



Comte de Modave, and added to these two arms the best cavalry then available in India, namely the Mughal horse. But he was never, like Daulat Rao Sindhia, the helpless slave of his foreign mercenaries. The result of this successful grafting of the new on the old was that the Marathas Ruhelas and Jats, till then considered invincible, were hopelessly out-classed in their wars with Najaf Khan and the lieutenants who carried on his legacy, till De Boigne confronted them with a still more modernised force before which nothing Indian could stand and which met its doom only from the white troops of another race.

As a politician Najaf Khan stands even higher. His self-control and calmness in the midst of harassing disappointments and hostile plots won the admiration of a cultured French observer, the Comte de Modave, who wrote from his camp, "I do not know how to describe the composure of mind and tranquillity of Najaf Khan in the midst of these Court intrigues directed against him. He was informed about their smallest details, and amused himself by discussing them with his friends. He used to say that these petty contrivances were the resource of the weak."* In the correctness of his vision into the future he had no rival among his peers.

* Modave, *Journal du Voyage...*, ms. p. 289 (tr. by me in *Bengal Past & Present*, 1936.)



His patience was inexhaustible because he knew his own strength. From the same source also sprang his marvellous moderation, whether we consider the long years during which he persisted in rejecting his lieutenants' demand for marching to Delhi and forcibly removing the mischievous Abdul Ahad Khan from the Emperor's counsels, or study his treatment of his defeated foes. In the hour of victory he never attempted to crush them outright, but followed a policy of compromise and liberal concession which turned his late enemies into grateful and loyal allies, as the great Akbar had so often done. In the end, his successful campaigns left no dormant danger behind them. To the innocent peasantry and traders and the non-combatants of captured cities he extended a humanity of treatment and a generous protection of their property and family honour that were unknown in Asiatic warfare in that age. When we study his character we can understand why his death called forth universal and spontaneous mourning from the people, regardless of their rank or creed.

§ 5. *Najaf Khan compared with
Najib-ud-daulah.*

As the dictator of Delhi and commander-in-chief (*Mir Bakhshi*) of the forces of the Empire, Najaf Khan naturally invites comparison with Najib-ud-daulah, his immediate predecessor in that office. At the zenith of his career, Najib-ud-



daulah was for ten years the regent of the Mughal Empire, his position and power undisputed by any Court rival or Muslim potentate in India. His strength lay in the fact of his being the head of a Ruhela clan and the recognised leader of the Afghan race in general throughout Hindustan, while at the same time he was up to 1767 backed, sometimes by the presence but oftener by the prestige and name of his unconquerable patron, the Durrāni Shāh. In India itself he was the Sunni champion besides being the head of the Afghan race. Even without Durrāni backing, he was manifestly the greatest Indian general of his age after the death of Asaf Jāh Nizām-ul-mulk. At the same time his possession of fertile and comparatively undisturbed jagirs in the Doab and upper Rohilkhand, which were carefully managed by his able and faithful land-stewards, ensured for him a large and steady income, so that at the time of his death he was the richest Muslim ruler of North India.

Najaf Khan, on the other hand, possessed some social advantages which birth had denied to Najib-ud-daulah. That Ruhela had started life in India as a poor uninfluential man, entering service in the humble capacity of a foot soldier. From this small beginning he had risen by sheer merit and unfailing opportunism to the virtual headship of the Empire. But Najaf Khan was a Mirzā, boasting of the royal blood of Persia and closely connected with the house of the Oudh



Nawābs by marriage. All this, however, counted for nothing in practical effect as steps to his rise to greatness. He had no racial backing in India ; even the Persian Shujā, his kinsman and brother of the faith, was his personal enemy, while Najaf Khan's creed made him utterly friendless at the Court of Delhi, where the Shia faction created by Amir Khan and Muhammad Ishāq Khan had been crushed after the failure of Safdar Jang's rising against his master in 1753.

In the royal council, the ears of the spineless weak-minded Shah Alam were time after time poisoned by Abdul Ahad Khan and other jealous intriguers against Najaf Khan, in spite of his evident loyalty and devoted services, and Najaf had to turn round and meet the challenge of these domestic enemies while he was entangled with foreign foes. In addition to such repeated thwarting by his Court rivals unknown to Najib-ud-daulah, Mirzā Najaf was also hampered by his lack of funds, as he had no fertile and protected jagirs for supporting his army with, and his victorious campaigns were often abruptly ended by the clamours of his unpaid soldiery.

§ 6. *Zābita Khan provokes war with Emperor.*

We shall now trace the services of Najaf Khan under the newly restored Government of Delhi.

When the news of Najib-ud-daulah's death (31 Oct. 1770) reached Shah Alam at Allahabad,



he first sent to Zābita Khan,* the eldest son of the departed chief, not only the usual condolences but also a robe of investiture for succession to his father's high office of Mir Bakhshi (Head of the Army) with the attached title of Amir-ul-umāra, and asked him to come with his forces and escort the Emperor to Delhi, where "the throne would belong to the Emperor and the control of the Empire to Zābita Khan," as had been the practice during his great father's regency of ten years. At the same time, the Emperor called upon Zābita Khan to pay the customary fee of succession for his father's estates and office, and settle the accounts of the Crownlands and privy purse estates round Delhi and in the upper Doab held by Najib for so many years. Even in the lifetime of Alamgir II there had been complaints that Najib was realising lakhs of Rupees every year as rent from these lands, but paying only a quarter of them or even less into the imperial Exchequer.

At the outset the Emperor had no unfriendly feeling towards Zābita, and indeed he had no means of asserting himself against that Ruhela chief whose troops were garrisoning Delhi and guarding the Emperor's mother and heir, while the exiled monarch had no army of his own. Zābita knew his sovereign's impotence and after

* G. Ali, ii. 266, 283. Muna Lal 121-123. Miskin 272-273. DC.



detaining the imperial messengers for some time, packed them off with a haughty refusal, though he assumed the robe of Mir Bakhshi (29 Dec. 1770). According to Ghulām Ali, Zābita's natural Afghan stupidity was aggravated by the insolence of youth and the pride of such vast wealth acquired without the least exertion on his part.

Thereafter, a rapid shifting of scenes took place on the political stage of the Empire. Shah Alam welcomed Mahadji Sindhia's secret offer of adhesion and came to terms with the Maratha plenipotentiary in Hindustan; Delhi fort was wrested from Zābita's agent and occupied by the Marathas in the Emperor's name; a formal treaty was signed with them for escorting Shah Alam to his capital, and finally the Emperor himself arrived near Farrukhabad on his march to Delhi. Here his first conspicuous success was the exaction of a tribute from the heir of Ahmad Khan Bangash, and this was effected only with the backing of Sindhia's armed force. The royal counsellors urged Shah Alam to follow this success up by attacking Zābita and compelling him to pay tribute and homage. But the Emperor either quailed from an encounter, or deemed it better policy not to antagonise Zābita, as such a course would drive that rich Ruhela to form a pact with the Marathas and leave the Emperor without a single friend in the world.



So, Zābīta Khan was again gently invited to come and pay his loyal respects and offer the customary congratulatory presents at the foot of the throne during the next Coronation in Delhi. All the other nobles and vassal princes of the realm did this duty, but Zābīta Khan continued obstinate in his contumacy, refusing to part with any money. Then the Emperor decided to punish him; the pay of the royal army had fallen into arrears and the soliders were clamouring to be let loose on the Ruhela lands as the only means of relieving their distress. Not a day was to be lost; it was already January and in a few months' time the rising flood of the rivers would make them uncrossable for armies.

§ 7. *Marathas force the Ruhela lines
on the Ganges below Hardwar.*

The campaign was promptly started. A body of imperial troops led by Mirzā Najaf Khan with the Maratha army under Tukoji Holkar, Mahadji Sindhia and Visāji Krishna, crossed into the Doab. Shah Alam himself left Delhi only eleven days after his arrival there, and marched ten miles behind the army, by way of Loni, Bagpat, and Ghausgarh to Chāndpur,* near the

* This Chāndpur (three miles east of the Pathri railway stn. on the Hardwar line) should not be confounded with Chandi ghat, situated on the *opposite* bank of the Ganges and seven miles north of it, i.e., one mile south of Hardwar.



west bank of the Ganges, 15 miles due east of Rurki.

