(A) EXPANSION IN THE DECCAN

1. The Peshwa and the Nizam

In the south the Peshwa aimed at the conquest of the Deccan and the Karnatak. But here the Maratha march to imperial destiny came to be blocked by the Nizam. True, there was now a turn in his tide since 1739, losing favour in the imperial court after Nadir's invasion and suffering defeat at Bhopal (1740) at the hands of Baji Rao. His own son, Nasir Jang, then in charge of the Deccan, rebelled against him. Both father and son, naturally courted Balaji Rao. Desiring the fulfilment of the terms of Doraha Sarai, the subahdari of Malwa and indemnity of 50 lakhs, the Peshwa decided to support the Nizam in return for 15 lakhs, though the latter frankly pleaded his helplessness at the Edlabad meeting (January, 1741).

The Nizam then sought to retrieve his prestige in the Karnatak recently lost to Raghujii Bhonsle. This area between the Krishna and the Kaveri, for long the bone of contention between the Nizam and the Marathas, then included five nawabships (Savanur, Cudappa, Kurnool, Trichinopoly and Arcot under the nominal vassalage of the Nizam), the Maratha principalities of Tanjore and Guti and some old chieftainships. The Marathas aimed at the subjugation of these nawabships. Shahu had deputed Raghujii Bhonsle (1739-41) and Fateh Singh Bundela not only to collect tribute but also to chastise Chanda Saheb (Husain Dost Khan, son-in-law of Nawab Dost Ali, Mughal governor (Nawab) of the Karnatak), who after harassing Shahu's cousin Pratap Singh, at Tanjore, had occupied Trichinopoly by subterfuge, and wanted to grab Tanjore and Madura. The Mughal governor was killed (May 1740), and his son Safdar Ali made a secret agreement with Raghujii for his safe succession against Chanda Saheb, now aspiring to be nawab, in return for one crore of
rupees (November). Chanda Saheb, in his turn, solicited the help of Dumas, French governor of Pondicherry. Raghuji captured Trichinopoly (March 1741) and carried Chanda Saheb as captive to Satara from where he, however, escaped later (May 1748). The campaign was fruitful financially on account of huge booty collected from Hindus and Muslims alike. Shahu conferred the mokasa of Berar and Gondwana upon Raghuji. Murarrao Ghorpade of Guti and Pratap Singh were firmly implanted at Trichinopoly and Tanjore respectively.

The angry Nizam now wooped down on the Karnatak when both the Peshwa and the Bhonsle were preoccupied in the north (Bundelkhand and Bengal). He occupied Arcot, placed it under Anwaruddin and then regained Trichinopoly after a long siege (Aug. 1743). Muzaffar Jang, son of his daughter, was appointed nawab of the subah of the Karnatak. This was his last memorable victory.

Two attempts to recover Trichinopoly by Shahu through Babuji Naik failed. Against him worked the Peshwa, who, by his 'silent diplomacy' won over Sayyid Lashkar Khan, the Nizam's prime minister, and sent Sadashiv to the Karnatak (December 1746). He defeated the nawab of Savanur and Nasir Jang. Maratha government was established in the western Karnatak but Trichinopoly could not be recovered.

2. Role of Bussy in Peshwa-Nizam contest

The death of the 79-year old Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah in May 1748 was followed by a succession dispute which for a time weakened the Hyderabad state and proved advantageous to the Marathas. But a new danger sprouted here owing to the emergence of Bussy.

The Deccan viceroyalty was seized by the man on the spot, the Nizam's restless and ambitious second son, Nasir Jang. Not heeding his father's last advice to cultivate friendship with the Marathas, he fought with
them. He secured the alliance of the English at Fort St. George against the combination of Muzaffar Jang (Asaf Jah's daughter's son and a claimant of the viceroyalty) and Chanda Saheb aspiring to be the Nawab of Arcot, both supported by the French at Pondicherry. He was murdered by a partisan of Muzaffar Jang (December 1750). The latter backed by a strong army under Bussy, the French commander, was proclaimed as the Nizam by Dupleix. But he, too, was killed (31 Jan. 1751). Bussy saved the Hyderabad state by at once declaring Salabat Jang, the third son of Asaf Jah, as the Nizam, and soon made himself not only indispensable but dictator in the state, with the support of the shrewd diwan (Ramdaspant, a Chicacole brahman, entitled Raja Raghunath Das by Dupleix) and his own secretary and interpreter, Haidar Jang.

Aiming at the annexation of Hyderabad, the Peshwa at first advanced to Aurangabad (early in 1751), but returned at the news of the advance of Salabat Jang. Supporting the cause of Asaf Jah's eldest non-martial son, Ghaziuddin, in return for concessions, the Peshwa asked him to come from Delhi and claim Hyderabad, hoping to govern the Deccan as his deputy. He also came to a 'friendly arrangement' at Panagal with Salabat Jang and Bussy (March) through Janoji Nimbalkar in Hyderabad service, gaining 20 lakhs as the price for his neutrality in the problem of succession and for suspension of his occupational activities in Khandesh (e.g. Nasik fort) in Nizam's dominions. Further, in order to maintain his influence in Hyderabad counsels, the Peshwa won over Salabat's two officers, Sayyid Lashkar Khan and Shah Nawaz Khan. His agents sought to humour Ramdaspant.

The affairs of the Nizam were in a bad shape. Salabat was a puppet under the tutelage of successive dictatorial regents. Ramdaspant secretly intrigued with Tara Bai against the Peshwa, captured Peshwa's cash of 5 lakhs near Aurangabad (April 1751), prepared for a war against Ghaziuddin, covering it up by a mission to Poona under
Nimbalkar. At the same time Bussy set about reorganising the Nizam's state by, 'strict discipline and incessant vigilance', fortifying himself at Aurangabad, recruiting and training a large army, then unequalled in military efficiency in any Indian state. The administration was toned up and even Salabat Jang stood in danger of Bussy, who maintained his expenses from the Northern Circars. As Bussy's ascendancy at Hyderabad was a standing obstacle to Peshwa's ambitions, the astute Peshwa endeavoured to win him over.

The Maratha-Nizam war was renewed in November, 1751. The issue was the mastery over the Deccan. It was a tussle between Bussy's trained infantry and artillery and the Peshwa's guerrilla tactics. After two months of desultory warfare and plunder of mutual territories during which the Peshwa, preoccupied with a civil war in Gujrat and Berar, was out-manoèuvred, he had to take to flight and even his capital was threatened. Status quo was restored by the treaty of Singwa (Jan., 1752).

To thwart the invasion of the Deccan by Ghaziuddin (entitled by the emperor Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah), Bussy arranged a defensive subsidiary alliance between the Peshwa and the Nizam (August 1752) by which the Nizam ceded Khandesh province (except the imperial forts and Burhanpur), Baglan district and territory worth two lakhs a year, besides tribute for the Karnatak and Hyderabad. The Peshwa agreed to defend Salabat Jang against all enemies and keep the Marathas out of Mughal Deccan.

The subsequent poisoning of Ghaziuddin by his stepmother (October) upset the inner plans of the Peshwa and deprived him of a good instrument of his ambitions. By stopping supplies and artillery the Marathas so harassed Salabat Jang and Bussy that by the Treaty of Bhalki (24 Nov. 1752) the Nizam ceded West Berar (between the Tapti and the Godavari) besides Baglan and Khandesh with such forts as Nasik and Trimbak, constituting Maratha homeland. The Peshwa agreed to help the Nizam in
Reducing the rebel Nawab of Bankapur and Savanur in West Karnataka. Bussy declined the Peshwa's offer of service but maintained friendly relations with him. During the tussle between Muhammad Ali (the English nominee) and Chand Saheb (the French nominee) for the Carnatic, the latter's murder (3 June 1752) practically marked the end of French supremacy there.

3. Expansion in the Karnataka (1752-60)

By a series of almost annual mulkgiri raids to the Karnatak (1752-57), the Peshwa sought not only to replenish his exhausted treasury but to expand the Maratha dominion at the expense of both the last vestiges of Mughal rule and Hindu chieftainships:

(i) Srirangapatam, 1753 (January-June): From Bhalki the Peshwa and his cousin went to Srirangapatam conquering Holi Honnur and Dharwar.

(ii) Bagalkote, 1754: The Peshwa captured Bagalkote and some other places as the Nawab of Savanur did not hand over a Maratha artillery deserter, Muzaffar Khan, trained by Bussy.

(iii) Bednur, 1754-55: The Peshwa and his cousin launched a gigantic mulkgiri expedition to Bednur in western Karnataka to collect arrears of tribute from the Raja of Seringapatam and the Nawab of Savanur, rifling treasure wherever found and leaving a trail of devastation behind.

(iv) Savanur, 1755-56: These years witnessed mounting crises for the Peshwa, viz., the failure of his brother, Raghunath Rao, in the north; the Sindhia-Rathor friction in Marwar; the defiance of the Angrias; the boomerang of borrowing British naval help; the desertion of Murar Rao Ghorpade to the Nawab of Savanur; the formation of a confederacy of Afghan nawabs and South Maratha chiefs, refusing to acknowledge the Peshwa, under the Nawab of Savanur. The undaunted Peshwa, in a joint expedition with the Nizam and Bussy, advanced along
with Malhar Rao Holkar, and the Bhonsle brothers against Savanur. The Nawab finally surrendered (May 1756) before the tremendous artillery of Muzaffar Khan and ceded halves of several districts in lieu of tribute. Beyond the Tungabhadra several chiefs (e.g. Bednur, Chitradurg, Raidurg, Harpanhalli and Sondha) paid tribute. The Maratha state was extended in the south from the Krishna to the Tungabhadra. Both Murar Rao Ghorpade and Muzaffar Khan now joined the Peshwa (against the advice of Sadashiv).

(v) 1757: Maratha interests were pushed into the extreme south. Accompanied by his cousin, the Peshwa advanced to Seringapatam, collecting tributes on the way. The Raja of Mysore had to pay 5 lakhs cash and to mortgage 14 districts for 27 lakhs more. Capturing Sera he returned, never coming to the south again after 1757.

By 1757 the Maratha dominions extending from the Goa-Krishna line southwards came to include the whole of Kanara, including Mysore.

Of the five nawabships in the Karnatak, the Peshwa had subdued Sera and Savanur. Further conquests in the southern nawabships were made during 1757-60 by the Peshwa's lieutenants: Cuddapa (Kolar, Hoskot and Balapur) by Balavantrao Mehendale (Sept. 1757); Kurnool by Visaji Krishna; Arcot had to pay tribute but was saved by British help. Mysore was saved from Maratha aggression (under Gopalrao Pathwardhan) by Haidar Ali (1759).

4. The Zenith and Exit of Bussy

Meanwhile Bussy's power and administrative control created enemies in the Hyderabad State. During his absence from Hyderabad in 1753 on account of illness, Sayyid Lashkar Khan, Nizam's prime minister, concerted measures with the Peshwa to remove the French. So he detached the French corps and drew the Nizam to Aurangabad, nearer Poona. At the earliest opportunity
Bussy hurried to Aurangabad with his troops, had the prime minister dismissed and extracted from his nominal master the cession of rich and fertile Northern Circars for the maintenance of his troops. The baffled Peshwa, however, cultivated friendly relations with the new minister of the Nizam, Shah Nawaz Khan, as anti-French as his predecessor. The Nizam became angry at the French recognition of Muhammad Ali, the English nominee as the Nawab of the Carnatic without his previous sanction as suzerain. Under the advice of his minister the Nizam now demanded the Mughal tribute from Mysore, then actively supporting the French. Bussy was unexpectedly in command of the army invading Mysore. This synchronised with the Peshwa's mulkgiri expedition to Seringapatam (1754-55).

In the subsequent Savanur expedition, occasioned by the desertion of the Peshwa's service by Muzaffar Khan, an artillery commander trained by Bussy, the Nizam, Bussy and the Peshwa combined against the Nawab of Savanur. The tremendous artillery fire of Bussy, who fired 1,25,000 shells on the besieged, profoundly impressed his allies.

Consequent upon the secret scheme of the two prime ministers, Salabat Jang dismissed Bussy, to escape from his tutelage (18 May 1756). Military help was sought from the English but it was not forthcoming on account of their involvements in pre-Plassey Bengal. Bussy's boldness, intrepidity, and diplomatic skill enabled him to surmount this crisis. With forces supplied by the Peshwa and Pondicherry he so entrenched himself in Char Minar (Chaumahalla Palace, June 1756) at Hyderabad that Salabat Jang was forced to reinstate him (September) and his ascendancy rose even higher than before.

Undeterred by this, the two ministers, Peshwa Balaji Rao and Shah Nawaz Khan, now resorted to diplomacy and helped to raise a revolution in the Northern Circars. While Bussy was busy in reducing it and occupying English forts, the two ministers in concert hatched a plot directed against both Bussy and Salabat Jang to confine:
the latter and instal Nizam Ali as the Nizam. But Shah Nawaz was himself dismissed (July 1757) and replaced by the pro-French Basalat Jang (another brother of Salabat Jang) by the Nizam whose hands were forced by riotous soldiers clamouring for pay, instigated by French intrigue.

Profiting by this internal weakness in Hyderabad state the Peshwa demanded from the Nizam all territories north of the Godavari under threat of war. The Maratha forces were led, not by the Peshwa but his 15-year old son Viswas Rao, accompanied by able leaders like Dattaji and Jankoji Sindhia, Damaji Gaekwad and others. The Nizam now induced Shah Nawaz to return from his shelter at Daulatabad fort (November). But all power now shifted to Nizam Ali, appointed heir and regent, ably assisted by the newly recruited captain of Bussy's artillery, Ibrahim Khan. On their way to the Nizam's capital at Aurangabad, the Sindhia attacked and defeated Ramchandra Jadav, a Maratha general of the Nizam at Sindkhed notwithstanding the support of Nizam Ali and Ibrahim Khan. By the peace of Shakarkhedla (29 Dec. 1757) the Nizam ceded territory worth 25 lakhs besides Naldurg fort.

