

Battle of Khanwa (1527): Causes, Events and Consequences

Causes of the Battle of Khanwa (1527):

1. Ambitions of Babur and Rana Sanga:

Both had very high ambitions of name and fame. Both had an eye on the whole of India. Each wanted to become the supreme power.

2. Charge of breach of faith:

Both accused each other of breach of faith. From records it is not clear whether any agreement was made between the two when Babur invaded India.

Babur's accusation was that Rana Sanga was one of the rulers of India to invite him to attack India but he rendered no help to him in the first Battle of Panipat.

Rana Sanga, on the other hand accused Babur of not accepting his claim on Kalpi, Dhaulpur and Agra.

Chief events:

The armies of Babur and Rana Sanga met at Khanwa, about forty Kilometers away from Delhi. Babur arranged his army almost in the same manner as he had done at Panipat. Several important Rajput rulers and Afghan chiefs rallied to Rana Sanga. About Rana's army, Lane- Poole has observed, "Whatever the exact number might have been, a more gallant army could not be brought into the field".

The battle started at 9 A.M. on March 17, 1527 and continued for about ten hours. The Rajput began to bring havoc upon Babur's army that seemed to have been reduced almost to their last gasp. At this moment Babur made a stirring speech before his soldiers: "Noble men and soldiers, every man that comes to this world is subject to dissolution. How much better is it to die with honour than to live with

infame. Let us then with one accord swear on God's holy 'Quran' that none of us will ever think of turning his face from this warfare till his soul is separated from his body." The stirring appeal had the desired result. The bloody war followed. As observed by Dr. R.P. Tripathi, "The ruthless slaughter closed the bloody episode."

The Mughals won the battle. Rana Sanga was badly wounded and taken away from the battle field. He wanted to take revenge of his defeat but his nobles did not want to take risk. He is said to have been poisoned to death by his own men.

Causes of Rana Sanga's Failure and Babur's Victory:

1. Rana Sanga not a diplomat like Babur:

Rana Sanga showed vacillation and was not a good strategist. He did not capture Agra and Delhi when Ibrahim and Babur were fighting the battle of survival. Had he done so, he would have acquired enormous treasures and resources.

2. Rana Sanga's failure to estimate the strength of Babur:

Rana Sanga underestimated Babur's strength.

3. Holy war (Jihad):

Babur had declared the struggle with Rana as a holy war of the Muslims against the Hindus. His stirring speech infused a new vigour among his soldiers. Everyone swore of the holy Quran.

4. Time for formation and consolidation:

Rana Sanga did not attack when Babur was making fresh preparations. Babur was able to form the 'Tuluguma' on protective lines.

5. Babur as a commander:

Babur was a very capable commander. In the face of adverse situation, he exhibited rare patience and courage.

6. Babur's artillery:

Babur's artillery wrought havoc on the Rajput army.

7. Babur's disciplined army:

Babur's army, though small in number but it was experienced and well-disciplined. On the other hand Rana Sanga's army consisted of heterogeneous elements comprising armies of several Rajput rulers as well as Afghan rulers. It lacked unity of command.

Consequences of the Battle of Khanwa:

1. Strengthening of the Mughal rule in India:

The foundation laid at the battle of Panipat for the establishment of the Mughal empire in India was strengthened and based on firm bases.

2. Set back to the superiority of the Rajput's:

In the words of S.R. Sharma, "Defeat of the Rajput's, at Khanwa ended the superiority of the Rajput's which they had established successfully in the last ten years and which was an eyesore to the Muslims". However, in contrast to this, A.L. Srivastva observed, "Rajput military power was no doubt crushed in the battle of Khanwa but it was not totally crushed. Within a few years they again raised their heads."

Babur's Place in History:

All modern historians have assigned a highly respectable place to Babur in history. V.A. Smith wrote, "Babur was the most brilliant Asiatic prince of the age and worthy of a high place among the reigns of any age and country". Havell described

him as “the most attractive figure in the history of Islam”. Ereskine described, “We shall probably find no Asiatic prince who can just be placed beside him”.

The character and personality of Babur, no doubt, deserves all these praises. But, Babur could not get his rightful place in history if he would have failed to conquer a large, part of northern India. He did not fare well in the politics of Asia and his conquest of Afghanistan was not glorious. It was only his success in India which assigned him the place of an important ruler.

Babur fought three important battles in India viz, the battles of Panipat, Khanwa and Ghaghara and won all of them. He thus succeeded in laying down the foundation of the Mughal rule in India. Babur, of course, himself failed to provide stability to his empire and also failed to make it an all India empire. Yet by breaking the power of the Afghans and the Rajput's, he laid down the foundation of such an empire which the Rajputs and the Afghans had failed to create during the course of nearly one hundred and fifty years.

Though Akbar had stabilized the Mughal empire and was known as the real founder of the Mughal empire, but in no sense Babur could be ignored. No doubt Akbar was the greatest Mughal ruler but Babur alone can be regarded as its founder. However, in the history of the world, Babur occupies a significant place as a great king. His writings, particularly, his autobiography, ranks among the best writings of the world written by kings.

Last Days and Death of Babur:

Babur had succeeded in establishing the Mughul empire in India and there was nobody to challenge his power in northern India. But, now he was near his death. It has been expressed by several historians that Humayun, the eldest son of Babur fell

ill and when showed no sign of improvement Babur offered his own life to God in return of his son.

Then Humayun recovered and Babur fell ill which, ultimately, took his life. But Dr S.R. Sharma has contradicted this story. He has written that the illness of Babur had no relation with the illness of Humayun who had recovered from illness six months earlier to Babur's illness. The majority of historians have now accepted the view of Dr S.R. Sharma.

Babur died due to his own illness. Dr R.P. Tripathi has also expressed that extremely tiresome life of Babur, his indulgence in liquor and opium and the hot climate of India were responsible for his illness and death.

Babur nominated his son Humayun as his successor and died on 26 December 1530 A.D. He was buried at Aram Bagh in Agra but later on was removed and buried in Kabul at the place chosen by himself during his lifetime.