instead of joining Shuja, he took the opposite road to Rajputana. The indescribable confusion and alarm in the imperial army in the darkness was checked and order restored by Aurangzib's coolness and iron will, and the
battle began, as planned at 8 o’clock in the morning.

Shuja’s 23,000 men were opposed to Aurangzib’s 50,000 veterans and fine portable field guns. So, with true generalship he gave up the customary plan of fighting in parallel lines to the enemy, opposing division to division, as his line would have been overlapped and swallowed up by the vastly extended line of his enemy. He decided to assume the offensive and make up for the smallness of his numbers by the moral superiority which an offensive gives.

After an hour spent in the showy exchange of fire, the two vanguards advanced and closed together, plying their arrows. Sayyid Alam, leading Shuja’s right wing, charged the imperial left wing, driving in front of himself three infuriated (mast) elephants each of which brandished a two-maund iron chain with its trunk. None could stand before them; Aurangzib’s left wing broke and fled; the panic spread to his centre where the soldiers began to run about in confusion. As the enemy attack pressed towards the centre, the two reserves on the Emperor’s wings flung themselves forward and barred Sayyid Alam’s path. Shuja’s general was repulsed and fled back to his own lines.

But the three elephants continued to advance wildly, scattering the men before them. One of them came up to Aurangzib’s elephant. The Emperor stood like a rock and chained the legs of his own elephant to prevent its flight—which would have been interpreted by his army as the Emperor’s flight and admission of defeat! A matchlockman shot down the driver of the attacking elephant and a brave imperial mahut nimbly leaped on its back and brought the riderless beast under control. The crisis passed, and the Emperor then turned to succour his right wing which had been hard-pressed by a charge of Shuja’s vanguard and left wing under Prince Buland Akhtar, and thrown into confusion.

But even in the greatest danger, Aurangzib’s presence of mind did not desert him. It at once struck him that as his own front had hitherto been turned towards the left, if he were now to face suddenly to the right, the army would interpret this volte face as his flight. So he first sent couriers to reassure his brigadiers and then wheeled the centre round in sup-
port of his right wing, just in time to save it. This was the
decisive move of the day, and thenceforth the tide of battle
rolled resistlessly against Shuja. The imperial right made a
countercharge and swept away the enemy before it with dread-
ful slaughter.

Meantime the imperial vanguard under Zulfiqar Khan had
beaten back the attack upon it, advanced and shaken the
enemy's front. Preceded by a most destructive fire from Au-
rangzib's side, the entire imperial army made a general ad-
vance, and enveloped Shuja's centre, his two wings having
been scattered before. Shuja, in imminent danger of being
shot down, got down from his elephant and took horse. His
army broke and took to flight, believing that their master was
dead. Everything fell to the victors.
Chapter XVII

War for the Delhi Throne: Jajau, 1707

The battle of Jajau, which was fought only three months after Aurangzib's death, between two of his sons, differed entirely in its character from the three great battles by which that Emperor had won his father's throne, fifty years earlier, (as described in Chapter XVI). First, the campaign was marked by the utter want of generalship; it was a soldiers' battle, or rather a sectional commanders' affair, with no planning or concerted action by a supreme leader. Secondly, here the issue was entirely dominated by guns and muskets, and the old Turkish tactics hitherto followed in Hindustan, had no room for play. Jajau revealed a degeneracy in the Mughal imperial army, as regards organisation and conduct of war, which truly foreboded the disaster of Nadir Shah's victory thirty years later.

When Aurangzib died (20th Feb., 1707) his eldest surviving son Muazzam, surnamed Shah Alam (and crowned as Bahadur Shah I) was the governor of Kabul. On hearing of his father's death he made a rapid march from Jamrud (in the Khyber Pass) to Agra (arriving outside that city on 2nd June). His strength consisted in his four sons, all grown up and experienced in affairs and except one all very able and spirited,—a large band of competent and devoted officers, all the accumulated treasure of the house of Babur, hoarded in Agra fort, and an overpowering force of artillery, served partly by European and mestizo gunners.

Against him came up from the Deccan his younger brother Muhammad Azam Shah, a brave but insanely proud and hot-headed old man (aged 62), who disgusted his best followers and weakened himself by his senseless jealousy of his own son Bidar Bakht,—the ablest and most war-hardened grandson of Aurangzib. Azam's army was numerically less than half that of Bahadur Shah, and by an act of utter folly and ignorance of the march of time, he left all his guns behind, and faced
his elder brother with a few hand-guns and rockets only, which proved mere playthings. All the slaughter among Azam’s family and officers was caused by his enemy’s fire-arms.

Prince Azam, after reaching Gwalior on 2nd June, sent his vanguard 25,000 strong, ahead the front part commanded by his eldest son Bidar Bakht and the supports by a younger son Wala-Jah, while he himself followed one day’s march behind. After crossing the Chambal at the Kaimthri ferry, six miles due south of Dholpur city, his army pushed northwards towards Agra by the old Mughal King’s highway (Shah-rah) from the Deccan. The present railway line from Dholpur runs parallel to this road.

Agra lies 36 miles due north of Dholpur in a straight line. The old royal road after leaving Akbar’s capital comes to its first halting stage at Tehra, 14 miles south-west, a little beyond the crossing of the Khari Nadi. Six miles further south the river Utangan has to be crossed at the village of Jajau. Here a sarai stood on the river bank for travellers to wait when the wide sandy bed of the snaky river was suddenly flooded by heavy rain. A bridge was built here, but later than our battle, and today there is a small station named Jajau where the railway line crosses the river, but it is a mile east of the old village of the name. Proceeding eight miles to the south we come to Mania, the largest place between Agra and Dholpur, and eight miles beyond it stands the old city of Dholpur, with the nearest point of the Chambal river two miles further south.

