



15 miles south-east of Lalsot, arriving there on the 4th of June.

As soon as the invading army began its retreat, the Rajputs advanced from Sanganer and on the 10th of that month their Rajah occupied Madhogarh, 17 miles north-west of Lalsot. Two days later they pushed a strong detachment on to Daosa, thus blocking Sindhia's northern path of retreat, viâ Balahari and Dig, to Agra and Delhi, and menacing the kingdom of his ally the Rao Rajah of Macheri, which was thus laid utterly bare of defence.

The Jaipur Rajah having come out of his capital gave Sindhia the opportunity of a fight in the open for which he had been longing. The Rao Rajah gave assurances that by a bold dash on the now poorly guarded Kachhwa capital the Marathas could seize it or secure its evacuation by corrupting its garrison. For a fortnight after Muhammad Beg's defection the enemy took no vigorous offensive, but wasted their opportunity in idle talk while their slender money resources were quickly drained and a quarrel broke out with their Rathor allies about the promised war expenses. [PRC. i. 115, 118, 119.]

§ 3. *Fourth stage: Sindhia advances again, reaches Lalsot.*

Sindhia therefore determined to put a bold face on it. Giving up all ideas of retreat, he countermarched towards the enemy position,





arriving a few miles south of Lālsot (probably at Bhaiā kā Bāgh) on 15th June. On the same day the Rajput force at Dāosa pushed a detachment southwards to occupy Ramgarh, which is only 6 miles north-west of Lalsot, thus threatening to oppose the Maratha advance through the latter pass and to pin the invaders down to the dry circuitous route south of it for their communication with Agra.

But though Mahadji had boldly turned at bay, he was really not in a position to risk an action. There was constant and increasing desertion from his North Indian contingent owing to famine prices (wheat selling in his camp at six seers to the Rupee) and his long default in paying their salary. His own faithful Deccani troops cherished a rooted distrust of their North Indian allies and ever stood on the guard against any treacherous attack from that side of the camp. Every one said that on the day of action these Hindustanis would go over to the enemy and turn suddenly upon their professed comrades. Sindhia was therefore forced to put off an action and bide his time till he should be joined by the trusty detachments he had recalled to his aid. These were two: Khande Rao's division in Bundelkhand, consisting of 10,000 hard-bitten veterans and the two disciplined sepoy battalions of De Boigne with their excellent artillery,—and Ambaji Ingle's army, then posted in the Karnal district, nominally 15,000 strong with guns. The



latter was also expected to bring with himself a strong force of hired Sikh cavalry. Ambaji started from Patiala on 7th June but was greatly delayed on the way by heavy rain and local hostility, so that it was as late as the 16th of the next month when he could ride into Mahadji's camp, and that too after leaving his entire force straggling several days' march behind, near Kot-Putli. [PRC. i. 117, 122, 124, 129.]

Therefore, for a week after reaching Lalsot, Sindhia firmly held to his cautious resolve and kept his generals back from advancing to seek a conflict with the enemy. The Rajput army, in spite of the tall talk of their generals and the ignorant clamour of their rank and file, really dreaded a trial of strength with Sindhia. They had a salutary fear of his more modern and better served artillery and his fine sepoy battalions under French commandants. They therefore planned to neutralise these advantages of their enemy by delivering battle on a rainy day when gunpowder would be less effective against sword and lance. Or, as an alternative, five thousand Rathor horse, vowed to death, would deliver a wild onslaught on his guns, ride over their brethren mown down by the first discharge or two, and impetuously fall upon the gunners and cut them down before they could load again. The Marathas on their part were terrorised by the reports which their spies brought of the Rajput war-plan of keeping their main force in ambush in the deep ravines





which scored that terrain, and sending a small body onwards to engage the Marathas and then by a pretended flight decoy them into the *nālās*. Hence, Mahadji abandoned his first idea of surprising the immobile Rajput camp at night. He trusted to time for the speedy dissolution of the ill-knit Rajput confederacy ; he must fight a field action in which his superiority in artillery and disciplined musketeers would have full effect. [*Akhbarat.*]

§ 4. *Fifth stage: Sindhia advances to seek battle.*

At last, on 23rd June, when the junction of Khande Rao's force was expected on the morrow, Sindhia assumed the offensive. The strictest precaution and order were enforced by this grey veteran leader. His plan was that his main camp should remain behind, some miles south of Lalsot with the baggage guard ; Mahadji himself surrounded by 7,000 men and ten large guns, should proceed with light baggage four or five miles ahead of it ; Rana Khan Bhai with the main body of his army should advance three or four miles further from his master, while the vanguard of the army, led by Rayaji Patil and Shivaji Vital (Bapu) should be posted two miles in front of Rana Khan and scout for the enemy's approach. In every advance that was made, Rana Khan took up Rayaji's position of the previous evening and Mahadji similarly occupied



Rana Khan's deserted camping ground. This rule was methodically followed throughout the ensuing campaign.

After thus "keeping his powder dry," Mahadji turned to prayer. The eve of the momentous forward movement was spent in vigil and worship. Three hours before dawn he summoned his chosen generalissimo Rana Khan Bhai, washed and clothed him in pure new robes, made him prostrate himself before the idols, rubbed on his forehead the ashes of the *hom* sacrifice just performed, and sent him off invested with Sindhia's own sword and shield. [*Ibr.* iii. 11.] In the course of the next day, Rana Khan occupied the Lalsor pass which the Rajputs had evacuated a few days before by falling back on Ramgarh. On the 26th Khande Rao Hari rode into Sindhia's camp with 3,000 Deccani horse, De Boigne's two battalions 1300 strong, two thousand Naga monks and some three hundred foot of Rajdhar Gujar (the Rajah of Samthar.) Next morning this force was paraded before Mahadji and their muster taken, and the general sent forward to join Rana Khan. [*Ibr.* iii. 20.] On the 30th of the month Rana Khan advanced some three miles beyond the pass, encamping below the Jowana hill north-west of its end, probably at the modern village of Didwana. A wide plain lay between him and the fort of Ramgarh in the north. Sindhia, according to plan, moved up and occupied the Khan's old





post at the village of Lalsot, at the lower mouth of the pass.

§ 5. *Description of Lalsot and the theatre of war.*

It is necessary to take here a clear view of the theatre of these operations. Thirty miles south-east of the city of Jaipur stands the large village of Lalsot,\* near the end of a long chain of low hills and outcrops that runs north-eastwards for many miles up to the Banganga river (near the modern railway junction of Bandikui) and even beyond it. The entire northern and western sides of the Lalsot district are enclosed, as if held in the tentacles of a gigantic octopus, by countless ravines which roll down to the Morel river, a feeder of the mighty Banas. The eastern side is effectively blocked by the long diagonal chain of the Jawāna hills mentioned above. The south side is comparatively open, and through it runs the road to Kerauli (42 miles east of Lalsot) and Dholpur and Bharatpur, still further off. Lalsot village itself commands the southern mouth of a pass bearing its name, which leads, by a direct but difficult and wild path, to Daosa, 22 miles due north, where the traveller strikes the shortest and most frequented route between Jaipur and Agra. This road runs roughly parallel to the Banganga

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\* Survey of India, half inch map, sheet No. 54 B/NW.





river and has been followed by the modern railway.

Proceeding from Lalsot through the pass immediately north of it and skirting on his left the mass of hillocks known as *Lalsot-kā-Dungar*, the traveller arrives after three miles at the village of Didwana overlooked by two isolated peaks. Then the level country begins. Turning a little to his left from Didwana, he enters, across two narrow ravines, the wide plain of Rāngarh, named after a village and a fortalice standing four miles north-west of Didwāna.

From Rāngarh four miles further to the north-west the path strikes the Morel river at a very easy ford free from ravines and *nālās*, opposite the village and fort of Bidakhā. From Bidakhā the path is skirted by two *nālās* for a mile and thereafter the country stretching north-westwards is an almost unbroken plain, dotted with human habitations for six miles till Tungā village is reached. This Tungā was now the base of the main Rajput army that had come out to seek an encounter with the Southern invaders, —their Rajahs being encamped two miles behind at Madhogarh.

