

# MAHARANA PRATAP



The  
Invincible Warrior  
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# Maharana Pratap: The Invincible Warrior

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# Preface

## Timeline

### Mewar rulers

Maharana Sanga (Sangram Singh I)	r. 1509–27
Rana Ratan Singh	r. 1527–31
Rana Vikramaditya	r. 1531–37
Maharana Udai Singh II	r. 1537–72
Maharana Pratap Singh	r. 1572–97
Maharana Amar Singh I	r. 1597–1620
Maharana Karan Singh	r. 1620–28

### Mughal rulers

Babur	r. 1526–30
Humayun	r. 1530–40
	and 1555–56
Akbar	r. 1556–1605
Jahangir	r. 1605–27

Shah Jahan                                  r. 1628–58

### **Major battles**

Battle of Khanua between                          1527

Maharana Sanga and Emperor

Babur

Siege of Chittor by Bahadur                          1535

Shah of Gujarat

Siege of Chittor by Emperor                          1567

Akbar

Battle of Haldighati between                          1576

Maharana Pratap of the Mughal

army led by Man Singh of

Amber

Battle of Dewair between                          1582

Maharana Pratap and the Mughal

army

### **Major Mewar Battles**

1303: Siege of Chittor by Sultan Alauddin Khilji

1527: Battle of Khanua between Maharana Sanga and Mughal emperor Babur

1534–35: Siege of Chittor by Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat

1567–68: Siege and capture of Chittor by Mughal Emperor Akbar

1576: Battle of Haldighati between Maharana Pratap and Mewar forces against Emperor Akbar's Mughal army led by Raja Man Singh

1582: Battle of Dewair in which Maharana Pratap defeated the Mughal forces

# Prologue

The horses were saddled and waiting at the outskirts of the rugged fort of Gogunda, nestled in the hills of Mewar. Everything was ready for Prince Pratap's quick and quiet departure. But before he left, there was one last thing to do. Bending down to gather up some earth from the ground, he applied a pinch on his forehead, and tied the rest in a piece of cloth which he tucked away in a corner of his turban. Wherever fortune would take him, he would carry the soil of his beloved Mewar with him.

Within the ramparts of Gogunda, the funeral rites of Mewar's ruler and Pratap's father, Maharana Udai Singh II, were taking place. As the eldest son, and widely regarded as the most able and gifted, the thirty-one-year-old Prince Pratap should have succeeded him, but the dying Rana had declared that his chosen heir was Pratap's younger half-brother, Prince Jagmal, born of his favourite wife. Prince Pratap, refusing to squabble over the throne of Mewar with his half-brother – a move which could have plunged Mewar into civil war – decided to leave quietly with his small retinue, while everyone was busy with the royal funeral. But even as he gathered up the reins and mounted his horse, several of his father's senior courtiers and kinsmen suddenly arrived and stopped him. They told Prince Pratap that he was the people's favourite as well as theirs, and that as Maharana Udai Singh's eldest son he was now their king.

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Pratap's absence at his father's funeral had not surprised the crowd of mourners – convention decreed that the successor to the throne did not join his predecessor's funeral cortege, and it was assumed that as the eldest son he would be in the palace inside the fort, awaiting the hour of his enthronement. What was noticed, however, was the absence of Prince Jagmal.

Some senior Mewar nobles, among them Rawat Kishan Das of Salumber and Rawat Sanga of Deogarh, hastened back to the palace in search of

him.<sup>1</sup> They found Jagmal seated on the ceremonial Mewar gaddi (throne) reserved for the Maharana of Mewar. Two of the nobles then politely but firmly took Prince Jagmal by his arms – one on each side – and as they did this, they declared loudly for all to hear, ‘You have made a mistake, Maharaj, that place belongs to your brother.’ They then marched him to a seat just a little removed from the throne, where a ruler’s brothers would traditionally sit in the court. White with rage and humiliation, Jagmal shook himself free of the nobles and immediately left the hall, and subsequently the fort of Gogunda.

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Sunset was approaching. Since the coronation ceremony had to be performed before nightfall, Pratap was hastily escorted to the nearby Mahadeo stepwell on the outskirts of the fort, where there was a flattish stone that was the right height for him to be ensconced upon. Seated on it, Pratap received the ceremonial anointment from Mewar’s leading noblemen Rawat Krishna Das of Salumber and Rawat Sanga of Deogarh, the kingdom’s Brahmin priests, as well as the Bhil tribal chieftains of Oguna and Undri, whose presence was essential to the time-honoured enthronement ceremony in Mewar.

Pratap was now ruler of Mewar, formally its 54th Custodian, with the title of Maharana, ruling a kingdom with a position of pre-eminence among Rajput states, and a long and illustrious history of valour. Still seated on the stone – which would henceforth become a symbol of kingship for his successors – Maharana Pratap received the pledge of allegiance and loyalty from the men present. Then, almost immediately, he rode out with them for the traditional succession hunt known as ‘the shikar of Aheda’ where the new ruler, according to ancient Mewar custom, was expected to hunt wild boar as an offering to the goddess Gauri. Success during this shikar was seen as an omen for the future of a newly anointed ruler’s reign. The Aheda was also an opportunity for the new Maharana to display his skills as a rider and marksman, and his familiarity with the thickly forested hills of Mewar, teeming with tigers, leopards and other wildlife.

If an oracle had been present on that coronation day in 1572, he or she may have declared that a stone for a throne, and the open-air anointment, were

harbingers of the long years that Pratap would take refuge in Mewar's hills and forests, ruling his kingdom from there, as he held out against the forces of the mighty Mughal emperor Akbar. All that, however, still lay in the future.

As Pratap began his reign, Jagmal, furious with his brother, and enraged at losing the chance to be ruler of Mewar, found his way to the Mughal governor of Ajmer, and from there to the court of Emperor Akbar, where he was given the jagir fief of Jahazpur and a position of honour at the Mughal court. It was indeed an irony that Jagmal had sought refuge from the very Mughal emperor who had besieged and sacked Mewar's ancestral capital of Chittor just four years earlier.

Many Rajput rulers had previously offered allegiance to Akbar, but proud Mewar had refused, and already paid a price. Pratap, and the Mewar he now ruled, were willing to keep paying the price. In the years that followed, and indeed until his last breath, Maharana Pratap's resolve remained unbroken.

# 1. The Sun Kings

Prince Pratap was born in the great fort of Kumbhalgarh,<sup>1</sup> straddling the thickly forested hills of the kingdom of Mewar, on 9 May 1540 (or Jyeshtha Sudi 3, 1597 of the Vikram Samvat calendar). His mother, Queen Jayavanta Bai, was the first of Rana Udai Singh's more than twenty wives. She was a daughter of the Sonagra Chauhan clan chief Akhayraj of Jalore, and granddaughter of a renowned warrior chieftain, Rao Randhir.

Mewar was a well-established kingdom by that period, much eulogized for its tradition of valour in battle, and tracing its physical entity in the region to nearly one thousand years before Pratap's birth. The origin myth of the Sisodias, Mewar's ruling clan, categorized them as descendants of the Sun – Suryavanshi – and thus descendants of King Rama, the warrior-god-hero of the Indian epic, the Ramayana.

The clan had once been known as Guhila or descended from ‘one who is cave-dwelling’, because one of their ancestors, Guha, also referred to as Guhaditya, had grown up in a cave amongst forest-dwelling Bhil tribals in the Idar region in the south of Mewar in the mid-sixth century, after he had lost his own kingdom. Guhaditya had eventually wrested power from the Bhil chieftain and founded a new kingdom to replace his lost ancestral kingdom. Mewar traditions hold that Guhaditya had begun to rule around 568 ce or Vikram Samvat 625.

In the distant past, Pratap's ancestors' fortunes had varied as they lost and then regained territory, but from the late sixth century onwards they extended their mastery across what is now southern and south-eastern Rajasthan, and the kingdom of Mewar had consistently increased in size and importance.

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In 1303, the great fort of Chittor, the then seat of Mewar's rulers who used the patronymic Guhila, was besieged by Sultan Alauddin Khilji of Delhi.<sup>2</sup>

The ruler Rawal Ratan Singh and his men resisted fiercely for eight months before Chittor fell to Alauddin's forces. All the women inside the fort chose to end their lives with a fearsome act of self-immolation called jauhar, while the men fought with swords, spears and arrows, a fight that ended when the last defender lay dead – in the act called shaka that accompanies a jauhar. By 1326, Prince Hamir from the immediate collateral branch of the Guhilas that had its seat at the estate of Sisoda, had retaken Chittor and revived the kingdom of Mewar.

The ruling family thereafter used the patronymic 'Sisodia' more often than 'Guhila'. The earlier title of 'Rawal' too was replaced by that of 'Rana', which the Sisoda branch preferred, and which also meant 'king'. But from the time of Hamir, the title of Rana was used interchangeably with 'Maharana' – meaning Great King, (as is recorded in a copper plate inscription dating from Hamir's reign). It was this title of 'Maharana' that Pratap's father, Udai Singh II, held, and which was to be Pratap's one day.<sup>3</sup>

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Among the Mewar rulers most renowned for their valour on the battlefield was Maharana Sanga, Pratap's famous grandfather. He had led a coalition of rulers – both Rajputs and non-Rajputs – against Babur, the Mughal conquistador from Kabul and Samarkand, on the battlefield of Khanua in March 1527. It was a hard-fought battle, and Babur eventually emerged victorious when a severely wounded and unconscious Sanga was carried off from the battlefield by his men. Maharana Sanga had made preparations to challenge Babur again, but he died in January 1528, allegedly of slow poisoning by some of his own men who thought his plan to take to the battlefield again was suicidal.

Mewar suffered considerable turmoil and instability after Maharana Sanga's death, which left a void in regional leadership, and enabled Babur to consolidate his newly conquered territories in India. By the time of Babur's death in 1530, his kingdom stretched from the Indus river in the west to Bihar in the east, and from the Himalayas in the north to Gwalior in the south. Those territories then passed to Babur's successor, Humayun (r. 1530–40 and 1555–56).

Maharana Sanga's successor, his son Ratan Singh II had a brief but tumultuous reign of three years from 1528, and when he died in 1531 he was succeeded by Sanga's second surviving son Vikramaditya. A weak ruler, his arrogance had turned the Mewar nobles against him. During his brief reign from 1531 to 1537, Chittor was attacked twice by the forces of Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat – first in 1532, and then again from 1534 to 1535, when it was besieged. When the fortress could not hold out any longer, most of the women, non-combatant elders, infants and children within the fort entered a partially enclosed space ablaze with burning wood to commit jauhar, as had happened once before in 1303. Rana Vikramaditya and his younger brother Prince Udai had been taken to safety in Bundi before the siege, but the remaining fighting force rushed out of the gates of Chittor fort for their last battle, the shaka . Thus, a bare five years before the birth of Pratap, Mewar had suffered a devastating loss.

An inscription dating to 1535 ce engraved on a copperplate records that Maharana Sanga's favourite queen, the dowager Rani Karmavati (also called Karnavati), led 13,000 women and children into the jauhar flames. It was Rani Karmavati who had sent a rakhi to Mughal emperor Humayun, pleading with him to help her as a brother when Bahadur Shah of Gujarat attacked the fort. Humayun gallantly agreed to come to her aid, but could not reach Chittor in time. Another of Sanga's widows, Queen Jawahar Bai, according to James Tod's nineteenth-century work, *The Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* , is said to have personally faced the enemy, sword in hand, before she perished.

Bahadur Shah's occupation of Chittor was brief, as troubles in his own kingdom, the fightback by Mewar's forces, and the well-announced approach of Humayun's forces, led him to take the pragmatic step of leaving Mewar.

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But more troubled times lay ahead for Mewar. In 1536, Banbeer, a cousin by a non-Rajput mother, killed Rana Vikramaditya, occupied the throne, and plotted to murder Prince Udai, Maharana Sanga's youngest son and the legitimate successor to the Mewar throne. And thereby hangs one of the enduring tales of Mewar loyalty and sacrifice. Udai's devoted wet nurse,

Panna Dhai, on learning of Banbeer's murderous intentions and impending approach to the section of the palace housing Prince Udai, immediately smuggled the young prince out of Chittor fort. She then placed her own sleeping son in the royal cot, and watched him die by the usurper's sword.<sup>4</sup> Banbeer of course thought it was Udai he had killed, and that his path to the throne was now clear. Meanwhile, Panna Dhai ensured Udai was taken to safety via a circuitous route that went through the tracts of Deoliya, Dungarpur, Idar, and several valleys and heights of the Aravalli hills of Mewar. The story of Panna Dhai's supreme sacrifice is now part of Indian lore.

Udai found shelter with Assa Shah, the Jain governor of Kumbhalgarh, and for a while remained incognito to the world at large in Kumbhalgarh's hilly subregion, living without the trappings of a prince. (This was a fate some of his predecessors too had experienced, and one his grandchildren too would know a few decades later, in the same subregion of Mewar.) Prince Udai was thus at a fair physical distance from the murderer Banbeer, who was ensconced on the throne at Chittor.

By 1537–38 young Udai became the rallying point for several Mewar chiefs and nobles. They acknowledged him as their Maharana and offered him the allegiance due to their clan head-cum- king. On learning that Udai had survived, and was gaining support as the 'true' Maharana of Mewar, Banbeer sent an army against him but was unsuccessful in finding and capturing Udai. However, the kingdom that Udai was challenging the usurper Banbeer for was one that was much weakened.

The jauhar and shaka on 8 March 1535 at Chittor had decimated much of the aristocracy and the feudal landholders of Mewar, as well as its ordinary citizens. The turbulence of the series of short reigns after Maharana Sanga had also taken a heavy toll, leaving the administration and economy of Mewar in a shambles. But by the time Prince Pratap was born, the young Maharana Udai Singh II had greatly consolidated his position.

Shortly after Pratap's birth in 1540, Maharana Udai marched towards Chittor to occupy his ancestral capital. Banbeer set out with an army to stop him but Udai Singh won that decisive battle near Mauvli, and

Banbeer was either killed in battle, or fled. There is little historical clarity on this, but in any event, it is known that Banbeer never returned to Chittor. Thus, in mid-1540, Udai finally assumed the formal regalia of the Maharana of Mewar on the ancestral throne within Chittor fort. This victory for Maharana Udai immediately after the birth of Pratap was viewed as an auspicious omen by the older courtiers, who regarded it as a harbinger of Mewar's return to glory days. But those days were still far off.

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The Mughal ruler too was facing troubled times. Emperor Humayun found himself increasingly threatened by the Afghan warrior Sher Khan, who had established his hold over the Jaunpur, Bihar and Bengal areas. Sher Khan proclaimed himself ruler in 1538, defeated Humayun at Chausa in June 1539 and at Bilgram in May 1540 and took the throne of Delhi as Sher Shah (r. 1540–45). While Humayun sought refuge in Amarkot (also known as Umarkot), and then fled to Iran as an exile where he dreamt of regaining his patrimony, Emperor Sher Shah expanded his empire, and introduced many administrative, military, and revenue-related reforms. In 1544, when Prince Pratap was a mere four-year-old, Sher Shah turned his attention towards Mewar.

Mewar's Maharana Udai Singh II found his position vulnerable, with his administration and court still ridden with problems due to the previous decade and a half's troubled regional history. Moreover, the Maharana had also spent part of the early years of his reign in skirmishes with Rao Maldeo, the ruler of the neighbouring kingdom of Marwar.

Aware that war with Emperor Sher Shah would bring more hardship and destruction to Mewar, Maharana Udai Singh adopted a pragmatic approach. When Sher Shah's forces reached Jahazpur, situated on the vast plain that swept up to Chittor, Udai Singh sent an emissary to him with the keys of Chittor – a time-honoured royal way of asking for a peaceful settlement instead of war. Having himself suffered the price that battles and sieges exact, Sher Shah accepted the offer, stopped his advance 19 km short of Chittor, and appointed Shams Khan as his deputy in the region.

Temporarily, the possession of Chittor fort and the land around it passed to Sher Shah.

This loss shaped Udai Singh's nascent policy for the defence of his kingdom – consolidate where possible, and yield slightly and temporarily where inevitable, in order to fight another day.

It also influenced his decision to build alternative semi-capitals in less accessible parts of Mewar. Thus, Prince Pratap grew up in different subregions of the sprawling kingdom.

## 2. Prince of Mewar

Pratap was the eldest of twenty-five brothers and twenty sisters. Like most children of the Sisodia clan, he grew up with tales of the most revered ancestor of the Mewar rulers, Bappa Rawal, his valorous exploits, and his piety. According to Mewar tradition, Bappa Rawal, who ruled in the eighth century, had taken Chittor from its previous ruler, Man Mori, a king of the Mori dynasty.<sup>1</sup> He had then repelled Arab invaders, and established Chittor as the capital.<sup>2</sup>

Bappa Rawal had the blessings of his spiritual preceptor, the sage Harit Rashi, who initiated Bappa into Saivism, and encouraged him to construct the original building of the now-famous Eklingji temple to Lord Siva at Nagda, a former Mewar capital. Harit Rashi also invested Bappa with the title of Diwan (Regent) of Eklingji – a title borne by all the rulers of the line since that time. Bappa Rawal abdicated around 753 ce to live out his remaining years in prayer and meditation at Eklingji, where his memorial cenotaph still stands.

The tales of Bappa Rawal and other great ancestors were often told to the young princes of Mewar by important members of the royal court – the bards, who brought to life these legends of the past through their stirring poetry and ballads. The bards also narrated stories from the epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, with the lines between recent history and handed-down traditions blurred enough to collapse time into a strange continuum of past and present. The heroic protagonists of the Ramayana and Mahabharata were regarded as either direct ancestors, separated by several score generations, or – depending on specific lineal descent lines – as friends or former foes of direct ancestors.

It was through these tales that a kind of chivalric code was instilled in the young prince, as in generations of Mewar's inhabitants. Laying out the duties and expectations of an ideal king, this code also eulogized the virtues of loyalty and courage in the face of adversity; of skill and strength on the battlefield balanced with generosity towards the enemy and

chivalry towards all women and children; pride in one's ancestry; and the readiness to choose death before dishonour.

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As Prince Pratap grew up, however, it must have become as obvious to him as it was to the palace zenana that, while he was the eldest son of the Mewar ruler, he was not the favourite. That place belonged to one of Pratap's younger half-brothers, Prince Jagmal – the ninth of Maharana Udai Singh's sons. Jagmal's Bhati clan mother, 'Bhattiyani Rani' Dheer Bai, was the queen of Rana Udai Singh's heart.

Polygamy was common for the male warrior elite of the period, with matrimonial alliances often based on political expediency and clan alignments. However, while Rajput men could have several wives, Rajput women married only once, and if widowed – as often happened in an age that resorted to swords and daggers as swiftly as words to resolve problems – they could not re-marry. It is not recorded what the young prince Pratap thought about his mother's position vis-à-vis his Bhati clan stepmother, or indeed, about his other stepmothers.

In time, Pratap himself would have eleven wives and seventeen sons, but in keeping with the norms of his times, little would get recorded and publicly shared about the appearance, personality or private lives of his wives and five daughters. His first marriage to Ajabde Kanwar Parmar whose family held the fiefdom of Bijoliya, took place when he was about seventeen. She is popularly believed to have been a childhood friend and his lifelong true love. She became the mother of their eldest son, Prince Amar Singh (who would later rule Mewar as Amar Singh I) on 16 March 1559, and after Pratap's accession to the throne, formally held the title of 'Maharani'.

