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PREFACE TO THE THIRD VOLUME.

This volume carries the story of the Delhi monarchy from the entrance of Shah Alam II into his capital in 1772, through seventeen years of his rule, to the bloody tragedy of 1788 which turned the Mughal monarch into a mere shadow and transferred his government to a perpetual vicar, till another and still bloodier tragedy came seventy years later which struck out the very name of his dynasty from the pages of Time. Among the phantoms of the past that crowd the stage of this volume, the dominating figure is that of Mahadji Sindhia, as Ahmad Shah Abdali's was in the volume before it. The final assertion of Mahadji's supremacy over all the members of the Empire took place two years beyond the close of the present volume, but the importance of that political development and the vast and diversified mass of materials available for its study have prevented me from continuing the story to that point.

In fact, this third volume has taken twice the time of its immediate predecessor to write, because of the immensity, variety and confused character of the historical sources on which it is based. The dates of thousands of laconic Marathi despatches had to be ascertained, their obscurities cleared, and the textual reading and arrangement of the Persian manuscript sources had to be corrected, before a single page of my narrative could be composed. To give two



examples: the Persian news-letters collected by Claud Martin and now preserved in the British Museum in two volumes running to 1500 manuscript pages (*Or.* 25,020 and 25,021), do not except in the rarest cases give the year, and hence the owner has bound them by placing *all* the sheets of a particular month for these nine years lumped together in one place, in the order of the days of the month only! It is only after ploughing my way through these huge collections of reports and concentrating light on their contents from the three languages, Marathi, Persian and English, that I have been able to date and interpret this class of sources correctly.

Again, the invaluable memoirs of Faqir Khair-ud-din (the Persian secretary of the Anderson brothers, British Residents with Sindhia) run to a thousand pages of foolscap folio size in my manuscript. But this is a copy made from the Khuda Bakhsh manuscript, which itself was transcribed from a defective and wrongly arranged original, without its scribe or my scribe noticing these defects. It took me two months of work at the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal to collate my copy with the Society's manuscript, in which too several folios have been placed out of order at the time of binding.

During the same period the despatches of the British Residents, James Anderson, William Kirkpatrick, and William Palmer, from the remnant of the old Poona Residency archives, supplemented from the Imperial Records then housed in Calcutta, had to be collected, edited and printed by me for the



Government of Bombay, under the title of *Mahadji Sindhia and North Indian Affairs, 1785-1794*.

As a result of it, the reader can now see some light in this dense and tangled jungle of historical materials, and future workers in this field will, it is hoped, be saved from much distraction and loss of time by the minute references given by me for every personality and incident. A certain amount of repetition will be noticed in the narrative, but it has been deliberately made in order to keep the reader's eye fixed on the main currents of this history, amidst the distracting rapidity and confusion of political changes.

Unfortunately for the historian, the French captains have left no accounts of their romantic Indian careers. The very short memoirs of René Madec touch only the fringe of the subject and end as early as 1776. De Boigne lived for many years after returning from India, but from the cosy chair of his palace in Chambéry he only talked to Grant Duff and Grant Duff has not played the Boswell to the veteran. Perron was a weaver's son who hated to touch a pen. Their Indian secretaries have left behind them letters only,—mere business papers and money accounts,—in Persian, but no regular history or even journal, like the priceless memoirs of Anderson's *munshi* Khair-ud-din. What would we not have paid for a volume of Indian recollections by De Boigne like the *Journal du Voyage du Bengale à Delhy* (1774-1776) written by the cultured aristocrat Comte de Modave, the nature of which can be judged



from the portion translated by me in *Bengal Past and Present*.

In the second volume the reader supped full of horrors; he saw one Emperor murdered, another deposed and blinded, and a third driven into exile and poverty for his very life. In the present volume no Pādishāh dies a violent death, but the only Emperor who fills the throne throughout meets with a fate which makes him cry for death by the assassin's hand as a welcome relief.

But with the close of this volume the succession of palace tragedies and camp assassinations also ends. Mahadji Sindhia's regency opened a period of peace and comparative prosperity for Delhi city and the districts that still acknowledged the authority of the Crown; military reorganisation of a new and efficient type was carried out and economic development fostered in the present United Provinces by French genius and industry. Except for domestic feuds, Malwa—and, in a lesser degree, Rajputana—began to know peace, till we reach the disintegration of Sindhia's Government under Daulat Rao at the end of the Eighteenth Century. These will form the theme of the concluding volume and the author is cheered by the prospect of bidding farewell to unrelieved bloodshed and treachery, and making his acquaintance with revenue and administration, agriculture and industry, social changes and cultural growth in a part of India not yet under British care.

12th November, 1938.

JADUNATH SARKAR.



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Bibliography.

For descriptions of works and abbreviations of names, see Biblio. in Vols. I and II.

DY—*Dilliyethil Marathyanchen Rajkaranen* or despatches of the Maratha envoys at Delhi, ed. by Parasnis, 2 vols.

MD—*Maheshwar Darbarachen Batamipatren* or despatches from Ahalya Bai's Court, ed. by Parasnis, 2 vols.

Gw—Historical Papers relating to the Gwalior State, 5 vols. ed. by Parasnis. *HP* is the second and corrected edition of the same by Sardesai, in one volume. (Marathi.)

Sat—Papers relating to Mahadji Sindhia, pub. by the Satara Hist. Res. Soc.

PRC—*Poona Residency Correspondence*, ed. by J. Sarkar. (English.)

Akh—*Akhbarat* or Persian ms news-letters, (various series.)

Correction.

Page 35, line 8, *for* drapped *read* wrapped.

Footnote, *for* built by Visaji's son Mahipat *read* built during the administration of Rao Raghunath the son of Ramchandra Ganpat in 1185 A.H. (=1771.)



FALL OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

CHAPTER XXVI

MARATHAS IN NORTHERN INDIA, 1770-1771.

§ 1. *The first tasks of the restored imperial Government of Delhi.*

Shah Alam II entered Delhi as Emperor on 6th January 1772, and immediately afterwards his Government had to take steps for asserting its authority on the rebels around. In this task Najaf Khan acted as his sword arm with conspicuous success. The two refractory vassals nearest to him were Zābita Khan Ruhela and Nawal Singh Jāt, whose wealth was as notorious as their default in paying revenue was deliberate and persistent and who had usurped many of the Crownlands in the environs of Delhi belonging to the Emperor's privy purse. In both these enterprises the Mughal Government received from the Maratha armies a help that was indispensable to their success. That help was direct and decisive against Zābita Khan, and indirect but not less effective in the case of the Jāt. To understand the new political grouping aright we shall have to trace the course of this Maratha reappearance in the North and mark its reaction



on the imperial Government's fortunes at different stages. This makes it necessary for us to go back to the Jāt affairs after Jawāhir Singh's death and the Maratha activities during 1770 and 1771 which have been sketched in Chapters 22 and 25 in the barest outline necessary for serving as a preliminary to Shah Alam's restoration to Delhi.