The battle of 28th July was fought in the plain between Tungā and Bidakhā, some two miles south-east of the former place and therefore fourteen miles from the village of Lālsot after which it is wrongly named. The advancing Marathas had their back to the Morel river





which they guarded by their recent conquest of Bidakhā fort, and their moving camp lay behind that river to the south-east, near Rāmgarh. Further to the south-east the long line was held by the troops guarding Mahadji and the light camps of his fighting generals, and last of all by his stationary base camp, two or three miles south of Lālsot village.

§ 6. *The rival armies' movements and plans during the month before the battle.*

The forward movement of Mahadji Sindhia's army was begun on 23rd June, but the decisive encounter which he was seeking did not take place till more than a month later. To this delay both sides contributed.\* Sindhia waited till he should be joined by the unaccountably slow Ambaji Ingulé and he also expected to see the Rajput coalition dissolve quickly. He knew that it is impossible to keep a large body of rustic clansmen together for a long time, so that the divergent elements assembled at Jaipur would quarrel and disperse to their homes if kept idle for a sufficiently long time. Nor would the mercenary Hindustani and Mughalia deserters remain loyal to their new employer when he failed to pay them punctually, and the cash resources of the Kachhwa State were very limited. Therefore he ordered Rānā Khan to advance

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\* PRC. i. 124 et seq. Akhbarat. DY. i. 202.





most cautiously, sending his artillery and disciplined musketeers ahead, and decline to be drawn into an engagement unless attacked, and every night fall back on his entrenched camp. During the day Mahadji, who had pushed on to Rana Khan's last encampment, would keep observing the country round, seated on a hillock, telescope in hand.

The Jaipur Rajah, on his part, repressed the ardour of his supporters for a fight, as he was waiting for the junction of helpers from Bikaner, Bundi, Khichiwara and other Rajput centres and particularly for a large body of hired Sindi musketeers who were fondly believed to prove more of a match for Mahadji's French-led sepoy battalions than the Rajput levies mostly armed with the sword and the spear. Nor was he without strong hopes of starving the invaders out, as he had set his vassals to raid the paths of Sindhia's grain supply and his Minas,—those expert hereditary thieves,—to rob the Maratha camp itself every night. This was being done with striking effect and success.

The Jaipur army had a mortal fear of Sindhia's superior artillery and trained battalions of musketeers, and shrank from a field action. Mahadji's salvation lay in the character of the Jaipur Rajah who had no brain, enterprise or even brute courage. As a British observer, unfriendly to Sindhia, remarked, "The Rajah of Jainagar appears to be a man deficient both in





spirit and conduct, . . . a young man immersed in pleasure and exceedingly deficient in judgment, if not also in courage.\* The bonds which unite the members of this confederacy are very weak, owing to the jealousy, distrust and even in some degree the opposition of interests, which may be discovered among them." [PRC. i. 117, 118.] The Jaipur Rajah's one policy was to avoid a decision by always putting things off to the future. In the daily skirmishes before the great battle, the fighting was done by the Rathors from Jodhpur and the troops of Hamadāni. That Mughal general angrily complained to the Rajah, "If such be the valour of your clansmen that throwing every affair on our shoulders they would stand aloof, then do you entrust all this business to me so that I shall see what I can do. If today [the 13th of July] the Rajputs had bravely exerted themselves, the war would have been decisively ended." The Rajah replied, "The war cannot be decided by skirmishing. On the day of the pitched battle you will witness the valour of the Rajputs." [*Akhbarat.*]

On 10th July a further advance was made by Rana Khan, who moved three miles nearer to the enemy, *i.e.*, towards the Morel river, while Mahadji stepped into his general's last camp, at

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\* Col. John Colins, who went to Jaipur to secure the person of the fugitive Wazir Ali (the murderer of Mr. Cherry at Benares), reported to the Gov. General about the Rajah in similar terms.





Didwana. Contact was now established between the rival outposts and henceforth skirmishes took place almost daily, but these were barren of any result. As Capt. Kirkpatrick reports, "The two armies, although they have somewhat approached each other, continue to be nearly as inactive as ever. Their operations are confined to the picking up of straggling cattle, the intercepting of small supplies of provisions, and the parading of their respective picquets opposite to one another, but always at such a distance as to preclude the effusion of much blood." [PRC. i. p. 204.]

On the 13th and 27th of July the fights between the patrols were of a severer character and the casualties were heavy, one sardar of the Deccan horse being slain at each, and the Rajput side getting the worst of it. There was no activity in the Maratha army for four days from the 15th of the month, when Mahadji's little daughter fell ill of anasarca. She died in the night of the 16th and her fond father was stricken down by grief; he told Rana Khan, "Act as you think fit for the next two or three days, but do not ask me, as I am not in a mood to reply to anything." [Akh. DY. i. 240.]

§ 7. *Decision to fight a pitched battle: Maratha advance across the Morel river.*

The mourning over, in the night of the 19th Mahadji received a written challenge from the Jaipur Rajah worded thus: "You are Regent





of the Empire and a veteran in war. Come out of the shelter of your guns into the open field, if you dare, and fight a pitched battle with the Rajputs. We shall see to whom God gives the victory." [*Akhbarat. PRC. i. p. 207.*] Sindhia called his generals together and told them, "If, after this, I make terms with the Jaipur Rajah without fighting one battle, I shall not be able to show my face in Hindustan. A man cannot live for ever. Let what will happen, happen." They objected saying that their soldiers would not fight unless their arrears were paid; that up to now they had fed their retainers by selling their own private property and equipment. He offered Rs. 20,000, which was refused as too little.\*

The two sides fixed the 21st for the pitched battle. But when that day dawned the tortoise refused to move, having been dissuaded by his astrologers. But Rana Khan, on his part, pushed on to Bidakha, on the Morel river, which blocked his road to the Jaipur camp, while his vanguard under Ambaji Ingle crossed that river and raided the villages beyond up to two miles of the enemy camp. On the arrival of Rānā Khan in full force (23rd July), the garrison of Bidākha agreed to capitulate with honour. But "when the garrison was coming out, a *pāgā* trooper laid his hand on a Rajput's wife; the Rajput slew

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\* Mahadji's army bill was Rs. 12½ lakhs a month, and he was already six months in default of payment.



the man, fighting began between the two sides, with the loss of 30 to 40 men altogether, and the garrison went back into their fortalice and renewed their opposition. Afterwards, Ram Sevak (the Rao Rajah's agent) conciliated them and evacuated the garhi under his protection." During the day the main Jaipur army made a half-hearted demonstration to save their brethren in Bidakha and then withdrew to their base. Next day there was no movement on either side owing to rain ; but Rana Khan dismantled the mudfort of Bidakha in order to remove that menace to his free crossing of the river.

Thereafter life in the Maratha camp became unbearable owing to the total stoppage of grain supply and the threatened mutiny of all sections of the army in exasperation at Mahadji's failure to pay their dues. Their starved horses were unable to carry any rider. His captains assembled in a council of war, cried out with one voice, "Better to fight and die than to perish from famine." Mahadji agreed to stake his all on one field fight and ordered five lakhs of Rupees to be paid to his soldiers ((25th July) in order to hearten them for the coming battle. A second challenge was received from the Jaipur Rajah on the 26th, "If you wish to seize my kingdom and will not accept tribute, why are you delaying to fight? Come on tomorrow ; I on my part, will be ready." The entire Maratha army was informed that their





master had taken up the enemy's gauntlet. [*Ibr.* iii. 21.]

After long prayers and *pujā* at midnight, Mahadji took two hours' sleep, then rose up at 4 o'clock in the morning, issued the orders of the day to his generals, ate the holy communion (*prasād*), and at break of day mounted his horse named *Desh-pujya* and rode forth to Rana Khan's camp, some two miles ahead of his own halting-place. The command for the impending battle had been assigned to Rānā Khān Bhāi, with whom Sindhia kept constant touch by a chain of swift couriers mounted on camels. Rana Khan marched about two miles ahead of his master with all his troops and sent his light division a mile further on. At each step that this army took to the front, Sindhia too advanced the same distance behind it, ascending successive hillocks and observing his troops through a field-glass and sending forth despatch-riders with his fresh instructions. In this methodical way, giving not the least chance for a surprise by the enemy or disorder in his own ranks, the veteran went forth to seek the long-looked-for decision at last.

