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**INDIA**

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## **Maharana Pratap's Victory Against Akbar's Forces Led by Man Singh in 1576 C.E.**

### **ABSTRACT**

In this article I intend to prove Maharana Pratap's victory against the Akbar's forces led by Man Singh in mid 1576 C.E. Various scholars have argued over this issue but most of them stick to 18<sup>th</sup> June 1576 C.E. and not beyond that date, when Man Singh tried to complete the task but failed utterly. The episode between Maharana Pratap and Akbar is a war, starting from the campaign of Man Singh till 1597 C.E., in which Maharana Pratap's resistance and holding the territory claims his glorious victory.

But sticking to the campaign of Man Singh, being ordered by his master Akbar, the series of incidence strongly reflects their failure. On 18<sup>th</sup> June 1576 C.E. at Khamnor, Man Singh retained the field while Maharana Pratap and his troops evacuated the field leaving behind a small contingent to engage Mughal army and proceeded towards their hill camps. No pursuit was being made as Man Singh feared that an ambush must have been planted in the narrow Haldighati pass by the Sisodiya Rajputs and the Bhils. The next day Man Singh again marched through the battle field to Gogunda and occupied it with customary resistance but soon got trapped in the hilly terrain being overwhelmed by the fear factor. What was thought to be a leading situation, soon turned to be difficult and morally weakening for Mughal army. Finally Man Singh and his forces retreated from the Maharana's territory. Maharana Pratap again occupied the area and became deservant of glorious victory.

### **Keywords :**

Campaign, Ambush, Haldighati, Resistance, Contingent, Deservant, Glorious, Victory

In this article I am discussing series of events which occurred between Maharana Pratap and Akbar's forces led by Man Singh during mid 1576 C.E. in which Maharana Pratap emerged victorious. Various scholars have argued over this issue but most of them stick to 18<sup>th</sup> June 1576 C.E. and not beyond that date, when Man Singh tried to complete the task but failed utterly. The episode between Maharana Pratap and Akbar was a war, starting from the campaign of 1576 C.E. till 1597 C.E., in which Maharana Pratap's resistance and holding the territory claims his glorious victory. But sticking to the military campaign of Man Singh,

being ordered by his master Akbar, the series of incidences strongly reflects their failure.

Abdul Qadir Badayuni who was spectator of the campaign wrote in his book *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* that "Akbar ordered Kunwar Man Singh to proceed to the hostile districts of Gogunda and Kumbhalgarh which was a dependency belonging to Rana Kika. Akbar provided 5,000 regular troopers, partly from his own body guard and partly belonging to the Amirs who were in command. Akbar sent Asaf Khan, Ghazi Khan Badakshi, Shah Ghazi, Khan Tabeizi, Mujahid Khan, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Sayyid Hashim Barha, Mihtar Khan and others". Again Badayuni mentions the route taken by Man Singh which was from Ajmer to Mandalgarh and then to Khamnor (near Gogunda, Udaipur district of Rajasthan).<sup>1</sup>

On hearing that Man Singh has entered Khamnor with Mughal army, Maharana Pratap left his capital and reached Khamnor with about 3000 men. Pratap's camp was positioned in the Haldighati pass which was the only route to Gogunda.<sup>2</sup> Pratap waited for the most opportune moment to strike. In the early morning of 18<sup>th</sup> June 1576 C.E., Man Singh's army made a movement when Hashim Barha with chosen 80 or 85 warriors called *Chuzai-Harawal* proceeded cautiously up in to the hills followed by some of the special troops of the advance body under Asaf Khan. Raja Loonkaran, with his men too marched with the advance body. When Maharana was reported of the event, he ordered Hakim Suri to attack the vanguard with his troops.<sup>3</sup> During the attack of Hakim Suri, skirmishers and the advance body of Mughal troops became hopelessly mixed up together and sustained a complete defeat. And the Rajputs on Man Singh's side under Raja Loonkaran fled away like flock of sheep. At this juncture the other division of army under the Pratap in person, charged out of the pass and made the enemy flees. The army who had fled did not draw rein till they passed five or six *cosses* beyond the river Banas.<sup>4</sup> Now the battle proceeded to Khamnor area.

In the midst of all this confusion Mihtar Khan hastening up from the rear with his reserves called on the imperial troops to rally. His shout "Akbar has himself came with troops" probably became the cause of the fugitives taking heart again and making a stand. This is collaborated by Abul Fazal's account in Akbarnama "When to superficial observers it was the enemy who seemed to be winning, providence suddenly tilted the balance of the battle in favour of the emperor. Word that the emperor himself had arrived with reinforcements spread like fire instilling fresh spirit in to the hearts of the Mughal warriors and demoralizing those of Mewar who soon fled from the field of battle".<sup>5</sup> Badayuni is thankful to Sayyids for holding ground firmly otherwise it would have been a disgraceful defeat.