Bussy now returned by forced marches from the east coast to Aurangabad and was again at the helm of affairs. The Nizam himself was placed under a French guard. In attempting to seize power, Bussy's secretary, Haidar Jang, had Shah Nawaz arrested, and seduced Nizam Ali's troops by bribes, wishing to send him away to a distance at Hyderabad. Apprehending foul play Nizam Ali killed Haidar Jang. In anger Bussy had Shah Nawaz murdered with his two sons (May 1758) and had Basalat Jang (another brother of the Nizam) appointed diwan, so that he could govern the Deccan through him. It was an apparent success of Bussy vis a vis the Peshwa.

But Bussy's star was already on the wane. The exigencies of the Anglo-French war led Count Lally, the French governor, to recall Bussy (June 1758) so as to
concentrate on Madras. With the English conquest of the Northern Circars and the final expulsion of the French from the Nizam’s dominions, the French cause became now completely doomed.

5. The Peshwa and the Nizam: The Battle of Udgir, 1760

Bussy and his powerful army had so long stood as a solid wall shielding the Nizam from the Peshwa’s ambitions. Now, deprived of the French prop, the Nizam became utterly helpless. He was reduced to a mere figurehead with the investment of Nizam Ali to power as regent in place of the pro-French Basalat dismissed in June, 1759. On the other hand the exit of Bussy and the subsequent adhesion to the Peshwa’s service of Ibrahim Khan Gardi (dismissed by the Nizam) with the French-drilled efficient modern artillery (October), not only whetted the latter’s ambition but substantially added to his strength.

A quarrel broke out between the Peshwa and Nizam Ali. Declining to implement the treaty of Shakarkhedla and refusing to become a subordinate ally of the Marathas, Nizam Ali now tried to get English help. The Hyderabad army was mutinous for arrears of pay. The Peshwa now made vast war preparations. The first striking victory was Sadashiv Rao’s bloodless capture of Ahmadnagar fort (Nov. 1759) by a stratagem, bribing its commandant, Kavi Jang. The loss of this famous fort, an advance base with its store of arms, led to a renewal of Maratha-Nizam war. Muzaffar Khan’s attempt on the life of Sadashiv delayed the war which started in December, 1759. A vast army numbering 60,000 under the Peshwa’s brother Raghunath Rao, son Viswas Rao, and cousin Sadashiv Rao, backed by Ibrahim Gardi’s 5000 regular sepoys besides his French artillery, invaded the Nizam’s dominions.

With his mutinous and unpaid troops the Nizam was ill-prepared to offer resistance. Still he had to face the
enemy at Udgir, 200 miles east of Poona (Jan. 1760). For the Marathas Udgir not only exhibited the combined arms of infantry, cavalry and artillery, but what was more significant from the point of view of tactics, it illustrated the combination of the cossack tactics of the Marathas and the European method of war. Hopelessly outnumbered and completely enveloped, suffering from inferior arms and equipment, with grain and forage supplies cut off, the Mughals under Nizam Ali and Salabat Jang (7000 only) were completely routed at Udgir (Date Jan-Feb.). Gardi’s artillery decimated the Mughals. This was followed by a decisive cavalry charge. Planning to effect a junction with a large force stationed at Dharur, the overpowered Nizam retreated to Ausa (40 miles south of it). The long agonising march was followed by a total disaster. The hovering infantry and artillery of Ibrahim played havoc on the small, slow-moving Mughals, proceeding in close columns. But Mughal artillery could not touch ‘the dispersed and wheeling’ Maratha cavalry. ‘It was the situation in Panipat inverted in favour of the Marathas’ (Sarkar). At Ausa the Marathas first annihilated the Nizam’s rearguard straggling behind and then crashed on his centre. The Nizam sued for peace. It was an unprecedented, ‘spectacular victory’ for the Marathas.

The terms of the Treaty (11 Feb. 1760) imposed by the victor were crippling. The Nizam surrendered territory worth 60 lakhs rupees in the province of Aurangabad, half of Bijapur and Bidar, the forts of Asirgarh, Daulatabad and Mulher and the towns of Bijapur and Burhanpur. The result was that the Mughal possessions in the Deccan came to be now confined to ‘an insulated space’, consisting only of Hyderabad and parts of Bijapur and Bidar, the Nizam also paying the chauth. ‘This was the apogee of Maratha success’ (Sarkar). Like the imperial power in the north, the Nizam’s power in the south was also broken and the Mughal Deccan was about to fall to the Marathas. But that was not to be. The victor of Udgir-
was vanquished at Panipat next year. In Hyderabad Nizam Ali became the Nizam after confining and killing his brother (September 1762).

(B) EXPANSION IN THE NORTH

1. Continued progress in Malwa & Bundelkhand

Balaji Rao continued his father's unfinished imperial programme in Malwa and Bundelkhand. Its main features included, as desired by the emperor, checking the Nizam and enlisting the sympathies of the Ranas of Udaipur and Marwar. But the most important plank of this policy was the friendship with and dependence on Jai Singh II, 'our great elderly friend'. Balaji Rao realised: 'in our hearty co-operation lies his interest as well as ours' (Letters of Chimnaji and Balaji).

As desired by Jai Singh a strong force was despatched to Malwa under Pilaji Jadav to be reinforced by either Malhar Rao Holkar and Ranoji Sindhia or both. After visiting the Nizam in January, 1741, the Peshwa went to Bundelkhand where he appointed Naro Shankar as his agent. Malhar Rao Holkar captured Dhar, the gateway of Malwa from the Mughals. The emperor wanted war. But Jai Singh suggested conciliation. The latter met the Peshwa and they agreed to act in complete accord. Finally the province of Malwa was granted (by a farman, 7 Sept.-1741) to the Peshwa who agreed to loyally serve the emperor and not encroach on any imperial territory. Diplomacy completed what had begun on the battlefield of Amjhera (1728).

The Peshwa placed the area between the Narmada and the Jamuna under three chieftains, Malhar Rao Holkar, Ranoji Sindhia and Yashwant Rao Pawar. Bundelkhand became a strong advance base from where the Maratha arm could radiate with equal ease to Rajputana in the
west, the Doab and Oudh in the north, and Benares, Bihar and Bengal in the east. Chhatrasal Bundela and his successors could not be expected to accept the sprouting Maratha hegemony (since 1729). Orchha, with its strategic central position, under Bir Singh Bundela, was attacked by the Peshwa in 1742 over the question of realization of chauth. Jhansi now became the central Maratha post under Naro Shankar (1742-56) and grew into a Maratha colony.

To counteract the stiff opposition of the Bundela chieftains the Marathas pursued, with the help of a diplomat Ramchandra Baba, the policy of dealing with them singly. The Maratha chieftains (Sindhia, Holkar and Pawar) being weakened by mutual differences, the Peshwa himself came in 1744 to Bhilsa. It took several years to settle Bundelkhand (1747).

2. Maratha-Rajput Relations (1741-60)

The rapid expansion of the Marathas in the north was facilitated by their friendship with the Rajputs, largely born of the cordial relations between Shahu and Sawai Jai Singh and the persuasive diplomacy and tact of Baji Rao I. After the latter's death in 1740 this friendship gave place to implacable rancour. Nadir Shah's invasion virtually eliminated Mughal authority in Rajputana. Almost immediately it came under a new master. The Marathas virtually became the arbiter of its destiny—interfering in succession disputes, and collecting tributes, indemnity or purchase money. The mutually quarrelling Rajput states, deprived by death of experienced and influential chiefs (as in Jaipur and Marwar), were unable to resist the political and financial stranglehold of the Marathas. The irony of the situation was that Rajputana witnessed the increasingly keen rivalry and lack of co-operation between Malhar Rao Holkar and Jayappa Sindhia which contributed not a little.
to loss of Rajput friendship and to the ultimate disaster at Panipat in 1761.

(i) The Jaipur episode: Malhar Rao Holkar

The death of Sawai Jai Singh in September, 1743 was followed by a civil war between his two sons, Ishwari Singh, supported by the Marathas and Madho Singh (claiming half share), backed by his maternal uncle, Maharana Jagat Singh of Mewar. The latter were defeated and Ishwari Singh did not redeem his earlier promise of a few parganas worth 24 lakhs to his brother.

In 1745 Ishwari Singh hired the Marathas (except Holkar) against the Maharana and Madho Singh: These two (and the dispossessed heir of Bundi, Umed Singh Hada) approached Malhar Rao Holkar with two lakhs for support. The latter sent his son Khande Rao to help them against the advice of his colleagues, Ranoji Sindhia and Ramchandra Baba Shenvi. The allies, however, were defeated at the battle of Rajmahal (March, 1747) by Ishwari Singh supported by Jayappa Sindhia (son of Ranoji). Both Sindhia and Holkar were bribed by the belligerents. The Poona government was also approached on behalf of Madho Singh to extract from Ishwari Singh the fulfilment of his promise. The Peshwa, originally a supporter of Ishwari Singh, became now inclined towards Madho Singh if he paid 15 lakhs subsidy to him, so that ‘both the princes would be preserved and our interests would be served’. This was, however, opposed by Sindhia’s diwan, Ramchandra Baba, as changing sides would cause loss of Maratha prestige. The Holkar, won over by the Maharana, passionately pressed Madho Singh’s cause on the Peshwa. Condemning such conflicting views in the Maratha camp, the Peshwa ordered both Holkar and Ramchandra to arrange an amicable settlement between the two brothers. But Ishwari Singh resented Peshwa’s partisanship of his rival as being interference in a domestic matter.
On his way back from Delhi the Peshwa, then high in imperial favour, came to Jaipur in 1747 and was joined by Madho Singh and other Rajput chiefs at Newai (39 miles s. of Jaipur). The Marathas demanded 50 lakhs from him and proposed an equal division of Jaipur state among the brothers. On Ishwari's refusal war began. Madho Singh agreed to pay Shahu 10 lakhs of rupees (under the guarantee of Holkar), and got from his brother four mahals (Tonk, Toda, Malpura and Barwada in Newai), but placed under Holkar till the final payment.

After an initial setback at the hands of Ishwari and Surajmal Jat at the battle of Bagru (Aug. 1748) the Marathas succeeded in making Ishwari Singh disgorge five parganas to Madho. But the heavy indemnity payable to the Holkar fell into arrears. Partly to realise these arrear dues and partly to avenge the Raja's murder of his pro-Maratha minister, Keshavdas, on a false suspicion of treason, the Peshwa ordered an invasion of Jaipur (1750). Highly dissatisfied at the meagre amount of two lakhs sent by the Raja, Malhar Rao and Gangadhar Tatya (alias Chandrachur) entered Jaipur. Dreading a direct confrontation with them and yet unable to pay a higher purchase money, Ishwari Singh committed suicide (12 Dec. 1750).

Madho Singh now became King of Jaipur with the support of Malhar, joined by Jayappa Sindhia (Jan. 1751). Besides ransom, the Marathas now demanded one-third or one-fourth of Jaipur territory by a written deed, which 'alienated the Rajah and the Rajputs'. The abduction of women from houses by Malhar's son Khande Rao exasperated the latter. Madho Singh changed colour. Unwilling to be a dependent of his insatiable and domineering Deccani helpers, he planned to murder the Maratha chiefs but in vain. Then followed a massacre of 3000 Marathas in Jaipur city with 1000 wounded (10 Jan.), followed by similar killings in the villages also. After this 'explosion' of hatred the Rajputs agreed to pay ransom of 50,000 rupees a year as the nazār for the kingdom, besides a compensation. The
Marathas vacated Jaipur in February, 1751, leaving bitter ill-will in Rajput hearts.

(ii) Bundi dispute: Holkar's candidate finally wins

The fortunes in the contest for the Hada throne of Bundi shifted endlessly but the Holkar-Sindhia rivalry remained constant. Budh Singh was ousted by Dalil Singh, supported by his father-in-law, Jai Singh II of Jaipur, from 1729-34, and again, after a short restoration of Budh Singh, supported by the Marathas, from 1734-43. After the death of Jai Singh (1743) Budh Singh's fugitive son, Ummed Singh, with the backing of Durjan Sal of Kota and the then Mughal governor of Gujrat (Fakhr-ud-daula) recovered Bundi in July 1744. Dalil Singh was backed by Ishwari Singh of Jaipur and the Marathas (except Holkar). Ummed was supported by Marwar, Udaipur and Madho Singh (rival of Ishwari Singh), Jayappa Sindhia deserting him for a higher price paid by Jaipur. At the battle of Bagru (August 1748) Malhar Rao and Abhay Singh of Marwar supported Ummed Singh who was crowned in October 1748 after 14 years of exile. He had, however, to surrender to the Holkar the town and district of Patan on the left bank of the Chambal. He promised ten lakhs as the price of Maratha support. The chauth of some places including Bundi was farmed for Rs. 75,000 a year to Malhar and Jayappa from 1751.

(iii) Marwar Venture of the Sindhia

Malhar's interference in Jaipur and Bundi disputes came to be paralleled by Jayappa Sindhia's in the Marwar. But while in the first two places Maratha nominees won, in Marwar the victor was unaided by the Deccanis. On the death of Abhay Singh in June, 1749, his son Ram Singh became king but had to carry on a prolonged dispute.
with his paternal uncle, Bakht Singh (of Nagor), then Mughal subahdar of Gujrat (since June 1748). The latter gained the throne of Jodhpur (July, 1751) and occupied Ajmer. Ram Singh approached Jayappa Sindhia, eager to establish his ascendancy and levy contributions. His initial intervention with an inadequate force ended in a fiasco (1752). The Sindhia became free to come in right earnest in June 1754 when he was detached from Raghunath Rao's main army. Meanwhile Bakht Singh had died in September 1752 and was succeeded by his son Bijay Singh. Initially fortunate, Sindhia successively besieged the latter, driving him from Ajmer to Merta (Aug-Sept) and thence to Nagor (1754-55), marked by a bitter duel. He captured Ajmer and several important centres in Marwar, including Jalor (containing the Raja's hereditary accumulations) and Jodhpur. The sandy fort of Nagor alone defied the mines of the redoubtable Sindhia.