The field of battle can be best traced from the diary of Bhimsen Burhanpuri, who was present at it in Azam’s ranks and wrote his book soon afterwards. Bahadur Shah set out from the garden of Daharara (popularly pronounced Dhara) in the western suburbs of Agra, to reach the Chambal, 38 miles south of him. On the same day Prince Azam started from Gwalior, and by a quick march crossed the Chambal near Dholpur and pursued the same route northwards to Agra. Each army advanced, in a huge sprawling body or rather a long chain of columns, without sending scouts in advance and quite in the dark about its enemy’s position. But a head-on collision between them was averted by the fact that Bahadur Shah from Agra kept to the west of the highway (i.e., the modern rail-
way) and inclined towards Khairagarh, while Azam Shah chose the eastern side of the same path (including towards Iradatnagar), because his objective was not Agra city but Samugarh, six miles due east of that capital. Thus the two armies came to move in parallel lines, with a space of four miles east to west separating them, when they first came in contact.

In the morning of 8th June, Bidar Bakht, with his father's vanguard, resumed his advance from his night's halting place near Jajau. After two hours of painful marching through dust, sand and raging thirst, he reached a village, about four miles north-east of Jajau, halted there, because of its good water supply, and sent word to his father, who was coming up three miles behind. The troops of the vanguard were scattered and its few guns were left miles behind, because no fighting was expected that day. Even the different corps of the vanguard marched carelessly as they pleased without battle dress or order, because of the heat and sandy broken ground; Zulfiqar Khan, in command of Bidar Bakht's left flank, strayed so far away as to be out of sight of his chief.

That morning, from the other side, Bahadur Shah had begun his southward march in equal ignorance of his enemy's position, and sent off his advanced tents under escort of his son Azim-ush-Shan to be erected in a grove four miles north of Jajau, and himself with his three other sons and the main army made a detour to hunt on the way. The troops of Bidar Bakht moving northwards saw these tents with imperial pennons on their left front. Khan-i-Alam Deccani and his brother Munavvar Khan detached themselves from Bidar Bakht's left wing and fell upon the party erecting the tents. Though they were only 2,500 strong, the suddenness of their attack drove away most of Azim-ush-Shan's troops, so that he had only 450 horsemen left out of his 25,000 men to support him. In the confusion the royal tents were set on fire and their guardian the Mir Tuzak was captured.

But while Khan-i-Alam's men dispersed for plunder, Azim-ush-Shan stood firmly facing the enemy and calling up reinforcements from his father on his own right rear. On seeing Bahadur Shah's own elephant running away with its royal hauda riderless, Bidar Bakht's scouts reported that the Em-
peror had been slain, and that prince advanced towards Azimush-Shan, beating his drums for the imagined victory. But on reaching the place he found his path barred by nearly one lakh of troopers, against his own 20,000, for two full divisions of the Emperor's army— one under the Wazir Munim Khan and the second under two other Shahzadas, had by this time joined Azim-ush-Shan and placed a line of guns in their front. "On Bidar Bakht's side it was found impossible to rally all his men, many of whom had dispersed to plunder the royal camp. His troops were also hampered by the crowd of baggage elephants, cattle and followers on both flanks and in their rear." He had no artillery. While thus brought to a halt, Bidar Bakht's men were helplessly slaughtered by his opponent's artillery; "the musketry balls fell like hail, and the rockets placed in a line before the advancing troops were repeatedly discharged with effect." (Irvine).

"The sun was high in the heavens and the heat excessive. After a time Bidar Bakht's men became impatient and made ready to charge, headed by Khan-i-Alam Deccani and his bodyguard of 500 men." But only three hundred of them remained with him to the end of the charge. Khan-i-Alam on his elephant forced his way to Azim-ush-Shan and attacked him, but he was surrounded by tenfold odds and killed, and his brother Munavvar Khan wounded; then the remnant of his party broke and fled away.

Meantime, Prince Wala-Jah with his own division had pushed on from behind Bidar Bakht to his left front to support his elder brother. After the fall of Khan-i-Alam his isolated position became too dangerous; Amanullah Khan who had hastened to Wala-Jah's support from the main body of Bidar Bakht, fell down half-burnt by a rocket, and the younger prince retreated for protection to the vanguard.

At the same time a corps of Azim-ush-Shan had attacked Zulfiqar Khan who commanded the large left flank of Bidar Bakht. Though Zulfiqar repulsed the attack, two of his ablest and most trusted commanders, Ram Singh Hada of Bundi and Dalpat Rao Bundela were killed by cannon-shot. "The Rajputs lost heart and fled, taking with them the dead bodies of their chieftains." A little later, Zulfiqar on being assailed by
the whole force of Azim-ush-Shan's division, took to flight. So also did Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur, a favourite of Bidar Bakht, who hid himself in his haueda and thus went over to the enemy opposite. Despair and relaxation seized Bidar Bakht's men. "The heat was excessive, the soil sandy and a hot wind arose which blew the burning sand into his soldiers' faces. The leaders on his side dismounted and awaited the enemy's charge, resolved to sell their lives dearly. On the other (i.e., Emperor's) side the Sayyids of Barha, equally determined to do or die, advanced to the attack on foot." After a desperate fight most of Bidar Bakht's commanders were slain and a large number of Bahadur Shah's supporters killed and wounded; the two Sayyid brothers, who were to be king-makers in the next reign, were so severely wounded as to be left for dead.

At last a ball from a swivel-gun killed Bidar Bakht who had already been wounded by arrows. Prince Wala-Jah who had arrived to reinforce his elder brother, lost many officers in this long and unequal struggle. Fainting from repeated wounds he was at last driven off on his elephant to the rear and taken to his father Azam Shah. It was now only three hours to sunset. The main body under Azam Shah in person, now took up the contest, which raged for two hours more. His chief captains fell thick and fast around him from the enemy's fire to which he could make no reply, and most others were wounded. "Azam Shah in spite of the death of his eldest son and of so many leaders, urged on his elephant, amidst a rain of arrows and balls, into the thick of the fight. One after another four drivers of his elephant were shot down." And then he tried to direct the beast by pushing his leg out of the haueda and pressing its head with his toes! "He was struck several times, but paid no heed to his wounds. At length a musket ball struck him on the forehead and killed him. . . . It was then about one and a half hours before nightfall. His flying troops made off towards Gwalior, and so many lost their lives on the way at the hands of Jat plunderers and the Ruhelas of Dholpur, that the ravines leading to the Chambal were encumbered with decaying bodies." Prince Wala-Jah also expired in the field from his wounds.
The loss on the two sides taken together was roughly estimated at ten thousand men and many hundreds of horses and scores of elephants perished from heat and thirst, exhaustion and wounds. Of the dead on Azam Shah’s side in the field, the officers, high and low, were probably as many as one-tenth of the common soldiers. This shows the disadvantage under which this party fought.
CHAPTER XVIII

