

### **Revisiting the Third Battle of Panipat (1761)**

The third battle of Panipat (1761) between the Marathas and the Ahmad Shah Abdali was one of the most important events in the history of eighteenth century India. The battle had stemmed the tide of Maratha power in India on the one hand and had given the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam (who at this time was running from pillar to post to restore the lost sovereignty of the Mughals in Bengal) an occasion for reasserting the Mughal authority which had come to be challenged by the nobles within the Mughal court. This paper is an attempt to relook at the battle and its context as described in an eighteenth century Persian text, *Shah Alam-namah* written by Ghulam Ali Khan, a scribe of the Mughal Prince, Mirza Jawan Bakht. The text uses both prose and poetry to describe the events that took place from 1754 to 1789. The main focus of this paper is the poem in which the battle of Panipat has been described. Written as a *nazm* i.e. in rhyming verses, the poem describes the soldiers, their attire their zeal and the outcome of the battle among many other issues which I attempt to explore in this paper. The interesting feature of this text is that both prose and poetry have been used to write the history of the reign of the Mughal emperor Shah Alam. I shall also look at the description of the battle as mentioned in other texts viz. *Siyar ul Mutakherin* (1832) by Ghulam Husain Khan and *A Ballad on Bhau and the Panipat in Hindustani* by TS Shejwalkar. By comparing the kind of information given regarding the battle and the combatants in these texts, it will be possible to capture the ways in which third battle of Panipat was constituted in popular memory and give newer perspective on the battle, its outcome and consequences.