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Pratap's early childhood was spent mainly at Kumbhalgarh. Built on the site of an earlier fort by his ancestor Maharana Kumbha (r. 1433–68 ce), Kumbhalgarh was Mewar's most impregnable fort, and one of the many places of refuge for its rulers. Perched over 1000 metres high on the

Aravalli hills, its massive perimeter walls run for 36 km and in places are so thick that eight horsemen could ride abreast along the walls.

Kumbhalgarh stood between Mewar and the neighbouring kingdom of Marwar, affording spectacular 360-degree views of the surrounding countryside. (Of course, borders were fluid in those days, and frequently Mewar's territories extended into what is traditionally considered Marwar today, and vice versa.)

Within the forts of Kumbhalgarh, Chittor, and wherever else Pratap went when Maharana Udai Singh's entourage included him, his days were full. There were plenty of companions within the palaces and raolas (royal quarters), as well as in nearby village homesteads, and among the Bhils and Garasias who lived in the forests. As he grew up, young Pratap had friends from all the different castes and tribal kinship groups around him, and these close relationships continued throughout his life.

It was a trait that would not only make him a remarkable leader but also be of immense help to him in the years of hardship in the future – years during which his very life depended on the safety net provided by hill and forest dwellers whose loyalty he had won in preceding decades. The Bhil boys had shown him how to walk silently through the dense forests when stalking prey, how to camouflage oneself, and what wild plants were good to eat. They also familiarized him with the hidden tracks and caves in the thickly wooded hills of Mewar. He never forgot these lessons learnt in his boyhood.

Pratap also received the education traditionally seen as suitable for a Rajput prince. This included lessons in ethics and morality, the study of religious texts, Sanskrit, mathematics, astronomy, etiquette, music and appreciation of other arts as well as principles of governance and administration and, of course, the code of a warrior.

Lessons in warfare, weapons and horses were considered an essential part of a prince's education, and Pratap and his brothers had more than one teacher to instruct them on traditional battle formations, military strategy and tactics, and the skills of the hunt and chase. Then, there were lessons in swordplay, archery, and handling staffs and spears. Hours were spent holding metal or wooden Mewari shields in one hand, and a weapon in the

other, often wearing armour or other protective gear that made Pratap and his fellow sufferers hot and uncomfortable. The young Mewar princes also held contests over who could throw the heavy locally made spears with their broad iron blades the farthest.

Alongside jousting with spears and wooden staffs, and the use of various weapons, Prince Pratap also learned how to care for his own horses. Hunting – variously called akhet or shikar – and horseback sport like chaugan, akin to modern polo – were not just regarded as sport or leisure activities but an important part of a prince's education. Horses were crucial in an age when much of the fighting was done on horseback. Mustering cavalry units, howsoever small, was as vital as mustering men-at-arms from small fief holders. Young Pratap was taught how to recognize good points in horses, how to spot faults, and how to treat equine ailments with herbs. He learnt all this from teachers and through personal observation, but also by studying the many portable illustrated manuals known as *Shalihotra*, which focused on horses and were popular at Rajput courts by this time. Pratap would own many horses in his life, and much later, one of them would join his master at the battle of Haldighati, and become immortalized as Pratap's favourite horse, Chetak.

The romantic vision of valour, the tales of warriors who preferred death to dishonour, that Pratap had imbibed from the bards at court and even from the women of the zenana, would eventually be tempered somewhat – though by no means erased – by the brutal realities of his experiences in blood-soaked battlefields. But through participation in hunts and military expeditions from a very young age, the prince would, like other warriors, learn to overcome fear while facing an enemy, or at least hide his fear from the world.

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In whichever fort the Mewar ruler and his court were staying, the days would dawn and end with the offering of prayers at one of the shrines. In the evenings, as darkness fell, the members of the royal family and their attendants would gather in a hall. Large platters and trays holding small earthen and metal lamps containing oil with wicks made of either twisted cotton, or semul cotton tree yarn, or old cloth, would be brought in. After

everyone had saluted the light, and heard a devotional song or two, the royal family, the courtiers, and particularly the children, would settle down to listen to either music from court singers and visiting artists, or stories about bygone days. Both the music performances and the stories were at times thrilling accounts of victory and valour, and courage in the face of danger, and sometimes evocative of sadness as they told of sacrifice and tragedy in order to uphold the values of duty, justice, honour and responsibility. The recitals would keep all the listeners, young and old, spellbound, despite well-known tales being retold for the umpteenth time. Through these evening sessions of music and storytelling, Pratap and his brothers and sisters learnt the history of their ancestors, and the ancestors of many of the other kingdoms that were at that time Mewar's friends or foes.

Sometimes the bards or singers were local ones, and on other occasions there would be performers and bards from other areas who had won fame or renown, or else wished to do so at Mewar's court. Once a famous bard, who was from the community of genealogy keepers called Charans, had requested that all weapons be left outside the audience hall where the ruler and his family and courtiers were sitting. Pratap and his brothers and half-brothers had rolled their eyes at what they saw as pretentious behaviour on the part of the old bard. The recital began. The whole court became engrossed. No one could later be sure of how it had happened, but at a particular passage, Pratap found his own sword arm, and that of everyone around him, had involuntarily flown to his empty sheath – so evocative and stirring had been the scene created by the bard's words.

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Maharana Udai Singh sometimes moved with his entire court to different parts of his kingdom, whose topography ranged from the flat plains surrounding Chittor fort, watered by the Gambhiri river (a tributary of the Banas river), to the densely forested Aravalli hills where he had refortified the forts of Gogunda and Kumbhalgarh. The Mewar plains, which extended eastwards towards Jaipur and Delhi,<sup>3</sup> were agriculturally rich, their fertile tracts and valleys irrigated by other tributaries and sub-tributaries of the Banas – like the Berach, Wagan, Khari, Gambhiri and

Morel.<sup>4</sup> The rich alluvial soil resulting from this river system yielded excellent crops. The lush greenery of Mewar's plains and hills was in sharp contrast to the harsh desert terrain of its neighbouring kingdom, Marwar.

Maharana Udai Singh's habit of moving base throughout his kingdom helped ensure good administration and control over his territory. These moves took place amidst great bustle and organized chaos. Outriders would be sent to the selected fort where the Maharana intended to spend the next few months, or years, while slower moving advance parties – each with their defined roles and duties – would set out according to predetermined schedules to ensure everything was in readiness for the royal party when they arrived. Enormous amounts of food and provisions, tents and awnings, weapons, religious impedimenta, vats of oil and ghee, fodder, ropes, implements and tools would be checked, replenished and packed by trusted retainers, under the supervision and control of one of the queens, including Pratap's mother.

Pratap always looked forward to these journeys which took several days. Along the way there would be opportunities for exploring the terrain, good riding and hunting, and convivial evenings around the campfire as the bards entertained the royal party with recitations of their stories and poetry.

The hilly forests of Mewar abounded in a variety of wildlife, a fact hard to imagine looking at the denuded hills today. As paintings and photographs show, it was a process that seems to have begun only in the first part of the twentieth century. Mewar chronicler Fateh Lal Mehta, writing at the end of the nineteenth century noted: 'Deer of many species are found among the mountains and forests. Wild boars, hyenas, jackals, hares, porcupines, monkeys, wolves, foxes and bears are also found. The tiger is found in some places, while panthers are numerous. There are many kinds of birds, including parrots, vultures, hawks, herons, cranes, partridges, pigeons, peacocks, wild ducks.'<sup>5</sup>

According to Erskine's *Imperial Gazetteer of India* compiled in 1908, chital deer, blackbuck, nilgai, hare, partridge, sand grouse and other game birds and fowls were found in more open countryside, and Mewar's

numerous ponds, lakes and streams abounded in fish, with crocodiles often found in the larger lakes.

Numerous inscriptions record that the hilly region of Mewar and the forests of Kumbhalgarh and Chittor abounded in tall trees of the salar, dhaو, khadira and dhak varieties, while the defiles of Mewar and Hadoti were full of trees like the mango, babul, bar, dhak and gular.<sup>6</sup>

Not all the land was forested, of course, and as Prince Pratap knew well, Mewar's farmers grew two crops a year. The sialu, corresponding to the rain fed kharif crop of northern India, that was harvested in autumn, produced maize, millet (jowar), sesame, cotton and sugar cane. The winter-sown rabi crop, known in Mewar as unalu, consisted of wheat, barley, gram and poppy, and was harvested in spring.

For the princes and their companions, their shikars were a time-honoured way to scout territory and learn the lay of the land, while the ruler and his ministers also used these journeys to learn about local problems and redress them, and to gather intelligence about discontent and possible rebellions.

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Despite his privileged upbringing, Prince Pratap never enjoyed his father's affection as a boy because of Maharana Udai Singh's preference for the children of the queen he loved best – his Bhattiyani clan wife, Dheer Bai. No doubt the Rana's favourite wife put pressure on him to declare her own son Jagmal as his heir, but Udai Singh's indifference to Pratap may also have sprung from his reluctance to acknowledge that Jagmal was a pale shadow to Pratap, and that Udai Singh's eldest son was a better warrior and rider, a keener student, a wiser decision maker, more courteous and even-tempered and far better liked by the nobles as well as the common people. In his eagerness to please Dheer Bai, Rana Udai Singh was perhaps blind to the virtues of Pratap and the faults of Jagmal.

As a result, Pratap did not receive from his father the respect and privileges that were his due as the eldest son and heir apparent. For example, when Pratap was living in Chittor as a youth (according to a later

text, the *Amarsar*, written in the reign of Pratap's son, Maharana Amar Singh by Pandit Jivadhar<sup>7</sup>) arrangements were made for Prince Pratap to live in a village near the sprawling base of Chittor's fort. He was attended by just a small contingent of ten Rajputs. This was scarcely the norm for the firstborn son of the ruler of Mewar, who would normally have lived in the designated Kunwar-pada Ro Mahal (palace of the prince) within Chittor fort, and had a much larger retinue attending on him. The rations allocated to him from the royal stores were frugal, barely enough for his men and himself. Pratap fell into the habit of eating his meagre meal sitting alongside his men. His ability to take hardship in his stride would be to his advantage in later years, when he would have to live in conditions of severe adversity.

During this period of his life, Prince Pratap won popular acclaim in an expedition against the Chauhans of the Vagar area, in which Karamsi Chauhan, a cousin of the Chauhan chief Sanwaldas, was killed in battle on the banks of the river Som. The victory brought a substantial tract of the Vagar part of south-eastern Rajasthan under Mewar's control. The *Amarsar*, and a later work called *Amar-Kavya-Vamshavalli*, penned in the reign of a seventeenth-century descendant, Maharana Raj Singh, by Ranchod Bhatt, also lauds Pratap for defeating the Rathores of the Salumber area, bringing their part of the Chhappan subregion into Mewar's control; and for his victory over the Bali area in the Godwar part of neighbouring Marwar by 1562 ce. However, records from Maharana Udai Singh's reign give very little information about Pratap's exploits and achievements, nor the exact dates when these occurred. This may have been a deliberate omission by court archivists, who perhaps took their cue from Maharana Udai Singh's attitude to his firstborn son. It may also have been because Pratap was often not present at court ceremonials, and thus his achievements as one of the many sons of the ruler could be left out of official court records.

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Well before Pratap reached adulthood, Maharana Udai Singh and his advisers had already realized the relatively vulnerable position of Mewar's ancestral capital Chittor, vis-à-vis attacks from the Delhi Sultanate,

Gujarat, Malwa and Marwar, which had been a threat over the previous couple of centuries too. The long-established trade and campaign routes from Delhi to Gujarat, and from Delhi to the Deccan via Malwa, ran through the territories of Mewar, and that made other powers pursue either an alliance with Mewar or its subjugation.

By 1556, Marwar and Mewar were once again opponents. When Haji Khan, a former slave administrator of Emperor Sher Shah Suri, and by that time master of Ajmer and Nagaur, was attacked by Rao Maldeo of Marwar, Mewar's Maharana Udai Singh (and Bikaner's ruler, Rao Kalyanmal) helped Haji Khan in beating back Maldeo's forces. However, subsequently Udai Singh and Haji Khan fell out and Haji Khan joined forces with Marwar's ruler, Maldeo, against Udai Singh of Mewar. Their combined troops defeated the forces of Mewar at the battle of Harmada in January 1557. (In this battle Mewar was assisted by the chieftain Jaimal of Merta and his troops. Eleven years later, as we will see in Chapter 4, Jaimal would once again come to Udai Singh's aid, and would sacrifice his life for Mewar in March 1568 during the siege of Chittor.)

In 1559 Udai Singh began to establish a second capital in the Girwa area of Mewar, located in the secure fastness of the Aravalli hills, west-south-west of Chittor. This came up on the banks of a pre-existing man-made lake called Pichhola. Pichhola lake dated back to the time of Rana Lakha in the fourteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Facilities to move to this new capital were provided to several families. The same year, work began on excavating another lake there, to provide enough irrigation to bring a large area under cultivation. Called Udai Sagar – a name it still bears – the lake was completed in 1562. The Maharana's Solanki clan wife, Sajja Bai, built the Prahlad Rai-ji temple on the banks of Udai Sagar, while Princess Kika Bai, daughter of Udai Singh's favourite queen Dheer Bai built the 'Bhattiyani Chauhtta' market street in Udaipur, to honour her mother. (The area remains a thriving market even today.) Mewar's 'second' capital, named Udaipur after the Maharana, would soon become the main capital of the Sisodias of Mewar. It would remain so until the merger of the state into India nearly four centuries later.

Udai Singh had observed and learnt from Sher Shah's temporary occupation of Chittor and its surrounding administrative divisions. On Sher Shah's orders, wells had been dug in the Chittor area and steps taken to make land revenue collection and other administrative measures more efficient during the two years that Chittor had been under the Afghans. Emulating Sher Shah, Maharana Udai Singh too now paid attention to providing lakes, embankments, wells and other waterbodies to both beautify his new capital and attract families of farmers and traders to settle there and make the city prosperous.<sup>9</sup>

However, while Udai Singh concentrated on his new capital, on the general revitalization of his administrative system, and improving trade and commerce in his kingdom, problems with his neighbours increased.

The countdown for the fall of Chittor fort had begun.

### 3. The Fall of Chittor

While Pratap was growing up in Mewar, the Mughal emperor Akbar had been consolidating and expanding the territories he had inherited in 1556 from his father, Humayun, and it became increasingly evident to him that the subjugation of Mewar was essential to his grand plan. To understand why, we must digress a bit, and describe the context within which Akbar inherited the Mughal throne, and then came to set his sights on Maharana Pratap and his great fort of Chittor.

Akbar's childhood had seen plenty of upheaval and drama as his father fled in exile when he lost his throne to Sher Shah. Humayun and his pregnant wife first found shelter at Amarkot in the Thar–Parkar desert of Sindh, where Akbar was born in October 1542 in the fortified palace of Amarkot's Hindu Rajput ruler. The Mughal exiles then moved on through parts of Afghanistan, until Humayun and his retinue found a place at the court of Shah Tahmasp, the ruler of Iran, in August 1544. Finally battle victories and fortune brought Humayun back on the imperial throne at Delhi in July 1555. He was not fated to enjoy the crown for long: he died of a broken neck on 27 January 1556, slipping on the steps as he ran down from his library to answer the call for prayer.

When news of Humayun's death reached his heir apparent, Akbar was campaigning against the Afghans at Kalanaur (in Punjab's present-day Gurdaspur district). Humayun's loyal general and companion-in-arms Bairam Khan, who had already been charged with the guardianship of the young prince, immediately arranged for Akbar's coronation (r. 1556–1605).

The new emperor of Hindustan was just fourteen. And he faced an uncertain future, with only a small force at his command, a tenuous Mughal hold over Punjab, and the prompt occupation of the Agra–Bayana area by the Afghans as soon as they learnt of Humayun's death.

Meanwhile, Hemu, the capable and ambitious Hindu minister and general of Sultan Adil Shah, the Afghan Sur dynasty ruler, who had claimed the mantle of the late Sher Shah Suri, marched towards Delhi and defeated Tardi Beg Khan, Delhi's Mughal governor, at the battle of Tughlaqabad, on 7 October 1556. Sultan Adil Shah was in Chunar at the time, and Hemu decided to proclaim himself the ruler. With the support of the Afghans who accompanied him, Hemu entered Delhi – a city that was then facing a terrible famine – and raised the imperial canopy over his own head as King Vikramaditya. However, within less than a month, Hemu was called upon to take the field against Akbar. The two armies clashed at the battlefield of Panipat on 5 November 1556.

The fiercely fought Second Battle of Panipat took a crucial turn when Hemu was struck in the eye by an arrow and lost consciousness, leaving his soldiers leaderless. Bairam Khan then pressed the advantage: he captured and then beheaded the wounded Hemu, after Akbar refused to take his sword to a dying man, and presented his head to Akbar whose forces now reoccupied Agra and Delhi.<sup>1</sup>

The Second Battle of Panipat brought to a decisive close the quest for supremacy between the Afghans and Mughals, and ensured the position of the young Mughal Emperor Akbar.<sup>2</sup>

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The initial years of Akbar's reign, with the young emperor advised and aided by his father's loyal inner circle, saw him consolidate and strengthen his position within a relatively short period. Mughal territorial control was expanded, even as internal and external enemies and rivals were dealt with. By the end of 1556, Punjab and the Gangetic doab were part of Mughal territory, while Mewat and the Alwar area fell to Akbar in 1557. In 1558 Akbar took the Jammu region in the north of the empire. In 1561 Rajasthan's strategically located water fort of Gagron became part of Akbar's realm, when Akbar wrested it from Malwa's ruler. This unique water fort or jala durg, so called because it is surrounded by the waters of the Kali Sindh and Ahu rivers which made it difficult to breach, had witnessed many valiant fights to the death, including two jauhars and shakas, a hundred years earlier. Malwa's ruler Baz Bahadur, with his

principal seat at Mandu, fled the battlefield.<sup>3</sup> By 1561, Gwalior, Jaunpur and Ajmer had also been absorbed into the Mughal Empire. Control of Ajmer provided Akbar a gateway into Rajputana, and it was to occupy a special place in the emperor's life. Akbar first visited it in 1562, and continued to do so regularly thereafter.<sup>4</sup>

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who also got his crown and kingdom at a young age, the young Akbar learned his politics, survival strategies and diplomacy the hard way. By 1562, after the first six turbulent years of his reign, he had formed his own opinions and decisions on military and administrative matters, was ready to take full control of his empire into his hands, and shake off his over zealous guardians and mentors. His former guardian, Bairam Khan, having lost the young emperor's favour and trust, had been urged to go on pilgrimage, and had been murdered in January 1561 by a Lohani Afghan at Patan in Gujarat, en route to Mecca.<sup>5</sup>

Akbar also put an end to interference in state affairs of the Atkah Khail (brigade of foster-parents), particularly his foster-mother Maham Anga and her son Adam Khan Kokah.<sup>6</sup>

In 1562 Emperor Akbar cemented an alliance with the ruler of Amber, Raja Bharmal, and this marked the beginning of an important phase, both for the Mughal Empire and for many Indian kingdoms. For, following the alliance with Amber, several other Rajput states came to an understanding with the Mughal court. Thus, along with a vigorous expansion of imperial frontiers evolved Akbar's 'Rajput policy' (as historians later described it): the offer of friendship sealed with matrimonial alliances, and an acceptance of Mughal sovereignty, with accompanying rewards of land and honours. The alternative was to face the might of the Mughal army. This policy, along with Akbar's absence of religious bigotry, willingness to reward merit, and various sound measures of governance brought several rulers of Rajputana into the service of the Mughal Empire and helped consolidate its foundations for the ensuing generations.

