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# The Myth of Afghan King Ahmad Shah Abdali and Triumph of the Sikhs

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**Abstract:** *The defeat of Maratha army at the hands of Afghan King Ahmad Shah Abdali in the 3<sup>rd</sup> battle of Panipat in January 1661, and his portrayal as a military genius is probably the most distorted version of modern Indian history we are persisting with. The surviving military strength of even the divided major Maratha powers under the command of the Peshwa was strong enough to absorb many such military reverses. The fact that neither the Afghan conqueror, Ahmad Shah Abdali, nor the all-ambitious and scheming British dared fill the power vacuum left by the Marathas in the north for full ten years, is highly significant and relevant to the point. All this supports my assertion that the Battle of Panipat was not the real cause of the decline of Marathas. The very fact that the battle with Marathas at Panipat for supremacy over Punjab was fought well inside that province and the subsequent failure of Abdali to follow his victory by adding more territories in the East to his conquest, shows the limited object of the Battle of Panipat. The battle then assumes its correct dimensions, as a major regional war fought for a limited purpose. The Panipat victory of Abdali failed to deter and even make a dent on the Sikhs, who were yet to be organized and welded into a strong disciplined force. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Panipat at best can be described as a pyrrhic victory for Abdali, from the aftermath of which he could not recover and lost within a short time his entire Punjab province.*

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**Keywords:** Ahmad Shah Abdali, Third Battle of Panipat, 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Maratha Empire, Peshwa, Sikhs, Princely States

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## Introduction

The defeat of Maratha army at the hands of Afghan King Ahmad Shah Abdali in the 3<sup>rd</sup> battle of Panipat in January 1661, as taught in history books is probably the most distorted version of modern Indian history we are persisting with. An analysis of the British period with the help of hundreds of Treaties, Sanads and Engagements that the British entered with different princely states and other British documents and books leads us to draw an irresistible conclusion that what has been written and is taught regarding the last three hundred years of the Indian history is not the whole truth. The historical facts depicting the resistance offered by the Indian people to alien powers, their marvellous capacity of not only surviving but of expelling them from the country and

recovery of vast lost territories even during the period of decline when the country was about to be taken over by the British have either been totally ignored or side tracked or have not been given in their proper perspective.

Let us take the example of the third Battle of Panipat between the Marathas and the Afghan invader, Ahmad Shah Abdali, which took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1761. This most talked about battle is generally described in history books in the manner that tends seriously to undermine the confidence of the people in their own ability in terms of important military operations and above all, in their capability to resist successfully and overcome alien invading armies. This battle is further represented as a decisive war which sealed the fate of the great Maratha power at one blow and portrayed at the same time Ahmad Shah Abdali as a great military genius and invincible commander of conquering forces, who like lightening suddenly descends on the plains of India to chastise the Marathas and walks away triumphantly back to his country as a great conqueror. But on a closer examination of all the relevant facts, we find that both these assumptions implanted in our minds by a distorted version of history are erroneous.

Firstly, let us try to analyse the question as to why Ahmad Shah Abdali did not fill the power vacuum and occupy northern India as a conqueror of the Maratha military power was really destroyed completely as is made out in our history books. Secondly, how was it that Scindia, who was only one of the five majors but divided and antagonist Maratha powers (the other four being Holkar, Bhonsle, Gaekwad and the Peshwa himself) within ten years of the battle, could revive the Maratha power in the north by 1771? Not only this, the fugitive Mogul Emperor, Shah Alam, who ever since the Battle of Buxar in 1764, was residing at Allahabad under British protection, felt confident enough to leave their shelter and went over to Scindia who again seated him on the defunct throne of Delhi under his patronage. It is also an undisputed fact of history that since that time Mahadji Scindia continued to be a dominant power in the North (barring minor temporary reverses) till his death in 1794. The different Maratha powers even after his death remained supreme before they were destroyed in bitter mutual hostilities and by the British by 1801 as victim of their own follies, individual ambitions, adroitly exploited by the latter.