NIZAM-UL-MULK'S THREE BATTLES: RATANPUR

Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah, the founder of the Haidarabad dynasty, came of a very noble Turkish family of Central Asia, and migrated to India with his father and grand-father, in Aurangzib's reign. Here all the three rose to the highest posts and honours by their extraordinary talents. The father (entitled Ghaziuddin Firuz Jang) was one of the two highest nobles of that Emperor. Asaf Jah himself (original titles, Mir Qamruddin, Chin Qilich Khan, and Fath Jang) was the best Muslim general in India during the first half of the 18th century; but his statesmanship and administrative capacity were even greater than his military genius. In the power of planning, commanding men, and managing intricate affairs with tact and promptitude, he was far above his rivals. As the English factors of Madras noted in February, 1744, he preferred diplomatic agreement to war, and he always confirmed the fruits of his victories by his moderation and courtesy to the vanquished.

The Emperor Muhammad Shah (who reigned from 1719 to 1748) had been set up on the throne of Delhi by two all-powerful Ministers, the Sayyid Brothers, Husain Ali and Abdul-lah, in whose hands he was a mere puppet, as he had neither the strength of will nor character. These two Ministers were Indian Muslims (settled in ‘Barah’ in the Muzaffarnagar district of the United Provinces) and Shias by religion. Nizam-ul-Mulk was a Sunni and the leader of the foreign Turkish soldiers in India.

The Sayyid Brothers filled all the important posts with their own men, and being jealous of the superior ability and power of Nizam, they plotted to crush him, lest he should assert his independence and oust them from the Emperor's regency.

In March, 1719, Nizam was sent to Malwa (capital, Ujjain) as its Subahdar. But the two king-makers plotted to re-
move and imprison him. So, early next year they sent an order from the Emperor recalling him to Delhi and appointing their own man Sayyid Dilawwar Ali as Subahdar of the province. At the same time another partisan of the Ministers, named Sayyid Alim Ali, the Subahdar of the Deccan, was ordered to march northwards from his seat Aurangabad and attack Nizam.

To avoid being crushed between these two enemies, Nizam-ul-Mulk decided to strike the first blow before they could unite. Leaving Ujjain, he crossed the Narmada on 8th May, 1720, and seized the city of Burhanpur (the capital of Khandesh subah) with its fort of Asirgarh, midway between Malwa and the Deccan.

Alim Ali began his northward march from Aurangabad about 10th June with a large force. At the same time, Dilawwar Ali, moving southwards, crossed the Narmada and reached Husainpur, 14 kos from Burhanpur. Nizam did not lose a minute. Leaving his family and treasure in Asir fort for safety, he marched out of Burhanpur on 15th June to meet Dilawwar Ali first. Near Ratanpur (in the Handiya sub-division of the Hoshangabad district) he contacted the enemy.

Natives' Crass Stupidity

In this contest the core of Nizam’s army consisted of Mughalians, that is Turks of Central Asia and Persians, and all his commanders were foreign Muslims. His officers formed a more enlightened and cleverer body of military leaders than the chiefs of the opposite side who were brave, no doubt, but no better than rustics. These foreign group-commanders had the intelligence and education to put their followers’ courage to the best use and co-ordinate the work of the different brigades so as to derive the utmost benefit from the men’s exertions. Dilawwar Ali’s army was purely Indian in its composition,—Rajputs, Ruhelas and the Sayyid clansmen of the Muzaffarnagar district.

The Rajputs are characterized in the Persian histories of Delhi by ‘jahalat-i-markaz’ or crass stupidity. The Indo-Afghans were no better; Babur in his ‘Memoirs’ illustrates their
rustic ignorance. As for the Sayyids of Barha, in North Indian popular speech the term was a byword for blunt ignorance and pride. Thus Dilawwar Ali’s men fought only with blind fury and animal courage, and not with their brains; each section of his men advanced individually against the foe immediately in front of itself and gave no thought to the plans and situation of its comrades in other parts of the field.

Nizam’s superiority in numbers was greatly enhanced by the excellence of his artillery, the ability of his officers, and the efficiency of his organisation. His artillery had been taken over from his father Firuz Jang’s, whose number, fulness of equipment and ‘material,’ and efficiency and discipline had excited the jealousy and alarm of Aurangzib twenty years earlier. That suspicious Emperor had warned his grandson (in 1702), “The muster of armament which Khan Firuz Jang showed to me contained guns, elephant-swivels, camel-swivels, horse-swivels, and all other kinds of firearms, not only as many as he is bound to maintain according to his pay and rank, but far more than that. Why do you, who are getting double his salary, waste your money, with nothing to show in return for it?” (Maasiri-I-Alamgiri, 278).

_Battle Of Ratanpur_

Hearing of Nizam’s close approach, Dilawwar Ali made his arrangements for fighting him. He occupied a plateau west of the northward highway, and depositing his camp and baggage for safety in a low ground two miles behind it, made trenches and posted artillery so as to mow down his enemy’s troops as they advanced to the attack. Nizam encamped four miles south of this position, and the next day, 9th June, 1720, was fixed for the battle.

In the morning of that day, as the Sayyid General waited in his chosen field in proud confidence of victory, his spies brought the report that the enemy had broken camp and was marching away elsewhere. This move he interpreted as a panic flight of Nizam and the boastful talk and merriment in the Sayyid’s camp became still more boisterous. But about noon-day his spies gave him a news as incredible “as if the Sun had
risen in the west instead of in the east" (—for so the Persian history aptly puts it); it was that Nizam's standards were seen four miles in the 'west,' approaching the rear of the Sayyid's position. In fact, Nizam had, by one stroke of military genius, nullified all the plans of his enemy. Wisely judging a frontal attack from a lower ground on such a well-prepared position to be suicidal, he made a detour to reach the enemy's unguarded rear. Leaving the familiar highway north of him, he struck into the trackless fields on his left and after marching 12 miles appeared at the back of Dilawwar Ali, a little after midday.