From 1562 onwards, Emperor Akbar used matrimonial alliances with princesses from various Rajput kingdoms, both for himself and later for

members of his immediate imperial family, as a means of enhancing mutual trust and goodwill, as well as obtaining numerous strong sword-arms in the service of the Mughal Empire. Akbar had already started enlarging the personnel in the Mughal Empire's system of government, and begun including Rajputs and other non-Mughals into imperial service, both civil and military, as administrators and military commanders. As part of this strategy, Akbar began to award select Rajput chiefs and kings with land revenue grants and honours known as mansab (with the system called mansabdari), along with court positions. He also allowed Rajputs submitting to him to keep their territories and kingdoms in fief as watan jagir, or home landholdings, and thereby gained their support and loyalty. In this way, the Rajputs became a strong sword-arm for the imperial Mughal armies. And by the latter part of the 1560s, Akbar was master of many parts of the subcontinent.

But some Rajput kingdoms still held out. In 1564, Marwar's ruler Rao Chandrasen, who had not bent to Akbar's will even after other members of his immediate royal family had done so, was expelled from Marwar.<sup>7</sup> It would soon be the turn of Marwar's neighbour, Mewar, which had marriage links with Marwar, to become the focus of Akbar's attention.

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Mewar enjoyed a special status among the Rajputana kingdoms, not just because of its thousand-year history but also because of the valour with which it had defended its independence. No doubt Akbar was regularly reminded by senior Mughal courtiers that Mewar's battle-hardened Maharana Sanga, father of its ruler Udai Singh, had created and led the confederacy that had almost defeated Akbar's grandfather, Babur, at the battle of Khanua in 1527 when the Mughal position in India was vulnerable.

The Mughals had another old grouse against Mewar. Babur claimed that even before the Battle of Panipat in 1526, Maharana Sanga had agreed to help him against Delhi's Sultan Ibrahim Lodi, but had gone back on his word. Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodi in that battle but the Mughals didn't forget what they saw as Sanga's betrayal. Mewar on its part completely rejected the Mughal claim that Sanga had ever agreed to help Babur.

But quite apart from old feuds, and the baggage of past history, Akbar had more compelling reasons for turning his attention to Mewar. For one, he knew that given Mewar's pre-eminent position among the Rajput kingdoms, his friendship with Mewar or his defeat of the state would have a huge influence on other Rajput rulers, and on potential rivals to his authority. More importantly, there were strategic reasons for Mughal control of Mewar – more than one crucial trade and campaign route, from Delhi to Gujarat where the major port of Surat was located, and from Delhi via Malwa on to the Deccan – ran through Mewar territories. It was vital that these routes be secured and controlled by the Mughal Empire, just as it was important for Akbar to strengthen his empire by gaining as many allies, friends and subordinates as he could.

In 1567 Akbar decided to move against the kingdom of Mewar. As a preliminary, Mewar's fort of Mandalgarh was occupied by Akbar's troops. It eventually became one of the twenty-six mahals, or subdivisions, that were placed under the Mughal administrative unit or sarkar of Chittor. When Maharana Udai Singh learnt of the advance of the Mughal forces, he convened a council of war, according to the nineteenth-century Mewar court chronicler Kaviraj Shyamaldas.

Kaviraj Shyamaldas's work, *Vir Vinod*, records that the Mewar nobles pointed out that neither the army nor the land had recovered from the previous wars and attacks by the Gujarat armies, and the years that the usurper Banbeer had held Chittor. Many renowned warriors had died at Khanua in 1527; yet others had died during the invasions and second siege of Chittor less than a decade after Khanua. Thus, many nobles advised that there should be a change of strategy, and the ruler and his family should leave Chittor fort, and confront Akbar's might from a different part of Mewar.

Most historical sources are silent on the views and whereabouts of the Maharana's various sons at this time. The *Vir Vinod* tells us that Prince Pratap was present at the council and volunteered to defend Chittor fort, but was overruled by his father. Some sources say that another son, Prince Shakti (aka Sakat) Singh, who was serving at Akbar's court prior to this, quit that imperial court and brought news of Akbar's intention of attacking

Mewar to his father.<sup>8</sup> The historian Gopinath Sharma held that Shakti Singh died in the subsequent siege of Chittor. In any event, there is no evidence of his return to the Mughal court, nor of his participation in any other activity after the siege of Chittor that followed. (But in Mewar legends and folklore, Shakti Singh appears again nine years later, in 1576, at a dramatic moment.)

Maharana Udai Singh, concurring with the advice of many of his nobles, then entrusted the defence of Chittor fort to a garrison, and left for the hills. Details are unclear from later texts, but from local lore it seems that for a while the Maharana was at Rajpipla, capital of the Guhilots of Rewakanta (in present-day Gujarat). Akbar sent a force there under Hussain Quli Khan to capture him, but they failed to do so. Udai Singh eventually made his way to his great hill fort of Kumbhalgarh which he used as his base along with the nearby fort of Gogunda.

The charge of Chittor's defence was given to the Rathore chief Jaimal 'Mertia' of Badnor. Jaimal, son of renowned warrior Veeramdeo of Merta, was a former chief of the fiefdom of Merta and a blood relative of the rulers of Marwar. (Jaimal was a cousin of poet saint Mira Bai from Merta, who had been married to Maharana Udai Singh's long-dead eldest brother.) When his Merta patrimony had been sequestered by the Marwar ruler, Rao Maldeo, and subsequently occupied by Mughal forces, Jaimal had found shelter and a place of honour at the Mewar court, which also bestowed estates, including Badnor, on him. When Mewar was threatened, Jaimal was at the forefront of its defence.

From this point onwards, in the absence of Udai Singh, the defence of Chittor was carried out by 8000 Rajput warriors under the overall command of Jaimal. The members of the valiant garrison defending Chittor included warriors like Rawat Sahidas Chundawat of Salumber (the clan chief of all the Chundawats), Rawat Duda of the Sangawat line, the Chauhan chiefs of Bedla and Kotharia, the Parmar chief of Bijolia, the Jhala chief of Sadri, the Sonagra ruler of Jalore and a Tanwar prince from Gwalior.

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The fort of Chittor, renowned for centuries across India, rose majestically above the plains. Its plateau summit was crowned by a continuous line of fortifications and other defensive features that included circular bastions, towers, crenels and merlons. Some buildings within Chittor fort had been built by long-ago rulers; others were relatively more recent, dating to the reign of Maharana Kumbha (r. 1433–68), Udai Singh's great-grandfather. Maharana Kumbha had also added a well-defended circuitous chariotway from the ground level to the flat plateau top, which was protected by a series of gates. These were Bhairon Pol, Hanuman Pol, Ganesh Pol, Jordla Pol, Lakshman Pol and Ram Pol. (Later, Padan Pol was built, and this needed to be passed before approaching Bhairon Pol).

Chittor fort itself contained many structures, for it was a combination of citadel and township, with accompanying waterbodies and shrines. The royal palace was typical of mid-fifteenth century Rajput civil architecture. It had been built by one of Kumbha's chief architect-artisans, Sutradhar Mandan, who was also the architect of Kumbhalgarh. The palace contained a series of apartments for the king and princes, besides an inner palace (raola or zenana) area reserved for the use of the women of the royal family and their servitors and attendants. The larger enclosed palace complex included public chambers, a picture gallery, a concert hall for music performances, the state treasury, the royal personal armoury, stables, storehouses, kitchen, temples and small shrines, and guardrooms. The complex was entered through the Badi Pol and the Tripoliya gate. There were also stables for horses and elephants, a hall for public audience, a temple to Siva, pillared corridors, multiple sets of courtyards, and the apartments of the heir apparent.

Chittor had two famed towers that were visible from a distance for anyone approaching the fortress-capital from the plains below. One had been built in 1448 by Udai Singh's great-grandfather, Maharana Kumbha. It was the 37-metre-high, nine-storeyed Vijaya Stambha (victory tower), commemorating his victory over the forces of Malwa and Gujarat led by Mahmud Khilji Malwa. It was covered with exquisite sculptures of Hindu deities and scenes from Indian mythology, and even an inscription bearing the word 'Allah'. The other, even older, was a 23-metre-high structure that had been raised in the twelfth century by a local Jain merchant called Jija,

as a symbol of Chittor's perpetually thriving trade and commercial activities. This tower, and its adjoining temple, honoured the first Jain Tirthankar, Lord Adinath, also called Rishab Dev.

The fort also had mansions for ministers and courtiers, and smaller homes for scribes, court poets, artists and workers. A bustling, crowded township area was set at a distance from the palace complex. The activities of its inhabitants were mainly based around the needs of the king and his court. All in all, Chittor was much more than a garrison fort, and even when the ruler left it, several women from the royal family usually remained at Chittor. This happened in October 1567 too. This time though, those who stayed, including part of the royal retinue, were undoubtedly well aware that if the fort of Chittor fell, they would join in the group immolation called jauhar.

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Chittor faced a long siege of over 120 days, that stretched from October 1567 to February 1568. The Mughal emperor arrived near the fort on 23 October and set up his imperial encampment to better supervise and lead the attackers. The Mughals erected gun batteries and raised rubble and stone platforms on which were placed their cannons and guns. An oft-repeated tale talks of Akbar offering a gold mohar (coin) for every basket of earth placed at a certain vital point – now called Mohar Magri (hill of gold) – because he wanted to raise it to a specific height to place a cannon on it!

The battle for Chittor was drenched in blood and gore, sound and fury, as the cannons and gun batteries were used with deadly accuracy by Akbar's Ottoman Turk master gunners. Akbar's forces had also laid mines along the massive defence walls of Chittor fort, and when these were detonated they not only caused breaches but also blew up scores of the men who had laid the charges. 'The quantity of gunpowder used was so enormous,' wrote one of Akbar's historians Maulana Ahmad, in the *Tarikh-i-Alfi*, 'that stones of fifty and a hundred mans were hurled to the distance of two and three kos . . . stones, corpses and limbs fell from the air.' But still, the Maulana concedes, the Mewar fighters showed a brave front, and the 'valiant Jaimal struggled bravely, inciting his men to fight and resist.'

Akbar personally led the prolonged assault on Chittor. At long last, a musket shot fired by the emperor himself killed the dauntless commander of Chittor's defence force, Jaimal, though Akbar did not immediately realize the identity of the man he had hit. According to some accounts, Jaimal was grievously wounded and died later,<sup>9</sup> after giving instructions for the defence of the fort to his compatriots.

Akbar's court historian, Abul Fazl, writing in the *Akbarnama*, recorded:

. . . H.M. (Akbar) perceived that a person clothed in a cuirass known as the hazār mīkhī (thousand nails) which is a mark of chieftainship among them, came to the breach and superintended the proceedings. It was not known who he was. H.M. took his gun Sangrām, which is one of the special guns, and aimed it at him . . . And in fact on the morning when the breeze of victory and dominion arose, it was ascertained that the Shāhinshāh's musket had reached Jaimal, the governor of the fort, and had at once destroyed both him and the fort.

Following Jaimal's death, and that of several other notable warriors, including Rawat Sahidas, who fell at the Suraj Pol gate to the east, a young warrior called Patta was given the task of commanding Chittor's defence. Patta was a scion of the Jagawat sub-clan of the royal Chundawats of Mewar, and held the fiefdom of Kelwa.

Despite a spirited and courageous defence, Chittor finally fell to the Mughal forces on 25 February 1568. The fall of Chittor was accompanied, for the third time in the fort's history, by the formidable rite of jauhar by the non-combatant women and children, and a fight to the finish by the male warriors. Among the women who entered the flames of jauhar were nine ladies of the Mewar royal family.

When Akbar saw the flames rising from parts of the fort that night, he was told that the women were immolating themselves, and that the next day would see the defenders take up their arms for the last and final fight of

their lives. Courageous to the end, Patta exhorted and led his comrades-in-arms valiantly, until he too fell between Hanuman Pol and Bhairav Pol. On the basis of earlier records, the historian G.H. Ojha noted in his *Udaipur Rajya ka Itihas* that Akbar later ordered the erection of two memorials commemorating the valour of Jaimal and Patta outside the chief gate of his fort at Agra. These memorials were later taken away to Delhi, and went into the possession of the Archaeological Survey of India.

Chittor was now open to Emperor Akbar. The subsequent sack of Chittor was accompanied by a massacre of the surviving populace of some 30,000 non-combatants, many of whom were peasants from surrounding areas who had sought shelter within the fort. The massacre was the first and, apparently, only such example of an absolute slaughter ordered by Akbar. According to Kaviraj Shyamaldas's nineteenth-century text *Vir Vinod*, out of the 40,000 peasants who were in the fort, 39,000 had died fighting, and Akbar ordered the killing of the remaining 1000. Whatever the true figure, the massacre has remained an unredeemed blot on Akbar's reign.

The capture of Chittor by Akbar proved to be the darkest spot in the reign of Maharana Udai Singh also, and yet another severe blow for the kingdom of Mewar within the space of a decade and a half.

Akbar, who removed the great gates of Chittor and had them taken away to his own fort in Agra, stayed at Chittor until 28 February 1568. Chittor was declared a sarkar (province) of the Mughal Empire, and placed under the charge of Asaf Khan, while Akbar returned to his own capital. Other important forts and power centres of Mewar like Mandalgarh, that had already fallen to the Mughal forces, were placed under the provincial administration of this Mughal sarkar of Chittor. Akbar's armies overran some other parts of Mewar's territory including Badnor, Shahpura and Rayala.

After the conquest of the Mewar capital, many neighbouring territories also came under the Mughal sphere of influence and/or the direct control of the Mughal Empire. And Emperor Akbar's Rajput policy proceeded to draw in new adherents. In 1569 Bundi fell to the Mughals; and despite strong resistance by the Bundi ruler, Rao Surjan, on 24 March that year, the fort of Ranthambore came into Akbar's hands after the Bundi ruler

agreed to peace terms.<sup>10</sup> One of the clauses specifically recorded that Bundi princesses would never be given in marriage to the Mughals.

In November 1570, Rao Chandrasen of Marwar, Rao Kalyanmal of Bikaner and Prince Udai Singh, Chandrasen's elder brother, presented themselves before Akbar at Nagaur. The latter two accepted Akbar's suzerainty. But Chandrasen, wary of the machinations of his rival brothers, and unwilling to accept Akbar's sovereignty, decided not to, and continued his protracted struggle against the might of Akbar. Meanwhile, Akbar entered into matrimonial alliances with Bikaner and Jaisalmer, and Jaisalmer's ruler submitted to Akbar. In 1572 the plains of Sirohi were attached to the Mughal Empire, while the ruling family took to the hills.

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Though the Mughals had captured Chittor and much of the flat and agriculturally prosperous plains of Mewar, besides some other key strongholds of Mewar, a substantial part of the kingdom was still held by Maharana Udai Singh. The Mewar treasury also did not fall into Mughal hands. Maharana Udai Singh retreated further into the relative safety provided by the higher terrain of Mewar, within the Aravalli hills. Fortuitously for the Mewar ruler, the Aravalli range, with an average elevation of over 600 metres above mean sea level, and summits exceeding 1000 metres, provided its highest elevation north-west of Udaipur, between the forts of Kumbhalgarh (1206 metres) and Gogunda (1090 metres), both already favoured retreats of Udai Singh.

Maharana Udai Singh knew Kumbhalgarh, or Kumbhalmer as it was also called, very intimately. He had grown up in and around that fortress stronghold, cared for by the fort's Jain governor Assa Shah, during part of his early youth. Like Chittor, Kumbhalgarh was substantially rebuilt and fortified by his ancestor, Rana Kumbha. Situated on a hill peak of the Aravalli range, Kumbhalgarh had a commanding view of the Aravallis to its east, south and west, and Marwar's desert terrain to its north-west. A Kumbhalgarh inscription of 1460 ce records that Kumbha's master architect Mandan began work here in 1448 ce. This fort had served as Rana Kumbha's second and more favoured capital.

Kumbhalgarh, Gogunda, and many of Mewar's forts that lay in the protective encirclement of the Aravalli hills had certain features in common, and these were to serve both Udai Singh and later Pratap well. Their natural features, which included rocks, hillocks and dense forest, were deliberately exploited to make the forts almost impregnable.

At Kumbhalgarh, as at Chittor, layers of battlements and bastions, seven fortified gates and a winding approach to the upper reaches gave additional security to the main habitational area of the fort. The formidable bastions were designed to remain inaccessible to an attacking enemy. And, as mentioned earlier, the high battlement walls at Kumbhalgarh were broad enough for several horsemen to ride abreast across it. Enclosed within these walls were a palace, several temples, a granary, stables for horses and elephants, an armoury for small arms, gunpowder and swords, and a larger armoury for cannons. There were also barracks for soldiers, and several storage buildings for grain, oil, salt, food, and fodder for horses.

The ruler's palace at Kumbhalgarh was situated, citadel-like, within an inner fort. As at Chittor, the secluded zenana apartments were separated from the general palace area by a narrow gallery. Both areas were self-sufficient, with several sets of apartments, halls, temples, stores and watchtowers. Kumbhalgarh had a number of water tanks and kunds, mainly located in the lower reaches where agriculture could be carried out. Interconnected reservoirs ensured irrigation facilities. Most houses, temples and other structures were located on the higher contoured levels, but below the citadel.

Gogunda too, was a fort with a long history, and like Chittor and Kumbhalgarh, the Maharana's great-grandfather Kumbha had renovated it in the fifteenth century and added to its palace and fortifications. As was the case with Kumbhalgarh, Gogunda's natural terrain and location within the fastness of the hills enhanced its protection. Gogunda had not formerly been a royal abode, but now the Maharana, after his tactical retreat from Chittor, made Gogunda fort his co-capital. Here he remained, successfully evading capture by the Mughals. And it was here that Maharana Udai

Singh II, the fifty-third ruler of his line to reign over Mewar, died four years after the fall of Chittor, in February 1572.

## 4. A Crown of Thorns

Prince Pratap Singh's coronation in Gogunda, on 28 February 1572, took place just hours before the full-moon night of Holi. It was, thus, regarded as an auspicious day for the fifty-fourth ruler of Mewar to begin his reign, even though the kingdom he inherited was in peril and his own position on the throne challenged.

While the majority of Mewar's nobles offered Maharana Pratap ceremonial allegiance and pledges of loyalty, Pratap's succession caused deep bitterness within a section of the royal family, led by Pratap's half-brother Jagmal. Relations between the two had been hostile since their childhood, and they both knew that no resolution was possible if both of them remained in Mewar. As mentioned earlier, on the day of Pratap's coronation, Maharana Udai's ninth son, Jagmal, who had briefly occupied the throne till he was forced off it by the nobles and chiefs supporting Pratap, left Mewar abruptly. He continued to insist on his claim to the throne of Mewar, and after travelling for a while arrived at the court of the Mughal emperor, where he sought redress. Akbar, who just four years earlier had besieged and cruelly sacked Mewar's capital Chittor, treated Jagmal with the honour he felt was due to a scion of Mewar, the premier Rajput kingdom. He bestowed on him the jagir of Jahazpur, and would later give him estates in Sirohi and Marwar as well. Meanwhile, following Pratap's hurried and rather makeshift succession ceremony at Gogunda, a second and more grand and formal coronation ceremony was held at Kumbhalgarh on 3 March 1572, which was attended by many more people, including the ruler of Marwar, Rao Chandrasen.