§ 2. *Causes of the decline of the Jāt Power after Jawāhir Singh's death.*

When Jawāhir Singh's tempestuous career ended in an appropriately violent death (June 1768), his throne passed to his younger brother Ratan Singh. No enemy was then in sight; the spirited Rajah of Jaipur had died a few months before Jawāhir; the Marathas were too deeply involved in their own country to send any expedition to Hindustan, and even their local agents in Bundelkhand and North Malwa were hard put to it to hold their own; Delhi was a lordless city, the Emperor being a powerless pensioner of the English at Allahabad; Najib-ud-daulah was now a broken down invalid who had retired from active life to wait for his latter end in resignation. While the Jāt Rajah was thus at peace with his neighbours, the rebels and refractory vassals within his territory were promptly crushed by his European generals, Sombre and Madec. The treasury was fairly full; even the ceaseless warfare of Jawāhir Singh's reign and his buying of Maratha and Sikh aid for avenging his father's

blood at any cost, had not turned him insolvent, so vast had been the accumulations in the treasury of Bharatpur during the long and prudent reigns of Badan Singh and Suraj Mal.

The Jāt State, therefore, might well have looked forward to a long period of peaceful recuperation and progress. But a nation's greatest enemy is within, not without. Jawāhir Singh had established his royal autocracy by crushing out the old Jāt nobility whom even Badan Singh had spared and Suraj Mal had cherished and turned into his best lieutenants. But the young dictator who followed them on the throne, had in less than five years chopped off all the tall poppies in the land, and henceforth the life of the State depended solely on the wisdom and strength of one man. A simple warrior-tribe like the Jāts, could flourish only under a succession of warrior kings, now that no martial baronage was left to supply the king's place at the head of the national levy and command the confidence of all the tribal brethren.

The Jāts, mostly ignorant peasantry, had not been able to adopt the European discipline and tactics which had now come to sway Indian warfare. This military weakness of their State was for a time concealed by their employment of two very able European mercenary captains, Walter Reinhard (popularly called Sombre or Samru) and René Madec. Of these Sombre cared only for money and was ever ready to desert to the



highest bidder, while Madec was lured away by his patriotic instinct, at the call of M. Chevalier the French Chief of Chandernagar, to transfer his services to the Emperor's Court at Delhi (Oct. 1772) and there serve as a French agent for building up coalitions against the British Power in Hindustan.

Brain and character alike were wanting among the successors of Jawāhir Singh, and, in addition, the lack of a strong man at the head of the State let loose all the selfishness and factious spirit among the other members of the royal family, which completed the national downfall in a few years.

§ 3. *Ratan Singh's reign and death: war for his succession.*

Ratan Singh had seen war at the head of a Jāt corps against the Marathas in Bundelkhand and North Malwa early in 1768; but immediately after coming to the throne he gave himself up entirely to pleasure and pomp. As the new lord of Brajamandal, he made a pilgrimage to Vrindāvan and held the grandest and most costly entertainments on the bank of the Jamunā, at which 4,000 dancing girls were assembled. He had picked up Gosain Rupānand, a Brahman monk reputed to be a master of alchemy, and engaged him to procure the Philosopher's stone. The sharper, after draining the Rajah of money for some time, at last found no other way of avoid-



ing punishment for his imposture than to murder his dupe during an experiment for the transmutation of metals in the privacy of his tent. He was instantly cut down by the Rajah's servants and "sent to Vishnu's heaven", while Ratan Singh lingered on for some hours (8 April, 1769). The leading Jāt general now surviving was Dān Shāh, the brother-in-law of Nawal Singh, and he was entrusted with the regency on behalf of Ratan Singh's infant son Kesari Singh.*

As the general-regent was not a man of the Jāt blood royal, but an outsider, it was easy for the late Rajah's brothers Nawal Singh and Ranjit Singh to spread the tale that he was going to use his absolute power for seizing the throne for himself. They thus united the other members of the royal family and the chief officers of the State in a plot for ousting him. As soon as Monsieur Madec, the chief supporter of Dān Shāh, had gone out to suppress some rebels in the provinces, the two brothers besieged the

* The European evidence on Jat affairs supplied by Father F. X. Wendel stops just before the death of Jawahir Singh. But the loss is fully made good by the *Mémoire* of René Madec who joined the Jat service in July 1767 and left it in Oct. 1772. I.O.L. transcript of this *Mémoire* used by me in preference to the summary given in E. Barbé's book, *Le Nabab René Madec*.

Kesari Singh's name is rightly given in *CPC*. ii. 1389, but misspelt as Kheri S in 1499 (corrected in the index.) Jat history after Jawahir S.—*DC*. *CPC*. ii and iii. Madec. *SPD*. xxix. *Bayan* (brief.) *Chahar Gulzar*. *Ibratnagmah*. G. Ali ii. 4.

regent in his mansion in Dig and forced him to capitulate on condition of exile from the country. Then the victors quarrelled over the division of power. Nawal Singh won over M. Madec and all the chief officers and made himself sole regent : his younger brother Ranjit Singh went back baffled to his appanage, the fort of Kumbher, which Nawal Singh then attacked. Ranjit in distress hired a band of Sikh mercenaries, rumoured to be 70,000 strong. Madec was now forced to raise the siege of Kumbher and hasten to meet this new enemy on the way. After an obstinate and long doubtful battle, the Sikhs were at last routed (*circa* 15 Feb. 1770). They retired 30 leagues from the field of combat and halted outside the Jāt frontier. Thence, on receiving a bribe from the agents of Nawal Singh, they marched away to their own country (end of February.)

§ 4. *Ranjit Singh Jāt hires the Marathas
returned to the North.*

A new and more dangerous enemy was now drawn into the Jāt kingdom by this fratricidal contest. Before the end of the year 1769 the young Peshwa Madhav Rao had triumphed over his domestic enemies and asserted his mastery over the Government of Puna. He was now free to send his best generals to Hindustan for restoring Maratha prestige which had been eclipsed by the disaster of Panipat. The aims of this expedi-



tion were quite clear: namely to realise the war indemnity due from the Jāt kingdom according to the treaty of 26th May, 1754 (Ch. 12 § 5) and to recover the lands assigned by the Delhi Government during Imād-ul-mulk's wazirship as the price of Maratha armed help up to 1754 (Ch. 13 § 7.) Many of these lands had been usurped by the Jāts and the Ruhelas after Ahmad Shah's victory in the Panipat campaign.

The task set before the Maratha generals was a heavy one. The armed force which alone could have ensured its accomplishment required a large outlay for its initial equipment and maintenance. But the Puna Government was bankrupt; it was necessary for it to make war feed on war. The nearest and most solvent of its North Indian debtors was the Jāt Rajah. From the middle of 1767 to the first quarter of 1769, Jāt forces had been busy driving out Maratha posts in Bundelkhand and North Malwa in concert with the indigenous Rajput chiefs of that region and the Jāt ruler of Gohad. These troubles ceased only with the murder of Ratan Singh and the ensuing civil war. This gave the Marathas their long-coveted chance.