The Sayyid was forced to leave his carefully-prepared trenches and heavy artillery behind, face round from the east to the west, and hasten to his own rear to meet the threat. Only a few light pieces, or swivels borne on elephants and camels could accompany him, and he was forced to fight on the ground of his enemy's choosing and leave the tactical initiative to him.

It was late in the afternoon of 9th June, 1720, when the two armies came into contact. A tract of rugged difficult ground lay between them, scored by many dry 'nalas' over which the path ran between broken jungly banks. Thus at first neither side could deploy its full strength and fight a regular battle in two parallel lines, each division of the one facing the corresponding division of the other force. Only the two vanguards could engage. Dilawwar Ali's men, in addition to having no artillery of their own, were further handicapped by having to advance into unreconnoitred ground. Nizam's officers with great intelligence and promptitude utilised their earlier arrival on the scene by planting their guns in such a way as to sweep the only path of their enemy's advance and posting groups of musketeers in the bushes on both sides of it. They thus formed a death-trap into which the Sayyid's men blindly rushed.

The battle began with a clash between the front lines after a short firing. Sayyid Sher Khan and Sayyid Babar Khan commanding Dilawwar's vanguard, delivered the attack with 2,000 horsemen and 7,000 infantry, supported by a 2,000 Rajputs and 3,000 Ruhelas on their right hand. Iwaz Khan, commanding Nizam-ul-Mulk's right wing and Ghiyas Khan his van-
guard, advanced to oppose them. But the broken ground pre-
vented these two crops from uniting, and at first the full force
of the attack fell on Iwaz Khan, whose front was not protected
by artillery. The impetuous charge of the two Sayyids seemed
to carry everything before them. Iwaz Khan's elephant was
daunted by the fire-flash and wild cries of the mob before it
and turned tail, and most of his followers took to flight.

The Khan, however, turned his face to the back of his
mount and did all he could to rally his men, exhorting them
and shooting arrows though himself wounded. His Turki
horsemen stopped in their flight, gathered in small knots and
renewed the battle. Reinforcements were pushed up to them
from the great reserve in their centre (under Nizam-ul-Mulk
himself) and wings. The two Sayyid captains, who had been
pursuing Iwaz with shouts of exultation, were checked. The
tide of battle ebbed and flowed as each side received fresh
troops and made a new dash. At last the two Sayyid leaders
were killed and their division ceased to exist.

At the same time from Dilawwar Ali's right wing, two
thousand Rajputs (under Budh Singh of Bundi and Gaj Singh
of Marwar) and some three thousand Afghans under Ali
Muhammad Ruhela, had fallen on Ghiyas Khan who com-
manded Nizam-ul-Mulk's vanguard and artillery. Here sword
and spear failed before cannon and musketry, and in the end,
the Rajputs took to their last desperate tactics, got down from
their horses and fought on foot till they were killed. Their
dead formed heaps in that contracted space; four hundred
corpses were counted out of their contingent of 2,000. The
Ruhelas saved themselves by flight.

As soon as the fighting became general, Dilawwar Ali at
the head of his main body, at least 6,000 strong, started from
the centre and drove his elephant impetuously towards Nizam-
ul-Mulk, who was standing with his escort, reduced to 600 men
by the heavy reinforcement that he had detached to the front
line. As he came up, a bullet grazed the Sayyid's forehead
and threw him into a swoon; his chin sank down on his knees,
and his driver led the elephant back to an open space in the
rear. Here Dilawwar Ali revived and once more drove his ele-
phant on to encounter Nizam, who had halted beside a 'nala.'
This time another bullet pierced his abdomen and finished his career. Most of his captains had already fallen, and the battle ended in two hours with the total ruin of his army.

The loss on Dilawwar Ali’s side was estimated as four thousand men and all the leaders killed and at least twice that number wounded. In Nizam-ul-Mulk’s army 30 men (of whom only two were officers) fell and a hundred were wounded.

_Greatest Indian General_

All the three battles of Nizam-ul-Mulk have some features in common which mark him out as the greatest Indian general of the 18th Century. He defeated superior numbers of enemies, his victories were decisive and annihilated the opposing army, and his successes were gained by a remarkable economy of men, the enemy’s losses being sometimes ten times his own. This result was due mainly to his own towering genius for organisation, choice of instruments, and quick decision in field tactics. But he also owed much to his more efficient and modernised artillery and the galaxy of able and educated lieutenants gathered round him, each of whom was capable of independent command and of seizing the initiative without waiting for orders. No other Indian army had so many corps-commanders of such rare capacity. His transport system was more efficient and faster than that of the rustic Sayyids.

He had inferior numbers in each of his battles, but the enemy attacked and he waited for them, in a prepared position, the advantage of which was doubled by his power to use his big guns, while the moving enemy outstripped their own guns. When the two sides are equal in armament and civilisation, the attack must be thrice as strong in number, if it is to bear down the defence.

Nizam-ul-Mulk’s forces were better trained, held under admirable control, and their action co-ordinated by a master mind from the safe rear (really centre), while the troops attacking him had to be led by their highest officers, with whose fall they broke and fled.

The sun went down as the fighting ended. Nizam-ul-Mulk did not allow a pursuit, but husbanded his forces and
attended to the wounded. Next morning a force of 3,000 chosen cavalry from his camp made a memorable dash of 80 miles in 24 hours and reached Burhanpur, where the families and property of his soldiers had been left behind without defenders. They were thus saved from Alim' Ali who was advancing on that town from the south.
CHAPTER XIX

NIZAM-UL-MULK’S THREE BATTLES:
BALAPUR AND SHAKAR KHERA

Sayyid Alim Ali, the nephew and agent of the Sayyid Brothers in the Deccan, was a youth of 22, brave to rashness but possessing neither generalship nor capacity for management. He failed in his first task of joining Dilawwar Ali in time to crush Nizam-ul-Mulk by a concerted attack. In contrast with Nizam’s prompt decision and rapid movements, both these Sayyid generals were hopelessly slow. It was 9th May, 1720, before Alim Ali started from Aurangabad. While he was only halfway to Burhanpur (Nizam-ul-Mulk’s base) his enemy had already crushed Dilawwar Ali (9th June) and reinforced Burhanpur. Thereafter the Sayyid general moved about aimlessly in bewilderment, and only tried to raise more followers and seduce Nizam’s partisans. He made a long halt south of the Purna river (Hartala Lake, 5 m. s. w. of Adilabad), his men suffering much hardship from the rain and flooded rivers. Nizam lay encamped on the north bank of the same river, enduring similar hardships from the weather. At last he made a sudden strategic move eastwards up the river and crossed the Purna unhindered at an easy ford away from his enemy. The two armies were now on the same bank and Alim Ali moved eastwards to meet him. After a further spell of inactivity due to the foul weather, Nizam-ul-Mulk reached Balapur in Berar (by way of Shegaon) and forced a battle at a place, five miles from Balapur city on 31st July, 1720.