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At the time of Pratap's accession, several parts of Mewar remained under Mughal occupation. But the Mughals found that not having full control over Mewar prevented them from properly carrying on trade and commerce along the natural routes connecting Delhi and Agra with Gujarat and its ports, and with parts of Malwa too. If the Mughals were

unhappy with this state of affairs, so were the Mewaris, who found that the partial occupation and cordoning off of Mewar's territory by Akbar's commanders severely strained the resources of their state. Mewar also suffered from being effectively surrounded to its north, east and west by Mughal territory, or by territories that had accepted Mughal paramountcy. Among these were many of the kingdoms that now form part of the present-day state of Rajasthan. These included Amber (also called Dhoondhar), Bikaner, Jaisalmer and Sirohi, along with the geographically contiguous Idar (in present-day Gujarat) that had pledged allegiance to Akbar's authority. Only on its southern and south-eastern borders was Mewar somewhat free of the Mughal sphere of influence. Akbar's aim was a blockade of Mewar, together with military and political pressure on its ruler to acknowledge Mughal supremacy. Pratap, on his part, felt bound by honour and duty to resist this, and to uphold Mewar's proud reputation as a kingdom that bowed to no one.

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Pratap was keenly aware of his illustrious lineage and the responsibility that came with it, but equally of the problems he faced: a kingdom that had been devastated by wars, hemmed in by the Mughals and their allies, with dwindling resources, hostile half-brothers, discontented kinsmen, and a demoralized populace. As Col. James Tod noted in *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* :

Pertap [sic] succeeded to the titles and renown of an illustrious house, but without a capital, without resources, his kindred and clans dispirited by reverses: yet possessed of the noble spirit of his race, he meditated the recovery of Cheetore [sic], the vindication of the honour of his house, and the restoration of its power. Elevated by this design, he hurried into conflict with his powerful antagonist [i.e. Akbar], nor stooped to calculate the means which were opposed to him.<sup>1</sup>

Pratap also had to see to the unfinished projects of his father: the new city of Udaipur that he had started building; and his attempts after the Mughal occupation of Chittor fort and other parts of the fertile Mewar plains, to develop agriculturally productive areas elsewhere in the state, to encourage settlers in hilly areas around Kumbhalgarh, Gogunda, and other forts of Mewar.<sup>2</sup>

The new Maharana was well aware that he was between a rock and a hard place: he would have to choose between friendship and subservience to Emperor Akbar, or the latter's enmity. He had seen that those who opposed Akbar, whether in Rajasthan or elsewhere, would be made to bend with force. This is what had happened in Kalinjar, Gujarat, central India and the Punjab. Individual rulers and chiefs like Rao Chandrasen of Marwar, Sultan Baz Bahadur of Malwa, Akbar's half-brother Mirza Muhammad Hakim of Kabul, and the Afghan and other chiefs of eastern India, as well as the brave Rani Durgawati of Garh-Katanga (Gondwana), in central India, who made a heroic last stand against the Mughal governor Asaf Khan, were among those who had faced, or were soon to face, the wrath and might of the Mughal Empire for their defiance.

Pratap's own senior contemporary, Rao Chandrasen of Marwar (r. 1562–81), had already seen his capital, Jodhpur, and some other tracts and forts belonging to his Marwar kingdom, occupied by Mughal commanders, while his disgruntled elder brothers, Ram Singh and Udai Singh, who had disputed his succession and fought a civil war, opted to join Akbar's service instead.

Rao Chandrasen was one of just a handful of rulers that had dared to stand up in opposition to Akbar. Most others had, along with their kinsmen and prominent nobles, accepted positions at the Mughal court, along with honours including mansabs (graded ranks) and jagirs (land grants). Since one of Chandrasen's daughters was the wife of Maharana Udai Singh, the exiled Rathore chief of Marwar had reason enough to be present at Pratap's coronation in his capacity as a relative by marriage. However, the Marwar ruler's prominent presence at the coronation ceremonies at Kumbhalgarh was also intended to reiterate his determination to offer

resistance to the Mughals and was interpreted by Emperor Akbar as a defiant challenge.

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The confrontation between Akbar and Pratap – which led to the famous battle of Haldighati – needs to be understood against the wider backdrop of Akbar's imperial policies. As has been said earlier, these included expansion and consolidation of the Mughal Empire, and maintaining internal stability through good governance. When he offered the Rajput states the choice of alliance and allegiance to the empire or facing the might of his armies, Akbar was following a policy used by many across the globe and through the centuries – that of co-opting enemies, near-enemies, or potential enemies as friends and then using them as proficient warriors and allies for the future campaigns of conquest, to extend the boundaries of the kingdom.

Some scholars have pointed out that Akbar incorporated Muslim states like Malwa, Gujarat and Bengal, but maintained a different policy towards the Hindu Rajput states. This is sometimes attributed to the fact that the strong clan/kinship organization of the Rajputs, and the nature of their polity, meant that even if the ruler of a Rajput state was destroyed, the branch or clan would not necessarily be destroyed. Rather, they would regroup to remain a future threat. Therefore he felt it necessary to forge bonds with the Rajput states through matrimony and the grant of honours and estates to their nobles and kinsmen. In contrast, in most of the Muslim-ruled states of the time, the fall of the ruling dynasty effectively wiped the slate clean for any strong successor – whether from within or outside the existing system.

At any rate, accepting Mughal suzerainty also curtailed smaller states from overt, individual, unauthorized territorial expansion into each other's kingdoms, which had previously been a common aspect, since such moves now became subject to imperial censure and judgement. Thus, from around the period that Akbar forged his Rajput policy there followed a relative political permanence or stability in the existence and boundaries of various Rajput kingdoms, which would largely continue into future centuries. (The situation would change marginally in the late eighteenth

and early nineteenth centuries when the decline of the Mughal Empire accelerated. For, taking advantage of this situation, some of the states once again indulged in sporadic campaigns against each other, until treaties with the East India Company put a stop to this by the second decade of the nineteenth century.)

The fact that various kingdoms and chiefdoms of Rajasthan acknowledged Mughal supremacy also meant that the emperor had a decisive role in the bestowal of the coronation tika of successive Rajput rulers. Therefore, whereas earlier a succession to the gaddi would by and large be accepted by clansmen and courtiers, Akbar and his successors occasionally recognized the succession of men who did not have the unqualified support of their traditional local courts and their clan. This challenged and undermined the existing relationship between Rajput rulers and their kin/clan to some degree.

However, despite Akbar taking upon himself the right to ‘bestow’ or ‘approve’ the succession of new rulers in various Rajput states, he did not overtly interfere with the traditional clan-based structure of Rajasthan’s kingdoms and chiefdoms and nor did his successors. Given the nature of the clan-dependent polity in these states – which included fief-holding kinsmen joining the military expeditions of their ruler with their respective locally raised and maintained forces (jamiat) – it was advantageous to Akbar (and his successors) to have Rajput rulers continue to lead military campaigns, accompanied by their clansmen, relatives, fief-holders and troops.

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Akbar used the institution of the mansab to reward those who were in imperial service. Under what was called the mansabdari system, a mansab – meaning rank, office or holding an honour – was granted as a high award, and the holder of a mansab was expected to render service, military or civil, to the Mughal state. These mansabs were classified into thirty-three hierarchical grades, and ranged from mansabdars of ten to mansabdars of ten thousand – the last being an honour reserved for members of the immediate imperial family. Some mansabdars were paid

in cash from the imperial treasury. More commonly, they were given landholdings or jagirs.

Each rank of mansabdar was allocated land, the revenue of which the officer collected through his own officials. Jagirs given in lieu of salary were called tankhwa jagir. For a Rajput chieftain, a jagir included the assessed revenue of his hereditary dominions (watan jagir). If this was insufficient for his level of mansab rank, he would be granted further jagirs in some part or the other of the Mughal Empire. As a ruler obtained higher mansabs, his share in imperial revenues increased, making loyalty more advantageous than rebellion.

Every grade or rank of this mansab system was marked by the number of horsemen and the size of the contingent of fighting men the holder was required to muster and bring into the field. Branding and descriptive rolls were introduced to prevent fraud. Technically, the acquired property of mansabdars lapsed to the state after their death, though this did not apply to their inherited estates. In the case of the Rajput princes and chiefs, their ancestral lands were viewed as their watan jagir or hereditary ‘home’ or own lands, and the emperor would confirm the rights of the ruler recognized by him at each new succession.

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Akbar’s own attitude towards Mewar and its ruler sprang from his evolving policy vis-à-vis the strong Rajput kingdoms, famed for their brave warriors and for their steadfastness in helping any cause they took up to its conclusion. As R.P. Tripathi noted, in his work *Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Akbar’s policy towards the Rajput states of India was not aimed at either annexing such states or interfering in their social, economic and religious life. According to Tripathi, Akbar wanted the allegiance of these kingdoms to the new imperial confederation, which implied four things. First, that the rulers give the empire tribute; second, to surrender their ‘foreign’ policies and right to settle disputes through mutual warfare; third, to send a fixed military quota for the service of the empire when needed; and finally, to consider themselves part of the empire, rather than separate units.

Akbar's policy, which included granting local autonomy to the Rajput rajas who accepted his suzerainty, inducting Rajput rulers (and their kinsmen) into Mughal service and treating them on par with the highest among Mughal courtiers, and fostering religious tolerance throughout his empire, helped cement Mughal–Rajput ties. (It may be relevant to take note here of an opinion expressed by the historian Dr A.L. Srivastava, in his study of Akbar *Akbar the Great*, Vol. 1, that there was no danger to Hinduism or the Hindu way of life from Akbar, who respected the religious beliefs and susceptibilities of all classes of people and more specifically those of his Rajput allies and vassals.)

Matrimonial alliances between the emperor (and his sons) with Rajput princesses from a number of different Rajput states also provided a strong additional bond. These same ties meant that Pratap's stand against the might of Akbar did not secure obvious compatriot assistance from the bulk of his fellow Rajput rulers and chieftains, as would have been the case in other circumstances.

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Akbar tried to extract peaceful submission from Pratap on at least three occasions. Between 1573 and 1575, three successive emissaries were sent from the emperor to Maharana Pratap. They were Prince Man Singh of Amber (r. 1589–1614), Man Singh's father Raja Bhagwant Das of Amber (r. 1574–89) whose sister was married to Emperor Akbar, and Raja Todar Mal. The emissaries could not make Pratap change his mind.

Man Singh, who would play a prominent role in Akbar's efforts to subjugate Mewar and its ruler Maharana Pratap, was a member of the Dhoondhar kingdom's Kachchwaha clan ruling family, which had Amber as its capital. (A capital's name was traditionally used interchangeably with that of its kingdom.) Born on 21 December 1550 to Prince Bhagwant Das and his chief consort, Rani Bhagwati Panwar, he was twelve when he entered the Mughal emperor Akbar's service with his grandfather, ruler of Dhoondhar, Raja Bharmal's entourage in 1562. He continued to serve at Akbar's court with his father, his uncle Prince Jagannath Kachchwaha, and other members of the Dhoondhar–Amber royal family. Subsequent training made the prince familiar with traditional Rajput and Mughal

techniques of warfare. The Dhoondhar–Amber kingdom was with Emperor Akbar at the sack of Chittor (1568), the siege of Ranthambore (1569) and the conquest of Surat (1573).

During his long service at the Mughal court as soldier and administrator, including in the lifetimes of his grandfather and father, Man Singh fought and distinguished himself in over sixty-seven main Mughal military campaigns and battles, including in the Kabul, Balkh and Bukhara areas to the north-west, Bengal and Bihar in the east, and the southern and central part of the subcontinent.

Man Singh was more than a skilled warrior and administrator. Eventually one of the nine jewels (navratna) of Akbar's court, he was wellversed in Sanskrit, Persian and Rajasthani, and himself a poet and a patron of learning. The library (pothikhana) of the Dhoondhar kingdom was considerably enhanced during his reign. The Amber–Jaipur school of painting probably dates to his reign too. Man Singh was also a great builder, making forts at Salimpur (Bengal), Manihari (Bihar) and Ramgarh (Dhoondhar), founding the towns of Akbarnagar (Rajmahal), Manpur (near Gaya), and building many other palaces, gardens and forts in Kashmir, Punjab, Bihar, Bengal and the Deccan.

In 1573, Man Singh was sent to command a Mughal force in its Gujarat campaign. When he and his force were returning along a route crossing the kingdom of Dungarpur, they were challenged by Dungarpur's Rawal Askaran and his forces. After defeating him in April of that year, Man Singh went on to neighbouring Mewar where he met Maharana Pratap as Emperor Akbar's emissary, to try to convince him to accept Akbar's suzerainty.

According to some nineteenth-century versions of their meeting (but which do not feature in contemporary Persian and Mewar sources), Man Singh arrived at the banks of Lake Udaisagar to meet Maharana Pratap. A lavish banquet was prepared for him, and Pratap's son Amar Singh appointed to wait on him. But Pratap himself did not appear, pleading a stomach ache. Man Singh said he could guess the cause of the ache, and declared that he would not eat a morsel unless Pratap himself put a plate before him, from which they would both eat. Pratap expressed his

apologies but said he could not eat with a Rajput who had given his relative in marriage to a Turk. At this, Man Singh left, with the riposte: ‘It was for the preservation of your honour that we gave our sisters and our daughters to the Turk; but abide in peril, if such be your resolve . . .’<sup>3</sup> After this failed attempt at bringing Mewar into the Mughal fold, Man Singh and Maharana Pratap would meet again three years later in rather more dramatic circumstances – facing each other on the battlefield.

Later that year, in September 1573, it seems Maharana Pratap was willing to consider a partial compromise. He is said to have put on the imperial robe of honour, known as khillat, that was sent to him by Akbar through Amber’s ruler Raja Bhagwant Das and according to Abul Fazl’s *Akbarnama*, sent his eldest son, Prince Amar Singh (later to reign over Mewar from 1597 to 1620), to wait on the emperor along with Raja Bhagwant Das. However, as Pratap himself was apparently insistent on not attending the Mughal court in person to offer homage to the emperor, and Akbar was not prepared to return Chittor to Pratap, nothing further came of this effort either.

Eventually, having exhausted all other possibilities, Akbar took a decision, probably sometime in March 1576, to force Mewar’s submission. By this time Akbar had successfully dealt with several of the outstanding problems threatening his empire, including the rebellious Afghans of eastern India – Sulaiman Karrani and Daud Khan – whom he had defeated, Rao Chandrasen of Marwar, and the rebellious Mirza brothers who had been crushed both in Gujarat and present-day western UP.

The emperor now appointed Man Singh, the Kachchwaha prince from Amber, as the commander-in-chief of the imperial army. It is worth noting that despite the fact that Prince Man Singh was the nephew of Emperor Akbar’s wife from the kingdom of Amber, he consistently had to prove himself worthy of military command, in the face of a persistent chorus from leading Mughal courtiers that harped on his being a non-Muslim. Contemporary chronicles in Persian like Abul Fazl’s *Akbarnama*, Nizamuddin Ahmad’s *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* and Mutamid Khan’s *Iqbalnama-i-Jahangiri* confirm that Akbar appointed Man Singh because of his bravery and far-sightedness.

Ajmer had become the imperial centre for garnering news about the Mewar ruler's activities. And in the Mughal camp there was much speculation and heated discussion about Pratap's and the Mughal army's future moves. Earlier, the Mughals had been certain that Pratap would capitulate but he had continued to stubbornly hold out. Now, on 3 April 1576, as the Mughal army, large and seemingly invincible, began its march from Ajmer into the plains of Mewar, no one ventured to predict what the outcome would be.

## 5. The Battle of Haldighati

Pratap had used the time since his coming to the throne in 1572 to strengthen and reinforce his defences. He had consolidated his hold over the Chhappan and Godwar parts of Mewar, improved fortifications in the Aravalli ranges, and actively reached out to the Bhils to ensure their support and assistance. Mewar's southern borders with Sirohi and Gujarat were guarded more rigorously than before, and the farming and other communities living in the fertile plains around Chittor and Mandalgarh were encouraged to leave those areas and settle in tracts of hilly Mewar that were less vulnerable to Mughal attacks. According to Mewar folklore, Pratap also took a number of vows intended to steel himself, his family and his courtiers for what he knew would be hard times ahead: for example, he decreed that no gold and silver dishes were to be used, everyone would eat only out of leaf plates; and that until Chittor was returned to Mewar he would not sleep on a bed, but only on straw strewn on the floor.<sup>1</sup>

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The Mughal forces were finally given the command to advance on 3 April 1576. There were many wings and units in the vast imperial army, and its commanders and warriors were already famous for their battle-hardiness. Among them were Asaf Khan, Syed Hashim Baraha, and several Rajput nobles: the Amber prince Raja Jagannath Kachchwaha (Man Singh's uncle), Rao Khangar, Man Singh's brother Madho Singh, and Rao Loonkaran.

Also present, in attendance on Commander Asaf Khan, was the chronicler Abdul Qadir Badayuni, who would leave an eyewitness account of the campaign against Maharana Pratap, written in the language he excelled in – Persian. Badayuni had been appointed to a religious post at the Mughal court by Akbar in 1574. His most important work, the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* ('Selections from History', sometimes called *Tarikh-e-Badayuni* or 'Badayuni's History'), is a contemporaneous, critical, account of his

times.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, he was not a fan of his emperor, and his writings are critical of Akbar, and his actions and policies. This gives his accounts a certain credibility.

Having advanced about 120 km south of Ajmer, Man Singh gave the order for the Mughal army to halt at Mandalgarh, one of Mewar's former possessions. The strategically located fort of Mandalgarh had been taken by the Mughal imperial army during Akbar's campaign of 1567–58, and was about 40 km north of Chittor. Man Singh's troops halted at Mandalgarh for around two months, awaiting the arrival of various other reinforcing units of the Mughal army. Further preparations, including securing the passage between Ajmer and Mandalgarh, were also carried out.

Meanwhile, Pratap's Mewar also continued with its preparations. From early 1572 the Maharana had been consolidating his position and marshalling his resources, much like his father had attempted to do after quitting Chittor fort. Apart from strengthening his army and his defences, Pratap carried out a drastic 'scorched earth policy': vast tracts of the countryside, stretching up towards Chittor, were burnt and devastated, so that the Mughal forces could not depend on local supplies of food or fodder.

With rain fed agriculture, Mewar had traditionally known two crops a year, and despite occasional famine years, the state was self-sufficient with its bounty of locally grown wheat, maize, sugar cane, cotton, millets and vegetables, supplemented by other edible items, including rock salt from the distant mountains of the north-west, that came in through the trade routes.

All of that now changed as the Mughal army advanced. In villages in the plains between Chittor and Udaipur, wells were filled with debris, even as villagers part-breached their own irrigation tanks, water reservoirs and storage facilities before abandoning their villages to prevent the enemy forces access to food, fodder and water.

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Around the end of May, the Mughal army left Mandalgarh and marched in the direction of Gogunda, located around 26 km north-east of Udaipur. Gogunda lies close to the valley now famous by the name of Haldighati, some 27 km north of Udaipur. Tod's *Annals* describes the terrain where the Mughal and Mewar armies fought the historic battle that is now the stuff of legend:

The whole of this space is mountain and forest, valley and stream. The approaches . . . are so narrow as to merit the term defile; on each side lofty perpendicular rocks, with scarcely breadth for two carriages abreast, across which are those ramparts of nature which occasionally open into spaces sufficiently capacious to encamp a large force. Such was the plain of Haldighati, at the base of a neck of mountain which shut up the valley and rendered it almost inaccessible.

Haldighati means 'turmeric valley', so called because of the turmeric yellow colour of the soil, formed from eroded rocks. At that time, the ghati was a very narrow pass or defile, strategically located at the neck of a hill, within a densely forested area. (It was artificially widened for road traffic and popular movement in the mid-twentieth century.)

