

Socialistic Mentality of the Rebels of the Revolt Of 1857

A Thesis submitted to the
University Of North Bengal

For the award of
Doctor of Philosophy

In
Department of History

By
Malay Saha

Guide
Prof. Dr. Ratna Roy Sanyal

Department of Studies in History
University of North Bengal
June, 2015

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled **Socialistic Mentality of the Rebels of the Revolt of 1857** has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Ratna Roy Sanyal, Professor of History, University of North Bengal. No part of this thesis has formed the basis for the awarded of any degree or fellowship previously.

Malay Saha
Malay Saha

Department of History

University of North Bengal

Raja Rammohanpur, Darjeeling

West Bengal

Date: 12.06.2015

CERTIFICATE

I certify that **Malay Saha** has prepared the thesis entitled **Socialistic Mentality of the Rebels of the Revolt of 1857**, for the award of **Ph.D** degree of the **University of North Bengal**, under my guidance. He has carried out the work at the department of **History, University of North Bengal**.



(Prof. Dr. Ratna Roy Sanyal)

Department of history,

University of north Bengal

Raja Rammohanpur

Darjeeling, west Bengal

Date: 12.06.2015

Dr. Ratna Roy Sanyal
Professor (Ret.)
Department of History
University of North Bengal

ABSTRACT

The Revolt of 1857 or India's first independence movement can be considered to be the principal milestone that put a specific direction and path for the future freedom fighters of British India. Growing socialism in the international sphere, especially in the Western world brought in a significant impact on the urban and rural leaderships who fought in the revolution. Mass uprising in rural and tribal hamlets took place against the then economic and political structure, which was sometimes native in origin or had the exploitation of the East India Company behind it, Bringing in equality in sharing the profits accrued by the Company, providing as much religious freedom and protection to Indian sepoys as enjoyed by the British soldiers, equal work distribution and lessening of inequality remained to be the primary motive behind the sepoys fighting the imperial power. The ideas of revolt or revolution are intrinsically associated with the; ideas of – socialism. However, there was a unique Indianess to such socialistic mentality which revolved around religious, traditional conservative mindsets fighting against exploitation, making attempts to dismantle the unequal administrative and economic structure.

But how did socialism, which still was growing as a concept amidst theorists in the West found a shape amidst the masses in the then India, who were basically illiterate as well as had more or less no contact with the outside world. Fighting against imperial powers, the masses which included the masses, peasants, and workers, soldiers, together against East India Company's hegemonic political and economic exploitation had a strange socialistic colour, as all castes, creed and religious followers joined the revolution against such exploitation. Marx himself identified such a revolution as one of the most practically successful attempts of a socialistic revolt that was thought of and theorised.

There is a need to assess the nature of the revolt, the causes that lay behind it, as well as the major and minor actors who were involved in giving the revolt a full shape. How could a society already under tight conservative and feudal setup rise to reform and revolt against the then socio-political and economic setup, sometimes even supported by the erstwhile rulers of the native princely kingdoms. The inspiration that forced such masses to unify, breaking the traditional socio-religious divisions created by the society, fighting shoulder to shoulder against a common exploiter, needs to be explored.

The revolt can be broken up into various spectrums to understand the birth of the socialistic mindset that took its birth amongst the masses. Analysing the major and minor causes from a socialist prism, re-thinking the causes that could have narrowed down the traditional gap between the masses and the native rulers and princes, the exploitation that was embedded within the ranks of the East India Company, might provide a better explanation in understanding the momentous revolution that shook the mighty British Empire from its roots, ending the hundred year old exploitation of the East India Company, bringing in direct British rule in India, and innovating new techniques to divide the Indian society for good, which had strangely unified and showed a strength that even defeated the will of one of the biggest capitalist ventures of Great Britain.

The economic aspect of the Revolt brings in new dimensions, grooming a socialistic mentality amongst the masses, bringing in the peasants tribal and rural masses within the revolt's lap. There is a need to assess the growing socialist trend after the revolt, its genesis, and its aftermath moulding the future Indian National Movement from different dimensions bringing the birth of communist parties, socialist thinking amongst

national leaders and growth of a politically conscious mass even before the advent of senior leaders like Mahatma Gandhi in the political spectrum of British India.

To understand the reasons behind the birth of such consciousness amongst the masses, the causes and mentality behind the rise of peasants, workers and tribals against the imperial powers, the birth of a politically conscious urban lower middle class, demand for economic freedom and equality remain to be the primary motive behind part taking this study. As most of the analysis till date revolves around the prominent leaders of the pre and post revolt period and seldom there has been any analysis to study the mindset, the psyche of the general revolutioneers, this study might usher a new aspect in looking at the first freedom struggle in the Indian national movement.

PREFACE

The revolt of 1857 is considered as one of the important even in Indian history, which gave a way to the freedom fighters to fight a mass movement against the British East Indian Company.

There is a large body of documents from the time, British official's documents, records, diaries and personal narratives who witnessed the mutiny.

Growing socialism in the international sphere, especially in the Western world brought in a significant impact on the urban and rural leaderships who fought in the revolution. Mass uprising in rural and tribal hamlets took place against the then economic and political structure, which was sometimes native in origin or had the exploitation of the East India Company behind it, Bringing in equality in sharing the profits accrued by the Company, providing as much religious freedom and protection to Indian sepoys as enjoyed by the British soldiers, equal work distribution and lessening of inequality remained to be the primary motive behind the sepoys fighting the imperial power. The ideas of revolt or revolution are intrinsically associated with the; ideas of –socialism. However, there was a unique Indianess to such socialistic mentality which revolved around religious, traditional conservative mindsets fighting against exploitation, making attempts to dismantle the unequal administrative and economic structure.

While assessing the existing literature on the Revolt, two major streams of thought are found. One points out how the revolt only revolved around the mutiny that took place amongst the sepoys employed by the East India Company. The other thought tries to narrate the mass appeal and participation that was involved in the revolt, giving it

the fame of being the first struggle against British colonial and imperialistic rule. The study will try to use both these streams to filter out the socialistic mindset that prevailed amongst the mindset of the Indian sepoy, the peasants, the urban middle class, as well as the landlords, zamindars and native rulers.

I would like to express my special appreciation and thanks to my supervisor, Prof. Ratna Roy Sanyal, who has been a tremendous mentor for me. I would also like to thank my teachers of the History department, Prof. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, Prof. I. Sarkar, Dr. Anita Bagchi, Dr. Bijoy kumar Sarkar, Dr. Dhalia Bhattacharya and Dr. Sankar Kumar Das. I also want to thank Dr. Sudash Lama and Sri Varun Kumar Roy for their kind cooperation in getting my paper to completion .

A special thanks to librarians and staffs of North Bengal University, Darjeeling; National Library, Kolkata, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Kolkata; National Museum, New Delhi; National Archives, New Delhi; Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi; Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi; library of university of Delhi, State Archives of Uttar Pradesh and west Bengal State Archives for the kind help they extended to me.

At the end I would like to express my appreciation to my families who are always supported me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Appendices	IX
Glossary	X
Chapter One – Introduction -	1
Chapter Two – Rise of Socialistic Trends in India during 1850s -	15
Chapter Three – The Revolt of 1857: Extent and Dimension -	48
Chapter Four – The role and Influence of the Revolutioneers on the Revolt -	99
Chapter Five – The Impact of the Revolt of 1857: An Assessment -	144
Chapter Six – Conclusion -	187
Bibliography -	197
Appendix A -	205
Appendix B -	206
Appendix C -	207
Index -	208
List of Maps -	213

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: [Proclamation Rebels From Meerat to Delhi, Collection No, 60, Serial No.774, Undated, NAI, New Delhi]

APPENDIX B: [The Proclamation of Commender- in- Chief of Delhi, Collection No.57, Serial No, 474, Dated 11th Sep. 1857, NAI, New Delhi]

APPENDIX C: [The C-in-C charges the Hindu and Musalman troops by all that they hold sacred to fight with effort against the British, Collection No. 57. Serial No 461, Dated 10th Sep.1857, NAI, New Delhi]

GLOSSARY

Amils - Revenue Official

Adibasi - Original inhabitant

Balwai – Revolt

Bannia - Marchant

Bhumij - Tribal / Adibasi

Chappati- An unleavened flatbread

Chowkider - Watchman

Deswa - Country

Faquir – Religious ascetic who lives solely on alms

Firangi - Foreigner, especially British or White person

Gadar – Revolt

Gujar – Tribes

Gaon - Village

Guru- Teacher

Gora- Faire Skined

Julum – Coercion

Mahajans – Merchant

Majwa – Luxuries

Mahal – A revenue division of paragana

Moulavi- An expert in Muslim law

Mulk - Country

Pandit- Scholar or Teacher

Padshah – King

Petty – Minor or Subordinate in rank

Phunki – Arson

Poligar – Feudal Chief

Prabasi – Migrated people who lived in foreign land

Raj – Zamindari Estate

Raja - King

Sahukar - Money lender

Sanyasi - A Brahman who having attained the fourth and last stage of life as a beggar

Subedar – Chief native officer

Tola – Unit of weight measurement

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The Revolt of 1857 or India's First Independence Movement can be considered to be the principal milestone of modern Indian history. This Chapter has indicated the theoretical analysis of revolt especially associated with socialistic thought and practical implication in the nineteenth century world political and economic order.

Revolt or Revolution in engineering is a unit of circular motion. In politics it refers to a sudden change of direction¹, whether it may be to change the direction of society or it may be to change the economic order. According to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary revolt means "forcible substitution by subjects of new ruler or polity for the old"². Why then (the nineteenth century) has Revolt or Revolution been seen as a major organizing concept? The Revolt of 1857 came when the exploitation had already paved the way for rising of the revolutionaries which included the masses, peasants, workers, soldiers. Revolt was the path to the future. It came to be seen as a social process rather than as a political event, and one which, moreover transcended existing political boundaries. Indeed the Revolt of 1857 spread from the leaders to the masses.

In the nineteenth century there were many revolutions in Europe as well as in India, but none was generally recognized as great social revolt or revolution. If we look into India during the period of nineteenth century there were unparallel social changes but it was associated with evolutionary change and emergence of a stable political order.

Revolution is political succession. It requires the replacement of one ruling group by another.³

By the turn of the nineteenth century, popular revolution had begun. The old order of Aristocratic rule was crumbling everywhere in Europe and the new American Republic was demonstrating an unexpected capacity for growth and development. Theories about the natural rights of oligarch were everywhere being challenged by competing theories about the natural rights of all men to an equal share in the good things in life. The new economic order in Western Europe was, moreover, proceeding rapidly. With it there emerged the kinds of social classes, based on wealth and power that resemble those of today.

No one in the history of social thought has made the struggle between competing social and economic classes so central a feature of society and so dominant a source of social change as done by Karl Marx. And no set of ideas has had such an enduring effect as those advanced by Marx. The French Revolution was clearly seen revolution as a spontaneous mass rising. The revolutions of 1830 and 1848, and the Paris commune, had all seen large masses in movement seeking political ends and economic transformation. We can compare this picture with the Revolt of 1857 in India, where the Revolt brings a new dimension, grooming socialistic mentality amongst the masses, bringing the peasants, tribal and rural masses within the revolt's lap.

By 'Analysis' we mean something very specific breaking down the whole pattern of events into smaller sections so that each can be examined in detail. Once this has been done and general principles established governing the nature of behaviour at each stage of process⁴, we seek to recombine them in an overall concept of revolt. In the case of revolution we are dealing with a phenomenon generally admitted to be of a major social importance which has been instrumental in the birth of socialistic thinking or mentality.

Systematic analysis of revolutions as phenomenon⁵, therefore, has been a very recent development in social thought. The great revolution of the nineteenth century greatest challenge to ideas of social and political organization and also to the challenge of economic structure.

The social preconditions of Revolution are those circumstances that bring together leaders followers, a cause and the material facilities by which they can use violence to achieve it⁶. Socialistic thinking is based upon the relationship formed by the human mind with the natural and social environment. We can identify for different social groupings or behaviors. Each group has a different relationship with its environment and therefore develops different mental tendencies. The first group (the masses) is overwhelmed by the psycho-physical waves of reality. Unable to contend with it, this group spends its energy simply trying to exist. The second group (the warriors) commands the psycho-physical reality by physical force. The third (the intellectuals) commands by psychic (mental) force and the fourth (merchants) commands by controlling the manufacture and exchange of psycho-physical objects.

Within this general pattern there are all sorts of small changes and fluctuations (thesis and antitheses) which do not substantially alter the basic social and political fabric. The substantial change can be referred to as social evolution and evolution refers to dynamic periods of progressive social changes.

A society is a composite of individual human beings. The totality of various individual flows of movement constitutes the collective social movement. Each individual flow is influenced by the collective flow. It is impossible for individuals to

move exclusively according to their individual inherent momentum. In some instances, the individual strives to maintain adjustment with the collective flow.

If we look over during the period of nineteenth century exploitation was a common factor for all classes of society. Exploitation has been a social and economic feature of every class in society. It is to be noted that Revolution as the Revolt has been the main element to the formation of the new world. A major factor which precedes the radical change in many Asian nations was the pressure of European imperial powers. For example, we can mention the imperial country like Great Britain. Great Britain had dominated India for many years. European imperialism was started in the 19th century. On the basis of world economic and political order, England, France, Germany and many other European countries being industrialized in the nineteenth century, their global attention expanded along with their demand for a variety of raw materials. This kind of dominated mentality as well as the western values created the new economic and political values which had established the new challenging platform for Asian societies in many ways. India was directly colonized by Britain starting in the eighteenth century.

Socialism revisits past struggle and movements. There is a need to study historical events in order to be aware of the battles of our ancestors, to take pride in those struggles, but, most of all, to arm ourselves with insight and examine the lessons. The Peasants Revolt for social justice was a demonstration of people power which struck fear into the hearts of the ruling class. The peasants had to work on his land for a part of the week, their unpaid labor in effect acting as rent to the noblemen. The rest of the week, they worked on their own buildings. The nineteenth century world economic and political order has provided the major element of the Revolt. We need to examine the economic

and social condition in nineteenth century Europe. Firstly Europe was predominantly rural and agricultural, but when Industrial Revolution was started the industrial capitalists found a new way for dominating third world countries.

The realization of socialism is now a practical task – a problem for which the proletariat is at least of all prepared the preconditions for the realization of socialism and the problem of this realization from a distorted perspective. This fundamental error goes so deep that it not only affects opportunists, for whom socialism anyway always remains a far off ultimate goal and leads honest revolutionary astray. After that the majority saw the revolutionary process, the ongoing struggle for power. It is impossible for us to concretely imagine the details of socialism as a completed condition. It is more important as theoretically accurate knowledge of its basic structure, the significance of this knowledge lies above all in its establishing the criteria by which we can judge the steps we take towards it. Concrete knowledge of socialism is – like socialism itself a product of the struggle for it, it can only be gained in and through this struggle. All attempts to gain knowledge of socialism which do not follow this path of dialectical interaction with the day to day problems of the class struggle make a meta-physic of it.

The problem of economic structure and class relations at the movement when the masses (who were victimized by capitalist way) seize state power, they arise directly from the situation in which the working class establishes its dictatorship and can, therefore, only be understood and solved in relation to its problems. For the same reason they nevertheless contain in relation to this and all preceding situations, a fundamentally new quality. Even if all their elements are rooted in the past, the inter-connection with the maintenance and consolidation of masses rule produces which could not have existed

either in Marx or in other earlier theories, which can only be understood and solved in the context of this essentially new situation.

Economic structure and class relations, strictly Marxist in its simplicity and sobriety, on the other hand, it is a lucid awareness of all new tendencies arising out of a new situation, unclouded by any theoretical prejudice. These apparently simple qualities rooted as they are in the nature of the materialistic dialectic in it a theory of history – are by no means easy to attain. The customary ways of thinking under capitalism have given everyone – particularly those inclined to systematic study – the tendency always want to explain the new, completely in terms of the old, today entirely in terms of yesterday.

The material basis of Socialism as a higher economic form replacing capitalism can only be provided by the reorganization and higher development industry, its adjustment to the needs of the working class, its transformation in the direction of an ever more meaningful existence. The condition of the material basis therefore determines the possibilities and path of its concrete realization. Imperialist war is the cause of socialist revolution. And this is not only because the horrors of war give rise to mass revolt – no revolt can bring about socialism unless the economic condition and also political conditions for socialism are ripe – but because state monopoly capitalism is a complete material preparation for socialism. In Europe the Proletariat still remains the weaker class and will remain so for a long time – until revolution is victorious on a world scale. Economically its struggle must therefore be based on two principles. Firstly to stop as quickly and completely as possible the destruction of heavy industry by war and civil war, for without this material basis the proletariat is bound to be destroyed. Secondly, to regulate all problems of production and distribution to the maximum satisfaction of the

material needs of the peasantry so that the alliance established with the proletariat by the revolutionary solution of the agrarian question can be maintained. The means for the realization of these aims change according to the circumstances. Their gradual implementation is, however, the only way to maintain the rule of the masses – the first pre-condition of the socialism or socialistic thinking. In the historical process which – at any given instance or phase – contain this relationship to the present whole and to the question of development central for the future in its practical and tangible totality. Those moments are brought into the open by history, by the objective development of productive forces. But it depends on the proletariat whether and how far it is able to recognize, grasp and thereby influence their further development. The fundamental and already off-quoted Marxist axiom that men make their own history acquires an ever-increasing importance in the revolutionary period after the seizure of state power. Important and more decisive in the period of transition of socialism than in the preparatory period, the greater the proletariat's active influence in determining the course of history. That is why every turning point in the development of socialism and the revolution can only be victorious on world scale, because it is only as and tactic are to be distinguished from rigid adherence to write principles, they must also be totally separated from all unprincipled, schematic real politic. The dialectically correct fusion of the general and also the specific, are the recognition of the general (in the sense of general historical tendencies) in the specific (in the concrete situation), and the resulting concretization of therefore the basis of this theory of compromise.

But the need to take into account all existing tendencies in every concrete situation by no means implies that all are of equal weight when decisions are taken. On

the contrary, every situation contains a central problem the solution of which determines both the answer to the other questions raised simultaneously by it and the key to the further development of all social tendencies in the future.