The Peshwa's generals in the North, after laying a large contribution on Mewar (September 1769), had gone away to besiege Rāghogarh in the Khechi country, and next taken post in Kerauli territory in order to dun the neighbouring State of Jaipur for its long-unpaid contribu-



tions. Here they were met by Ranjit Singh's envoy with a proposal to hire them for his defence, and they jumped at the invitation. A Maratha army estimated at 30,000 men with good field artillery marched to Kumbher, interviewed Ranjit Singh on 5th March, 1770, and encamped outside that fort. But "Ranjit Singh not having paid them the stipulated sum of money, they began ravaging and laying waste the dependencies of both chiefs without distinction. Nawal Singh was encamped with his forces under the walls of Dig, uncertain whether he should fight the Marathas or buy them off." [CPC. iii. 128, 161.] A month passed in this way, the Jāt army merely watching the enemy from a distance. [SPD. xxix. pp. 302-305.]

§ 5. *Battle of Sonkh-Aring, 6 April, 1770.*

Then a battle disastrous to Nawal Singh was precipitated by his folly on 6th April.* By that time the Marathas had exhausted the supplies in the open country near Dig and Kumbher and completed their alliance with Najib-ud-daulah, who had reached the Doab to join them. So, they set out for the Doab, sending their larger guns and baggage ahead under Tukoji Holkar to Mathura and following this vanguard in a strong body of cavalry with rockets and light pieces only.

* Battle—Madec (best.) CPC. iii. 180, 184. DC. SPD. xxxvii. 240. Khare, iv. 1et. 970, 971.



Nawal Singh had challenged them before to a pitched battle, but on seeing them thus going away, he realised that his waiting game would only lead to the loss of his Doab possessions without a blow in their defence. He therefore promptly set out from Dig and followed the Marathas by a parallel route a few miles north of theirs. He had no clear plan of action, and not being a soldier himself wavered between one general's advice and another's.

On 6th April, the Jāt army moved out of Dig to Govardhan, nine miles eastwards, in several straggling bodies stretched out irregularly and without concert over the long road. No regiment was ready for fighting, large numbers of his soldiers had gone back to the city of Dig to fetch their necessaries, and detachments had been sent off to escort the baggage. Later in the day the Jāts sighted the Marathas drawn up in battle order and facing round towards them, some distance north-west of Sonkh, (a place midway between Kumbher and Mathura.) Nawal Singh held a council of war. Sombre and Madec urged him not to fight that day as his troops had not been fully assembled yet and there would not be sufficient daylight left for a regular action. But their advice was swept away by the vehemence of Dān Shāh, who had returned from his exile after organising the army of the deposed Nawab Qāsim Ali of Bengal. He could not let the Marathas slip away from under his eyes, without



making an attempt to crush them when deprived of their powerful artillery. Gosain Bālānand, the captain of the wild Nāgā monks, supported this policy. Nawal Singh, like all weak men, was led away by the most clamorous counsellor and ordered an attack.

The Jāt vanguard, composed of 2,000 chosen horsemen of the Bhadauria and other Rajput clans, led by Dān Shāh, galloped upon the Marathas and were met by a terrible fire of rockets and light artillery which brought down nearly the whole of their dense mass; the broken remnant took to flight. The action had begun so suddenly that no troops could be sent up to support this charge, which dissolved in nothing. Meantime, Madec had pushed back the left wing of the enemy, but men from their right promptly rode up to reinforce it, and he in his turn was attacked with such vigour and superior numbers that he could save himself only by forming his sepoy into a square and fighting on three faces at the same time.

The battle raged thus, irregularly but with intense fury till an hour before midnight. The Jāts, fighting without any plan or mutual concert, acknowledged defeat only after Nawal Singh himself had fled away from the field.* His soldiers

* "After two hours' close engagement, Nawal Singh was obliged to retreat within the lines of Samru, who had formed a square . . . and had for a long time sustained

rushed back in disorder, breaking Madec's square in the wild sweep of their flight. That French captain with only 5 or 6 horsemen escaped to safety through the Maratha ranks under cover of darkness.

It was a long-drawn and most obstinate battle. The Jāts, with the inglorious exception of their master, fought with the desperate courage for which these peasant-warriors have always been famous. The Marathas lost a thousand to twelve hundred men in killed and wounded and eight hundred horses slain. But their victory was complete. The Jāt field army ceased to exist as the result of a single afternoon's action. "It is computed that 2,000 of their soldiers were killed and 500 [? 5,000] wounded. All their artillery (40 pieces) was left on the field, except two light pieces which Samru had brought off."

Two thousand Jāt horses and thirteen elephants were captured. Madec's corps alone lost 1,400 men in killed and wounded, with its horses, camels, elephants, arms and artillery; its sole remnant consisted of the wounded and his camp-guard left behind in Dig. Still heavier was the loss among the Jāt leaders. "Never was a greater number of sardārs killed and wounded in

repeated shocks of the enemy. Finding himself in a tight corner, Nawal Singh threw away his ornaments lest he should be recognised by the enemy, and with a few attendants reached the fort [of Aring] in safety." *CPC*, ii. 184, also *DC*.



any battle." At its closing stage many of Nawal Singh's Hindu and Muslim captains had to adopt the desperate device, well-known in Indian warfare, of dismounting and fighting on foot sword in hand. In the Jāt van Thakurdas Soghoria was killed and Kumar Kilak dangerously wounded. "Their army was so completely broken that numbers returned after wandering about seven *kos* from the battle-field. The Jats deserted in great numbers and joined the sardārs in Kumbher." [CPC. iii. 184.]

From the lost field Nawal Singh took refuge first in Aring (four miles east of Govardhan), and later in Dig where the remnant of his army gradually rallied. The pursuing Marathas came up to Dig, keeping beyond the range of its guns, but soon retired to Mathura, where they halted at Sarāi Koila, 4 miles south of the city, to arrange for the invasion of the Doab.

§ 6. *Quarrels among the Maratha leaders in Hindustan.*

After this initial and decisive victory over the most powerful vassal of the Empire, the success of the Maratha northern enterprise promised to be swift and easy, as no strong enemy was left in the region west of British-protected Oudh. But that hope proved utterly delusive in the end, through the internal quarrels and lack of statesmanship and even of intelligent self-interest among their leaders which have so often

ruined the national cause of the Marathas. The Peshwa, when ordering this expedition to Hindustan, had entrusted the direction of military movements and diplomatic policy to Ramchandra Ganesh ; but that chief was to act in concert with Visāji Krishna as his diwān and Māhādji Sindhia and Tukoji Holkar as his generals. This division of authority, coupled with Ramchandra's utter unfamiliarity with North Indian warfare and political groupings, ruined the chances of the Peshwa's success. Ramchandra and Visāji had both distinguished themselves in war in the Deccan, and, as usual with Maratha officers in similar situations, were mortally jealous of each other,—reproducing the typical antagonism between the subahdar and the diwān in a Mughal province, but in a more baneful form. Nor was Ramchandra's own contingent large enough to enable him to overbear a veteran like Māhādji Sindhia at the head of a strong and compact family force. The young chief Tukoji Holkar was surrounded by old ministers who played the rascally game of continuing Malhar's policy and jealously thwarting every step advocated by Māhādji solely because he was a Sindhia.