On reaching the vicinity of the village of Molela, situated on the banks of the river Banas and surrounded by the Aravalli hills, the imperial forces made a temporary camp. There they remained till around the middle of June, sending out small scouting parties to reconnoitre the area.

Meanwhile, Pratap continued with his scorched earth policy to ensure that the Mughal army could not get local supplies of food or fodder. He also secured the support of an Afghan chief, Hakim Khan Sur, and of the Bhils of the area armed with their bows and arrows. All the passes in this hilly terrain had been fortified as well.

As his sharp-eyed Bhils perched on hilltops kept the Maharana updated on the goings-on in the Mughal camp, Pratap and his army moved down from Kumbhalgarh to Khamnor, a village situated near the entrance of the

Haldighati pass. All was now set for the forthcoming battle, which we today know as the Battle of Haldighati, fought in June 1576 (or the second Sudi of the month of Jyestha of the Vikram Samvat year of 1633).

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According to Badayuni's contemporaneous account, Mughal commander Man Singh led 5000 cavalry in the battle, though a later work, *Nainsi's Khyat*, by one of the kingdom of Marwar's ministers, Muhnot Nainsi, maintains that he commanded 40,000 soldiers. A still later work, Kaviraj Shyamaldas's *Vir Vinod* asserts that the Mughal troops numbered 80,000. Sources also differ on the size of Pratap's army. After studying various sources, one of Rajasthan's twentieth-century historians, Professor G.N. Sharma, states that Maharana Pratap faced the Mughal army at the head of 3000 horsemen, 2000 infantry, 150 elephants, and 100 miscellaneous men who served as drummers, trumpeteers and pick-men. As always, Bhil archers formed an important part of Maharana Pratap's fighting force. Whatever the real numbers on either side, it is clear that Pratap's Mewar army was probably outnumbered by the Mughal force sent by Akbar.

There appear to have been skirmishes and encounters in plenty, including one on 18 June 1576, before the main battle. Some historians date this to the morning of 21 June.

The Mughals' right flank was under the experienced commander Syed Ahmed Khan, while the left flank had renowned warriors like Ghazi Khan Badakshani, and the Rajput Rao Loonkaran and his Shekhawat kinsmen. Beyond the left flank was the reserve of the Mughal forces, under the command of Mahtar Khan. Man Singh himself, in overall command of the Mughal army, was seated atop an elephant.

Using Mughal and Rajasthani accounts, G.N. Sharma reconstructed Maharana Pratap's battle formations in his book, *Mewar and the Mughal Emperors* (1962). Pratap used the traditional order of harawal (van, or front-attacking formation of an army), chandrawal (rear), vama-parshva (left wing) and dakshin-parshva (right wing), besides the central main body.

Pratap's vanguard was led by his Afghan ally Hakim Khan Sur and his contingent, besides some of Mewar's bravest fighters: Kishan Das Chundawat of Salumber, Bhim Singh of Sardargarh, Rawat Sanga of Deogarh, and Rawat Ram Das of Badnor (son of the hero Jaimal, who had fallen in 1568 defending Chittor). The right flank of the Mewar army was commanded by Raja Ram Singh Tomar of Gwalior, along with his three sons, and other supporters. The left flank was led by Man Singh Jhala, also called Bida, who held the title of Raj Rana of the Jhala clan that had been bestowed the fiefdom of Badi Sadri.<sup>3</sup>

Maharana Pratap led the centre, followed by his chief minister (pradhan), Bhama Shah, and the latter's brother, Tarachand, who too was a minister and a military commander of Mewar. The chandrawal (rear) was commanded by the Bhil ruler Punja of Panarwa and his Bhils, with that contingent including Purohit Gopi Nath and the bard Charan Jaisa.<sup>4</sup>

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The ensuing battle on the fateful morning of 21 June was fiercely fought as the cavalry, elephant-borne troops and foot soldiers of Mewar and the Mughals faced each other. And, as Akbar's court historian Abul Fazl noted, in the thick of the battle it was difficult to distinguish between friend and foe.

To repulse an initial attack by Pratap's forces, Man Singh deputed an advance guard of 900 soldiers (Badayuni calls it the *jouza-i-harawal* ) under the command of Syed Hashim Baraha. This advance guard was routed by Pratap's thundering cavalry charge and forced to retreat. But the Mughals soon rallied and gained a prized trophy when the mahout of Mewar's lead elephant Ram Prasad fell to an arrow. The elephant was captured by the Mughal mahouts, and later proudly presented to Emperor Akbar. Akbar would undoubtedly have been pleased with this gift – there are many stories about this elephant of Maharana Pratap's being much coveted by everyone, including the emperor.

Another bloody battle took place that morning on the plain of Rati-Talai (since called 'Rakt-Talai' or 'Lake of Blood' in commemoration of the gory battle), close to the narrow pass of Haldighati, while the midday sun

beat down mercilessly. Maharana Pratap assembled his forces on both sides of this thickly forested hill pass which was so narrow that two riders could barely pass side by side. According to Abul Fazl, the pitched battle between the two opposing armies was fought beside the village of Khamnor, while Badayuni, an eyewitness, stated that it took place near Gogunda. Both these places were close to Haldighati.

Compiling information from various sources, including Tod's account of the battle which was based on what was told to him by descendants of some of the combatants, twentieth-century historians believe that the major fighting took place at the pass, and near the area still known as Badshah Bagh. (The name Badshah Bagh probably owes its origin to the encampment of the Mughal army of the 'badshah' or emperor. Of course, Akbar himself did not come to Haldighati.) Badayuni noted that the three-hour battle saw bitter combat, in which life was cheap while honour was hard won.

In the heat of the battle, when the Mewar forces seemed to be gaining the upper hand, the Mughal commander Mahtar Khan spread the rumour that Emperor Akbar himself was approaching, leading a large contingent of the imperial army. Akbar was not present at any stage of the battle of Haldighati, but at that moment the ploy worked, and boosted the morale of the Mughal forces who, instilled with fresh courage, rallied anew.

And then the moment arrived when Pratap and Man Singh came face-to-face, two leading Rajput warrior princes with two opposing visions. As the historians Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph observed in their perceptive Introduction to Kesri Singh's book on Haldighati: 'Man Singh of Amber was all that Pratap refused to be: commander of conquering Mughal armies, governor of Mughal provinces, an honoured figure at the Mughal court . . . which was solicitous to preserve his loyalty.' Man Singh was fighting for the glory of an empire that wanted to subsume smaller regional kingdoms, while Pratap was fighting for a small regional kingdom's right to political and cultural sovereignty, free of the overlordship of any empire.<sup>5</sup>

But as they faced each other on the battlefield that day, each man undoubtedly thought only of how he could vanquish the other. Pratap, who

was astride his favourite horse Chetak, flung his spear at Man Singh who was on an elephant. The spear missed Man Singh and killed the elephant's mahout instead. At the same time, a sword held in the trunk of Man Singh's elephant grievously wounded Chetak's legs.

Finding their commander Man Singh in danger, the Mughal troops surrounded the Maharana, who was hard-pressed as he managed to fight his way through. Pratap's nobles then prevailed upon the Maharana to leave the battlefield, arguing that while he lived to fight on, the cause of Mewar would remain alive, and continue to be a thorn in the Mughal emperor's side. It was not in Pratap's character to leave the battlefield midway and save his own life, but this time the Maharana agreed to make a tactical retreat.

Now it was the turn of the Mughal forces to be misled: Man Singh Jhala, chief of the fiefdom of Bari Sadri, took the Maharana's place in the thick of the battle, donning certain visible emblems of Mewar's royal regalia like the Mewar royal canopy (chhatra), crimson in colour, with the emblem of the Sun and a dagger, so as to give the enemy the false impression that Pratap was still fighting there. In a curious case of history repeating itself, Man Singh Jhala's ancestor, Raja Ajja Jhala of Haldwad in Kathiawar (Gujarat), had done the same to save Pratap's grandfather, Maharana Sanga of Mewar, some half a century earlier, when the seriously wounded Sanga lost consciousness during the battle of Khanua in 1527, where he was fighting Akbar's grandfather, Babur. The Jhala chief fell in the battle of Haldighati to save his ruler, just as his grandfather had sacrificed his life to save Maharana Sanga in the battle of Khanua.<sup>6</sup>

Maharana Pratap's horse Chetak, though bleeding heavily, managed to gallop away from the battlefield and carry his master to relative safety. The faithful steed finds prominent mention in the bardic sagas of Mewar, and in its folklore and later written accounts as well. According to the story most often retold, the gallant Chetak (upon whom the epithet 'Flying Horse' has been bestowed in countless ballads), though grievously injured, carried the Maharana away from the battleground, with the 'speed of the wind' before finally falling to the ground and dying, some 3 km from Haldighati, near Balia village. Chetak's final effort had been to leap across

a wide chasm that was too broad for any enemy followers to cross, with his master still on his back. Pratap was grief-stricken at the death of his horse, and later erected a memorial to honour him, at the spot where the horse fell. The cenotaph still stands – mute testimonial to a faithful horse and his grateful master, and an abiding symbol of loyalty and sacrifice for generations of Mewaris.

Among the other traditions associated with the tale of Chetak's legendary ride is that of a meeting between Pratap and his estranged brother, prince Shakti (or Sakat) Singh. According to this, Shakti Singh, having fought on the side of Emperor Akbar, and against his own land of Mewar, followed the Maharana as he galloped away from the battlefield of Haldighati. Another popular version holds that Shakti/Sakat Singh was watching the battle from a distance and came to help Pratap when he was being pursued by two Mughal soldiers. When he finally came upon his brother beside the fallen Chetak, he was filled with remorse at the thought that while the noble steed had given his life for his master, he himself had wasted so much time in opposing and hounding his own brother, and supporting his enemies. Shakti begged forgiveness and after an emotional reunion, offered his own horse in place of the dead Chetak, so that Pratap could escape. Shakti himself took guard to strike down any Mughals who might follow in pursuit of Pratap.

Many historians of Rajasthan, among them G.H. Ojha, G.N. Sharma and Raghbir Singh Sitamau, however, have come to the opinion that this stirring story of the meeting between the two brothers, Pratap and Shakti/Sakat Singh, after the fight at Haldighati is a legend without historical backing, which originated with the penning of the late seventeenth-century *Raj-Prashasti* in Maharana Raj Singh's reign. Mughal annals make no mention of the presence of Pratap's brother during the imperial campaign against the Maharana, and contemporaneous writers recounting acts of valour in a form of history-writing, known as 'khyat' (literally 'fame'), too have made no mention of any meeting between Pratap and Shakti/Sakat Singh. Historians have also pointed out that the presence of Mewar royalty fighting on the side of Akbar against his ancestral land of Mewar was scarcely a subject the court writers would have suppressed. Rather, they would have highlighted and publicized this

betrayal, if indeed it had happened. Even Jagmal, who held a Mughal fiefdom, did not fight on the side of Akbar against his native land of Mewar.

According to G.N. Sharma, the once pro-Akbar Shakti/Sakat Singh probably died fighting on Mewar's side within the besieged fort of Chittor in 1567–68 during Maharana Udai Singh's lifetime itself. Sakat Singh had apparently fallen out with the emperor in 1567 and, as mentioned earlier, one popular version says it was Sakat who brought the news of Akbar's impending invasion of Mewar to his father Udai Singh at Chittor fort. Nevertheless, the story of the remorseful Shakti/Sakat Singh coming to the aid of his brother Pratap after the battle of Haldighati remains indelibly lodged in twentieth-century Indian folklore.

Many of the folk tales associated with Maharana Pratap took their present form during the eighteenth century, when Pratap's descendant Maharana Raj Singh was challenging Akbar's descendant, Aurangzeb, over numerous issues, and Mewari and other writers used tales associated with Maharana Pratap to foster local pride and bolster public spirits.

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Was Pratap forced into battle at Haldighati, or did he deliberately launch an offensive, even though he knew that the terrain was difficult, both for fighting on horseback and for a pitched battle? Later historians have speculated that Pratap was probably pushed by circumstances into battle at that place and time. A broad view is that the Maharana took a decision to attack Mughal positions near Haldighati only when he saw their artillery guns being readied to be carried across the river beside which they were encamped, this task made much easier because the river was running low during the searing heat of June. Once the battle was in full swing, however, Pratap's forces, who knew that rugged terrain far better than their adversaries, did seem to have an edge over the Mughals. It was only when the fake news was spread about Emperor Akbar's imminent arrival with heavy reinforcements that the balance tipped in favour of the Mughals.

While the Jhala chief fought the valiant rearguard action in which he and several other great warriors of Mewar were cut down, including Raja Ram

Singh Tomar of Gwalior (who had been given refuge in Mewar after Babur had invaded his kingdom), the bulk of the Mewar forces, following Pratap's orders, retreated to their hideouts in the surrounding forested hills, where Pratap too found refuge as darkness fell over the blood-soaked battlefield of Haldighati.

Mughal chroniclers Abul Fazl and Nizamuddin Ahmad recorded 150 killed among the Mughals, and 500 among the Mewar forces,<sup>7</sup> while according to Badayuni, 500 men were slain that day, of whom 120 were Muslims. On the other hand, later chroniclers from Rajasthan began to speak of 20,000 deaths. With time, the numbers of the dead became a kind of scale to show the severity of the battle, in which both sides mourned enormous loss of life.

And at the end of the battle, both sides claimed victory – Mewar, because there had not been any surrender, and the Mughal imperial army, because it still held the field. As Kesri Singh, a twentieth-century scholar of the Battle of Haldighati puts it in his book *The Hero of Haldighati*, ‘The field no doubt remained with Man Singh. But for the Emperor’s army no victory was ever more like defeat; for Mewar, no retreat ever more glorious.’

The saga was far from over, though. Many more campaigns would be launched against Maharana Pratap and his Mewar, and Emperor Akbar himself would have to come to Mewar in pursuit of his elusive enemy. But Pratap had not yielded to Akbar before the battle of Haldighati, he did not surrender at Haldighati, and he was as firm in his resolve not to do so after the battle as well.

## 6. Guerrilla Warrior

Maharana Pratap could not linger at the spot where his brave Chetak had fallen, as it was too close to the battleground. As he hastened in the direction of Kumbhalgarh and Gogunda, there were only desultory attempts by the Mughals to pursue him. Indeed, some chroniclers noted that the Mughal commander Man Singh of Amber had put out the word that the Mughal army was not to pursue the Maharana. Having done his duty by the emperor, perhaps Man Singh did not wish to further harass Pratap, whom the Amber prince personally respected, and with whom he was connected by blood ties. Man Singh may also have remained hopeful of an eventual peace settlement between the Maharana and the emperor. Be that as it may, after Haldighati, Man Singh seems to have incurred Akbar's displeasure and censure, and for a while was even denied access to the emperor's presence.

A day after the Battle of Haldighati, the Mughal forces reached Gogunda. Pratap, meanwhile, had already had the fort hastily evacuated overnight. Anticipating a Mughal attack on Gogunda in the wake of the battle of Haldighati, he had sent the inhabitants of Gogunda, including his family, out of the fort to hideouts in the hills. The attacking force thus found a deserted fort and town, held by a small garrison of about twenty Mewar soldiers, who put up a strong fight, and eventually fell fighting to the last man. Man Singh had forbidden the Mughal forces from any form of looting and destruction in Mewar, and this was to strain the work of the imperial supply commissariat in time, as the Maharana's men cut communication lines, and food supplies for the Mughal troops ran short.

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The strong, near-impregnable forts that enabled the Rajputs to withstand sieges over a prolonged period of time were also their Achilles heel, and Pratap knew well both their strength and potential vulnerability. Constructed atop hills and peaks in most cases, or in locales otherwise difficult to access, these forts were excellent for defensive purposes and

for specific garrisoning. In addition to housing their normal inhabitants – comprising the ruling clans and their relatives, as well as courtiers, the garrison, merchants, administrators, priests, servants and scribes – the forts could also shelter thousands of people from the surrounding areas. However, during a prolonged siege, the forts would, perforce, become cut off from the food supplies and resources of the surrounding countryside, as well as from farmers or other rural people from the immediate vicinity who had been unable to gain the security of the fort in time.

Thus, a long siege lasting several months or even years, meant extended hardship for the defenders – non-combatants and the garrison alike. The besieger encamped in the plains below the fort usually managed to cut off supply routes to the encircled fortification. Since during a siege the crowd within a fortress far exceeded its usual population, the stored provisions would inevitably begin to dwindle whenever a siege became long drawn out. The crowding and pressure on drinking water, sanitation and other facilities often led to epidemics within besieged forts, further weakening the position of its defenders.

Some of these problems were, in fact, experienced by the Mughal forces that came to occupy Gogunda. Food supply lines to Gogunda were soon cut off, even as Maharana Pratap let loose his men to harass Mughal army units wherever possible. As Badayuni noted, Akbar's imperial commanders were so apprehensive about night-attacks by the Maharana and his men, that on taking possession of Gogunda, Mughal soldiers were ordered to barricade streets, dig a trench around Gogunda to serve as a dry moat, and raise crude walls all around, up to a height that Mewari horseriders could not leap over.

Soon, the grand Mughal amirs (nobles) were reduced to killing their horses for meat, the only other food available being mangoes and some wild fruit that grew within Gogunda – and not enough of those either. Upon learning of the distressed state of his army in 'Kokandah' (as Gogunda was spelt in Mughal court records), Emperor Akbar recalled Man Singh, Asaf Jah Khan and Qazi Khan from Gogunda in September 1576.

Man Singh and Asaf Khan were even temporarily excluded from court – and Akbar may well have begun to wonder where Man Singh's loyalties

lay – was this Mughal mansab-holding commander totally loyal to his emperor and therefore an opponent of Mewar? Or was he, as an influential Rajput prince, sympathetic to Maharana Pratap, admiring him for his refusal to submit to Akbar?

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Meanwhile, post Haldighati, Akbar's imperial Mughal forces further entrenched their positions in the plains of Mewar, where they already held mastery over Chittor, Mandalgarh and many other tracts. The roads into and out of Mewar were ‘closed’ by the Mughal forces. Maharana Pratap, however, continued to elude capture, and remained a powerful symbol of defiance. Mewar’s warriors, having often experienced the drawbacks associated with long sieges, were willing to follow Pratap’s evolving policy that allowed for forts to be held, given up and retaken at opportune moments, with guerrilla warfare rather than pitched battles becoming part of his deliberate strategy.

Another part of Pratap’s strategy was to encourage a loose coalition against the Mughals, especially with the states that ringed Mewar. The approach to Mewar necessitated crossing these kingdoms, and Pratap used his long-standing links with their rulers or chiefs to create buffer zones between the Mughals and Mewar. Pratap specifically called upon Raja Narayan Das of Idar (who was also his father-in-law) to join hands with him against Akbar, supported Rao Chandrasen of Marwar in fighting Mughal garrisons in the Nadol area, and also influenced Rao Surtan of Sirohi and Taj Khan of Jalore to continue their resistance to Akbar. The latter two had reasserted their independence from the Mughals in the early months of 1576. However, partly to check Pratap’s attempts at finding support from like-minded neighbours, the Mughal armies redoubled their activities against the rulers of Sirohi and Jalore, and Chandrasen of Marwar.