Meantime the defiant foe had matured his own plans. Zābita lodged his treasures and the families of all the Ruhela chiefs in Pathargarh (the stone fort of Najibabad) with a small garrison, while he himself took post at Shakartāl with some 4,000 troops and distributed the bulk of his army along the eastern bank of the Ganges from that fort up to Hardwār 38 miles northwards. He hoped to repeat his father's resounding success against Dattaji Sindhia in 1759 and at the same time guard against any incursion into the Najibabad district across the uppermost reaches of the Ganges like Govind Pant Bundele's raid in the November of that year. But Zābita was not Najib, and the Marathas profited by the lesson of Dattaji's failure to leave Shakartāl untouched and to concentrate all their strength on forcing the Ganges in its uppermost and shallowest part. The season too favoured the invaders. It was now the depth of winter and the Ganges water had touched its lowest level.

Over these 38 miles the Ruhela forces were posted in groups, entrenching the east bank at every known ford and holding it in strength. The Marathas dug trenches opposite them on the west bank, and then very successfully deluded the enemy. They had decided to deliver their blow at Chandighat, just below Hardwār, at the northern extremity; but they caused it to be



noised abroad that they would cross several miles further down, and even sent their camp and baggage away from Chandighat and spent several days in seeming idleness and neglect at this vital point. Then after the Ruhelas had been thrown completely off their guard and diverted from the real point of attack, the invaders began their crossing.

On 23rd February, three hours before sunrise, the Marathas drove their horses into the river at Chandighat, reached the sand bank in midstream unperceived, and advancing to the further bank fell upon the Ruhela trenches sword in hand. The surprise was complete, but the defenders soon rallied, fired their muskets and rockets, and then rushing out pressed the assailants back into the river. Meantime Najaf Khan had reached the island in midstream, and halting his camel-swivels there opened fire at close range on the crowded Afghan ranks opposite. His deadly fire decided the issue. Karam Khan Razzar and four or five other sardars, fighting in the front rank of the enemy, were the first to be shot down. Then the Ruhela army fell back; only Sādat Khan Afridi with a few hundred brave men held the ground against ten thousand imperialists and Marathas who had crossed over by this time. His horse fell under him, he himself was shot in both thighs, but he changed horses and fought on till he was stricken down with more wounds. His men fled away, but his



brother Sādiq Khan, though severely wounded, made a reckless charge upon Najaf Khan himself. All people gave way before this wounded tiger, horribly striped with running blood all over his body and growling out the Afghan battle cry *ān! ān!* The desperado reached the elephant of Najaf Khan, who was roused by the challenge and crying out, "Yes, I am ready for you," struck Sādiq Khan with his spear, while the servant in the back seat of his *hauda* shot the Afridi down. With him the last trace of resistance ended; the Afghans broke and fled in headlong rout.

The heads of the fallen Ruhela generals were severed and sent to the Emperor. Ali Muhammad Khan, blind of one eye, a wounded colonel of Zābita's army, was captured when hiding himself among the bushes on the river bank. The news of this splendid victory, the first in his reign, reached the Emperor in his camp, ten miles in the rear, at noon. The entire credit for it was rightly given to Najaf Khan, and it became the first step of his ladder to supreme eminence in the State. "The Emperor showered favours on him, and stretching his own beard with both hands towards Najaf Khan, cried out, 'Yet have saved my honour.' "*

* DC. G. Ali, ii. 284-296. Muna Lal 125-127. Miskin 276-277. Ibrat. i. 203-207. Bihari Lal (tr. by me in I.H.Q. 1935, pp. 641 *et seq.*)

§ 8. *Flight of Zabita Khan ; capture of Shakartāl.*

The victory was decisive. The Afghan resistance had been shattered at one blow. All was now confusion terror and despair in Zābita Khan's ranks. Every ford held by his men was abandoned and the contagion even spread to Shakartāl. When the news of the Marathas having established themselves in full force on the eastern bank of the Ganges, with the road to the Ruhela homes open before them, reached Zābita that evening, he went to beg armed aid from his brother-in-law Faizullah Khan, who had encamped with some 4000 men opposite to this fort. "Faizullah who had never seen a battle, in terror declined the proposal to assist in the defence of Shakartāl, but that very night took the road to Rampur, whence after only a night's halt he fled to the Tarai jungles with his family and treasures, setting fire to his capital."

The desertion of his sole ally and the flight of all his troops made Zābita Khan's position utterly untenable. So, late that night he abandoned Shakartāl and fled away on an elephant with only 40 attendants, to join his ally in the northern hills. Indescribable confusion reigned among the leaderless Ruhelas at Shakartāl: "the whole camp was breaking up in flight, the bazar was deserted, the tents were on fire The roads on the eastern bank leading to Najibabad were crowded with Afghan fugitives, who were



cursing their Mughalia comrades" [as the cause of the defeat.] Zābita's uncle Afzal Khan was captured.

The myriads of Maratha light horse now overspread the fair province of Rohilkhand in a resistless flood, because every Afghan chief of note, including Hāfiz Rahmat and the sons of Dundi Khan, had taken refuge in the Tarai with their women and troops, leaving their cities to their fate. The memory of the Maratha incursion in Safdar Jang's cause in 1751 was still fresh and all their great chiefs except two were now dead; and of these two remaining giants of old, Sardār Khan was dying and Hāfiz a brokendown old man disgusted with life by squabbles with his son and brethren.

After the victory the Emperor marched south down the right bank of the Ganges to Shakartāl, which he reached on 1st March. But there was no prize left in that fort now. Immediately after the flight of Zābita and his army, "the Gujars and Mewātis living in the environs of Shakartāl plundered that masterless tract worse than the Marathas ever did. When the victors arrived at that fort they found only sacked and blazing houses. Only a few pieces of artillery, too heavy to be removed, were secured by the Marathas."*

* DC. Miskin (present) 278-279. *Ibrat*. i. 207.

§ 9. *Siege of Pathargarh.*

The Marathas, in rapid pursuit of the Ruhelas fleeing from the Ganges bank, invested Pathargarh, the stone fort built by Najib-ud-daulah one mile east of his capital Najibabad. Najaf Khan joined the siege, and the Emperor too arrived there soon after, encamping in the rear, between Sahanpur and Jalalabad, some four miles west of Najibabad. The fort was no doubt strong and well stored with guns and munition, but sufficient provisions had not been laid in, and it contained the wives and children of all the Afghan sardars (who had themselves fled away to the Tarai jungles.) After a fortnight's exchange of fire, old Sultan Khan who commanded it, offered to capitulate if the lives and family honour of the garrison were assured.

The Marathas at once accepted the offer, and on 16th March Pathargarh was vacated. "The Marathas took their stand at the gate of the fort. At first the poorer people came out; they were stripped and searched and let off almost naked. The rich people threw caskets full of gems and money from the ramparts into the wet ditch for concealing them. Many noble Afghan families, after coming out of the hands of the Marathas, sought asylum within the circuit of the imperial halting place. But the plunderers of the camp and the Turāni Mughals robbed them of the clothing on their persons which even the Marathas had



spared, and they dragged away the women by the hand towards their own tents!" Najaf Khan rescued them and after some days sent them away under escort of his own followers to Jalalabad-Luhari in the north Muzaffarnagar district, which was a large and as yet safe Afghan colony.*

§ 10. *Spoils taken at Pathargarh; quarrel between Emperor and the Marathas.*

The Marathas spent twenty days in seizing the property found in Pathargarh and digging out the buried treasure. Spies reported to them that the inmates had thrown their riches into the wet ditch. It was very deep, and so they drained it by cutting a canal from it to a neighbouring stream and thus recovered the treasure. A quarrel soon broke out between the two allies over the division of the spoils of victory. The Marathas were taxed with breach of the agreement made at the beginning of the campaign. On the imperial side it was alleged that "the faithless Marathas

* Pathargarh.—Miskin 281-282. G. Ali, ii. 296 (scanty.) Muna Lal 128. *Ibrat*, i. 208-210. DC. Bihari Lal (in *I.H.Q.*)

Khare's assertion that all the Maratha women dragged into servility by the Ruhelas from the Bhau's camp at Panipat were liberated at this capture of Pathargarh, finds no support in any contemporary record in Persian or Marathi, nor does he cite any authority. (iv. p. 1888.)