Thus, from the very outset the Maratha camp became sharply divided into two warring factions,—Sindhia contradicting Holkar, and when Ramchandra sided with Sindhia Visāji joined Holkar simply because the last-named was opposed to the supreme chief. These dissensions became



a matter of public notoriety in every camp bazar and came to be reported in the news-letters to the English Company, the Delhi Government and the Peshwa alike. The grouping of the mutually wrangling chiefs changed with bewildering variety for a year and a half and was ended only by the Peshwa's recalling Ramchandra Ganesh (middle of 1771); but even after that date the old discord cropped up again in the form of an irreconcilable antagonism between Sindhia and Holkar as to the attitude to be observed towards the Emperor and Zābita Khan. In fact, the new Maratha enterprise for undoing the work of Panipat was foredoomed to failure, because the Peshwa could spare no member of his family like Raghunāth Dādā or Sadāshiv Bhāu to lead it with unquestioned authority and dominating rank.

§ 7. *Conflict of policy in the Maratha camp :
Sindhia versus Holkar.*

From the very beginning Ramchandra failed to impose his will on his associates. Even before their start from Kerauli Māhādji had left him in a huff and moved towards Mārwar, because he could not agree with Ramchandra, and the latter had to depute Ganoji Kadam to mollify Sindhia and bring him back (January 1770.) The victory over the Jāt Rajah (6th April) caused the old sore to break open in an aggravated form; now began a sharp and irreconcilable conflict of public policy as distinct from a personal quarrel. The

question was, what should the Marathas do next? Should they wait in the Jāt country, starve Nawal Singh out of his stronghold,—it may be, after months of blockade,—and thus realise the tribute due from him, before proceeding to the recovery of their Doab possessions and lost power at the Delhi Court? Or, should they leave the Jāt issue unsettled and hasten to the Doab for reconquering it with the help of Najib-ud-daulah before the coming of the rainy season put a stop to campaigning for four months and forced their vast army to eat its bread in idleness? [SPD. xxix. 252.]

Māhādji Sindhia, apart from the blood feud that he bore to Najib, instinctively perceived that this Ruhela chief was the one enemy of the Marathas in the North,—great in his military genius and resources, and greater still in his political insight and diplomatic suppleness. He, therefore, proposed that the victorious Marathas should promptly come to terms with Nawal Singh by accepting a moderate money indemnity, leave a friendly Jāt Rajah in their rear, and march into the Doab for wresting their jagirs there by force from the Ruhela and Bangash usurpers, especially for punishing Najib, the arch-Ruhela and the moving spring of all anti-Maratha combinations among the Afghans of the North, now that his Durrani patron was unable to come to his aid.



Ramchandra Ganesh advocated exactly the opposite policy: the Jāt Rajah having been effectually crushed, he could be safely left behind to be squeezed by Maratha tribute-collectors with exorbitant demands, and the Maratha army should enter the Doab in alliance with Najib, wrest all the Jāt possessions there by this combined Maratha-Ruhela attack and share them with Najib. He was reluctant to face a long and costly campaign by attacking Najib, who was sure to be supported by the Bangash, the trans-Ganges Ruhelas and the Nawab of Oudh. The dreaded spectre of a pan-Muslim coalition against the returned Marathas, like the one which had triumphed in the Panipat campaign, cowed his spirit. As he told his colleagues, "We have come here after ten years, and if we do not first make friends with Najib, then all would join him against us, and with such a combination of enemies opposing us we shall have to fight a hard fight, the result of which no man can foresee." Tukoji Holkar was the hereditary rival of the house of Sindhia. Najib's very astute Hindu agents visited him, and by bribing his ministers induced them to persuade their young master to follow Malhar's policy of always backing Najib's interests in the inner council of the Maratha leaders. The Peshwa approved of Ramchandra Ganesh's plan, and about the 24th of April the Maratha army began to cross into the Doab. [SPD. xxix. 254-262, 246, p. 307.]



In less than three months the result declared itself and proved that Mahadji Sindhia was the better prophet. No doubt, the Marathas took some Jāt villages, but none of their former lawful domains in that region was released by Ahmad Bangash or Hafiz Rahmat or even by Najib himself, and not a pice of compensation or tribute was paid by them. These Afghans frankly told the Maratha envoy, "We are soldiers, we do not surrender lands unless compelled by superior force." [SPD. xxvii. 214.] Thus the hoped-for smooth recovery of jagirs and collection of money through Najib's friendly persuasion came to nothing, as Māhādji had foreseen. The faithless chief of Najibabad kept the Marathas deluded by his smooth talk, wasted months in hollow negotiations, and opened a secret correspondence for uniting all the enemies of the Marathas in that province in order to defeat their enterprise. He achieved a masterly triumph of diplomacy for the remainder of his life, and the Southern chiefs were completely befooled. It was only after his death that the Marathas by going to war with the Afghans won back any of their former possessions in the Doab. Thus once again in Maratha history, a Holkar had ruined the national cause in the North by his selfishness and personal jealousy. We shall now see in detail how the events moved on these lines during the third Maratha penetration into Hindustan.



§ 8. *How the leaders' disputes ruined the Maratha interests.*

When, after the victory over Nawal Singh (6th April, 1770), the Marathas arrived on the west bank of the Jamuna near Mathura, they found that Najib-ud-daulah had reached the east bank, for they had before this opened negotiations with him and he had marched out of his home in order to co-operate with them. Envoys passed and repassed over the river for some days, confirming the alliance and giving pledges of safe conduct, and the principals on the two sides exchanged visits in their tents.

On 25th April first Tukoji and then Ramchandra Ganesh crossed over to the east bank, and Māhādji Sindhia two days later. They encamped close to Najib's camp. Meantime a Jāt force had crossed the river higher up for defending the Doab. But it was of no avail; the allies swept everything before them, the leaderless Jāts making no defence against such odds. Some twenty villages of parganahs Shukohabad, Sa'adabad &c. were wrested from their Jāt administrators by Najib and placed under his own collectors and troops (early in May.) The Marathas, too, seized some other places and their roving Pindharis looted many more, ravaging the entire district. Soon afterwards a rupture took place between the allies. Najib, either fearing treachery from Māhādji or believing in the false

accusations of Tukoji Holkar, marched away from the vicinity of his doubtful friends (10th May) towards Aligarh.

Meantime the ex-wazir Ghāziuddin Imād-ul-mulk had come unasked from his asylum at Farrukhabad to Agra (c. 4 May), where he was visited by the Maratha chiefs with due honour. Then he forced himself as an unbidden guest on Sindhia's camp. This introduced a fresh complication into Maratha affairs in the North, because their reception of the mortal enemy of the house of Alamgir II at once filled Shah Alam with the suspicion that they were planning to set up some other prince on the throne and govern the Empire through Ghāzi-ud-din as his wazir. This incident also antagonised Shujā and the English towards the Marathas. But the Marathas had not really formed any plot with him against Shah Alam; they were merely wavering, uncertain what to do in the changed political situation of Delhi since their last visit in 1760. [DC. CPC. iii. 216. SPD. xxix. 260, pp. 307-310.]