Akbar acted against all these allies of Pratap nearly simultaneously. He dispatched an imperial army under Tarsum Khan, Bikaner’s ruler Raja Rai Singh, and Syed Hashim Baraha to reduce them into submission. Taj Khan of Jalore was driven to surrender to Rai Singh of Bikaner. Sirohi’s ruler, Surtan, was humbled into presenting himself at Akbar’s court, though he

later quit the court without permission (Bikaner's Raja Rai Singh and others were thereafter deputed to deal with the Sirohi chief afresh). Another force was sent against Raja Narayan Das of Idar, and Idar was occupied after a stubborn resistance. Thus, Akbar succeeded in subduing Rao Surtan of Sirohi, Taj Khan of Jalore and Narayan Das of Idar. Nadol in Marwar too was captured by the Mughal forces by 19 October 1576, though Rao Chandrasen of Marwar continued to defy him.<sup>1</sup>

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Meanwhile, on 11 October 1576, four months after the battle of Haldighati, Emperor Akbar, leading a large army, had left Ajmer for Gogunda. The royal progress was far grander than the movement of previous expeditions against Mewar had been: the fluttering imperial pennants and banners visible from afar, and the dust raised by the feet of his cavalry, infantry and war elephants all but obscured the baggage trains and palanquins that brought up the rear. But for all the pomp of the imperial procession, Akbar moved fast, as had become his wont. Indeed, his rapid march of 400 kos, (around 965 km) in only nine days from Agra to Gujarat in 1573, to lift the siege of Ahmedabad by rebels like Mirza Muhammad Hussain and Ikhtiyar ul-Mulk, and going into battle immediately upon reaching Ahmedabad, had already become the stuff of legend.

Once Akbar reached Gogunda, he took personal control of the campaign to bring Maharana Pratap to his knees, and gave orders for intense garrisoning and controlling of all the areas Pratap was rumoured to be in. Having personally inspected Mohi, near present-day Nathdwara, and appointed officers to guard and garrison it, he gave similar orders for Madariya, near Chittor. Numerous new Mughal outposts were established at places like Pindwara and Haldighati/Khamnor, and imperial officers put in charge of them.

At around the same time, Akbar ordered Amber's Raja Bhagwant Das, Man Singh, Qutb-ud-din and other senior imperial army commanders to pursue and capture the Maharana. In the period between his accession to the Mewar throne in early 1572 and the battle at Haldighati in June 1576, Pratap's preparations towards what seemed an inevitable showdown with

Akbar, had included – apart from building his military strength – consolidating his position in the hilly reaches of Mewar, and making the indigenous Bhils his partisans. As part of this strategy, he granted lands as jagir to local Bhils in Mewar’s hill regions. These preparations now served him well.

All attempts on the part of the imperial forces to trace Pratap in the hilly reaches and difficult terrain of the more inaccessible parts of Mewar proved futile. For a while, the Maharana stayed at the village of Koliyari, to the west of Gogunda, to take stock of the situation and make further plans, but then, as was his habit, he moved on to another hideout.

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By the end of 1576, about six months after the battle of Haldighati, Akbar’s court historian Abul Fazl recorded that the emperor had cleared Mewar of ‘rebellion’. But as later events made clear, Akbar’s various expeditions had little permanent effect on Maharana Pratap and his determined resistance. Not long after Akbar and Man Singh’s departure from Gogunda, Maharana Pratap recovered the fort. Akbar again sent a force under Bhagwant Das, Man Singh, Mirza Khan (also known as Abdul Rahim, and soon to bear the title of ‘Khan-i-Khana’) and other seasoned commanders to retake Gogunda and re-establish control over the region. But before that, in November 1576, Emperor Akbar entered the city of Udaipur, which was a source of special pride for Mewar, having been established by Pratap’s late father, Maharana Udai Singh, and having served as a one-time capital of Mewar. The emperor handed over Udaipur’s administration jointly to Prince Jagannath Kachchwaha, a scion of the Amber ruling family (Prince Jagannath was one of Raja Bharmal of Amber’s younger sons, and therefore prince Man Singh’s uncle) and to Mughal army commander Fakhruddin. Towards the end of 1576, Akbar left the region and proceeded to Malwa, traversing through Dungarpur and Banswara, which had previously been subdued but would have a rocky relationship with the Mughals thereafter, because of the support they got from Maharana Pratap in Mewar.

Akbar left in place a series of administrative and military arrangements for continued action against the Maharana. However, as Maharana Pratap

continued to attack the Mughal forces in the areas newly occupied by them, Akbar once again sent a large expedition against the Mewar ruler in July 1577, under the command of Raja Bhagwant Das, Prince Man Singh and the Mughal Mir Bakshi, Shahbaz Khan. The expedition was reinforced by other well-known commanders of the Mughal forces.

By March 1578, Maharana Pratap had been tracked to the great hilltop fort of Kumbhalgarh. Shahbaz Khan now sent Raja Bhagwant Das and Man Singh back to the Mughal court. Why he did so has been the subject of speculation – did Shahbaz Khan doubt their loyalty, and wonder whether Bhagwant Das and Man Singh genuinely wanted Pratap captured? Did he think it more judicious not to have them or their contingents in Mewar? If this was intended as a slight to the Amber royals, the effect was neutralized when almost immediately Emperor Akbar deputed the father-son duo to the Punjab region.<sup>2</sup> From this point onwards, Man Singh – who would continue to play an important role in the military and administrative matters of the Mughal Empire, was not to see service again in the Rajasthan area.<sup>3</sup> This was obviously a deliberate move on the part of Akbar. One reason undoubtedly was that having tested Man Singh's ability in Punjab and the north-west, Akbar opted to use him in the troublesome Bihar and Bengal provinces also. Whether Akbar too was unsure of Man Singh's commitment to suppressing Maharana Pratap remains a moot point. But after Akbar's death Man Singh would no longer have a special position at the Mughal court – he would fall out of favour with Akbar's son Prince Salim, later Emperor Jahangir.<sup>4</sup>

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Meanwhile, in March 1578, Shahbaz Khan had reached the vicinity of Kumbhalgarh, occupying the nearby site of Kelwara at the foot of the hills, some 5 km from Kumbhalgarh. The sudden and stealthy arrival of Shahbaz and his troops took Maharana Pratap by surprise.

And now, the tide turned against Maharana Pratap. According to Abul Fazl, a large gun located within Kumbhalgarh fort burst, causing a fiery blaze that engulfed the Maharana's artillery positions and part of the armoury, and caused other major damage as well. Pratap himself, however, managed to make his way out of Kumbhalgarh before the Mughal forces

could capture it. He made initially for Ranakpur, and then set out further west. Meanwhile, at Kumbhalgarh, between the night of 3 April and the dawn of 4 April 1578, a fierce battle raged, and despite a gallant defence by the Mewar side, the Mughal forces were successful in taking possession of Kumbhalgarh fort. This would prove to be the only time this famously impregnable stronghold was ever invested by an outsider.

Shahbaz Khan went on to retake Gogunda the next day, and by midnight he had once again occupied Udaipur. Kelwara too was occupied. According to Abul Fazl, neither Gogunda nor Udaipur was defended by the Mewar forces. This may have been part of Maharana Pratap's strategy to minimize loss of life and property, and to conserve his men and resources for a later battle.

Shahbaz Khan now succeeded in occupying more Mewar territory, and advanced towards Chavand, in southern Mewar, about 60 km south of Udaipur. With Shahbaz Khan's advance, Pratap headed deep into the Bhomat hills of southern Mewar to consolidate and regroup his forces, which included several Bhils who inhabited this region. Then he moved on, finding shelter around the village of Chulia in Idar, before moving on to Dholan, on the western fringes of Mewar, which became his base for a while. Over time, various settlements, hamlets, villages and townships, especially in the hilly regions of Mewar, came to be associated with the Maharana's rapid movements and temporary headquarters – among them Ubeshwar, Dholiya, Machin, Zawar, to name a few. They are visited to this day by Maharana Pratap's admirers.

In May 1578, with a string of successful campaigns under his belt, Shahbaz Khan left Mewar. With his departure, Maharana Pratap lost no time in moving to retake his territory from the Mughals, his efforts aided by a large and unexpected gift.

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Just when he needed it most, as the *Vir Vinod* by Kaviraj Shyamaldas records, Maharana Pratap's prime minister Bhama Shah handed over to him 25 lakh rupees and 20,000 gold coins (mohar).<sup>5</sup> This was a considerable sum in the sixteenth century – Tod in his *Annals* estimates

that this amount was sufficient to keep 25,000 men for twelve years, and it enabled the Maharana to significantly enlarge and strengthen his force.

Bhama Shah, and his brother Tarachand who had been appointed governor of Mewar's Godwar area by Pratap, were members of a wealthy family of financiers, originally from Delhi. Their father Bharmall had served as qiledar (fort commander and administrator) of Ranthambore. (In their turn, Bhama Shah's son, Jiwa Singh and grandson, Akheraj, would also one day serve Mewar as pradhans.) Bhama Shah's generosity, which allowed the Maharana to continue his efforts against the imperial armies, is still part of Mewar's oral and written tradition, where he is eulogized for his extraordinary loyalty to his lord and his commitment to defending Mewar's honour and independence.

That November, Pratap attacked the Mughal garrison at Kumbhalgarh and, according to Abul Fazl, caused 'turbulence' there. As a consequence, Mughal commander Shahbaz Khan was sent back to Mewar and once again deputed by Akbar to take action against the Maharana. He was given substantial funds from the Mughal treasury to carry out this task. While Shahbaz Khan and other Mughal commanders launched many vigorous campaigns against Pratap, the elusive Maharana kept moving between his various hideouts in the hills, from where he and his partisans regularly attacked Mughal outposts, forcibly taking away food and other supplies from there to augment their own shrinking supplies.

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On 16 June 1580 Akbar appointed Mirza Khan, better known in history as Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khana, as the subedar (governor) of Ajmer, giving him the additional charge of commanding the imperial campaign against Pratap. Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khana was the son of Akbar's own guardian, Bairam Khan,<sup>6</sup> and treated by Akbar as a member of his own family.<sup>7</sup> One of the nine jewels of Akbar's imperial court, Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khana was simultaneously a rooted-in-the-people poet, a Mughal grandee, and a brilliant warrior and administrator. Still remembered across India as the Hindi poet Rahim,<sup>8</sup> Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khana is credited with writing a stanza that became Mewar's motto, after certain actions of Pratap's gave him an insight into the Maharana's character. The lines are: ' *Jey dridh*

*rakhey dharma ko, ta rakhey kartar* ' (God protects those who remain steadfast in upholding righteousness and Dharma [correct action]).

On one occasion, while travelling between Ajmer and Sirohi, the women and children of Khan-i-Khana's family were captured by Prince Amar Singh, Maharana Pratap's eldest son. When Pratap learned about this he gave orders for the prince to immediately return the ladies with due honour to the Mughal camp, and admonished his heir for capturing non-combatant family members of an enemy and treating them as if they too were enemy. The Maharana's magnanimous and chivalrous action won over the Ajmer governor completely. He later wrote couplets and verses praising Pratap, one of the most popular being:

All is unstable in this world  
Land and Wealth will disappear  
But the virtue of a great name lives forever  
Patta [a colloquial rendition of Pratap]  
abandoned wealth and land,  
But never bowed the head  
Alone of all the princes of Hind  
He preserved the honour of his race.<sup>9</sup>

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By March 1581, Shahbaz Khan was reporting to Emperor Akbar that the Mewar ruler's power had been permanently crushed. Shahbaz was being overoptimistic: Maharana Pratap continued his guerrilla tactics, breaking up Mughal lines of communication and taking the Mughal troops by surprise through his effective espionage system.

In fact, between 1576 and 1585, Pratap foiled so many expeditions headed by battle-hardened and experienced Mughal generals and commanders like Qutb-ud-din Khan, Raja Bhagwant Das of Amber, Shahbaz Khan, and Jagannath Kachchwaha that Mewar record-keepers were kept fully busy with recording and retelling the events in the years to come, in works like seventeenth-century Mewar poet Dayaldas's history of Mewar and its rulers, *Rana-Raso*, the *Amarsar*,<sup>10</sup> and the Jain poet Hem Ratan's epic poem *Gora-Badal Chaupai*. This recounted an earlier Mewar saga about the heroic sacrifice of Gora and Badal in serving the land of Mewar and their sovereign in the fourteenth century, as a eulogy to a king like Pratap who was not willing to compromise on the honour and sovereignty of his land.

For nearly a decade after the Battle of Haldighati, Maharana Pratap focused increasingly on 'irregular' warfare. He was well aware that he would be outnumbered by the imperial army in manpower, and he could not match them in firepower. So, rather than take on the Mughals in a pitched battle where he would be at a disadvantage, he preferred to take offensive guerrilla action at every opportunity, making full use of the natural terrain of Mewar, with its densely forested and inaccessible valleys and hills. As a guerrilla tactician Maharana Pratap was so skilful and effective that the renowned historian of medieval India Satish Chandra believes he may well have been the inspiration for two later warriors in their skirmishes against the Mughals, Malik Ambar and Chhatrapati Shivaji in the Deccan.

The Maharana's men often impeded imperial traffic along the traditional Mewar–Malwa, Mewar–Gujarat and Ajmer–Gujarat routes. The indigenous Bhils of the less accessible areas, skilled in the use of the bow and arrow, and knowledgeable about local forests, mountain paths and passes, proved to be his invaluable allies. Traditional Mewar accounts underline that, alongside constant attempts to sever the imperial supply lines, the land was not ploughed but kept wasted and scorched by the people of Mewar for over six years – from before Haldighati in 1576 until 1582, with crops destroyed and wells filled with earth and rubble, in order to deter the Mughal occupying forces.

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Mewar had long been known for its rich deposits of copper and iron ore, besides the zinc, lead and silver around the hilly and thickly forested Zawar area south of Udaipur. Its minerals, which even found mention in eighth-century inscriptions, had become a rich source of revenue for Pratap's ancestor Maharana Lakha (r. 1382–1421) whose reign saw a revival of mining activities, and his successors. Pratap made full use of the old mining works and mine shafts around Zawar, protected by a network of minor fortresses, using them not only as places of refuge, but also to safely store part of his treasury, and the arms that he and his entourage had collected.<sup>11</sup>

Numerous popular tales in Mewar relate that at one stage Maharana Pratap, his family and a few loyal supporters took refuge underground in the mines of Zawar Mala whilst hunted by the Mughal forces. James Tod (in *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 1), also repeated these tales. An article in the *Indian Antiquary* (1872) records that in the Zawar Mala caves:

... there were preserved, for generations, the rings and bolts to which the cradles of Maharana Pratap Singh's children had been attached; and even now the inhabitants of the village on this elevated plain speak of their being there still.

There are traces of steps, walls and outlets for water, and to this day villagers around the Zawar Mala caves still refer to one of the ancient mines as Pratap khaan (mine) and another opposite to this as Rani khaan. The Pratap khaan is believed to have served as one of Maharana Pratap's headquarters during his long years in exile. At Pratap khaan a relatively broad flight of stone steps, not seen in any of the other mines, runs down several metres to an ancient stope, with a space referred to as an 'audience chamber'. This is a circular domed chamber, within which a substantial platform is said to exist. (This disused mine is not accessible to visitors).

Over time, many poems, stories and couplets came to be attached to the saga of Maharana Pratap of Mewar.

A popular story, also recounted in Tod's *Annals*, but with no historicity, relates how the royal family were reduced to eating meagre meals of bread made from the local wild millets and grasses that they collected. One day Pratap's wife and daughter-in-law managed to collect enough to make just a few of these rotis, half to be eaten that day to assuage their immediate hunger, and the rest kept aside to be eaten later. They had barely started eating when the loud cries of one of his daughters pierced Pratap's heart – a wild cat had run off with the piece of bread that the hungry little girl was about to eat, as well as all the rest that had been saved for a later meal. The Maharana was so distressed by the cries of his hungry children that for the first time his resolve wavered, and the news reached Akbar that the Maharana was finally considering accepting Akbar's terms and surrendering to Mughal might.

Pratap's brother-in-law, Bikaner's Prince Prithviraj, also known as Peethal, was one of Akbar's nine jewels, a Mughal military commander, and also a renowned poet. The emperor asked him to find out if there was any truth to the rumours about Pratap. And so Prince Prithviraj sent the Maharana a stirring epistle in verse, in which he declared that the news of Pratap deciding to surrender to Akbar was as likely to be true as the sun deciding to rise in the west:

The sun, Lord Kashyap's scion

Must rise in the west

Should Pratap so much as even address Akbar

By word of mouth as the king of kings.<sup>12</sup>

The Bikaner prince's poem then went on to ask if he, Peethal, should jettison his Rajput code of honour and hang his head in shame, since Pratap could no longer shoulder the burden that the rest of them had been unequal to shouldering.

According to local tradition, the Maharana's sagging spirits revived when he read the Bikaner prince's letter, with its implicit but unmistakable message that his fellow Rajputs were counting on him alone to uphold their traditions and their honour. He immediately shot back an answer, assuring Peethal that he would never surrender to Akbar:

Whilst this body breathes

Let Lord Ekling bear witness

By Pratap shall Akbar still be called the Turk

The sun shall rise as it always does

In the East.<sup>13</sup>

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Historians like G.N. Sharma and the writer Rajendra Shankar Bhatt noted that not all of these legends are verifiable, and that several stories about Pratap commonly told and retold in later centuries do not find any mention in contemporaneous Mewari annals. One often retold story, as related earlier, pertains to Pratap insulting Man Singh of Amber when he visited Udaipur as Emperor Akbar's emissary, much before the Battle of Haldighati. Pratap refused to eat with the Amber prince, taunting him to call his 'Mughal Uncle' for help, thereby underlining the Amber ruling family's marriage connections with the Mughals. There are doubts about whether this actually happened: if indeed Man Singh was given a banquet at Mewar, it would have been a breach of normal courtly protocol for Maharana Pratap to eat with him, or for Man Singh to insist that he do so,

since Pratap was the ruler of the state and Man Singh at that time was a mere prince of Amber.

James Tod in his *Annals* has a romanticized account of Maharana Pratap fleeing from one place of concealment to another, in conditions of abject poverty, but this is refuted by historian G.H. Ojha who notes that Mewar was not entirely bankrupt, and that its treasury had not fallen into Mughal hands at any stage – not even after the sack of Chittor. If Mewar's treasury had indeed been captured, this would have been recorded by contemporaneous historians and by Akbar's own numerous court chroniclers.

Be that as it may, Maharana Pratap's fight against the Mughals was soon to reach a turning point, with the battle of Dewair. Though not as famous as the Battle of Haldighati, it was to have far-reaching consequences.

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In 1582, around the time of the festivities associated with Dussehra, Pratap attacked the imperial Mughal garrison commanded by Sultan Khan near the village of Dewair, 40 km north-east of Kumbhalgarh. Reinforcements from nearby Mughal outposts arrived, and there was a fierce and decisive battle, in which the elephant-borne Sultan Khan mounted a horse after his elephant was struck down dead. Pratap's son, Prince Amar Singh, then charged Sultan Khan and struck him such a fierce blow that Sultan Khan's helmet and armour shattered, and the Mughal commander and his horse fell dead. The demoralized Mughal soldiers fled the field in disarray, leaving Pratap the undisputed victor in the battle of Dewair.

Writing in the nineteenth century, Tod compared Pratap's victory at Dewair to the Battle of Marathon (490 bce), in which the Greeks fought heroically to decisively defeat an invading Persian army. Lamenting that Mewar didn't have a Herodotus or Thucydides to tell the world the story of its brave warriors and great battles, Tod also compares the Battle of Haldighati with another great battle of antiquity – the Battle of Thermopylae (480 bce), in which the heavily outnumbered Greeks tried to block an invading Persian army in a narrow pass, as at Haldighati. Though the Persians managed to break through the pass, the Battle of Thermopylae

has become a symbol of patriotic defence of one's land, and of heroism in the face of tremendous odds, as has Haldighati.