There is no doubt that the third Battle of Panipat was a major battle. But there is also no doubt that the powerful and united Maratha Empire at that juncture under the overall command of the Peshwa, was strong enough to absorb many such reverses and shock waves released by it. The magnitude of the surviving military strength of even the divided major Maratha powers supports my assertion that the Battle of Panipat was not the real cause of the decline of Marathas. The fact that neither the Afghan conqueror, Ahmad Shah Abdali, nor the all-ambitious and scheming British dared fill the power vacuum left by the Marathas in the north for full ten years, is highly significant and relevant to the point. The truth remains that both these two new political powers were aware that the Maratha's power was more or less intact and was merely readjusting itself

due to internecine troubles and therefore, they were mortally afraid of stepping into the shoes of the Marathas in the north.

I would now like to raise the question as to why Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Afghan invader, failed to push ahead after the Battle of Panipat when there was apparently nothing to prevent him from annexing the vast and rich territories of the north, from Punjab to Bengal? The truth behind Abdali's obvious reluctance to conquer the whole of north India can be ascertained after closely following his repeated invasions, from his first attack early in 1748 to the last invasion in 1767. The table 1 gives us a broad picture of his invasions in India.

**Table 1: List of Ahmad Shah Abdali's Invasions in India**

<b>Invasion</b>	<b>Year</b>
1st invasion	Early 1748
2 <sup>nd</sup> invasion	1748-49
3 <sup>rd</sup> invasion	1751-52
4 <sup>th</sup> invasion	1755-56
5 <sup>th</sup> invasion	1759- Early 1762
6 <sup>th</sup> invasion	1762-63
7 <sup>th</sup> invasion	1764
8 <sup>th</sup> invasion	1767

Abdali's first invasion in early 1748 came in response to the invitation of the usurper Mogul Governor of Lahore, Shah Nawaz Khan, who invited the Durrani King to invade the weak Mogul Empire and assured him all his help. But the little known fact of history has been that Ahmad Shah Abdali met with defeat in his very first venture of invading Sirhind at the hands of the army of even a fast declining Mogul Empire. Ahmad Shah Abdali precipitately retired to Afghanistan after his defeat. The retiring Afghan ruler, according to Cunningham "gave an opportunity to watchful Sikhs of harassing his rear and of gaining confidence in their own prowess" (Cunningham 1849). Thus we find the great Afghan General being defeated most inauspiciously in his very first independent military campaign in India.

But Ahmad Shah Abdali had first-hand experience of the weakness of the fallen Mogul when earlier he had accompanied his Master Nadir Shah to Delhi in 1739. One single defeat, therefore, was not going to dampen his ardour and craving for the vast richness of the country. Abdali, therefore, re-crossed into India at the end of the same year. Due to intrigues at the Delhi court, he could be opposed only by the new Governor of Lahore, Mir Mannu. He presented a bold front to the Shah, but he knew that his forces were not sufficient to check the formidable invader. Since Ahmad Shah Abdali had yet to consolidate his rule over his new Afghan empire and over the trans-Indus provinces, he readily accepted the peace overtures of Mir Mannu and as described by Syed Muhammad Latif, the well-known author of "The History of Punjab", "he accepted to withdraw on the condition that the revenues of the four districts of Pasrur, Gujrat,

Sialkot and Aurangabad, the most fruitful principalities of Punjab, should be assigned to him, as they had been to Nadir Shah, from whom he pretended to have inherited his power and title. The Governor further agreed to hold the government of the Punjab in the name of the invader, and to remit the tributes regularly to the Shah" (Latif, 1891).

It may be relevant to mention here that among the Muslim governors of Punjab, Mir Mannu was the most bitter and irreconcilable foe of the Sikhs. He had resolved to physically extirpate them and had announced monetary awards on Sikh heads.