The discord among the Maratha leaders and its fatal effect on their enterprise are well illustrated in the despatches sent to the Peshwa from the spot. As early as 4th May, Nāro Narsi wrote that Sindhia and Holkar were advocating diametrically opposite policies regarding the Jāt Rajah, with the result that Maratha diplomacy



had failed in dealing with all the local Powers, great and small, and their main design was defeated, while the rainy season which would enforce inaction on them was fast approaching. A later despatch (written on the 17th) informed the Peshwa, "Sindhia is for accepting the indemnity offered by the Jāt Rajah, Holkar is against it. Our sardārs are daily quarrelling; they are not on speaking terms with one another. Three sardārs are present here, and yet not a pice has been realised."

The party led by Holkar raised the demand on Nawal Singh to eighty lakhs of Rupees! At the end of May the Jat envoy rose to 65 lakhs, which the Maratha chiefs agreed to accept; but the higgling continued about the amounts and dates of the instalments, and the Jat demand that 20 lakhs out of this sum should be written off as compensation for the damage recently done to their lands and tenants by the Maratha-Ruhela forces. The Marathas rejected the new Jat proposal and resumed the seizure of their villages in the Doab, which did not bring the payment of the indemnity any nearer. These negotiations dragged on for months without any agreement. As Nāro Narsi wrote, "So long as the water level of the Ganges and the Jamuna was low the Jats carried on their parleys, but when the rivers were flooded their negotiations fell into delay." [SPD. xxvii. 214, xxiv. 246, 255—260.]



§ 9. *Maratha demands on the Bangash and the Ruhelas.*

Towards the end of May a Maratha detachment raided the Bangash territory in Farrukhabad. At the end of June, a force from Kālpi, led by Bālāji and Gangādhār (the sons of Govind Pant Bundélé) crossed the Jamuna at the invitation of some local zamindars and invaded the Etawa district from the south, capturing a number of villages (such as Auriya) from the local Ruhela collectors. [CPC. iii. 255, 307.]

The monsoon now set in with full vigour. Ramchandra Ganesh brought together all his forces for cantoning in the Aligarh district. Up to this time though "the Jat territory had been totally devastated, no indemnity money had been paid." But the interception of a secret letter from Najib to Hāfiz Rahmat and other trans-Ganges Ruhelas betrayed their intrigue for treacherously foiling the Maratha designs by spinning out feigned parleys, precipitated matters, and drove Ramchandra Ganesh to close with Nawal Singh's offer. The Jat indemnity was fixed at 65 lakhs payable in three years, besides an annual tribute of eleven lakhs which would commence in the fourth year after the 65 lakhs had been fully discharged. Ranjit Singh was to be provided for by an appanage yielding 25 lakhs a year. A treaty to this effect was signed by the two parties and on 10th July Ramchandra's diwan



started for the Jat capital to collect the first instalment. [*SPD.* xxix. 262, 246. xxvii. 214. *CPC.* iii. 323, 445.]

Envoys from the three Maratha chiefs then set out for the seats of the trans-Ganges Ruhelas to demand the restitution of the Maratha jagirs they had usurped during Abdali's invasion ten years ago. They refused to yield an inch of land unless the Marathas first succeeded in making Najib-ud-daulah disgorge what he had seized in the Mirat and Saharanpur districts of the Upper Doab. The baffled envoys returned, but nothing could be done before the end of the rains. As Nāro Narsi wrote to the Peshwa on 18th August, "Your troops have nothing to eat. Up till now we have carried on by borrowing 5 to 7 lakhs of Rupees. But no further loan is procurable . . . No tribute has been realised by us. All the Rajputs are watching to see what success attends our efforts to get money from the Jat Rajah." [*SPD.* xxix. 246, xxvii. 214.]

At last the bewildered Maratha chiefs took counsel with Najib-ud-daulah again. That Ruhela, whose shrewd policy had completely triumphed in the Doab and baffled the Marathas, now played another masterly stroke and succeeded in diverting the Maratha forces from the Bangash and Ruhela territories to the Jat possessions near Delhi. He told them, "So long as you cannot exact any indemnity from the Jat Rajah, you will not get a pice from the Doab. Therefore, you

should detach ten thousand men from here. They will be joined by my 5,000 troops now in Delhi, and the two together will annex all the Jat territory near Delhi and drive the Jat so hard that he will perforce make peace by paying the money." [SPD. xxix. 246.]

So, on 29th August, a Maratha force of 5,000 horse moved north towards the Ganges, but stopped soon, as the season did not yet permit any campaigning over long distances. During their enforced halt, Najib feeling the approach of death, settled the indemnity with the Jat envoys in private (c. 28 September) and publicly with the Maratha chiefs on 8th October in a darbar held day and night. Then he gave the Maratha generals their *congee*, sending his son Zābita khan in their company, and himself set out for his home, only to die on the way at Hāpur on the last day of the month. [DC.]

§ 10. *Progress of Maratha arms after
Najibuddaulah's death.*

On the death of Najib-ud-daulah a new scene opened and Maratha policy underwent a complete change. Freed at last from the malign influence which had hypnotised all their chiefs except the clear-sighted Māhādji Sindhia for the last seven months, Maratha enterprise in Hindustan rapidly achieved a series of brilliant successes with the most far-reaching consequences.



In the second half of November the Marathas spread, ravaging the districts of Etawa, Shukohabad and Qanauj. Ahmad Khan Bangash was prepared to buy them off, but Hāfiz Rahmat urged that it was better to fight than to pay. The Marathas continued recovering many places in the Doab from the Afghan hands. At the beginning of the next month Ramchandra Ganesh laid siege to Etawa, which had been taken away by the Ruhelas from the Peshwa's agents just before Panipat. This fort was now held by Kabir Khan, on behalf of Hāfiz Rahmat. After a fortnight Kabir found resistance useless as there was no hope of succour. On 15th December he vacated the fort on being granted his life and property; at noon the Peshwa's standard was hoisted on the ramparts and a Maratha garrison put in. [CPC. iii. 505, 517, 530. SPD. xxix. pp. 311-313, Shaikh Kabir is paid Rs. 50,000 as the price of the grain and stores in the fort as well as the arrears of his *sebandi* troops.]

This close approach of the Marathas to the frontier of the district of Kora excited great alarm at the Court of Lucknow. Shuja-ud-daulah sent his son with a strong force, including Umraogir's Gosain corps, to the frontier post of Cawnpur by way of precaution, and wrote urging the English Governor to move up a body of their own troops from Patna to the Kora district in support (early in January 1771); and some time later he himself arrived at Cawnpur. The alarm



spread even to the English city of Patna. [CPC. iii. 562, 564, 577.]

But the Maratha leaders' attention was now diverted to the north,—to the Bangash principality and Delhi. At first Ghāzi-ud-din Imād-ul-mulk, the ex-wazir, arranged a treaty between the two parties; Ahmad Bangash, Hāfiz Rahmat and Dundi Khan agreed to pay 22 lakhs in the course of three years, in full satisfaction of the claim for the revenue of the Maratha territories in the Upper Doab that they had enjoyed for these ten years. Holkar tore up the treaty and demanded the expulsion of Ghāzi-ud-din and war with the Afghans. So, Ghāzi-ud-din retired in disgust to Ajmir. Early in January 1771 a clash was precipitated between a large roving band of Maratha raiders near Farrukhabad and the Ruhelas, who rushed out to attack them, killing many of the plunderers and routing the rest. Hāfiz sent a large force to strengthen the defence of Farrukhabad. Then the Marathas resumed their negotiations, because they had been further weakened by the hopeless divisions among their leaders. [CPC. iii. 571.]