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After his victory at Dewair, Maharana Pratap immediately headed towards Kumbhalgarh. He and his forces overran thirty-six Mughal outposts in a single day, and the tracts stretching from Dewair to Kumbhalgarh were cleared of Mughal occupation. Having retaken Kumbhalgarh, the Maharana proceeded towards Zawar, capturing all the Mughal garrison outposts that lay en route, among them Amet, Madariya and Zawar.

Thereafter, the Chhappan area of Mewar, to the south of Udaipur, was occupied by Pratap's forces, and its ruler Loona Rathore was defeated. The Chavand area of southern Mewar too was taken over by the Mewar Maharana. Pratap now sent expeditions against the neighbouring states of Dungarpur and Banswara which had accepted Akbar's suzerainty. Following a fierce battle on the banks of the river Som, Pratap's forces under Rawat Bhan were victorious in Dungarpur, and Banswara too accepted Pratap's supremacy.

Sirohi became Mewar's ally as well. In 1581, Akbar had made Pratap's estranged half-brother Jagmal the ruler of Sirohi, after the death of Jagmal's father-in-law, Devra Chauhan Rao Man Singh of Sirohi. But Rao Man Singh had nominated Surtan as his successor, and Surtan took to arms to resolve the matter. Jagmal was killed in the ensuing battle of Dattani, near Mount Abu, on 17 October 1583.

Impressed by the new Sirohi chief's courage and daring, Pratap proposed a matrimonial alliance between a daughter of his family and Rao Surtan. He was dissuaded by some Mewar nobles, who urged that now that Jagmal was dead the squabble between the brothers should end too, and instead the Mewar Maharana should use the Rajput tradition of vair – the declaration of enmity against someone who had wronged a member of one's clan – and seek vengeance against Rao Surtan. Pratap categorically refused to do this. The marriage alliance with Sirohi helped end another of his traditional enmities and further strengthened Pratap's position.

Mughal pressure on Mewar had relaxed marginally by this time due to other issues and internal crises, which impinged on the emperor's attention. These included a revolt in Bengal and Bihar against Akbar's reforms, which necessitated sending troops to that region; and the incursion into Punjab by Akbar's half-brother, Mirza Hakim.

However, in December 1584, Akbar again decided to take action against Pratap and charged Raja Jagannath Kachhwaha of Amber with the task of capturing Pratap and producing him at the Mughal court. At the approach of Jagannath's expedition, the Maharana retreated further into the inaccessible reaches of Mewar. This expedition in 1584–85 was, in effect, the last major campaign by the imperial forces against Pratap. In 1585, the emperor moved to Lahore, in order to keep better control over the north-western boundaries of his empire and the situation there. Thereafter, from 1585 to 1597 Akbar did not dispatch any further expeditions against Pratap.

## 7. The Maharana's Last Years

Maharana Pratap established his new capital at Chavand, 60 km south of Udaipur, near Dungarpur, in 1585. The remaining thirteen years of his life saw him reign over Mewar from here. Though this period continued to be one of relative hardship because much of Mewar remained under imperial occupation, Pratap built his palace at Chavand, as well as administration buildings, stables, a town square and a temple to Chamund Mata, using local stone and lime mortar. Local legend has it that he also built over a dozen hideouts within a 10 km radius of Chavand, where his arsenal and his forces were kept concealed, and where his Bhil warriors lived. Today his palace lies in ruins and few traces of those hideouts remain, though the Chamund Mata temple still stands.

The near-contemporaneous *Amarsar* text by the poet Pandit Jivadhar, composed at the Mewar court of Pratap's successor, Maharana Amar Singh I, tells us that in Chavand, Pratap was able to finally enjoy some peace and establish order. Often, as he went riding cross-country or on hunting expeditions, the Maharana recalled his childhood experiences of learning the skills of the hunt – the akhet – in the hills around Gogunda and Kumbhalgarh.

The Chavand court sheltered poets, writers, artists and artisans too. And even earlier, when Pratap had his hands full with fighting Akbar's imperial armies, he gave refuge and patronage to many scholars and artists. Under Maharana Pratap and his successor Amar Singh, the Chavand school of miniature painting developed and took on its own trajectory, with a renowned painter like Nasiruddin as part of its atelier. Various ragamala sets, depicting musical moods, were painted at Chavand during this period, and the style continued into the seventeenth century. Some typical features of the Chavand school paintings are the sharp pointed noses, large eyes and angular features of the figures, their diaphanous clothing, wavy skylines, and the use of browns and reds. These features, as art historians have observed, reflect the influence of Gujarati/Jain manuscripts as well as pre-sixteenth-century Rajasthani paintings.

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In the winter of 1596–97, Pratap sustained an internal injury while hunting, which was slow to heal. The fifty-seven-year-old Maharana eventually succumbed to his injuries at Chavand on the eleventh day of the bright shukla half of the Indian month of Magh of the year Vikram Samvat 1658, corresponding to 19 January 1597. His memorial chhatri (cenotaph) was raised at the nearby village site of Bandoli.

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Between 1585 and his death thirteen years later, in January 1597, the Maharana had succeeded in recovering a substantive part of Mewar with two notable exceptions. Despite his best efforts, Pratap was never able to fulfil his ambition of recovering his ancestral capital, Chittor, even though he managed to restore Mewar's control over some of the area around Chittor. Mandalgarh too remained under Mughal authority.

The long years of fighting had devastated the land, both because of the many battles and resultant destruction by the armies, and also because of the Maharana's order to his people not to cultivate land, so that the invading forces could not obtain food and provisions from Mewar soil. But gradually, the ordinary people of Mewar who had left their land and homes during the turbulent years of Mewar–Mughal confrontation, began to drift back to the land. Agricultural activity picked up, assisted by a series of good monsoon years. So, albeit cautiously, did trade and economic activities.

But Maharana Pratap's last days were troubled. Even as he lay dying, he is said to have carried the bitter regret of not having recovered Chittor from Mughal control. Chittor was much more than a fort with a long hoary history – it also embodied the very spirit of Pratap's dynasty. Chittor had fallen to the Mughal emperor Akbar in 1568 in the reign of Pratap's father, Maharana Udai Singh II, almost four years before Pratap became ruler of Mewar. Pratap had always set the goal of retaking Chittor as his personal milestone.

The fierce battle fought at Haldighati had not given the result that Pratap must have hoped for. A decisive victory would have meant the withdrawal of Mughal armies from Mewar's territories, and the return of forts like Chittorgarh and Mandalgarh to Mewar's flag. A decisive victory would have meant unbroken Mewari occupation at Gogunda, Kumbhalgarh and the new city of Udaipur built by Udai Singh II. And it would have seen Pratap reigning not from the inaccessible forested hills around Gogunda, Kumbhalgarh, Dholan or Chavand, but from the throne of his forefathers in the once grand but now ravaged sabha mandap (hall of audience) of Chittor, which Pratap's father had tried to replicate in his Udaipur palace-fortress.

And yet, for the followers of the indomitable Maharana, and even for his enemies, Haldighati had not been a defeat either. The aftermath of Haldighati had seen the Mughal armies unsuccessfully chase the elusive shadow of the Mewar ruler across the Aravalli hills. Even the Mewar forts and towns that were captured by the Mughals tended to slip out of their hands with disconcerting regularity, as soon as various army commanders were withdrawn or replaced, especially in the wake of Akbar's eventual preoccupation with the northern and north-western borders of his empire. The subsequent battle of Dewair had certainly been a decisive victory for the Maharana. But it was a victory that came late and, therefore, while it could undo much, it could never erase the entire past.

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According to nineteenth-century Mewar chronicles, the dying Maharana of Mewar called upon some of his closest nobles and advisers to pledge to keep up the struggle against the Mughal forces, and not let his heir apparent (the future Maharana Amar Singh) lay down arms. His eldest son and heir apparent, then took a pledge before his dying father that he would live up to the task given to him: namely, to administer with justice and honour the kingdom of Mewar; and to never allow Mewar to become a part of the Mughal Empire.

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Even during his lifetime Maharana Pratap had become a legendary figure, hero-worshipped for his courage and determination against tremendous odds, in maintaining Mewar's independence, and upholding Rajput honour. Over the centuries, the legend only grew and he remains today an enduring symbol of patriotism, valour and chivalry.

One wonders whether, in his more reflective moments, Maharana Pratap looked back at the personal histories of some of his ancestors whose lives had included periods of exile, of living in forests and caves, and other hardships, in spite of their having been born royal. The list of such forebears included (according to Mewar's royal genealogy) Lord Rama, who had spent fourteen years in exile in a forest, and the orphaned Guha, ancestor of the Guhila Rajputs, who was brought up in a forest cave amongst the Bhils. Then, among his more immediate ancestors there was his grandfather Sanga and great-uncles, the princes Prithviraj and Jaimal, whose intense sibling rivalry led to all three spending part of their youth in semi-exile during the lifetime of their father. And Pratap's own father, Udai Singh, who escaped being murdered by his half-brother Banbeer, had spent a phase of his boyhood in hiding, shuttling between the forts of Chittor and Ranthambore, his maternal uncle's kingdom of Bundi, and the forests and fort of Kumbhalgarh. Exile and disinheritance were aspects of reality for many a crowned head – even Pratap's adversary Akbar had been born in exile.

Perhaps Pratap was too stoic a personality to have lamented that a life of exile and hardship in the forests and hills of Mewar was a fate preordained for his line. But there must have been times when he wondered how long he could hold out against Akbar and his armies. What made him so unbending in his resolve to confront the Mughal forces again and again? Why did he refuse to even engage in dialogue with Emperor Akbar, or to try and negotiate for peace with honour? Perhaps the code that had been instilled in him as a boy – a code that eulogized courage in the face of adversity, and the readiness to choose death before dishonour – was one that was so deeply embedded in him that he could not shake it off. Perhaps as the head of the oldest and most important Rajput kingdom he felt it his duty to uphold Rajput honour when lesser Rajput princes were succumbing to the lures of the Mughal court. We can only speculate, for we know very

little about the doughty warrior's own feelings, other than his oft-repeated declaration that he would never lay down his weapons against the Mughals, and that he would maintain Mewar's independence and sovereignty till his dying breath.

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When news of Pratap's death reached Akbar at his court, then at Lahore, the Charan poet Dursa Adha from Marwar stood up and praised the Maharana, spontaneously composing and reciting his now famous poem before the emperor.<sup>1</sup> The poem hailed Maharana Pratap as one who had not bowed before another in his lifetime, noting that the brave Pratap, the 'noble Guhilot Rana', had preferred hardship to subservience.

*As leygo andaag, paag leygo anaami,  
Gao Adha gavday, jiko vehto ghur vaami.*

You did not let your horses be branded by the imperial seal,

Your turban remained unbowed before all.

Songs of your valour were sung far and near,

Even as you kept the wheel of governance of your kingdom

Moving with your left shoulder.

*Navrojey nahin gayo, na gao aatsa navvali,  
Na gao jharokha heyt, jeyt duniyana dehli.*

You never attended [Emperor Akbar's  
celebrations of] Nauroz,  
Nor presented yourself at the imperial tents.

You were never in attendance beneath the royal balcony,  
The world shook with your valour.

*Guhilot Rana jeeti gayo, dashnaa moond rasna disi,  
Nisaas mook bhariya nayan, toh mrit Shah Pratap-si.*

Pratap-si[ngh], on hearing of your passing  
The Shah (emperor) has bitten his tongue [symbolizing inability to utter words in sheer shock and sorrow],

And let out his breath slowly,  
While tears are welling up in his eyes.  
Behold, your victory O Guhilot Rana.

Indeed, you have won [the ultimate round].

And, now as the Badshah learns of your passing  
He does not rejoice.

Behold all, see how he has fallen into deep silence.  
He sighs and takes his tongue between his teeth,

So utterly tongue-tied as he is,  
And he has bowed his head in sorrow  
Even as tears well up in his eyes.

Rajasthani sources claim that Akbar's response to these verses was to generously reward the poet.

This was, perhaps, Pratap's final victory.

# Epilogue

The succession of Pratap's eldest son and predesignated heir, Amar Singh, as Maharana of Mewar (r. 1597–1620), initially saw a continuation of the policy of defiance against Mughal supremacy.

In 1598, Emperor Akbar once more turned his attention towards Mewar, and charged his eldest son, Prince Salim – the future emperor Jahangir – with the task of obtaining Mewar's subservience. Though Prince Salim moved to Ajmer, he does not appear to have been particularly active personally in this campaign, leaving his efficient commanders to carry out the task. Imperial troops succeeded in occupying portions of Mewar, while Mewar's forces retaliated with the guerrilla tactics tested under the late Maharana Pratap.

In 1603, another expedition was sent by Akbar under Prince Salim, but this failed to capture the new Maharana who proved as adept as his father in evading the Mughals – after all, as crown prince, Amar Singh had been his father's military and administrative right arm, and his loyal shadow.

Following Akbar's death in 1605, and Prince Salim's own accession as Emperor Jahangir, the new Mughal emperor focused more intensely on Mewar and several more expeditions were sent against the state. The Mughal prince Parvez, one of Emperor Jahangir's sons, led the first of these. Maharana Amar Singh continued to oppose Mughal domination, and the imperial forces clashed with the forces of Mewar on numerous occasions and at different battlefields – including Desuri, Badnor, Mandalgarh and Mandal. Mewar resumed its 'scorched earth policy', while simultaneously launching guerrilla attacks against imperial garrison outposts. Though Mughal grip over portions of Mewari territory tightened, Prince Parvez was unable to subjugate Maharana Amar Singh – to the displeasure of Emperor Jahangir.

Three further expeditions against Mewar, under the command of Mahabat Khan, Abdullah Khan and Raja Basu, respectively, met the same

resistance. Matters continued in this manner till the middle of 1613, when Emperor Jahangir decided to take matters into his own hands.

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On 7 September 1613 Jahangir marched in person towards Ajmer, where he arrived on 8 November. He made it his base from 1613 to 1616, and this enabled him to ensure an unbroken line of supplies and ammunition to the Imperial forces campaigning against Mewar.<sup>1</sup>

Another of the emperor's sons, Prince Khurram (later Emperor Shah Jahan), was given charge of this fresh campaign against Mewar. The advancing Mughal forces occupied more tracts of Mewar, as Amar Singh was pushed deep into the hilly territory of southern Mewar. Short of supplies and assets, and all too aware of the toll extracted in terms of warriors and civilians killed during the long years of hostility between the Mughals and Mewar, spanning the reigns of both Maharana Pratap and Emperor Akbar, Amar Singh and his councillors eventually came to the conclusion that it was finally time for a cessation of hostilities. According to some versions, it was Kunwar Karan Singh, Maharana Amar Singh's son and heir apparent, rather than the ruler himself, who realized, as did most of the important chiefs of Mewar, the prudence of reaching some sort of an 'honourable' understanding with the Mughals.

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Thus, Prince Khurram was approached, with terms for a possible settlement. These included the condition that the Maharana of Mewar would not be called upon to attend the Mughal court in person but the heir apparent of Mewar would be expected to do so on his father's behalf; nor would any princess of the Sisodia family marry into the Mughal family – then or in the future. Khurram responded favourably. Peace terms were then put forth and largely accepted. It was agreed that the Maharana would get back all Mewar territories occupied by the imperial forces, including the important forts of Chittor and Mandalgarh, with the caveat that the Maharana could not undertake any repairs to the fort of Chittor. In addition, in acknowledgement of Mughal supremacy, Mewar would provide a force of a thousand cavalry to the Mughal army.

These peace terms, on the whole generous towards Mewar, were unhesitatingly approved by Emperor Jahangir, and an imperial farman recording the emperor's order was issued and handed to Maharana Amar Singh by Prince Khurram at Gogunda on 5 February 1615. The Mewar ruler and Prince Khurram cordially exchanged ceremonial gifts, including jewels, elephants, horses and robes, as the formality of such momentous occasions demanded, before parting company.

Mewar's prolonged confrontation with the Mughal Empire was finally over. And Mewar had achieved peace with its honour largely intact. Thereafter, Mewar's heir apparent Prince Karan Singh waited upon Jahangir, who honoured him with presents and ratified the treaty. Later, Karan Singh was warmly received by Jahangir at the Mughal court, given gifts and granted a mansab of 5000. Though Mewar no longer had the authority to mint its own coins, the treaty brought stability and tranquillity in the region at long last.

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Maharana Amar Singh, recalling his pledge to his father on his deathbed, was deeply distressed at the treaty, even though it bore his acquiescence. Some traditions hold that Amar Singh had been kept in the dark about the peace negotiations. When finally presented with a fait accompli, he had no choice but to reluctantly accept it. The ignominy of accepting peace at the cost of Mewar's sovereignty weighed heavy on him. One later tradition states that Amar Singh handed over Mewar's governance to his heir, and lived in an old fortress near the one-time Mewar capital of Ahar on the outskirts of Udaipur, where the royal family cenotaphs and temples had been built, till his death in January 1620. Upon Amar Singh's death, his successor Karan Singh (r. 1620–28), continued the task of rebuilding his kingdom physically, repairing the ravages of years of war, and restoring the morale of his people who had seen long years of sacrifice and suffering.

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A few years later, Prince Khurram, later to be Emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628–58, d. 1666), rose in rebellion against his father. His flight from

imperial wrath as a deemed ‘rebel’ brought him to Mewar, where he sought refuge with Maharana Karan Singh at Udaipur.

In the true tradition of a Mewar warrior, Maharana Pratap’s grandson offered sanctuary and personal safety to Akbar’s grandson, and the two exchanged turbans. Such an exchange of headgear was a recognized token of friendship and fraternity and established honorary kinship.

An exquisite island home, with a specially built pavilion-palace – now known as Jag Mandir – was provided to Prince Khurram on Udaipur’s Pichhola lake. Khurram spent some months at Udaipur, before leaving Mewar for the Deccan. In 1627, upon learning about his father Jahangir’s death, when Khurram marched from the Deccan towards Delhi to stake his claim to the imperial throne, he traversed through Gogunda and met his ‘brother’, Maharana Karan Singh of Mewar. Karan Singh subsequently deputed his brother, Prince Arjun Singh, to join Khurram’s escort-party-cum-entourage to Delhi.

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Maharana Pratap and Emperor Akbar would, perhaps, have understood and appreciated both the irony and the inevitability of this brotherhood established between their two grandsons. Fierce adversaries who had spent years fighting each other, Maharana Pratap and Emperor Akbar nevertheless had much in common. Both were brave and skilled warriors, men of exceptional courage and ability, who held fast to their principles and convictions. Over the years they must surely have grown to respect these qualities in each other. But as magnanimous men and wise rulers they would also, arguably, have realized that by the time their grandsons inherited their thrones, the time would have finally come to cease hostilities, and establish peace with honour between Mewar and the Mughal Empire.

# Chapter 10

## Notes

### Prologue

1 Apparently, when Jagmal's absence had been noted and commented on, his brother Sagar – who was also Pratap's half-brother – had commented that since the dying Maharana had nominated Jagmal as his successor, Jagmal was within the palace taking his place on the throne.