Nizam’s Army

Nizam’s army was mainly composed of foreign Muslims—Iranis and Turanis, popularly called Mughals,—while Alim Ali had come from the south at the head of 30,000 men, one half of whom were Karnataki horsemen and the other made up of
various groups of Indo-Muslim troops, such as his own Sayyid clansmen and many bands of Afghan mercenaries, settled in the Deccan; and he was also accompanied by a vast horde of Maratha light horse, popularly estimated at 17,000 men, whom Raja Shahu of Satara had sent under his Senapati Khandoji Dhabare to support the Government of Delhi. These allies had no influence on the fighting, they merely followed the Maratha game of looting the enemy's baggage while the soldiers were busy in combat.

The vanguard of Nizam-ul-Mulk was commanded by Muhammad Ghiyas and strengthened by his artillery under Muhammad Shah. His right wing was under the tried and trusty Iwaz Khan, centre under his son Ghaziuddin, and rear under Rao Rambha Nimbalkar, a Maratha chief hostile to the house of Shahu.

Alim Ali's vanguard, consisted of 15,000 Karnataki horse-musketeers under Tahawwar Khan Afghan, seventeen war-elephants, and his park of artillery under Ghiyasuddin. He himself occupied the centre, while his Maratha allies hovered on his left wing.

Nizam-ul-Mulk was the first to advance to the attack. The Sayyid's artillery was ineffective, but the first shot fired by Nizam knocked down the haudd of Latif Khan's elephant. Before the smoke could clear, Tahawwar Khan with his elephants and a vast horde of Karnataki horsemen fell impetuously on Nizam's vanguard and threw it into great disorder, many of the men being forced into flight. After an obstinate fight in which many of their officers were wounded, this division retreated.

But in the meantime other divisions from the right and left of Nizam-ul-Mulk's army had advanced to the attack and hemmed the assailants round. Alim Ali, on his part, pushed forward the centre of his army in such hurry that a portion of it was left behind. Nizam-ul-Mulk's tried generals repelled Alim Ali, wherever he turned. Other brave captains of the Mughalians sustained the fight against the Sayyid's elephants though wounded. In this confused and mixed combat, Alim Ali was wounded; a little later his elephant-driver was killed; other leaders also fell,—Ghiyasuddin Khan (his chief of artil-
lery), Tahawwar Khan Afghan (the commander of his vanguard) and seven other high officers.

Left unsupported in an advanced position, Alim Ali’s elephant being unable to bear the rain of arrows any longer, at first turned tail. But three times did the youthful Sayyid general return to the combat, his wounds dripping blood. In the end, however, nothing could prevent a retreat before his swarm of well-led and well-combined enemies. While still fighting a hopeless rearguard fight he was again and again wounded and at last surrounded and killed. Seventeen noted chiefs, “riders on elephants,” fell on his side and a large number of common soldiers. Many more were wounded. Six hundred and thirty-four Marathas were slain.

On the side of Nizam only four minor officers were killed and six officers wounded. The sword and shield of the Indian Muslims were no match for the Central Asian bow in the hands of expert horsemen, mounted on spirited steeds; our elephants again proved a vain hope, and a more modernised artillery silenced our old guns and gunners.

*Shakar Khera, 1724*

The battle of Balapur (31 July, 1720) was followed by more changes in the ever-changing Court of the Emperor. The two Sayyid dictators fell, in September and November of that year, and Nizam-ul-Mulk was appointed Prime Minister (Feb. 10, 1722). But the young Emperor was without character or intelligence; he listened easily to Nizam’s rivals who wished to crush him by whispering that he was planning to depose the Emperor and crown a boy-prince as his puppet. The Rajput and Hindustani-Muslim nobles were leagued against Nizam-ul-Mulk as the head of the Mughal or foreign party. These intrigues led to Nizam abandoning the Wazir-ship in disgust and retiring to the Deccan, where he reached Aurangabad, the seat of his viceroyalty in July, 1724. His enemies at Court issued an order, signed by the Emperor, appointing Mubariz Khan (then Governor of Golkonda subah) as Viceroy of all Mughal Deccan, displacing Nizam-ul-Mulk, and granted him
five lakhs for raising an army. In July Nizam was formally dismissed from the Wazir-ship.

Mubariz Khan was a veteran general of the Turkish race, now over sixty years of age. He was at first for prudently waiting on developments, but his hands were forced by his Pathan allies, the Afghan mercenary bands, settled in many places of the Deccan who had formerly been the backbone of the army of the Bijapur Sultans. Therefore, he set out on invasion at the very height of the rainy season. Marching north-westwards from his seat of Haidarabad and crossing the Godavari near Nander, he reached the Char Thana district by way of Basim (in Berar Balaghat) and encamped on the bank of the Purna, somewhere south of the Lunar Lake.

Nizam-ul-Mulk met the challenge by rapidly marching up with a very select force of 6,000 horse and a powerful artillery eastwards from Aurangabad (C 23 Aug.) via Jaina, to a place some 22 miles west of Mubariz Khan’s encampment. The Khan had a superiority of three to one in numbers, but no artillery. So, instead of attacking Nizam there, he planned a swift strategic blow at the enemy’s headquarters far in the rear. He would make a surprise night march, skirting Nizam’s camp on the south and west and reach the friendly town of Jafarabad, undetected, and then with fresh allies gathered there he would suddenly fall upon Nizam’s unguarded base at Aurangabad, some 65 miles south-west of it, while Nizam’s army would be held up near Lunar.