### § 8. *Battle of Tungā.\**

Rana Khan forded the dry bed of the Morel at Bidākha, passed clear of the ravines that skirt

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\* Battle of Tungā.—*Akhbarat*=*PRC.* i. No. 135=*HP.* 503=*Aiti Patra* No. 261. *Ibr.* iii. 21-28. *DY.* i. 224. *PRC.* i. Nos. 136 & 137. *MD.* ii. 147, 150. *Chandra D.* ii. 71.



the two sides for a mile after the crossing and drew up his line in the plain beyond, a mile further off. First spread a loose screen of scouts for bringing news of the enemy's dispositions and movements. Then came the artillery, and behind it the infantry battalions which were to receive the first shock of the enemy's onset. In the third line were the Maratha horse, held in reserve for supporting any hard-pressed point in the front lines; and with this body stood Rana Khan himself. The last reserve, especially in guns and munitions, was kept under Mahadji himself, two miles behind the battlefront, on the further (*i.e.*, eastern) bank of the Morel. The Maratha artillery, on reaching the battle ground, threw up a line of earthworks before them by digging into the sandy soil and thus their front was protected by an entrenchment about a mile in length. Sindhia's army stretched west to east; their first line was formed by Khanderao Hari with De Boigne's two battalions, the Afghan mercenaries under Murtaza Khan Barech, Ghāzi Khan and other captains, and the Nāgā force of Moti-gir Gosain (Left); then came the disloyal and passive Hindustani sepoy of the old Najaf Khani service (Centre); and lastly the two brigades, each nominally six battalions strong, under the faithful Lesteneau and Le Vassoult, together with the Rajput levies of the Macheri Rajah (Right.)

The Jaipurians began their advance to the contest about the same time that they saw the





Maratha army moving towards them across the Morel. They, too, threw up earth works before their line of guns. On their side the brunt of the battle fell on the Rathor cavalry from Jodhpur (under Bhim Singh Bakhshi) who had vowed in the Rajah's presence not to return alive without victory, and the Mughalia deserters under Muhammad Beg Hamadani, these two generals respectively leading the right and left wings of their army. Their centre was evidently formed by the Kachhwas, who idly kept themselves back, exactly like Mahadji's centre composed of the Hindustanis.

After the usual light skirmishes between the rival patrols, the battle started about nine in the morning with a mutual cannonade which did more injury to the Marathas, because their guns, dragged from a more distant base and across a wide stony river-bed, were lighter than those of the Rajputs, whose camp was close behind. "As the Jaipur guns were larger their balls reached Sindhia's army, and many men and horses were killed; while Sindhia's shots being fired from smaller pieces, did not touch the enemy . . . . . The Jaipur balls were found to weigh from five to fourteen *seers*." On hearing of it, Mahadji ordered four large guns to be taken to Rana Khan.

A little before 11 o'clock the distant cannonade ceased, as if by mutual consent. Then a tumultuous shout was heard on the enemy's right, and through the smoke screen burst four





thousand Rathor horsemen at the gallop. These desperadoes, after taking a last lingering pull at their pipes of opium, drew their swords and charged the Maratha left with wild cries of "Hān! Hān! Kill them! Kill them!" The Maratha batteries ploughed through their dense ranks, opening bloody lanes at each discharge. But heedless of their comrades who fell, the survivors swept up to the Maratha guns, sabred the gunners, and still advancing fell upon the supporting infantry. Their terrific impact broke the first line of the Maratha left wing; hundreds of Nagas and Afghan troops were slain, and even De Boigne's sepoy after firing a few volleys were forced back in confusion along with their Maratha comrades. The cool Savoyard led his disordered ranks obliquely to the rear, formed the survivors again and reopened small arm fire, but "the Rathors heeded it not."

Rana Khan promptly sent up reinforcements of Maratha horse under Shivaji Vital (Bapu), Rayaji Patil and Khanderao Hari (Apa), who rallied the fugitives and renewed the combat. The bloodiest and most obstinate struggle of the day raged here. The situation at one time became so critical that the sons of Murtaza Khan Barech dismounted and fought on foot, which is the last expedient of Indian warriors when driven to bay. By this time the Rathor charge had spent all its force; no infantry came up from behind to support it and consolidate its gains; and when at





last more guns arrived against them from the Maratha reserve, the Rathors were driven back, but not before they had inflicted over 300 casualties, including Ghāzi Khan (brother of Murtaza Khan), Shambhuji Patil, and one jamadar slain and Malhar Rao Pawār, Chimmāji Khanderao (Shivaji Vital's diwan), the nephew of Shivaji Vital and one jamadar wounded. For this the Rajputs had to pay a heavy price, suffering over one thousand casualties, high officers like Shovārām Bhāndāri and Bhim Singh Bakhshi's brother-in-law, besides a score of lower officers being slain. [*DY.* i. 224. *MD.* ii. 147. *PRC.* i. 135, 137. *HP.* 503. *Akh.*]

But the greatest loss to the Rajput cause was the death of Muhammad Beg Hamadani, which broke the spine of their offensive power. This general, the most famous Muslim warrior then living in Northern India, had sent his retainers on to attack the Maratha right wing while he stood on an elephant in the shade of a tree watching them from behind. A cannon-ball struck the tree above and rebounding knocked him down to the ground tearing one side of his body open; then the branch broken by the shot fell down crushing him underneath. His advancing troops, ignorant of his fate, shook the Maratha right wing and penetrated to their baggage, but were repulsed by the Deccani horse hurried up from the reserve by Rana Khan.





The Rathors during the rest of the day made three or four advances as if to fall on the Maratha guns again, but found no opportunity of carrying out the design. The Mughalias, deprived of their chief, did not stir again. After repulsing the first two enemy attacks, Sindhia's army stood on the defensive, the Maratha portion of it quaking in fear lest at the first successful break through by the Rajputs their treacherous Hindustani comrades should join the enemy and turn their guns upon Mahadji's own men! But the traitors got no opportunity for doing so, thanks to the successful defence by Rayaji Patil and others. [HP. 503.] In fact, after the first hour's close tussle, the moves of the Rajputs became spasmodic and lacked vigour; the Maratha line held firmly, their men breathed freely, their wounded were transported to the rear tents in the *palkis* which had been promptly sent up by the considerate and ever-watchful Mahadji, and their munition supply was replenished by the same alert leader. But there was no further advance on the Maratha side, partly because Hamadani's death was not known to them until the night, and partly because it began to rain in the afternoon, making that sandy plain difficult for artillery movement, and the Marathas were afraid of the ravines in front, the on-coming darkness and the lack of wells in that tract. So, each side fell back to its camp and resorted to random firing till an hour after sunset in order to guard against a surprise attack in the





darkness. Thus the battle of Tunga,—miscalled that of Lalsot,—“though sanguinary, had no decisive result.” [De Boigne, *Carriere*, p. 68.]

§ 9. *Criticism of the Lālsot campaign.*

The battle of Tunga has been universally acclaimed by the Rajputs as “an entire victory.” Tactically it has no right to that name: the Rajputs delivered successive charges on the Maratha force in the field and failed to dislodge them; all their attacks were repulsed, and at the end of the day each side returned to its camp in the rear, as was the usual practice. The day after the battle the Maratha army reappeared on the same field, and even advanced up to gunshot of the Jaipur camp, but none on the opposite side ventured to stir out of their shelter. That is not the sign of a victory. Nor could the Rajputs boast of having taken a single Maratha gun, and their own casualty list was much heavier than that of the Marathas.

And yet it was not a victory for Mahadji either. He had failed to crush the enemy in the field, or to rout them out of their camp. He had not captured any enemy gun. Therefore his offensive must be adjudged a failure. If he was forced to beat a hurried but marvellously well-conducted and safe retreat four days after the battle, it was due not to the threats of the enemy,, but to treachery and dissension in his own ranks and the utter failure of his provisions. Not a



single Rajput general barred his retreat or appeared near enough to exchange blows with his rearguard. The Maratha despatch-writers and Mahadji himself boasted that on the field his army had been victorious. That in one sense they had been; but the impartial historian must say that, as at Sheriffmuir, so here too "none wan."