"The Marathas defaced the curious workmanship of Najibuddaulah's tomb" at Najibabad, [Atkinson, *N. W. P. Gazetteer*, v. 352] but did not "demolish it" as Khare writes.



had seized all the artillery and treasures of Zābita Khan, as well as his elephants, horses and other property, and offered only a worthless fraction to the Emperor." At last the patience of the Emperor was worn out, and on 3rd May "harsh altercations broke out between him and the envoys of the Marathas, and the latter went away in anger." Next day he sent Rajah Rāmnāth to them to negotiate. However, on the 11th a compromise was patched up through Sindhia, and out of the property officially attached at Pathargarh, one half was given to the Emperor, one fourth to the Peshwa and the remaining quarter divided among the Maratha sardars, but the elephants cash and jewels remained unshared. The Emperor's demand was for money and Sindhia promised him two lakhs. But this was only a fraction in value of what had been seized. As a Maratha agent reported from Nagina on 9th May, lakhs and lakhs of Rupees worth of booty was appropriated by the Maratha officers without crediting it either to the Peshwa or to the Emperor.

From the carefully kept account-books of the Peshwas which have been preserved, we get an exact and detailed statement of the gains of the Maratha Government at Pathargarh. The total value of the gold and silver of all kinds including coins, was ten lakhs of Rupees. 2298 horses were found, out of which 1043 were given to the Emperor. Arms and munitions amounted only



to three large cannon (each bearing a name), two jizails, seven zamburaks, 1842 cannon-balls, a hundred rockets and 530 maunds of powder, &c. [SPD. xxix. pp. 337-340, 343.]

Another point of friction was the disposal of Zābita Khan's jagirs which included all the Crown-lands in the Panipat Saharanpur and Mirat districts and which the Marathas claimed by virtue of the imperial grants made to them before the battle of Panipat. [Ch. 13 § 8.] But the Emperor now gave Saharanpur to Fakhruddin Khan (a son of the ex-wazir Qamruddin), and Anupshahar and Karnal to Mahadji Sindhia, that Maratha general having undertaken to bring Shujā-ud-daulah to Court and make him personally support his sovereign. We may here add that the negotiations for making Shujā perform his duties as wazir in person failed. He no doubt exchanged turbans with Mahadji Sindhia in sign of full brotherhood, but it was done *in absentia*, the turban without the head under it having travelled from Faizabad to Sindhia's camp for being exchanged with the Maratha's cap (*pāgoti*.) It had been at first settled that Mahadji should go to Faizabad with the Oudh Nawab's envoys—Anupgir Gosain and Elich Khan, personally assure Shujā of his safety and bring him to the Emperor's camp. He actually set out, on 11th May, but after making four marches stopped on account of an irreconcilable breach with Visāji Krishna, and finally gave up the

mission in disgust. The two Oudh envoys went back covered with failure.*

§ 11. *Ruhelas sue for peace ; terms.*

When the fugitive Zābita Khan went to the jungle of Nānakmātā and met Hāfiz Rahmat and other Ruhela chiefs hiding there, his appeal to them for aid in recovering his patrimony fell on deaf ears ; all of them were afraid of facing the Marathas backed by the Emperor's authority and personal presence. Zābita in despair sought asylum with Shujā, who marched to Shahabad with Captain Gabriel Harper and welcomed him (12th May) like a brother, out of gratitude to Najib-ud-daulah. A little later, Hāfiz Rahmat came to Shujā at Gopāmau, and negotiations for a settlement began, Shujā acting as the middleman between the Ruhelas and the Marathas. Visāji agreed to make peace for a war-contribution of forty lakhs of Rupees from Hāfiz and Dundi Khan. The Ruhelas were utterly defenceless; Zābita's family and those of all the leading men of his clan were captives in the Emperor's hands; the invaders had overspread Rohilkhand with none to oppose them. In the Tarai a severe epidemic was rapidly thinning the number of the Afghan refugees, "a hundred to a hundred and fifty men

* *Ibrai.* i. 210. *SPD.* xxix. 277 (completed by 270), 276, 285. *Muna Lal* 129-131. *G. Ali*, ii. 297-298.



were dying daily, and their soldiers were fleeing away to Farrukhabad and other places ; those who remained were ailing." On the Nawab of Oudh standing security for the above indemnity, the Marathas withdrew from Rohilkhand, the Ruhela sardars came out of the jungle, and every one took possession of his own lands. A separate peace was made with Zābita Khan, who was restored to his family estates in Najibabad and Saharanpur, and his wives and children were released from captivity. [CPC. iv. 60.]

Mahadji objected to these terms. The breach between him and Visāji widened so far that he gave up visiting his chief. The Maratha enterprise ended in confusion and failure to realise any money. As the Peshwa's agent wrote from Moradabad on 29th May, "It seems that our political arrangements which had begun to mature in certain places, will be thrown into confusion. Our leaders are not of one mind, but every one acts independently. God only knows what the result of it will be . . . Nobody is paying a pice of the promised contribution, (another letter adds.) Our troops are eager to go back to their homes."

On the Emperor's wish to return to Delhi becoming known, Visāji and Tukoji pressed him to march on Allahabad instead, for exacting the old tribute of Bengal and Bihar from the English holders of those provinces and also for compelling Shujā to pay revenue to his overlord. But the

Emperor knew his own military weakness and the faithlessness of his only allies the Marathas. His chief counsellor in these matters was Najaf Khan, a regular pensioner of the English and a soldier who had personally witnessed the prowess of the British army during 1763-1765. Mahadji Sindhia too supported Najaf's views, and the Emperor therefore adhered to his decision to turn back. One day, Visāji and Tukoji visited Hisām-ud-din, the Emperor's prime minister, and vehemently pressed for the march to the eastern provinces. The dispute grew so bitter that the followers on both sides took up their arms for a fight. But the Emperor forbade the clash and kept Najaf's contingent ready for defending him if necessary. This cooled the ire of the Marathas and they agreed to retreat.*

§ 12. *Imperialists plunder Rohilkhand. Return of the expedition to Delhi.*

The invaders began their return journey from Rohilkhand at the end of May. The Emperor started from Najibabad, as usual two marches behind his allies. By way of Nihtaur, Sherkot, Seohara, Salimpur and Amroha, he reached the Ganges which he crossed at Puth, and

* DC. SPD. xxix. 271, 276. Muta Lal 129-131. Bihari Lal's *Life of Najibuddaulah* (tr. by me in *I.H.Q.* 1935.) Return,—*Ibrat*, i. 210-211. Miskin 282. DC. SPD. xxix. pp. 326-328.



moved due west through the Mirat district *via* Bagsar, Hāpur and Lākhan, to Delhi, which was entered on 9th July. Most of the cities in Rohil-Khand, like Aonla, Barily and Rampur had been set on fire by the fleeing Ruhelas; what remained was now ransacked by the Marathas. One city alone, Amroha, held out under its Sayyids, who ultimately saved it by promising a ransom of Rs. 60,000 through Najaf Khan. This amount was realised by cruel distraint by the Mirzā's lieutenant Najaf Quli Khan, "who was a second Yezid in hardness of heart," and paid to the Peshwa. Returning to the Doab, the Marathas laid siege to Khurja, a Jat post, which they took after two months of trench warfare (on 30th July.) At Delhi the Court spent the rest of the month in celebrating the first grand Coronation of the restored monarch, on 29th July. Then followed three months of inaction owing to the monsoons.