Then began the elephant fight, in which Ram Prasad the favourite elephant of Pratap was captured by Mughals. Now Badayuni writes "As the battle proceeded Hakim Sur's division retreated and united with Pratap's division. Then the Rana

turned and fled, and betook himself to the high mountains...".<sup>6</sup> What does it mean, loosing moral or military tactic? Definitely timely decision to retreat because if military help has arrived for enemy than more fighting was not possible in the plains. Why do scholars think that Pratap and his men should have fought till death? Badayuni did not mention encounter between Pratap and Man Singh which has been strongly dealt in Rajasthan Chronicles. Badayuni mentions extremely hot conditions in the mid day which led to brain boiling in the cranium and the number of casualties being 500 in total. The soldiers having no energy left for movement retired to their tents believing that Pratap by stealth and stratagem must have kept himself concealed behind the mountains.<sup>7</sup>

But what seems most possible after understanding Jhala Man's sacrifice is that Pratap had made a tactical decision to retire in to the hills with his army, leaving a select band of warriors under Jhala Man to cover his retreat. Pratap might have honoured him by giving his royal trappings, while he fought a rear guard action to hold off the immensely superior army of Akbar for the safety of his master and Mewar.<sup>8</sup> About the next day Badayuni demonstrates the fear factor through words "The Amir as security against a night attack on the part of the Pratap, barricaded the streets and drew a trench and a wall of such a height that horse men could not leap over it and then settled down quietly".<sup>9</sup> This proves that battle did not end and more was expected.

It became difficult for the Mughal army to sustain in Gogunda without food as Pratap had cut the supply lines. Mughals had to depend on animal flesh and mango fruit grown locally.<sup>10</sup> They were afraid of further movement in the hills assuming the Bhil attack through catapults and arrows from hidden areas.<sup>11</sup> It was a trap that the Pratap had laid for them. What was thought to be a leading situation, soon turned to be a difficult and morally weakening. It seems that Man Singh did not send messenger to imperial court or if sent, Akbar did not believe the news as is evident from the arrival of Mahmud Khan to Gogunda on the imperial order. Mahmud Khan reported to the Akbar of the situation.<sup>12</sup> This proves that Man Singh was in difficult situation and was thinking of more combats. When Badayuni travelled to Amber with Rama Prasad elephant as captive and informing the people of Mughal win, people did not credit his statements.<sup>13</sup> Why such things happened? Seemingly public had better understanding of the outcome. In the end of September on being recalled by Akbar Man Singh retreated from the Maharana's territory which was soon occupied by Pratap and Mandan Kumpawat was made the administrator of Gogunda.<sup>14</sup> This strongly proves the failure of military expedition of Akbar.

The pitiable straits to which the Mughal army was reduced to Gogunda and the manner in which its commander Man Singh was recalled and upbraided by the emperor provide mighty proof of the utter failure of the imperial task in accomplishing its mission of conquering Pratap or his territory.<sup>15</sup>

Again why no *Fatehnama* being issued by Akbar which was issued after Chittorgarh's victory; because Mughals did not win at all.<sup>16</sup> Whereas *Raj Prashasti*, *Raj Ratnakar* and *Jagdish Mandir Prashasti* has clearly mentioned Pratap's victory and moreover there seems to be no valid reason to consider them wrong.<sup>17</sup>

