CHAPTER 7

THE RAJPUTS

1. Characteristics of Rajput history in the Eighteenth Century: Causes of Decline

The decline and fall of the Mughal Empire practically synchronised with the revival of the Marathas and the Sikhs. For the Rajputs, however, it was a period of decline, not of revival. Indeed the course of Rajput history in the eighteenth century is vastly different from that of the Marathas or the Sikhs. As compared to the noon-tide splendour of the Marathas, born of a true revival, and the grim struggle of the Sikhs against the Mughals and the Durransis, ending in independence, the history of Rajasthan now became a mournful tale of civil wars, military stagnation and foreign aggression and plunder, plunging this famous ‘land of Rajahs’ and its chivalrous people into unparalleled political disorder, economic ruin, hopeless misery and moral squalor down to the establishment of British suzerainty in the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Why was it so? Why did the decadence of the Rajputs coincide with that of the Mughals? To understand this it is necessary to assess the impact of the Mughal Empire on the Rajput rulers during the last two hundred years or so. True, their independence was curtailed by the Mughals to a great extent, but they were largely compensated in different ways. Unforeseen and undreamt-of opportunities lay open to the Rajahs and their barons for conquest and for rule, as generals, governors or as officers of the Empire in different regions far beyond the narrow limits of their homeland—from Afghanistan and Central Asia to Assam and from Kashmir to Mysore. Contact with the Mughals had broken their isolation. In the political field a strong
imperial government effectively controlled the mutually warring Rajput states, protected the smaller against the bigger ones and held together the feudatory states, regulated succession and eliminated civil wars. This controlling and unifying agency dissolved with the decline in the character of the Emperor, now a mere shadow, the negligence of the wazir and the party conflicts in the court. As Sarkar writes: 'No superior power was left to enforce lawful rights and prevent ambitious conflicts between one vassal State and another, or between one prince and another of royal house. All the pent up personal ambitions and inter-State rivalries, now burst forth without fear or check, and Rajputana became a zoological garden with the barriers of the cages thrown down and the keepers removed.' Thus the Rajputs had become so closely integrated with the Mughal political system that when it decayed and collapsed during the first half of the eighteenth century they also lost their moorings. Hence the decline of the imperial power ruined and humiliated the Rajputs.

Besides the decline of the imperial authority, the social organisation of the Rajputs proved to be a factor in their decadence in the eighteenth century. The inert and slumbering medieval Rajput society with its clan feeling and organisation, characterised by internal jealousies preventing union, and rigid social usages, failed to adjust themselves profitably to the new forces released by the western civilisation. The system of education of the rulers and the general court atmosphere left much to be desired, for it fostered a sense of narrow exclusiveness and clan-pride, dinned into their ears by the panegyrical bardic literature of the charans. Long tutelage under the Mughals blunted their traditionally keen sense of patriotism and liberty. The straightforward, simple Rajput tried to ape the Mughal courtier's arts and sought to match the Maratha in intrigue and diplomacy. The rulers confided more in 'barbers, tailors, elephant-drivers and water-carriers' than in nobles who lost their normal importance in the royal councils.
Again certain elements in Rajput character now contributed to their decline, viz., love of war and land. War was the only profession befitting the ‘character, tradition and training’ of a Rajput. He still retained his personal courage and restlessness but all this proved futile now. For they could not adjust themselves to the radically new type of warfare that came to prevail in the eighteenth century. The old method of tumultuous charge followed by a desperate hand-to-hand duel with swords and spears became out of date. The days of yeomen-retainers and horsemen carrying spears, conducting short campaigns with their masters were over. Now the increasing use of artillery required long-range, quick-firing muskets. All this proved to be highly expensive, involving heavy consumption of ammunition and equipment of the musketeers, which were beyond the reach of the poor Rajput rulers. The problem of logistics in long campaigns outside their own country also needed money. The racial character and habits of the Rajputs proved to be incompatible with elaborately organised armies, modelled on European ones. Their overconfidence in cavalry and swordplay and their neglect of artillery and infantry cost them dear. They became unable to withstand foreign invaders. The victories of De Boigne, Sindhia’s general at Patan (in Jaipur) and Merta (in Jodhpur) 1790 made the proud and brave Rajput horsemen powerless before quick-firing guns and disciplined musketeers’ and Europeanised infantry. To remedy their military inferiority and to counter the European-trained brigades of Sindhia the Rajput rulers started the practice of hiring foreign mercenaries (popularly known as Sindhis). According to Tod ‘these hired bands were entirely composed of infantry, having a slight knowledge of European tactics....These guards were composed either of Purbia Rajputs (i.e. Oudh and Buxar men), Sindhis, Arabs or Rohillas’. The French mercenary captains employed by Jaipur and Kota to recruit trained battalions could not match De Boigne’s men. But though inefficient they were
expensive and so increased the insolvency of the rulers and disorder in their kingdoms.