§ 13. *Visaji Krishna and Tukoji Holkar quarrel with the Emperor. Delhi forces attack the Jats. Rene Madec joins the Emperor.*

On the arrival of winter a storm burst over the Emperor and his city. The Pathargarh expedition had ended in a rupture between the Emperor and the Marathas. The Ruhela chief had been utterly defeated, but the fruits of the victory had disappointed the two allies; the financial distress of neither was relieved by the



spoils of war. The Emperor was convinced that the Marathas would neither give him armed help in recovering his lost dominions, nor provide him with a more liberal revenue than Najib-ud-daulah had done. On the other hand, the Marathas legitimately demanded the fulfilment of the terms of his treaty with them (22 March 1771) which they had fully carried out by restoring him to his capital. The 30 lakhs promised to them in that treaty still remained unpaid, and the bankrupt Puna Government was constantly urging its North Indian agents to realise this money. The Emperor having refused to invade Oudh for exacting tribute from its viceroy or to make an incursion into Bihar for its long-outstanding revenue, the Maratha chiefs pointed out that in these circumstances the only person who could produce money in the Emperor's need was Zābita Khan, the inheritor of Najib's immense hoards, and that Zābita could be placated only by pardoning him for his past contumacy and appointing him to his father's office of Mir Bakhshi, with all the family jagirs. As the price of this Maratha intercession and armed pressure for enabling him to gain these objects, Zābita agreed to pay the Peshwa ten and a half lakhs of Rupees. Tukoji Holkar, as the hereditary ally of Zābita, converted Visāji Krishna to this policy; but Mahadji Sindhia refused to promote the interests of the house of Najib-ud-daulah or to take part in the proposed demonstration against the Emperor in support of them.



The late Ruhela campaign had suddenly raised Mirzā Najaf Khan to the highest credit at Court and the greatest influence over the Emperor's mind, who now ordered him to raise troops and form a new army worthy of the Crown. For this purpose, the revenue of several districts north and west of Delhi was assigned to him and he sent his collectors there,—Najaf Quli to Hansi-Hisar, Niyāz Beg (Turāni Mughal) to Saharanpur, Muhammad Beg Hamadāni to Jalalabad-Luhari (*i.e.*, Ghausgarh in north Muzaffarnagar), Afrāsiyāb Khan to Sonapat and Pānipat. The former disbanded veterans of the imperial army as well as youths aspiring to the profession of arms, came to Delhi in crowds as the news spread that a new army was to be raised under the Emperor's banner. Very soon an excellent force of about seven thousand men was enlisted, besides a contingent of foreign Muslim cavalry (called Mughalia, *i.e.*, Persians and Turks) who belonged to Najaf Khan's personal following. Miskin describes the recruits as "strong and handsome youths, well mounted and of the Hindustani breed, wonderful to look at,"—but, as the result showed, they proved too raw and undependable in their first battle (in December next.)

The rise of Najaf Khan excited the jealousy of Hisām-ud-din, and that worthless favourite plotted with Tukoji Holkar and Visāji to get Zābita pardoned by the Emperor and appointed as Mir Bakhshi under Maratha patronage and



thus set him up as a counterpoise to Najaf Khān in the official headship of the army of the Empire. Shah Alam resisted his demand, and this refusal brought down a Maratha attack upon Delhi at the end of the year.

As usual in India, the rainy season enforced inactivity on all parties. At its close the imperial forces invaded the Jat territory stretching south of Delhi and took a number of small mud forts. But the Jat Rajah made peace with the Marathas by agreeing to a money contribution, and being thus relieved of one enemy, sent his forces to oppose the imperialists. His vanguard was led by René Madec with a newly equipped well-armed force of 3,000 men and eight field guns, besides Jat cavalry. At Madec's approach the imperialists fell back and all these Jat posts were recovered without a blow. The Emperor then promptly concluded his long drawn negotiations for seducing Madec. The French partisan leader was promised Rs. 40,000 per month with power to add to his contingent of 3,000 men up to any number he might consider necessary ; and a patent for the title of Nawab Shams-ud-daulah Bahadur Qaim Jang, six-hazari (both *zāt* and *sawār*) was sent to him. Madec assures us that in this act of desertion his object was purely patriotic. In leaving the Jat service abruptly he was sacrificing much of his property lodged in his house in Bharatpur as well as the sum of two lakhs of Rupees, being the arrears of his pay due from Nawal Singh : but



he was at this heavy cost carrying out the instructions of M. Chevalier, the French Chief of the Chandernaggar factory, for establishing a French force and French influence at Delhi as a set-off to the British conquest of Bengal.

Madec left the Jat service without giving notice, and had therefore to fight his way through strong opposition up to the gates of Delhi. His march was conducted with remarkable skill, courage and tenacity, and at its end he entered Delhi on 15th November 1772, and was welcomed by the Emperor with ceremonies and honours which entirely turned the head* of the ex-sailor and rough adventurer. Madec's arrival happened to be timed to a crisis in the affairs of Shah Alam; only a month after the French captain's entrance into Delhi, "the fortunes of the Empire came to be decided under the walls of the capital", as he justly observes in his memoirs.

* Madec writes in his *Mémoire*: "The third day [17th Nov. 1772] I went to the Emperor's audience...in the same order in which I had made my entry into the city,—(described before as, "I can say without ostentation that my entry into Delhi had the air of a triumph and that I entered there more like a monarch than a private person.")...The Emperor invested me with a robe of very rich cloth of gold with all the ornaments, namely a girdle, a turban and an aigrette set with precious stones...In considering the state of grandeur in which I found myself...I could hardly believe that it was not a dream."

§ 14. *Maratha attack on Delhi.*

Visāji Krishna and Tukoji, after their recommendation to the Emperor in favour of Zābita Khan and the Jat Rajah had been rejected,* assembled their forces in the Doab and made a move towards Delhi at the end of the monsoons, arriving within eight miles of the capital on 21st November. The Emperor held a consultation with all his nobles. Fazl Ali Khan was detached with the two battalions of sepoy supplied by the English, to go and entrench the eastern bank of the Jamuna near Shahdara. But the Marathas approached the capital from the south. They crossed over to Khizirabad, a village on the Jamuna west bank, some ten miles south-east of the Turkmān gate of Delhi.

Najaf Khan from the outset counselled a bold resistance. But the Emperor's cause was ruined by his personal cowardice and weakness of character which made him a puppet in the hands

* When the Maratha chiefs demanded the subsidy promised in 1771, the Emperor replied, "During the recent (Ruhela) campaign you have seized all the spoils and looted all the country. What have I gained except hardship and a little of lakhs of Rupees? What has been my gain from your adhesion? Even Mirza Najaf has spent on his own troops the 80,000 Rupees that was realised at Amroha." [Ibrat i. 215.] To the Maratha demand in favour of Zābita Khan and the Jat Rajah, his reply was, "I know my rights. I am the Sovereign and the Jats and Ruhelas are rebels who have usurped territories under obedience to me." [Madec.]

of his ministers and these ministers were moved solely by mutual jealousy and selfishness. Hisām-ud-din had recently supplanted Saifuddin Muhammad Khan as the Emperor's chief adviser and confidant, which was a poor requital for Saifuddin's services in 1771 in securing the Maratha alliance, wresting Delhi fort from Zābita's men, and conducting the Emperor to his capital. Hisām was mortally jealous of Najaf, the man of the sword and the darling of the army. The ministers moved at cross purposes to each other, while their master wavered between them. As the French captain noted with surprise, "The Emperor assembled such troops as he had ; but he did not do what he ought to have done on the occasion,—he did not appear at the head of his army." Najaf's counsel prevailed for the time and war was decided upon. The Marathas from the gate of Delhi repeated their demand on behalf of Zābita Khan, but it was again rejected by the Court.