The manufacturers, products of the industrial revolution, had to defy the old order and they did not fear as yet the working class in Europe. Naturally, such an industrialist class found it to its interest to prove that all value came from the factory and consisted in labor to which the owner contributed his part. According to Marx, value is not a specific physical property of an object, it is a social property, a social relation between persons, maintained as a material exchange of products. We can understand what value is only when we consider it from the point of view of a system of social production relationships which present themselves in a mass form, repeating the phenomenon of exchange millions upon millions of times. As values, then, all commodities are only different quantities of congealed labor time.⁷

As society develops, the system of exchanges develops into a regular process of circulation, in the course of which the commodity most fittingly takes on the role of constructing itself with other commodities, becoming the universal equivalent called money. Money is a commodity that has the social function of being the measure of all values as well as the medium of exchange on the basis of political and economic order. Money and exchange play a vital role in the economic functioning of society, when money and commodity circulation become prominent for a capitalist mode of production. The workers, through their representatives, guide their own destinies and organize themselves so that international production may be purposefully controlled and planfully managed. The allocation of material and workers to a particular industry is made, not

according to the hectic fluctuations of the market, but by social analysis of the needs of man, of the productivity of the workers, and of how much strength is needed to fulfill these needs. For the first time, society rises from domain of necessity into the realm of freedom. Socialism remits industry and agriculture upon the basis of the fusion of science and collective labor. The old life of the agrarian population, with its unsociability and idiocy, is liquidated, as is the unhealthy attitude of enormous masses of population in huge cities. The population is entirely redistributed and a new synthesis is obtained. In the higher stage of social life to which socialism is a transition and which we can call communism in the narrow sense of the term. The transformation is entirely complete, as society's struggle nears the decisive hours; even small sections of the ruling class can cut themselves adrift and join the revolutionary proletariat. No class gives up power without a struggle. The masses cannot hope to dispossess the capitalist from control over the means of production without violence and bloody struggles. The necessity for violent revolution arises not only because this is the sole means to overthrow the bourgeoisie which throttles the progress of society, but also because it is the only way by which mankind can purge itself of bourgeois corruption, can burn out the putrescence of the old order and prepare it for the new. It is manifest that Marx deduced the inevitability of the transformation of capitalist society into socialism wholly and exclusively from the economic law of the movement of contemporary society. While the socialization of labor grows apace, those of the ruling class become more and more divorced from the process of production and degenerate into mere parasites. In the struggle of the workers against their enemy, whatever victories they win in the beginning are but temporary, they seem to take one step forward only to be forced two steps backward. However, this is only

apparent. Inevitably they grow stronger and better prepared as the class became regenerated. Socialistic trend is a broad array of ideologies and political movements with the goal of a socio-economic system in which property and the distribution of wealth are subject to control by the community for the purposes of increasing social and economic equality and co-operation. This control may be direct, exercised through masses, or indirect, exercised on behalf of the people by the state. As an economic system, socialistic trend is often characterized by the state or community ownership of the means of production. The modern socialist movement largely originated in the late – 19th century Working Class Movement. During this period the term socialism was first used in connection with European social critics who criticized capitalism and private property. For Karl Marx, who helped to establish and define the Modern Socialist Movement? Socialism or socialistic trend would be the socio-economic system that arises after the masses revolt in which the means of production are owned collectively. This society would then progress into communism. In the early nineteenth century the shift that precipitated many of conflict was the industrial revolution. The growing industrials based on many European countries were to encourage urbanization, often at the expense of the living conditions of the workers. This was coupled with new agrarian technologies which required fewer people to work the land whilst producing greater agricultural yields. In some countries this precipitated an industrial revolution that took place in the broad sector of world economic and political condition where urban industry played an increasingly dominant role in the economy. This process was first seen in Britain, Prussia, and Netherland in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century whilst other countries, such as France, Italy and the United States of America were to

industrialize the late nineteenth century. Some states such as France, Italy and Austria, failed to industrialize significantly in this period, a factor that would lead to later difficulties during the First World War. The age of industry for Europe began with slow progress in the 1780's. Western Europe tended to advance more quickly than the East. Britain initially led the way. Progress remained slow until the 1850's, because most people continued to use old methods, and population increases reduced the benefits of industrialization. As a result, the industrial age did not start in continental Europe until after 1815, and was not complete in Britain until 1850. During the nineteenth century in the world economic and political order the new word added that was new imperialism. This word first used in the modern sense. In this time economic explanations have claimed that the acceptance of responsible government was the logical and inevitable consequence of the adoption of free trade in 1846. The downfall of the protectionist system and the relaxation of Britain's economic controls allowed free play at last for liberal notions of colonial government and enabled mature colonies to throw off their subordinate status.

As with the economic interpretation, great power rivalry has a long ancestry as an explanation of the imperialism. This category is intended to convey more than the idea of the diplomatic quarrels of Europe being extended beyond its borders, the arguments of A.J.P. Taylor, but is meant to include the domestic fuelling of these urges by nationalism and social Darwinism, which helped the growth of the trend of socialistic mentality. The starting point is that of crisis, the defeat of France in 1870 and the gradual collapse of the concert system. Pent up nationalistic feeling in France expressed itself in the attempted restoration of prestige by the accumulation of a great deal of what Salisbury was

facetiously to call light soil. The origin of industrial capitalism examines the social processes of both industrialization and class formation. Its relevance extends not only to other cases of developing societies, but also to the larger study of social change within advanced capitalist societies. In the chapter two (Rise of the socialistic trend in India during 1850s) making an attempt to differentiate between the mentality of the then leadership and the masses of India at the initial phases of the revolt, assessing the various causes that led to the revolt. The third chapter (The revolt of 1857: extent and dimension) will assess the revolt itself in detail. The chapter four (the role and influence of the revolutioneers on the revolt) would analysis the role of the various leaderships, the reasons behind the participation of the masses, and would try to find a link between nascent socialistic thoughts that evolved during the period of revolt. Chapter five (the impact of the revolt of 1857) indicates the role of socialistic thought in the post 1857 period among the masses and the impact of the revolt on the imperial government and to analyse and understand the growth of socialistic ideas after the revolt till the time of independence.

The revolt can be studied in various spectrums to understand the birth of the socialistic mindset that took its birth amongst the masses. Analysing the major and minor causes from a socialist prism, re-thinking the causes that could have narrowed down the traditional gap between the masses and the native rulers and princes, the exploitation that was embedded within the ranks of the East India Company, might provide a better explanation in understanding the momentous revolt that shook the mighty British Empire from its roots, ending the hundred year old exploitation of the East India Company, bringing in direct British rule in India, and innovating new techniques to divide the

Indian society for good, which had strangely unified and showed a strength that even defeated the will of one of the biggest capitalist ventures of Great Britain.

The economic aspect of the Revolt brings in new dimensions, grooming a socialistic mentality amongst the masses, bringing in the peasants tribal and rural masses within the revolt's lap. There is a need to assess the growing socialist trend after the revolt, its genesis, and its aftermath moulding the future Indian National Movement from different dimensions bringing the birth of communist parties, socialist thinking amongst national leaders and growth of a politically conscious mass even before the advent of senior leaders like Mahatma Gandhi in the political spectrum of British India.

To understand the reasons behind the birth of such consciousness amongst the masses, the causes and mentality behind the rise of peasants, workers and tribals against the imperial powers, the birth of a politically conscious urban lower middle class, demand for economic freedom and equality remain to be the primary motive behind partaking this study. As most of the analysis till date revolves around the prominent leaders of the pre and post revolt period and seldom there has been any analysis to study the mindset, the psyche of the general revolutioneers, this study might usher a new aspect in looking at the first freedom struggle in the Indian national movement.

REFERENCES

1. Calvert, Peter, *Revolution and counter-revolution*, Open University Press, Buckingham , 1990, p.2
2. *Ibid.*, p.3
3. *Ibid.*, p.15
4. *Ibid.*, p.32
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p.36
7. Sweezy, Paul M, *Four lectures on Marxism*, Cornerstone Publication, Kharagpur, 2008, pp.26-30

CHAPTER- II

RISE OF SOCIALISTIC TREND IN INDIA DURING 1850s

In the year 1793 the major land system was introduced by British authority that means East India Company. Lord Cornwallis introduced the system in 1793 better for East India Company was not an end in itself. The system ushered in a new era in the economic history of Bengal in the late eighteen century. The new set up not only aimed at establishing some kind of order in a confused state of the economy since 1765, which was convenient for the East India Company; but it brought in its wake new complications that affected different segment of Bengal as well as India in different ways. It is well known that the set up of 1793 was introduced keeping in view the conditions in lower Bengal and particularly those in settled areas. But the set up was soon to penetrate deep in other distant areas inhabited by the rural peasant and as well as tribal people or masses whose structure, age old beliefs and notions, social and economic patterns were quite distinct from those of the rest of the people of Bengal. The impact of the new set up introduced in 1793 on a predominately tribal area and a study of the tension it had produced among a particular tribal group would, therefore, be a fascinating enquiry. This impact had presented a profound challenge to the entire economic and social fabric of the peasants whatever may be the tribal people or peasant and masses as a whole and it did not remain unanswered.

If we look over the Jungle Mahal it was not destined to last long. The Government law and order during the period 1800 to till 1855 were not proved sufficient enough to safeguard the peasants' interest in the area. Peasants mean the tribal people who were

engaged in agricultural sector. The total ignorance of the tribal peasants or people about the existing revenue laws, the non-tribal land and money lenders gradually encroached upon the tribal rights in land. The people of this area had not even the access to the complicated legal remedy. The age old rights of the tribal in the jungles were curtailed as a result of the establishment of commercial centres which were trying to have exclusive rights over the jungles. The masses or the workers or the peasants who belonged to tribal community were reclaiming the jungle lands. But the zaminders were misappropriating the entire profit out of it without making any least effort for the improvement of the cultivation. The British East India Company extended their profit by indigo cultivation. This kind of profit mentality of English East India Company was depriving the peasants of the fertile land. Though the trouble arose over a question of disputed succession, the issue was soon taken up by the Bhumij caste as well as the likeminded tribes. The zaminders had not the least enterprise for the improvement and extension of agriculture, so that the peasants might get fair price of their produce. The zaminders liked to be surrounded with forests and to live segregated. The new administrative set up did not bring any considerable relief to the inhabitants of the erstwhile masses or peasants, and the common men they had all the time ignored.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the agrarian condition in British India had undergone rapid changes leading to pauperization of the peasantry. In consequence, peasant struggle against British Empire began to erupt in a number of regions that remained under British imperialistic rule. This struggle against imperialistic rule or aggressive mentality slowly spread across the masses which included peasants, workers, common people in one path or revolts lap.

In the permanent settlement, along with economic exploitation by the East India Company, this was based on the system of rent. The zaminders perpetuated many types of extra-economic coercion, complacent in the shadow of firm support extended to them by the imperial government through the institution of permanent settlement; the zaminders were exhibiting unheard of arrogance. The court of directors referred to the heavy arrears on the settlement of the last few years and expressed their opinion that with a view to avoiding such defalcations in future a permanent settlement of revenue should be made estimate in its amount on reasonable principles for the payment of which the hereditary tenure of the possessor should be the only necessary security.¹ The peasants aimed at preventing such arrogance which was growing by British East India Company. The permanent settlement created a class of parasitic landlords who, by and large, were interested neither in the improvement of agriculture in the contemporary cultural and social awaking. However without any plan or even conscious effort as sporadic, spontaneous features, some of the peasants of Bihar and surrounding area slowly started adopting the gathering method for fight against the exploitative policy of the East India Company.

Socialism has an older ancestral origin than democracy in the sense that the debate of equality and inequality is as old as civilization itself. Ever since Plato lamented that every city is a city of two-one of the rich and the other of the poor, and Aristotle's caution that inequality everywhere is the cause of revolution the question of creating a just, equal stable and efficient society has been the core of political speculation. Ideas and honour as a pre-requisite to a just society, and concern for the poor oppressed and the deprived have always been a part of intellectual thinking. However socialism, like

democracy as we understand it, is essentially a modern concept. It arose first out of commercialization (whatever may be commercialization of agriculture or may be commercialization of daily use commodities) and then became a reaction to the Industrial Revolution which decisively shaped human societies and lives. Socialism instead proposed a society based on equality, cooperation and sociability. Socialism through violent revolutions, while others stressed on peaceful and gradual change. Some claimed that they had discovered the laws of historical development and projected socialism as the inevitable destiny, while others remained content in just projecting what they considered to be a perfect society.² Marx was a revolutionary and a socialist but, above all, a humanist who believed that genuine emancipation and liberation of human beings would be brought about by their own efforts, socialism in India necessitated that certain restrictions were imposed on property rights and that the growth of monopoly was prevented. Equality is a very essential part of socialism. Equality is an essential concept for the study of political life at any time or in any place whereas the notion of equality has only a limited relevance. Equality, it might be said, is an ideal or principle, something men aim at or by reference to which they guide their conduct, power and authority, on the other hand, correspond to certain enduring features of human relationship, especially when men live under government or in states. Equality is characteristically a reforming idea and since the periods in human history when the zeal for improvement in an egalitarian direction constitute a fraction of man's total political experience the idea has only an intermittent importance. We may also be concerned with equality in a somewhat different sense that brings it closer in type to concepts such as power and authority when we focus our attention on the ways that wealth, power, rights and opportunities are

distributed among the members of a society. But while in that sector of society inequality has come against the spot of equality then there is a growing wavering condition which may be non-cooperation tendencies or may be Revolution tendencies. The inequalities which have struck men as unjust and stirred them to protest are of course the differences in political and social status, in the distribution of wealth and the opportunities for self development, rather than the differences between persons in ability, personality, or esteem. In human societies have for the most part been divided into classes or groups whose members have been distinguished by possession or lack of various advantages, opportunities, rights, powers, and privileges. Most political philosophers and social theorists have recognized and attached importance to this phenomenon, both as a significant explanatory factor and as something that needs either to be accepted, and perhaps justified, or condemned and therefore changed. “The India people feel that their construction (Railway) is undertaken principally in the interests of English commercial and moneyed classes, and that it assists in the further exploitation of our resources”. This statesman argued by G. K. Gokhale. Gokhale just highlights the then economic condition and also the economic exploitation of the East India Company by his argument. The construction of railways had a revolutionary impact on the life, culture, and economy of the Indian people. Not till their establishment could the British truly penetrate Indian life, link India with the growing world market, and set it on the path of capitalist development. As a matter of fact railways began, in course of time, to be looked upon by the alien rulers of the country as a panacea for all its economic ills, and their development was pressed on the vigour and vehemence, getting priority over everything else.

Here we also mention that the agrarian problem was perhaps the most important economic problem facing India at the 19th century. Agriculture constituted the main economic activity of the people nearly about eighty percent of the population depending on it for livelihood. The progressive realization of the country during the 19th century under the initial impact of British supremacy had accentuated the traditional dependence of Indians on agriculture. In the words of R.C. Dutta if agriculture prospered, the people were well off, if crops failed, there was famine in the land.³ Besides Indian agriculture was extremely backward and the agriculturist very poor. As a result of a large number of historical factors, India came to have, by the middle of the 19th century, a medley of system of land tenure and land revenue. In Bengal it was held by landlords under the system of permanent settlement according to which they paid permanently fixed land revenue to the Government. In Northern India land held by landlords or village communities who paid a land assessment that was revised by periodic new settlements of revenue. Under the ryotwari system prevailing in Bombay and Madras, land was held by peasant proprietors, who paid land revenue directly to the state, the revenue being assessed on each individual holding separately and regularly revised at each new settlement⁴. The principles determining the pitch of revenue also varied according to the time and place during the rule of the East India Company; but by the middle of the 19th century, a more or less uniform principle had been evolved, at least in theory, for all parts of the country not covered by the permanent settlement. The land revenue policy of the Government of India was a major cause of the poverty and destitution of the peasant and of the backwardness of Agriculture. This theme or frame has helped the peasants, masses to raise their voices against the British exploitation.

By 1830s, after half a century of minimal government, the British began to gain control of the administrative problem. The official favour shown by the home government to the active type of administration set up in the North West provinces must inevitably have rebounded on the Bengal Government. Bentinck's administration (1828-34) reflected the need for economy in administration and he appointed Finance Committee and resolved for strong Government by the Union of the Offices of Collector and magistrate⁵. If we look to the outbreak of Santal Rebellion we can find that this Revolt is a contribution to the understanding of cultural continuity among the basically non-literate Santal villagers who are bound to their land in the Santal Paraganas of Bihar. These communities have been subjected to highly aggressive assimilative pressures during the past century and half. The factors which have served to preserve their right deserve the attention of those interested masses. Assimilative pressures have been exerted through a number of broad traditions of which the Pan Indian rural tradition has been the most influential. Its influence has been exerted to incorporate the Santal People into that form of the village community, life and peasant economy which was developed under the laissez fair policies of British administration, especially in the first half of the 19th century⁶.

Santal, Hul was one of the fiercest battles in the history of Indian freedom struggles causing greatest number of loss of lives. The number of casualties of Santal Hul was 20,000 according to Hunter who wrote it in annals of Rural Bengal. The Santal Hul of 1855 was master minded by the four brothers' Sidhu - Khanu, Chand and Bhairav; a heroic episode in India's prolonged struggle for freedom⁷. It was heroic episode because during that time they had tried to among all masses within one revolt's lap

against the exploitation. It was in all probability, the fiercest spontaneous rebellion in India prior to Great Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. With the capture of political and economic power by the East Indian Company, the natural habitats of the Adivasi (Indigenous) people including the Santals began to settle by the intruders like money lenders, traders and revenue farmers, who descended upon them in large numbers under the patronage of the company.

The Santals were exploited by both colonial East India Company and also their collaborators, native immigrants. Tribal and peasant struggles which took place during various phases of British rule, the historical development of these movements during this period which can reflect the varieties of forms and methods adopted by these movements. The British East Indian company's Government had to face perhaps the biggest of tribal insurrections in India with the great Santal people in 1855. During this time the Britishers or the officers of the East India Company who had till then not known what a clash with tribal people meant, had to set themselves too seriously think about this problem. That is why we find them more cautious and more careful in dealing with the Santals and at the same time with the Mundas, another great tribe of this country soon followed a spate of revolts spearheaded by the Indian war of Independence of 1857 which rocked the British Empire to its foundation.

The tribal too initiated struggles to safeguard their honour, to protect redress against the money lender, the zaminder and other parasitic land holders. It cannot be said that they under rated the strength of the enemy nor were they over estimating their own strength. They knew that their primitive arms could not silence the Britishers' guns. They also realized that the non-tribal India would not make common cause with their struggle.

They should have also been aware that ultimately they have to rely upon their own strength and yet they gave a heroic fight for the simple reasons that they could not avoid it much less postpone it.

The late Dr. B.S. Guha for a long time, the Director of the Department of Anthropology, Government of India, who contributed a great deal to the anthropological lore in this country, reviewing the disturbances that occurred in the tribal areas, observed that the underlying causes of Santal uprisings were the deep dissatisfaction created among the tribal people, against exploitation by their more advanced neighbours. Enumerating a few of these uprisings; the learned Anthropologist stated 'several uprisings of the tribal people took place beginning from Mal Paharia rising in 1772, the Mutiny of the Hos of Singhbhum in 1831, the Khond uprising in 1846, to the Santal rebellion of 1855. In like manner a punitive expedition 1744 by the Company's Government and in 1833 the confederacy of Khasi Chiefs was defeated by the British Army. But they established gathering one way against British East India Company⁸.