The military weakness of the Rajput states was closely linked up with their economic impoverishment. Their resources were poor: the soil was sterile; the population was sparse and immobile; trade was not well developed; the standard of life was very low indeed. For the Raiputs land was the only source of riches and status, and the surest means of an honourable and comfortable life. During the heyday of the Mughals the Rajput rulers and their barons as lieutenants of the Emperor carved out new estates for themselves. With the cessation of imperial expansion, they found all avenues of an honourable and lucrative career blocked. The field of their activities, political and military, became very much circumscribed. Unlike the Muslim founders of principalities in Hyderabad, Bengal and Oudh, the Rajput Rajahs could not secure any share in the Mughal carcase that lay open before them. Their warlike instincts now found outlets only in civil wars and land-grabbing at the expense of their own neighbours.

Such weaknesses could have easily been overcome if the crowned heads in Rajputana were strong, able and gifted with foresight and tact. Unfortunately for Rajputana able and experienced rulers passed away one by one in several states. Mewar lost its ascendancy after the death of Maharana Raj Singh in 1680. Thereafter began the rivalry between the Kachhwahs of Jaipur and the Rathors of Jodhpur for dominance in Rajputana, leading to ‘disorder and destruction’. The situation was complicated and worsened by succession disputes among sons (natural or adopted), brothers and even pretenders. In the absence of a warrior-king there were factious quarrels for regency or for controlling the government in the royal family or among the barons. Civil wars in one family drew neighbouring families as allies of the belligerent candidates. Nay, what is more, the rival factions made frantic bids of money for securing foreign Maratha intervention, either from the
Peshwa or his local agent, Holkar; or the Sindhia, the local rival of Holkar. As such bids exceeded the capacity of the Rajput states, the latter became indebted to the Marathas, who had not only to invade the country but station their troops there to realise their legal dues. The Rajput states sank deep into insolvency.

In fact the weakening of Mughal authority and the elimination of Mughal influence after the invasion of Nadir Shah was followed by the penetration of the Marathas into Rajputana. For her the 'Mughal period' ended, and the 'Maratha period' began by 1740. The Marathas could fix their stranglehold on Rajputana because there was now no strong and resolute ruler like Rana Sanga to galvanise the Rajput states in a common bid to oppose them.

The ruin of Rajasthan in the eighteenth century was completed by the moral decay of its rulers, on whose character depended the welfare of the state. The rulers ceased to be 'the main spring of the system', in the words of Tod. The head of the clan and of the state failed to hold together the 'discordant materials'. The universal use of opium destroyed their capacity for sustained exertion as well as brain power. Wine-drinking, domestic concubinage and licentiousness—all produced a degrading effect on and corroded the finer qualities of Rajput character. The evil examples of the rulers produced its baneful results on the nobles and the upper classes of society.

Thus political, socio-economic and military factors, all combined to account for the overall decline of the Rajputs in the eighteenth century. Confined within their narrow and sterile shells, they 'became doomed to unemployment, idleness and vice'. The stage was clearly set for reversion to traditional isolationism, clan or family strife. This fine race now lagged behind other enterprising peoples of India. Thus Rajasthan had already become rotten internally when the Marathas crippled it from outside.
2. Rajput-Mughal Relations (1707-40)

The Rajputs played a significant part in the making of the Mughal empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries under Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan. Aurangzeb's policy caused a prolonged war with Rajputana which proved to be ruinous not only to the Empire financially and politically but to the Rajputs as well, contributing to their isolation. 'When Aurangzeb neglected the indigenous Rajputs, he endangered the keystone of his power' (Tod).

The relations of the Rajputs with the Mughals during the first half of the eighteenth century (from 1707 to 40) have been studied in detail earlier (in chapter 2, sec. C). It will suffice here to indicate the principal trends in outline only.