On 7th December Mirzā Najaf went in force towards Bārapula to fight the Maratha army; he stood ready till midday, but neither side advanced to the encounter, and so Najaf returned to the city in the afternoon. The imperialists used to issue daily from the walls, march two miles south into the Old Fort (Purāna Qila) and stand in battle order ; a little skirmishing sometimes took place, and at last the two armies retired to their respective camps. The sandy bank (*reti*) of the



Jamuna below the Old Fort was entrenched and held by the imperialists, but this position was really untenable against the myriads of Maratha light horse. After skirmishes of a more extensive kind on the 10th, 12th and 16th, the decisive engagement came off on Friday the 17th of December.*

§ 15. *Battle of Purana Qila.*

Both sides fixed upon this date for a pitched battle. It was the first conflict in Hindustan in which European-trained and European-led sepoys and artillery were employed on the Emperor's side, but superior generalship, even more than superior numbers, decided the issue against him, for no fault of the Europeans. Early in the morning the imperialists marched out of the city and drew up their ranks facing the south, a cannon shot beyond the Old Fort, their left flank resting on the Jamuna and their right on some ruined fortifications (Firuzabad.) "The corn-fields, surrounded by high hedges, served as so many entrenchments. . . . It was a very advantageous position, allowing of a vigorous defence," as Madec noted. But all these advantages were lost through the inexperience of the

* DC. Madec's *Mémoire. Ibrat.* i. 214-217. Muna Lal 135-138 G. Ali iii. 4-6. Miskin, 283. Battle,—CPC. iv. 122, 138. DC. Miskin 284. G. Ali, iii. 7-12. Muna Lal, 138-140. *Ibrat.* i. 217-218. Madec (best).

imperial forces and the absence of unity of command on their side. Their first line was composed of the Mughalia cavalry under Qalich Beg Khan, "drawn up in platoons according to the terrain", on the right. Next, to the east, stood Madec with his three battalions of sepoy and eight guns. The extreme left was formed by two battalions of English sepoy under Gangārām and Bhawāni Singh commandants with four pieces of artillery. In the second line, behind a row of imperial guns, stood Mirzā Najaf with his personal contingent, all on foot. Far away in the rear, close to the river bank at the south-eastern corner of the New City, Ghāziuddin Khan's mansion was occupied by the reserve under Hisām, who had entrenched the plain below the Blue Bastion and ranged 30 heavy pieces of artillery there.

The battle began with the usual exchange of gun fire, in which two powder chests on the imperial side exploded, killing some 400 men. Then the Marathas came on to the fight. As they advanced, they quickened their pace and menaced the Mughalia cavalry (the extreme right of the defence.) These men were shaken even before being assailed. The Marathas had now halted to receive the expected charge of their enemy, but on seeing the wavering in the Mughal ranks they promptly seized the opportunity and themselves charged. The Mughal cavalry was heavily outnumbered (about five to one), and being unaided by any momentum of attack, at once broke and



fled. On their heels, one compact division of the Maratha horse passed with lightning speed behind the imperial battle line and galloped towards the city.

At the same time, the Maratha right wing advanced against the imperial left. "These *paltans*, through ignorance and mismanagement, fired off their muskets while the Maratha horse were still beyond range, and before they could reload the enemy were upon them, trampling and cutting them down. The remnant of these sepoys made a right turn and came to rest upon Madec's division." Thus the imperial left, like the right, dissolved away at the first impact.

The battle now gathered round the centre. Here Madec had been attacked in front and rear and completely enveloped. He had formed his men into a square in the nick of the time, thanks to the energy and alertness of his second in command Mons. de Kerascao; but in effecting this change of formation he had to give some ground and abandon three pieces of cannon and two munition carts. By a judicious fire on all the four faces he succeeded in keeping the enemy back. Mirzā Najab himself had been caught at a disadvantage and broken. The Maratha centre, disregarding the fire of the wretched imperial artillery, had swept through his line of guns, routed Najab's followers, and forced him with a handful of his personal guards to take refuge in Madec's square. Early in the day his nephew

Mirza Ahsan had been mortally wounded by a cannon-ball.

And now the French square alone stood in the field like a solitary island in the midst of a raging sea of horseman. But it was an island built on granite. From noon up to three hours of the night, Madec held his position, keeping the enemy at a distance and preventing them from dragging his three guns away. In the meantime, the Maratha left wing, pursuing and slaying the fugitive Mughal horse, had reached the gates of Delhi and looted Madec's camp and baggage resting under its walls. As he writes, "I lost five elephants, all my horses, camels, tents, carriages and quantities of other effects. The royal favourite Hisām, who held the neighbouring ramparts with his heavy artillery, did not advance one step either to reinforce Najaf Khan in the field or even to save my camp close in front of him." He was openly accused of firing blank charges in order to complete the ruin of his rival Najaf, and his soldiers were seen joining the Marathas in the pillage of Madec's unguarded camp. Shortly after this, Hisām fled into the city with his troops, abandoning his trenches.

The Maratha horse then entered Ghāzi-uddin's mansion and ransacked it thoroughly. Here the rich trader Karim Khan had deposited his merchandise worth lakhs of Rupees, some elephants, and 30 to 40 horses for safety, but all these were plundered. Close to the Delhi Gate



of the capital, the raiders seized two elephants of the Emperor himself. By way of the now defenceless eastern side of the city, close to the river bank, the Marathas even penetrated within the walls and dispersed for plunder through Sadullah Khan's market square. Here they were attacked and driven out by Sayyid Muhammad Khan Baluch (the brother of Musavi Khan.) Once again the incurable predatory instinct of the Marathas and the lack of true generalship among their chiefs robbed them of the all but conquered imperial capital.

Three hours after sunset the remnant of the imperial army, sheltered by Madec's carefully led square, returned to the city. There were loud charges of treachery made against Hisām, but the Emperor lacked the spirit for punishing the traitor. He merely rewarded the gallant fighters, embracing M. Madec and Najaf Khan and robing them with his own shawls &c.

It was reported that in this battle the Marathas had lost 17 sardars slain and 12 wounded, and three thousand men had fallen on the two sides together. But it was decisive. Though the imperialists manned the trenches and exchanged a distant fire with the enemy for a few days after it, they no longer ventured out into the open. The Pindharis set fire to Patparganj and Jaisinghpura. Madec, when sitting on the edge of his trenches among the ruins of Old Delhi, was wounded by a bullet in the thigh. All his



equipment and property had been lost and his force terribly cut up in the battle of the 17th.*

§ 16. *Complete submission of the Emperor to the Marathas.*

The Emperor had no stomach for fighting left, his troops were hopelessly outnumbered, and his city was completely enveloped by "the Maratha army with the Ruhela troopers of Zābita Khan and the Jat soldiers and Samru's battalions and guns which had arrived to the aid of the Marathas." Against these could be put only the handful of Najaf's personal followers, the remnant of the defeated and dispirited new levies who had escaped the Maratha sword on the 17th. It was a situation which even a Najib-ud-daulah had not been able to save with better resources in 1757.

So, the Emperor made a complete surrender and signed a promise to grant all his enemy's demands. On the 19th peace parleys were opened by Hisām in the tents of Visāji and Tukoji; on the 20th Dado Malhar (Visāji's diwan) and five other Maratha chiefs came to the Fort and held a secret conversation with the Emperor; next day each party withdrew from its trenches below the

* According to a newsletter (CPC. iv. 122), the Maratha army *cum* Zābita Khan's contingent was 35,000 strong, and a total of 3 to 4 thousand men fell on the two sides taken together. The Marathas captured 11 pieces of artillery, five elephants, and all the tents of Madec and Najaf.

city, but the discussion continued for some time longer, owing to the exorbitant nature of the Maratha demands. On the 26th the royal submission was consummated under the disguise of a gracious pardon. After having the Fort carefully searched to guard against treachery, Visāji, Tukoji and Zābita entered the Audience, each one's wrists tied together with a handkerchief like those of defeated and captured malefactors; they made the customary present of gold coins, and at the end of this mummery were given from the Emperor's side robes of honour, elephants and other presents. Zābita Khan was appointed Mir Bakhshi and restored to his paternal jagirs in Rohilkhand, Saharanpur and Mirat. On 2nd January 1773, the Maratha triumph was completed by the issue of an order dismissing Madec's battalions and the Mughalia horse and other troops newly raised by Najaf Khan.*

The settlement was, however, protracted by personal intrigue. Hisām knew that when his Maratha patrons were gone from Delhi, "Najaf would not leave him alive". He therefore bribed

* The capitulation signed by the Emperor contained the following terms: (1) The Emperor should not keep troops in excess of what was necessary for guarding himself. (2) He should restore to the Jats all the country that they had possessed before. (3) Zābita Kh. should be appointed Mir Bakhshi and given back all his territories conquered by the imperialists earlier in the year. (4) The Emperor should pay the Marathas Rs. [blank] as war expenses and cede the province of Kora Jahanabad. [Madec.]



them to expel Najaf from the Emperor's presence and service. "The Marathas, finding it impossible to realise the 25 lakhs promised to them by the Emperor in 1771, at last came down to nine lakhs, which Hisām paid in cash and kind, and in addition he promised Tukoji one lakh on condition of expelling Najaf." They also knew that the Mirzā was their one enemy and they dreaded his ability and strength of will so long as he was backed by the Emperor's authority. They, therefore, demanded that he should be dismissed by the Emperor and delivered up to them, or be forcibly expelled from the city along with the Mughalia horse. When this threat became known, the Mughalia soldiers from every part of the city flocked to Najaf's residence to guard him. Najaf put his house (Ismail Khan's mansion, close to the Mori Gate) in a posture of defence, and continued to live there in open defiance of the Emperor's order, saying that he was no longer a servant of the Government but a private person.