Just as there has been a clash of economic interests in the various tribal uprisings, there has been a clash of cultures also between the tribal and non-tribal vested interests, bulwarked by the ruler or the ruling authorities, who in their initial stages of administration and unsettled authority had to lean upon the educated and the landless classes, who were potential trouble makers – a policy continuously followed by the British throughout their rule in this country, which even the present administration is not yet quite able to replace by a thoroughly democratic people's rule. The two types of interests were closely entwined and were sometimes supplying the necessary momentum to each other. The tribal reacted forcibly when his religious beliefs were scoffed at, when

his independence was attacked, when his traditional, customs and manners, civic rights, judicial systems, standards of etiquette and prestige and code of honour were brushed aside and deep rooted conventions ignored and insulted and violated. According to Santals and other tribal conception the land (cultivable land) of any village was not alienable by any one individual and was the common property of all. Distribution and redistribution of all village land was affected by the village council of elders and all clearings of the jungle, as well as the sowing and harvesting were carried out under the supervision and initiation of the village priests and elders. The residents of any village could use and improve separate plots of land allotted to them and if any family had more members and required more land they could under instructions from the elders annex more land. When these well established conventions were ignored by the European rulers who had been given to an individualistic and not to a collective pattern of living, the clash became inevitable. One of the main reasons why tribal people in this sub-continent feel disunited, isolated and thwarted is the gradual land steady temptation to which they succumbed in the past one hundred years, by allowing themselves to be easily converted by powerful religious missions, foreign as well as indigenous, not because they really believed that their pattern of faith was inferior to that of others, but because through conversion they fondly hoped to secure economic betterment, freedom from exploitation and relief from the shahukar's or Mahajan's (Money lenders) harassment.

Dr. J.H. Hutton too had remarked in his work *Modern India and the west*, in which "the best land (of the tribal) passed into the hand of outsiders." It may not be correct to suppose that the tribal revolts were un-connected with the general popular discontent resulting from the ruthless exploitation engineered by the British East India

Company's unscrupulous and commercial administration. Though the eruptions of this unrest took firm shape from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, trouble was undoubtedly brewing virtually in every part of the country among almost every section of the people, like the peasants, intelligentsia, trading communities, the military, the scions of native royal dynasties, who were deprived of their territories by the application of the doctrine of Lapse, conquest and various other pretexts found for justifying annexation. The peasants were badly hit by rack renting by the zaminders and rich land holders and reduced to poverty owing to the unhelpful attitude of the company's courts, which were mostly supporting the claims of the vested interests of the creditors. It was clear to every litigant that the then Government was solidly behind the vested interests though they took shelter under some law or other, either imported from their own country or by a tortuous interpretation of the prevailing local laws. They did not take notice of the Indian conditions of tenancy, collective, inalienable ownership; of land and other time honoured practices, which assured the actual tiller undisturbed and continued right to enjoy the land, which is an ancestor tilled. The revolts of the tribal people were not isolated and on the other hand shared many features in common with the revolts of non-tribal, agrarian and small trading communities. For various reasons that particular period might have been chosen by the suffering masses to ventilate their grievances in an organized manner. The country was disturbed all over with wars between one ruler and another, mostly fermented by the company's skilful civil servants.

In the second half of the nineteenth century was the beginning of a new kind of peasant struggle in India, which entered mostly on the rent question. Broadly speaking the peasants rose in struggles against enhancement of rent, evictions and exactions of

land lords who were often money lenders. Apparently, the peasants wanted to loosen the bonds of feudal exploitation. If we look deeply into the matter of exploitation we can see here exploiter was common for all sectors that was East India Company or land lords, money lenders, zaminders, Mahajan who were appointed by the East India Company. Evidence that has accumulated in recent years makes it clear that all categories of peasants were involved in these agrarian struggles.

The peasant movements in mid nineteenth century were intermittent and remained confined to a few regions. What is remarkable is that these movements were becoming secular, cutting, across caste and communal barriers. It is not worthy that the Farazi Movement which grew in early nineteenth century in Barasat, Faridpur, Dacca and Barisal was essentially a movement of the Farazi Sect and hardly spread among Hindu and tribal peasants. The pagalpanthis of Sherpur represented a puritanical sect of the Muslims, between 1765 and 1850 some disturbances flared up in different parts of India, although peasants' masses were involved in these struggles⁹. These struggles revealed peasant discontent but hardly brought to the fore the rent question that exacerbated the relations between landlords and their tenants.

The nineteenth century witnessed the long series of tribal rebellions which could be related to the disintegration of the tribal system. The tribal peasants were losing their land and forests when the work of reclamation was done, the Santal was ousted and his land was leased to those who could pay high cash rent to the East India Company. When money rent proved to be less profitable than produce rent, the land owner thought it wise to swing over the share cropping. Tribal rebellions, by and large, broke out in this background. As we see some of the tribal rebellions had millenarian overtones and

revealed the passionate longing of the tribal peasants for another and better world. They remained devoted to the leaders who invariably came from the same community and predicted the advent of a new social order¹⁰. They often rose in violent struggles, the oppression of non-tribal landlords and money lenders continued unabated. The agitation soon assumed the proportions of a rebellion driving the surprised Europeans into panic, and they sought the Government's intervention, which was not forthcoming readily, in view of the violent Santal revolt of 1855-56 and the Indian war of independence of 1857, which left unforgettable impressions on the foreigner as well as on the sons of the soil. The land settlements of the East India Company were motivated with a commercial basis, namely of squeezing as much revenue from the peasants as one could secure, irrespective of his ability to pay the enhanced assessments fixed at an exaggerated estimate of the yield of the soil. This, the ryots, could not pay, not only that, the required payment was directed to be paid in cash which again affected him adversely owing to fluctuating prices. The convenience of the Government was evidently not the same as the facility of the subject. This new method of collecting land revenue was at variance with that of the traditional Moghul rulers and drove the cultivators into the greedy hands of money lenders, whose rates of usury ranged between fifty and hundred percent. Indebtedness resulted in suits for taking possession of the peasants' land, through the law courts, whose decisions were taken far away from the villages of the ryots and in utter ignorance and disregard of the conditions prevailing, involving costs which the poor peasant could not afford to incur. Between 1851 and 1865 the number of the discontent prevailed, rose seven to eight and half times. Even the company's Governor-in-Council was obliged to acknowledge that our civil courts have become hateful to the masses of our Indian

subjects from being made the instruments of almost incredible rapacity of usurious capitalists, yet another revolt that rocked South India that of the combustible Mopla Muslims who were descendants of both early Arab settlers as well as converted Hindus. The struggle here was against the zaminders Namudiris by the peasants tenants, the cause being the conversion by the British Indian Government of the status of a Jenmi from that of the traditional partner to that of an absolute owner of the land, with right to evict the Mopla tenants, a right he had not before. This resulted in the enhancement of rents and wholesale evictions for non-payment of rents.

The Moplas revolted under the able leadership of a young lawyer Shri Narayana Menon and struck against the land holders. Between 1836 and 1854 there were twenty two uprisings resulting in pitched battles in which several Moplas lost their lives at the hands of the security forces. There were riots in 1851, and 1852, 1855, when thousands of rebels who were guilty of arson, and Murder of land holders and their supporters were arrested and hundreds executed by the British authorities. Shri Narayana Menon who entered the Coimbatore Jail at the age of 30 for leading the peasant revolt secured his release only when he served a long term of more than twenty years for a life sentence. It is thus seen that in each one of the revolts, tribal or non-tribal, the parties to the disputes were originally the tenant and the land grabber and as revolt and violence flared up by masses. The Government invariably stepped into safeguard the vested interests of money lenders, zaminders, and the intelligentsia. Undoubtedly revolt was not only in the air but got into the blood of every one's veins in the mid-nineteenth century period of India's chequered history. There is, therefore, no point in trying to find out who ignited the first spark, the tribal or the non-tribal surely the Santal revolt of 1855 should have taught a

few lessons to the leaders of the National Revolt of 1857, and this must have been of immense help in estimating the seriousness of events that happened subsequent to it. Social Movements was prevalent in India during and since British rule. We may define a Social Movement as ‘the attempt of a group to effect change in the face of resistance’¹¹; and the peasants as people who engaged in agricultural or related production with primitive (palaeotechnic) means and who surrender part of their produce or its equivalent to landlords or to agents of the state. Peasant revolts have in fact been common both during and since the British period, every state of present day India having experienced several revolts over the past two hundred years. The revolt that is ‘Indian Mutiny’ of 1857-58 was one significant revolt in which vast bodies of peasants fought or otherwise worked to destroy British rule over an area of more than 500,000 square mile.¹² The frequency of these revolts were deeply influenced the body and mind of the masses. On balance, India was plundered through the export of capital to Britain by such methods as the repatriation of profits and salaries, debt services for colonial wars and public works, ‘home charges’ and adverse terms of trade with respect to raw materials exported from India and to imported manufactured goods. In many regions various means were used to encourage or compel cultivators to grow industrial crops and even food crops, for export. In addition to highland plantations for tea, coffee, cinnamon, and later rubber, large areas of the plains were at different periods turned over to indigo opium, cotton, oil seeds, jute, pepper, coconuts and other export crops.¹³

Speculation and investment in land by merchants, bureaucrats, landlords, and successful cash crop farmers made land sales increasingly common. The growth of absentee landlordism and of cultivation for Private Profit meant that traditional

paternalistic relations of landlords and their tenants were disrupted in many villages, and that tenants and labourers were exposed to new and more alienating forms of exploitation, resulting in greater resentment on their part. From the 1850s with the building of railways, the increased movement of goods and people had profound effects. It further undermined the unity and self-sufficiency of villages. The modern transport of food grains reduced the danger of severe regional famines; at the same time by permitting grain stocks to be removed from prosperous areas it appears to have allowed the growth of chronic malnutrition throughout the country. Concomitantly, however, modern transport fostered the movement of ideas between town and country and created links between urban and rural people. Such links strengthened the Indian nationalist movement led by the bourgeoisie; they also permitted a degree of unity between peasants and urban workers in the then revolts.

Between 1765 and 1857 a large proportion of revolts were led by Hindu and Muslims petty rulers, former revenue agents under the Mughals, tribal chiefs in hill regions and local landed military officers (poligars) in south India. They were supported by masses of peasants, common people and sometimes former soldiers. The revolts were either against the conquest itself and the imposition of heavy revenues on existing nobles, or retaliatory attempts to drive out the British after they had dispossessed a zaminder or a raja for failing to pay the revenue and had replaced him with some other claimant to the estate, with a company officer, or with a merchant, money lender or adventurer who had bought the estate at auction. The goals of these revolts were complete annihilation or expulsion of the British and reversion to the previous government and agrarian relations. The peasants were not blind loyalists. Their own grievances were bitter, for in their

efforts to squeeze out the revenue the company's officers often completely pauperized the peasants or had them starved, flogged or jailed.¹⁴ The largest restorative rebellions was of course, the 'Mutiny' of 1857-58. Began by Hindu and Muslim soldiers in revolt against their condition and against offence to their religions, it engaged millions of impoverished peasants, ruined artisans, dispossessed nobles, estate managers, tribal chiefs, landlords, religious leaders (Hindu, Muslim, tribal and Sikh), Civil servants, boatmen, shop-keepers, mendicants, low caste laborers and workers in European plantations and factories. In the heart of the rebel area mass insurrections of armed peasants, in addition to the Mutinying troops and the private armies of rulers, combined to massacre the British and to destroy government buildings, revenue and court records, coffee and indigo plantations and factories, telegraphs, railways and churches – in short, every organ of British rule. The war was a holy war, so announced repeatedly by rulers and religious leaders, but it was also most interestingly a war in which Hindu and Muslim, tribesmen and Sikh, explicitly foreswore mutual enmity and combined in defense of their own and each other's customs and honor against infidel conquest and oppression. Contrary to standard British accounts, it seems to have come within an ace of ending the company's rule.¹⁵ For several months it raged over a 500,000 square mile region in which the peasantry, including the lower castes and the landless laborers, formed the backbone of resistance.

Indian peasants have a long tradition of armed uprisings, reaching back at least to the initial British conquest and the last decades of Mughal Government. For more than 200 years peasants in all the major regions have repeatedly risen against landlords, revenue agents and other bureaucrats, money lenders, police and military forces. The

uprisings were responses to relative deprivation of usually severe character, always economic, and often also involving physical brutality or ethnic persecution. Major uprisings during the British rule more successful have involved mass insurrections, initially against specific grievances, and the less successful, social banditry and terrorist vengeance. Both in the case of communist revolts and in that of earlier peasant uprisings, social banditry and terrorist vengeance, when they occurred, appear to have happened in the wake of repression of other forms of revolt. Although revolts have been widespread, certain areas have an especially strong tradition of rebellion. Bengal has been a hot bed of revolt, both rural and urban from the earliest days of British rule some districts in particular such as Mymensingh, Dinajpure, Rangpur and Pubna in Bangladesh, and the Santal region of Bihar and West Bengal, figured repeatedly in peasant struggles and continue to do so. The tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh, and the state of Kerala, also have long traditions of revolt. Hill regions where tribal or other minorities retain a certain independence, ethnic unity, and tactical maneuverability, and where the terrain is suited to guerilla warfare, are of course especially favourable for peasant struggles, but these have also occurred in densely populated plains regions such as Thanjavur, where rack-renting, land hunger, landless labour and unemployment cause great suffering. During colonial period in India, the increasing poverty, famine and unemployment make it seem certain that India's agrarian ills can be solved only by a peasant-backed revolution leading to socialism, but the struggle will be very long and hard.

Revolution is used even to describe political upheaval which changes personnel of the Government; (the term would deprive the concept of its essential characteristics). Marxism has provided a very fruitful definition of revolution by change in properly

relations, and transfer of power from one class to another. In this context it has given a clue towards defining revolution, which in recent times has taken two forms, viz. bourgeois-democratic revolutions and socialist revolutions. Marxism has also pointed out that in the context of colonial and semi-colonial countries, bourgeois's revolution or colonial revolution meant national liberation struggles from foreign rule, establishment of a bourgeois regime to launch an Independent bourgeois socio-economic order, sometimes described as completing the task of the bourgeois democratic revolution. The concept of socialist or proletarian revolution is made clear by defining it as a revolution, wherein bourgeois property relations are over turned and political power is transferred from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat. During the imperialist phase of capitalism and particularly after the Great Socialist October Revolution in a backward, predominantly peasant country, an acute controversy has been going on about the nature of Revolution which would complete even the bourgeois-democratic tasks can the bourgeoisie initiate development which can lift the economy and social order from colonial underdevelopment to even a bourgeois type of development experienced by advanced capitalist countries, or has the revolution to be a socialist one, even in order to complete bourgeois democratic task, whatever the discussions and differences among Marxist, the major criterion adopted by them to define revolution still appears the most scientific and fruitful one. It helps us to locate the role of different sections of rural population in a struggle for bringing about a revolutionary transformation of society. The fear that the masses of the Third World may overthrow even the indigenous bourgeois – landlord classes in the process of overthrowing imperialism, and thereby usher in a socialist Revolution has led the national bourgeois and the bourgeois intelligentsia to evolve a

comprising “transfer of power” from colonialism to independence. This path of compromise is generally characterized by bargaining and negotiating with imperialism backed by various kind of reformist pressure struggles, wherein the exploited and oppressed classes and masses are often pressed in the service of ‘nationalism’ to build up pressure, but not permitted to take to the road of radical and revolutionary class and militant mass struggles against the common exploiter. The concept of revolution needs clarification, because when a panegyric assessment of the revolutionary potential of the peasantry is projected.

The role of peasantry is carried on with regard to anti-colonial, anti-imperialist national movement. Various sections of the rural people are pressed in the movement, without being permitted to take to class struggles against common exploiter or it refers to the role of peasantry in the context of a nationalist movement wherein the leadership adopts the path of militant class and mass struggles, based on the exploited and oppressed rural strata developing their own strength and fighting power, in and in the process sharpening class struggles against common exploiter and oppressors. From time to time, throughout the centuries, the peasant has indeed risen in rebellion against his oppressors. But history is also replete with examples of peasants who have borne silently, and for long periods, extremes of exploitation and oppression. At the same time occasional outbreaks of peasant revolt do raise the question of the conditions in which the peasant becomes revolutionary. We cannot speak of the peasantry in this context as a homogeneous and undifferentiated mass. Its different sections have different aim and a social perspective for each of them is confronted with a different set of problems. But one thing common amongst all peasants and masses was they fought against one common

exploiter (East India Company). The constellation of peasant forces that participate in a revolutionary movement depends upon the character of the revolution, or, as Marxists would see it, the 'historical stage' which it represent. Thus, when a revolutionary movement progresses from 'bourgeois-democratic revolution' to 'socialist revolution', the roles of the different sections of the peasantry no longer remain the same.¹⁶ Equally question begging are those generalizations which dismiss the peasantry as a backward, servile, and reactionary class, incapable of joining hands with forces of social revolution. The peasants have in fact played a role, sometimes a crucial and decisive role, in revolutions. The Chinese Revolution is a case in point. The question that needs to be asked, therefore, is not whether the peasants are or are not revolutionary but, rather, under what circumstances they become revolutionary or what roles different sections of the peasantry play in revolutionary situations. These are question which greatly interest socialist movements in countries with predominantly peasant populations. For socialists, moreover, the question is not merely that of mobilizing peasant support as a means to achieve success in their struggle. The question is not just that of utilizing the forces of the peasantry. The free and active participation of the peasantry in transforming their mode of existence and giving shape to the new society must be an essential part of the socialist goal itself,¹⁷ we propose in this essay to consider the roles played by different sections of the peasantry in the cases of Russia, China and India. We can easily examine the preconditions that seem necessary to bring about a revolutionary mobilization of the peasantry in the struggle for socialism, whether it is peaceful and constitutional or insurrectionary. We shall put forward hypothesis which, in our view, throw fresh light on certain aspects of the problems. These hypotheses require further consideration,

especially in the light of the experiences of other countries.¹⁸ We would like to emphasize at the outset that these propositions are being advanced tentatively and in order to open up a discussion on certain aspects of the problem that have so far been obscured.¹⁹ The respective roles of the so-called middle peasants and poor peasants and the pre-conditions that we find are necessary for a revolutionary mobilization of poor peasants. These terms have been defined in Marxist literature to refer to various classes of the peasantry. But they are fraught with ambiguity and, as we shall see later, they have sometimes been reinterpreted to alter their denotation to suit ideological exigencies of political tactics or the personal pre-directions of particular writers.²⁰ This terminology appears to focus attention on relative differences in the wealth or poverty of various strata of the peasantry without any dedication of the criteria by which the strata may be distinguished from each other as classes. Stratification on the basis of simple difference in wealth, on a single linear scale, is often the basis of differentiation of 'classes' in academic sociology. But that is not the basis on which Marxists distinguish classes. The Marxist concept of class is a structural concept, classes are defined by relations of production, where several modes of production coexist, and classes cannot be arranged in a single linear hierarchical order because they must be structurally differentiated. The division of the peasantry into rich peasants, middle peasants, and poor peasants suggests an array of the peasantry with the different strata arranged one over the other, in a single order. The movement of peasantry for free exploited society symbolized the national response of the Indian people, (the masses) to the British imperial rule. India was always a nation and the cultural diversity which characterized its social organization was a part of the Indian unity. Throughout the ages, however, the Indian political culture remained un-integrated. Indian renaissance

provided the basic groundwork of Indian nationalism but its impact was unevenly distributed over the length and breadth of the country during the mid of nineteenth century. It accepted the Indian belief systems as the main frame of reference of national consciousness. The national movement or the peasant struggles in India began as a protest against British colonialism which was informed by the ideology of liberalist reform. The Indian renaissance gave the movement a new thrust and rapidly evolved it into a mass struggle which underlined the repudiation of the British rule. The Indian resurgence brought home to the British the inherent danger in the integration of the Indian political culture which they had assiduously carried out to consolidate their power in India. In the context of the Indian freedom, the integration of the Indian political culture assumed new ideological dimensions, which portended the repudiation of the empire as well as its liberalist reforms. In the beginning the British had turned to Hindus, an overwhelming majority of the Indian population to formulate a basis for the integration of India into a political unity.