However, it seems that Mir Mannu's success with the Sikhs and the Delhi court went to his head and made him over confident of his power. He now stopped the payment of the agreed tribute to Ahmad Shah Abdali, who therefore now marched to India for this 3<sup>rd</sup> attack in 1751-52, to enforce his claim over the ceded territories by force of arms. Mir Mannu tried to put on a bold front but was outmanoeuvred by the Shah and was ultimately defeated at Lahore on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1752. Not expecting any help from Delhi, Mir Mannu submitted to the Shah and laid at his feet a present of Rs. 50 lakhs. He was pardoned by Abdali and was reinstated as Governor of Punjab.

Sitting at his camp at Lahore, Abdali made two noticeable achievements: (a). his one strong detachment seized Kashmir without encountering any opposition, and (b). by simple negotiations, obtained from the Mogul Emperor cessation of the country west of Sirhind.

We thus find Ahmad Shah Abdali extending his empire into India and tightening his strangle hold over Punjab during his third inroad. While Kashmir was conquered by a mere show of force, the fertile and rich province of Punjab was simply won by a note of demand sent from Lahore to a trembling and pusillanimous Mogul Court. Abdali thus completed one of his most fruitful invading missions with the least possible loss of men and returned triumphantly to Afghanistan.

Soon after Abdali's return the Sikhs resumed their military operations with greater vigour making deep inroads in the revenue of Abdali's Lahore government. In the meanwhile serious differences arose between Murad Begum, the widow of late Mir Mannu and her would be son-in-law Vizier Ghazi-ud-din of Delhi Empire. This enraged the Begum who thereupon sent her agents to Kabul professing her sole loyalty to Ahmad Shah Abdali and bringing to his notice the encroachments made by the Delhi court on the territories ceded to him and the indignities to which she was subjected.

Abdali, on receiving these reports particularly of the occupation of Lahore by the Mogul Government of Delhi and on representation from the Begum, also from Najib-ud-Doula, the Rohilla Chief (the -greatest supporter of Abdali's cause) set out for India in 1755-56 on his fourth invasion. Lahore was occupied without any resistance being offered and it's Governor Adina Beg Khan, fled to the shelter of the Hill Rajas. Abdali continued his most fruitful march to Delhi unopposed and was met by Najib-ud-Doula at Karnal and was personally received by the Mogul Emperor at Narela, about 20 miles from Delhi,

and was escorted to the capital with all pomp and honor. The widow, Murad Begum, who in the meantime was reconciled, interceded on behalf of her son-in-law Vizier Ghazi-ud-din. The Vizier was pardoned by the Shah and restored to his position on payment of a heavy tribute. Then started the merciless extortion of almost all the Amirs and Grandees of the Mogul Court in which due to intense mutual hatred and jealousies quiet a number of them acted as confident informers of the Shah about their rival's wealth. Murad Begum also played a prominent role in this sordid drama. To sum up in Latif's words: "Having extracted all he could from Omerahas (Amirs) of the State, he ordered the town to be pillaged and nearly all the horrors which had been experienced at the time of Nadir Shah's invasion were repeated" (Latif 1891).

Out of his intense bigotry he also ravaged Mathura and caused a general massacre of Hindus and destruction of their temples and religious places and carried his sword of devastation to the neighbouring Jat areas and Agra.

Following his fourth invasion of India, Ahmad Shah Abdali retired to Afghanistan secure in belief that he could reign in peace and enjoy his new acquisitions undisturbed. But, as it turned out, he misjudged the rising power of the Khalsa and the Maratha capacity for long distance military campaigns. Before retiring to Afghanistan, Ahmad Shah Abdali did three things: (a) he himself married the daughter of the late Mogul Emperor Mohammed Shah and his grand-daughter to his son and successor Tymur Shah; (b) reinstated Alamgir II on the throne after levying heavy contributions on him and (c) appointed his son, Tymur Shah, as overall in-charge of his Indian possession east of River Indus.