§ 11. *Renewed quarrel between Sindhia and Holkar: failure and discredit of* **IND-10529**
Ramchandra Ganesh.

After the death of Najib-ud-daulah the quarrel between Sindhia and Holkar broke out afresh over the question of the attitude to be

adopted by the Marathas towards Zābita Khan. Visāji Krishna (with the support of Sindhia) demanded from him a fee of 25 lakhs of Rupees for succession to his late father's post of Mir Bakhshi, as Najib was known to have been the richest noble in India after the Jat Rajah, while the Marathas were starving and overwhelmed with debt as the result of their futile Doab campaign. Holkar backed Zābita and pledged himself to get the Ruhela acknowledged by the Emperor as Mir Bakhshi without his having to pay anything to the Peshwa. Zābita, therefore, scornfully rejected Visāji's demand. Then Visāji and his party sent an ultimatum to Tukoji to expel Zābita from his camp. [CPC. iii. 571, 605, 614.]

It was Ahmad Khan Bangash's ambition to be appointed Mir Bakhshi through Maratha patronage, if only Zābita could be denied that high office, and he therefore continued bidding higher and higher for Maratha favour* through his pensioner Ghāzi-ud-din (who had influence over Sindhia). At the beginning of January Tukoji had prevented a settlement being made with Ahmad and Hāfiz Rahmat ; but by the 26th

* As a news-letter from the Doab reported, "All the officers of the Maratha army are Visāji's friends and they consider Ranchandra Ganesh a fool. All this is due to the instigation of Mahadji Sindhia. Visāji and Mahadji wish to make Ahmad Khan Bangash Mir Bakhshi, for he has promised them a sum of money." [CPC. iii. 605.]



of that month he had been overruled, and peace was made on condition of the Bangash paying 10 lakhs and Hāfiz Rahmat 22 lakhs. [SPD. xxix. p. 313.]

Ramchandra Ganesh, the nominal head of the Marathas in Hindustan, "was disgusted with these machinations" and cross-currents of intrigue in his own camp; he felt that all power had slipped out of his hands into those of Visāji allied to Māhādji. So, in "extreme dejection" he determined (c. 26 January 1771) to march back alone to the Deccan, taking his own contingent of Household Cavalry (*huzurāt pathkhā*) with him. But a compromise was effected and he was prevailed upon to stay. The Maratha council of war now decided to march out of the Farrukhabad territory to Delhi, take possession of the capital, and "there establish either Ghāzi-ud-din or Ahmad Khan or anybody else who would give them money." The utter failure of Maratha war and diplomacy in the Doab in 1770 proved that Holkar's policy (endorsed by Ramchandra Ganesh) of working hand in glove with the arch-deceiver Najib, was an utter folly and that Mahadji Sindhia who had advocated the opposite policy had truer political vision. Tukoji and Ramchandra were utterly discredited in the eyes of their colleagues and master. Sindhia's counsels henceforth triumphed and, in close concert with Visāji, he took charge of the guidance of Maratha affairs; Visāji mounted to the supreme command

on the crest of the rising wave of national success and these two confederates' triumph in capturing Delhi (10 Feb. 1771) confirmed his promotion by securing the Peshwa's assent to the supersession and recall of Ramchandra Ganesh. The ejection of Zābita Khan from their league, the check to that eternal marplot Tukoji Holkar, and the paralysing of Ramchandra Ganesh, "whom all the officers of the army considered a fool," gave an unwonted unity and vigour to Maratha policy from this date (27th January) onwards, and striking successes were achieved in consequence. [CPC. iii. 605.]

§ 12. *The Marathas capture Delhi and escort the Emperor to his capital.*

This brings us to the Maratha relations with the imperial exile at Allahabad. On 20th December 1770, Shah Alam from his Court in that fort sent Saifuddin Muhammad Khan as his envoy to the Maratha chiefs to hire their armed aid in restoring him to Delhi, as the recent death of Najib-ud-daulah had made the possession of Delhi a pressing issue. His heir Jawan Bakht and mother Zinat Mahal lived in the imperial capital, which was guarded by a contingent of Zābita Khan's troops (about 3000 strong), while Zābita himself with a division of the Maratha army under Holkar was then occupying the districts round Delhi in the Emperor's name, as in his father's time. The Marathas now held the

key to the control of the Delhi Government, as Najib was dead, Ahmad Shah Durrani was dying and hopelessly entangled in his own dominions, Zābita Khan was an inexperienced youth, and Dundi Khan was stricken down with paralysis.

While the future was looking quite dark to Shah Alam and his inner council in their ignorance as to whom the Marathas would declare as Mir Bakhshi or even crown as Emperor, Mahadji Sindhia had sent a secret letter to him professing sincere devotion to his cause and offering to escort him to Delhi if his expenses were paid. The reply was the despatch of Saifuddin Muhammad from Allahabad to the Maratha camp. A bargain was ultimately struck, though there was a hitch in the interval due to Sindhia's recall of Ghāzi-ud-din, the unpardonable enemy of the Emperor, from Ajmir to his camp.

Then, leaving the environs of Farrukhabad (about 27th January 1771), the Maratha host marched by way of Mainpuri, Shukohabad and Aligarh to Patparganj opposite Delhi (5th Feb.), after looting and burning Sikandrabad on the way (c. 2nd Feb.). On Thursday, 7th February, Saifuddin left the Maratha camp, forded the Jamuna, caused the Delhi Gate of the capital to be opened, assured the citizens that they had now nothing to fear from the Marathas, and going to the Jāmi Masjid made Musavi Khan Baluch's brother, then in charge of the city on behalf of Zābita Khan, proclaim Shah Alam, and



demanded the surrender of the fort. Under orders of the Queen Mother, Qāsim Ali (Zābita's *qiladar*) refused to deliver it and opened fire from the walls in defence. The resistance of the masterless citadel was futile. A short bombardment by the Maratha guns made a breach in the Asad Burj and soon brought the qiladar down on his knees; he made terms for a peaceful surrender* at noon on the 9th. Early in the morning of the tenth, Bālā Rao Govind, an officer of Sindhia, entered the fort, posted his own troops in charge of its ramparts, and expelled Zābita Khan's garrison. A Maratha contingent of 5000 horse occupied the city.

Visāji was appointed by the Crown Prince collector of the districts round Delhi, especially to the north, which Najib had so long appropriated to himself. Sindhia and Visāji now† became all in all in the counsels of the Prince and at his Court. What were the victors to do next? Their most pressing need was money. The Heir and the Queen Mother were really powerless. So, negotiations were opened (12th

* CPC. iii. 605-665. DC. SPD. xxix. 265. Shaikh Qāsim the qiladar was paid Rs. 11,000 by Bala Rao, probably as the salary of his *sebandi* troops. (*Ibid*, p. 314.)

† Holkar kept himself at a distance, and his ally Ramchandra Ganesh sulked in aloofness at being completely eclipsed by his rival. On 26th April a proclamation was read that the Peshwa had appointed Visāji as leader of the Marathas *vice* Ramchandra recalled. DC.