British rule in India was based on economic exploitation of the indigenous people who were gradually becoming conscious about it at all India level. They had very well realized how their large scale and small scale industries were purposely destroyed by the imperialist rulers so that they might ultimately be forced to import from Lancashire and other places in England in order to make their daily needs meet. The preferential trade relations between England and India also did much to awaken the consciousness of national interest in India circles. The tendency of the administration of the British East India Company was to encourage unrestrained exploitation of the country and its people by British traders in India who ran the new government especially for their own personal

aggrandizement and the profit of their employers in their homeland. Without stopping this exploitation, Indians had realized that although the trustee-idea did in those days seek to apply a moral brake to the process, but with the birth of British industrialism, following upon the discovery of steam power and the invention of machineries, and increasing body of political and economic interests was created in England in the administration and exploitation of India. Since then administration and exploitation had gone in the hand of the government of this great dependency. With a growth of this new condition, all the old moral values had been entirely destroyed. The apologists of the British rule in India had sought to justify this apparent economic injustice to their own enlightened conscience by the fancy of the trust idea, forgetting obvious fact that no law or court of justice in civilization permits or tolerates the appointment of any person to the charge of a minor's estate who has obviously adverse interests in that estate. For, it could not be denied that the British and Indian interests had never been identical in the prevailing system. Indians' political and administrative incapacity might be put forward in justification of the administrative domination of the British people over Indians. The adverse British interests in the economic and industrial life of India, which they proved, still existed and their presence completely established the unfairness of the plea of trusteeship, upon which Great Britain still sought to satisfy her conscience and the civilized world in regard to her enjoyment of autocratic authority in the government of India.²¹

In social sphere too, the age of renaissance and modernization had set in with the advent of Raja Rammohun Roy on the social and cultural horizon of Bengal in particular and that of India in general. Until the emergence of Rabindranath Tagore there was no

comparable figure of great stature produced by India whose life work could be considered as having the same immediacy of influence in the maturing of modern age in the socio-cultural sphere of India.²² The crystal palace exhibition (1851) was followed by a number of such exhibitions which demonstrated the ever growing and expanding power of British imperialism. At the time of British imperialism, they fearlessly took all sorts of steps intensifying the exploitation of the Indians to the benefit of the British monopoly capitalists.²³ “It was an era of shameless infiltration by British capital, the effects of which”, writes a Soviet Scholar in a recent study, “were felt in one way or another by almost all classes and strata of Indians society”.²⁴ The economic exploitation of India led to the leveling of severe criticism and touching, sensitive, emotional lamentation by the politically conscious Indian elements. They alleged that their long standing self sufficient economics were undermined and dissolved. The aim of production changed from self sufficiency and direct consumption to the market and profit and there was left very little scope for free and full development of Indian economy.²⁵ It was transformed into a dependent complementary Shri Aurobindo alleged: India... is an asset in the hands of injustice throughout the world. Capitalists from every part of the globe flock to India and are provided with every facility to exploit her in the interest of the Plutocracy of the world ... so long as this country ... remains the dumping ground for all sorts of foreign goods, so long as the children of the soil are not granted that preferential treatment which is only their right, unscrupulous wealth will continue to have an advantage which will considerably handicap the friends of labour in their efforts to bring competence to every man. If accumulation of wealth in few hands is a curse against which an enlightened section of humanity has at last set its face, then they should complete their propaganda by

seeking to step a fertile source of this evil as foreign over lordship.²⁶ Besides, the commercial bourgeoisie who constituted a numerous and significant nucleus in the urban centres was very much antagonized. There was not the slightest disagreement of theirs with the popularly prevailing anti-imperialist feeling that the colonialists had deprived them of a large portion of their commercial profits and obstructed indigenous industrial development, which in turn kept them at a distance from accumulating their depleted profits from trade. It should also not be forgotten that speedily growing colonial exploitation of India also paved the way for the worsening of the economic status of a large number of commercial bourgeoisie and middle men, and above all, of course, those of small position. The existing fulcrum of commerce was gravely threatened not only by the newly developing means of transport controlled by a foreign administrative apparatus, but also by the speedy penetration of large primarily alien commercial houses engage in importing and exporting transaction. Due to the introduction of the new economic system there took place an extensive stratification of the agrarian population. While on the one hand, the agrarian society comprised feudal or semi-feudal landlords, absentee landlords and rich farmers whose strength was not much numerically, on the other hand, there were poor peasants, tenants, semi-serfs and labourers whose number increased by leaps and bounds with the stabilization of the new economic system.²⁷ The rising social contradiction of labour and the ascendancy of the power of money and the market were bound to culminate in disastrous consequences on the peasantry. Not only did rents greatly increase but a large number of peasants lost the land they had once owned. The bad economic conditions were very congenial to the growth of great mass discontent in the poor agrarian population. It provided a social basis for the building up and organizing

of a powerful peasant's movements and mass mobilization all over the country. Gradually this movement became an integral part of the overall nationalist movement engaged in liberation of the country from British domination. The mass of the peasants joined the nationalist movement because they considered the alien regime the ally of the feudal lords and money lenders who exploited them.²⁸ In this way they were affected by the bad economic condition which created among masses a mentality to fight against the British East India Company and destroy the common exploitation in all sector.

During 1850's peasant and as well as exploited masses demanded the abolition of the common exploitation which had done by zaminders, money lenders who were appointed by British authority. The peasant workers as well as all tribal community played a vital role in the process of the struggle for socialism. The masses including the laboures, peasants, artisans (who were affected by de-industrialization) demanding their rights, minimally cultural rights, maximally political right, always more economic equality. The rural working population expressed their grievances, demanding to retain the fruits of their labour, which often was expressed by a demand to own the land they toiled. The socialist trends were to be found among the masses. The structures of socialist trend as well as socialist movement began whose political base was in the masses exploited by the British East India Company, which later extended their bases of support by appealing to the ant-capitalist sentiments of the broad masses of the population. The extension and deepening over time of the capitalist process within the capitalist world economy had extended and deepened the polarization of classes on a world scale, and thereby strengthened the social base of anti-systemic movements.²⁹ It is a question of which movement has been in fact able to mobilize politically the popular masses for a

struggle against those who were continuously exploiting the masses, which has found significant resource, for demands that it represents the popular interest. Furthermore, not only did these three varieties of movements favoured by in mobilizing popular support of peasants, tribal as well as common men, the peasants also fought with courage against exploitation. Irrespective of the issues which provoked the struggles initially, they became struggles against feudalism and imperialism. However, these spontaneous, militant upsurges lacked direction and organization, and in many cases, remained localized or bound within a given community. In the end, they could not match the might of the colonial state despite their courage. Yet it should not be forgotten that many of the struggles won important demands. For example we can say that Santal Revolt was a step against common exploitation. Many such struggles were spontaneous in character and were fought locally. In several cases, these began with limited immediate demands, but soon transformed into battles against landlordism and British authority. There were numerous uprisings of tribal during first half of the nineteenth century. British rule ushered in commercialization of agriculture, and this led to the penetration of tribal areas by outsiders, money lenders, traders, land-grabbers and contractors, the dikus, so hated by the Santal. Some of the major tribal revolts of the period include the revolts of the Bhils in 1818-31, of Kolis in 1824 in Bombay presidency, of Mewars in 1820 in Rajputana, of the Ho tribe in Chhotanagpur in 1813-32, of the Cutchingis in 1815 and 1832. In 1846 the Khond rose up in Orissa and 1856 witnessed the Santal revolt. These revolts fed into the rising anti-colonial sentiments of the people.³⁰ In India social mobilization of peasants for agrarian reform was also an integral part of the nationalist liberation movements from the beginning during 1850s. Thus in most of India social

mobilization was not spontaneous, but a gradual approach of popular participation via common exploitation system. In the above case study one could say that exploitation by British East India Company had caused peasants to take the risk of mobilizing or gathering within one revolt's lap to fight against the British East India Company, money lenders, zaminders etc.

REFERENCES:

1. Sinha, Narendra Krishna, *The Economic history of Bengal, from Plassey to the permanent settlement*, Calcutta, 1968, Vol-II, p.147.
2. Mukherjee, Subrata & Ramaswamy, Sushila, *A History of Socialist Thought from the pre-cursors to the present*, Delhi, 2000, pp. 26-65.
3. Dutt, R.C, *Speeches II*, Delhi, 1986, p.90.
4. Dutt, *EHII*, p. 97.
5. Stokes, E.T, *The English Utiliteranians and India*, Oxford, 1959, (hereafter, English Utilitarians), pp. 150-168.
6. Somers, George E, *The Dynamic of Santal tradition in a peasant society*, New Delhi, 1977, p. 1-3.
7. *The Sandhyani Magazine*, March 01, 2009.
8. Raghavaiah, V, *Reproduced from Tribal revolts*, Andhra Rashatra Adimajati Sevak Sangha, Nellore (A.P), 1971, pp. 13-26.
9. Choudhury, S.B, *Civil disturbances during the British rule in India, 1765-1857*, Calcutta, 1955, pp.19-43. In this pioneering study Dr. Choudhury relates agrarian disturbances to the discontent of the peasants against the land lords and the money lenders.

10. Hobsbawm, E, *Primitive Rebels*, 1974. Hobsbawm describes these movements as “blind and grouping”; “Impractical land Utopian”, yet the “revolutionary aspirations” of these rebels cannot be denied. Also Fuchs, S, *Rebellions prophets*, 1965, pp. 354-361.
11. Aberle, David F, ‘*The Peyote Religion among the Navaho*’, Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, 1966, p. 315.
12. Choudhury, S.B, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
13. In Bombay province in 1834-45 cotton occupied 43 per cent of cultivated land in Broach and 22 per cent in Surat but the cultivators were reported to receive little or no profit (Dutt, R.C, ‘*The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age, 1837-1900*’. Routhledge and Kegan, Paul, London, Vol.II, 1960, p. 98).
- 14 Choudhury, *op. cit.*, 1955, pp. 16, 60- 61
15. Choudhury, *op. cit.*, 1957, p. 269.
16. Gough, Kathleen, Sharma Hari P, (ed.), *Reproduced from Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1973, pp. 291-337.
17. Alavi, Hamza, “*Peasant and Revolution*”, Desai, A.R, (ed.), *Peasant Struggle in India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1979, p.672.
18. Since the initial publication of this article, these hypotheses have been corroborated by the findings of various writers. They have been reaffirmed, in particular by Wolf. Earic, in his article, “*On Peasant Rebellions*”, in UNECO’s International Social Science Journal, Vol.XXI, No. 2, 1969, and reprinted in Shamin, T, (ed.), *Peasant and Peasant*

Societies (London, 1971). Wolf has corroborated the theses in the light of the experiences of a number of other countries in his peasant wars of the twentieth century, 1969.

19. Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 672.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 673.

21. Choudhury, Sukhbir, *Socio Economic Nationalism (1800-1918)*, Delhi, Anmol publication, 1996. pp. 2-3.

22. Joshi V.C, (ed.), *RamMohun Roy and Process of Modernization in India* Vikas Publishing Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1975.p.20-21

23. Choudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

24. Levkovsky, A.I, “*Beginning of Mass Liberation Struggle*”, Reisner, I. M, and Goldberg, N. M, (ed.), *By, Tilak and the struggle for Indian Freedom* (People’s Publishing House, Delhi 1966), p. 318.

25. Choudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

26. Mukherjee, Haridas, and Mukherjee, Uma, *Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics, a collection of his writings along with biographical account* (Calcutta, 1958), p. 138.

27. It may be recalled that the new economic system did not provide much security to the working class also. Following the traditional bourgeois pattern of extracting absolute surplus value the propertied classes – both foreign and Indian – primarily concentrated on the exploitation of the proletariat. Accordingly, the inauguration of the twentieth century

saw the working day reach the greatest length of time in the history of factories. The workers were compelled to “toil from dawn to dark and sometimes even longer”. How mercilessly they were exploited can be gauged from the length of the working day in various industries [For further study see. Levkovsky, A. I, n.1, pp.332-34 and 338].

28. Choudhury, *op. cit.*, p.30.

29. Amin, Samir, *Transforming the Revolution: Social Movement and the world system* pp.22-24, 26. In this volume the authors engage in a provocative discussion of the history and contemporary dilemmas facing the movements that are variously described as anti-systemic, social or popular. Authors believe that which have for the past 150 years protested and organized against the multiple injustice of the existing system, are the key focus of social transformation.

30. Namboodiripad, E.M.S, *History of the Communist Movement in India*, Vol.1, New Delhi, 2005, pp.16-37.

CHAPTER III

THE REVOLT OF 1857: EXTENT AND DIMENSION

One of the primary and severe outbursts of resentment against the British rule came in the form of the Indian revolt of 1857. This revolt followed the battles of Plassey and Buxar and the main cause was resentment against setting up of British rule in Bengal. The revolt was basically started by the soldiers who worked for the East India Company and later was spread across the country by peasants, artisans and soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the sake of others. Different religions of India came together and fought united for one cause. There were many different reasons for the outbreak of the revolt of 1857. British exploitation continued with imposing by their faith forcefully on Indians. There was a significant threat to British rule in India, when a number of Indian masses of the British India rose in revolt in 1857 against such common exploitation. This revolt struck a sympathetic chord among many people who had their own reasons to be dissatisfied with the British rule. The Revolt of 1857 is a significant event in the modern Indian history. The British took serious note of it, and considerably changed their policies in the wake of the revolt. Some of the members of the ruling colonial elite chose to ignore the popular character of the revolt and labeled it merely as a “Sepoy Mutiny”. Nationalist elite, which took shape in the last two decades of the nineteenth century to lead a successful anti-colonial political campaign, glorified it as the ‘first war of Indian independence’. Memories of the Revolt had lain deep in the awareness of both colonial rulers and the Indian subject.¹

Company rule in India refers to the rule or dominion of the British East India Company on the Indian subcontinent. This is variously taken to have commenced in 1757, after the battle of Plassey, when the Nawab of Bengal surrendered his dominions to the company ² in 1765, when the company granted the diwani or the right to collect revenue, in Bengal and Bihar ³ or in 1772, when the company established a capital in Calcutta and appointed its first governor-general, Warren Hastings, and became directly involved in governance. The rule lasted until 1858, when, after the Indian rebellion of 1857 and consequent to the Government of India Act. 1858, the British Government assumed the task of directly administering India in the new British Raj. The Britishers came and ruled India for nearly 200 years. After the battle of Plassey in 1757, the British achieved political power in India, and their paramountcy was established during the tenure of Lord Dalhousie, who became the Governor- General in 1848. He annexed Punjab, Peshwar and the Pathan tribes in North West of India. And by 1856, the British conquest and its authority were firmly established. And while the British power gained its heights during the middle of the 19th century, the discontent of the local rulers, the peasantry, the intellectuals, common masses and also of the soldiers who became unemployed due to the disbanding of the armies of various states that were annexed by the British became widespread. This soon broke out into a revolt which assumed the dimensions of the 1857 revolt.⁴ The Revolt of 1857, which began with a revolt of the military soldiers at Meerut, soon became widespread and posed a grave challenge to the British rule. Even though the British succeeded in crushing it within a year, it was certainly popular revolt in which the Indian rulers, the masses and the militia participated so enthusiastically that it came to be regarded as the First war of Independence.

The rapid expansion of the British dominion in India, attained as it was by changes in the administrative system and modes of existence to which the people had been accustomed through long ages, disturbed the placid currents of Indian life and produced commotions in different part of the country. Mention may be made, in this connection, of the Bareilly rising of A.D. 1816, the Cole outbreak of 1831 – 1832, and other minor risings in Chota Nagpur and Palamu; the Muslim movements like the Ferazee disturbances at Barasat (Bengal) in 1831 under the leadership of Syed Ahmad and his disciple, Meer Niser Ali or Titu Meer, and later in 1847 at Faridpur (Bengal) under the guidance of Deedoo Meer, the Moplah outbreaks in 1849, 1851, 1852, and 1855, and the Santal insurrection of 1855 – 1857. These risings testify to the general ferment in the British Empire in India, the last and the most severe being the Revolt of 1857 – 1859, which shook its mighty fabric to its very foundations.