At long last Bijay Singh took to stratagem, resulting in the murder of the Sindhia during peace talks (1755). Rajput and Persian sources, however, ascribe it to sudden provocation caused by abusive language of the latter towards the Rajputs. The incident notwithstanding, the war continued under Sindhia's courageous and enterprising brother (Dattaji) and son (Jankoji). The Rathor plan of organising an anti-Maratha coalition of northern powers, the emperor, the Wazir, Surajmal, the Rohilla leaders, Madho Singh and others did not materialise. Dattaji was in full control of the situation and defeated the Rathors at Godawas (32 miles n.e. of Jalor) and also the Jaipurias. The Peshwa sent reinforcements. Finally peace was made with the Marathas (Jan-Feb. 1756). Marwar was divided between Bijay Singh (in Jodhpur, Nagor and Merta) and Ram Singh. Dattaji Sindhia was to get 50 lakhs of rupees as war indemnity besides Ajmer fort and district and Jalor. He strongly garrisoned Ajmer and retained it for defence purposes, giving Jalor to Ram Singh (d. 1772).
The relations between Sindhia and Holkar, already uneasy became further embittered.

The Marwar episode had a profound effect on the fortunes of the Marathas. The Peshwa had urged Jayappa Sindhia to settle the dispute there tactfully and amicably and as quickly as possible, without offending the proud Rathor swordsmen. The Sindhia was to reinforce Raghunath Rao in the north so as to exact a vast tribute from Shuja-ud-daula of Oudh succeeding Safdar Jang and secure the 'holy cities of Allahabad and Benares. The Oudh tribute would afford a most welcome relief to the bankrupt Peshwa whose 'malady of debt' was as corroding as consumption. But the Sindhia turned a deaf ear to the Peshwa's mandate and doggedly persisted in seeking to wipe out Bijay Singh. His 'selfish insubordination' not only thwarted the Peshwa's plan but ruined the interests of the Marathas in Marwar and consequently in Northern India.

(iv) Enters Raghunath Rao: Two invasions
1753-55, 1756-57.

The dynastic wars in the Rajput states were over but the Marathas had not yet received their promised high prices. So the task of realising these fell on Raghunath Rao and Malhar Rao when in response to Imad-ul-mulk's invitation the Peshwa deputed them to Delhi. They collected the promised tribute (chaudh imposed since 1736) and indemnity from Jaipur, Kota, Bundi and other Rajput states (October 1753-January 1754). During the next four months (till May 1754) Raghunath kept the energy of his troops engaged in fighting the Jats. Their artillery drove away the approaching Maratha forces from Dig and Bharatpur, but a vast Maratha army besieged Kumbher fort sheltering Surajmal. Finally the Marathas retired after gaining a heavy sum of 30 lakhs, payable in three instalments, but only after losing Malhar's son, Khande Rao (May).
Raghunath next sent Jayappa Sindhia to take part in the dynastic dispute in Marwar (June).

By May 1756 the Maratha governmental forces left Rajputana and Hindustan north of the Chambal, except Antaji Manakeshwar at Delhi, a few managers of jagirs and collectors of Peshwa’s tribute.

By end of 1756, however, the Peshwa, whose aggressive policy in the north was motivated by craze for funds, again deputed his brother, Raghunath Rao and Malhar Rao Holkar to realise the unpaid Rajputana tribute. But Raghunath’s lethargy, lack of resources in men and money and friction with Holkar,—all contributed to make his venture militarily and financially barren. Even the siege of Barwada was ineffective. He could realise only 11 lakhs from Jaipur in three and half months (till July 1757).

(v) Sindhia and Holkar again (1758-60)

In July, 1758 Jankoji Sindhia came to Rajputana to collect the unpaid tribute of 50 lakhs from Marwar, and the succession fee from Kota (along with Holkar). Sindhia and Holkar now momentarily agreed to share the gains in Rajputana and Malwa. The Sindhia also coerced Madho Singh to promise 36 lakhs. After Sindhia’s departure to reinforce Raghunath Rao at Delhi (1758), Madho Singh expelled the Maratha outposts (probably in concert with Surajmal Jat).

The Peshwa asked Holkar in July, 1759 to put pressure on Udaipur for payment of arrear tribute. But the latter’s main task was to realise the Jaipur contributions. He defeated the Rajputs and occupied the fort of Barwara. This frightened the surrounding chiefs, who had usurped Maratha jagirs in Kota-Bundi. But before he could have these restored he was called away by the Sindhia to the north in 1760. The unsettled Maratha interests could be settled only after Panipat.
3. The Marathas as arbiters of the Empire

In the beginning of the sixteenth century Babur had sought to inherit the Timurid heritage. Now two hundred years later in the moribund Mughal empire founded by Babur, Ahmad Shah Durrani the Afghan king became the heir to the Persian Nadir’s raiding policy. But already events of the last thirty-five years had raised a force in the south of the country which was on way to claim the mastery over Delhi. Thus the two powers, the Marathas and the Afghans, had a confrontation over the arbitership of the empire. The Marathas did not remain silent spectators of the kaleidoscopic changes in Delhi since 1718. The opportunity there was too tempting to be lost. But it ultimately proved to be a quicksand for the Marathas.

(a) Maratha help sought in Delhi (1747-52)

In 1747 emperor Muhammad Shah appealed to Shahu for help against Ahmad Shah Abdali. The Peshwa started for Delhi in December but Maratha help was not necessary owing to the defeat of the invader at Manupur (March, 1748).

When emperor Ahmad Shah invited Nasir Jang to come from the Deccan against his Wazir, Safdar Jang, towards the end of 1748, the latter sought Peshwa’s help. The Peshwa deputed Sindhia and Holkar (then in the north) to bar Nasir Jang from crossing the Narmada. Safdar Jang also prepared for war. The frightened emperor now instructed Nasir Jang not to advance (1749).

Next year (1750) there was a tussle between Safdar Jang, Nawab of Oudh and Wazir of Delhi, and the Rohilla Afghans, who, in their dream of restoring the pre-Mughal Afghan empire, invited Ahmad Shah Abdali. In 1751 Safdar Jang sought with the emperor’s sanction the assistance of the Marathas under Malhar Rao Holkar from Malwa and Jayappa Sindhia from Narnaul (at the price
of Rs. 25,000 daily) and also of the Jats under Surajmal (at the price of Rs. 15,000 a day) against the Bangash Afghans, invading the Wazir's territories in Oudh and plundering Lucknow and Allahabad. The Marathas and the Jats were then considered to be the only powers able to match the Afghans. The Maratha light horse, 'falling like a sudden calamity', entered the Doab and occupied Rohilkhand in 1751 in a bitter struggle, in which Dattaji Sindhia earned a name for himself. The Marathas ruthlessly plundered the whole country to 'their heart's content', 'not allowing a single man to escape and every article they carried away as booty'. The booty was assessed by Sayyid Ghulam Ali at two crores of rupees in cash besides what was plundered in kind and in the cities. The Marathas were rewarded by grant of half of Rohilkhand, their first territorial gain beyond the Jamuna (retained till 1761).

According to Sardesai the 'Maratha objective' was religious cum political. The Marathas wanted to occupy the holy places like Prayag and Kashi, where the Holkar wanted to restore the original temple of Vishweshwari by pulling down Aurangzeb's mosque. But the local Brahmans, appealed to the Peshwa against such an attempt, dreading its consequences.

Opinions, however, differ on the wisdom of seeking Maratha interference in the internal disputes in the heart of the empire. Srivastava defends the Wazir. Sardesai compliments the Marathas for saving the empire in a crisis. But many think that it was fraught with dangerous potentialities. Apart from the heavy price paid for the military support (viz., about 40-50,000 rupees a day), the immediate sequel was the invasion in 1751-52 of Ahmad Shah Durrani. The Indian Pathans now found a new leader in Najib-ud-daula, a sworn enemy of the Marathas (who had defeated him at Shukartal) and unfriendly to the emperor. He raised the cry of 'religion in danger' and invited Abdali against the Wazir and his Maratha allies. The emperor, quaking with fear, summoned Safdar Jang twice. Advised
by his allies, Holkar and Sindhia, to patch up a reasonable peace with the Rohillas and concentrate against the Abdali, the Wazir signed the treaty of Lucknow (February 1752) ceding to the Marathas in lieu of expenses and dues a large area in the Doab (retained till 1803).

Profoundly significant was the next treaty (12 April, 1752) which made the Peshwa or (if unable) his Maratha sardars, defender of the emperor from internal and external enemies (the Pathans, Rajputs and other rebels and the Abdali) in return of 50 lakhs (30 for the Abdali and 20 for the internal enemies). The Peshwa was to enjoy the right to levy chauth from the Punjab, Sind and the Doab, and get the governorships of Agra and Ajmer. The Wazir advanced to Delhi with his Maratha allies. But as the emperor had already ceded the important strategic areas of Lahore and Multan to the Afghan invader who placed these under Muin-ul-mulk, the Marathas lost the first chance of confronting their Afghan rival. Though the emperor did not ratify the treaty, they demanded their 50 lakhs and freely plundered the Delhi populace. The Peshwa's summons to the Maratha sardars to escort Ghaziuddin to the south led them before leaving (May 14) to secure from the emperor the Deccan viceroyalty for Ghaziuddin in place of Salabat Jang, the Marathas getting 30 lakhs (in part payment) which Ghaziuddin would give as nazaran to the emperor for the post.

(b) The Civil War in Delhi, 1753

The friction between the emperor and Wazir Safdar Jang was accentuated by the murder of Javid Khan. Besides, party rivalry flared up in the court between Shia Irani and Sunni Turani groups. An anti-Wazir combination grew up with the emperor and his mother, supported by the Turani Sunni Mir Bakhshi (Intizam-ud-daula) and Ghaziuddin II the younger (son of Ghaziuddin I eldest son of Nizam-ul-mulk Asaf Jah). This led to the rebellion
of Safdar Jang (March-Nov. 1753). At one stage the Wazir, supported by Surajmal Jat besieged the emperor and tried to capture him. The emperor's cause was saved by the unexpected appearance of Najib-ud-daula. The Wazir was dismissed (May 13, 1753) and replaced by Intizam-ud-daula. Ghaziuddin II, appointed Mir Bakhshi through Safdar's help, turned against his patron.

Both the rebel Wazir and the emperor sought Maratha-armed support and offered bribes. The Wazir, recalling his past association with the Holkar, offered jagirs worth ten lakhs of rupees a year. On the other hand the emperor and Ghaziuddin appealed to the Peshwa for help, offering a sum of one crore of rupees 'besides the governorships of the two subahs of Agra and Allahabad. The Peshwa's Delhi agents, 'the small daring commander', Antaji Manakeshwar and the greedy ambassador, Bapu Mahadev Hingane, had to deal with this delicate but provocative situation. They sent repeated letters to the Peshwa for despatching a strong army either under the Peshwa or Sadashiv Rao to avoid a disaster, 'to maintain the Maratha position there; retain hold of the concessions previously granted, and to improve them by taking advantage of the civil war'. They also sided with the emperor, offering 5000 Deccani horse, because the Peshwa always aimed at having a subservient viceroy of Mughal Deccan, so as to be its master in effect.

The Peshwa was right in his decision to support the emperor. But he was wrong in the choice of his instrument which ultimately proved to be fatal. Instead of going himself or deputing the experienced Sadashiv, he selected his 18 year-old brother Raghunath, lacking experience of Hindustan. Besides the preliminary contingent totalling about 10,000 the main Maratha army advanced (September 1753) under Raghunath, supported by Sindhia and Holkar. They were directed to bide their time, join the winning side or utilise the exhaustion of the belligerents 'so as to increase the Maratha domination in the North'. But once-
again the need for the Maratha army had passed away. The civil war was over before the army reached Delhi. The ex-Wazir was pardoned and granted afresh the two subahs which had been promised to the Marathas (7 Nov. 1753).

(c) Marathas courted by the Wazir and Bakhshi.

After Safdar Jang's withdrawal, the internal rift in the Turani camp became unmasked. The Wazir (Intizam-uddaula, secretly backed by the emperor) and the Bakhshi (Ghaziuddin Imad-ul-mulk) bitterly competed with each other in securing the main Maratha army.

Again during the subsequent conflict (1754) between the emperor and his overgrown Bakhshi, then the most powerful noble at the court, assisted by his lieutenant, Aqibat Khan, the Wazir planned to rescue the emperor by breaking the Bakhshi's powerful Maratha alliance. An anti-Maratha coalition was to be formed,—with Safdar Jang, who was to be propped up, the Jats, then the only people able to match the Bakhshi, but whose hoarded wealth excited the cupidities of the southerners, and the Rajputs, whose lands were annually ravaged by the Marathas. Thus the Marathas would be expelled from the north and the Mughal dominions would be guarded from their encroachment in the future.

(d) The Marathas as makers of Wazir and Emperor

But the plan did not succeed. On the other hand the Marathas under Malhar Rao Holkar became the instrument of Imad-ul-mulk in the fulfilment of his ambitions. The Holkar surprised the imperial camp at Sikandarabad (26 May, 1754). The emperor, flying from the Maratha terror, was forced to appoint Imad-ul-mulk Wazir (June 2, 1754). Even thereafter he was deposed, blinded and killed and Alamgir II was enthroned. Thus the Marathas, who had come thirty-six years before with the Sayyid king-makers.
in 1718, became wazir-makers and king-makers themselves in 1754. They effected this revolution in imperial fortunes for the sake of money and power.

The realisation of the money promised by Imad was, however, a difficult task. The vast Maratha army moved about round Delhi and in the doab eating up food and fodder alike. It was a sordid tale of plunder and oppression in villages, causing great harm to peasants, the Jat yeomen-farmers and the marts, raising prices. Acting on the Peshwa's instructions to squeeze the Delhi government to the utmost, Raghunath made frantic efforts to realise money contributions. But as Delhi was bankrupt the Marathas had to be given assignments on revenue, even on Bengal. Even when these failed fertile lands in the Doab had to be alienated to them. In fact Imad was completely in the grip of the Marathas, whose insatiable demands bled the empire white, leading to a mutiny of the unpaid and starving imperial soldiery. Delhi became the scene of anarchy, violence, rapine and daily fighting while the bitter court rivalries led to increasing Maratha interference.