Considered in its strategy, the Lalsot campaign as a whole was a failure for Mahadji; and the failure was due to his lack of a single clear objective steadily pursued, and his blunder in concentrating every available soldier for the field fight, which left his line of communication with Kerauli fatally unprotected and made it impossible for him to spare an adequate escort for the vitally necessary grain convoys. He was truly starved out of Rajputana. For this failure he alone was to blame. He had begun the campaign in the expectation that time was on his side and that the Rajput confederacy would automatically break up if he kept facing it long enough. But such a waiting game presupposed that during that interval of inaction the food supply of his own camp would be assured and his communications with his base near Agra kept open. He had no doubt of the result in an actual clash of arms with the raw feudal levies opposed to him, but how was he to meet his incomparably larger army bill and keep up his munition supply in that distant and backward country? On this point he made a miscalculation and he paid the





price of his mistake by one full year of loss of power and fame. Indeed, his clearness of vision, unfailing sense of reality and practical skill seem to have deserted him from the commencement of May 1787, otherwise how could such a veteran leader forget that a modern army marches on its stomach?

§ 10. *Mutiny of Sindhia's Hindustani troops ;  
his critical position.*

On the day of the battle Mahadji Sindhia was up and doing for twenty-one hours without a respite, and it was only at one o'clock of the next morning, after all his troops had come back to their respective positions and his generals had reported that all was quiet on the front, that he could lay his head down to sleep. Day-light brought no relief to the anxieties of the chieftain, but rather added to them. True, there was no fighting on that day (the 29th of July) ; his army under Rana Khan marched in full equipment to yesterday's battlefield and even two miles further, to the edge of the Jaipur camp ; but the Rajputs did not venture to take up the challenge by coming out of their trenches, they merely stood on the defensive. In the evening a letter was received from the Kachhwa Rajah begging for a two days' truce for the funeral of Muhammad Beg Hamadāni and other slain warriors and promising to be ready for fight on the 31st.



But within Mahadji's own camp the situation now became intolerable. After the battle of Tungā with its heavy casualties in men and horses, his unpaid and starving soldiery could no longer be kept in hand. He had distributed three camel-loads of Rupees and some badges of honour among them as reward, besides Rs. 25,000 for buying sweetmeats. But such a small sum when divided among that vast horde was a mockery,—each soldier getting only the price of two days' rations and no part of his pay at all. All the commandants came to Sindhia and pointed out that it was impossible to keep their men with the colours unless they were paid their arrears. But Sindhia had not the necessary money with him, and would not part with what little he had.

The inevitable outburst came on the 30th. That day news arrived that a grain convoy of 6,000 pack-oxen and 700 camels coming from the Kerauli side *vid* Khush-hal-garh had been cut off by the Rajputs owing to the negligence and cowardice of the escort, a thousand Deccani horse and foot. The Jaipur Rajah's Dāi-bhāi (wet nurse's son) blocked the eastern road from Khush-hal-garh, while Rodā Rām Khawās closed the southern route from Ranthambhor. The coming of provisions to Mahadji's camp now totally ceased. "A Rupee could not buy even four lbs. of flour or six lbs. of *dāl*. All the troops, especially the sepoy battalions, clamoured





for their pay. Mons. Lesteneau came to Mahadji and reported that the Mughalia troops who had previously gone over to the Jaipur side were seducing his sepoy by promising to pay up their dues from the Jaipur treasury. Mahadji at first did not pay heed to his words." [*Ibr.* iii. 26.]

But the matter soon passed out of his hands. All the trained sepoy battalions took up arms, placed their officers under arrest, and with guns limbered up threatened to march on Mahadji's tent and extort their dues by force. Rana Khan advised a prompt settlement of their claims, but Sindhia replied, "If I pay the salary of the Telingas today, then the Hindustanis tomorrow and the Deccani horse the next day will ask for their dues. Six\* lakhs is what their monthly salary amounts to." But more alarming news came from the Jaipur camp and at last Sindhia bowed to necessity. He offered two months' pay; but it was now too late. The sepoy and gunners replied that their salary was due for eight months and flour was selling at four seers to the Rupee, so that they were too weak from fasting to hold their muskets; that they must be paid all their arrear dues in full and for the future four annas a day in cash, or else they would go over to the Jaipur Rajah. Throughout the 30th and the forenoon of the next day the tumult raged unabated in his camp. Sindhia

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\* *Akh.* SJ. ms. 47, has "sixty lakhs per mensem," evidently a copyist's error for "six lakhs."



was utterly distracted ; all his attempts to placate the soldiery, even by making ~~half~~ security for his good faith, failed. The ~~exaggerated~~ sepoy's abused and sent back his peace envoys. They refused the jewels that he offered, saying that they could not feed on gems, but wanted cash. Some regiments, however, accepted part payment, such as the gunners (Rs. 2,900), Lesteneau's battalions (Rs. 1,000) and Murtaza Khan's sons (Rs. 10,000.) [*Akh.* 47.]

But one body of 7,000 men obstinately refused. They marched off at 3 o'clock in the afternoon of the 31st with all their muskets, 125 pieces of artillery, and all their munition carts, —forming squares and placing their baggage in the centre. When they reached the bank of the Morel and halted, Ismail Beg and Malik Md. Khan advanced from the Jaipur army, welcomed them, paid Rs. 30,000 down and promised one lakh more in two days' time, and led them across the river to the Rajah's camp. True, Mahadji thus lost only 7,000 sepoy musketeers and artilleryists, while more than that number of trained Hindustani soldiers still remained under his banners through the personal influence of Lesteneau, Levassoult and Jean Baptiste de la Fontaine. But in the council of war held that evening, all his generals told Sindhia that in future no Hindustani soldier could be trusted and that in such circumstances he must avoid a battle by all means, lest during the engagement





with the enemy. Intense fighting should break out between the two sections of his army and "the result would be another Panipat." Mahadji decided to wait and see. [HP. 503.]

Shortly after nightfall a loud report of all the guns was heard to proceed from the deserters' camp. The hearts of the Marathas were chilled with the fear that these men were coming with their Rajput allies to deliver a night attack. Mahadji himself rode immediately to the front to reconnoitre, but his spies soon brought the reassuring news that the noise was that of a salute fired by the deserters in honour of the Rajah of Jaipur who had paid them a visit.

What was Mahadji to do now? An attack by the combined forces of the Rajputs, the Mughalias and the recently deserted sepoys with their superior artillery and overflowing munition-chests, was reasonably expected next morning. Could he meet it with his depleted and partly disloyal forces? All his generals agreed that resistance was hopeless; "the time resembles that of Panipat. If the enemy advance we are sure to perish. They have been emboldened, our own men have been correspondingly disheartened; the paltans and Mughalia troops still with us are unreliable. The Deccani horse in this army is small in number. Grain is selling at four seers to the Rupee, and no provision is coming from outside. Many of our horses have perished, and those that remain have no strength left in





them. On the strength of what shall we fight?" [Ibr. iii. 19. HP. 503. Akh. PRC. i.] Hence a retreat was decided upon.

§ 11. *The retreat from Lalsot, 1-9 Aug. 1787.*

Three hours before the dawn of 1st August, the retreat began,\* in the same well-planned and orderly manner as during the advance to Tungā, but with the positions reversed: the vanguard under Rānā Khan now became the rearguard; and the main baggage camp with the women and other impedimenta turned its face round and became the front portion of the moving army; Mahadji, as usual, commanded the middle of this long line, keeping constant touch with all the divisions and rendering support and restoring order wherever the need for it arose. If his late march to the enemy's encampment, conducted for successive days without any accident or loss, had been a masterly act of military genius, his present success in leading a dispirited army back to safety from the face of a superior and exultant enemy must excite our highest admiration for his cool calculating generalship, his eternal vigilance and his tireless exertion under appalling difficulties. Leaving the Ramgarh plain on the 1st of August,

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\* Mahadji's retreat from Lalsot.—*Akhbarat*, SJ. ms. (best and fullest), 51-73. PRC. i. 137,, 142-144, 151-156. HP. 503. Muna Lal (present), 310-311. Ibr. iii. 31-33.





he grimly held on to his purpose, declined to be drawn into side engagements, and by making long marches daily, arrived in safety near Dig on the 8th day. No other Indian leader of that age could have accomplished such a feat.