### 1. The Sun Kings

1 Though over time there came to be rival claims regarding his birthplace.

2 Mewar had known many capitals through the ages, including Nagda and Ahar.

3 Early Mewar rulers had used the title of 'Rawal', in preference to 'Raja' or 'Rao', all three terms meaning a king, up to 1303. Almost concurrently, the term 'Rajput' indicating a son or daughter of a king (raja), had become common across the northern and north-western parts of the Indian subcontinent, as a synonym for kshatriya – the warrior caste. Both terms – 'Rana' and 'Maharana' – were used in common parlance and literary works, including during Pratap's own time.

4 His name is recorded as 'Chandan' in Mewar accounts.

### 2. Prince of Mewar

1 Mori dynasty rulers, believed to have some nebulous links with the Mauryan dynasty, established their rule in southern Rajasthan around the sixth century ce. Their territorial hold included parts of Kota and Chittor. It is popularly held that the Moris made Chittorgarh their capital, and that the fort of Chittor was built for Chitrangad Mori (Maurya), also called Chandra Rai Mori. A water reservoir (tank) and the earliest buildings at Chittor are popularly ascribed to Chitrangad Mori.

2 Early Guhila king Mahendra II is identified with the renowned Bappa Rawal by some writers. According to others, his successor, Kalabhoja, was Bappa Rawal. Yet others hold that Kalabhoja's successor, Khumman, was Bappa Rawal. The honorific 'Bappa' (father) may have been used for more than one early Guhila chief. An early epigraphic reference to Bappa Rawal occurs in the Eklingji inscription of 971 ce.

3 The kingdom of Mewar was encapsulated into a geographical zone that had the Aravalli hills on its west, the northern scarps of the central Indian Vindhya to the south and south-east, and the rich alluvium of the Indo-Gangetic plains to the north and north-east. The area included fertile river plains, highlands and plateaux of the Bhorat subregion, the south-east Rajasthan Pathar subregion and hilly ridges with narrow valleys referred to as the north-eastern hilly tracts.

4 Watered by a network of rivers, many of them perennial, belonging to the Chambal–Banas river system, many riverbeds were used by local villagers to grow cucumbers and melons during the summer months.

5 Fateh Lal Mehta's *Handbook of Meywar and Guide to Its Principal Places of Interest*, 1888) also recorded that 'Camels and cattle are said not to be numerous. Sheep and goat are very plentiful. Good horses are scarce.'

6 Mewar had an abundance of babul (*Acacia arabica*), banyan (*Ficus bengalensis*), haldu (*Adina cordifolia*), ber (*Zizyphus jujuba*), dhak or palas (*Butea frondosa*), gular (*Ficus glomerate*), jamun (*Eugenia jambolana*), khair or dhadira (*Acacia catechu*), khejra (*Prosopis spicigera*), mahua (*Bassia latifolia*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), neem (*Melia azadirachta, Azadirachta indica*), pipal (*Ficus religiosa*), salar (*Boswellia*

*thurifera*), shisham (*Dalbergia sissoo*), siris (*Albizzia lebbek*), tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), dhaو (*Anogeissus pendula*).

7 This five-chapter Sanskrit text in verse, dating to Vikram Samvat 1685 (1628 ce), looks at the lives of the Maharanas Pratap, Amar Singh and Karan Singh. It was begun during the reign of Amar Singh and completed during the reign of Amar's son, Karan Singh.

8 *Vir Vinod* by Kaviraj Shyamaldas notes that Udaipur's famous Pichhola lake was constructed by an enterprising Banjara nomadic trader who had prospered by the trade he carried out across Mewar. It is commonly believed, however, that Pichhola developed from a small pond that was extended first by Rana Lakha in 1382 and later by several Mewar rulers.

Long after Maharana Udai Singh II's time, the city of Udaipur would also see the creation of more lakes around Pichhola, including the Swaroop Sagar and Fateh Sagar.

9 Ironically, events in 1576 would see Pratap, by then the Maharana of Mewar, order the filling in of wells in the plains watered by the river Banas and its tributaries, to prevent the invading Mughal army from getting access to water.

### 3. The Fall of Chittor

1 Bairam Khan had been a close associate of Humayun, and one of his wives was the younger sister of Humayun's Mewati wife. Humayun arranged the marriage of his young niece, Salima Sultan Begum, to Bairam Khan. Salima Sultan Begum was a granddaughter of Emperor Babur, and the daughter of Humayun's half-sister Gulrekh Begum. The marriage enhanced Bairam Khan's position as part of the extended imperial family. Later, after Bairam Khan's assassination, the widowed Salima Sultan Begum married her cousin, Akbar.

2 Of the Afghan Sur contenders, Sultan Adil Shah fell in battle against the Mughal governor of Bengal at Monghyr in 1556; Sikandar Shah Suri

surrendered to the Mughals in May 1557 and died a fugitive in Bengal; and Ibrahim Shah Suri took refuge in Orissa, where he was killed.

3 Baz Bahadur has gone down in history as a romantic, music-loving prince, who fell in love with a village belle, Rupmati. According to popular myth, when he fled the battlefield, abandoning Rupmati to her fate at the hands of the invading army, she committed suicide by swallowing diamonds.

4 In 1570, Akbar undertook a pilgrimage on foot to Ajmer to offer thanks at the shrine of the Sufi saint Khwaja Moin-ud-din Chishti, on the birth of his heir, Jahangir. The city became the capital of the Ajmer suba (province), with 7 sarkars (divisions) and 197 parganas (districts), and served as the base for imperial operations against Gujarat, Mewar and Marwar. Akbar built city walls, a mosque, Dargah Bazaar and, in 1575, a fortified palace – long known as Daulat-Khana. Part of this became the British magazine in 1863 and the Rajputana Museum in 1908.

5 His son, Abdur Rahim, rose to a high position under Akbar, and got the title of ‘Khan-i-Khana’. He came to be remembered in later centuries in Rajasthan and across India as the famed poet ‘Rahim’.

6 Sons of the royal wet nurses held the title of ‘Kokaltash’, or foster-brother, shortened to Kokah, at the Mughal court. Similarly, in the courts of the Rajput rulers of Rajasthan, sons of royal wet nurses were given the title of ‘Dabhai’.

7 Marwar’s ruler, Rao Maldeo, designated his third son, Chandrasen (r. 1562–81), as his heir, overlooking the claims of his firstborn, Ram Singh, and his second eldest son, Udai Singh. The disgruntled elder brothers challenged the succession and encouraged unrest in parts of Marwar. Chandrasen defeated Udai at Lohawat in 1562, and Ram at Nadol in 1563. The defeated brothers took refuge at Akbar’s court. Mughal forces occupied Jodhpur, and placed it in the administrative charge of Bikaner’s Raja Rai Singh. Chandrasen shifted to Bhadrajun, and continued resistance against the imperial forces.

8 One of the stories the historian G.H. Ojha cited at the beginning of the twentieth century held that Prince Shakti Singh left Mewar following a quarrel with Prince Pratap during a boar hunt. The quarrel flared out of control, and when it was on the verge of turning into a fratricidal combat, with supporters on both sides ready to join in, the royal priest to the Mewar ruling family had physically stood between the brothers to make them see reason. When that did not work, the priest had taken up a dagger and taken his own life. The act brought the young men to their senses immediately and dramatically. The furious Maharana Udai Singh had asked Shakti to leave Mewar, holding him to blame for the chain of events. Shakti had then found his way to Akbar's court.

9 In 1576, Jaimal's son, Ramdas Rathore, fought and died in battle at Haldighati alongside Maharana Pratap.

10 Rao Surjan of Bundi is among the many fascinating characters of the period. Akbar gave him lands in and around Varanasi, and Chunar fort – in lieu of Ranthambore and parts of Bundi.

#### 4. A Crown of Thorns

1 Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, or the Central and Western Rajpoot States of India* , Vol. 1.

2 We get glimpses of the Mewar that Pratap may have created, under more favourable circumstances, from Pratap's commissioning of works like the Sanskrit text *Vishva-Vallabha* . This book, written by Chakrapani Mishra at Pratap's court, was completed in 1577, a year after the fateful battle of Haldighati. The work is a compendium on agriculture, horticulture, finding water sources, water collection structures in different terrain grafting plants and developing new varieties, and best farm practices for different terrains. In a peacetime Mewar, following the directions provided in the *Vishva-Vallabha* a sixteenth-century 'green revolution' could have taken place. Even wartime Mewar found this book very useful, and small-scale farming by Bhils and others in previously

non-agrarian locales helped provide some food to Pratap's own troops, creating farming oases far from Mughal reach.

3 Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, or the Central and Western Rajpoot States of India*, Vol. 1.

## 5. The Battle of Haldighati

1 For centuries afterwards, in tribute to their ancestor, the rulers of Mewar placed leaves beneath their silver and gold plates when they ate.

2 Among his writings was the *Kitab al-Hadith*, which no longer exists. He also translated Sanskrit tales and the Ramayana and Mahabharata into the Persian language.

3 Dispossessed of their heritage in a family intrigue, Ajja and Sajja, sons of Raja Rai Singh Jhala of Halwad (Gujarat), obtained shelter in Mewar. Their Jhala descendants played important and loyal roles in Mewar's subsequent history.

4 Interestingly, Badayuni makes no reference to a line-up of Bhils in Maharana Pratap's battle formations, but Mewar sources do. The role of Punja and the Bhils continues to be eulogized and commemorated in Mewar even today.

5 Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph in the Introduction to *The Hero of Haldighati* by Kesri Singh 1996.

6 In acknowledgement of the sacrifice, Pratap gave the Jhala noble's descendants the right to bear those insignia of Mewar's royalty in perpetuity, though they remained part of the Maharana's regalia.

7 Kesri Singh in his book, *The Hero of Haldighati*, published to mark the 400th anniversary of the battle of Haldighati, and reprinted in 1996, quotes the same figures of mortality.

## **6. Guerrilla Warrior**

1 To his dying day, Rao Chandrasen of Marwar continued to resist Akbar. In 1575, after losing one of his remaining strongholds, Pokhran, Chandrasen made Siwana his base. He sought allies, but in March–April 1576, the rulers of Dungarpur and Banswara were reluctant to assist him against Akbar. Later that year, Akbar sent an army under the command of Shahbaz Khan against Chandrasen. Chandrasen was defeated and he spent the remaining five years of his life as a wanderer without either a capital or a throne, but with his indomitable spirit undimmed. He sought assistance in vain from other fellow rulers, and though his ability to mount armed resistance was weakened, he nonetheless raided Mughal-held tracts like Asarlai and Bhinai, and even threatened the vicinity of Jodhpur. In January 1581, Rao Chandrasen died near the Sachiyayi pass in the Piplodha hills, far from the capital city of Jodhpur founded by his ancestor, Jodha. He never recovered Marwar, but equally, never stopped trying to do so, becoming a symbol of courage in the face of adversity for many – including Maharana Pratap of Mewar.

2 In 1578 Man Singh, along with his father, Bhagwant Das (by then Raja of Amber), was posted to the Punjab in the north-west part of the empire. Both men, with their retinues, reached the Punjab in April 1578. Their campaigns included those against Badakshan and Kashmir. When Sialkot became Man Singh's jagir (fief), he repaired its fort and beautified the city.

3 In January 1580 Man Singh was given charge of the law and order of the north-west of the empire. He also replaced Sindh's nizam (administrator). When Mirza Muhammad Hakim, Emperor Akbar's half-brother, again took up arms against Akbar and advancing south-eastwards from Kabul, attacked Punjab, Akbar deputed various commanders like Bikaner's ruler Rai Singh and Dhoondhar's Prince Jagannath Kachchwaha to assist Man Singh. In February 1581, Emperor Akbar personally marched against Mirza Hakim. Akbar reappointed Man Singh 'hakim' (lord/chief) of Kabul, and he continued to govern the Indus region until mid-1585. By this time, Akbar had already moved his court northwards,

where it stayed till 1598. As subedar of Kabul, Man Singh successfully suppressed the Roshania, Tariki, Ghori and other tribes, including the Yusufzai group responsible for the death, in February 1586, of Raja Birbal (Akbar's minister and one of his court's nine jewels) and about 8000 imperial troops, in an ambush.

4 Man Singh's military successes were galling to many other Mughal commanders and powerful courtiers, and they helped create misunderstandings between Man Singh and Akbar's eldest son, Prince Salim. Towards the end of Akbar's life, Man Singh pushed for Akbar's grandson Prince Khusrav (who was also Man Singh's nephew) to succeed him, but his efforts failed. Prince Salim, on becoming Emperor Jahangir, retained Man Singh's services as a military commander (by this time he had succeeded his father as ruler of Amber) but sent him far from the court to fight campaigns in the Deccan. Man Singh died in the Deccan during one of these campaigns in 1614.

5 Shyamaldas, *Vir Vinod*, Vol. 2.

6 Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khana's mother was a daughter of the famous Mewati chief, Jamal Khan from the Mewat area, and a direct descendant of the ruling Yaduvanshi warriors. The clan had a long history, and became known as Khanzada upon conversion to Islam. The Khanzadas played a crucial role in Mughal and Rajput history. The elder of Jamal Khan's daughters was married to Emperor Humayun, and Humayun arranged Bairam Khan's marriage with Jamal Khan's younger daughter.

7 Bairam Khan's widow, Salima Sultan Begum, who was Abdul Rahim's stepmother, was a granddaughter of Babur. After becoming a widow, she was married to Akbar, and brought her stepson, Abdul Rahim, with her. The exceptionally bright child caught Akbar's attention, and since Akbar felt he owed the deceased Bairam Khan, his former guardian, respect and honour, he had taken over the role of guardian and foster-father to the young boy.

8 Apart from writing various dohas, Rahim translated Babar's memoirs, *Baburnama* from the Chagatai Turki language to Persian. The work was completed in 1589–90 ce. Rahim also had an excellent command

over Sanskrit, and wrote the *Khetakautukam* and *Dwatrimshadyogavali* in Sanskrit on astrology.

9 Translation from Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, or the Central and Western Rajpoot States of India*.

10 An important court chronicle written in Sanskrit during the reign of Maharana Pratap's son, Maharana Amar Singh, by Pandit Jivadhar who was among the luminaries at the Mewar court.

11 In 1984, a coin hoard found at Zawar revealed twenty-nine silver coins of Akbar's reign minted in 1593 at the imperial mint at Ahmedabad. This post-dates Maharana Pratap's reign.

12 Translation by Kesri Singh in the *Hero of Haldighati*.

13 Ibid.

## 7. The Maharana's Last Years

1 Dursa Adha (1538–1639), from Dhundhla in Marwar, was among the most highly regarded and famed writers of the sixteenth century and was wellknown at the Mughal court too. Dursa Adha lived to the ripe old age of 111, and in the course of his long life received patronage and recognition at Emperor Akbar's court, where he composed verses in Dingal eulogizing Marwar's Rao Chandrasen, Mewar's Rana Pratap and Sirohi's Rao Surtan – all opponents of his patron. His works include *Jhulna Rao Amar Singhji Gajsinghhot-ra*, *Rao Shri Surtan ra kavitt*, and *Kirtan-Bhawani*.

## Epilogue

1 Ajmer was a major centre of Mughal authority. It was here that Sir Thomas Roe presented his credentials on behalf of King James I of

England to Emperor Jahangir in January 1616, and got permission for the East India Company to carry on limited trade in India. Jahangir spent time and energy beautifying Ajmer. He laid out the Daulat Bagh gardens near the Anasagar reservoir, and built the Chashm-e-Noor palace.

## Bibliography

Any contemporary work on Maharana Pratap and the history of Mewar in the medieval period must rely not just on written sources but also on oral histories as recounted by the bards who were an important part of Mewar and other Rajput courts. These oral histories, extolling heroic warriors, describing great battles and narrating important and dramatic moments in the lives of the rulers and their families, have found their way into local folklore, legends and poems, and influenced the work of nineteenth-century chroniclers such as Kaviraj Shyamaldas and Col. James Tod. The sources used in this book include works by sixteenth-century Mughal historians, Mewar court chroniclers, and the works of contemporary scholars and historians, as well as oral histories and ballads.

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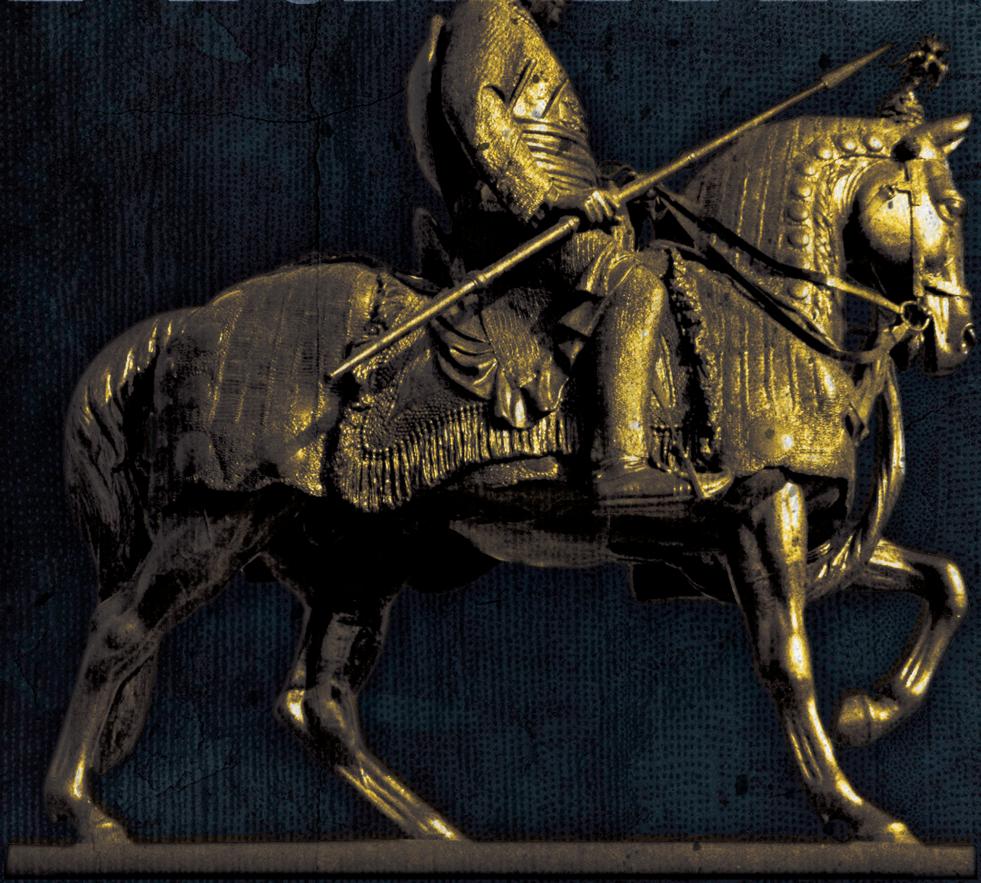
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## Acknowledgements

Writing about figures that are iconic is not easy, and the task becomes a bit more challenging when the figures are national icons, as is the case with Maharana Pratap of Mewar.

I thus must acknowledge earlier writings on Maharana Pratap, as well as discussions with teachers and scholars too numerous to be individually named (with some of them no longer in the world of the living). I am also grateful for the chance of much travel across Rajasthan, all of which has helped shape my understanding of Mewar, its terrain, sociocultural mores, food and history. It is, therefore, perhaps simpler to say a generic thank you, and state that this book is the result of a plethora of information, books and people. The last include my long-suffering editors at Juggernaut Books, Nandini Mehta and Parth Mehrotra. At this point, the Vedic sages would have chanted ‘Idam na mam’, loosely translatable as ‘This [glory] isn’t mine’. For the flaws, however, I take complete responsibility.

# MAHARANA PRATAP



The  
Invincible Warrior  
RIMA HOOJA