\( e \) Abdali first opposed by the Marathas, 1757

Wazir Imad-ul-mulk's efforts to recover the Punjab and his attitude towards Mughlani Begam led Ahmad Shah Abdali to invade the Punjab (October, 1756), and restore his authority. The invasion was unopposed from the Mughal side (1757). The first opposition came from Antaji Manakeshwar, the Maratha retainer of Wazir Imad-ul-mulk (January). Even with a small squadron but without artillery or stores and sandwiched between the Durrani and the Rohillas, he fought bravely for some time and defeated an Afghan general by resorting to Parthian tactics. But he was decisively defeated in February, 1757 by the Afghans. Leaving Najib-ud-daula as regent at Delhi and his own son Timur as viceroy of Lahore, the Abdali left in April, 1757.
(f) *Raghunath Rao’s Second Northern Invasion*  
(1757-58)

(i) *To Delhi, Lahore and Attock*

The dictatorship of the Rohilla Najib-ud-daula, left by Abdali as his plenipotentiary at Delhi, proved equally galling to the emperor and Imad. Imad now rued his recent anti-Maratha coalition with Abdali, made peace with the Marathas and turned against Najib, who was to be expelled from Delhi. Imad, restored to power, would be a Maratha stooge, giving a green signal to Maratha expansion in the north. Delhi’s unpaid indemnity was to be realised.

The immediate result of the Wazir’s invitation was the second northern expedition of Raghunath Rao (1757-58) along with Malhar Rao Holkar as ‘the ally and master’ of the Wazir (August, 1757). The Peshwa had deputed them in December, 1756 but there was some delay in their arrival at Delhi on account of the Rajputana venture on the way. However, Raghunath had despatched an advance army to the north. The Marathas came to terms with Surajmal Jat, promising to clear his balance of 1754, entered the Doab (June, 1757) which was freed from the agents of Delhi and of Najib. Shuja-ud-daula remained neutral. Raghunath had demanded *chaouth* from Najib (who had occupied the lands assigned to the Marathas). Najib’s defences of Delhi proved to be futile against the combined attacks of Raghunath and Holkar and he was expelled therefrom (Sept.). The emperor and his capital once again changed masters, the Marathas in place of the Rohillas. Imad came back to power.

After formally installing Alamgir II and confirming Imad as Wazir, Raghunath made ‘new appointments at his own discretion’ viz. Ahmad Khan Bangash as imperial
Bakhshi and Antaji Manakeshwar, imperial faujdar of Delhi environs. The Wazir substituted his own men for Najib's agents viz. qiladar of the palace fort, superintendent of diwan-i-khas, emperor's peshkar and superintendent of the Jamuna canal.

Maratha mastery over Delhi was complete. But fearing reprisal from the Abdali Raghunath sent S. O. S. calls to the Peshwa for sending Dattaji Sindhia. The Marathas plundered the country round Delhi, exacted contributions from land owners, occupied Najib's jagirs of Saharanpur and upper Doab, advanced up to Thaneshwar and even thought of conquering the Punjab. The sequel would show that the arrangements made by Raghunath under Holkar's hypnosis proved weak.

For the time being, however, the Marathas moved irresistibly. The alarmed Durrani governor of Sirhind, Abdus Samad Khan Muhammadzai, fearful of the near approach of the Marathas, made preparations for defence. He was joined by Najib's son from Saharanpur. This for a time restrained Raghunath as a war with Abdali was "beyond his power".

But circumstances soon drew the Marathas to the Punjab. The emperor and Imad were keen on recovering it. The Mughal governor of Jalandhar Doab (between the Sutlej and the Beas), Adina Beg Khan, scared by fears of Abdali's wrath for his relentless anti-Afghan crusade with Sikh assistance, offered Raghunath to pay one lakh of rupees daily during march and fifty thousand while halting. The Sikhs aspired for an independent motherland in the Punjab. Abdali had his hands full owing to internal troubles and Persian menace in the west. During this first Maratha invasion of the Punjab (February 1758), Raghunath and Malhar captured Sirhind and its governor (March). During the subsequent downright loot of Sirhind, first by the Sikhs and then by the Marathas, 'none of its inhabitants, high or low, male or female, had a cloth left on his person'. Lahore was occupied in April. Timur
Shah, the expelled governor of the Punjab and his commander Jahan Khan found safety by crossing the Chenab near Wazirabad. The Marathas could not immediately cross the flooded river in pursuit. But subsequently they did advance up to the Indus and some even penetrated into Peshawar territories up to the Khyber pass under Tukoji Holkar, Narsoji Pandit and Sabaji Pandit. The trans-Indus regions of Peshawar were entrusted,—by what wisdom is not clear,—to Abdur Rahman sent by Peshwa and that double-dealer Abdus Samad Khan with instructions to capture Kabul and Qandahar. The revenue from all Punjab districts including Attock reached the Maratha occupation army at Lahore for four months. The Marathas now reached their zenith in the north just as Udgir marked their apogee in the south. Disaster came immediately after.

Raghunath Rao did not deem it wise to retain the Punjab under the direct administration of the Marathas with a Deccani garrison. Long distance from home, weak finance of the Poona government, the extreme climate of the Punjab with its burning summer and freezing winter and the universal antipathy of the Sikhs daily growing to power, stood in the way. So, after appointing Adina Beg, who combined administrative experience with an understanding of the Sikhs, governor of the Punjab in return for an annual tribute of 75 lakhs of rupees, and leaving a small supporting force there, Raghunath retraced his steps towards Delhi (May 1758), restraining, on the way to Poona, Wazir Imad-ul-mulk from escheating the property of Adina who died in September, 1758.

The Maratha interests in the Punjab were, however, ruined after Adina's death. The Marathas demanded that since they had released the Punjab from the Afghans and Adina was their nominee, they should nominate a governor. But Adina's naib, Khwaja Mirza Jan Khan, now became the substantive governor of the province. He could not cope with the Sikhs, though he drove a raiding
party of Afghans and Gakkhrs from Gujrat. The Qizilbash captains of Timur Shah’s army in league with the Marathas confined the governor. So the Peshwa sent a strong force there under Dattaji Sindhia (April 1759). The latter sent Sabaji Sindhia to assume charge of the province with an army, but himself returned to Delhi on account of the Sikh preponderance making the conquest of the province difficult.

(ii) Folly of the northern push

Thus by the middle of the eighteenth century the Marathas became the paramount power in India. “The frontiers extended on the north to the Indus [and even beyond] and the Himalaya, and to the south nearly to the extremity of the peninsula: all the territory which was not their own paid tribute. The whole of this great power was wielded by one hand, and all pretensions of every description were concentrated on the Peshwa” (Elphinstone). An imperial Peshwa made the Marathas the uncrowned heir of the imperial Mughals.

Spectacular though, this two-year northern expedition of Raghunath was ‘politically a hollow show and financially barren’ (Sarkar). Far from adding even a pice to the Peshwa’s coffers, it involved a deficit of 88 lakhs of rupees, which led to a quarrel with Sadashiv Rao. The political unwisdom proved to be ‘more fatal’ than the financial implications. Firstly the annexation of the Punjab proved to be a reckless or mad venture. The dangerous proximity of the Marathas to the Afghan dominion inevitably provoked the Durrani king to a retaliatory war. This possibility does not seem to have been anticipated by the Peshwa who did not provide for posting a strong army under first class or even second class generals. Sovereignty without responsibility was a pitfall for which the Peshwa as the head of the state must be held accountable, for it caused the collapse of the Maratha power in Northern India.
in 1761. Secondly, Raghunath Rao committed an unpardonable folly in estranging Najib-ud-daula against the sober advice of Malhar Rao to win him over by a give and take policy, as Najib would have been the best person to effect a friendly delimitation of Maratha and Afghan frontiers. Lastly, the Marathas were unable to maintain their hold on their new dominion, 1500 miles from their homeland base, without the willing co-operation of the Sikhs and the Muslims alike, who regarded the Marathas as hated intruders and plunderers (ghanimi).

True, there was a Muslim confederacy,—the foreign Afghans, allied to the Indian Rohilla Afghans, Najib Khan and Ahmad Khan Bangash besides Shuja-ud-daula of Oudh who now came to regard the Marathas as the greatest enemies of the Muslim interests and feared the absorption of their principalities. But it would be incorrect to say that it was a Hindu-Muslim conflict, because the Hindu powers, the Rajputs and the Sikhs did not at all join the Marathas. With the exception of Surajmal Jat, the Rajputs and other northern Hindus did not co-operate with the Marathas. They even professed sympathy for the Afghan invader, though he was the sworn enemy of Hinduism and had destroyed the holy places of the Hindus including their Bethlehem. The Peshwa had to thank himself for this sorry state of affairs, as he had given up his father’s policy of Hindu Pad Padshahi and took to predatory warfare, irrespective of religion, and committed numerous sins of omission and commission. The Peshwa had directed his northern generals *(21 March, 1759)* to support anyone who would promise territorial gains and give cash to the tune of 50 lakhs of rupees. This reveals the attitude of the Marathas. Their eventual rout by the Afghans in 1761 lay in the logic of facts.
IV. THE THIRD BATTLE OF PANIPAT: THE MARATHA-AFGHAN CONFRONTATION

As explained before, Ahmad Shah Abdali came to recover the Punjab (August, 1751) from the impertinent Marathas. The piled-up loose bricks of Maratha imperial power in Northern India, uncemented by any administrative consolidation and good-will of the peoples conquered, tumbled down like a house of cards at the first touch of Abdali’s one short campaign (1759-60). He was preceded by his general, Jahan Khan, who pushed Sabaji Sindhia out of Attock, the Marathas hardly offering resistance. The Shah himself started in the autumn of 1759 and, driving the Marathas under Sabaji, advanced to India via Lahore and Sirhind (October–November, 1759) and proceeded towards Delhi, the Sikhs offering a stiffer resistance than the Marathas. After declaring Timur supreme ruler of the Punjab and making suitable administrative arrangements there, the Shah crossed the Jamuna, entered the Doab and came to be joined by Najib-ud-daula.

Delhi was virtually masterless and defenceless. Imad-ul-mulk, Wazir, apprehending a junction of the emperor Alamgir II and Intizam-ud-daula with the invader, had the former two murdered (November 1759) and made a grandson of Kam Bakhsh (Muhi-ul-Millat) emperor as Shah Jahan III. The murder of the emperor was ‘an insane and absolutely profitless crime’ (Sarkar). It hastened the advance of the raging Afghan on Delhi. Dattaji Sindhia, who was besieging Najib-ud-daula at Shukartal raised the siege (December) but was slain by the Afghans (at Battle of Bararighat, 10 miles north of Delhi) on January 9, 1760. Jankoji, his nephew, fled to Rajputana to join Malhar Rao Holkar. But this ablest Maratha cavalry leader, notwithstanding his hide-and-seek tactics, was defeated at Sikandarabad on March 4, 1760, by the Afghan general, Jahan Khan. The Shah won over Ahmad
Khan Bangash (March 31, 1760) and made a formal agreement with him for joint consultation and action. Shuja ud daula, then with the strongest army and artillery in India, approached both by the Shah and the Marathas with the bait of wazirship, ultimately joined the Shah, thanks to the diplomacy of Najib ud daula. The Rajput Rajas of Jaipur and Marwar remained neutral but loyal to the Shah. The proud Surajmal Jat alone remained adamant and refused to join the invader.

The Shah also negotiated with the Marathas for a peaceful settlement. Some progress was made when Hafiz Rahmat Khan agreed to persuade the Shah to return and then join the Holkar to defeat Najib ud daula. But neither the Khan could go against his tribesmen nor the Shah give up the cause of Najib. The negotiations broke down with the arrival of the Maratha army under the Maratha General, Sadashiv Rao Bhao (son of Baji Rao's brother, Chimnaji). Thus, on the whole, Ahmad Shah's diplomacy succeeded well enough. He had no territorial designs beyond the Punjab and did not place his son on the Delhi throne.

Undeterred by the disconcerting news of successive disasters in the north the Peshwa (15 Feb., 1760), then exulting over Udgir, decided to send a large army. The Afghan challenge must be met. The tarnished glory of Maratha arms must be restored. The popular victor of Udgir, Sadashiv Rao, was selected in a council of leaders, somewhat unwisely against the Peshwa's wish, in preference to Raghunath, possessing greater experience of warfare in Hindustan, because the latter's recent northern blitz had caused a mounting debt and financial obligations exceeding 80 lakhs and so brought upon him the odium of being a bad financier. The Peshwa's mandate to Sadashiv was 'to destroy the enemy finally and hold all territory up to the Indus'. Along with him went, according to custom, the Peshwa's representative, his 17-year old handsome son, Viswas Rao, as nominal commander. The Maratha army
was to be assisted by Ibrahim Khan Gardi, trained by the French general, Bussy, with a park of artillery. The Marathas captured Delhi (July-Aug., 1760). It was really 'a barren spectacular success' but it proved to be a turning point in the career of Bhaub. The Marathas had soon to face acute starvation. So they captured the Afghan fort of Kunj pura (October, 1760) which had enormous quantities of grain. Bhaub deposed Emperor Shah Jahan III and proclaimed Ali Gauhar, son of Alamgir II, as Emperor Shah Alam II, his eldest son Mirza Jawan Bakht as his heir and Shuja ud daula, absentee wazir, to wean him back from the Afghan side. The Marathas, however, were routed at the third battle of Panipat, 14th January, 1761. Abdali came to Delhi 15 days later and left for Afghanistan about two months later (22nd March, 1761.)

1. Sources

The Third Battle of Panipat has been a source of controversy among scholars. There is controversy regarding its sources, its details, the activities and responsibilities of the Maratha leaders, and its results. The historical sources about it may be broadly grouped under four separate heads, Marathi, Persian, Hindi and French.