Hisām invited the Marathas to the city and mounted the imperial artillery on the Lahore Gate in order to expel the Mughalia supporters of Najaf (17th January.) Great disorder broke out in Delhi, with its inevitable accompaniment of loot and the sack of houses, on the 19th. The Marathas rode up the path on the river bank outside the city wall and stood ready opposite Najaf's residence, but they retired at sunset as



neither side advanced for fighting. Next day the city again throbbed with alarm in expectation of an armed conflict. But again Najaf Khan's good sense prevailed. He knew that he had not a single friend in the world except the mercenary Mughalias, no patron like the Durrāni Shah, no tribal followers, no territory and treasure of his own. He, therefore, agreed to the Maratha proposal to leave Delhi and join them with his contingent, on a pay of Rs. 3,000 a day, as their servant in their forthcoming invasion of Rohilkhand and Shujā's dominions.*

§ 17. *Ramghat expedition of Marathas and Najaf Khan.*

This settlement made, the Maratha sardars crossed into the Doab on 2nd February 1773, and Najaf Khan did the same the next day, with the Mughalia troops who had decided to follow him for a living. Zābita, too, joined his Deccani patrons and promised to help their enterprise in Rohilkhand with his local knowledge and influence. The allied force traversed the Doab rapidly and reached Rāmghāt, on the west bank of the Ganges, 40 miles south-east of Bulandshahar, on the 15th. Their object was to obtain peaceful possession of the districts of Kora and Allahabad, by virtue of the imperial rescript

* DC. Madec. *Ibrat*. i. 219-222. Miskin 285-286. G. Ali iii. 14-18. Muna Lal 141-144.

granted to them. For this purpose they sent envoys to the Nawab of Oudh, demanding from him in his sovereign's name delivery of the lands he had usurped since 1765. They also called upon the trans-Ganges Ruhelas, especially Hāfiz Rahmat Khan, to pay up the indemnity promised in January 1771.

The Marathas at the very outset wished to avoid war. They knew that they were not strong enough for a regular campaign. Mahādji Sindhia with his 10,000 men had left them before their recent attack on Delhi; another force of 5,000 under Shivaji Vithal had been detached to Jhansi to meet the revolt against Maratha authority there fomented by the Gosains and local chiefs. Only 30,000 men were now left, equally divided between Visāji and Tukoji. The latter, true to the Holkar tradition of raiding tactics (*ghanimi qawāit*), proposed to make a dash on Faizabad (the seat of Shujā-ud-daulah), and capture that unwallled town in three days. But Visāji knew better. He knew that his allies Zābita and Najaf were secretly corresponding with Shujā, assuring him of their real antagonism to the Maratha interests and offering to go over to the Nawab of Oudh in the event of a clash of arms between the two sides. Even René Madec begged for returning to the Oudh service if the English would pardon his desertion from their army in 1764. [CPC. iv. 172, 183] Visāji, therefore, wanted to avoid war at all costs.



Ever since the Marathas had vacated Rohilkhand in May 1772, the Indian world knew it for certain that they would return there for collecting their dues next winter. Shujā knew that the Kora and Allahabad districts had been formally ceded to them, and he was not willing to disgorge these annexations. Hence, ever since that month he had kept making frantic appeals to his English protectors at Calcutta for the hire of British troops to defend these districts from the Marathas when they would come next. The Governor had assured him of such support. From Faizabad, by way of Lucknow, Shuja reached the bank of the Ganges opposite Cawnpur on 31st January, 1773. An English brigade composed of sepoys as well as white infantry, under Colonel Champion (the future conqueror of Rohilkhand) accompanied him. After the Marathas had arrived at Rāmghāt, the Nawab moved up the river towards them and encamped opposite Farrukhabad (3rd March). Here he was joined by more British troops and their commander-in-chief Sir Robert Barker himself. Marching further north, in response to the terrified calls of the Ruhelas, and covering long stages daily, the Anglo-Oudh force reached Sāhaswān, only 20 miles short of Rāmghāt, on the 19th. On that very day the Marathas at last embarked on war.*

* Rāmghat expedition.—Macpherson's *Soldiering in India* and *CPC*. iv (both fullest and best.) *DC*. *Aiti Tip*. vi 17.



There had been an angry scene in the invaders' camp on the west bank of the Ganges. The pacific Visāji Krishna, inspite of his high title of the supreme agent for Maratha interests in Hindustan, was powerless. Tukoji Holkar, as usual, by his bluster carried the day, and taking Najaf Khan with himself forded the Ganges there with his 15,000 light horse, while Visāji, with the other half of the army, stayed behind at the village of Bhelon, two miles west of the *ghat*, in charge of all the camp, heavy baggage and the accumulated spoils of three years' campaigning in the North. The Pindharis looted the country round. As a wise precaution, a bridge of boats had been thrown by the Marathas over the Ganges at Puth, 50 miles higher up the river, to provide a safe path for retreat.

§ 18. *Tukoji Holker raids Rohilkhand ;
encounter with British troops.*

Arrived on the east bank of the Ganges, Tukoji attacked and captured Ahmad Khan (the son of Sardār Khan, the ex-Bakhshi of Ali Md. Ruhela), who had entrenched on the river side opposite Rāmghāt, with the fortalice of Asadpur behind him. The action was short and sharp ;

SPD. xxix. 278 and pp. 331-333, 341, 348 (Najaf Kh. engaged by the Marathas on Rs. 3,000 daily.) *Ibrat*, i. 222-228 (detailed.) Miskin 287-288 (present.) G. Ali, iii. 18-19 and Muna Lal 144-145 (meagre.) Bihari Lal. *Gulshan-i-Rahmat*.



the Ruhelas lost 300 out of their force of 2,000 men and the Marathas 900. But a son of Ahmad Khan held out in Asadpur, which Tukoji invested. The English army at Sāhaswān, warned by the heavy sound of firing at night, made a rapid march next day and arrived before Rāmghāt (20th March.) At the news of their approach, Tukoji abandoned the siege and made a lightning raid on Sambhal (35 miles north-east of Rāmghāt) and Morādābād, both of which large cities he plundered. Then, with equal speed, he fled back, crossing the Ganges at Puth, and rejoined Visāji at Aligarh.

We shall now return to the Maratha division left behind at Rāmghāt. At ten o'clock in the morning of 20th March, the English brigade advancing on Rāmghāt sighted the Marathas and immediately formed line of battle, all the troops priming and loading. At once a large body of Maratha horse hovering on the east bank crossed the Ganges back to Ramghat without a shot having been fired at them. Then some 3,000 of their cavalry appeared on the western bank, at first merely watching the movements of the English. After General Barker had pitched his tent, Visāji fired two 12 pounders across the river and dropped about 30 shots near this tent, killing an old woman and wounding an elephant. Two English guns immediately replied, the very second shot of which "fell among the thick of the enemy, upon which they turned tail in great confusion,



and a few more rounds made the whole of them quit the shore."