During the period of the decline of the empire after Aurangzeb's death several issues came to determine Rajput-Mughal relations. The Rajputs, sometimes by a policy of non-cooperation and sometimes by open defiance, contributed to the weakening of the Empire. With the death of Raj Singh in 1680 Mewar lost her ascendancy. Marwar and Amber now came to the forefront in Mughal politics. Ajit Singh of Marwar and Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber now sought to assert independence and extend their territories. Mewar could not do so. 'Rajasthan benefited by the demolition of the empire: to all but Mewar it yielded an extension of power'. During the time of Bahadur Shah, the rulers of all these three kingdoms tried unsuccessfully to unite in a bid to oust the Mughals from Rajasthan. Quite naturally Jai Singh and Ajit Singh wanted to remain in close proximity with each other, demanding governorships of Malwa and Gujrat respectively. This was again closely related to the Mughal court politics. During the Civil War after 1707 both Azam and Muazzm (Bahadur Shah) tried to court them. Azam and Jahandar (under the influence of Zulfiquar Khan) conceded to their demand. But both
Bahadur Shah and Farrukhsiyar considered this to be dangerous for the empire. Bahadur Shah did not aim at re-establishing direct rule in Amber but interfered in the dynastic succession supporting the younger brother Vijay Singh against Jai Singh. In Marwar, however, Bahadur Shah's objective, like Aurungzeb's, was primarily economic and religious, seeking to control the trade routes to the western ports and re-establish Islam.

During the reign of Farrukhsiyar Jodhpur and Jaipur 'played a conspicuous part in Delhi politics and by opportune aloofness or adherence they had added to their possessions a large portion of the empire'. Under Muhammad Shah Jai Singh was at first appointed faujdar of Sorath in Ahmedabad, and then governor of Agra. Ajit Singh retained charge of Ajmer and Gujrat (till 1721). Jai Singh neither joined the Sayyids nor the Nizam. 'In this way the country from a point sixty miles south of Delhi to the shores of the ocean at Surat was in the hands of these two Rajas, very untrustworthy sentinels for the Mughals on this exposed frontier' (Irvine). The invasion of Nadir Shah eliminated Mughal authority in Rajputana.

3. Domestic history of principal Rajput States and their Rulers.

Even a cursory glance at the internal histories of the principal Rajput states will make it abundantly clear why all of them could not utilise the decline of the Mughal Empire either for their own benefit or for constructive purposes.

After the death of able rulers came mediocre or even ordinary ones. On the death of Maharajah Jaswant Singh in 1678 his posthumous son, Ajit Singh, was installed as the ruler of Marwar by Durgadas, who succeeded in foiling Aurangzeb's effort to annex it. After the Emperor's death Ajit Singh sought to expand his dominions. He occupied Ajmer, dismembered Gujrat and extended far into the desert,
up to the ‘world’s end’. He gradually became influential in the Mughal court, had close connections with the Mughal court; his daughter was married to Emperor Farrukhsiyar (1715); he was himself a high official and governor of Ajmer and Gujrat (till 1721). But on account of his changing policy and defects of character he could neither consolidate his position nor enjoy his father’s preeminence. So the Rathors failed to derive much benefit from the growing dissolution of the Empire. Ajit was killed at the hands of his second son Bakht (Bhakt) Singh.

With the death of Maharana Raj Singh in 1680 the great Sisodia house of Mewar fell into ‘obscurity and isolation’ and lost its primacy in Rajasthan. He was succeeded by Jai Singh (1680-98) and Amar Singh (Mewar and Udaipur) could do nothing, even after Aurangzeb’s death, to restore Mewar’s pre-eminence. Only some efforts were made to control old feudatories of Abu, Idar, Dungarpur and Banswara. About Raja Jagat Singh (r. 1734-51) Tod remarks: ‘Addicted to pleasure, his habits of levity and profusion totally unfitted him for the task of governing his country at such a juncture; he considered his elephant fights of more importance than keeping down the Marathas’.

There were, again, civil wars for the throne in the second quarter of the eighteenth century which made three states storm-centres in Rajputana,—Bundi, Jaipur and Marwar. These internal conflicts invited Maratha invasions and helped the cause of Maratha predominance in Rajputana.

(a) Bundi

In the Hadar country there was a rivalry for headship of the clan between the old senior branch (of Bundi) and the junior branch (of Kota, created in 1624 by Jahangir). In 1707 the Kota chief claimed the headship of the whole clan. The rivalry was encouraged by Aurangzeb’s sons, by the Sayyid brothers and some Delhi nobles to serve their own
ends. But a greater change came from Sawai Jai Singh. Desirous of making Bundi his vassal, he displaced its lawful ruler Budh Singh by Dalil Singh (r. 1729-48; second son of Salim Singh Hada of Karwar), who acknowledged him as his overlord and in whose favour he obtained an imperial order. Budh Singh was defeated in April, 1730, Dalil was crowned in May and married to Jai Singh's daughter. For nineteen years Budh Singh and his son Ummed Singh struggled to recover their own. Finally Ummed Singh gained victory. He was another outstanding personage in energy, persistence and courage like Bakht Singh Rathor.