The prince in turn was placed under the guardianship of his trusted and confidential minister Jahan Khan. A highly incensed Abdali had especially enjoined his son and Jahan Khan to punish the Sikhs without mercy as they had dared to plunder his rich package of loot on his return march and cut off the stragglers of his army. Although his son Tymur Shah and his Vizier Jahan Khan faithfully tried to implement the letter and spirit of his directive about the Sikhs and did their best to suppress them and destroy all their religious places at Amritsar (including the sacred pool which was sacrilege and filled with earth), the effect on the Khalsa was just reverse. The confederate army of various Sikh clans ravaged the country around Lahore with boldness and after several successful skirmishes utterly defeated the Pathan army under the Afghan Prince and the Vizier in a pitched battle, gaining their first important victory against the rising power of Afghanistan under Abdali. The Sikhs next inflicted a severe defeat on the whole division of the Afghan army at Jullunder. Completely demoralized from successive major reverses, the Afghan evacuated Lahore and for the first time the Sikhs triumphantly entered the capital of Punjab in 1758.

At this time, the Marathas finding the situation favourable for the overthrow of the alien Afghans marched into Punjab under the overall command of their famous general Raghunath Rao or Raghoba. After capturing Sirhind, the Maratha army rapidly

advanced to Lahore and occupied the city in May 1758, after defeating the Afghan contingent. Prince Tymur and Jahan Khan retreated with a small force hotly pursued by the Marathas who further occupied Multan and added the region to their conquests. Leaving a detachment at Lahore, and after levying an annual tribute of Rs. 75 lakhs on their new appointed Governor of Lahore, the Marathas retired from Punjab. But the province was soon plunged in turmoil. The Sikhs again resumed their military operations, separately under different clans and their combinations.

It was this loss of his Punjab conquests that brought Ahmad Shah Abdali to India for the 5<sup>th</sup> time in 1759 at the head of a considerable force. He stayed in the country up to his victory over the Maratha army in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Panipat in January 1761. It is however very clear that in all the first five invasions Abdali's object was limited to the extent of either conquering or retaining his various provinces in Punjab (Peshawar, Multan, Kashmir, Lahore, Sirhind, etc.) which he pretended to claim as the successor of Nadir Shah.

India, or to be more correct, Northern India, was nowhere in his mind, nor was he capable of such a great venture, which is now evident from his total incompetence even to retain his Punjab possessions despite his repeated excursions. The very fact that the battle with Marathas at Panipat for supremacy over Punjab was fought well inside that province and the subsequent failure of Abdali to follow his victory by adding more territories in the East to his conquest, shows the limited object of the Battle of Panipat.

Thus, if we remove the false notion that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Panipat was fought for supremacy at the country level, all the exaggerated and imaginary figures of the strength of the rival armies and the casualty figures running into lacs will disappear. The battle then assumes its correct dimensions, as a major regional war fought for a limited purpose and the figures of the strength of the rival armies and the proportionately higher loss of life due to the bitterness of the contests, as given by the famous historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar (1991), becomes the obvious accepted correct version of the battle.

Unfortunately for the Marathas, they not only grossly underestimated Ahmad Shah Abdali, but also miscalculated the political and military strength of his Indian supporters and thus paid a heavy price through a humiliating defeat. It seems that this under-estimation of Abdali's capacity as a military general of some consequence was primarily due to the total absence of any remarkable achievement on his part in his earlier invasions. The Marathas, therefore, were misled and made a wrong assessment of his strength by sheer contempt and thus paid a heavy price for the mistake. As we have seen above, in his 1<sup>st</sup> invasion he was defeated; in the 2<sup>nd</sup> he was bought off and no battle took place; in the 3<sup>rd</sup> he was nearly defeated by a provincial Governor and in the 4<sup>th</sup> battle was offered by the fallen and degraded Mogul Court and now we can see that most luckily for Abdali he was very much under-estimated in his 5<sup>th</sup> and first real contest of arms.

Further, it is highly significant that during the period of one year when Abdali was making his frantic preparations for the battle with the Marathas, in the words of M. Latif,

the Sikhs under his very nose, right in the heart of Punjab “ravaged the country far and wide...a large number of Sikh horsemen swarmed round Lahore, pillaging the residents who lived outside the city walls and setting their houses on fire...the NaibSubedar shut himself up in the city”(Latif 1891).