1857 Revolt consisted both of rebellion by the sepoy or soldiers and reaction from sections of the general Indian population. Peasants were an important segment of Indian society. Uprising among the sepoy and peasants was even more directly related in that sepoy were in their origins, peasants with close ties with their kin people in the villages. Many of the sepoy came from Awadh, a region currently incorporated in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, a region that also saw massive peasant uprisings. Awadh, one of the main centers of the revolt, was annexed by Lord Dalhousie, Governor General of India, in 1856. The British removed talukdars, traditional landowners of the region, promising a better deal for the peasants. But in reality, condition of the peasants only got worse. Heavy over assessment of land revenue impoverished them. While talukdars appropriated the surplus peasants produced, they were limited and constrained by the

relations of Mutual interdependence between the Raja and the peasant and the traditional worldview of social norms and obligations. British conquest assaulted this traditional worldview, and removal of the king had an emotional impact on the people of north East India. The storm centers of the revolt were Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Bareilly and Jhansi. Bakhat Khan was the rebel leader in Delhi and he took the fight to Lucknow. In Kanpur, Nana Sahib, adopted son of Baji Rao II, the Peshwa of the Maratha Kingdom, led the Revolt. The British had earlier refused to recognize Nana Sahib as the legitimate successor of the Peshwas. Tantia Tope, one of the loyal followers of Nana Sahib, is remembered for his valiant fight against the East India Company. Revolt at Lucknow was led by the Begum of Awadh who proclaimed her young son Nawab. Young Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi joined the Revolt when the British refused to acknowledge her right to adopt an heir to the deceased local king. Kunwar Singh, a ruined and discontented Zamindar near Arrah in the state of Bihar, was the chief organizer of the Revolt in the area. The Revolt carried on as late as 1859 in some instances before it was finally crushed. A number of these heroes and heroines of the Revolt have been immortalized through the united way or oneness of their valiant battles in modern and contemporary India.

The process of the British conquest of India and the consolidation of British rule was accompanied by serious discontent and resentment among the masses. Even the Indian soldiers serving in the British Indian army were affected. For nearly 100 years popular discontent took the form of armed resistance led by the deposed chieftains or their descendants and relations, Zamindars and poligars, and exsoldiers, officials and other retainers of the Indian states. Broad section of the artisans and peasants joined the revolt

of 1857; the reason is that of their own grievances and hardships, often forming the backbone of the revolt of 1857. During first half of the nineteenth century intensification of the land revenue demand, exploitation of the artisans by the East Indian Company and its servants, and the uprooting of old Zamindars created an explosive condition. Popular or mass revolt occurred in almost every district and province. The demobilised soldiers and displaced peasants of India who were exploited by English East India Company participated in the famous revolt of 1857. Expansion of British power in India led to the popular revolt of 1857.

This revolt running like a thread through the history of the first hundred years of East India Company rule in India. This panel was based on the traditional links and loyalties between the peasants and the Zamindars, moneylenders and the petty chieftains. They were holy local and isolated or separated in feature. They were backward-looking and lacked any modern feeling of nationalism or a modern understanding of the nature and character of imperialism or the building of a new society on the basis of new social relationship. Their leadership was inevitably traditional and company unaware of the changing world around them. They did not pose a real challenge to British power even though the British had sometimes to deploy large armies to suppress them. Their great contribution lay in the establishment of valuable local traditions of struggle against foreign rule. The culmination of the traditional opposition to British rule came with the revolt of 1857 in which millions of peasants, artisans, soldiers and masses participated. The Revolt of 1857 was to stake British rule to its roots.⁵ The Revolt began with a mutiny of the sepoys or the Indian soldiers of the East India Company's army but soon engulfed wide regions and people. It was a product of the accumulated grievances of the people

against the foreign government. The peasants were discontented with the official land revenue policy and the consequent loss of their lands and the lower courts. The annexation of Awadh by the British in 1856 was widely resented and especially in Awadh. This action angered the company's soldiers, most of whom came from Awadh. Moreover they had now to pay higher taxes on the lands their families held in Awadh. The British also confiscated the estates of a majority of the taluqdars or zamindars. These dispossessed taluqdars became dangerous opponents of British rule. The annexationist policy followed by the British viceroy, Lord Dalhousie, also created panic among many rulers of the native states. These rulers now realised that total submission and humiliating declarations of loyalty to the foreign power could not guarantee their existence. The policy of annexation was, for example, directly responsible for making Nana Sahib, the Rani of Jhansi, and Bahadur Shah staunch enemies of the British. The sepoy of East India Company were discontented with their low pay, and hard life and the contemptuous treatment meted out to them by their British officers. Besides a sepoy had little prospect of promotion; no Indian could rise higher than a subedar drawing sixty or seventy rupees a month. Thus, by 1857, conditions were ready for mass upheaval. It is beyond doubt, "writes R.C. Dutt, "that political reasons helped a mere mutiny of soldiers to spread among large classes of the people in Northern and Central India, and converted it into a political insurrection".⁶

The real nature of the rebellion, and to estimate its effects on subsequent Indian history – social, economic and political – it is essential that we investigate into the real causes, follow its course through blood and terror⁷ and study the role played by various classes or sectors.

The primary reason of the revolt was the imperialist exploitation of the Indian masses. It would be well, therefore, to go back to the days of the founding of the East India Company. The stories of the fabulous profits being made by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French Companies trading with India tempted British merchant adventures to form a trading company for a similar purpose. In 1600, the East India Company obtained a charter from Queen Elizabeth I to trade with India and the Spice Islands. Trade with India in those years consisted of buying handicrafts and other valuable and artistic products from the country. As the Indian craftsmen were generally ignorant of the value of their goods in the international market, the wily and unscrupulous merchant – adventurers bought their goods for a mere trifle, and made huge profits.⁸ In 1765, the East India Company acquired the Diwanee of Bengal. By then, it had ousted all other European competitors from the Indian market. The acquisition of the Diwanee and the virtual monopoly of the trade with India further increased the profits of the company and its servants, while adding heavily to the misery and privation of the people of India.⁹ Holmes remarks that “the native administrators oppressed the peasants and embezzled the revenue. The servants of the company found it profitable to connive at the abuses.”¹⁰ The inevitable result of the accumulation in England of the wealth of plunder was that it became, along with similar other accumulations, the basis of capitalist enterprise in that country. Marx observes that “chartered companies were powerful instruments in promoting concentration of wealth the treasures obtained outside Europe by direct looting, enslavement and murder, flowed to the motherland (metropolitan country) in streams and were there turned into capital.”¹¹ Had watt lived fifty years earlier, he and his invention must have perished together, for lack of sufficient capital to set them

working.¹² In the Indian context during colonial period the East Indian Company's policy of territorial aggrandizement and annexation, the chief source of demand for Indian foods – the native courts - were disappearing from the Indian scene. The process of decay began by the establishment of foreign rule and helped by the force of foreign goods. The Industrial Revolution in England completely transformed the character of her relations with India. The Expansion of British manufacture overwhelmed and ultimately destroyed the primitive Indian industry and converted the country into a source for raw material. India became a major market for British goods. The condition of the uprooted artisans and craftsmen became miserable. The population of Dacca-renowned throughout the world for the fine quality of muslin that they produced – decreased from 150,000 to 20,000 between 1827 and 1837.¹³ The transformation in trade relations had severe repercussions on the Indian social structure. The uprooted artisans fell back upon agricultural. There was no possibility of the growth of a modern industrial system within the orbit of imperial relations.¹⁴ During the Hindu Muslim rule the “King's Share” was a proportion of the year's produce and was surrendered as a tribute of tax by the peasant joint-owners of a self-governing village community to the ruler or his nominee. The soil in India belonged to the tribe or its subdivision – the village community, the clan or the brotherhood settled in the village – and never was considered as the property of the king ... Either in feudal or imperial scheme there never was any notion of the ownership of the soil vesting in anybody except the peasantry.¹⁵ During the company's rule it was assured that the state was the supreme landlord. In place of the traditional share of the government in the produce paid by the village communities as a whole, there was introduced a system of fixed payment in cash assessed on land which had no reference to

good or bad harvest or to how much of the land was cultivated. In most cases the assessment was individual, either levied directly on the cultivator or on landlords appointed by the government. The individual's land being directly assessed, the village communities were recognized as proprietors of land the results were not very different, the reason is that the responsibility was collective only in name. There was a strong trend towards individual assessment, and in practice, co-proprietors were treated as individual proprietors who could sell or mortgage their land.¹⁶ Under the operation of the company's law, however, the village was usually in debt from the Zamindar downwards and of all creditors the Bania was the most pitiless.¹⁷ The company's law not only gave protection to him, it also gave him land as security for his claims.

The hopes that had been painted by Lord Cornwallis were too rosy. The Court of Directors gave its consent to the proposal of permanent settlement without much ado, and the revenue settlement of Bengal was declared permanent in 1793. According to Sir Richard Temple, the permanent settlement was a measure which was affected to naturalize the landed institutions of England among the natives of Bengal."¹⁸ But by this measure, as Lord Metcalfe observed, the ancient rights of the ryot "were virtually destroyed by the little of property conferred by us on those who had no pretension to it."¹⁹ Even under the permanent settlement estates were liable to be sold in default of payment under the provisions of Act I of 1845."²⁰ Holmes writes in the history of Indian Mutiny that the result of Cornwallis' action was that 'the inferior tenants derived from it no benefit whatever. The Zamindars again and again failed to pay their rent charges; and their estates were sold for the benefit of the government."²¹ The collector of Midnapore wrote in 1802, that a few years of the system of sale and attachment' had reduced most of

the great Zamindars in Bengal to distress and beggary and produced a greater change in the landed property of Bengal than has, perhaps, ever happened in the same space of time in any age or country by the mere effect of internal regulations.”²² Another consequence of the permanent settlement in Bengal was the subdivision of rights in land. The Zamindars leased out their interests to the middlemen, and the middlemen leased out in turn, creating a long chain of rent received and rent payers who intervened between the state and the actual cultivator. In 1819 the absolute subjection of cultivators to the mercy of the Zamindars “was regretfully admitted, and yet no steps were undertaken to protect the ryot.”²³ The wealth which the company derived from the exploitation of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa tempted it to expand its territory. The company’s armies fought twenty wars between the Battle of Plassey and the great Rebellion; in one hundred years, Mysore, Maharashtra, Karnatak, Tanjore, Bundelkhand, Rohilkhand, Hariana, the Punjab (including pre-partition North Western Frontier Province) and Oudh were added the company’s domain. All the former Native states, from Kashmir down to Cochin, became the company’s “protectorate”. What most affected the company’s soldiers was the annexation of Oudh – “the fatherland of the bulk (three - fourths) of the company’s army”²⁴ – by Lord Dalhousie in 1855. Oudh had, in fact, been managed by the company under a system of double – government since the middle of the 18th century.²⁵ The Mussalmans, not only of Oudh, but of all upper India, were embittered and angered by the suppression of one of the few Muhammedan reigning houses which had been left in power,” wrote Lt. General McLeod Innes in his excellent book, *The Sepoy Revolt*.²⁶ Under the weak rule of the Nawab wazier of Oudh, Talukder class had exercised authority almost independently on him,²⁷ extorted land revenue at the point of the bayonet,²⁸ and

kept the country in a state of instability rendering life, property and industry insecure.²⁹ According to Sir W. H. Sleeman, "whenever they quarrel with each other, or with the local authorities of the (native) government, from whatever cause, they take to indiscriminate plunder and Murder-over all lands not held by men of the same class – no road, town, village, or hamlet is secure from their merciless attacks – robbery and murder become their diversions, their sports, they no more hesitate of taking the lives of men, women, and children, who never offended them, than those of deer or wild hags."³⁰ But even where no talukdars intervened, hundreds of villages had been ruined and desolated by the exactions of the greedy and rapacious officials – amils.³¹ The sufficient evidence of the wretchedness was "miserable and starved cattle, unable to drag the wretched implements of husbandry in use, squailed and deserted villages, ruined wells, and a naked and starved peasantry."³² In this way, observed Kaye, "a revolution was gradually brought about by means of English application (of law), which acting coincidentally with the other agencies, swelled the number of the dissatisfied, dangerous classes, who traced their downfall to the operations of the British rule, and sullenly bided their time for the recovery of what they had lost, in some new revolutionary epoch."³³ Sir Syed Ahmed Khan who cannot be accused of ever having been anti-British in his sentiments, remarks in his brochure, "The cause of the Indian Revolt, that" the system of revenue settlement, introduced by the English Government is undoubtedly creditable. But the rate of land revenue is heavy when compared with former settlements The assessments imposed by the English government have been fixed without any regard to the various contingencies. Land lying fallow pays in the same proportions as cultivated land..... The cultivations are obliged to borrow money in order to pay land revenue. The interest on

these loans is exorbitant.”³⁴ A large number of estates every year were auctioned under the decrees of the courts, in lieu of debts which sometimes ran to no more than a couple of rupees. They were bought by new men from the lower provinces. The former proprietors, who still belonged to the soil, were reduced to the position of small farmers and under – tenants on their ancestral lands. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan describes the effect of the numerous sales of landed property in the first days of British rule by saying that Indian society was turning upside down.³⁵ The disbandment of the former king’s army, which had swollen to 70,000 men, according to Resident Lowe’s calculations,³⁶ had thrown a horde of desperados upon Oudh. “To discharge a sepoy was to create a bandit,” remarked Lt. General Innes.³⁷ There was not a family in Oudh which did not have one member at least serving in the army. The region was thus overrun by the disbanded soldiers who had found no place in the new Oudh Irregular force and the military police.³⁸ The disbandment resulted in forced unemployment in almost every Oudh peasant’s home. The extinction of native states aggravated the situation. The Duke of Wellington had probably this in mind when he remarked that to annex a state was to degrade and beggar the natives, making them all enemies.”³⁹ Sir Thomas Munro also pointed out that this policy “debased the whole people.”⁴⁰

The Europeans, who filled these posts did not, and were not expected to maintain large retinues, as the Indians in the former governments has done, and would probably do it if they were given the posts. Thus the poorer sections of the Indian people would in any case have been unable to obtain those posts, whatever the government ruling over them. The consequence of this was that they were prepared to join in any upheaval on the chance of improving their lot.⁴¹ In 1850, the production of silver fell short of the world

demand for it, and this aggravated the situation further – first, because Indian currency had been placed on an exclusively silver basis by an act of 1835, and secondly, because India was still passing through the transition from barter to money economy.⁴² At this critical moment in the expansion of their influence and power, the British suffered reverses in the First Afghan war (1838 - 42), the Crimean war (1854 - 56) and in the two wars against the Sikhs (1845 - 49). This nearly shattered the general belief “in their invincibility,” despite the fact that they won all these wars; for the people discovered that the British were no superman. They were capable of making almost fatal mistakes – mistakes which perhaps clever adversaries could exploit.⁴³

As belief in the invincibility of the British army had almost ended, the sepoys convinced themselves that the many victories which the English had gained had been due entirely to the Indians’ prowess. They believed and voiced the belief in no uncertain terms that they had enabled the English to conquer Hindustan from Burma to Kabul.⁴⁴ The composition of the British army was also favourable to the growth of this belief. There were 360,000 sepoys as against British Soldiers, and 12,000 Indian gunners as against 6,500 European.⁴⁵ In these circumstances, the sepoys were quick to take offence when they were told that they would no longer enjoy the privileges of Foreign Service (batta) when serving in Sind, or on the Punjab. They asked why they should not have the same privileges merely because the British boundary – line had been extended to what was recently foreign soil. Reconciliation to the decision was almost impossible in the contest of their conviction that the territories could not have been conquered without them. They felt embittered because their employer the company had rewarded them for their food services by depriving them of a well – deserved portion of their pay.⁴⁶ Other

matter that touched the sepoys to the quick was company's alleged interference in their religious beliefs. Acts such as the abolition of sati, legalization of remarriage of Hindu widows, and prohibition of the killing of daughters, whether in themselves good or bad, were repugnant to Indian customs and socio – economic and also religious tradition. They increased the suspicions of the Indians masses.⁴⁷ During 1850, an act was passed permitting converts to Christianity to retain their patrimony. In the midst of the furore this created among Indian masses, a letter by one Mr. Edmond was circulated from Calcutta to all principal officials of the company's government. The letter said that as the entire sub-continent was under the control of a Christian power, it was but right to convert the Indian people to the Christian faith.⁴⁸ It was remoured that the Indian servants of the East India Company would be the first to be converted to Christianity and after that the mass of the people. It was presumed that the letter was written by order of the government. The denial offered only a temporary relief the general belief remained the government had only postponed the project and would resume it the moment it felt strong enough to do so.⁴⁹ During this period there was no communication between rulers and the ruled, no living together or near one another – as had always been the custom among conquerors who came from the north – west. The English rulers always looked forward to retirement and returning “home”. They seldom came to settle in India.⁵⁰ The Indian masses had no voice in the administration of the country. The greatest mischief lay in this that the people misunderstood the views and the motive of the British government. They misapprehended every act, and whatever law was passed was misconstrued by men who had no share in the framing of it, and hence no means of judging its spirit. The Indian masses had no voice in the administration of the country during the 1850's. The laws and

regulation passed by the British government, it could never hear, as it ought to have heard, the voice of the people on these subjects. The people had no means of protesting against what they felt was wrong, or of giving expression to their wishes.⁵¹ The masses of India misunderstood the views and the motives of the British government. They fell into the habit of thinking that all laws were passed with a view to degrade and ruin them, and to deprive them. At last came the time when all men looked upon the English government as slow poison, a rope of sand, a treacherous flame of fire. They began to believe that if today they escaped from the clutches of the government, tomorrow they would fall into them; or that even if they escaped the tomorrow, the third day would see their ruin. When the rulers and ruled occupy relatively such a position as this, what hope is there of loyalty or of good will?"⁵² The facts and circumstances that created in the minds of the people a vague dread of mass conversion to Christianity, strengthened by the letters of Edmond and activities of wheler, brought home to the mind of the sepoy the grave and imminent peril which threatened their religion;. And this feeling worked upon minds thoroughly disaffected against the British for many years past. A discerning eye could see that the mine was loaded and the train prepared, and the spark might be easily furnished by any inflammable passion. The story of the greased cartridge supplied the spark and caused an explosion which shook the British Empire in India to its very foundations.⁵³ It is to be observed that in the case of social reforms introduced by the British were looked upon with suspicion by the conservative sections of the Indian society. Reforms such as abolition of sati, legalization of widow remarriage and extension of western education to women were looked upon as examples of interference in the social customs of the country. The social discrimination faced by the Indian masses due to the British attitude

of racial superiority also led to much resentment. Educated Indians were denied promotions and appointments to high office. This turned them against the British. The increasing activities of the Christian missionaries and the actual conversions made by (Hindu to Christian) them were taken as a proof of this fear. The policy of taxing lands belonging to temples and mosques lent further support to this idea. The belief that their religion was under threat, united all sections of society against a common enemy that is British East Indian Company.