(b) Amber-Jaipur

The rise of Amber from obscurity to eminence was due to Mughal patronage as well as to the ability of several generations of its rulers from the time of Akbar to Aurangzeb,—Bhagwant Das, Man Singh, and Mirza Rajah Jai Singh I. During the first half of the eighteenth century the most remarkable prince in Rajputana was Sawai Jai Singh II. Ascending the throne at the age of eighteen he dominated the history of Amber (r. 1699-1743) and played an important role in later Mughal history. But even he could not secure any lasting advantage for his country during the period. His political and military record held out great promise at first but subsequently it was dimmed by occasional failures.

As the ruler of Amber, he was keen on augmenting its greatness. The weakness of the Empire was an excellent opportunity to do so. At his accession the Amber raj consisted of three parganas or districts of Amber, Daosa and Baswa; its western areas had been annexed to imperial domains in Ajmer. 'The Shekhavati confederation was superior to, and independent of, the parent state', bounded by the royal thana of Chatsu in the south, Sambhar in the west, Hastina in the northwest; and Daosa and Baswa in the east. The governorship of Agra enabled Jai Singh to
-enlarge and consolidate his territory', as Agra included his hereditary domains.

Jai Singh's territorial and political ambitions led him to form a plan to assert his supremacy over minor rulers and capture all his frontier districts. There was an old rivalry between Bundi and Kotah. Bundi was under Budh Singh, a protege and brother-in-law of Jai Singh, and Kotah under Bhim Singh. Bahadur Shah had rewarded Budh Singh by the grant of Kotah. But Bhim Singh refused to give it up and was supported by Husain Ali. Defeated by Bhim Singh Budh Singh sought the help of Jai Singh. The Emperor restored (1715) Bundi to Budh Singh. The latter continued to hold it except for some time in 1718 (when it was lost to Bhim Singh). Subsequently Jai Singh himself occupied Bundi and ousted its legitimate ruler, Budh Singh, in favour of Dalil Singh who acknowledged him as his overlord.

Early in his reign he showed great promise as a lieutenant of Prince Bidar Bakht at the siege of Khelna against the Marathas and was rewarded by Aurangzeb. Later for his services in guarding Khandesh and Malwa from Maratha raids Bidar Bakht recommended his appointment as deputy governor of Malwa. This was, however, not accepted by Aurangzeb. In the civil war, 1707, he at first joined Azam who had appointed him governor of Malwa but later deserted him. Subsequently he rose to a very high position in the Mughal court under Farrukhisiyar, when he was again appointed governor of Malwa (1713-17) due to the patronage of Sayyid Husain Ali. His record in this capacity was mixed. He resisted and defeated the Marathas in 1713 so crushingly that they held aloof from Malwa till 1715. This was then regarded by newspaper reporters as the biggest victory since the time of Aurangzeb.

Farrukhisiyar sought to create a rift between Jai Singh and Husain Ali. Already friction had grown between them due to Husain Ali's interference in the Kotah-Bundi dispute. Jai Singh violated court etiquette in not attending on Husain Ali during his march to the Deccan. Again the Jats were
engaged in plundering activities on the borders of the dominions of Jai Singh and disturbed the imperial territories with encouragement from the Sayyids. The Emperor wanted Jai Singh to punish the Jats (Sept. 1715), and also to win him over. But Jai Singh went to Amber and delayed action. He invested the Jat fort of Thun after more than a year in November, 1716 but could not make much headway on account of the rugged terrain, dense forests, shortage of provisions and the guerrilla tactics of the Jats, supported by the local people, and the secret opposition of the Sayyids. Finally the Jats made peace, thanks to the efforts of Khan-i-Jahan, uncle of the Sayyids.

During Jai Singh’s pre-occupations with the Jats the Marathas plundered Malwa again. After his unsuccessful Jat campaign he was suddenly replaced by Md. Amin Khan in Malwa (November, 1717). After the downfall of the Sayyids he was appointed governor of Agra (Sept. 1722) and conducted another Jat expedition. He besieged and captured the Jat stronghold of Thun and was rewarded with the title of Rajah-i-Rajeshwar. Badan Singh who deserted his cousin, the Jat leader Muhkam Singh, now became a feudatory of Jai Singh.