As M. Latif (1891) further narrates still more significantly: “Ahmad Shah Abdali on his return from Panipat, took no steps to chastise the Sikhs or to remedy the disorder that then prevailed in Punjab, but appointing KhwajaObed Khan, Governor of Lahore, returned to Kabul in the spring of 1761”. The Panipat victory of Abdali failed to deter and even make a dent on the Sikhs, who were yet to be organized and welded into a strong disciplined force. There was apparently no reason why Abdali ran to Afghanistan so precipitately leaving his Punjab provinces in utter disorder, not to speak of thinking in terms of consolidating the gains of his great battle which was fruitless in terms of material gains, had completely exhausted the men and material resources of the Afghan invader. He was well acquainted with the intrigues of his divided and weak supporters in India, and also fully conscious of the power of the Marathas, which was sure to retaliate with vengeance had he stayed back together with the fruits of his victory in terms of territorial gains. Ahmad Shah Abdali left India in greatest possible hurry, not daring even to inflict any punishment on his biggest foe, the Sikhs, to save his Punjab provinces. Otherwise, history has no parallel of an invader coveting the wealth and territories of other countries had turned out to be the loser after inflicting a big blow on his real adversary. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Panipat at best can be described as a pyrrhic victory for Abdali, from the aftermath of which he could not recover and lost within a short time his entire Punjab province, as we will see when we follow his subsequent three invasions of India.

After the Panipat battle the various Sikh clans, separately or in combination of various strength almost overran the entire countryside of Punjab, captured many towns and forts, built several new fortifications and besieged several important seats of Afghan power. Abdali sent a strong force of 7000 Afghans in early 1762 under his General Nur-ud-din to punish the insurgent Sikhs with the help of his local forces. The Afghan general was defeated with great loss by combined forces of Charat Singh (the grandfather of Ranjit Singh) and other leading Sardars, and Nur-ud-din fled to Sialkot where he was besieged.

Elated by their success the Sikhs intensified their military operations against other Afghan strongholds and against their Indian supporters. The well-known town of Sirhind, the capital of Subah of the same name, was invaded and its Afghan governor, Zen Khan, was desperately trying to hold it when Abdali now descended on the plains of Punjab to save his doomed possessions at the end of 1762 (for the 6<sup>th</sup> time). Abdali's greatest feat this time was that by a most secret military manoeuvre he surprised the Sikhs at Sirhind and inflicted a severe defeat on them. In the ensuing carnage, the worst in the Sikh history, it is said that they suffered a loss varying from 12000 to 25000 men, according to different versions. The Sikhs remembered this tragedy of their heavy loss

by name of "GhulaGhara" or the "Bloody Carnage". Despite being surprised and outflanked, the Sikhs contested the field with great determination, but the presence of Ahmad Shah Abdali, (their first confrontation with him in a pitched battle) probably overawed them. Further, the Sikhs at that moment were also deeply concerned about the safety of their inadequately guarded camps and their women and children against such a formidable enemy.

During Diwali festival, Abdali visited Amritsar and according to Latif (1891): "The Sikh temple of Harmandir at Amritsar was blown up with gunpowder, and the sacred reservoir again choked with its ruins, and polluted with the blood and entrails of cows and bullocks. Kalandar Khan, a Durrani chief, was appointed to carry out these arrangements. Numerous pyramids were made of the heads of those who had suffered decapitation.