Early in the morning of the 22nd, the English general crossed the Ganges at the ford of Rāmghāt, Shujā-ud-daulah having sent in the preceding night twenty pieces of cannon to cover the advance and some 5,000 Najib infantry to occupy a good post on the west bank. But the news of the intended attack had reached Visāji and he had precipitately fled fourteen miles behind, leaving there only a few Pindharis rummaging among the abandoned things of his camp. The English encamped on the ground so long occupied by the enemy; their General advanced eight miles westwards without coming up with the enemy; he found only small bands of Pindharis hovering afar off and a large force of Maratha horse that watched the English "from a respectable distance." Hāfiz Rahmat Khan, who had so long maintained a dubious attitude towards Shujā, now came to the wazir's camp, and so also did several of Najaf Khan's officers who reported that the rest of their commanders would desert the infidels in groups of 20 or 30 at a time, as they found means of escape.

After halting on the west bank on the 22nd, the English brigade recrossed the river to their old ground, a mile from Rāmghāt, leaving a strong body to guard that ford. Next day, at the news that Holkar was raiding Morādābād, the brigade began a rapid march north-eastwards to the rescue



of the Ruhelas. At the end of the second day (26th March) news came that the Maratha raiders had fled back across the Ganges. So, General Barker returned to Rāmghāt on the 28th.

§ 19. *Settlement made by General Barker between the Marathas and the Ruhelas.*

In the meantime, during his absence the Marathas had tried to force the ford at Rāmghāt about 2 o'clock in the afternoon of the 27th, but they had been repulsed by the heavy guns and troops left there by the Nawab of Oudh under his eunuch Mahbub Ali Khan. This was the last Maratha raid into Rohilkhand, and just one year after it that province was for ever closed to them by being annexed to Oudh and thus brought under British protection.

The English brigade halted at Rāmghāt for 16 days more, and then marched north to a point opposite Anupshahar (30th April.) Before this the Maratha army had abandoned the Rāmghāt position on 28th March and retreated into the Doab, about 25 miles west of it. There was now an open rupture between Visāji and Tukoji, each of them blaming the other for this irreparable failure of Maratha enterprise in Hindustan after three years of effort (Feb. 1770—May 1773.) They lingered in the Etawa-Khurja region for some weeks, making preparations for their departure home. They buried all their heavy guns (the spoils of Pathargarh) near Etawa, and sent off much



of their booty ahead, to cross the Jamuna by a bridge of boats at Kālpi.* On 21st April, two wakils sent by the Marathas to treat for peace were introduced by Shujā to General Barker. Shujā satisfied the Marathas by promising that he would take written bonds for 15 lakhs from Hafiz Rahmat and for five lakhs from Ahmad Khan Bangash's son and thus discharge the war indemnity promised by the Afghans to the Marathas a year earlier. [DC.] But no agreement was made by the Ruhelas for paying any subsidy to the Nawab of Oudh for his armed assistance in the Rāmghāt campaign, over and above the forty lakhs promised to him in 1772.†

This arrangement having been made as the best of a bad job, the Maratha chiefs on 5th May dismissed Najaf Khan from Aligarh with gifts, a robe of honour, jewels and Rs. 26,000 in cash and a grant of 19 parganahs out of their fiefs in

* Capt. Macpherson writes: "15th April. News from the Maratha camp that for these two nights past they had had their horses saddled all night. Najaf Khan asked Tukoji if he intended to fight us; he replied that his men were much more inclined to plunder...18th. We are informed that the Marathas are very uneasy at their situation and that Visaji sent his Prime Minister Dado Malhar to Tukoji to accuse him of being the cause of commencing hostilities against the Wazir and English, which the other denied...(more quarrels between the two.)" [123-124.]

† For the Wazir's case, *CPC.* iv. 475, and Hafiz Rahmat's reply, 481. Bihari Lal explains why the Ruhelas failed to pay Shujā as promised (*I.H.Q.* 1936.)



that region. Zābita Khan received his *congee* from Visāji Krishna four days later. Then the Marathas themselves set out for the Deccan by way of Etawa and Kālpi. Najaf Khan, after a visit to General Barker at the English camp opposite Anupshahar (9th May), returned to Delhi on 20th May.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

**DOWNFALL OF THE JAT POWER,
1773—1776**

§ 1. *Ministerial changes at Delhi. Rise of Abdul Ahad: his early career and character.*

The return of Mirza Najaf Khan to Delhi after the Maratha failure in Rohilkhand (20th May 1773) was followed by a revolution at Court. A sovereign like Shah Alam II, with no strength of character, energy or even personal courage, was bound to pass his life under the tutelage of some cleverer brain or stronger will. His administration was directed by one favourite after another. Munir-ud-daulah had dominated the exiled Court at Allahabad; but his influence depended solely on his enjoying the trust of the English authorities of Bengal and securing the smooth payment of the annual tribute of 26 lakhs promised in return for the diwani of the eastern provinces—which was now the sole support of the Emperor's household and officers. When that tribute fell into arrears, Munir's advocacy of every policy favoured by the English began to be counted as a sin and his fall was completed by his open opposition to the migration of the Court to Delhi on which the Emperor had set his heart. Saif-ud-din Muhammad Khan Kashmiri, (entitled Saif-ul-mulk), now rose to high favour. He conducted the pact with the Marathas for the

restoration of the monarch to his capital, took delivery of Delhi fort for his absent master from the Maratha hands, and acted as the chief minister during the march from Allahabad. But a fortnight after the royal entry into Delhi he was supplanted by Hisām-ud-daulah, evidently because he had no administrative capacity and could not satisfy the Emperor's pressing need of money from the revenue but had spent all the collections in keeping together the army that formed the imperial escort to Delhi.

Hisām who had been the jealous rival of Munir-ud-daulah during the royal sojourn in Allahabad, achieved no better success in filling the Exchequer, and he was ruined by his pro-Maratha policy during the attack on Delhi in December 1772. The failure of the Marathas to divide the rich spoils of Rohilkhand equitably with the Emperor and even to maintain their military predominance in Hindustan, necessarily involved their partisans at Court in their discredit. Najaf Khan, who had advocated a directly opposite policy which the Emperor had rejected in favour of Hisām's, was now triumphantly vindicated, and Hisām fell entirely out of favour. Moreover, Najaf was a former *protege* and constant friend of the English, and his influence over them would be very useful in securing the restoration of the Bengal tribute of 26 lakhs which the Bengal Governors had stopped after the great famine of 1770. The cession of



Kora and Allahabad to the Marathas, brought about by Hisām, had antagonised the English and he stood condemned for this diplomatic false step. Now that the Marathas were happily gone out of Hindustan covered with failure and disgrace, Najaf Khan was the proper person to restore the broken friendship between the Emperor and the English. He was also the only general capable of recovering the imperial dominions and suspended tributes from the Jats and other upstart rebels, while Hisām was no soldier.

So, Najaf Khan on returning to Delhi was received in audience (20th May 1773) with the highest honours; and at his recommendation Abdul Ahad Khan was appointed deputy wazir two days later, *vice* Hisām-ud-daulah whose title of nobility was taken away and his name reduced to plain Hisām-ud-din. This Abdul Ahad Khan (now ennobled as Majd-ud-daulah Bahrām Jang) had at first been a servant of Najib-ud-daulah and posted at Delhi under Najib's representative in that city to act as a channel of communication with the Queen-mother and the Crown Prince who were living at the capital during Shah Alam's exile. He had acted as the bearer of these two august personages' message to the absent Emperor in September 1769 and also as Najib's envoy to the Marathas in the Doab in April 1770. After Najib's death he had borne Zābita Khan company and conveyed his new master's presents and

proposals to the Emperor on his way to Delhi (19 November 1771.) On the fall of Pathargarh and the flight of Zābita, he had come out of that fort and had received the Emperor's formal pardon for having been a rebel's follower (30th March 1772.) For a year after this he hung about the Court without employment, though his speech and manners charmed the Emperor. At last the supple Kashmiri won Najaf Khan over to his interests by vowing to be his faithful follower and supporter at Court ever afterwards and thus secured the Premiership (22nd May 1773.)*

Abdul Ahad was a courtier after the Emperor's heart, with the smooth polish, perfect suavity of temper and false bewitching tongue of a typical Kashmiri Muslim, and he soon grew into the best loved personal friend and private companion of Shah Alam. But he was no soldier, no ruler of men, and his natural weapons of duplicity and covert intrigue broke hopelessly down when coming in contact with the hard facts of life in that troubled and changeful world.