There has been little attempt to understand the thoughts and actions of thousands of ordinary villagers who rose on such a considerable scale. Even in the work, for instance, of S.B. Chaudhury, where ordinary people do come into picture, there is a tendency to treat their actions as nothing more than an automatic response to the objective changes brought about by British rule, or to consider them as a passive or semi-passive mass that was activated by the mobilization efforts of the leaders. There has been no real attempt to study the vital elements of popular consciousness, how the people worked out such perceptions and gave meanings to them in terms of their own cultural codes, symbols, and value systems. An aspect of autonomous popular consciousness and action during the Revolt of 1857 has started receiving greater attention. The complementarity of the taluqdar-peasant relationship – where inequality was circumscribed by customs and mediated by various forms of beneficence – was disrupted by alien colonialist operations with shocking repercussions on the ethical and normative visions of the peasants.⁵⁴ The essentialist construction of an Indian nature is evident – an Indian Rajput, under normal circumstances i.e. uncontrolled by British law and order, is essentially prone to plunder. As a sequel, therefore, they are met by a force which supplied whatever was wanted in

their former chastisement. 'And they have behaved well ever since,' thus concludes the contented civilizer.⁵⁵ The 1857 Revolt is thus given a character of 'a great struggle between light and darkness, civilization and savages'.⁵⁶ The solution advocated and practiced by historians like Ranajit Guha – to 'invert' these official sources in order to arrive at a knowledge of rebel mentality – seems to move within a frame work of binary opposites, which is problematic such an approach misses out on the whole range of nuances of intermediary attitudes and interpretations that various groups of rebels manifested through their actions and perceptions. It gives us little idea of the separate cultural domain that the groups of common men had tried to preserve against the onslaught of the colonialist regime. There is very little help from the official sources in trying to construct the various constituents of popular culture – notions of 'dharma' and life, its meaningful symbolism and ritual significance within polity and society arrived at by different groups of rebels – all of which are essential to truly grasp and understand the modalities and idioms of popular grievances and actions in 1857, along with their casual and characteristic inter-relation and spiritual variations.⁵⁷ There is no dearth of discussions on the causes and issues leading to the uprising of 1857. In the context of our study, it is more pertinent to begin with a cursory examination of the changing contours of society, economy and policy as a whole in the region under consideration in the years before 1857 under colonial rule, and examine how different sections of the population perceived and reacted to these changes with variations over geographical and social space. Under new colonialist policies were not only the statues of kings and chieftains – but even their social – cultural and ritualistic roles as a political functions were adversely affected, an attack on the symbolic legitimacy of the political order by the British could

very well mean an attack on the cherished values and norms that had sustained traditional society and polity, and was in fact perceived as such.⁵⁸ The introduction of contractual relations and European ideas of property, rent and revenue, meant that the kings were reduced to the status of chiefs; the local lords who were seen as upholders of a social order maintained through ritual practices who reduced to 'land lords', and soldiers, for whom military service to the overlord was duly affiliated with ethical and religious sentiments, were converted into 'recruits' serving for money with little actual understanding or regard for such sentiment.⁵⁹ It is also important to remember that most of the sepoys under the company were recruited from Awadh, the eastern district of Ghazipur – Ballia and Shahabad, and had an agrarian background with considerable peasant links. Thus the issues that affected the sepoys could also affect their peasant relatives back home, and vice versa.⁶⁰ In the fertile alluvial plains of the eastern district – Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Banaras, Ghazipur – Ballia and extending into the similar areas of western Bihar – dense settlement patterns and social networks based on clan and locality was the norm. Even in the doab regions of Kanpur, Fatehpur and Allahabad, though instant upheaval had made lasting rulership difficult, it had nevertheless led to an adoption of defiant independence on the part of all power – holders, from lineage chiefs to village Zamindars. The impact of British administrative and revenue policies on these groups is crucial as these were the people who would, by and large, emerge as active rebels in 1857.⁶¹ In the Banaras the land went from lineages and local chiefs into the hands of merchants, bankers, petty civil servants, and their descendants. These groups formed the new class of landlords – often absentee and managing affairs through managers – who were different in background and outlook from

the older group (means the local group of merchant as well as Zamindars and landlords). The paternal ties that used to take away the edge from the exploitative relationship between older landlords and peasants as well as common masses gave way to a system of cold, impersonal, and ruthless exploitation of peasants by this new class of landlords. Cohn has analysed the data on 283 public auctions of lands sold in the period 1795-1850 in the region comprising the four districts of Banaras, Ghazipur, Balia, Jaunpur and Mirzapur. Cohn concludes that the three groups – Rajputs, Brahmans and Muslims, who were forced to sell more than they bought – the Rajputs accounted for most of the total land lost. Cohn has shown that approximately 41% of the lands transferred in these auctions went to families whose principal occupations were money lending, service ns law.⁶² The new purchasers were overwhelmingly non-resident; their contact with cultivators was limited to ruthless extortion of rents and all this disrupted the traditional moral economy of the countryside. This would prove a crucial factor in the participation of a large mass of peasants in the uprising, specifically targeting their attacks on the gaddis, shops, offices, and houses of these merchants and public servants. The organization of the rebels especially on the pre-rebellion period. The reason for this is obvious. The records about the nature, the functions and the structure of their secret organization. Books on the revolt are replete, no doubt, with the accounts of itinerant Moulavis, Faquirs, pandits and sanyasis, the volunteer begging parties and the Madaris who roamed from place to place and spread the message of revolt and also spread the exploitation of the British East India Company. Such books abound also in stories about the red lotuses and chappatis passing from village to village. The author of 'A Narrative of the Indian Revolt has described the passing of the lotus thus. "A man appeared with a

lotus flower and handed it to the chief of the regiment. He handed it on to another man who took it and passed it on and when it came to the last, he suddenly disappeared to the next station. There was not, it appears, a detachment, not a station on Bengal through which the lotus flower was not circulated.”⁶³ Sir George Otto Trevelyan is of the opinion that the red lotus united all the sepoys.⁶⁴ Each one was made to swear over the red lotus that he would act with the others when the call came.⁶⁵ According to Savarkar, the sepoys used to meet secretly at night. All resolutions were passed in the general meetings, and all the decisions that were taken in the inner circles were obeyed strictly.⁶⁶ Every regiment was a unit in the larger organization. To facilitate deliberations between the various regiments, it was arranged that on festive occasions regiments should invite one another for celebration. This afforded a pretext for united secret meetings. Selected sepoys met in the houses of the subedars. The work of deciding important matters was left to the officers.⁶⁷ The circulation of chappatis on the eve of the outbreak was, in all probability, a signal to prepare the people for the coming upheaval. Nawab Moinuddin describes how early one morning in February the watchman of Farukh Khan brought a chappati and asked him to cook five similar ones to send to the five nearest villages, with the instruction that each village chowkidar was to prepare five similar chappatis for distribution in the same way. Each chappati was made of barley and wheat flour. It was about the size of a man’s palm and weighed two tolas. This circulation of chappatis was an exact repetition of what had happened before the Mahrattas invaded northern India in 1803; the only difference was that in place of mutton, a spring of millet had accompanied the chapatti. Similarly, before the santal rebellion a branch of the sal tree had been circulated from village to village. According to Sir John Malcolm “there had been a

mysterious circulation of sugar grist before the Mutiny of the coast Army in 1806. Dim prophecies and rumours foreshadowing a holocaust came in the wake of these chappatis. They created alarm in the public mind.⁶⁸ In this regard the masses gathered against the British exploitation within the one revolt's lap.

A central question for any strategy of socialist transformation is the question of agency, the social forces that will carry out this transformation. Classical Marxist view of struggle for socialism as class struggle, properly interpreted, carries within it the basic elements of the answer to this question. It was characteristic of Marxism that even as it established the necessity and possibility of socialism in the material objective conditions first created for it by capitalism, it also looked for the social forces in society that can provided the decisive thrust to the struggle for the new historic form to be achieved. Marx, on the basis of his analysis of capitalism, located this social force, the revolutionary subject or agency above all in the proletariat of what were in his time the most the most advanced capitalist countries. Not because any class teleology or metaphysics was involved or, in Marx's words, because 'socialists considered the proletarians as gods'. But for the simple reason that as a class of the worst victims of capitalism which 'cannot free itself without abolishing the conditions of its own life', the proletariat was seen to have a most direct objective interest in transition to socialism, and because it was thought natural and easy for it to 'win the theoretical awareness of its loss', that is, acquire the revolutionary consciousness necessary for carrying out this transition. The growing numerical strength of the proletariat as well as its structural location in capitalism, at the very heart of production, was seen to give it a certain strategic social power and capacity for collective action to be an agent of revolutionary

transformation. While Marx never denied the role of another social forces in the revolutionary process, indeed sought them as allies of the proletariat, it was the proletariat the objective situation reinforcing its self awareness as the prime victim of capitalism and its sense of collective power, which was to be the strategic actor in the socialist revolution, the grave diggers' of capitalism as Marx called them.⁶⁹ In 1789, the French Revolution, generated the military philosophy known as "the nation in arms". In accordance with this idea, a state with popular sovereignty was stronger than an absolutist monarchy because its people willingly contributed their blood in defence of the country they considered their own⁷⁰, and this marked the rise of the people's war. It is to be noted that people's war in this context refers to interstate warfare and hence is different from the Maoist concept of people's war which involves the political mobilization of certain classes by the socialistic mentality for conducting guerrilla and conventional warfare against the ruling classes.

The Great Mutiny lasted from May 10, 1857 till April 1859. In certain aspects, the fighting during this period in south Asia approximated the paradigm of a people's war. All the elements characterizing a people's war were present in varying degrees in the conflagration of the Mutiny. The East India Company's wars with the indigenous powers between 1770 and 1849 were similar to the European 18th Century wars. But combat during 1857 represented a lethal increase as regards scope, intensity and impact on society. Alexander Llewellyn asserts that in 1857 both sides aimed at the complete destruction of the enemy.⁷¹ The distinction between combatants and non-combatants vanished in the case of people's war. Forster and Nagler claim that the civil war in US of 1861-65 and the Franco-Prussian war of 1871 witnessed the evolution of a strategy

directed against the civilians. This was because the civilians were necessary to sustain the war effort and the former often also joined the people's armies. The people took up arms and were either mobilized from above or they mobilized on their own spontaneously.⁷² The popular initiative shaped the mass violence that unfolded against the alien regime in 1857.⁷³ Rudrangshu Mukherjee goes on to say that the rebels indulged in acts of symbolic violence. Instances of popular unrest were symptoms of popular hatred and anger.⁷⁴ Popular folk culture perceived the Ghadar of 1857 as an attempt of the people (described as 'balwai' in colonial records) to free their mulk from the rule of the hated English (firangis). The popular perception of people towards the colonizers as Firangis, connotes certain characteristic and features. From certain interesting Bhojpuri, Avadhi, Bundeli and Bagheli folk cultural forms, we get some idea about what they actually meant when they referred to the English as firangis, they were perceived by the people as those who were fair-skinned (gora), were looters and exploiters of the country (mulk) and those who corrupted their religion and caste.⁷⁵ The Revolt of 1857, spread like wildfire. Within a week of the breaking out of the rebellion the English empire in upper India had all but disappeared.⁷⁶ Between the frontiers of Bengal and Punjab, English authority was acknowledged only for a few miles around Agra, and in some other isolated spots where there happened to be English regiments. "To live in India now", wrote Lowe "was like standing on the verge of a volcanic crater, the sides of which were fast crumbling away from our feet while the boiling lava was ready to erupt and consume us."⁷⁷ Every ploughshare in upper India was being turned into a sword; The Events of 1857 at Berhampur and Barrackpur created deep impressions in the minds of the sepoys and probably among people too. On the other hand this paved the way for others to think

about their possible acts under similar situation. Berhampur and Barrackpur no doubt inspired several sepoys and induced them to think that some people among them exhibited the courage and courted a glorious end to uphold their religion. The resolute and adamant attitude of the army authorities and the state's administration further strengthened their fear that the state was conspiring to deprive them of their religion; There was no reason for the sepoys, peasants, adibasis and even aristocrats to have any trust and confidence on any foodeill of the colonial state. All of them have seen heard from their parents and grandparents how a period systematic social deprivation originated in India after the beginning of the colonial rule in 1757. They have also seen heard from their parents and grandparents how several hundred and thousands of masses resisted the intrusion of colonial rule and sacrificed their life. They have also seen, heard from their parents and grandparents how the colonial state through its law, police, prison and army dominated village after village, killed and burnt and destroyed many of their cherished and beloved people and things. So at least on this issue sepoys became more resolute that they will not surrender their faith, religion, the only one left space of solace as well as the space to locate their own root in an alien overbearing state.⁷⁸

On 23rd April Colonel Carmichael's myth of Meerut cantonment ordered a parade of 90 skirmishers to be held on next day where the colonel would demonstrate how without biting by teeth the sepoys can load their cartridges. Next day when the sepoys arrived at the parade ground 85 cartridge and despite repeated efforts from the colonel they adhered to their poi9nt rigidly. Ultimately the parade was dismissed and a court of Enquiry was called on 25th April. The court gave the verdict later that the 85 rebels will have to be given 10 years of rigorous imprisonment. On 9th May morning at the parade ground of

the cantonment 85 sentenced sepoys were assembled, they were wearing uniform at that time. After the announcement of sentence their army uniform, medals etc. were taken away from them and then ironsmiths fixed iron shackles on their legs and this whole process took long time. This event no doubt created deep impression upon the minds of other sepoys assembled at the parade ground. In the eyes of all the other sepoys these 85 men of 3rd light cavalry were already examples of courage and sacrifice. Those 85 men sacrificed job, honor and were compelled to imprisonment for their resoluteness to protect their religion. After the parade ground the rebels were escorted to jail. When the court of enquiry was going on during that period the sepoys were becoming enraged. Hugh Gough mentioned that during those time incendiary fires destroyed huts at night and in the bazaar there prevailed an ill feeling among the people. This event indicates that already when at Berhampur and Barrackpur sepoys revolted and were punished, at that time again another penal measure on the same issue further enraged and irritated the sepoys and also the local people. The court martial added further fuel. Although the morning and midday of the 10th May showed no signs of a huge outburst but in the evening at 5 p.m. a cry was raised in the bazaar that European troops were coming in the Indian sepoy lines to disarm the Indian sepoys. The sepoys of the 20th N. I. rushed out with their arms, started firing and thus begun the preliminary proceedings of the coming cyclone. During that time a group of sepoys of the 3rd light cavalry marched to the jail and released their 85 prisoner comrades from the jail. By late evening several bungalows, houses, government establishment were burnt down. Palmer observed that when the sepoy lines broke open in revolt the news reached to the bazaar and there started violent activities in the bazaar. ⁷⁹ In late evening the sepoys released several hundred prisoners

from old jail and this gave a fresh impetus. At late night as Palmer has observed that from the surrounding villages came several bands of Gujar adibasis who set fire to the unoccupied sappers and miners line. By that time the sepoy already left Meerut and divided in groups they marched towards Delhi.⁸⁰ As a result the entire Meerut district and Bulandshahr rose up in the Revolt of 1857.

The Revolt of 1857, in Delhi has been a subject of much interest among historians of modern India. Some of them have, rather incidentally also discussed the rebels' efforts at establishing a working administration of Delhi. Delhi was occupied by the rebel sepoy on 11 May. Colonel Vibart observed that after morning breakfast when all were taking rest at their bungalows at that time, an hour later came the news that sepoy of light cavalry from Meerut arrived at Delhi.⁸¹ S. N. Sen observed that there was no lack of sympathizers inside and once it became known to the city people that the sepoy from Meerut arrived at Delhi to fight for faith after killing the Europeans the streets were thronged with crowd.⁸² Chaplain John Rotton observed that long after the revolt of 1857 he came to know why in Delhi it took long time for the revolt to take place. Rotton narrated that the Deputy collector of Delhi told him that the king sent a sowaree camel down to the Meerut road to report how near the British troops were to his city. When the messenger returned, saying there were certainly no European soldiers within 20 miles of Delhi, the spirit of mutiny could restrain itself no longer. This was the reason, as Rotton concluded why the activities inside Delhi started after a delay. The rebel sepoy forced and eventually succeeded in convincing the unwilling emperor to assume the leadership.⁸³ The rebels attacked and destroyed post-office, electric telegraph, Delhi Bank, Delhi gazette press, every house in cantonments in the lines. Charles Ball mentioned that

at late hours of the day Gujar adibasis from the adjacent villages of Delhi started to arrive and then started full scale killing and plunder of Europeans and their houses from “foundation to roof”.⁸⁴ After the installation of Bahadur shah on the throne the rebels issued proclamations. In one of the earlier proclamations the rebels gave call to all people of the country to join in the war which they initiated to save their religion. In the proclamation the rebels invited all “Hindus and Musulmans” to “unite in this struggle”. The rebels also advised everybody to copy the proclamation and dispatch it everywhere and ‘all true Hindus and Musulmans’ were advised to” be alive and watchful. The rebels also invited people from all over to come and join them at Delhi. For this reason, although some rulers remained loyal to the colonial state but from many parts of the country it became an aim of the rebels to join in Delhi and subsequently several rebels started to arrive at Delhi. The Delhi court poet Ghalib observed that “The rebel armies were assembling from various places form India. Since, the name of the emperor was associated with the revolt, many officers from great distances had joined the rebellion.”⁸⁵ The entire region of Doab and Rohilkhand became a hotbed of rebellion. Rice Holmes observed that “Rajas emerged from their seclusion, gathered their retainers around them, and proclaimed their resolve to establish their authority, as vassals of the king of Delhi.” Everywhere the Gujar adibasis as well as masses joined in the rebellion and the dispossessed land owners also joined and drove the tahsildars, the country police.⁸⁶ When we see the action of the rebels sepoys in this broader historical context it is not surprising that they should have decided to set up their new state in the imperial capital (Delhi) with the Mughal emperor as its nominal head. They were not acting in impulse. They had a fairly good idea of the implications of this move, namely, that it would

convince people that the Government of the East India Company had been definitely overthrown. We should bear in mind that most of the rebel governments in different parts of Northern, central and eastern India invariably sought the formal sanction of the emperor to establish their legitimacy. For the company too, destroying the Delhi regime was the foremost priority.