However, it seems that the Sirhind carnage failed to make any dent on the Sikh morale or even to undermine their military power. On the contrary, their first major confrontation with Abdali seems to have steeled their nerves and their latent and overt fear of him now completely disappeared. It is now the Sikhs who resolved to end the Afghan rule in Punjab and avenge their defeat at Sirhind. As recorded by Latif(1891): "The Muslim troops had scarcely reached the Chinab when the Sikhs concentrated their forces at Amritsar and marched upon Kasur, a Pathan settlement, which they surprised and plundered and from which they carried off considerable booty. They then captured and sacked Malerkotla, and slew their old enemy, Hingan Khan, its veteran chief. Elated with these successes they aimed at acquiring territory, and with a well-equipped force of forty thousand men, they attacked Sirhind. A battle was fought at Pir Zen Munere, a village seven miles east of Sirhind, between the Sikh and Mohammedan forces, which ended in the complete defeat of the latter. The whole country from the Sutlej itself was sacked to the Jamna was occupied by the victors without opposition. The town of Sirhind itself was sacked and its buildings were either razed to the ground or set on fire. This being the place in which the mother and children of Guru GovindSinghji had been murdered by the order of Wazir Khan, Aurangzeb's general. Sikhs were determined upon retributive justice. Not a house was left standing, and a custom exists to this day, by which it is considered a meritorious act for every Sikh to carry away a brick from the place and throw it into the Sutlej, to mark his detest and abhorrence of the place. The Sikhs divided the plains between the Sutlej and Jamna among themselves, establishing military posts at important places."

The fall of Sirhind and the precarious position of Lahore forced Ahmad Shah Abdali to undertake his 7<sup>th</sup> invasion of India in January 1764 to retrieve his precarious political and military prestige and entered Lahore in January 1764. From here he sent strong forces in every direction to seize and punish the Sikhs. But by now the Sikhs had properly learnt their lesson at Sirhind and fighting a sort of guerrilla war, they managed to remain beyond his reach. An enraged and frustrated Abdali spent his fury by levelling to the ground the houses of Sikh chiefs at Sutlej. "In numerous villages", says Latif (1891), "the



standing wheat crops were burnt or otherwise destroyed, and the Sikh places of worship plundered and desecrated. For two months he continued to ravage the countries south of Lahore, when, hearing fresh disturbances in his native provinces, he retraced his steps somewhat precipitately to Kabul without having either effectively punished the atrocities of the Sikhs, or completely recovered the lost province of Sirhind... he was harassed in the neighbourhood of Amritsar by the Sikhs and petty engagements were of constant occurrence in which the Afghans suffered greatly".

We thus find that within 3 years of Panipat battle, the so-called great general and military genius of Afghanistan behaving like an ordinary plunderer and persecutor lost his Punjab dominions with complete defeat staring him in the face during his 7<sup>th</sup> invasion.

We shall now describe the political situation after Abdali had left India and before he appeared on the scene for the 8<sup>th</sup> and the last time to meet defeat and a humiliating retreat. We would like to narrate it as far as possible in the words of M. Latif. He says: "But no sooner had he turned his back than Sikhs burst forth like smouldering embers of a fire that is stirred, and, overrunning the country, laid it waste in all directions. They besieged and took Lahore. Kabuli Mai, the Governor, hurried off to Jammu and claimed the protection of RanjitDeo, one of the hill Rajas" (Latif, 1891).

"The Sikh chiefs and their followers now partitioned among themselves the whole country between Jhelum and the Sutlej. The Sikh confederates then held a national meeting at Amritsar, their sacred rendezvous, and, by a decree of the Khalsa, proclaimed their own sect as the dominant power in the Punjab, and their own religion as supreme. The assumption of sovereignty by the Sikhs was marked by the striking of a coin bearing the inscription, 'Guru Govind had received from Nanak Degh, Tegh and Fatteh – grace, power and victory'. The Sikhs, now unchecked, became masters of the whole open country as far west as the Jhelum, while their possessions to the east extended to the plains of Karnal" (Latif, 1891).

Ahmad Shah Abdali now made his final (8<sup>th</sup>) and most humiliating invasion of India in 1767 to accomplish the hopeless task of recovering his Punjab possessions. This time he dropped all false pretensions as an invincible conqueror and tried to placate his friends and conciliate his enemies. The Raja of Patiala was given the high-sounding title of "Raja RajganMahinderBahadur" and was allowed to use the colours and drums as the insignias of royalty and to strike coins in his own name. "He sent a present of fruits to Lehna Singh, the Bhangi chief of Lahore; but the latter returned it to the king, with a message to the effect that fruit was a luxury worthy of an emperor, the asylum of the poor, and that for an humble peasant like himself grain was the best food" (Latif, 1891).