This retreat was a movement of unspeakable terror, privation and daily alarms to the rank and file of his army. Throughout the ten days following the battle of Tungā, the phantom of Pānipat kept haunting the memory of every Deccani in his camp. But if Lālsot did not prove a second Pānipat, it was because Mahadji Sindhia was no Sadāshiv Rāo Bhāu and he was better served than that hero of the Chitpavan tragedy.

It was still three hours to day-break on the 1st of August when Mahadji sent off camel riders to his baggage camp, south of Lālsot village, some eight miles behind the battle front, to warn the women, transport officers and guards there to pack up and begin their march immediately, so as to leave the road unencumbered for the main army coming up from behind. In his own camp near Rāngarh the news spread quickly that a retreat had been ordered, and the soldiers and camp followers started in feverish haste to make preparations for moving off. Mahadji and Rānā Khan remained behind to stem any Rajput attack and sent the field camp and artillery on towards the base under escort of the light division, after burning some tumbrils which had stuck fast in the



mud and, abandoning a good deal of baggage for lack of transport\*

When the light division joined the base camp, it was almost dawn, and a busy and confused scene of packing, clamouring and running about for transport opened at once. In the midst of it, a powder chest caught fire, evidently through accident, though a Maratha news-writer reported it as a wilful act of treachery by a Hindustani sepoy. The explosion caused the blaze and roar of a gun fire, killing and wounding ten men and some bullocks. The people in the distant parts of that vast encampment, on hearing the report, shouted out that the North Indian battalions still with Sindhia had turned their guns on their southern comrades. They began to flee in a panic; those whose property was already loaded took it with themselves, those who were not ready fled away for bare life abandoning their baggage. A wild rumour was spread by the fugitives that a disastrous battle had begun and that Mahadji

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\* Sindhia kept a body of men posted in the pass of Lalsot. Seventeen guns, 10 to 12 thousand horse and the battalions of De Boigne and Lesteneau were left with Rana Khan and Ambaji for guarding the rear. He himself mounted a horse and marched to the rear at three hours before dawn. In the morning he stood on the Dungan [of Lalsot] when spies reported that the Jaipur army had come out for fighting, but Rana Khan, with his troops in battle formation, was retreating step by step. After coming three *kos* away, he halted and swore, 'If I live I shall reduce Jainagar and Jodhpur to dust.' [Akh. SJ. ms. 52-53.]





himself had been slain. Seizing this opportunity, the camp ruffians and licensed Pindharies looted one section of the bazar and the area of Afrasiyab Khan's widow's halting place.

But two hours later, Mahadji himself arrived on the scene. He stopped there for some hours, quickly restored order, and "loading his cooking pots and carpets (abandoned by their bearers) on the camels of his camel-swivel guns, he ordered his soldiers to take as much of the general camp property as they could personally carry and collect and set fire to the rest. . . . The tents also were burnt." [HP. 503.] Then marching steadily on and keeping strict control over the middle division of his army, he reached two miles beyond Piplāi at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, after a strenuous march of 24 miles for himself and 32 miles for his rearmost division, which was brought up in admirable order by Rana Khan, retreating slowly in battle formation with loaded artillery for repelling any enemy attack, and reached the halting ground two hours after dusk without the least loss. The enemy durst not molest its march.

Next day a serious question arose. News came that the fort of Khush-hal-garh, ahead of them and midway on the road to the friendly State of Kerauli, had been taken by the Jaipur Raja's foster-brother. The Maratha collector posted there had fled away abandoning the two guns, carpets and other stores that Sindhia had



deposited, in it, and the enemy now dominated the road to this stronghold. Mahadji, therefore, swerved to the left, *i.e.*, north-eastwards, making Dig his objective. The Rajputs occupied Lalsot and its hill and even reached Piplai the day after the Marathas had left it, but advanced no further, though rumours used to rise daily in the Maratha camp that they were coming. By way of Bāmniwās, Sakrauda, Bhasāwar, and Pathenā, he reached Thun, 14 miles south-west of Dig on the 8th of the month and finally moved on to Siswārā (eight miles nearer to Dig) on the 11th, where he halted in order to gain breathing time and rearrange his affairs.\*

His movement towards Dig, instead of towards his own dominion of Gwalior south of the Chambal, was prompted by his wish to safeguard his family which had been left behind in Dig and his son-in-law, Ladoji Deshmukh, who was stationed at Delhi as his deputy. On the 10th his wife and children joined him at Thun, and next day they departed for Gwalior with a

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\* Mahadji's route—Starts from plain of Ramgarh,—Bamniwas, 4 m. n. of Piplai (1 Aug.)—Wazirpur, 20 m. e. of Bamniwas and 8 m. e. of Udai (2nd)—Sakrauda, 12 m. n. e. of Wazirpur and 2 m. s.w. of Hindaun (3rd)—Talchiri, 12 m. n. of Hindaun (4th)—Bhaswar, 10 m. n. of Talchiri (5th)—Pathena, 7 m. n. of Bhaswar and 26 m. s.w. of Dig (6th)—Khera Medah, 12 m. n. of Pathena (7th)—Thun, 14 m. s.w. of Dig (8th)—Siswara, 8 m. n. e. of Thun (11th) *Akh. SJ.ms. and PRC. i.*





detachment under Apa Khande Rao, accompanied by all the artillery except twelve pieces, the heavy baggage of his army and the females of all the Deccani commanders and troops present in the North. Thus lightening himself, Mahadji turned to his work as a soldier for restoring his power and prestige which had now suffered a total eclipse.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI

## THE ECLIPSE OF MAHADJI SINDHIA

§ 1. *Course of events during Mahadji's loss of the Regency of the Empire.*

When Muhammad Beg Hamadāni with his powerful army joined the enemies of Mahadji Sindhia (on 25th May, 1787) and that Maratha chief beat a hurried retreat from Jaipur territory, the news of it at once shivered his newly built and ill-knit dominion into a hundred fragments. A world of enemies raised their heads against him;—rivals for his position as imperial Regent, heirs of old houses whom he had dispossessed, Hindustani officers whose vast alienations of Crownlands (worth 70 lakhs of Rupees a year) he had taken back, greedy old courtiers whose perquisites and corrupt influence he had curbed, and the entire North Indian Muslim society to whom the regency of a Hindu was an abomination.

The future at this time looked utterly dark and menacing to him. But amidst the distraction caused by reverses on every side and the total absence of friends and resources in every direction in which he cast his eyes, Mahadji always nursed in his heart the two objects of keeping the regency of the Empire and of punishing the Jaipur and Jodhpur Rajahs for the damage done





to his prestige. To one determination he held firmly throughout: he would not cut his losses and retire to the south, abandoning his north Indian ambitions altogether and contenting himself with the district of Gwalior which he had won from the Gohad chief four years earlier. He was a strong-willed reserved man, whose inner mind even his four intimate counsellors could not correctly fathom; he gave his ear to them but not his tongue. Hence the amazing reports sent off by the professional news-writers in his camp, that Mahadji was utterly bewildered and changing his mind from day to day. Not so; he was not a man to wear his heart upon his sleeve for the chattering jays of the hand-written press to peck at.

In the light of the large mass of minute contemporary records and almost day to day letters from himself, his officers and observers near him preserved in the Marathi, Persian and English languages, it is now possible to see a clear thoughtful planning and a sustained consistency in his policy, with the necessary variety and flexibility in the choice of means from the day of his retreat from Lalsot to the day fourteen months later when Delhi was reoccupied in his name. A sketch of this period, if given here in outline, will save the reader from the distraction of details and the cross-currents of four or five episodal events that filled the interval.



The eclipse of Mahadji Sindhia began at the end of May 1787 when he hurried back from the Jaipur kingdom towards his base at Dig, and it was completed on the 1st of August when he retreated from Lalsot. The tide turned decisively in his favour after 17th June 1788, when under the walls of Agra he destroyed Ismail Beg's army as a fighting force. Although he took three months and a half more to re-occupy Delhi, yet after that 17th of June all people knew that Sindhia had become master again and they hastened to make terms with him. But alas! during this interval of fifteen weeks the Delhi royal family was laid in the dust and the veil of divinity that hedged them in was torn asunder by the rude hands of Afghan spoilers. It was a tragedy of even greater poignancy than the downfall of the French monarchy five years later.