Consequently the motives of the rebels have often been obscured. Yet the sepoys understood much better than we possibly can the political significance of associating the name of Bahadur Shah with their struggle against colonial rule.⁸⁷

The military cantonment of Nasirabad was situated near Ajmer. On 28th May revolt broke in this cantonment. Charles Ball narrated that at first the 15th N .I. took possession of the artillery but others showed no inclination to join them but by evening the situation changed and full scale revolt broke out. Henry Mead has noted that when the remaining Europeans left the station the local villagers appeared in the scene with their arms. After that the treasury was looted and bungalows burnt. Charles Ball also observed that finally the rebel sepoys left the station to go and join Delhi and in their route captain Nixon tried to stop them but ultimately the rebels were successful in reaching Delhi.⁸⁸

Henry Mead has observed that in Bareilly just before the outbreak fugitives from other corps passed through and influenced the minds of the men and told them that European troops were coming to destroy their caste.⁸⁹ The European officers at Bareilly were fully confident of their troops. They felt that their troops were loyal and would not revolt. At that time at Bareilly was stationed the 18th N. I., 8th irregular cavalry and 6th company of Bengal native artillery. Charles Ball has observed that the two infantry

regiments became highly excited when they heard that a king had been proclaimed at Delhi.⁹⁰ The British officers of the station remained in the dark up to the moment of the outbreak. Rebels acted according to their plan. On 31st May at 11'O clock a gun was fired by the artillery, the sepoys rushed and took their arms and started indiscriminate firing. The rebels broke open the jail and released some 3000 prisoners and with them joined the locals. In Bareilly an artillery subedar Bakhtawar Khan assumed the position of commander – in – Chief and retired judge Khan Bahadur Khan proclaimed himself Nawab and set up the government. Henry Mead noted that the Bareilly rebels headed for Delhi with 700 carts laden with treasure which was looted from the treasuries of Rohilkhand.⁹¹

On the same day the sepoys of the 28th N. I. revolted at Shahjahanpur. Here the sepoys gathered with in one revolts lap. The sepoys killed Reverend McCullum, Dr. Bowling, Captain James, Lieutenant Spans, Captain salmon and civil magistrate Mr. Ricketts.⁹²

What was important in all this was not the objective truth, but what the people believed the company was going to do or doing. And it was the belief about what was being done and the consequent panic that stirred men into feverish activity. Fear bred fear, and rumour spread from one sepoy line to another, generating activity and more panic. Rumour, fear and panic, for all their irrationality, brought men together, stoked their hatred and spurred them to violent action. The transmission of rumours and panic was facilitated by the fact that the sepoys shared a common life style; very often they came from the same background. Events such as the seizure of Awadh or the way the first summary settlement in Awadh was disrupting the familiar world, when discussed in

the sepoy lines, could reinforce feelings of shared misfortune and generate mass violence. Rumours of attempts to undermine caste purity must have created widespread panic, stirring up the wind of Madness. Fantasy, which revealed deeprooted distrust, combined with facts to produce an image of the firangi Raj as the sacred. The episode of the greased cartridge must have provided the crucial element of psychological over-stimulation, transforming perception into action. The mutinies thus expressed a collective mentality of opposition that embodied in it a whole matrix of panic, anxiety and hope. Added to the force of rumours was the circulation of mysterious objects like chapattis and lotus flowers – the most commonly referred to incident of the mutiny – conveying unknown messages. In this context it is worth-while recalling, especially as religion had an obvious hold over the nineteenth century Indian mind, that there was current in India during this time the prophecy that the end of British rule was not far off.⁹³ As the uprisings took place in the various Awadh stations and British administration collapsed, the talukdars recovered the land they had lost. Very often in a remarkable act of loyalty the village proprietors returned the land voluntarily to the talukdar. Capt. Barrow, who had sought shelter with Hanwant Singh, watched this act of allegiance. The return of the sepoys from the mutinous regiments provided the talukdars with fighting men, and the allegiance of the village proprietors gave them a popular base. It was only then that conditions were fulfilled for the revolt of the army to be transformed into a revolt of the people.⁹⁴ In Awadh there were three distinct phase in the transformation of the army revolt into a general uprising of the masses and in the subsequent progress of the rebellion. The first phase was a direct sequel to the mutinies in the districts. With the collapse of the British administration in the districts the only area where British authority survived was

Lucknow. The attention increased once the British suffered their first major setback in the battle of chinhat (30th June 1857). From the battle of Chinhat to the first relief of Lucknow in September 1857 by Havelock and Outram, the city was under siege and was the centre of revolt in Awadh. The second phase, perhaps in one sense the most crucial, lasted from the first relief to the final fall of Lucknow in March 1858. During this phase the city was the focus and the fighting was for its control. The British were still in a precarious condition and under siege. The city had to be evacuated by them in November 1857, and from then until March the British and the rebels maintained the struggle for Lucknow because both sides realized the importance of holding it. But the fight was slowly spreading to the countryside. The Third phase was in March 1858 when the rebels, having lost the capital, dispersed into the countryside. This is the phase both of desperate struggle to continue the revolt and of conciliation and surrender to the columns of Lord Clyde which were then sweeping through Awadh. All three stages of the rebellion had, in a way, the capital city for their local point.⁹⁵ The rebels realized the advantages of the Indian summer. Khan Bahadur Khan urged them to keep fighting since British, he thought would not be able to withstand the summer.⁹⁶ Talukdars were convinced that theirs was an army composed of men of every village.⁹⁷ The chief of staff himself noted how the population of country rose and closed in on its rear, when the British army had advanced into Awadh.⁹⁸ It is be noted that contemporary British observers, more than modern day analysts, perceived clearly the power of the revolt in Awadh. It is necessary to underscore this in view of the common presumption that the revolt had run its course by the fall of Lucknow. For the rebels, doom came only when Lord Clyde overran Baiswara; till then the issue was still undecided and the rebellion retained much of its

robustness and man power, and even elements of planning and co-ordination and also co-operation. The real strength of the talukdar's resistance, and indeed of the revolt in Awadh, sprang from the unhesitating and complete support received from the peasantry and the general populace of the Awadh countryside.⁹⁹ In the revolt the talukdars did provide the bulk of the fighting force. For example Rana Raghunath Singh of Khajurgaon had 1,500 retainers, but within a few hours he could provide three to four thousand men.¹⁰⁰ It is probable that the revolt was so intense because the people of Awadh thought they were fighting in a just and legitimate war. In Awadh the opposition to the British in 1857 was truly Universal, a people's resistance.¹⁰¹ It represented not a revolutionary challenge but a popular rejection of an alien order.

In May 1857, the news of the outbreak in Meerut and following that the fall of Delhi a few days later, had an electrifying effect on the troops and the population in Kanpur as well as all over north India. In the summer of 1857, there were rumours about the cartridges of the new Enfield rifle being coated with the fat of cows and pigs; about flour being polluted by bone – dust; about forcible conversions to Christianity; about the intentions of the British to disarm the sepoy; and about the end of British rule at the centenary of Plassey. All these circulating together aggregated into one gigantic rumour about the evil intentions of the British. Untraceable in their origin and unverifiable in their import, the rumours moved in powerful current touching on issues that were profoundly close to indigenous sentiments. Rumour spread from village to village, from bazaar to bazaar and from one sepoy line to another, bringing men together and pushing them to resist what they considered an alien intervention.¹⁰² The leaders in their turn, recognizing the strength and importance of the people, sought to keep them happy. Thus

we read in Tantia Topi's 'order book' instructions like, 'Anyone who takes wood etc. from the Godown or from the houses of the poor, should be punished by order of a court';¹⁰³ or again, 'all the commanding officers are requested to give strict orders to their men..... that if they are found extorting money from the poor villagers or plundering them they will be severely punished'.¹⁰⁴ There is a deliberate coming together here of the two domains, of the popular and of that which was represented by Nana and his men. It leads to the formation of a unity against a common enemy whose complete annihilation alone can lead to a stable reconstitution of the old order. A single thought ran through every mind in the area – "now or never was the time to shake off the oppression of the stranger".¹⁰⁵ In Jhansi, Lakshmi Bai "raised the banner of revolt". The fanatical influence of the wahabis in Patna and of the Brahmins in Banaras made these two cities formidable. The high price of food grains and other provisions which were always attributed to British rule came in handy as justification and propaganda to the reels of Allahabad. In Bihar the permanent settlement vanished like a dream. Generally, the revolt of the sepoys was followed or accompanied by a rebellion in the city and the countryside. But in several places the people rose in revolt before the sepoys.¹⁰⁶ The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Halliday had observed that Bengal presidency was also a theatre of events similar in character to that of upper and central provinces.¹⁰⁷ The affected districts of Bengal presidency were Shahabad, Patna, Gaya, Champaran, Saran, Tirhut, Bhagalpur; Purnia, Chotanagpur, Dacca, Chittagong, Palamou and Burdwan. The Gaya Magistrate reported that people were talking to their neighbours that the "yoke" is nearing its end.¹⁰⁸ The event of 1857 started with the Mutiny of the Indian sepoys over the use of greased cartridges, but the sepoys were soon joined by broader sections of the civil society whose

moral economy had been disrupted by the political East India Company. The rebels had expected active support from the Punjab.¹⁰⁹

The sepoys at Jullundur, Ludhiana, Ferozpur, Sialkot etc. had established contact with the local inhabitants of the respective areas. It became possible for them to carry on their struggle with widespread local support. The revolt was at least in Punjab, everybody's concern. Barring a few ruling princes and their hangers – on, the people belonging to different religions, castes, and classes had an interest – a positive interest to be precise – in it. The poorer sections of the people or masses, the illiterate, and the lower castes were a part of the struggle.¹¹⁰ It is necessary to form an accurate picture of the rebellious movement both among the sepoys and the masses. The masses or the civil population in each locality revolted only when the British authority had left it and the administrative machinery had completely broken down. The people came to believe that the British Raj was at an end and merely took advantage of the political vacuum thus created to serve their own material interests. From the very beginning the goonda elements of the population and particularly the marauding tribes like Gujars, Ranghars etc. took a prominent part in the local risings. Even the ordinary people were animated more by subversive than constructive activities. The result was that plunder, rapine, massacre, and incendiarism, on a large scale, directed against the Europeans as well as Indians, mostly characterized these outbreaks. In addition to these, personal vendetta, a desire to gain by force what was lost by legal process, settling old scores and satisfying personal grudge played a large part in the popular upsurge almost wherever it occurred.¹¹¹

The mutiny was most widely spread in the area now covered by the state of Uttarpradesh

and fringes of neighbouring territories in all directions save the north, and there the civil population was also largely affected. The state of things outside the area requires a detailed consideration. There was for a time turned into a mass movement, mainly due to the predatory habits of large elements of population. But order was soon restored with the aid of the loyal chiefs of Patiala, Nabha and Jhind and the Sikhs and other loyal elements of the population. In Bengal and East Bihar, some sepoys mutinied at Dacca, chittagong, Tipperah, and Bhagalpur, but were dispersed without difficulty. The civil population was unaffected, though there was an outbreak among the sandals, who had also revolted only two years before.¹¹² Even the British authorities in England had to admit the special reason for violent outbreak in Awadh, as is shown by the following extract from a letter written by the secret committee of the court of Directors to the Governor- General on 19th April, 1858. "War in oudh has derived much of its popular character from the sudden dethronement of the crown and the summary settlement of the revenue which deprived a large number of landlords of their lands. Under the circumstances, hostilities which have been carried on in oudh have rather the character of legitimate war than that of rebellion".¹¹³ For from enlisting the sympathy and support of the people at large, they were intent on plundering them and burning their villages. It is undeniable fact that both Europeans and Indians were alike victims to their fury and greed, and in many places they inspired a sense of dread and terror rather than that of sympathy and fellow-feeling among the people. The sepoys at Delhi refused to fight unless they were paid their salaries, and that on an adequate scale, - a demand which is hardly in consonance with the spirit which should guide a fighter in a war of independence. Many sepoys at Delhi, Bareilly and Allahabad and probably in other places, too, after plundering

indiscriminately, went back to their homes to enjoy the wealth they had secured, without any thought of any other question or policy. There is nothing in the conduct or behavior of the sepoys which would justify us in the belief, or even assumption, that they were inspired by love for their country and fought against the British with the definite idea of freeing their motherland. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the attitude and activities of the sepoys in 1849 certainly did not correspond to the patriotic fervour with which they were supposed to be endowed in 1857. Unless, therefore, we suppose that this sentiment was suddenly developed during the short interval of eight years, we can hardly regard the sepoys, who rebelled in 1857, as being inspired by the idea of regaining freedom in India.¹¹⁴ The upsurge of the people was limited to a comparatively narrow region of India, comprising at best the greater part of U. P. and a narrow zone to its east, west and south. The whole of Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Rajasthan and greater Parts of the Punjab, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh as well as the whole of India, south of the Narmada, hardly witnessed any over act of rebellion on the part of the people.¹¹⁵ Even within the narrow zone where the civil population revolted against the common enemy within the revolt's lap. An analysis of historical examples would prove that struggle of common masses must have as its primary object the expulsion of foreign rulers, simply as because they are foreigners, though there are usually many grievances against them which rouse the spirit of the people and impel them to such revolt. During the period of this event, there is unimpeachable evidence to show that the people were engaged in all kinds of subversive activities, and individual classes, and states were fighting with one common interest. On the other hand, one looks in vain for any evidence to show that the common masses realized the value and importance of the recovery of lost independence, and made

an organized and determined effort to maintain it by evolving a suitable plan for defence. Anyone with a modicum of knowledge and common sense must have felt that the avenging British forces were sure to come, sooner or later to recover the lost dominions. But contemporary evidence leaves no doubt that many eminent leaders and local chiefs, who had established their authority, discounted even the very possibility of such a contingency. The masses felt and perhaps rightly, that the whole authority of the British Government depended upon the vast force of the sepoy and the tiny British force counted for little. They knew too little of the power of England and recent reverses at Crimea suffered by the British at the hands of the Russians, of which very exaggerated accounts were afloat in India, made them belittle the power and might of the British Government. So when the Mutiny of sepoy took away the very prop on which the British rule in India rested the people not unreasonably believed that their hour had come.¹¹⁶ The participation of civil population or masses in the revolt was foreshadowed by the many instances of open resistance against the British. The lawless elements which joined the Mutiny to serve their own ends and robbed alike the British and the Indians were common factors in all outbreaks during the century preceding the revolt.

REFERENCES

- 1) Chandra, Bipan, *Madern India*, Delhi, 1976, pp. 11-26.

- 2) Bose, Sugata, Jalal, Ayesha, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political; Economy*, London and New York, Routledge, 2nd edition, p. 76.

- 3) Brown, Judith M, *Modern India : The origins of an Asian Democracy*, New York, oxford University press, 1994, p. 46

- 4) Ludden, David, *India and South Asia: A short history*, Oxford, one world publications, 2002, p. 133.

- 5) Chandra, Bipan, Tripathi, Amalesh, Dey, Barun, *Freedom struggle*, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1972, p. 43.

- 6) Joshi, P. C, (ed.), *Rebellion. 1857*, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 2007, p. 6.

- 7) Bright, Rev. Dr. Frank, in his *History of England*, period IV (1893) writes about atrocities committed by the Indian rebels and British ibid, London, p. 7.
- 8) Beauchamp, Joan, *British Imperialism in India*, (1935), p. 17. Also see Dutt, R. Palme, *Modern India*, Bombay, 1926, p. 31.
- 9) Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- 10) Holmes, T. Rice, *A History of the Indian Rebellion*, 5th (ed.), London, 1898, p. 6.
- 11) Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, pp. 835-36.
- 12) Brooks, Adams, *The Laws of civilization and decay*, England, 1896, p. 260.
- 13) Marx, Article on India (2nd Indian (ed.), 1945), p. 22.
- 14) Gadgil, D.R, '*Industrial Evolution of India in recent times 1860-1939*', London OUP, 1959, p. 45.
- 15) Mukherjee, Radhakamal, '*Land problems of India*', London 1933, pp.16,41, also see strachey, '*India: Its Administration and progress*, 4th (ed.), 1911.pp. 137, 365.

- 16) Dutt, R. C, "*The Economic History of India*, London, Vol. I. p. 85.
- 17) Thornhill, Mark, *the personal Adventures and Experiences of a Magistrate During the rise, progress and suppression of the Indian Mutiny*, London, 1884, pp. 33-34.
- 18) Temple, Sir Richard, '*Men and Events of my Times in India*, ' 1882, p. 30.
- 19) Selections from the papers of Metcalfe Lord, p. 253.
- 20) Mills, Arthur, *India*, 1858, p. 112.
- 21) Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
- 22) *Report of the Collector of Midnapore* in 1802, Quoted by Dutt R. Palme, *India today*, Delhi, (Revised ed., 1947), p. 191.
- 23) Wadi & Marchant, "*Our Economic problem*," (1945), p. 236.

- 24) Innes. Lt. General Macleod; *The sepoy Revolt*, (1857), p. 26. Browne, Rev. J. Cave, *The Punjab and Delhi in 1857*, (1861), vol. I .p. 28.
- 25) Innes, *Ibid.*, P. 27, Holmes, *op. cit*, p. 71.
- 26) Gubbins ,M. R, *An Account of the Mutinies in oudh and of the Siege of Lucknow presidency*, London (2nd ed. 1858), p. 70.
- 27) *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- 28) Kaye, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, vol. I. p. 114. Innes, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
- 29) *Ibid.*, vol. I. pp. 137-138.
- 30) Col. Sleeman's Diary. Quoted by Kaye, *Ibid.*, p. 135.
- 31) Kaye, *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115. Innes, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-29.
- 32) Gubbins, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

- 33) Kaye, *op. cit.*, p. 179, Thornhill, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.
- 34) Khan, (The causes of the Indian Revolt, urdu, 1858), pp. 27-30.
- 35) *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- 36) Kaye, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 126-127.
- 37) Innes, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
- 38) Gubbins, *op. cit.*, p. 69. Joyee Michael, *ordeal at Lucknow*, (1938), p. 47.
- 39) Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
- 40) *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 41) Joshi P. C, (ed.), “*Rebellion 1857*”, New Delhi, 2007, p. 22.
- 42) Prof. Thomas, *Economic History Review*, (1933), Mehta Asoka, *The great Rebellion* (1946), p. 17.

- 43) Kaye, *Op. cit.*, vol. I. p. 274. See also Morton's. A. L.; *A people's History of England*, (1945), p. 45.
- 44) Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
- 45) Kaye, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 341.
- 46) *Ibid.*, pp. 277, 310.
- 47) Bundle 194, Fol. No. 30, parwanah of the rebels giving details of their grievances against the British and appealing to their countrymen to the revolt. (vide press List of Muting, papers Imperial Record office, Calcutta, 1921)
- 48) Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.
- 49) *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 50) *Ibid.*, p. 32.

- 51) Khaldun, Talmiz, *The Great Rebellion*, Joshi. P. C, Ed., *Rebellion 1857*, (2007), p. 26.
- 52) Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
- 53) Munshi, K. M, Majumder, R. C, Majumder, A. K. , Ghosh, D.K., - "*British paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*", Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 1963, p. 680.
- 54) Mukherjee, Rudrangshu , *Awadh in Revolt, 1857-58*, New Delhi, 1984, pp.28-65.
- 55) Rizvi, S. A. A, (ed.), *Freedom Struggle in UttarPradesh*, vol. IV, p. 73 (here after FSUPIV) p. 25.
- 56) Taylor, Meadows, *The story of my Life*, 1878, p. 340.
- 57) Rag, Pankaj, '*1857 The oral tradition*' Rupa publications, New Delhi, 2010, p. XIV.
- 58) *Ibid.*, p. 2.