The plan was foiled by the natural slackness and inefficiency of the Indo-Muslim army and the sleepless activity of Nizam’s Maratha allies. Mubariz Khan’s movement was detected and opposed as soon as it started, and after eight days of skirmishing he was forced to retreat and concentrate his army under the shelter of the fortified town of Shakar Khera. On his part, Nizam-ul-Mulk, by a grim determination and able management, crossed the Purna river to its east bank with all his artillery and stores and followed his enemy up to Shakar Khera.

A look at the map will illustrate these movements. ‘Shakar Khera’ (renamed ‘Fath Khera’ by Nizam-ul-Mulk after his victory) is 16 miles n.n.w. of Lunar Lake and 12 miles west
of Mehkar on the Pain Ganga. The Purna river flows 20 miles south and also west of Shakar Khera. 'Char Thana' stands 25 m. south of Lonar. 'Jafarabad' is 25 miles due west of Shakar Khera, and 65 m. north-east of Aurangabad. In Irvine's 'Later Mughals,' II. 143, this place is named "Zafarnagar", evidently by mistake.

The Core Of Nizam's Army

The core of Nizam's army was formed by six thousand choice cavalry, mostly Turks and Persians, mounted on good horses, with a large park of artillery, including camel-swivels and easily portable light pieces besides large field guns. These were distributed among his two main divisions, instead of being massed in one place before the vanguard. Thus his divisional commanders could shift and work their artillery quickly and with deadly effect to convenient points with every change in the tide of battle. Mubariz Khan had some light swivel guns or falconets and only two or three large pieces, which were too old and cumbersome and had no effect on the enemy.

But Nizam-ul-Mulk's chief strength lay in his body of highly intelligent war-seasoned brigadiers and captains each of whom knew how to seize the initiative as soon as the need arose with the fighting in any sector taking a new turn. A Greek ambassador described the ancient Senate of Rome as a council of kings. We may similarly call Nizam's entire force as a corps of captains. In contrast with it, Mubariz Khan's army was a body of hot-headed rustics, brave to rashness but ill-armed, ill-led, and never combined at all. It was as if village quarter-staff champions were sacrificing themselves by rushing upon linked battalions firing grape shot.

Battle Formation

Nizam's battle formation followed the European plan rather than the conventional Mughal Indian order. First, he made two main divisions of his men, one under himself and the other on his left hand under Iwaz Khan, each with its own artillery. Secondly, instead of massing his men in two
dense bodies in the centre and the reserve, he split them up into many small bands each under an able captain who could be relied upon to combine with others at the right moment and help in enveloping the enemy's attacking column. Thus there was not the risk of one single wing of his army being shattered and driven out of the field by a desperate push of the
enemy's full force. While Nizam-ul-Mulk himself occupied the heart of the centre, some fifteen small bands of horsemen were posted like islands on his front and two flanks, as supports of his main divisions, with orders to rush and patch up any breach in his line. This was a clever improvement on the old Mughal military plan of having only two large reserves, called *iltmish* or advanced reserves, on the two wings. The effect of this good arrangement was heightened by Nizam distributing his fire power (guns and muskets) along his entire front in three separate divisions like the letter U, one with the van and the other two with his ring wing and Iwaz Khan's force (on Nizam-ul-Mulk's Left).

Nizam-ul-Mulk's vanguard was led by Qadir Dad Khan (with the heavy artillery and musketeers), his right wing by Talib Muhiuddin Khan (with light guns and wall-pieces), his left wing by Ismail Khan. He himself occupied the centre, surrounded by many smaller bands in the form of dispersed reserve (*iltmish*). On the left was drawn up Iwaz Khan's division, with its own artillery, while the Maratha light horse (7,000 under Baji Rao, accompanied by Turk-taz Khan, Nizam's representative) stood in the left rear.

Mubariz Khan gave the command of his vanguard to Ghalib Khan, of his advanced reserve (*iltmish* in one body just behind the vanguard) to Muhammad Beg Khan, right wing to Ibrahim Khan Pani (with his 2,000 Indo-Afghan cavalry), left wing to his own sons and the Miana Pathans of the Deccan (more as a part of the centre than as a detached wing); the centre was under himself.

*Fighting Develops*

Nizam-ul-Mulk waited in his position with his guns chained together and reserving their fire. A little after mid-day, on 1st October, 1724, Mubariz Khan advanced to the attack. He first sent about 9,000 horsemen to fall upon Iwaz Khan. The assailants quickened their pace till they suddenly reached a water-course (*nala*), full of sticky black mud, which lay between. Men and horses began to sink in it and the pressure of the rear ranks threw this force into one dense mass in help-
less disorder. Iwaz Khan’s artillery worked havoc among them, but the left section of the attacking column, on finding a dry path fell “like roaring tigers” on the right wing and advanced centre of Iwaz Khan and began a hand to hand combat. Many of them had lost their horses or left them behind in the nala.

While the assault was thus halted, Nizam’s other generals arrived to the rescue of Iwaz and did great execution with their swivel-guns and muskets. Ghalib Khan (the commander of Mubariz’s vanguard) was slain, and after standing this pitiless fire of shot and bullet without the means of replying, for an hour and a half, Mubariz’s sons Asad and Masaud were killed. On hearing of it their brave father, set his face on a soldier’s death and drove his elephant along with the Pathan allies of his right wing into the thick of the fighting. He fought on for nearly another hour; “he had been wounded and his strength began to fail; at times he fainted, but reviving he seized again the bow and arrow. His elephant-driver was killed, he took the dead-man’s place and fought on as before. But an hour before sunset Mubariz Khan and all his chief men had lost their lives.”

The total losses on Mubariz Khan’s side are said to have amounted to 3,500 men, of whom some 30 to 40 were leaders and “riders on elephants.” Two of his own sons were slain and two more were wounded and taken prisoners. On Nizam-ul-Mulk’s side only three captains fell and his losses in common soldiers did not exceed a few hundreds.