When Sindhia turned his back on Lalsot his first care was to reach a place of safety and withdraw his family and those of his Deccani officers from Dig and then send them home. Along with the women he removed to Gwalior his artillery, camp and heavy baggage, and he also disbanded his Hindustani troops and trained sepoy battalions (except a few). Thus lightening himself, he turned aside to the west, in order to interpose between the advancing Rajput army now strengthened by the adhesion of the Mughalia troops and the city of Delhi on the east. His aim was to preserve contact with the imperial capital





and safeguard his son-in-law Lādoji Deshmukh Shitolé who represented him at Court as Deputy Regent. But the matter was taken out of his hands by the impetuosity of Ghulām Qādir and the cowardice of Lādoji. At the approach of this Ruhela chief, Sindhia's agents fled away from Delhi (24th August) and Ghulām Qādir was admitted to the presence and was appointed Mir Bakhshi and Regent (*vice* Sindhia) by the frightened Sovereign (5th September.) Before this dismissal, Mahadji had decided to support his sole ally the Rao Rajah of Macheri by his presence and to strengthen himself by that Rajah's resources as the only means of preventing a Jaipur advance to Delhi. With the loyal and unstinted aid of the Rao Rajah, he lived at Alwar from 24th August to 2nd November, and thereafter came to Rewāri, at the urgent call of the Emperor, whose palace Ghulām Qādir had begun to bombard.

During this period Sindhia suffered heavy losses: Agra city fell to Ismail Beg on 16th September, Ajmer city to the Jodhpur Rajah on 27th August, the whole of the Doab was lost, and only the fort of Aligarh held out, to fall eventually on the 17th of February next year. While Ismail Beg's siege of Agra fort was going on, a further threat to Sindhia's power appeared in the person of Prince Jawān Bakht (Jahāndār Shāh) who came out of his asylum at Benares and reached Agra at the beginning of November. But he had no men





or money, the English would not and the Nawab of Oudh could not help him in a war against Sindhia; and his own haughty irascible character, even more than the clash between their personal ambitions, made him quarrel with Ismail Beg, and the baffled heir to the throne at last went back to British territory (arriving at Farrukhabad about 23rd Feb. 1788). His adventure achieved no other result than to give a good fright to Sindhia and help in pushing that chief beyond the Chambal.

From the Rewāri district Mahadji made a vain attempt to bring the Emperor over to his own side by sending Ambāji Ingle on an embassy to Delhi (14th Nov.) and another equally futile effort to raise Ismail Beg's siege of Agra (15-18 Dec.) At last, abandoning all field operations north of the Chambal, Mahadji retired beyond that river (20th Dec.) and encamped on the south bank of the Kumāri brook, 28 miles north of his stronghold of Gwalior. He had now no Maratha force in the north, except those shut up in Agra and Aligarh.

During the three months of his total exclusion from the north (20 Dec.—16 March 1788), Mahadji wisely devoted his resources to crushing the rebels and raiders in Malwa and the Rajput border land and thus set his hands free for taking a fresh initiative in the north. During this period also the Emperor led an expedition to Rewāri, met the Jaipur Rajah (3 Feb.), fought the





refractory Najaf Quli Khan (12 March) and came back to Delhi on 23rd March after patching up a nominal peace with that powerful rebel. Early in April next began the new Maratha offensive in Hindustan. Fresh troops having come from the Deccan homeland, Rānā Khan was sent with them across the Chambal (4 April) and joined his constant ally, Ranjit Singh the Jat Rajah of Bharatpur.

By admirably planned tactics and exactly timed movements, this general gave Ismail Beg the slip, surprised the siege trenches before Agra, and provisioned the fort with lightning rapidity (9 April). While Rānā Khan hovered round Agra, cutting off Ismail's provisions in spite of many reverses in open actions, Devji Golé and Rayaji Patil recovered the Mathura district and then crossed into the Doab, convulsed Ghulām Qādir's dominions there, and stopped the coming of provisions to the besiegers of Agra. This strategy enforced a separation between Ismail and his ally Ghulām Qādir, as the latter hurried back from Agra to the Doab to defend his own estates; and then Rānā Khan, instantly seizing the isolation and weakness of Ismail Beg, inflicted a decisive defeat on him (17th June.) The country west of the Jamuna was now cleared of Sindhia's enemies, and that Chieftain himself advanced from the Gwalior side to Mathura (4th July.) But he could not recover Delhi till three months afterwards, during which interval Ghulām Qādir





sacked Delhi and blinded the Emperor. Sindhia's agents effected the unhappy sovereign's restoration (the *khutba* being read in Shah Alam's name again on 17th October 1788), and Ghulām Qādir was captured on 18th December and done to death in March next. There was none left now to dispute Sindhia's supremacy.

The main incidents of these fourteen months were four, namely the obstinate struggle of Mahadji with Ismail Beg Hamadāni, the meteoric rise and fall of Ghulām Qādir Ruhela, Shah Alam's campaign against the rebel Najaf Quli Khan, and the adventure of Prince Jawan Bakht which ended in utter futility. The activities of the Rajput Rajahs, the two Gosain brothers, and other petty adversaries counted only as minor episodes.

§ 2. *Mahadji Sindhia's changes of policy and measures during the eclipse of his power: estimate of his forces, money and allies.*

Having thus briefly surveyed the course of events during Mahadji Sindhia's loss of control over northern affairs, we shall study his policy and resources during the same troubled period. First of all, from his halting place near Dig he sent off to Malwa the families of his Deccani officers along with his own wives and children and all his heavy artillery, tents and surplus baggage. At the same time he bade his camp-followers and other non-





combatants go away wherever they could find their bread, so that quite two-thirds of this vast horde left him [on 11th August. *Akh. SJ. ms 74.*] As for his troops he firmly refused to throw away his good money on the faithless Hindustanis still with him, though he owed them nearly a year's pay; he would spend the money more usefully on the fresh and reliable troops expected from the Deccan. The Hindustanis were offered a small daily subsistence, but the discharge of their arrears was made conditional upon the conquest of Jaipur! Their captains were offered *jāgirs* instead of money, in full clearance of their dues, but only in the Doab tracts of which he had been recently robbed and which they must reconquer from the usurpers. In fact Mahadji was deliberately working for the departure of these disloyal and useless troops from his army in disgust at his insolvency and the famine prices then raging; he said that their covert treason and passive conduct had led to the failure of his *Lālsot* campaign, and he would therefore pay cash to none but the Deccanis. [*Akh.*]

But he also felt that the Deccani troops then with him, though thoroughly loyal, had grown stale by eight years' continuous absence from home and campaigning in north India ever since he had come to Malwa in 1780 to oppose Col. Camac, and that no great work could be got out of them; for that he must wait for the arrival of fresh troops from Maharashtra. For such fresh





and faithful instruments he had written pressingly to the Peshwa, and indeed to every possible helper, including small men like Beni Hazuri, Dhokal Singh and others who were asked to send even a thousand men each. And he was daily scanning the southern horizon for signs of the approach of these reinforcements, like India's thirsty bird looking out for the rain cloud, as a Marathi letter poetically expresses it.

But where he had most right to hope, he was most cruelly disappointed. The wise young Peshwa Madhav Rao II felt a generous impulse to support his hard-pressed general in the north and proposed to send a large army there under Hari Pant Phadké, the best Maratha general then in the south. But *his* Peshwa, the cold calculating Nana Fadnis, whispered that Phadké would never consent to serve under Sindhia. Chitpavan Brahmanic pride would not stoop to taking orders from a man of the Maraté caste. The Puna Government had neither the will nor the money necessary for backing Mahadji in his hour of need. Ali Bahadur, an illegitimate grandson of Baji Rao I, was then chosen to lead the proposed reinforcements, which Tukoji Holkar was ordered to join on the way. The man was utterly incompetent and had no heart for his work. Nor, indeed, had any of the Puna soldiers. They remembered how, 28 years before, a gallant army had been sent forth from Maharashtra to retrieve the disaster to a Sindhia in the north and that it had





only fed the vultures and jackals on Panipat's plain, and here was a call from another Sindhia in distress in the same far-off land of evil omen. Their captains were in no greater hurry to go than their politicians were to send them. Ali Bahadur took the auspices for his march by entering his campaigning tents on 8th September, 1787, but he joined Sindhia fully fourteen months later (6th Nov. 1788), at a time when Sindhia had made himself master again unaided by a single horseman in the Peshwa's pay.\* The other Puna agent, Tukoji Holkar, proved a positive hindrance and intrigued against Mahadji everywhere on the way.