But Abdali's decline was irreversible, it was now the turn of Abdali's troops to smell danger at every step in Punjab and to panic and to bolt towards home. While Abdali was thus engaged in the humiliating task of conciliating his Sikh enemies, his troops started deserting him. "His measures were interrupted, says Cunningham, "by the defection of his own troops; twelve thousand men marched back towards Kabul, and the Shah found

it prudent to follow them. He was harassed in his retreat, and he had scarcely crossed the Indus before Sher Shah's mountain stronghold of Rohtas was blocked by the Sookerchukeas, under the grandfather of Ranjeet Singh, aided by a detachment of the neighbouring Bunghee confederacy. The place fell in 1768, and the Bunghee almost immediately afterwards occupied the country as far as Rawalpindi".

We thus find the mysterious course of history repeating itself, on the Indian soil, almost at the same place where 2000 years back the all-conquering army of another invader Alexander the Great, similarly turned its face towards home and refused to risk the hazards to march further into the country. Although it is not fair to compare Alexander the Great with Abdali, the similarity of these two situations in many respects is indeed striking and deserves to be noted.

In the light of the hard historical facts about Abdali's invasions of India is it not a distortion of history that he has always been presented as a great military genius and a great victor, who, with one winning stroke of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Panipat completely changed the course of Indian history, while his humiliating defeats on Indian soil and the final destruction of his power and the loss of his dominions in Punjab at the hands of Govind's Khalsa within seven years of Panipat battle, have been ignored as if of no consequence? Was not the Sikh victory over Abdali a triumphant reassertion of Indian valour against the heaviest odds, bringing glory and self-confidence to the nation? Was it not clear indication of the fact that 700 years of incessant Indian struggle against alien invasions had failed to exhaust the nation's vitality to resist foreign domination and still it was left with enough store of energy to continue the successful battle against superior alien powers, including the British who were finally forced to quit the country in our own life time?

The very fact that such vitally important historical facts have been excluded and not given their due importance in history books taught in schools and colleges shows the working of a deliberate hand to keep the people in the dark, and ignorant of their glory.

The triumph of Khalsa over Ahmad Shah Abdali was only one step of its glorious march towards the goal of its historical contribution to the cause of the motherland. The military might of the Khalsa was further consolidated and enlarged into a formidable armed force under the genius of the great Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The province of Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar which were lost to alien powers centuries and centuries ago were recovered by the irresistible sword of Khalsa within 50 years of Abdali's death. The re-conquest of these provinces by sword was later also firmly sealed by pen – by the Tripartite Treaty of June 1838 signed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Afghanistan King Shah Shuja and the British Governor General, Lord Auckland. A reading of Article 1 of this 18-clause treaty will make every Indian proud of their great heritage:

"Shah Shooja-ool-Moolk disclaims all title on the part of himself, his heirs and successors and all the Suddozies, to all the territories lying on either bank of river Indus, that may be possessed by the Muharaja, viz,; Cashmeer, including its limits, E.W., N.S., together

with the fort of Attok, ChuchHuzara, Khubul, Umb, with its dependencies, on the left bank of the aforesaid river, and on the right bank Peshawur, with the Eusufzaee territory the Khutuks, HushtNuggu, Mitchnee, Kohat, Hunggoo, and all places dependent on Peshawur, as far as the Khyber pass, Bunnoo, the Vuzeeree territory, Dower-Tank, Gurang, Kalabagh, and the Khooshalghur, with their dependent districts, Derah Ismaeel Khan, and its dependency, Kot Mithen, Oomur Hajeepore, Rajenpore, and the three Kutches, as well as Munkehra, with its district, and the province of Mooltan, situated on the left bank. These countries and places are considered to be the property, and to form the estate, of the Muharaja; the Shah neither has nor will have any concern with them; they belong to the Muharaja and his posterity from generation to generation”.

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