March) with the Emperor through the Crown Prince, for bringing Shah Alam back to Delhi at the head of a Maratha force and restoring the fort to his officers, in return for 25 lakhs as expenses and the cession of Mirat and some other districts, besides giving the Maratha chiefs the right to appoint all imperial officials below the wazir and take half the *nazar* paid by the newly appointed functionaries.

The Emperor now prepared for marching out of Allahabad to Delhi, which the Marathas had agreed to hand over to him in return for the promised subsidy. On receiving the first instalment of it, they delivered possession of the fort to his agent on 2nd August. In the course of his march to Delhi the Emperor arrived near Farrukhabad, and demanded a succession fee or tribute from the son of Ahmad Khan Bangash who had recently died. But Fakhr-ud-daulah, the chief minister of the Bangash Government, assembled thousands of Afghans from the country around and made preparations for war. The Emperor called Māhādji Sindhia to his aid. Sindhia with a vast force of horsemen and artillery made a rapid march to that side. But when he arrived at Marhera, Fakhr-ud-daulah, in terror of the Maratha arms, at once yielded and made peace with the Emperor. Mahadji retraced his steps from Marhera, disappointed in his expectation of rich booty from Farrukhabad, but he made no complaint as "he had lofty ambitions



about the future." [Ibratnamah, i. 200.] On 18th November he waited on the Emperor at Nabiganj and formed his escort to Delhi, which was entered on 6th January, 1772.*

§ 13. *Visāji Krishna triumphant; Ramchandra Ganesh dismissed, his later history.*

We shall here complete the story of the Maratha dissensions in the North. The news of the capture of Delhi on 10th February 1771 caused the wildest exultation at the Court of Punā. It recalled to the memory the capture of the same imperial city by the Bhāu on 2nd August 1760, and was popularly believed to have undone the work of Panipat. The credit of this "great achievement" was given to Visāji and Sindhia. On 26th April, the Peshwa's orders were received at Delhi appointing Visāji Krishna to the command of the Maratha forces in Hindustan, supplanting Ramchandra Ganesh. That fallen chief set out from the environs of Delhi, in the deepest humiliation, for the Deccan. But Holkar and Sindhia sent some of their highest officers to intercept him at Faridabad and induce him to come back. To them he replied, "I have no quarrel with Sindhia or Holkar. I am going away to the Deccan because Visāji has not given me the Peshwa's letter. He is sending me off after lowering my

* DC. CPC. iii. 695, 717, 812, 828, 888, 895, 987. SPD. xxix. 89; pp. 317-321. Aitt. Charitren, iv. p. 111.

position, and I can therefore return only if these two generals and Visāji come here and personally entreat me to go back." This was done, after he had proceeded to Palwal.

At this turn of affairs, Visāji grew angry and left Delhi with the Household Cavalry of his master, crossing the Jamuna and going to Ghaziabad (c. 22 May, 1771.) Thus a new twist was given to the Maratha puzzle and their leaders assumed a new grouping. Visāji Krishna stood out in absolute isolation, while Sindhia and Holkar allied themselves with Ramchandra Ganesh. As the Peshwa's agent wrote from Visāji's camp, "Our domestic dissensions have been made manifest to the public. Visāji has broken with both the Maratha-caste sardars and gone off abandoning the control of Delhi. His antagonism to them for the sake of Ramchandra is ruining our plans. People are saying that unless the two Maratha-caste sardars support him, nothing undertaken by Visāji can succeed."* Mahadji and Tukoji wanted to give the supreme command of the army in Hindustan to Ramchandra once again, but Visāji kept firm hold of Delhi fort and sent his correspondence with his rival to the Peshwa for his orders.

* SPD. xxix. 265, 266, 268, 269, 272. DC. CPC. iii. 810, 812.



The Peshwa's reply was a stern reprimand to the two sardars for violating his previous order about superseding Ramchandra Ganesh. So, Visāji was confirmed in his office, and is henceforth designated in the Persian records of the time by the curious title of "Peshwa" *i.e.*, the supreme chief of the Marathas in the North.

Poor Ramchandra Ganesh, after being flouted and beaten to and fro like a shuttlecock, at last left Delhi for the Deccan (10th September 1771). A body of silahdar cavalry had been seduced by him from obedience to his successor and these men lingered in Sitaram's Sarai (outside Delhi) for some months after, but were paid their arrears of salary and won over in April 1772.

Visāji Krishna now became the head of the Maratha forces in Hindustan without a rival. But he was too weak a man to enforce obedience on Sindhia and Holkar, or to unite them in the national cause. Henceforth Maratha policy in the North parted into two irreconcilable paths, Sindhia and Holkar each took his own line regardless of the other's, and no joint enterprise for the common interest of the nation was possible. Briefly put, henceforth Sindhia by acting individually and secretly wormed himself into the Emperor's confidence. Holkar, on the other hand, antagonised Shah Alam by supporting Zābiṭa Khan with demonstration of force, while

Visaji Krishna cared only to get possession of the region north of Delhi for himself.*

After returning to Punā, Ramchandra Ganesh tried to show his resentment at his supersession and to throw public odium on his master, by following the Muslim trick of "turning faqir." He stripped himself naked, with only a towel tightly drapped round his waist, took a beggar's bowl in his hand like a *sannyasi*, and went through the streets of Puna for two days, making a parade of begging alms of grain from the citizens, who were more amused than shocked by this mummary (July 1772. Khare, iv. 1904.) The Peshwa sternly forbade him to make a fool of himself in public. Ramchandra long kept up the hope that another turn of Fortune's wheel would overthrow Visāji Krishna, whose place in Delhi he would then get. But Madhav Rao's death that November and the murder of his successor ten months later, dashed all his hopes to the ground. Visāji Krishna amassed a fortune in the North, which he devoted to the cause of his patron Raghunāth Dādā in the war for the Peshwaship that began in 1774.

* At Pānipat, in the temple enclosure outside the city, there is a small temple with a Persian inscription stating that it was built by Visāji's son Mahipat. In a neighbouring temple a beautiful piece of sculpture representing the purely Maratha god Dattātreya has been preserved.



CHAPTER XXVII.

**DELHI AFFAIRS AND RUHELA CAMPAIGNS,
1772-1773.**§ 1. *The tasks before the restored Shah Alam.*

When the Sun first rose over Delhi after Shah Alam's entry into the capital as Emperor, it beheld a scene of universal rejoicing, because this was the first day of the blessed month of Shawwāl. The thirty days of fasting and prayer had come to an end, and the *Id* festivities were taking place in every mosque, public square and private house. But, besides this happy coincidence, the citizens of all classes expected a new time of prosperity from the return of the Government and the pomp and expenditure inseparable from the residence of the Sovereign and the nobility in their midst. The twelve years of decay depopulation poverty and humiliation borne by the imperial city during her master's exile were over, and Delhi might now proudly raise her head once more as the metropolis of India.