Mubariz Khan had reached Shakar Khera six days before Nizam and yet he had not cared to reconnoitre the ground over which his enemy was advancing even within a mile of his own camp, before setting out to give battle! This scene of helpless massacre of horsemen involved in the sticky black cotton soil of Berar by artillery posted on the other side of an undetected nala has a historic parallel in the defeat of Malik Ambar by Shah Nawaz Khan (son of Jahangir’s Khan-i-Khanan) on the Godavari, 6th Feb., 1614. (See my House of Shivaji, p. 17).
CHAPTER XX

BAJI RAO'S PALKHED CAMPAIGN

The three victories of Nizam-ul-Mulk over the Delhi forces, already described, prove his genius as the foremost general of his times in India and the efficacy of his war-machine against other Indo-Muslim armies. In these battles the two sides followed the same method of war and differed only in the quality of their leadership. But Nizam-ul-Mulk failed altogether and had to admit defeat when he was opposed by an altogether different system of war, namely, the light foray tactics of the Marathas under Baji Rao I, the ablest exponent of that system. The Palkhed campaign of 1727-28 is worth studying, because it clearly illustrates the difference between the two systems in their result.

This campaign will also repay study by students of Indian Military History, because unlike all other campaigns before the British regime, every day's marching stage of Baji Rao is known to us with its date from the Maratha official diaries. We can thus accurately calculate the miles daily covered by the Maratha horsemen, the impediments on the way that they overcame, and the length of time they could march without rest, and contrast them in these respects with the regular army of the Mughals as led by Nizam. It should not be forgotten that Baji Rao moved without any artillery, baggage or even handguns, his troops being armed only with the sword and the long lance (a few with bows also). His men were a purely mounted force, with one led horse to every two troopers; they did not encumber themselves with bulky articles of booty, but merely looted cash and ornaments and burnt the houses along their track. Nizam-ul-Mulk's army was strong in heavy cavalry (many mail-clad); they carried with themselves guns, tents and camp-followers, so that they always painfully lagged behind the fleet Marathas.
As regards the strategy of this campaign, each side tried to threaten its enemy’s capital and thus compel the latter to desist from pillage and return to its own homeland. In this game Nizam took Poona and Baji Rao did not seize Aurangabad; but in the end Baji Rao was more successful and he could force Nizam-ul-Mulk to admit defeat and agree to a peace on terms dictated by the Marathas.

Nizam-ul-Mulk after defeating Mubariz Khan (1st Oct., 1724), took possession of Haidarabad and soon settled down as the master of the six subahs of Mughal Deccan. Thenceforth, though he never renounced his allegiance to the Delhi Emperor, he acted as his own master in every respect. His strong and able rule gave some peace to the country and increased the national wealth. But when he tried to check the Maratha depredations in the name of collecting chauth, and to resume possession of the old Mughal villages, illegally seized by them during the past quarter century of war and anarchy in the Deccan, he was resisted by the Maratha barons, and thus war became inevitable.

Dividing Marathas

On his side, Nizam-ul-Mulk revived Aurangzib’s old game of weakening the Maratha royal power by seducing to his banners those nobles of King Shahu who were jealous of the Peshwa Baji Rao I, and renewing the civil war in the house of Shivaji — between Shahu of Satara (the son of that great Raja’s eldest son) and Shambhuji II of Kolhapur (the son of his younger son, Rajaram). This Shambhuji himself came over to the Nizam’s Court with a band of selfish Maratha nobles and pressed Asaf Jah to conquer Shahu’s dominions for him. An army was raised near Aurangabad for the projected invasion of Poona, which was due to start in November, 1727, at the end of the rainy season.

Baji Rao learnt of the plot very early and struck the first blow. With a force (about 6,000 strong), composed entirely of light cavalry, without guns, carts, baggage or camp bazar, he raided Asaf Jah’s territory, moving with incredible rapidity and living off the country. He never stood anywhere to give
battle, but only spread fire and plunder on the two sides of his path.

Crossing the Godavari near Puntamba on 17th October, the Peshwa burst into Asaf Jah's territory on the north bank, and skirting the larger cities like Baizapur and Aurangabad some distance on their west and north, he raided the Jalna and Sindhkhed districts, sacking and burning, till he arrived near Jafarabad (on the Purna river, 9 miles south-east of the famous battlefield of Assaye) on 3rd November. But his roving bands when dispersed for plunder were caught up and given a severe beating by Nizam's ablest lieutenant Iwaz Khan on 6th November in the Jalna district.

We next find Baji Rao resting and recouping his army at Deulghat, 25 miles north-east of Jafarabad, till the beginning of December. But on the 2nd of that month he was on the move again, and made an unexpected dash eastwards, via Narsi to Basim in north Berar (8th December) and Mangrul of the Pir, 25 miles north-east of that town (the next day). Then suddenly changing his direction he turned north for 50 miles to Hadgaon (on the 10th) and next due west into East Khandesh, threatening Nizam's base of Burhanpur—from the south (15th December).

Nowhere was the Maratha leader's progress arrested. Avoiding pitched battles, he began a series of bewilderingly rapid marches which completely baffled and exhausted his enemy. In fact, in this cross-country race over a vast broken country, Nizam with his mail-clad heavy cavalry and cumbersome artillery, was out-maneuvered by the Maratha light horse and toiled painfully behind it, without being able to prevent its ravages, or to bring it to action. Nizam's vanguard under Iwaz Khan followed the Marathas, with their master coming up one stage behind as a support. The Muslims were utterly exhausted by the hardships and privation of this waterless tract, and Nizam gave up the pursuit after reaching a few miles beyond Burhanpur, and halted to refresh his troops.

Baji Rao now burst into Gujrat, which province was not included in Nizam's charge. Crossing the Tapti river some distance west of Chopra (24th Dec.) and the Narmada at the Baba Piara ford, 30 miles south of Baroda (3rd January, 1728),
south to Songad fort, 85 miles south of Baroda and 45 miles due east of Surat (12th January). Here he passed 12 days.

In the meantime Nizam-ul-Mulk had learnt at Burhanpur about Baji Rao's exact position, and resumed the chase after him. Arriving near Surat by long marches, he encamped. Baji Rao being thus cut off from the western or sea-side region with its rich towns, darted in the north-eastern direction, to the Ali-Mohan (Chota Udaipur) country, reaching Panwad, 80 miles north-east of Songad on 31st January.