Equally complete, but far more straightforward and prompt, was the disappointment that Sindhia met with in his appeal for armed aid to the English, his allies by the treaty of Salbye. Lord Cornwallis clearly informed him of the Court of Directors' order to the Governor General to observe strict neutrality in the quarrels of the native Powers.

But a body of new Maratha troops which had been raised for him by his devoted agents at Jāmbgāon (about 5,000 men) did join him near Gwalior in March 1788 and these helped to turn

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\* *HP.* 509. *Sat.* i. 126. The causes of the delay at Puna, in *Sat.* i. 126 and also *PRC.* i. 203, 204 and ii.





the scale against his Mughalia enemies.\* De Boigne's two battalions remained faithful and rendered him the most effective service in this period of trial. And so also, but in a lesser degree and less consistently, did Lesteneau with his two battalions, except for the six months (middle of September 1787 to middle of March 1788) during which the latter mercenary parted from Sindhia on failing to obtain pay for his men.

After the retreat from Lalsot, as throughout the preceding campaign, Mahadji's worst troubles were caused by his want of money. He had exhausted his cash and credit alike, and his seemingly vast dominions in Hindustan were yielding no revenue. This insolvency subjected him to daily humiliations after the retreat from Lalsot. On 14th August, "His funds being exhausted, when the envoys of his soldiers became most insistent for payment, he placed the ornaments of his wives before his court and said, 'This is the *jāidād* that I have.' Rana Khan remarked, 'What will this quantity amount to?'" [Akh. SJ. ms. 83.]

But money did gradually reach Sindhia. "His courtiers raised a loan of thirteen lakhs on their personal security for his use." Rānā Khān and other sardars placed their gold and silver

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\* On 8th Feb. 1788, Palmer wrote from Sindhia's camp, "The troops which he ordered from Burhanpur for the protection of Malwa, have totally defeated the Udaipurians. [PRC. i. 202.]





ware at his feet, and these were sent to Vrindāvan to be melted into coins. [August 1737. *Akh. SJ. ms. 83, 86.*] So also was the silver plate in Mahadji's palace of Ujjain which was converted into seven lakhs of Rupees. [*MD. ii. 154*; earlier remittance from Ujjain, in Oct. *Akh. 243.*] The Alwar Rajah furnished seven lakhs (in August 1787),—one lakh being advanced by himself and six lakhs from the local bankers. [*Akh. 116.*] Sindhia had already run into heavy debt to Ahalyā Bāi Holkar during his campaigns in Gohad, and he durst not ask her for any large loan now. Nānā Fadnis by his personal influence induced the Puna bankers to promise Sindhia a loan of five lakhs, but refused another five lakhs which Mahadji had begged from the Peshwa's Government as a subsidy; and even this bankers' loan did not reach Sindhia by the end of October. [*HP. 509.*]

In January 1788, however, after his vigorous suppression of disorder in Malwa, his actual revenue collection increased to 12 lakhs or more. [*PRC. i. 196, 201.*] Through his agent at Jāmbgāon he received a loan from the Deccan early in March next. [*HP. 516.*]

Thus in the course of time Mahadji gained financial relief, and in consequence of it a decisive increase of his military strength. But at first he was almost driven mad by bankruptcy and the crowding of enemies on all sides. Of



these enemies the most harmful, because of their large forces and strong will, were Ismail Beg Hamadāni at the head of the old Mughalia party and Ghulām Qādir Khan (the son of Zābita Khan) at the head of a Ruhela army assembled from Ghausgarh and Rohilkhand alike. A third enemy, Najaf Quli Khan, contended himself with carving out a principality for himself in the Rewari-Narnol-Kanud region at the expense of the Rao Rajah, but his indolent pleasure-loving character rendered the danger from him to Sindhia's power almost negligible. The Jaipur Rajah, pushed from behind by the Jodhpur commander Bhimrāj Bakhshi, had been the fountain and origin of Sindhia's troubles, but he quickly took a secondary place or sank into quiescence. He had no wish to trouble the Marathas if they did not trouble him by pressing for the arrears of his tribute,—his sole aim being to preserve his own patrimony, which necessarily involved the wresting back of every bit of land robbed from him by his disloyal vassal of Macheri. But beyond his own borders he would not march; he would not molest Mahadji's retreat from Lālsot (which was a welcome riddance to the Kachhwa State); and he had no quarrel with the Peshwā, to whom he appealed, as a family friend since the days of the great Shivaji and Mirzā Rajah Jai Singh I, to stop Sindhia's aggressions. [Akh. S]. ms. 51. *Ibr.* iii. 21.]





§ 3. *Sindhia's contest with Ismail Beg: its first stage, Marathas expelled from the North.*

We shall first of all deal with the most decisive contest waged by Mahadji during the eclipse of his power. As soon as the Maratha army fell back from Lālsot, the Jaipur Rajah advanced to his north-eastern frontier and set about reducing the forts of the Narukā Rao Rajah, instead of pursuing Sindhia and driving him altogether beyond the Chambal. At this Ismail Beg and other Mughalia sardars who had joined him were discontented, as their aim was to create large estates for their own selves out of the territory once held by Mirza Najaf Khan as Mir Bakhshi. Moreover, their promised salary could not be paid out of the exhausted Jaipur treasury and a rupture took place when the Rajah tried to take away the artillery of the Telingas who had come over to his side after the battle of Tungā. [*Ibr.* iii. 21. *Akh.* 58, 63.]

Faced with a hopeless future in the Jaipur service, Ismail Beg, Malik Muhammad Khan and other Mughalias left the Rajah's camp and marched away towards Agra, to the immense relief of the Rajputs. In addition to their Mughalia horse they had with them three battalions of sepoy and sixty guns, several of which were of large calibre. Against them Mahadji could only send Rayaji Patil with a party of Maratha light horse but no guns and no trained musketeers. In purging his army of treason near



Dig he had got rid of all the Telingas and Hindustāni sepoys, except four battalions under De Boigne and Lesteneau, and sent away to Malwa all his large guns, keeping only four of these and some lighter pieces. The lesson of Panipat had not been lost on him; if he chose to follow raiding tactics (*ghanimī*), he must not encumber himself with slow and heavy artillery. His striking force was now composed entirely of Maratha spearmen mounted on ponies. [*Akh.* 88. *HP.* 504.]

Ismail Beg easily brushed aside the opposition of Rayaji Patil by means of his gun-fire and musketry action (11—15 Sep.) and arrived close to Agra. On the 16th, Lakhwā Dādā Lād, the governor of the fort, made a sortie with his Deccani horse and two battalions of sepoys led by Lesteneau, and gave battle to Ismail Beg Khan, while Rāyaji Patil fell on the Khan's rear and at first gained some success. But Lesteneau's troops had been exasperated by their salary remaining long unpaid and merely evasive replies being given by Mahadji Sindhia to their commandant's entreaty and warning. So, during this engagement they turned their muskets on their Maratha brethren in arms, and Ismail Beg, taking advantage of the confusion, made a vigorous advance. The Hindustani soldiers living in Agra opened the gates of that city to him and he captured it without resistance. The defeated Rāyaji galloped away towards the friendly base





of Bharatpur; Lakhwā Dādā was cut off from his charge but contrived to re-enter the fort next day; Lesteneau joined Ismail Beg and was granted some jagirs in the north Agra district in lieu of pay. The fort of Agra, however, successfully defied the Muslims for nine months, under its exceptionally able and enterprising *qiladar* Lakhwā Dādā, till his master gained the upper hand again in June 1788.\*

The capture of Agra city was a great blow to Mahadji and a great gain to his enemies. Under the late Jat and Maratha rule this place had become the richest and most flourishing city in the Mughal empire and the residence of many rich or noble families as a safer place of refuge than ever-troubled Delhi. The conqueror now squeezed the inmates mercilessly in his pressing need. The city escaped a general sack by paying Rs. 35,000, but the houses of Naubat Rai (Mahadji's manager) and Narayandas (Afrasiyab Khan's diwān) were seized and dug up for treasure, yielding over three lakhs in cash and kind. With this money, Ismail refreshed his famished and ragged troops and began to enlist new men, till a force of over 20,000 was assembled under his banners. [DY. i. 286.]