On 5th June 1773 Mirzā Najaf was appointed Second Paymaster General, the titular Mir

* *DC. Ibrat*. i. 228. *G. Ali* iii. 21-28. *Miskin* 288. *Muna Lal* 146. These dates are taken from the contemporary Persian sources and therefore the patent of nobility given to René Madec really belongs to the year 1774. (*Parbé* pp. 289-91, dates incorrect.)

CPC. ii. 178, 626, 987 (Saifuddin had incurred a debt of 12 lakhs for the Emperor's journey to Delhi.) *Styar*, iii. 85.



Bakhshi Zābita Khan being an absentee like the nominal wazir Shujā-ud-daulah whose actual functions were discharged by Abdul Ahad Khan as his deputy at Court. On the same day Hisām, who had been dismissed from this latter office, was thrown into prison, but Najaf Khan with his usual moderation and foresight got his fallen rival released, five days later, by pleading with the Emperor, took him to his own house and there set him to render account of his management of the royal treasury (Crownlands) during his year of chancellorship. The ex-minister compounded for the claims against him by paying six lakhs to the Emperor and three to Najaf Khan. Mahdi Quli Khan, who had oppressed and fleeced the Delhi people during Imād-ul-mulk's wazirship and had later flourished under the protection of Hisām, was thrown into prison on the downfall of his patron (14th June), and after a month of beating, was tortured to death by being chained to the leg of an elephant and dragged through the streets of Delhi (12 July.) [Muna Lal 148-149. *Ibrat*. i. 229, 243-244. DC.]

§ 2. *Mirza Najaf's new army; his military superiority.*

Secure, at least for a time, from the backbiting and intrigues of envious rivals, Mirzā Najaf set himself to raising a new army for the Emperor, with his usual energy and success. His reputation drew out of work veterans and ambitious

young recruits from all sides, and his task was rendered easier by the help of a number of very able and devoted lieutenants that he had gathered round himself, such as Najaf Quli Khan and Afrāsiyāb Khan (these two being popularly called his adopted sons) and Muhammad Beg Hamadāni, besides former Mughalia captains like Qilich Beg, Niyāz Beg, Mirzā Beg, Badal Beg, and our invaluable memoir-writer Tahmāsp Khan (who used the pen-name of *Miskin*.) Mulla Rahim-dād with 3,000 Ruhelas in a state of utter destitution,—without clothing on their backs, arms in their hands, or armour on their persons,—entered Najaf's service to avoid starvation. The country round Delhi, especially the Baluch colonies in Mewāt, was beaten for recruits and the response was prompt and ample. In a short time the assembled force exceeded 20,000 men.

The question now arose how to feed and equip them. The Treasury was empty. An attack upon the Jat Rajah, known to be the richest vassal in the north, was the only resource left, now that the attempt to squeeze Zābita Khan had failed. The vast new army if left unpaid would form a constant danger to the peace of Delhi, and therefore Abdul Ahad gave Najaf two lakhs of Rupees on condition of leading these men out on a Jat expedition. One lakh more was raised by Najaf's two lieutenants as a loan on their personal security. The new army was thus equipped and set out against Nawal Singh. It was agreed that



the territory and booty seized would be shared equally between the Emperor and his general. Najaf Khan was also appointed subahadar of the yet to be reconquered province of Agra in addition to his Deputy Paymastership.

His military superiority lay in his copious supply of artillery, rockets and smaller fire arms, six battalions of sepoy musketeers,—two of them trained by the English and the others organised and led by commandants who had previously seen service under Europeans,—his assemblage of the remnants of the old Badakhshis (all veterans familiar with Durrāni warfare) and a large body of desperate Ruhela soldiers who had been disbanded after Najib-ud-daulah's death and the downfall of his son. He had, besides, the benefit of the advice of very competent European generals, such as Major Polier, an expert military engineer highly praised by Hastings, in the campaign of January 1774, and René Madec and the Comte de Modave in the war of 1775-1776. Above all shone his own undoubted genius for war and diplomacy and power of controlling men.*

§ 3. *Causes of the decline of the Jat military power.*

Against such an adversary, the Jats were hopelessly outclassed. They had not adopted the

* Miskin 283. *Ibrat*. i. 229.



combined tactics and disciplined use of firearms which the Europeans had introduced into Indian warfare ; they had even lost the high level of efficiency in the indigenous style of fighting to which Suraj Mal had raised them. All their veteran captains were dead. Jawahir Singh's ruthless selfishness had destroyed most of their leading chiefs, and time had removed the rest. No younger men had risen to take the places of these. Their Rajah was a weak voluptuary, lacking even the brute courage of his ancestry. And his Government was torn by family dissensions, the factious opposition of his brothers and uncles, and the open defection of Balu Jat's sons. Of his European retainers, Madec had been seduced by the Emperor in October 1772 and Sombre was to be in May 1774.

Under Suraj Mal the Jat power had successfully defied the great Durrāni Shāh by a policy of pure defensive. But they now failed to play such a game by reason of Mirzā Najaf's rapidity of strokes, masterly use of the time factor, and sharp turning on strategic lines. The campaign of 1773-74 and that of 1775-76 ended in unmitigated disaster for the house that Suraj Mal had raised to supreme eminence in Hindustan. The murder of the Peshwa Narayan Rao on 30th August 1773 and the intestine and foreign wars in which the Puna Government was next involved, prevented any Maratha advance north of the Chambal for eleven years after it.



and thus kept the ring clear for the combat between the Delhi Government and its refractory Jat vassal.

§ 4. *Dān Shāh Jāt and Chandu Gujar defeated in the Doab, Sep. 1773.*

Najaf's invasion of the Jat homeland was preceded by a smaller trial of strength in the Doab* immediately south-east of Delhi (in the Bulandshahar district.) The armed preparations in Delhi during the monsoons had not escaped the Jat Rajah's notice. By his order his forces in the Doab, then commanded by Dān Shāh, the best general left to him, and Chandu Gujar the governor of Aligarh, advanced from their base at Dankaur and ravaged the imperial territory from Sikandrabad to Ghaziabad (1-2 September 1773.) At the arrival of this news, Najaf Khan despatched from Delhi a strong detachment of 6000 Mughalia horse (under Tāj Md. Baluch and Niyāz Beg) and two battalions of English-trained sepoy (under Rāmru commandant) with a good supply of guns and rockets (7th September.) When this force reached Shāhdara, the Jat raiders hurriedly fell back on their base, the imperialists giving chase and every day slaying their stragglers and capturing their camp property.

* Doab campaign.—DC. *Ibrat*. i. 213-214 (wrongly places in 1772.) G. Ali iii. 29-33. *Chahar Gulzar* 492 b-493a (full.) CPC. iv. 558.

Outside Dankaur, the Jats turned at bay in a strong position protected by pits and hillocks and offered battle (16th Sept.) "Chandu Gujar led a charge upon the imperial artillery. But the guns fired grape and the sepoy battalions delivered volleys from their muskets rank after rank with exact precision. The Jat light horse which had never expected this, were shot down in large numbers. Chandu Gujar, though wounded, broke into the sepoy ranks and was bayoneted," and the broken remnant of the Jat vanguard fled away. Meantime Dān Shāh had crossed the stream with a few thousand horsemen and fallen upon the imperial rearguard. Here a long and obstinate hand to hand fight took place, but at last the Jats were routed by a bold counter attack led by Tāj Md. Khan. Dān Shāh himself fled away wounded. Over 3,000 Jats perished in this campaign. Large quantities of spoils fell into the victors' hands, and that region was cleared of Jat authority. The detachment crossed back to the west bank of the Jamuna and joined Najaf.

§ 5. *Mirza Najaf invades Jat country ;
successful advance.*

The Mughal generalissimo had himself set out from Delhi on 24th September and entered his tents at Bārapula. He took very happy auspices for his projected campaign by capturing the mud fort of Maidāngarhi, which Suraj Mal