



Solstice at Panipat: 14 January 1761

Uday S. Kulkarni

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'Solstice at Panipat' is an authentic account of the third battle of Panipat fought between the Marathas and the Afghans on 14 January 1761.

The sun stood still as the mighty powers clashed for the empire of India in the killing fields of Panipat. Hundreds of thousands of men died in twelve hours in their titanic struggle for supremacy. One of them emerged victorious; yet it was a pyrrhic victory.

This is that story, researched meticulously by Uday S. Kulkarni from scores of primary and secondary sources in English, Persian and marathi, spread across many tomes dating back to the 17th century.

With a foreword by Ninad Bedekar, over two dozen maps and several colour photographs of personalities and locations; it is a lucid and balanced account of the last battle of Panipat.

Solstice at Panipat: 14 January 1761 Details

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From Reader Review Solstice at Panipat: 14 January 1761 for online ebook

Rohit says

This book starts with a comprehensive version of the events which led to the bloodiest battle of the 18th century. The battle itself is described by the author in a very lucid manner. The author has done a thorough research on this topic which can be understood by the reader when reading the book. A truly engaging story and a must read for all history/war enthusiasts.

The Marathas lost the battle not because of their poor military or fighting skills, but because the enemy was an outstanding military general who was himself the king of Afghanistan. The Maratha soldiers were also outnumbered in this battle and they had the burden of protecting the women going on a pilgrimage. Ridiculous right? Who takes women with them to the battle? Some of the blunders committed by Maratha general Sadashiv Rao bhau such as taking women to the battlefield, not forging an alliance with Sikhs and Jats, waiting too long which led to starvation in the army. These mistakes proved very costly in the end and around 100,000 Marathas (soldiers + non combatants) were killed in a single day . Even Bhau was a great military general but not as experienced or clever as the great Shivaji Maharaj or the undefeated Peshwa Bajirao. After reading this book, I couldn't help but think about all the 'ifs and buts' in this battle. Marathas captured Delhi just 10 years after this debacle which proves that even though they lost the battle, they didn't lose the war.

Nikhil Kadadi says

A very engaging book, astonishing account of the political, diplomatic manoeuvrings of the Maratha empire and the powers of India in the 17 hundreds. A detail account of the Panipat war and its implications. A must read for people interested in Indian & subcontinental history.

Salil Kanitkar says

Excellent piece of work!

Very detailed, very articulate. No over-dramatization - told in facts. Great read.

SANTOSH REDDY says

A well researched book written in a detached and unbiased manner. The third battle of panipat and its effects have a bearing on our national life to the present day. If sadashiv bhau / marathas had won the battle, the course of next 250 years would have been different. It would be an exaggeration ,but still i do feel that many geopolitical issues like partition of the Indian subcontinent would have been avoided if the marathas were victorious. But i do know very well that there is no scope for if s and but s in history

Manish Dasgupta says

Bhau was such a hero!

Siddarth Gore says

This is a very engaging book about all the political and strategic happenings in 18th century India. This was truly the era of the Marathas. We generally associate Panipat with the end of Maratha power. But that is not so. The Maratha power was dominant till 4 decades after that battle.

Nithya says

A must read, if you are interested in the bleak period of Indian history. A wonderful follow up, if you are into Maratha history. Obviously Jadunath Sarkar did an excellent work on documenting the early maratha growth, but this book throws light on the war, and strategy part of it. Highly recommended.

Arjun Subramaniam says

An engaging account of the Maratha Empire written in an extremely lucid and engaging style. What makes it even more remarkable is that the author is a practicing dentist and that speaks volumes for the passion with which research has been undertaken. A must-read for any military history enthusiast.

Shashishekhar Kashyap says

A veritable time machine, the book by Dr Uday S Kulkarni threw open doors to the not so distant past, hitherto little known to me. Probably I'm not the only one whose knowledge of the Marathas (and India) is so less. History in school was so dry.

It is my firm belief that, history or any story for that matter cannot be clearly described only in black and white, but always in shades of grey. The book too reinforces this belief.

It was a revelation of sorts to learn that the Marathas were responsible for the security of the Mughal empire. As was learning about the impervious relations between the Rajputs and the Marathas.

Malhar Rao Holkar and Najib Khan seem to be the key nobles of the time who made a difference. I couldn't help but wonder what would have happened if Malhar Rao Holkar would not have protected Najib Khan. Probably Abdali wouldn't have come to India, and the Marathas would have established much more control over the whole of North India. And this might have helped blocking the English from gaining a foot hold and later extending their presence in the whole of India.