(a) Marathi

No Marathi despatch of the battle is available. However, there are quite a few Bakhars and letters. Among the Bakhars there are Bhaub Sahibanchi Bakhar and Shrimant Bhaub Saheb Yanchi Kaifiyat, the Panipat Bakhar and Holkaranchi Kaifiyat. Sir Jadunath Sarkar's views about the unreliability of the Bakhars have been criticised, sometimes justly, by T. S. Shejwalkar, who has not only pointed out their importance and also pointed out the inconsistencies in Sarkar's opinion. Rejecting the Bakars as later gossipy fabrications 'no better than opium eaters' tales', Jadunath
finds in Bhau Sahebanchi Bakhar some 'true traditions as proved by authentic records' and some apparently true but unsupported statements and warns that it should not be rejected outright but used critically. Shejwalkar, however, regards the first two as 'the most important primary sources' of the battle in Marathi. Their authors, though unknown, wrote nearer the battle than Kashiraj. Perhaps the Bhau Bakhar (dealing with the period since 1753) was an enlarged version of the Kaifiyat (from Udgir to Panipat). The author of the Bhau Bakhar was biased in favour of the Sindhis. This and the Kaifiyat reflects the unanimous opinion then prevailing in Maharashtra about the imperfect assimilation of European tactics of Gardi and the traditional Maratha warfare. The Bakhar makes Bhau responsible for the disaster by breaking his own battle order, its account being more correct than that of Kashiraj. Bhau is also criticised for rejecting Abdali's request for postponement of the battle.

The long series of Marathi letters constituting the primary or basic source of the campaign (written direct from the field) are to be found in Rajwade's Marathanchya Itihasachin Sadhanen (1898), Aitihasik Lekha Sangraha (V. V. Khare, 1897), Shindeshahi Itihasachin Sadhanen (1920-37), the Peshwa Daftar (vols. 2, 21, 27; Sardesai's Selections 45 vols.), Chandrachuda Daftar (1920-34).

Among these a few important ones are those from the Bhau to Govind Ballal Bundele (the revenue collector) and others, those from Govinda Ballal, besides some stray letters (in Itihas Sangraha, edited by Parasnis 1909-17). A few letters about the Panipat campaign about Peshwa's responsibility and intercepted by Abdali are in Ichalkaranji state history (ed. by V. V. Khare, 1913).

According to Sarkar the Purandare Daftar (vols. 1 & 3, 1529 & 34) is a valuable primary source for the events after Panipat especially the Peshwa's last days but gives nothing important about the battle itself. But it gives much new information prior to Panipat, especially about the psycho-
logy and character of principal characters. Both Sardesai and Shejwalkar therefore consider it to be important.

The autobiography of Nana Fadnavis (Aitihasik Patren, Yadi Waghaire Lekha) is also not considered very reliable by Sarkar, as he thinks it to have been written about 30 years after Panipat, and as it differs from his authentic letters from Bhau's camp in several respects. Shejwalkar, however, says that it was written soon after the battle. The Hingane Daftar (1945) throws light on Delhi politics before and after Panipat but not on the campaign.

(b) Persian

No despatch, akhbar, state papers in Persian about Panipat has survived, except some letters between Abdali and Jaipur, valuable for diplomatic but not for military history. The Akhbarat i darbar i muala dated 20 December, 1758 and 22 November, 1760 (also known as Parasnis papers containing many other newsletters) are valuable for the pre-Panipat period, especially about the Punjab campaign and the push to Attock. The earliest Persian account of Panipat is the report given by some Maratha survivors of the Gaekwad's army to the author of Mirat i Ahmadi (and incorporated therein) only eight months after. But the account of Kashiraj Shivarao Pandit's Ahwal i Jang i Bhau Wa Ahmad Shah Durrani is considered by Sarkar to be 'the fullest and most trustworthy source of the battle', though it also gives the events leading to it. A Deshastha (Deccani) Maratha Brahman, sojourning in Northern India for about 25 years before Panipat, he was present throughout in the camp of Ahmad Shah Abdali along with his master, Shuja ud daula of Oudh, employed as a mediator between the two sides and carried a message to Afghan wazir once. All this made his account specially important as that of an eye-witness who could 'see both sides more intimately and accurately' than any one else. Sarkar considers Kashiraj
to be honest, as he admitted having written 19 years after Panipat; the inaccuracies and discrepancies due to ‘lapse of memory or hurried writing’ could be corrected, Sarkar thinks, by ‘a critical and comprehensive’ study of the work.

Shejwalkar’s differences from Sarkar are fundamental. Kashiiraj’s whole psychological approach was anti-Maratha. He was disappointed in getting service under the Peshwa and so went northward; the Marathas were proud, Sadasiv was arrogant; the disaster was preordained; Abdali had a divine role to punish them; he wrote his account perhaps for a British official in Oudh (c. 1780) when the Marathas were on the wane. Kashiiraj falsified the date of Bhaub’s writing about his movement to Kashiiraj (not three hours but three days before Panipat) to dramatise. Again, the value of being an eye-witness must be discounted; the battlefield being extensive, about seven miles, none could see things for himself. Kashiiraj was again a civil and not a military officer. His version was based on other accounts, as there are ‘curious coincidences’ with Bhaub Bakhar, or both might have been derived from a common unknown source. Not only are his dates wrong but his account differs from the Bakhars in some important particulars. Hence Kashiiraj’s account is useful for the Afghan and not for the Maratha side.

The Delhi Chronicle (by an anonymous writer with a detailed chronology of events at Delhi and reports, 1738-98) gives accurate dates and some new facts but it is brief.

Ibratnamah of Faqiruddin Md. of Allahabad and Tarikh i Alamgir Sani deal with the pre-Panipat period (re: Imad’s acts). Muhammad Jafar Shamlu was another eye-witness of the campaign. He was the chief manager of Shah Pasand Khan, commander of Abdali’s left wing. Notwithstanding his boast, his Manazil ul Futuh (E & D) written 35 years after Panipat from memory without notes, is often wrong and gives inflated figures. But it is not fit for rejection as Sarkar suggests. Many of his details, are new and supported by Marathi sources. Shamlu’s pointed reference
to the expulsion after Sindhia, from the banks of Attock, corroborated by Maratha accounts, is highly significant. Though less detailed than Kashiraj, Shamlu corrects him in places, especially as regards the despatch of Bhau's chit. His account of battle array is also different from that of Kashiraj. Abdali was not sure of victory in the first half of the day as he made arrangements for the worst. Bhau had not left the rear of his camp unprotected.

Sayyid Nuruddin Hasan, author of *Ahwal i Najib ud daulah* (written c. 1773 probably for Sir Charles W. Mallet), was 'the most learned and thoughtful' of all Muslim writers. But he was not present in the field, being with his master, Imad ul mulk, hiding at Bharatpur. His work is very valuable where he had his facts verified from the actors. But it requires cautious use where he depended on others. Bihari Lal Munshi's brief Life of Najib ud daula refers to his ruse of Afghans using scarlet Qizilbash caps in Kunjpura to create the impression of Ahmad Shah's arrival and thereby demoralise the Marathas. But it is silent on Panipat.

Shaikh Ghulam Husain (pen-name 'Samin') has left (1782) a vivid description of Abdali's army, camp and attitude in 1756-57 at the behest of Capt. Jonathan Scott. Sarkar has used it to contrast the Maratha and the Abdali armies. Ghulam Ali Khan (Azad) gives useful information in *Khazgah i Amirah* (1763) regarding the Marathas and Abdali's invasions till 1762 and personalities like Imad, Safdar, Alamgir II, Shah Alam and others. Md. Saleh Qudrat (*Tarikh i Ali*, 1785) covers the period from 1707 to 1761.

There are some other accounts in Persian, not as valuable as the above. Ibrahim Khan (*Tarikh, E & D*), and Sayyid Ghulam Ali (*Imad us Sadat*, 1864) borrow profusely from Kashiraj. (See *Nigarnama i Hind, E & D*, viii) Ghulam Husain (*Siyar ul Muta'kerin*) wrote his account at Patna far away from Delhi from hearsay. This was copied by Md. Ali Khan Ansari of Panipat. *(Tarikh i
Muzaffari, 1812). Shakir Khan, son of Lutfullah Khan Sadiq, was then unemployed and living in poverty at Panipat but his account (Tazkira) is too short to be useful. Similarly the memoirs of Tahmasp Khan (Miskin), who was not present either at the field or anywhere near, is also brief.

The accounts of Shuja ud daula’s flatterers contain ‘gross misrepresentation’ of facts: Gulistani (Mujmil ut Tawarikh); Md Mustajab Khan (Gulistan i Rahmat or Life of Hafiz Rahmat Khan abridged in Gul i Rahamat by Md. Sad Yar Khan, 1833); Imam ud din Husaini (Tarikh i Husuin Shahi, known as Tarikh i Ahmad Shah, dealing with Afghans up to 1798). The last work gives many useful correct details (notwithstanding confusion in dates, events and wrong statements) and agrees with Nuruddin in several new points.

(c) Hindi

Surajmal Jat was not present at Panipat. Sujan Charitra by Sudan is a study of his life. Kaviraj Shyamaldas’s Virvinod is a general account.

(d) French

Father Xavier Wendel’s history of the Jat kingdom is too brief as regards the battle.

2. Causes of the Maratha Failure at Panipat

The circumstances leading to the battle of Panipat (14 January, 1761) have already been referred to. Space does not permit a full account of the battle which would be highly technical. Ever since the battle of Panipat various attempts have been made to enquire into the causes of the failure of the Marathas at Panipat. Sardesai thinks that Peshwa Madhav Rao I had such an enquiry made which
resulted in the preparation of Bhau Saheb’s *Kaifiyat* and *Bhau Saheb’s Bakhar*. Modern scholars from the time of Elphinstone and Rajwade down to Sarkar, Sardesai and Shejwalkar have also endeavoured to analyse the causes of the disaster and apportion blame between the principal Maratha actors. The task is, however, not an easy one. Shejwalkar has vehemently criticised Sarkar’s views but Sardesai finds the latter’s analysis to be ‘clear reasoned’. Sarkar thinks that ‘the military disaster to the Marathas at Panipat was inevitable’. To understand this we have to analyse immediate and the deep-seated causes.

(A) Immediate Factors: Relative position of the two armies

The military superiority of the Durransis over the Marathas was due to some ‘polar differences’ between their armies.

(i) Rival Generals and Captains: In war much depends on organization of the army and generalship. Sadashiv Rao was primarily a civilian administrator. True he was brave and had shown his mettle as a great organizer of victory over the Nizam in the south. But Abdali was not Nizam. Nor was Panipat Udgir. Bhau’s position was full of difficulties and weak. Though the man on the spot, he was not a free general, but the agent of a distant dictator. Having no North-Indian experience he was not conversant with the affairs, the climate and the manners of the people there. Unaware of even the respective position and strength of the enemy forces, he had to depend on the Holkar and Govind Ballal Bundela, both having experience of Hindustan, and could not decide the plan of campaign without discussion with the Holkar.

On the other hand Abdali was ‘a lesser Nadir’. Trained under Nadir, he was a consummate general with a genius for war and diplomacy alike, and the best Asian general of his age. He commanded the powerful Afghans as well
as the Indian Afghan Muslim armies. Unlike Bhaup himself had to lead a battalion, Abdali seldom fought himself, like the generals in Europe. Watching the battle like an eagle he kept himself free to take the decisive move at the right moment, by hurling his reserve of 10,000 against the Marathas.

Abdali had a galaxy of brilliant commanders each matching the Bhaup: Shah Wali Khan (Wazir), Jahan Khan, Shah Pasand Khan, besides Najib ud daula and others. But Bhaup had no first rate or capable captains. The Holkar was now too old to ride; Jankoji Sindhia was inexperienced with a bad record of defeats. Antaji Manakeshwar and others were 'too small' to bear comparison with the Afghans. Moreover, the Maratha captains were 'individualistic in spirit and military tactics'.

(ii) **Strength of the two armies**: Contemporary accounts have left different estimates of the strength of the two armies, some of which are inflated. Sen thinks that on the whole the two were equally strong. Perhaps on the basis of Kashiraj, he thinks that the Marathas were superior in cavalry and artillery, the Afghans had superior infantry and generalship. But consensus of modern research is that the Afghan army was numerically superior to the Marathas. Abdali's army totalled 60,000. His own men consisted of 23,000 horse and 7000 foot, while his Indian allies contributed 7000 horse and 23,000 foot. The main Maratha army numbered 45,000, including 10,500 cavalry and Gardi's 8000 foot-musketeers. In the second line while the Afghans had 80,000 second class troops, the Marathas had only 15,000 Pindaris. There was 3:1 preponderance of cavalry in Abdali's own army, and his superior horses made the Afghans a match for more than double their number of the Marathas. The strength of the Marathas had so long lain on cavalry but at Panipat its numbers as well as efficiency had been precariously reduced. A famished army mounted on hungry nags faced the finest cavalry in Asia mounted on thorough-bred horses. Again the Afghan army was then
the finest in Asia. Its efficiency was kept up in tip-top condition by periodical reinforcements from home in men and horses, unaffected by Indian summer, scarcity or sickness. The Marathas had 300 elephants at Panipat, though Abdali considered these to be useless for fighting. Durrani’s own troops were organised on a regular pattern of European-trained sepoys regiments in India. Each cavalry regiment (dasta) of Abdali was 1000 to 1200 strong. But in the Maratha army, as among the Mughals, ‘there was fraud, the actual number falling far short of the scheduled number, based on cash salary (naqd) or land assignment (Saranjam).

(iii) Discipline and Internal Cohesion: The Maratha army was inferior to Abdali’s not only in numbers but also in organization and discipline. Thanks to iron discipline reminiscent of Nadir’s days and constant exercises the Afghan army moved ‘like one man at the will of the Shah.’ Kashiraj says that his orders were ‘obeyed like destiny’, none daring to hesitate or delay one moment or neglect his duty. In spite of the provocation caused by Maratha pilfering of war animals, no Afghan stirred out as ordered. The Turks were born horsemen, highly trained and disciplined. The least insubordination was punished severely. People committing plunder or atrocities had their noses slit, stomachs cut, arrows thrust into nostrils and were paraded (e.g. in Jan., 1757, 1760). It was this strict discipline which accounted for success in Abdali’s army against feudal, indisciplined and refractory soldiers of the Marathas. On the other hand plunder was the common feature of the Maratha army. The Marathas usually sent foraging parties to plunder food and fodder and did not discriminate between friend and foe. To the protest of the Mughal Wazir, Imad-ul-mulk, the Holkar replied: ‘They are soldiers: they always do it’. Baji Rao had once tried to control Malhar Rao Holkar but was insulted. This lack of discipline reacted fatally on the Maratha army when pitted against the better
organized and disciplined army of the Afghans. Besides discipline, the difference between the two armies was clearly illustrated in the manner of camping and marching.