But the Emperor was in no position then to fulfil these expectations. Indeed, he did not as yet know how to subsist himself. His treasury was empty, his Crownlands were gone out of his possession, his palaces were stripped of their furniture, all the royal stores exhausted long ago,

the public buildings were out of repair and even the fort walls were cracked. To add to his burdens, he had run into heavy debt and let the pay of his troops fall into arrears by maintaining a large force during the past ten months for escorting him to Delhi; and over everything else hung the dark cloud of the large subsidy promised to the Marathas for their recent military aid and still unpaid. The task before Shah Alam II in January 1772 was nothing less than the reconquest of a dismembered empire with an empty treasury and in the teeth of powerful usurpers who were entrenched in their provinces by long years of possession and formidable for their veteran armies, well filled treasuries and the prestige of past victories.

§ 2. *The ministers of the Delhi Government.*

For this task what instruments did the young Emperor see around himself? The former wazir Ghāzi-ud-din Imād-ul-mulk was impossible; the new wazir Shuja-ud-daulah was a perpetual absentee bent solely on raising his fief into a kingdom. No other minister of a sufficient age or experience was within sight. The highest of the courtiers that had gathered round him during his last twelve years' wanderings and exile were Munir-ud-daulah, Saifuddin Muhammad Khan, and Hisām-ud-daulah,—mere diplomats, but neither soldiers nor administrators. They³ were polished ambassadors for making good terms with



the English or the Marathas, but not statesmen of the calibre needed for restoring a fallen monarchy. Hence they naturally came to be eliminated after the return of the Court to Delhi.

But in the Court of the restored monarch there were two persons of a humbler station than these, who were destined to be the supreme leaders of the State in the coming years and whose long-smouldering rivalry was the greatest misfortune of the Empire and the severest condemnation of Shah Alam's capacity as a ruler of men. These were Mirzā Najaf Khan and Abdul Ahad Khan. During the eleven years that followed Shah Alam's return of Delhi, one person gradually but unmistakably established himself by sheer merit as the supreme guide of the State and the sole dominating figure on the political stage. He was the last notable statesman-warrior that managed the affairs of the Delhi Government before the Emperor became a shadowy puppet and the Empire a mere name. He was the last of the great gifts of Persia to mediæval India. It would have been happier for the country and happier far for the Emperor himself if Najaf Khan's ability had been more promptly recognised instead of his having to wrestle with unworthy rivals for eight years out of these eleven, and if his life had run to the normal span of a man's days on earth instead of being cut off at the age of forty-five.

§ 3. *Mirza Najaf Khan, his past history.*

Mirzā Najaf Khan* was sprung from a noble Persian family of which the head had the hereditary custody of the key to the sepulchre of the most venerated Imām Ali-al-Rizā at Meshed and more than one member of which had married daughters of the Safavi kings. Najaf was born at Isfahān in 1737, and as a boy migrated to India with his sister who was married to Mirzā Muhasan, the eldest brother of Safdar Jang. He first saw service under this lady's step-son Muhammad Quli Khan (popularly called Mirzā Kuchak), who had been appointed imperial keeper of Allahabad fort. But that fort was usurped (April 1759) and Muhammad Quli was imprisoned and murdered (January 1761) by his jealous first cousin Shujā-ud-daulah. Young Najaf Khan, fearing to be involved in the ruin of his nephew and patron, fled away from Shujā with his bare life to Bengal, where the Nawāb Qāsim Ali Khan enlisted him and gave him three lakhs of Rupees for raising a force. In this Nawāb's service, Najaf Khan with his contingent joined the Bengal army at UndhuāNālā (August 1763), shook off their lethargy and greatly distinguished himself by raiding Mir Jafar's trenches. He next followed the

* *Imad-us-sādat*, 108-109, 29. *Siyar*, ii. 317-327, iii. 89. *Ibrat*. i. 119, 149-178. Muna Lal, 87, 106, 127. Broome, 381, 502-531 & CPC. i. 2342-2688. ii. 840. iii. 112, 164, 830. iv. 473.



defeated Qasim Ali to Bundelkhand in the expedition undertaken by Shujā's orders for realising tribute from Rajah Hindupat. When Qāsim Ali returned from this expedition, Najaf remained in that province in the pay of different Bundela princes, fighting in their intestine contests. Shujā wrote inviting him to come over with his forces and join in his war with the English. The English generals, Munro and Carnac, too, from the middle of 1764 continued to send him tempting offers to desert Shujā's cause and even to make a treacherous attack upon that Nawāb. Najaf waited till the battle of Buxar (October 1764) and the continuous flight of Shujā had proved to the Indian world that the English were the winning side.

He now made a rapid march from Bāndā and joined the English camp before Allahabad (January 1765), after plundering the local revenue-collectors and merchants on the way and seizing Himmat Bahadur's treasure, horses, tents and other equipment in Achalgarh for himself. His local knowledge of Allahabad where he had served in Muhammad Quli's time, enabled him to point out the weak spots of the fort and thus helped the English to capture it quickly (11 February 1765.) He next accompanied Fletcher in the fights with Malhar Rao Holkar (May) and daily rose higher in the favour of the English. His adhesion supplied the English army with that arm which it had hitherto totally lacked and the



want of which had neutralised the offensive power of its unconquerable infantry, namely a force of well-mounted expert Mughal cavalry. Therefore, at the treaty of Allahabad (16 August, 1765), Lord Clive guaranteed Najaf Khan an annual pension of two lakhs of Rupees out of the 28 lakhs promised to the Emperor in return for the grant of the *diwāni* of Bengal.

All these operations had been conducted by the English in the name of the Emperor, and Najaf was retained at their conclusion as a general in the imperial service and their best supported protege and most loyal partisan among Shah Alam's courtiers. At English recommendation he was appointed by the Emperor faujdar of Kora (1766.) This roused the jealousy of Munir-ud-daulah, another supporter of the English interest among the Emperor's counsellors and the most acceptable envoy in negotiating with them. Munir at last got Najaf dismissed from his post at Kora on the false charge that he had failed to collect the standard revenue (21 Feb. 1770.) The English Governor pleaded with the Emperor for Najaf as hard as he could, but Najaf had to live for more than a year in Allahabad in unemployment and distress. His day came when in May 1771 the Emperor set out on his march to Delhi. Such an able captain could not be passed over when the imperial Government had none with even a quarter of his competence and experience. So, Najaf Khan was given Rs. 50,000 for

equipping his contingent and followed the Emperor on his march. He soon justified his choice and proved himself the fittest man for the supreme command of the Empire's forces.

§ 4. *Character of Mirza Najaf Khan.*

When we contemplate the career of Najaf Khan we do not know what to admire most,—his military capacity, his political insight, or his humanity. In none of these points he had an equal among the peerage of Delhi or the vassal princes of the Empire in his own day. Najibud-daulah may have surpassed him in military genius and fought greater battles against mightier antagonists, but the circumstances of his time were different, and he merely carried on the traditional Afghan system of war with supreme thoroughness. Najaf Khan, on the other hand, had received a military education denied to the great Ruhela; he had faced British troops in the field and later fought side by side with them; he knew and appreciated the new warfare which the Europeans had brought into India, and he quickly adapted himself to the change and successfully incorporated into his army alien elements and diverse instruments. He concentrated on fire arms, and assembled ten thousand sepoy musketeers trained in the European system and a heavy park of improved artillery; he enlisted European partisan leaders like Rene Madec, Walter Reinhard and the