Another salient point that could be gleaned is the fact that most of India was under constant turmoil during the same time European countries were experiencing relative calm in their mainland. This probably explains the lack of industrial advancement in India as compared to Europe and America though we were quite advanced in fields like architecture, medicine, etc.

The amount of research that has gone into writing the book, contrasts with the abysmal level of analysis and general lack of application by other well known contemporary historians.

The only criticism that I can think of is that in the midst of the narration, references are made asynchronously which made it difficult to follow. But then, just explaining things chronologically would have made it yet another high school textbook.

The book and the author are an inspiration for students of Indian history. And a must buy and read. (The author himself has published it. Hence, the recommendation to buy and support)

Hrishikesh says

An extremely engaging book. Very well researched and detailed. However, I cannot in all honesty, objectively comment on the writing style of the author - the story itself is so profound, and strikes such a deep chord, that I cannot give a fair and unbiased assessment of the writing style.

The Third Battle of Panipat has been a landmark event in Indian history. What makes this battle so different is that it was an attempt to prevent a foreign power (Ahmed Shah Abdali) from seizing the rule of India. In terms of political motives, it was an Indian success; despite Abdali's victory in the battle, he could never conquer India. Thereafter, India never faced an invasion from the North West.

This battle is also important because it is the sole moment in Indian history when the power-center of India was outside of the Ganga-Yamuna doab. Right from Rajgir-Pataliputra-Kannauj-Agra-Delhi, it is only during the period of the Maratha ascendancy that an all-India power ruled from outside of the doab.

Furthermore, the Maratha confederacy realized early on just how deeply intermingled political and cultural identities in India are. The battle was an attempt to protect the frontiers of Indian civilization; not just an Indian "empire".

For me, the chief reasons for defeat in the battle are:

1. Lack of unity within the Indian rulers. Jaipur and Jodhpur stayed away. Awadh sided with the Abdali. The Rohillas actively fought against the Marathas. The Punjab states were not united.
2. Logistically issues. Lack of funding and resources. Inability to adjust to the north Indian winter. Carrying a large number of non-combatants.
3. Lack of unity within the Maratha army. Rivalries between Holkar-Scindia. Lack of trust in Ibrahim Khan Gardi.
4. Inability to adapt to a different form of warfare. The traditional guerrilla techniques used by Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj - and later by Peshwa Bajirao I - were ineffective in the plains of north India.

There are far too many lessons in this battle for contemporary India. Even today, we show a remarkable lack of unity in the face of external threats. And these threats are existentialist; we cannot afford to trivialize them.

What depresses me is the fact that even today, blame-games do not end, and events of 1761 are used to further extend regional and castist differences. It is essential to realize that it was these very differences that presented a weak India, open to exploitation from without.

These lessons have left a deep imprint on my mind. And when we ride out again from our city to stake a claim for India, we shall be much smarter, learn from the mistakes of our ancestors and create a stronger and more prosperous nation.

Amit Shrivastava says

book give very fine details for the reason of war. Initial chapter explain about chatrapati family. One of the reason that writer has given for the war is border issue of India with afghan king. one thing that I didn't find accurate is King Hemu details which writer first describe as general of afghan king (Sher shah suri) during 2 panipat war, but as a fact he was the king at that time. Writer has mentioned that north India was describe as Hindustan by Martha's .

Overall book is very good to know about panipat war, its reason , about Ahemad shah abdali, N how Martha's had struggled.

Vedvrat Shikarpur says

An excellent treatise on the war of Panipat. The book is a neutral account written and in no way exemplifies or puts blame of the defeat on one. It also gives very realistic viewpoints on the war and the diplomacy around it, commenting how the outcome of the war led to the entry of the British in Indian confederation.

The book is simple and provides quantitative evidences to all its statements and articulations. An insightful read to those wishing to read up on the Peshwas, Maratha history in its splendour, medieval war methods and strategies of India and mainly for those looking for a book that tells a historic tale in a very interesting retelling.

Kudos to the author Uday Kulkarni for this one!

Samir Bodkhe says

its a good book.Seems balanced and gives a background before the epic battle.

Srinidhi Kasagar says

Hats off to the author for providing such a detailed history about 3rd battle of panipat. Yes, Sadashiv Bhau is indeed the Abhimanyu of Mahabharatha!!

Kedar Kulkarni says

Tedious beginning. Keeping track of multiple characters and timelines gets unnerving at first. From 2nd part onward, they start converging and it all pays off in the final part. The final part has amazing description of circumstances around the battle. And the description of the battle itself is kinetic.

Great book. Has extensive citations and a balanced perspective. This one's for keeps.
