INTRODUCTION

In a way, the growth and ups and downs of civilization in the world can be ascribed to the warfare. Out of the barrel of the gun, have emerged the theological doctrines, political systems and socio-economic concepts. It provided inspiring theme to the law giver, the pen of the poet, the brush of the painter and the chisel of the sculptor. The natural curiosity coupled with instinctive pugnacity of man took him to far-off lands. In search of pastures, riches and glory, he trode the untrodden paths as well as blazed trails through the densest of forests and deepest of waters. No desert or marsh could restrain his arms. He ransacked palaces of kings and abodes of gods. Smiling meadows were laid waste, national liberties trampled, rapine, massacre, and incendiarianism perpetrated. War, thus, offers an extremely fascinating study.

The study of war is no fiction reading. It calls for the discipline of the scientist to understand why a particular course of action adopted by a lesser known commander could succeed, while that of a glamorous and a bragger's failed. This could be appreciated only if one tried to seek the basic principles which led to the success or failure in the war.

Independent of the weapons of war, these principles have existed in all ages and all climes. That is the basic reason why an objective study of military history has been regarded as indispensable to an ambitious army officer. Jomini was merely
stating the truth when he said: "Military history, accompanied by sound criticism, is indeed the true school of war". Writing about Napoleon's campaigns in the same vein he said, "His victories teach what may be accomplished by activity, boldness and skill; his disasters what might have been avoided by prudence". We may, therefore, not be assuming too much when we say that the theory of warfare is furnished by the military history and its study is essential, so that "each person in succession may not have to go through the same labour of clearing the ground and toiling through his subject, but may find the thing in order and light admitted on it", observed General Carl Von Clausewitz. It is the study of history which broadens an officer's vision, deepens his grasp, and eases his tackling of constantly changing situations of war.

According to Montgomery of Alamein, since the opportunity of practising the art of war comes very rarely to a general, it is by the constant study of the theory of the science of war that he can attain professional competency. That is why the great commanders have always been serious students of military history. He quotes, with approval, T. E. Lawrence who felt: "We of the twentieth century have two thousand year's experience behind us, and if we still must fight we have no excuse for not fighting well". He felt that those who derided the theory and regarded only the experience in the trenches of value, were unrealistic and shallow. They were like the legendary mules of Fredrick the Great, who had been through forty campaigns, but still remained mules.
The present study was undertaken with the aim of uncovering the vast experience of Warfare that lay buried under the thick and foggy layers of time, the most crucial in the history of India. The collapse of the mighty and impressive ancient Indian political structure at the hands of barbarous, hungry and greedy yet, virile, swift and doughty warriors descending from the North-West, did call for a thorough investigation from the angle of an historian as well as that of a military thinker. The paucity of reliable historical literature rendered the job a knotty problem. The study is, therefore, an humble attempt to solve the mysteries so deeply enshrouded in the black blanket of the time. The aim was to unravel the underlying principles of the strategy and tactics of war and not only the narration and enumeration of facts or inherent inaccuracies of the political history. The object was not to condemn the princes but to hit at the 'Why' of those military facts which rendered them bereft of power and pelf and swept away the old glamorous social and political fabric of this ancient land.

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