Subsequently as governor of Malwa (Oct. 1729-Jan. 1730 and again in 1732) he had to deal with the Marathas.

Opinions differ as regards the nature of Jai Singh’s attitude towards the Mughal empire over the Maratha question. He is sometimes regarded as being pro-Maratha on grounds of community of religion. Others exonerate him from the charge of being disloyal to the empire. It is therefore necessary to examine his relations with the Marathas in some detail and the changes in his attitude towards them since 1713. The exact date of personal contact between Jai Singh and Baji Rao is not definitely known, but it might have taken place sometimes between 1719-25. In 1725 Jai Singh and Maharana of Udaipur, professing loyalty to the Emperor, made suggestions to him for a pacific settlement: (i) Shahu be appointed in imperial
service and granted jagirs valued at ten lakhs in each of the provinces of Gujrat and Malwa; (ii) four officers of Shahu to be given mansabs. They also advised Sarbuland Khan, governor of Gujrat, to settle matters with the Peshwa and correspond directly with Shahu. The Rajas were, however, doubtful if the Marathas, demanding chauth of Malwa and Gujrat (50 lakhs annually), would accept these terms and also suspected their bonafides.

On his appointment as governor of Malwa for the second time in October, 1729, Jai Singh submitted a memorandum to the Emperor and again pressed for a peaceful settlement by grant of chauth of Malwa and Gujrat for avoiding annual expensive campaigns, on condition that the Marathas would not create disturbances in Malwa and place a force under its governor. Shahu was willing. Jai Singh's agent Dip Singh concluded a pact with Shahu, accepting 26 lakhs for Malwa and Gujrat. The Emperor at first 'agreed' to Jai Singh's memorandum but later changed his mind, criticising him for 'negligence and sloth', and replacing him by Md. Khan Bangash as governor of Malwa.

The modern apologists of Jai Singh have expressed the view that his policy was comparable to the attitude of Nizam-ul-Mulk towards the Marathas, for the latter also advised his sons to seek peace with them. What were Jai Singh's motives? Probably he wanted to use the governorship of Malwa to extend his influence up to the Narmada. Probably he considered that the Maratha claims were irresistible. Probably he considered it futile to fight the young and virile Marathas on behalf of and with the support of the weak and decayed Mughal government. True, the mere acceptance of the Maratha claims for chauth cannot be regarded as treason. But the fact is that the Marathas defeated him in February, 1733. Again both Jai Singh and Khan-i-Dauran failed in the campaigns against the Marathas in Malwa and Rajputana in 1734-35. Jai Singh's collusion with the Marathas became a matter of discussion in the court. The Emperor became incensed.
Saadat Khan of Oudh told him that Jai Singh had ‘ruined the entire empire by his secret support of the Marathas.’ The talk of replacing Jai Singh from the viceroyalties of Agra and Malwa antagonised him. A selfish opportunist and practically disloyal, Jai Singh promoted Maratha (and not imperial) interests in Hindustan. He assured the Maratha agent at Jaipur: ‘I have hitherto guarded the prestige and interests of Baji Rao because I cannot trust the Turks (i.e., the Mughals). If the latter triumph over the Deccani forces, they will disregard us. Therefore, in every matter I shall follow the Peshwa’s behest.’ In August, 1735 he also invited Peshwa Baji Rao I to come to him so as to induce the Emperor to come to a settlement with him. Sarkar’s stricture on Jai Singh is severe but well-deserved. He has, contrasted the ‘courage, enterprise and fidelity’ of Mirza Raja Jai Singh I with Sawai Jai Singh’s ‘love of sensual ease, misappropriation of the imperial chest of military defence and treacherous subserviency to the enemies of the country’. Even if we assume that it was palpably impossible for him to save the empire and keep the Marathas out of Northern India and spare Rajputana from ‘the horrors of Maratha domination’ for long, he could have done so for sometime at least.

Unsuccessful against the Marathas in Malwa, Jai Singh persuaded the Emperor to surrender to them in 1736. He next interfered in the dispute between Abhay Singh of Marwar and the Raja of Bikaner but was severely defeated by Abhay Singh’s brother, Bakht Singh, at the battle of Gangwana (28 May, 1741).