As contrasted with the monolithic unity of the Afghan army organised in a graded hierarchy, the Maratha army presented the picture of rattling stone chips jumbled together without any internal cohesion. There were so violent differences between Malhar Rao Holkar and Ibrahim Gardi regarding methods of warfare that they had to be kept at a distance during the battle. The Maratha officers in Northern India were more concerned in their personal interests than in those of the Maratha empire. The Maratha envoy at Delhi, Hingane, was suspicious of his military colleague, Antaji Manakeshwar. The Maratha cause was further weakened by differences between Holkar and Sindhia, the former inciting the Raja of Jodhpur against the latter. Holkar is said to have been in secret collusion with Najib-ud-daula, the agent of Abdali and the Afghan General, Shah Pasand Khan (though some writers hold a different view). The Maratha generals were jealous of the Gardi soldiers (under Ibrahim Khan) who were paid higher and more regular salaries than the Maratha soldiers.

(iv) **Arms and armour**: The Afghan superiority in discipline could perhaps have been neutralised if the Marathas had superiority in fire-arms. True, the Marathas had a larger artillery (cannon 200, shutarnals innumerable) and their field guns were also of larger calibre than those of the Afghans. But once in position the Maratha guns could not be dragged forward easily and became useless, so that the ordering march was broken. The Marathas, proud of their artillery, always put a premium on heavy and useless pieces (some drawn by 200 bullocks). If the roads were not good the gun carriages were easily shaken to pieces. With much baggage heaped on them their ready use was delayed. Again the Marathas wasted their inadequate supply of ammunition (like food and fodder) in useless firing. With faulty elevation, and not easily
alterable level of long range cannon and reckless aiming the shots fell harmlessly behind the targets, without being able to break the enemy battle order. Such wasteful discharge soon exhausted the Maratha artillery. At Delhi and Kunjpura it had worked wonders but at Panipat it became virtually dead.

The strength of Abdali's artillery lay not in heavy cannon but in camel-swivels which were more efficient and mobile and hence superior. It was then 'the finest mobile artillery in Asia', with 4000 soldiers with Zamburaks (swivel guns) on 2000 camels and 40 light cannon pieces. These were used only at the right moment. Abdali's control of fire power like Nadir's was of European type. His artillery, equipped with flintlocks (Jizails) fired heavier bullets than the short-barrelled French guns of Gardi's 8000 foot-musketeers. The long-barrelled Ruhela guns which fired heavier bullets accurately took a heavy toll. When the cause of the Marathas became hopeless, they were roasted with camel and elephant swivels. It became an 'unequal contest' between 'the eagle and the lion.' 'With wings cleft and talons shorn,' the Maratha eagle had no chance against the Afghan lion.

Again the Durrani army was better dressed than the Maratha army. The Durrani officers were armour-clad, the weight of which was easily borne by excellent Khorasani horses. Even common soldiers used to wear leather jacket and cotton coat (as customary in cold climate), which could parry a sword or a spear. Among the Marathas, even officers hardly wore armour. Their garments (befitting a warm climate) were very light and the common soldiers wore nothing beyond the dhoti wrapped round their waist. So they were derided by the Afghans as bare-backed (Kun berahna).

(v) Maratha army unwieldy: By imitating the Mughals the Maratha army had become unwieldy. The army of Sadashiv differed as much from that of Shivaji as the army of Aurangzeb from that of Babur. Like the Mughals,
but unlike Shivaji, the Maratha army was encumbered with expensive, magnificent and heavy camp equipage, costly tents and thousands of animals to carry these. Unlike Shivaji’s army, again, the Maratha army now teemed with large number of women including officers’ wives, concubines and others of doubtful character. Like the Mughals the Maratha army suffered from excess of non-combatants (including pilgrims, traders and shopkeepers). It “resembled more the emigration of a nation guarded by its troops than the march of an army only to subdue an enemy” (Dirom). Naturally expenses for food and fodder soared up. Bhau did not heed Surajmal’s advice to leave his heavy equipage and non-combatants behind in Jat forts. Losing all mobility his army at Panipat was no longer able to carry on harassing tactics which required speed.

(B) Deep-Seated Causes of Maratha Weakness

The foregoing analysis of the rival armies at Panipat might create an impression that the Marathas lost the battle merely due to some organisational weaknesses. Far from it. No doubt these did contribute to the debacle but cannot explain it satisfactorily. We have to go to the root of the matter. Panipat was never lost in the course of a day. A national disaster like this could not but be the inevitable outcome of some chronic, corrosive and devitalising internal forces inherent in the Maratha state,—constitutional, administrative and military,—as also failure in policy, statesmanship and tactics i.e., diplomatic and tactical failure.

(i) Constitutional and administrative factors: The constitution of the Maratha confederacy, as already explained, was essentially loose and weak. Its political achievement was due essentially to individualistic efforts throughout and was never based on collective effort. The steady and measured rise of the Peshwa to dictatorial
authority by eclipsing the king and liquidating all dissentients at home came to be paralleled by the spectacular imperial expansion necessitating the creation of the confederacy and generated centrifugal forces. The Peshwa wanted to perpetuate his hold by keeping mutual jealousies among chieftains alive. Sindhia and Holkar paid the Peshwa back in his own coin by fanning the dissensions in the Peshwa's family. If the confederate chieftains like Holkar, Sindhia and others became partners, not servants, of the Peshwa, the secondary military and civil officers like Antaji Manakeshwar, Govind Ballal Bundele, Hingane brothers, Naro Shankar and others also claimed equality with the sardars, usurping rights and indulging in mutual rivalry, vitiating the atmosphere and working at cross purposes. Notwithstanding dereliction of duty, corruption and complaints, these could neither be dismissed nor replaced. The case of injudicious retention of Govind Ballal Bundele in the strategic border area of the Doab in spite of his age, his remissness and friction with the Bhaule (of which the Peshwa was fully aware) illustrates this point. Sardesai has complimented the Peshwa for the rise of obscure and ill-educated men as governors, generals or imperial diplomats. But the system of recruitment and training of officials was not adequate for the task of governing an empire.

(ii) Military factors: defects of feudalisation and denationalisation: Shivaji's army was disciplined under one central organisation with one supreme leader. But after him the Maratha army degenerated into ill-disciplined, feudal forces under semi-independent warring chieftains. Sambhujir had impaired its discipline by allowing it to take the spoils of war instead of depositing these to the state treasury. Rajaram also weakened its discipline by purchasing the loyalty of his followers by giving jagirs and creating hereditary fiefs. Under Shahu the disintegrating process continued owing to the changes introduced by Balaji Vishwanath. The commander was reduced to a nominal authority. Unity of command vanished with hereditary
military chieftains. Sub-infeudation among their followers became widespread. This system had some serious defects. The chieftains did not maintain the fixed number of troops. The standard also suffered. Salaries remained in arrears (e.g., the Holkar did not pay for 60 months). Since finance was weak, the army was reduced in peace time, damaging its efficiency. Then came denationalisation of the army under Balaji Baji Rao. The army, purely national under Shivaji, and preponderantly so under Baji Rao, became wholly heterogenous under Balaji Baji Rao, with mercenaries from different parts of India and even outside, each element adhering to respective modes. The adoption of Bussy's European mode in warfare by appointing Muzaffar Khan and then Ibrahim Khan Gardi with his foot-musketeers proved to be a tower of strength no doubt. But this was never assimilated in the Maratha army. Denationalisation, added to feudalisation, produced disastrous results on the efficiency, discipline and unity of command in the army.

(iii) Imperial Policy: Within less than half a century the Marathas had spread like a whirlwind from Mysore to the Indus, without perhaps grasping the full geo-political implications thereof. Geographical factors were misunderstood or ignored. Even the Deccan, which the Marathas boasted to be 'as good as theirs', continued to be a drag on them. The imperial venture in Hindustan lengthened the line of communications precariously, multiplied political responsibilities immensely beyond their capacity, impoverished the treasury by huge debts, without any hopes of replenishment except through exactions and plunder, and imposed the unbearable burden of military defence of distant lands on the Marathas.

The Marathas committed a great mistake in not leaving a strong army of occupation in Northern India during the last 10 years. The Peshwa turned a deaf ear to suggestions for placing a strong and disciplined army in Delhi or Northern India made by Bapuji Mahadev Hingane (1751).
and repeated by Govind Ballal Bundele in 1755. In 1755 Raghunath Rao left Northern India for Poona along with Holkar leaving only a small army under Antaji. This tempted Abdali to invade India, expel this army and occupy Delhi. It was a blunder of the Peshwa to have sanctioned the provocative push to the Punjab without keeping a permanent strong army to defend it against Afghan reprisal. Even he did not think it necessary to keep a first class captain like his brother or even a secondary general like Holkar or Sindhia in the north-west. Sindhia had to perform a heavy task. He had to defend a vast area from Lahore to Multan, to lead expeditions to Bengal and to raise funds. The result was disastrous. When Abdali advanced, Maratha forces in the Punjab failed to check him and Sabaji Sindhia, their governor, left Lahore for Sukkarta. At one stroke the work of Dattaji Sindhia was undone. Maratha power in the Punjab received a fatal blow. Maratha prestige in Northern India was tarnished. It is not, therefore, surprising that the political and military arrangements made by the Marathas in the advanced posts in the Punjab and Northern India collapsed like a house of cards even before Panipat.

The salutary and practical principle of making war pay for war was either forgotten or beyond the Marathas. An empire could hardly be maintained ‘eternally on credit’. Thus conquest, accompanied by predatory warfare, became an instrument of financial exaction, not of consolidation. As V. V. Khare acutely observes; In peace times the Maratha Empire was everywhere but during times of turmoil it was nowhere.’ The imperial policy resulted in the diplomatic isolation of the Marathas. No state, Hindu or Muslim, supported them in the north, because every one was alienated by the hateful Deccani ghanimi. If the ‘Deccan ulcer ruined Aurangzeb’, the ‘Hindustan ulcer’ ruined the Peshwa. Sripat Rao Pratiniidhi was vindicated at Panipat.

(iv) Loss of Morale: A high morale is indispensably
necessary for success in war. Long before Panipat the Marathas had lost their morale as a result of successive defeats at the hands of Afghans from 1759. At the siege of Shukarta (Sept. 15-Dec. 8, 1759) the Marathas were defeated by Najib and then by Shuja and by Abdali’s men in the Punjab. The raising of the siege exposed the weakness of Maratha strategy and gave a heavy blow to the prestige of the Marathas in Northern India. Dattaji Sindhia was the commander-in-chief of the besieged garrison. Next, the Marathas suffered defeat in an open engagement at Taraori (December 24, 1759), being ‘outnumbered, outgeneralled and outclassed in weapons’. Again the Marathas got a shattering blow at Bararighat (Jan. 9, 1760), followed by another defeat next month. All this should have made the Maratha rulers of Poona realise that all was not well with their methods of warfare and the government should have taken adequate steps to review the position. In March 1760, Holkar made a miscalculation after the sack of the city of Secunderabad by overstaying there. The result was that there was a surprise attack (on March 4) by the Afghan general, Jahan Khan. Holkar, the best cavalry leader of the Marathas, had to escape from the battlefield. This was followed by another flight.

(v) Failure of diplomacy and statesmanship: Maratha diplomacy, statesmanship and tactics seemed to have become wellnigh bankrupt on the eve of Panipat. The failure of Maratha diplomacy was reflected in the short-sighted and selfish policy of Balaji Rao in the north as a result of which he alienated the sympathy of all powerful elements in Northern India. On account of increasing debts he was very anxious to raise money by any means and he sent armies to the north not for the sake of advancing the cause of the Marathas for the Hindus but to amass money by plunder. This made Marathas highly unpopular in Northern India and they came to be called ghani (oppressor). The Rajput leaders expected...
Balaji Rao to help them like his father. But Halkar and Sindhia committed more wrongs on them. It is not surprising that both the Rajputs and the Jats kept themselves aloof at the time of crisis instead of helping them. On the other hand Najib-ud-daula, plenipotentiary of Abdali, by clever propaganda and giving a call for *jihad* for the defence of Islam rallied the Indian Muslims in Northern India and represented war with the Marathas as war with *Islam* and infidels. On the other hand the Bhau had no inspiring call to rally the Hindus. He was not fighting for *Hindupad Padshahi* but admittedly for the Mughal empire. The Marathas on account of their greed of money not only alienated the Muslims but also the Hindus and could not organise a counter-Hindu alliance against Muslim combination. The Hindu rulers were so hostile to the Marathas that they declined to join them at Panipat against Abdali though the latter had caused a slaughter of Hindus in 1757 in Delhi, Mathura, Brindaban and Gokul. They regarded Abdali as the Messiah against the Deccani ‘locust swarms’ i.e. Marathas. On account of the Afghan-Maratha peace proposal Surajmal Jat who had in the beginning sided with the Marathas deserted them in August, 1760 and this was ruinous to the cause of the Marathas. He thought it wise to keep himself aloof from the Marathas. Thus Panipat was not a confrontation between the united Hindus and the united Muhammadans, as Keene thinks. After their defeat at Bararighat, Abdali negotiated with the Jats and Rajputs asking for tribute and submission and the Hindu leaders replied that the rajas would be willing to attend on the Afghan if they were assured of safety. Hence the Rajputs and Jats regarded Abdali as an obstacle to the Marathas and as a preventive of Maratha raids on their territories.

The Marathas also could not win over Shuja-ud-daula of Oudh. Abdali was a Sunni and Shuja a Shia. Shuja-ud-daula had the strongest army and best artillery in Northern India but Shuja preferred to side with Abdali.
and not with the Marathas against the opinion of his mother and some of his officers. The victory of Abdali would not injure Oudh’s interests as he would go away but a Maratha victory would be ruinous to Oudh. The Marathas cherished endless ambitions in Northern India, unmasked since 1757; they coveted his rich cities of Ayodhya, Benares and Allahabad and wanted to annex Bihar. So it was in his interest to check them in the north. Any hesitation on the part of Shuja was removed by Najib-ud-daula’s appeal to religious instincts. It was a victory of Najib to win over Shuja to join the Afghan. There was now no single Delhi noble on the side of the Marathas. The greatest folly of Maratha diplomacy was the difference with Najib, who was their principal enemy and responsible for their defeat at Bararighat. Holkar regarded Najib as his son but Dattaji Sindhia regarded him as a thorn and undid Holkar’s work. He entrapped Sindhia at Shukartal and ruined him at Bararighat. To save himself from Maratha vengeance he invited Abdali and asked him to stay on till Panipat. The Marathas helped Imad-ud-Mulk, that worthless coward wazir of Delhi but this could not compensate the estrangement of the powerful Najib. Imad-ul-Mulk’s murder of Emperor Alamgir II (Nov. 29, 1759) was used against the Marathas. As he was incapable of helping them, his alliance was futile.