For a month and a half after this battle there was a lull on both sides. Sindhia was utterly

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\* Ismail Beg captures Agra city.—H.P. 504. PRC. i. 177, 178. DY. i. 286. Ibr. iii. 22. His exactions, G. Ali ii. 258.



confounded by the gathering of enemies on all sides, while his own forces numbered less than 15,000, mostly light cavalry with De Boigne's battalions now fallen to a thousand bayonets or less, and he could see no aid coming from any quarter.

At the end of October, Mahadji was forced into action. His general Ambāji Ingle (with 8,000 horse and foot) had been sent on a raiding campaign into Jaipur territory in order to create a diversion; in this he failed and also in his attempt to wrest Ajmer city which had been captured from the Marathas by the Jodhpur Rajah on 27th August. In the end Ambaji was surprised, severely defeated and forced to flee to his master's side at Alwar, with the loss of his baggage. [*Ibr.* iii. 53. *Akh.* 204—237.] Meantime, Ghulām Qādir Khan's audacious attack on Delhi (16th Oct.) drove the Emperor into making frantic appeals to Sindhia to come to his rescue.

So, leaving Alwar on 28th October, Mahadji arrived between Rewāri and Pataudi (4th Nov.), and here he was brought to a halt for a month. His enemies at Delhi gained complete control over the Emperor and secured an order forbidding him to approach the Court (15th Nov.), and Sindhia could do nothing but wait passively for the longed for reinforcements to arrive. Prince Jawān Bakht (Jahāndār Shāh), eldest son of Shah Alam, left his asylum at Benares to try his hand at recovering his paternal dominions or at carving



out a principality for himself. He reached Mathura (*via* Farrukhabad and Jalesar) on 1st November, but after a fruitless journey to Agra for concerted action with Ismail Beg, he broke away from that reluctant ally and went off to Delhi on 8th December. During the prince's alliance with Ismail Beg, Mahadji felt that he must strike a blow for the relief of Agra, or he would be pressed by enemy forces on three sides and expelled beyond the Chambal. Therefore, leaving Rewāri early in December, he moved\* towards Sikandra (Agra) where Ismail Beg lay in camp. The Maratha force was inferior to their enemy in number, dispirited by their late reverses, and without any big artillery. But Sindhia made a last desperate attempt: after appealing to his followers' honour, he sent Rana Khan ahead with 10,000 horse. Ismail Beg promptly marched out to the encounter with a strong body of horse and foot and 33 pieces of cannon (on 16th December.) The Maratha horse, vowing to fight bravely, made repeated charges on Hamadani's army and inflicted some loss. But Ismail Beg, forming his men into one dense column, attacked the enemy centre, carrying everything before him by the volume of his fire. At last the Marathas

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\* *DY.* i. 235 reports Mahadji Sindhia as present at *Kaul jhil*, 12 kos from Agra towards Delhi, on 15th Decr. The only place there with a faintly similar name that I can find in the *Indian Atlas* is *Konraij*, between Dig and Kumbher, with a marsh near it. Campaign in *Ibr.* iii. 70-72.



were repulsed with heavy loss ; De Boigne's trained battalions, firing well-directed volleys, formed a defensive shield round Mahadji and safely brought him out of the field. But Lakhwā Dādā had profited by this diversion of the besiegers, to sally out and convey much foodstuff from outside into his fort.

The fugitives from the battle of Sikandra retreated to Dholpur, and were rallied there by Sindhia. Ismail Beg came up close behind, and here a second battle was fought on the 20th of the month. The Marathas offered a gallant defence, but were broken by repeated charges led by Ismail in person, and their case became hopeless when a powder-chest exploded. Then, abandoning all further struggle, they drove their horses into the Chambal and crossed over to Sindhia's own dominions. Their camp and all their baggage were plundered, and their post at Dholpur fort was invested by a detachment of the enemy, while Ismail went back to his camp before Agra fort, and Sindhia retreated beyond the Chambal and the Kumari rivers, to 28 miles north of Gwalior.

The last trace of Maratha authority in Hindustan disappeared after this retreat. Mahadji had now not a single friend north of the Chambal except Ranjit Singh Jat, and no post except two or three which were beleaguered by the enemy.



One disaster followed another: Ajmer fort\* capitulated to Bijay Singh on 24th December without making the least defence. Najaf Quli seized Gokulgarh, Ghulām Qādir captured Khurjā and besieged Mursan and Aligarh, while Anupgir Gosain took Firuzabad.

§ 4. *Second stage of contest: Maratha guerilla activities, but Ismail Beg still dominant.*

But within a week of this retreat, Mahadji had pulled his men together and formed a new and very effective plan of campaign. He now concentrated his available forces in the Gwalior region and set them to subdue his revolted tributaries of Kerauli and Narwār and other places in that province. The new policy began to bear fruit in February. The Rānā of Kerauli was forced to make terms; the rebel chiefs in the

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\* Ajmer lost.—The fort was in charge of a brother of Mirza Rahim Beg. Sher Khan jamadar was defending it, but his family lived in the city, below the fort. When the Jodhpur Rajah took the city on 27 Aug. almost without a blow,—“Mahadji’s subahdar did not fire even for an hour,”—the victors placed piquets on the houses where Sher Khan’s wives and children lived, and these latter took poison in fear of being dishonoured. [Sat. i. 120 *Akh.* S]. ms. 188, 194. MD. ii. 154.] For some time Ambaji Ingulé and Jivaji Bakhshi fought Rodoji Khawas outside Ajmer city and provisioned the fort, but they were expelled by the Rajputs in October. [*Ibr.* iii. 53. *Akh.* 225, 231—241.] The fort fell on 24 Dec., “the qiladar and his wife are dead; the fort did not resist even for a month or fortnight.” [MD. ii. 154. PRC. i. 192.]





Gwalior region were suppressed, and the Udaipuri bands that had violated the Mālwa frontier were defeated by a fresh Maratha force moved up from Burhanpur. The Rāghogarh Rānā's son, after escaping from his prison in Bhilsā, had been disturbing the country, but Rānā Khan reconquered the Khichi State and Mahadji wisely made friends with the Rānā by restoring him to freedom and his dominions, on the promise to pay tribute.\* And by the middle of March, Sindhia

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\* Mahadji, Jan. March 1788.—MD. ii. 161. PRC. i. 194—206.

Ibr. iii. 106-107 narrates: When Mahadji crossed the Chambal to Gwalior, he found the atmosphere of that region changed. Territories were seized by the Rajahs of Narwar, Datia, Kerauli, Kota and Udaipur. Rana Chhatra Singh [captive Gohad chief]'s relatives emerged from every lane and troubled the Maratha grantees. . . Sindhia collected himself quickly and sent Rana Kh. with 5,000 men against the Rajah of Narwar, who after some fighting fled into his fort, but soon submitted through lack of provisions and sent Rana Kh. back by paying a fine and restoring the usurped *mahals*. Apa Khanderao chastised the rebels of the Gwalior district. By his order Rana Chhatra Singh was poisoned to death and his body taken out of Gwalior fort and burnt. Mahadji released the Rajah of Raghogarh from prison and sent him back to Raghogarh on his swearing to be loyal and pay tribute regularly in future. Ambaji with a large force suppressed the rebels in the Ujjain district and up to the Mewar frontier. These campaigns restored the *morale* of the Maratha army. [On 23 Feb.] Mahadji himself set out to punish the Rajah of Kerauli, whose capital was besieged, till he begged to make peace through Bapu Vital Rao, paid tribute and ceded the lands he had seized.