After Nadir Shah’s invasion Jai Singh became the most influential among the old nobles. Through him negotiations were made with the Marathas, on terms similar to those of Baji Rao in 1736 and 1738. Malwa and Bundelkhand were finally ceded to them (September, 1741). Thus having ‘mixed in all the troubles and warfare’ of the anarchical times, he died on 21 September, 1743.

Jai Singh deserves both praise and criticism, Tod
commends him as 'a statesman, legislator and a man of science'. Sarkar attributes his greatness to his 'extraordinary intellectual keenness and versatility, political wisdom, taste for culture and ideas of reform far in advance of his society'. Distinguished as the astronomer-prince, he also founded Jaipur city. On the other hand Tod had a low opinion about his record as soldier, for 'his courage had none of the fire which is requisite to make a Rajput hero'. This was to a large extent compensated by his 'talents for civil government, court intrigue, in which he was the Machiavelli of his day....'

The death of Jai Singh II was followed by a war of succession. At first his eldest son and successor, Ishwari Singh (r. 1743-50) became king. But his claims came to be challenged by his younger brother, Madho Singh, supported by his maternal uncle, Rana Jagat Singh of Mewar, on the strength of the Mewar-Amber treaty of 1708 by which Jai Singh had promised succession to the offspring of the Mewar princess. Both sides purchased Maratha intervention at high prices. Ishwari Singh defeated the allied armies of Mewar and the Marathas at the battle of Rajmahal (1 March, 1747) and captured the rich trade-centre of Mewar at Bhilwara. He joined the Mughal army at Manupur against Ahmad Shah Abdali but fled away, losing all prestige. The internal administration in Jaipur deteriorated on account of a mental decline in Ishwari Singh, the death of Raja Aya Mal Khatari, the able and faithful minister and diplomat (Feb. 1747) and the poisoning of his son and successor, the pro-Maratha Keshavdas, on a false suspicion of treason. Failing to redeem the heavy demands of the Marathas Ishwari Singh committed suicide (12 Dec. 1750), leaving no issue. He lacked his father's courage and cleverness but inherited his vices. He was weak-minded, capricious, coward and incompetent. The army was saved by some hereditary officers.

Ishwari Singh had held his own during his lifetime by making heavy concessions to his brother, Madho Singh.
The latter now secured the throne with the help of Holkar's men.

(c) Marwar

Ajit Singh's successor, Maharaja Raj Rajeshwar, Abhay Singh (r. 1724-49) was appointed Mughal governor of Gujrat under the influence of Khan-i-Dauran so as to wean him from the Turani party. He held the post for two years (1729-31). Reaching Ahmadabad (October, 1730) he defeated Sarbulanand Khan (dismissed rebel governor).

Abhay Singh's attitude towards the Marathas was different from that of Jai Singh in some respects. Realising the impracticability of resisting the Maratha claim for chauth of Gujrat with his small resources, Abhay Singh surrendered it to Peshwa Baji Rao (1730) and sought to help him so as to expel with his assistance other Maratha captains from Gujrat (including Pilaji Gaekwad). Abhay Singh met Baji Rao in February, 1731, and criticised Khan-i-Dauran's policy of fighting the Peshwa with the help of the Nizam. But Baji Rao, freed from Senapati Dabhade (1731), gave him no help. As Pilaji continued to harass Gujrat, Abhay Singh had him murdered treacherously (1732) and occupied Baroda. This was, however, lost in 1734. Abhay Singh joined Wazir Qamaruddin's war party against the Marathas. But he did not take any active part in the expeditions. Returning to his capital he became sunk in ease and opium.Interested in domestic intrigue he attacked Bikaner. This led to Marwar-Amber conflict ending in the defeat of Jai Singh at Gangwana (1741). According to Tod Abhay Singh combined 'ferocious courage' with 'excessive indolence'.

After his death, there was a war of succession. His 19-year-old son and successor Ram Singh (r. 1749-51) inherited his father's arrogance and the impetuosity of the Chauhans (through his mother). Lacking self-control, foresight and consideration of his own good, he alienated all nobles and
relations by his pride, bad temper and worse tongue. His rival was his paternal uncle, Bakht Singh, the chief of Nagor, assisted by the imperial Mir Bakhshi, Salabat Jang, who invaded Marwar (1749). Ram Singh approached Ishwari Singh for help. Bakht Singh (r. 1751-52) gained the throne in 1751. He was an outstanding personage in energy, persistence and courage. The last vestiges of Mughal authority passed way from Rajputana with the departure of Salabat (1752-3).