The Marathas showed a regrettable lack of statesmanship and realism in their dealing with north Indian powers. Instead of coming to a headlong catastrophe they might have come to terms with some of their rivals. By rejecting Najib-ud-daula’s offer of conciliation in June 1759 they necessarily had to engage in a disastrous and useless war with him. They rejected the peace offers of Shuja-ud-daula at Shukartal (1759). Thirdly, they even rejected the peace offers of Abdali sent through Hafiz Rahmat Khan (May, 1760) before the arrival of Bhau in the north. All these peace offers failed because the Marathas demanded
exhorbitant sums of money. Even after the capture of Delhi in August 1760 Shuja-ud-daula made a proposal for peace between the Afghans and the Marathas and this mission failed and that is why both Surajmal Jat and Imad-ul-Mulk left the Maratha side at Ballabhgarh after failure. Before the Maratha capture of Delhi an honourable peace could have been made with Abdali by ceding the Punjab and confirming Najib-ud-daula. But the Peshwa, away in the Deccan, could not understand the realities of the situation and did not agree. This left Bhau with no other alternative than to fight to the finish. The capture of Delhi where Abdali had a small force gave a wrong impression of the Afghan strength. Shuja and Najib maintained negotiations with the Abdali in August and September 1760. But Bhau did not think it desirable to come to terms with Abdali. When the Marathas defeated Abdali's agent and annexed the Punjab, Raghunath Rao received on the banks of the Indus an autograph letter from the Shah of Persia for an alliance against Abdali, the common enemy. But Raghunath under-estimated the strength of Abdali and lost a golden opportunity of dealing with the Afghans with the help of Persia. The idea of a balance of power does not seem to have been appreciated.

(vi) Failure of Strategy, Logistics & Tactics: These are close partners in war which must work in unison. Strategy involves policy and decides where to act and what to achieve. Logistics brings the troops to the point and tactics is the art of handling troops in battle. The Peshwa in the far-off Deccan had dictated policy to Sadashiv Rao Bhau thus: 'to destroy the enemy finally and hold all the territory up to the Indus', without any consideration of the realities of the situation in Hindustan. Logistical difficulties dogged his footsteps almost from the very beginning. His original plan to cross the Jamuna near Etawa, isolate Abdali and Shuja-ud-daula, attack the former in the upper Doab and raid the latter's Qudh terri-
tories was correct. But it miscarried owing to early rains, which prevented Govind Ballal from securing boats for the bridge. The campaign became necessarily protracted with disastrous consequences. Bhau had begun to face difficulty in finance and food almost from the beginning. Lack of money on the way delayed his arrival in the north. His capture of Delhi in August 1760 proved to be 'a barren spectacular success' because he could get neither food nor fodder during his two months' stay near it. His expenses increased for supporting the royal household members. Within a few months men and horses began to starve. Out of the total expenditure in this expedition (Rs. 72 lakhs) Bhau got only Rs. 22\(\frac{1}{2}\) lakhs, with no ally and no single banker willing to give him credit. This had a terrible effect on the morale of the army. So there was utter exhaustion of funds and credit. A longer stay would mean sure and severe starvation.

To solve this problem he had to move from Delhi northwards to Kunjpura, lying between Sirhind and Abdali's Doab camp, and containing huge grain stores, which he captured from the Afghans (17 Oct., 1760). But he left at Delhi a comparatively small force of newly-recruited second line troops (under Naro Shankar) which was easily crushed by the Afghans. So he failed as a general in omitting to provide for his own safety in case of unforeseen defeat. He also failed to guard the fords and ferries of rivers. Maratha patrols kept watch in their usual sleepy way. His patrol near Sonpat had no knowledge of the movement of the Afghans who crossed the Jamuna by surprise at Baghpate and cut the Marathas to pieces on 23 or 27 October, 1760. This was the greatest tactical blunder of the Bhau. He committed mistakes of tactics and strategy on account of his over-confidence and under-estimation of Abdali's strength. He was right in rejecting Holkar's suggestion of pursuing harassing tactics (because of vast size) but it is inexplicable why he did not try to fall back on Delhi and re-open communications with his base.
Instead he came hurriedly southwards to Panipat. This Muslim town near the Rohilla homeland was not a favourable site for the Marathas. But there was no choice for the Bhau. Abdali had, after winning over Shuja-ud-daula, crossed the Jamuna blocking the Bhau’s line of communications with Delhi, and cutting off all sources of supply of food and provisions to the vast Maratha army which began to starve. The Bhau entrenched himself at Panipat, defending it by a deep ditch and a strong mud wall with mounted cannon. It was his plan to compel the Afghans to fight the Marathas on his own ground.

The two armies faced each other (November 1). But instead of immediately attacking Abdali, still in an unsettled and hence weak position, the Bhau who had reached there earlier and so was in a stronger position, preferred a waiting game.

Bhau’s strategy at Panipat was to starve Abdali by sending Bundele to ravage Rohilla territory and cut off the supply of the Afghans, and then compel him to stir out of his entrenchment and attack the entrenched Marathas. This was sound in theory but it only needed able instruments to execute it. But the fat civilian revenue collector was now too old, his force of militia and cavalry too inadequate for this difficult task of cutting Abdali’s food supplies. Even after Bundele’s death in December, 1760 Bhau stuck to this plan and the result was that while his own army was starving, the enemy had full facilities of supplies. After December his stay at Panipat only helped to ensure the starvation and annihilation of his army and hence it was an unpardonable folly. Bhau lacked foresight and the power of quick decision required of a general. The decision to launch the final attack on the Afghans was taken not after careful consideration or according to a well-calculated plan but under pressure of circumstances. After December 1760 clouds thickened because the treasure convoy of Parashar Dadaji sent by Govind Ballal (Rs. 1,50,000) was cut off (Jan. 6). Horses and camels died in thousands.
Life in the beleaguered camp became unbearable. Despair and terror led Bhau (who had rejected Afghan peace proposals earlier) to appeal for peace to Abdali through Shuja-ud-daula. But it was rejected at Najib’s call for *jihad*. On the night of Jan. 13, the hungry and desperate Maratha army leaders decided to go to battle to die the death of the brave rather than in ignominy. It was not enthusiasm for laurels of victory but escapism from starvation which made them rush to a death-grapple with fully provisioned, well-fed and well-clothed Afghans. According to *Bhau Bakhar* it was decided to form a hollow square (with the women in the centre) and by using artillery penetrate through the enemy lines. But it was given up the next morning. A seasoned general has to direct the movements of his army. Bhau, like an inexperienced commander, led the attack in person from the centre without leaving any reserve. He hatched no plan for an orderly retreat in case of defeat. So he tried no strategy. The issue was decided by superior manpower in a close hand to hand fight without the artillery playing any important part. The Maratha right wing under Malhar Rao Holkar remained inactive during the critical stage of the battle. The only action of Holkar was to stand motionless and in the end escape from battlefield. On the other hand, the Muslim ally of Marathas, Ibrahim Khan Gardi (supported by Damaji Gaekwad), on the left wing, stood pledged to his word of honour. Abdali tried to win him over to join the Muslim banner but he declined and died fighting in a grim duel with the Rohillas, whose defensive tactics of advancing under successive breastworks of sand had saved them from cavalry attacks.

(vii) *Maratha strategic intelligence*: Abdali’s espionage system was more efficient than that of the Marathas. His interception of Bhau’s letters accounted for blackout of information at the Peshwa’s end. Again, suitable vigilance was not kept at the ferries on the Jamuna. Abdali easily eluded the sleepy Maratha patrols at Baghpat ford. Again the ignorance of the Marathas of Abdali’s movements (e.g.
30 December, 1760) resulted in the loss of the treasure chest coming to Bhau (Jan. 6, 1761).

It is sometimes said that the Marathas lost at Panipat as they forsook their traditional guerrilla mode of warfare. True, it had been a highly successful method in the past for defending the country and exhausting the enemy. But it required a special terrain, which was available in the hilly and jungly areas of the Deccan but not in northern India, the vast plains of which were unfamiliar and the peoples was hostile to the Marathas. Malhar had advised Bhau to follow the guerrilla mode by remaining behind the Chambal and wait till the departure of Abdali. But there is no doubt that at Panipat Bhau had tried to combine the two polar methods, new and old, of trained infantry and guerrilla war, which proved disastrous.

3. APPORTIONING RESPONSIBILITY

In this background Panipat would appear to be the culmination not only of immediate sins of omission and commission but also of the inherent and antecedent weaknesses of the Maratha state and character. No single person can be held accountable for the disaster, but responsibility attaches to several leaders in some way or the other.

(i) Peshwa Balaji Rao

It is generally believed that Sadashiv Rao delayed his attack on Abdali at Panipat in expectation of the Peshwa's arrival which would have sandwiched and destroyed the invader. So some modern writers hold the Peshwa responsible for the disaster on the ground that he had broken his promise to come from the Deccan to reinforce the Bhau. Sardesai blames the Peshwa for not going to the north when there was still time. But Sarkar has found no evidence of any such promise on his part. When the
Bhau decided to entrench at Panipat on 4 Nov., 1760 there was not even the slightest prospect of the Peshwa's coming northwards. The contents and dates of the letters of the Bhau and the Peshwa and the time taken for them to travel from and to Panipat (four weeks in peaceful time and more during disturbances) are really significant in this connection. In fact it would take more than three months for an army to come from the Peshwa to Panipat.

On 5 September, 1760, the Bhau sought only money not reinforcements. From October (i.e. from the occupation of Kunjpura with ample food supplies) to the beginning of December the optimism of the Maratha was reflected in the letters of the Bhau to Govind Ballal and those of others, while their armies were roving round Abdali's camp or plundering the Doab (under Naro Shankar) Additional man-power was not necessary.

The situation changed with the fall of Mehendale (Dec. 7). Abdali then cut off Bhau's line of communications with Delhi and forced him within trenches. The boastful optimism of the Marathas changed into growing despair with the death of Govind Ballal (Dec. 17), whose severed head was received by Bhau on Dec. 22. But no letter then sent from Panipat could ever reach the Peshwa before January 14, hardly less draw an express army from the south.

In such a situation the Peshwa should have 'commanded the Bhau at once to fall back on Agra or even Gwalior, and thus save his son and army at the expense of the coveted and unattainable lordship of Delhi and the Punjab and the unhampered possession of the Doab'.

As the supreme head of the State, responsible for policy and strategy as well as funds to implement the policy, the Peshwa has certainly to bear responsibility for the disaster. He directed his cousin to 'destroy' the enemy. But as regards funds, the ever-bankrupt Peshwa sanctioned some money no doubt, but expected him to fend for himself in the north with Peshwa's orders for half the Maratha
-dues and by collections of tributes and outstanding revenue. This was evidently a variable but uncertain source. In other words the vast northern expedition was sanctioned with inadequate funds. Its economic basis was, therefore, unstable. So the General handicapped for lack of funds, had to appeal to the Peshwa for money. This seemed unreasonable to and exasperated the Peshwa. He was guilty of total ‘diplomatic failure’ or ‘want of statesmanship’, as explained earlier.

(ii) Sadashiv Rao Bhau

The survivors of Panipat attributed the disaster to Bhau’s wrong strategy and tactics and to certain defects in his character like pride, haughtiness and unrealism for which he could not command the love of his followers during the campaign. The Bhau Bakhar is a post-mortem apology. Sardesai even says that his defeats were due to ‘his desire to serve his people’ and considers Raghunath Rao’s failure to keep ‘order and discipline among Maratha agents in the north’ to be the first main cause of the disaster. Shejwalkar has shown that Bhau’s sardars and mamlatdars were alienated not because of his behaviour during the campaign but of his strong attitude as diwan during the last ten years. In fact his defects were pointed out by John Spencer four years before Panipat.

Sadashiv can not be held responsible for the policy or strategy of the campaign as it was dictated by the Peshwa. He was, as Sarkar puts it significantly, the ‘doomed agent’ of the Peshwa. But generalship does count a great deal in a battle. Bhau might have been the ‘fittest general’ as Sardesai claims, but he was certainly a worse general than Abdali. Rawlinson sympathetically writes that ‘he lost not because he was a bad general, but because his opponent was a better one’. Even without any northern experience Bhau had originally hit upon a right plan of crossing the Jamuna into the Doab. But this failed and
his occupation of Delhi was bareen. His capture of Kunjpur was a correct move but he committed the greatest blunder in not guarding the fords of the Jamuna which enabled Abdali to cross it over to the west bank and lie astride on the Bhau's route to Delhi. There was no alternative for him but to come to Panipat. But here he committed another mistake in not reopening his line of communications with Delhi, for after his stay at Panipat he was just floating 'in the air', without any base at all. His plan of entrenching at Panipat so as to compel the Abdali to come out of his own entrenchments and attack the Marathas in their own ground has been considered to be correct in theory but incorrect in practice. But this proved to be an incorrect decision in two ways. The first was its implementation. Who was to force Abdali to come out of his entrenchment, secure in supplies of food and fodder? The Bhau had to depend not on his own military captains but on 'Captain Hunger' to do this trick for him. Abdali's food supplies must be cut. For this he had to depend on Govind Pant Bundele in the Doab. But Bhau's choice of his instrument proved to be wrong. True the Bundele was already in the area which supplied food to the Abdali. But, as already shown, neither was he capable himself nor was his force adequate against the alert Rohillas. Abdali was too quick for him. The result was that not only was the Bundele killed but the Bhau himself became the victim of the same 'Captain Hunger' whom he had wanted to hurl against his enemy. After the death of Bundele persistence at Panipat became a criminal folly.