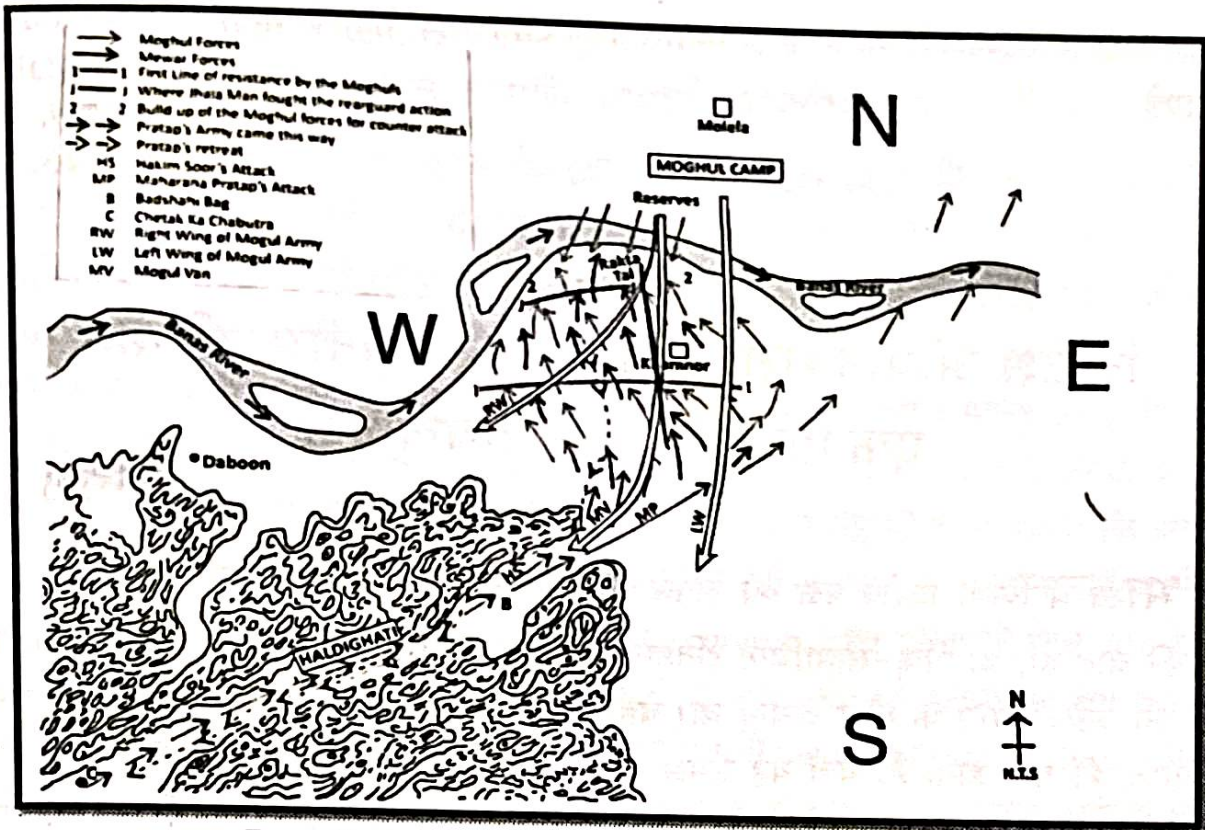
After the episode there are ample evidences to prove that small neighbouring states of Banswara, Dungarpur, Idar, Sirohi, Jalore, Bundi had cordial relations with Pratap which reflects the emergence of Pratap's leadership and prominence in Rajputana.<sup>18</sup>

Pratap had no intention to fight in the plain. He wanted Mughals to adventure in to the hills. But after initial skirmish in which Mughals ran away, might have propelled Pratap to further carry on attack in the plains which might finish off the battle instantly. The plan seemed to be successful until Mehtir Khan played a trick. It compelled Pratap in the mid day to evacuate the plains. It was only in the hills and through guerilla warfare that Pratap could have resisted with incomparable force. Pratap had come with a shift in the military tactic of previous Mewar rulers. He did not shut himself in Kumbhalgarh and made an attempt to exhaust enemy or thought of performing *Saka* if the things do not go accordingly. A new tactic of making hills as fort and taking help of terrain in manoeuvring is amply reflected. We find use of arrows and catapults by Bhils which disheartened the Mughal army even on 18<sup>th</sup> June and after it, till they stayed in Gogunda. This amply reflects the strategy of Pratap during 1576 C.E. and even after that.

And this was but the beginning of the long drawn out relentless warfare which Akbar perpetrated upon Mewar. Even during fight with Man Singh Pratap knew that it is just a beginning and not an end and more has to be tackled. But Pratap withstood the imperial might due to, the courage and bravery which he possessed being characteristic of Sisodiya Rajputs; support of nobility; hilly terrain of Mewar coupled with his own knowledge of its topography; unrivalled military genius; support of Bhils and common people throughout the war; and utilizing his resources carefully and properly.

To conclude, Pratap was successful in repulsing the military campaign of Akbar, led by Man Singh, in his territory from June 1576 C.E. to September 1576 C.E. He instilled a fear factor of Mewar army among Mughals.

Now Pratap had provided an alternative to Rajput Kingdoms to unite under the banner of Mewar. It should also we investigated that whether mansingh helped Rana indirectly.



Location of battle on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1576 C.E.

Source: *Maharana Pratap: The Hero of Haldighati* by Kesri Singh, Books Treasure, Jodhpur, 2010, p. 98

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