The death of Bakht Singh in 1752 was followed by a war of succession, which directly led to Maratha intervention. Bijay Singh (r. 1752-92) became King. Jayappa Sindhia was murdered by the Rathor envoy in 1755. But no practical gain resulted. Bijay Singh had to cede Ajmer to the Marathas. Marwar became ‘the special hunting ground’ of the Sindhias.

About the weak and non-martial rule of Bijay Singh a Rajput bard wails: ‘Fortune never attended the stirrup of Bijay Singh, who never gained a battle, though at the head of a hundred thousand men....’ During his reign ‘the crownlands were uncultivated, the tenantry dispersed; and commerce had diminished, owing to insecurity and the licentious habits of the nobles, who everywhere established their own imposts, and occasionally despoiled entire caravans’. There was no peace in Marwar till the death of the dispossessed Ram Singh in 1773.

4. Rajput-Maratha Relations: Maratha Penetration into Rajputana (1734-61)

The Rajput states, though Hindu, became the victims of Maratha aggression partly as prospective fields of plunder of their untapped resources, and partly as two powerful Rajas, Abhay Singh Rathor, Mughal governor of Gujrat and Sawai Jai Singh II of Jaipur, Mughal governor of Malwa (1729-30; 1732), had to oppose the Maratha raids. Jai Singh II made a show of fighting and preferred to buy
off the Marathas but was defeated in February, 1733. Ultimately the empire lost both Gujrat and Malwa to the Marathas, as explained earlier. This conquest of Malwa became the 'starting point' of the Maratha penetration into Rajputana. This was facilitated largely by the character of the Rajput rulers: the pleasure-seeking Jagat Singh of Mewar, the weak and unwarlike Bijay Singh of Marwar and the sensual and intriguing Sawai Jai Singh. Another contributory factor was the various dynastic quarrels in Rajputana,—in Bundi, Marwar and Jodhpur. The Marathas came as hired friends of the contestants and ended by becoming masters levying tribute or plunders.

The first Maratha penetration into Rajputana was in Bundi. Here the cause of the defeated Budh Singh was taken up by Pratap Singh (eldest son of Salim), who went to hire Maratha help at six lakh rupees. A Maratha army under Malhar Rao Holkar and Ranoji Sindhia whisked away Salim, the regent. But after their departure, a Jaipur force restored Dalil. The terror caused by the light forays of Holkar led Jai Singh II to call a conference of all Rajput Rajas (October, 1734) to devise measures against repetition of Deccani spoliation. But the Rajputs were themselves divided. "Unity of interests was the chief character of the engagement, had they adhered to which, not only the independence, but the aggrandisement, of Rajasthan was in their power, and they might have alike defied the expiring efforts of Mughal tyranny, and the Parthian-like warfare of the Maratha,...but difficult as it had ever proved to coalesce the Rajputs for mutual preservation, even when a paramount superiority of power, both temporal and spiritual, belonged to the Ranas, so now, since Amber and Marwar had attained an equality with Mewar, it was found still less practicable to prevent the operation of the principles of disunion." (Tod). This also needed co-operation with the imperial troops deputed for the same purpose. So no united and effective defence against the Marathas was possible.
During 1734-35 two imperial campaigns were sent to drive the Marathas from Malwa and Rajputana. That in the western theatre (via Ajmer) was under the imperial Bakhshi, Khan-i-Dauran, Jai Singh, Abhay Singh and Rai Durjan Sal of Kotah. The other in the eastern theatre (via Agra for Bundelkhand) was under Wazir Qamaruddin (November, 1734-May, 1735). But both these failed. In Rajputana Khan-i-Dauran, at Jai Singh’s advice, induced the Marathas to retire beyond the Narmada on a promise of paying 22 lakhs as chauth of Malwa (March 23, 1735). Pilaji Gaekwad received a bribe of five lakhs from the Wazir to vacate Malwa.

During the North Indian pilgrimage of Peshwa Baji Rao’s mother, 1735, the Rajput Rajas treated her with highest respect. Jai Singh II distrusted the Mughals and evinced friendship with the Peshwa. He invited him (August, 1735) to come, promising him to pay Rs. 5,000/- daily besides chauth of Malwa and the rent of Pilaji Jadav’s jagir, a total of 20 lakhs in cash and arrange his interview with the Emperor.

In October 1735 Peshwa Baji Rao planned to march to the north. All Rajputana became alarmed. But he wanted to impose chauth peacefully on the Rajput Rajas.