Again, the Bhau rightly realised the importance of the trained infantry and the novel feature of entrenchments. But Holkar persisted in his traditional guerrilla mode. Bhau's attempt to combine these polar methods of warfare proved disastrous. Last but not the least, some sort of battle order was decided upon on the night previous to the battle, but it was suddenly changed the next morning.
All these ‘but’s would prove that as the supreme
commander of the army the Bhau has to bear a very great
responsibility for the disaster. Nevertheless it has to be
admitted that Bhau’s strategy at Panipat in placing the
cavalry behind Gardi’s infantry was not incorrect. But it
was not well comprehended by his captains (Gaekwad,
Shivdev and Pawar) who rushed forward before time.

(iii) Malhar Rao Holkar

The Peshwa suspected Holkar’s bonafides in 1750-52
but Shejwalkar has shown that he was not treacherous.
He, however, failed to restrain Najib ud daula from his
mischievous activities. But Rajwade was perhaps right in
blaming Holkar for the disaster. He fled away from the field
of battle at the first signs of defeat with his division which
was the only large and compact one that escaped slaughter.
His apologetic defence (the Holkar Kaifiat) that he was
ordered to escort the wives of Bhau and other chiefs out
of Panipat to the Deccan was long ago suspected by
Rajwade. In fact instead of accompanying them he met
Bhau’s wife on the way after about 20 hours of the disater
only accidentally. Even he did not care to protect his
ward, Jankoji Sindhia, posted next to him, and take him
along. On the contrary, Holkar by ‘secret collusion’ with
Najib ud daula and Afghan general, Shah Pasand Khan,
remained neutral at a critical hour, and one hour before the
end of the battle, he saved himself by flight from Maratha
right wing, exposing Jankoji to the Afghans and compelling
him in a wounded state to escape to the rear of Bhau’s centre
only to be captured by a Khan of the Afghan right wing.

(iv) Govinda Ballal Bundele

Rajwade has made him the main scapegoat for the
disaster: he failed to win Shuja over: did not properly
THE MARATHAS

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Arrange for Bhau's transport in the Doab: did not supply money demanded: did not invade Shuja's territories to divert him: did not cut off Abdali's supplies through the Doab (so making Bhau's plan futile). Bhau may be held guilty in not keeping accounts and supplying money only. He was expected not only to provide finance but also to raise a strong cavalry force to harass Oudh and Rohilkhand, starve the allied Muslim army and make it Gardi's cannon-fodder. But Bundele was not primarily a military captain. Was it not too much for the General to expect him to act as one such at his age in that emergent situation when the areas under him were ravaged by the Rohillas for some years? His failure was 'more due to the system than to remissness on his part' (Sen). In any case Bundele was never disloyal. He had a keen understanding of the complex but unsatisfactory political situation in Northern India as illustrated by his urging the Peshwa to permanently station or send a disciplined force in February 1755 and again at the time of Raghunath's return. He also informed Sadashiv in 1756 of the Holkar-Sindhia differences constituting an obstacle to concerted action.

4. EFFECTS OF PANIPAT, 1761

The consequences of Panipat may be considered from two aspects: immediate and ultimate. The immediate results affecting the victor and the vanquished, have been differently assessed. All, however, are agreed on its ultimate result on the history of India.

(i) On the victor: The victory of Ahmad Abdali eliminated the Maratha menace from his dominions and laid the Mughal empire prostrate. But it proved to be a pyrrhic victory won at great cost. True, an incalculable booty was entirely grabbed by the 8000 Durranis who excluded the Iranis and the Turanis from any share in it and sold Brahman women and good horses respectively at one tuman and two tumans to Indian soldiers. The
Deccani prisoners numbering 22,000 became slaves. But apart from the spoils of war in cash, jewels, slaves, elephants, camels, horses and other property there was no permanent political gain to the Abdali.

It is not true to say that Abdali 'wished to seize the empire of Hindustan'. He had sufficient geo-political sense to understand that it was not possible or wise to govern such a large country from distant Qandahar without incessant war. He was more interested in annexing the rich Punjab and ensuring the safety of its frontiers to relieve the needs of poor Afghanistan. So he wanted Delhi to be under a friend like Shah Alam II, whose envoy, Munir ud daula, had come to him in December, 1759 and who was also espoused by the Marathas. Hence he confirmed Shah Alam II and established Jawan Bakht as his father's deputy at Delhi. But his further ambitions including the expedition against Surajmal Jat were baulked by his mutinous soldiers, hating the Indian summer and demanding immediate return to their homes from where they had been absent for sixteen months. So Abdali had to return (March, 1761), leaving Najib ud daula as regent of Delhi. Even before his departure the confederacy of the Muslim rulers broke up. He could not consolidate his hold on the Punjab where the Sikhs became powerful.

It is, however, untrue to say that the Afghans never again invaded India as Major Evans Bell, Rawlinson and Sardesai write. Ahmad Abdali invaded India thrice during 1762-67.

(ii) On the Marathas: Much controversy has centred round the question of the extent of the shock of Panipat on the Marathas. Was their defeat a disaster or not? Elphinstone long ago observed: 'Never was a defeat more complete and never was there a calamity that diffused so much consternation....all felt the destruction of the army as a deathblow to their national greatness'. Maratha scholars beginning with V.K. Rajwade have, however, belittled the political and military effect of the disaster.
To Sardesai it was no disaster, at all, except for the carnage.

All agree that the Panipat carnage was an awful catastrophe, inflicting severe losses in manpower and leadership. The news of the devastation reached the Peshwa at Bhilsa from a banker ten days after the holocaust: 'Two pearls have been dissolved, twenty-seven gold mohurs have been lost, and of the silver and copper the total cannot be cast up'. The pearls referred to Viswas Rao, Peshwa's eldest son and Sadashiv Rao; the mohurs included the able lieutenants like Jaswantrao Pawar, Tukoji Sindhia, Ibrahim Gardi and others, while the silver and copper included the innumerable combatants and non-combatants,—28000 bodies in 32 heaps, bodies in ditches, besides those killed in pursuit or the wounded who died later. 'It was in short a nation-wide disaster like Flodden Field; there was not a home in Maharashtra that had not to mourn the loss of a member, and several houses their very heads. An entire generation of leaders was cut off at one stroke'. (Sarkar.)

In the opinion of the Maratha scholars Panipat did not destroy the Maratha power in the north or essentially shake the Maratha empire. Dittoing Major Evans Bell's view that Panipat was 'a triumph and a glory' as the Marathas fought for a glorious cause of 'India for the Indians', Sardesai holds that 'the disaster decided nothing'. In the first place, Ahmad Abdali soon tried to come to a friendly understanding with the Peshwa and did not secure a lasting gain. Secondly, the Marathas showed remarkable resilience. Balaji Rao's son, Peshwa Madhav Rao (1761-72) 'carried out the aims and objects of the Maratha policy as laid down by the first Peshwa'. In August 1763 the Marathas defeated the Nizam at Rakshasbhuvan. Within a decade they sought with some success to recover their power in the north. In 1769 they crossed the Narmada under Visaji Kishan along with Sindhia and Holkar, exacted tribute from the Rajputs, the Rohillas and the Jats and surged...
forward to occupy Delhi in 1771. This went a long way to retrieve their tarnished reputation. They again became the most important power in India and restored the fugitive emperor Shah Alam II to his ancestral throne and brought him under their protection. In this sense the Maratha fortunes declined not from Panipat but from the premature death of Madhav Rao, considered to be the greatest of the Peshwas. As Grant Duff writes: "the plains of Panipat were not more fatal to the Maratha Empire than the early end of this excellent prince" (1772). Thirdly, even after the death of Madhav Rao, two leaders, who had escaped death at Panipat, Nana Fadnavis (Fadnis, d. 1800) and Mahadji Sindhia (d. 1794), soon restored the Maratha power. Sindhia occupied Delhi in 1789, nullifying the effect of Panipat, 28 years earlier. Thus the Marathas again became a power in Hindustan and fought the British twice before their liquidation. According to this school of thought the setback, if any at Panipat, was only ephemeral.

Jadunath Sarkar, however, considers this view to be 'chauvinistic' and 'unfounded'. He has forcefully argued that the Panipat debacle was a disaster of the first magnitude from political and military and moral points of view. His argument is based on the marked contrast in the position of the Marathas and the overall situation in India in 1760-61 and in 1772. True, the Marathas did restore the emperor to his ancestral throne in 1772. But in 1772 the Marathas came not as Kingmakers, not as the dominators of the Mughal's empire and the real masters of his nominal ministers and generals' as in 1760 when they were instrumental in changing the king and the wazir. A Maratha victory in 1761 would have resulted in the expulsion of the Durrani from India and from the Punjab by the Sikhs; the sealing of the north-western frontier at the Indus; and the annihilation of Najib-ud-daula; the clearance of the Doab from all anti-Maratha elements. Shuja would have become a tributary vassal. An elated Maratha army would have finished Sindhia's unfinished
task of annexing Allahabad and Bihar provinces and fleeing Bengal. The English would have readily agreed to pay chauth to save Bengal. Bihar would have become a springboard for further Maratha expansion in the north-east.

But by 1772 Bengal and Bihar had already become red. Oudh had acknowledged British suzerainty. The Marathas lost the Punjab for ever (not to the Afghans but to the Sikhs). Malwa, Rajputana and the Doab had been lost. The Marathas now had only the Jat country (Mewat and Haryana). They now had barren Rajputana and wild Bundelkhand as the only field of their northern ambitions during the next 40 years (1765-1805), and their activities in this Hindu land left a bitter legacy of hatred. The Marathas reappeared in the north no doubt but in a changed set-up. This reappearance was certainly not a full recovery.

Again the moral effect of Panipat was not less significant. It tarnished the political and military reputation of the Marathas. Their militarism stood discredited, the halo of their invincibility disappeared. The ‘Indian world’ was convinced that ‘Maratha friendship was a very weak reed to lean upon in any real danger’ and that ‘Maratha protection was not worth purchasing by the least sacrifice’ (Sarkar).

The aftermath was melancholy and ominous. The future seemed uncertain. The Peshwa’s plans of northward advance to expel the foreigner with the support of loyal powers was upset. The tragedy hastened the end of the ailing Peshwa (June 23). ‘It was a dismal sunset to the glorious noon of his father’s and his own reign’ (Sarkar). Panipat left his brother, Raghunath Rao (Dada) free to give vent to his ‘guilty ambition’ of acquiring supreme power in the state, which opened a new scene of ‘Theban horrors’ of murder, suicide and the untimely death of the young.

From the above discussion it becomes clear that Panipat temporarily eclipsed the Marathas. It stunned but did not annihilate. The Marathas survived and recovered their power to a large extent but not wholly as before.

On the history of India: The real significance of
Panipat lay not merely in its effects on the Afghans or the Marathas but in a different direction. It ‘decided the fate of India’. In the mid-18th century the foreign Afghans allied to the Indian Afghans contended with the Marathas for supremacy in Hindustan just as 200 years before the Indian Afghans contested with the Mughals. The issue remained uncertain for a decade, 1750-60. With the defeat of the Marathas pledged in 1752 to defend the empire, the empire, too, tottered to its fall. When the Mughal oak fell various spoilers prowling about rushed to gather wood. The dismantled provinces of the empire were left to their fate at the hands of the different aspirants for ascendancy. Panipat virtually sounded the death-knell of the Mughal Empire.

The Afghans were, however, not destined to rule India. The Durrani returned home but could not retain his hold on the Punjab from where the Marathas had retreated. The Sikhs re-emerged fifty years after Banda’s execution (1716) to share the oak. Abdali had to abandon Sirhind formally to the successors of Ala Singh and Central and Eastern Punjab virtually to the Sikhs. They settled down in warring misls on either side of the Sutlej. Ranjit Singh, who subdued these, created history by reversing the tide of conquest,—from the east to the west.

Thus in the Maratha-Afghan confrontation culminating at Panipat each side weakened the other, facilitating the task of the future masters of India, the British, in establishing their supremacy in India. Already victorious at Arcot (1751) they dug their heels in almost simultaneously in the west and the east. The fall of the Angria, the commander of Maratha navy (1756), removed a formidable rival of the English in the west. In the east Plassey (1757) sowed the seeds of English supremacy in Bengal. Then came in quick succession the fall of the French at Chandannagar (1757), the defeat of the Dutch at Bedara (1759) and the fall of the French at Wandiwash (1760). It was during the Panipat campaign that Clive was on his homeward way to explain the chances of an empire to the Great
Commoner. The three days (14-16 January) witnessed momentous events for the future of the country: the battle of Panipat; Shah Alam II Emperor preparing to invade Bengal with French help (14 Jan.) but defeated by the English and seeking their protection (15 Jan.); fall of Pondicherry (16 Jan.). Thus during 1756-61 the English became free from 'the thralldom of insidious neighbours' (Gerson de Cunha). Then came the deposition of Mir Qasim (1763); Battle of Buxar (1764); and Grant of the Diwani (1765). If the Marathas had won in 1761 or if the Abdali had retained his hold on Northern India, perhaps the English could not have secured their prize and consolidated their hold so easily. Thus Panipat prevented the Marathas from resisting the growth of the British power in the Gangetic plains. It gave the British time to mature and strike their roots. After Balaji's death the British had no rival and the tone of their correspondence and attitude considerably changed from the time of Baji Rao I, as the mission of Gordon and Price indicates. This undeniable weakening of the power of the Peshwa 'paved the way to English interference in Maratha affairs'.

Again the Marathas did not learn from Panipat which revealed the fatal defects of their military and imperial system. In their infatuation for trained infantry, they neglected their 'once powerful cavalry'. Assaye, like Panipat, was lost for combining two opposite modes of warfare (Malleson). Panipat was the prelude to Assaye and Kirkee (Rawlinson). After Madhav Rao's death in 1772 Maratha imperialism in Hindustan meant in practice not the pre-eminence of the Peshwa but of Sindhia and Holkar, as the two latter (and also Bhonsle and Gaekwad) became virtually independent. When the revived Maratha power came to oppose the English, the latter was already firmly entrenched in India. Another direct consequence of Panipat was the rise and consolidation of the power of Haidar Ali in Mysore; In these respects the Third Battle of Panipat was a decisive battle, 'a-turning point in the history of India'.