_Nizam Captures Poona_

Nizam, losing sight of his enemy, and worn out by his long and fruitless marches, wisely changed his plan of campaign. Giving up the pursuit of the elusive Baji Rao, he in full force entered the Poona district, now denuded of its defenders. No resistance could be made; Raja Shahu and his Court took refuge in Purandar fort; every military station and town in the Poona district submitted to Nizam in terror and was placed in charge of some agent of the Kolhapur Raja. Finally Nizam entered Poona city, proclaimed Shambhuji's authority over the country and celebrated the Raja's marriage with a princess of Ramnagar.

Meantime, Baji Rao after roaming in the Ali-Mohan country, was induced by Udaji Pawar to go to Kuksi, 25 miles east of Ali (10th February), and thence turned homewards, going 80 miles south to Betavad, 15 miles north-west of Amalner, in West Khandesh (13th February). Here he received frantic appeals from Raja Shahu to come back for the defence of the Maratha homeland and capital. But with unfailing foresight Baji Rao planned the automatic evacuation of the Poona district by threatening the enemy's capital. Instead of going to Poona he turned south-east and crossing the Ajanta range by the Kesari ghat, burst into the Gandapur and Baizapur districts, west of Nizam's capital Aurangabad, pillaging and burning. Nizam-ul-Mulk at once withdrew from Poona with all his troops, deposited his camp and baggage in Ahmadnagar fort, and then on 24th February set out in light marching order to overtake Baji Rao, who had reached Palkhed, 12 miles east
of Baizapur and 28 miles west of Aurangabad on the 25th. For the next six days "Baji Rao plundered on both flanks of the Nizam’s line of advance, prevented the coming of provi-
sions, and wherever a ravine or stream crossed the path of the Deccani army he used to attack them, but when fighting began he took to flight and engaged in Cossack-like tactics." At last the Nizam was manoeuvred into a broken waterless ground and completely hemmed in. However, after undergoing un-
speakable hardship, he cut his way out, but in utter disgust gave up the plan of supporting Shambhuji II. By the treaty of Shevgaon (12 March), he conceded all the Maratha claims.

The military student of this campaign will find his task easier, if he takes a large map of the Deccan plateau (Degree sheets) and pins a flag on each stage of the Maratha army’s march. This campaign gives a classic example of what the predatory horse, when led by a genius, could achieve in the age before light artillery.

_Baji Rao’s Route_

1727

13-14 Oct. in Pargana Parner, about 50 miles north-

17 Oct. Pantamba, 50 m. north of Parner on the south

18-20 Oct. Andar-sul, 18 m. n. of Pantamba and on the

22 Oct. Near Yeole, 9 m. n. w. of Andar-sul.

23 Oct. Borsar, 10 m. n. e. of Baizapur.

24 Oct. Dhamangaon, 4 m. n. of Takli city and 8 m. n.

28 Oct. Ridhere in pargana Dabhade (Dabhade is 18

29 Oct. Dongar-gaon Dabhade, 2 m. n.e. of Dabhade.

30 Oct. Pangri, 8 m. n. w. of Jalna and 10 m. s. e. of

2 Nov. Palashked pargana, in Sindhkhed district, 20 m.

3 Nov. Near Jafarabad, 9 m. s. e. of Assaye battlefield.
1 Dec. Halt at Deulghat, 5 miles s. w. of Buldana.
3 Dec. Manbad, near Pathri.
4 Dec. On the river Purna, near Parli. There is a Padali, 16 m. s. of Lonar lake and on the Purna R.
5 Dec. Halt near Avta Nagnath (=Nagthan) 7 m. s. w. of Basim.
6 Dec. City of Narsi, 25 m. s. of Basim.
9 Dec. near Mangrul of the Pir, 25 m. n. e. of Basim.
10 Dec. Hadgaon, 50 m. n. of Mangrul.
12th Dec. Wankhed, 12 m. n. w. of Panchgovan.
13 Dec. Near Zahut? (probably Jamod), 15 m. n. w. of Wankhed.
15 Dec. Province of Zainabad (Burhanpur south).
17 Dec. Adavad, 11 m. e. of Chopra in West Khandesh.
18 Dec. Kusumba, 12 m. w. of Dhulia.
23 Dec. Bhadvad, 12 m. s. w. of Nandurbar.
25 Dec. Kukar-munda, 12 m. n. of Nandurbar, but on the north bank of the Tapti.

1728

3-4 Jan. Narmada bank at the Baba Piyara ford, 30 m. s. of Baroda, and 8 m. n. of Nandod (Rajpipla Rd. Ry. Station).
6-8 Jan. Panetha, on the south bank of the Narmada,
14 m. n. e. of Shuklatirth.
10 Jan. Ten Talav, 20 m. n. e. of Panetha but on the north bank of the Narmada.
12-24 Jan. Near Songad, 80 m. s. of Baroda, and midway on the Surat-Nandurbar Ry. line. Mohan city is 70 m. n. e. of it. Udaji Pawar interviews Baji here on 24th January.
31 Jan. Panwad, pargana Mohan, 10 m. n. of Mohan.
2 Feb. Tanbhal, pargana Mohan, 20 m. n. e. of Nandod Ry. station.
3 Feb. Jambli? pargana Mohan (probably Jhalambi, 22 m. e. of Songad).
5 Feb. District of Ali. Ali city is 20 m. n. e. of Mohan, and 20 m. e. of Chota Udaipur, which is 50 m. e. of Baroda.
10 Feb. Kuksi, 25 m. due e. of Ali.
13-14 Feb. Betavad, 80 m. s. of Kuksi but across a very hilly tract and 15 m. n. w. of Amalner in W. Khandesh.
16 Feb. Mukti, district Dhulia, 10 m. e. of Dhulia City.
25 Feb. Near Palkhed, 12 m. e. of Baizapur.
March 2 Crosses the Godavari, to the south bank, at Kalegaon, 18 m. e. of Nevasa.
March 11. Shevgaon district, on the Goda south bank.
March 12. Treaty of Shevgaon, signed at Lakhephul, 6 m. w. of Paithan.