So long Maratha penetration had not resulted in any territorial aggression. The Maharana of Mewar, Jagat Singh II, gave the Peshwa Baji Rao a fitting reception. But this did not save Mewar from being ‘the first victim of Maratha aggression.’ By a treaty (1736), effective for ten years, he agreed to pay an annual tribute of Rs. 1,60,000. In lieu of it Banhada pargana was ceded and it was divided equally between Holkar, Sindhia and Pawar. When the Maharana invited him to his palace, the Peshwa suspected foul play and was pacified only on payment of a fine of seven lakhs. Most probably it was during the reign of the next Rana, Pratap Singh II (1751-54), who had to make heavy contributions to the Marathas that ‘the first limb (was) severed from Mewar’, when its important fief
Rampura was assigned to Holkar by Madho Singh of Amber (who had got it as an appanage from the Rana). Repeated Maratha depredations so impoverished Mewar that Rana Raj Singh II (1754-61) had to seek monetary help from the Brahman tribute-collector for marrying the Rathor princess.

In Jaipur Baji Rao declined to equate Jai Singh II, a mere imperial mansabdar, with the Maharana (equal with Shahu in status). The Peshwa also took no steps for the restoration of Bundi to Budh Singh, though this had been promised to Shahu. Jai Singh advised the Peshwa not to attack Delhi then but to come next year, with an assurance to secure for Shahu the imperial grant of chauth and cession of Malwa. Peace negotiations with the Peshwa conducted by Jai Singh II failed. The Peshwa invaded Northern India (1737). After his death Malwa was ceded to his son, Balaji Rao, in 1741.

**Period from 1741 to 61**

Notwithstanding Maratha penetration into Rajputana since 1734, there was, on the whole, Maratha-Rajput friendship down to 1740. The relations between Shahu and Jai Singh II were cordial. Baji Rao was also tactful. But rancour replaced friendship in the time of Peshwa Balaji Rao. The political vacuum created by the virtual disappearance of the imperial authority from Rajputana after Nadir Shah's invasion came to be filled up by the Marathas who now became the master and the arbiter of the destinies of the country, interfering in cases of disputed succession, plundering the land, collecting tribute, exactions or ransom. After the deaths of influential rulers like Sawai Jai Singh in 1743, Abhay Singh in 1749 and Ishwari Singh in 1750 their weak successors, without any strong protective suzerain, could not withstand the Maratha pressure. In fact the dynastic quarrels in Bundi, Jaipur and Marwar not only led the neighbouring Rajput states to espouse the cause of the rival candidates, but the latter even invited the
Marathas to settle the issues and they came almost annually. The disputes were at last settled one way or the other but the weakened country, ‘divided, impotent and impoverished’ lay at the mercy of the Deccanis.

The various aspects of Maratha penetration into Rajputana during 1741-61 have been dealt with earlier in the chapter on the Marathas, and need not be repeated here, viz., (a) Bundi, (b) Jaipur, (c) Marwar, (d) the activities of Raghunath Rao and (e) of Holkar and Sindhia in Rajputana.

Post-Panipat Period

The Panipat disaster emboldened the Rajputs to endeavour to remove Maratha influence from Rajputana. But Mewar, weakened by minority rule and civil war and exhausted by heavy payments to the Marathas, was unable to avail of the opportunity. The succession dispute between Ari Singh and Ratan Singh led to the intervention of Holkar and Mahadji Sindhia. Rana Ari Singh agreed to pay 64 lakhs, but to collect this cash was as impossible as ‘to draw blood out of stone’. So Mewar’s limbs were cut. Some of its districts came under the administrative control of Sindhia (e.g. Jawad, Jiran and Nimach) and some under Holkar (Morwan and Nimbahera). Rana Hamir (1773-78) had to pay heavily to the Marathas for help in restoring internal order.

Madho Singh of Jaipur, strongly fortified in his capital, was ‘now the strongest power in Rajputana’, with a martial population and villages with protective walls. He even sought to organize an anti-Maratha coalition with Ahmad Shah Abdali, Shah Alam II, Najib-ud-daula and the Rajput rulers. But he was defeated at Mangrol by Malhar Rao Holkar (November, 1761). His failure was due to ‘his lack of character, quarrels with his feudal barons and chronic antagonism to Bijay Singh of Marwar, the only Rajput prince that counted for anything.’ Madho Singh
died in 1768. As his two immediate successors were minors, Jaipur became distracted and anarchical. Hence the efforts to wipe out the Marathas from Rajputana failed and they continued to hold the country (except Bikaner and Jaisalmer) under their grip in the seventies of the eighteenth century.