- 59) For a detailed discussion on this aspect, see Cohr B. S, *Representing Authority in Victorian India*, in *An Anthropologist among Historians*, 1978, pp. 629-82.
- 60) Rag, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
- 61) *Ibid.*
- 62) Cohn, B. S, *op. cit.*, pp. 365.
- 63) Anon, (1858), p. 4
- 64) Trevelyan, *Cawnpore* (1899), p.57-83.
- 65) Joshi, P. C, (ed.), '*Rebellion 1857*' p. 28.
- 66) *Ibid.*
- 67) Kaye, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 365.
- 68) Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 29-30.

- 69) Singh, Ranadhir, '*Struggle for socialism – some issues*', Delhi, Aakar Books, p. 81.
- 70) Jackman, Steven D, '*shoulder to shaulder*': *close control and 'old Prussian Drill' in German offensive infantry Tacties, 1871-1914*. *Johrnal of Military History* (henceforth J M H), vol. 68, No. 1 (2004), p. 79.
- 71) Roy, Kaushik, "*The Beginning of people's war in India*", EPW, p. 137
- 72) Forster and Nagler, 'Introduction' in Forster and Nagler, Ed, *on the Road to Total War*, pp. 5, 8.
- 73) Bhadra, Goutam, '*Four Rebels of Eighteen –Fifty-Seven*' in Guha. Ranjit; Ed, *Subltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, vol. 4, oup, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 273-275.
- 74) Mukherjee, Rudrangshu, *Awadh in Revolt: 1857-58, A study of popular Resistance*, OUP, New Delhi, 1984, p. 66.
- 75) Moosvi, Shireen, (ed.), *Facets of the Great Revolt 1857*, New Delhi, 2008. p. 78.

- 76) Thornhill, *op. cit.*, P. 178 also see cave-Browne, *op. cit.*, vol. I. p. 192.
- 77) Lowe Thomas, *Central India during the Rebellion of 1857 and 1858*, (1860), p. 59.
- 78) Chakraborty, Kaushik, *Decolonising the Revolt of 1857*, p. 104.
- 79) Palmer, J. A. B, *The Mutiny outbreak at Meerut in 1857*, London, 1966. p. 90.
- 80) *Ibid.*, p. 95.
- 81) Vibart, Edward, *The sepoy Mutiny as seen by a subaltern*, London, 1898, p. 12.
- 82) Sen, S. N, *Eighteen Fifty Seven*, Kolkata, 1957,p. 71.
- 83) Rotton, Rev. John Edward Wharton, *The chaplain's Narrative of the siege of Delhi*, London, 1858, pp. 20-21.
- 84) Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

- 85) *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.
- 86) Holmes, T. Rice, *A History of the Indian Muting*, London, 1898, p. 142.
- 87) Farooqui, Amar, 'Bahadur Shah Zafar and the 1857 Revolt' people's democracy. Vol. XXXI, No. 24, June 17, 2007.
- 88) Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
- 89) Mead, Henry, *The sepoy Revolt*, London, 1858, Reprint New Delhi, 1986, p. 143.
- 90) Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
- 91) Mead, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
- 92) Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, P. 111.
- 93) Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, PP. 74-75.

- 94) *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- 95) *Ibid.*, P. 82.
- 96) Translation of a letter arrived from Lucknow, 15th Feb. 1858: For Dept. Political, 30th Dec. 1859. Supplement No. 952.
- 97) Translation of letter from Naipal Singh to Thakur Bulkari Sing and Situl Sing: for. Dept. Secret Cons. 25 June 1858, cons. No. 57.
- 98) Chief of staff to Edmonstone, 19 June 1858: For Dept. Secret Cons., 30 July 1858, cons., No. 76.
- 99) Pati, Biswamoy, (ed.), *The 1857 Rebellion*, p. 226.
- 100) See Appendix (No. 10) in Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt*.
- 101) Even canning for all his disagreement with the secret letter of 19th April had to admit that the rising against our authority in Oudh has been general, almost

universal: Canning to Secret committee of Court Directors, 17th June 1858: F. S. U. P. ii, p. 353.

102) Mukherjee, Rudrangshu, *Spectre of violence the 1857 Kanpur Massacres*, Penguin Books, 1998, p. 46.

103) *Ibid.*, p.64.

104) *Ibid.*

105) Trevelyan, *Cawnpore*, (1899), p. 76.

106) Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 34-35.

107) Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

108) Kaye, J. W, *A History of Sepoy was in India*, London, 1896, vol. – III, p. 73

109) Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

- 110) Yechury, Sitaram, “*The Great Revolt. A left appraisal*”, New Delhi, People’s Democracy, 2008, p. 155-56.
- 111) Pati, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.
- 112) *Ibid.*
- 113) Parliamentary paper, House of Commons. Accounts and papers 1857-58. Vol. XLIII. P. 411. (there is no consecutive page – numbering)
- 114) Pati , *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.
- 115) *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 116) *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 49.

CHAPTER – IV

THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF THE REVOLUTIONEERS ON THE

REVOLT

A century of social deprivation before the outbreak of 1857 regularly gave birth to popular resistance. The colonial state always had maintained a realm of domination to subjugate the un-reconciled population, specially peasants and adibasis as well as common masses. Launching a resistance shedding blood and even accepting death was not a new thing or a very exclusive thing for the peasants and adibasis. Under such a situation, no exclusive conspiracy or a group of conspirators were required to launch a revolt. The initial sepoy revolts everywhere attracted a discrete rebel force whose principal body was consisted of peasants, adibasis, and local zamindars and in cities - rebel aristocrats. Peasants and adibasis spread the revolt in countryside and villages on the basis of their own initiative. Peasants and adibasis regularly revolted from 1757 onwards and so in 1857 when they discovered a breakdown of colonial order and an absence of colonial authority and the colonial state they spontaneously initiated and participated in the rebellion. It was they who always nurtured a latent but strong desire for change of colonial order and it was the social deprivation of colonial order which gave birth to, and nurtured the desire. In 1857 sepoys started the revolt. But in the subsequent period as we have noticed, they received active Cooperation from the villages. At a much later period thousands of adibasis and also lower caste people participated in the rebellion. These adibasi people were none but adibasi peasants, and villagers were none but peasants. For them causes like greased cartridge or annexation of Oudh mattered little or at all not. They simply participated because in the earlier years of

the 19th century and late 18th century also they tried to uproot colonial rule. The rebellion got strength only when peasants started to participate in it. For this reason Shahabad and palamou, parts of Central India and Awadh became a stronghold of the rebellion. In his letter to Turn bull in March 1858, Boyle has observed that Shahabad was the most eventful region in the entire lower provinces during the revolt.¹ So far as the sepoy soldiers were concerned the soldiers of the East India company were peasants in uniform and it was for this reason that everywhere, be it Bengal or Awadh, the Sepoys united themselves with the peasants and villagers aristocracy and common masses. It never appears that men like Bakht Khan, Teeka Singh, Jwalaprasad, Ahmadullah Shah, Beni Madho, peer Ali, Kunwar Singh, Amar Singh, the Sepoys of several regiments, the thousands of peasants of Shahabad, Awadh, Rohilkhad, Doab and the santals, kols, Bhils, Gujars were more designing men or seeking another employer. By resolutely destroying every signs of the colonial state the rebels established that they were not merely bargaining for a better deal. Rather they courageously and unhesitatingly sacrificed their life for a broader political purpose – the end of the colonial rule.² The bifurcation of the subject of the great revolt of 1857 into two distinct historical aspects, the military Meeting, and the civil rebellion, has the merit of a new approach and offers the most intelligible clue to proper understanding and rational evaluation of the main character of the revolution. That the sepoy struck the first blow is not denied, that their grievances flowed independently of any external pressure and originated from the conditions of the existing military service also appears quite probable. But their apprehensions and fears about the intentions of the British to destroy their caste and religion were exactly those which troubled the minds of the civil population or masses and the feudal aristocracy as

well. This connects the two aspects of the revolt in the historical process. When the sepoys had created the field and attained a certain measure of success, sections of the aristocracy and certain civil elements put themselves at the head of the movement, with the result that the military complexion of the insurrection was changed. The change was bound to take place as the sepoys did not produce a single competent commander who could channelize the activities of the rebellious troops.³ Naturally enough the initiative and leadership passed into the hands of civilian leaders who turned the movement to their advantage and even led the soldiery to the attack. After the explosion at Meerut the mutinous troops made for Delhi where resided Bahadur shah the emperor. According to the Indian legitimists, this gave the movement a traditional countrywide base. The local troops having in a large measure accomplished their plan of overthrowing the British authority in their respective regions proclaimed that the hukumat or authority belonged now to the country chief who had exercised it in the past.⁴ These are factors which irresistibly toned down the military character of the revolt and produced conditions favorable for the merging of the military rising into a popular rebellion. Few circumstances are more observable throughout the revolt than this ferment in the civil populace accompanying the Indian mutinies. Anything less than this (with so wide spread a sepoy war to encourage honest and natural motives of a patriotic and socialistic character) would have been extremely improbable in all conditions of political life, ancient and modern. A rumour, that the British power was gone unsettled the minds of the common masses and the tremendous events of the time ignited the embers of all latent discontent.⁵ If it was so, it was not unlikely that the British had to face a really national and revolutionary situation growing out of the mutinies. A sense of righteous indignation

against the British, whose feelings are so different from those of the Indians and whose gods are so different, must have naturally flowed from the war of the mutinies which gave it the character of a just and righteous revolt, in reality great and formidable rebellion, as Disraeli said in the house of commons. Instead of being a partial military mutiny, a hectic revolt of the Bengal army alone, the outbreak gradually approached the character of a rising of the people as well as common masses⁶. The most immediate factor working out this change was the religious element which actuated the masses to sacrifice their lives. The many references to the jihads and the cry of religion in danger which was echoed and re-echoed in the seditious proclamations of the period entered into the composition of the upsurge.⁷ Madness produced by fanaticism often outweighed all other feelings. The excesses of Irish rebellions and the French revolution are pertinent in this connection. Very authentic intelligence obtained from Lucknow in the period between 25 November and 2nd December runs: the war is now fully believed throughout Lucknow to be a religious crusade and numbers of people are flocking into the capital from the districts to take part in the struggle.⁸ Then Lucknow fell finally in March, the British authorities were struck by the overwhelming number of placards and pamphlets which were hung up in every nook and corner of the city urging the people to die for their caste and creed.⁹ The religious feeling mingled with the racial issue the universal hatred of the English aliens which gave the revolt of 1857, a national colouring, a strange socialistic colour, by no wisdom, by no system, as one contemporary British officer says, could they have prevented the antagonism of race.¹⁰ This aspect of the revolt namely, the determination of the rebels to tear the English out of the land, root and branch.¹¹

British officials like major Williams of Meerut, F. Thompson of Allahabad, and M. Thornhill of Mathura were convinced that as a rule the extirpation of the British was the object which prompted the rebels to adopt ruthless measures. The massacre of the Europeans in the parade ground at Farrukhabad reflects the same sentiment. There was no proclamation to the effect. The day was rainy, yet there was a great assemblage of people to witness the dreadful spectacle.¹² In Delhi too, great crowds assembled to witness a similar scene on Saturday the 16th May.¹³ That the people in general were in sympathy with the rebels may also be judged from the selfless spirit which is seen on a large scale in different regions of India during the epoch. Very few rebels craved for life or seemed to care to purchase it. They often courted death defiantly, like the Spartans.¹⁴ What again was very remarkable was that the villagers did not betray their rebel leaders and very rarely, if ever, they earned, blood money, even though habitually poor. Military communications bear out the fact that the British punitive forces were constantly misled and misinformed as they went out to elicit information for military reconnaissance. The officiating magistrate of Bihar going in pursuit of Alikarim, found that the heart of the whole country was with the rebel and consequently could not get any assistance or information from the villagers regarding Karim's where - about, although he offered large rewards. Many other officers entrusted with the same mission experienced a similar situation. In fact, from the rarity of the occasions on which the British forces were able to surprise the rebel forces, it seems more than likely that the rebels were helped by the villagers all around them who kept them acquainted with the movement of the enemy troops. It is also a noteworthy fact that during the mutinies the British military command established flying corps; this indicates that they commanded only the spots of ground

held by their own troops in different scattered areas while for communication between the disjointed members of their army they depended on flying columns. They could depend neither on their sepoys nor on the country people to keep the communication lines open between the far-flung military posts. This is what the French had to go through in the Peninsular War in the face of the Spanish national rising. Apart from the fact that this military situation demonstrated the actual insufficiency of the British forces, it also brought into relief the prevalent spirit of disaffection. According to records, flying columns were scouring the Punjab, Rajputana, central India, as well as Oudh. All these are proofs of the fact that a vague feeling of patriotism lay behind the Mutiny and rebellion of 1857 official reports about men wandering in the guise of fakirs and unusual numbers of them appearing in the country side tampering with the villagers or carrying correspondence between different bodies of mutinous sepoys concealed in their bamboo lathies or employed in other emissary or reconnoitering work are too well-known to require detailed references.¹⁵ The Magnitude of the rebellion is manifest from the returns of persons tried and punished as furnished by the district officers. On May 13, when it was known that the Mutiny of the Sepoys had been followed in many places by rebellion of the populace. The series of Acts which followed namely Acts, xvi, xvii, and xxv of 1857 were in the nature of retributory measures to meet the challenge to the government from the civil populace as well as common masses. Not only mere martial law was not proclaimed but every extensive measures were taken for the summary trial of offending persons of every class of people, civil as well as military and lower classes. Other severe measures were also adopted, even burning of offending villages was considered a necessity where the mass of the inhabitants had committed a grave outrage and the

perpetrators could not be traced.¹⁶ Brigadier Neill's course from Benares to Allahabad was marked by corpses of villagers, and the riversides for miles presented an array of demolished houses. As he saw it, the rising was becoming something more than a military mutiny and he had not the tenderness to deter him from striking root and branch the people who were rising into rebellion on the ruins of the native Army.¹⁷ The scene of alarm, scarcity and distress presented here brings into prominence the revolutionary character of the objectives of the rebels. It was sure enough not a mere wish to humble and humiliate the British government. The total subversion of the British authority in many sectors was only matched by the establishment of a rebel government of a determined character aiming to replace the former rule in all aspects, though many forms were not changed as new ones could not be devised an account of the exigency of the times. Otherwise most of the new governments aimed at justice and equality and embodied to a great degree the spirit of the times. Rani of Jhansi proved herself a most capable ruler.¹⁸ The mass movement was a challenge to the British system of law, revenue, production, and properly relations. Yet the rebellion of 1857 was not the work of the dispossessed talukdars alone. The war of the talukdars was made possible only by the co-operation of the general mass of people, the country people, the villagers of different social status. A very singular circumstance which was apparent and worthy of consideration was that the low castes and the cultivators who received attention at the hands of the British government displayed the most marked hostility to it.¹⁹ In Oudh the British were fighting not a mutiny, but the revolt of people under its hereditary chiefs and leaders.²⁰ In Budaun the mass of the population rose in a body and the work of rebellion after the sepoys had left, passed into the hands of the rural elements.²¹ In some sector of

Saharanpur, as Kaye was able to find out from the materials at his disposal, even the Sepoys were regarded as protective elements by the British as against the inhabitants of towns and villages who turned out fiercely: the British officer could hardly realise this rapid change amongst the peaceful villagers.²² In Debound, the resistance offered by the townspeople had been determined and the rebels were numerous. In Mathura whole country had risen almost instantaneously, immediately after the outbreak of the Sepoys. The authorities at Ghazipur were resisted by villagers who were organized in bodies of thousands in July 1857. Sherer, the magistrate of Fatehpur, while leaving the station and wandering in search of a place of safety, found the peasantry of the countryside in ferment, in a state jacquerie of the agricultural type.²³ The people of Jehanabad (Bihar) were also in open rebellion. All official sources agree in stating that in Allahabad the peasantry rose at once under their old talukdars, specially the rural population of the Doab, and all the muscle and sinew of the agricultural races were arrayed against the government.²⁴ In Rewah the whole of the population was hostile and country was secure only by the courage and resourcefulness of Captain Osborne. In Shahabad the rebellion of the people was found to be most determined and protracted of its kind. The sagar and Narmada countries were in blaze, seditious conspiracies were fermented in Belgaum, Hyderabad, and Poona and popular rising took place in far distance Kolhapur, Savantvadi, and Nargund. The commotion at the last named place took the form of a national resistance²⁵ within socialistic barriers. This sample survey taken of this vast and sombre scene of rebellion may confirm the view that the so-called Mutiny of 1857 has an internal consistency, only if we regard it as both a mutiny and a rebellion unmistakably united. In general, popular risings were excited by military disturbances yet sometimes

the fermentation appeared on the surface even without them. It is, however, not very easy to determine the duration of these occurrences, nor the sequence in which one act of revolt followed another but in most of the districts, as shown in the present work, elements, of revolt and embers of disaffection continued, to smoulder long after their re-occupation by the British. There is no gainsaying the fact that rebellion gripped many parts of India, even where agitation was not violent, there was no mistaking the unrest in people's minds and it is to be doubted if all acrimony was spent quickly. The village people were not certainly properly organized, and too often they broke out into small parties without any competent leadership, yet they fought heroically and even showed capacity for co-ordinated action.²⁶ There were some factories lying scattered in the whole country and coffee and indigo plantations run by Europeans, where a working class allied to the toiling population must have worked. The dismantling of the factories at shahjehanpur, saran, and Hazaribagh and the wholesale destruction of indigo factories at Shahabad and in many other places as already noticed, were a challenge to the system of exploitation and the instruments of production the primitive demand of the nascent proletariat. The fact that a proclamation had to be issued by the government for the recovery of indigo seed only serves to underline the resentment of this class against the planters and the cultivation of cash crop in general. Little is known of the facts relative to the social composition of the rebels. In general they may be classified as people who lived by profession of arms, agriculture workers, religious mendicants and priests, civil servants, shopkeepers, boatmen, and other professionals of this type. The commercial and industrial classes, the bankers and mahajans, were on the side of order and government and were the targets of attack in almost every place. So universal was this feature that

G.H. Freeling of Banda could not help reporting that in no instance the bankers and traders, the class favored by them, had been able to keep their own in the struggle.²⁷ A very significant feature of the movements of the rebel leaders was that they did not confine their activities merely to their respective regions but moved to the neighboring areas to carry on the general struggle against the English. Not to speak of the military operation of the Fyzabad maulavi, Firuz Shah, Tantia Topi, the Rani of Jhansi, Rao Sahib and Kunwar Singh, a host of other leaders also made themselves conspicuous in many fronts of the Revolt throughout the whole upper-India.²⁸ In the country to the south of the Jamuna, Barjor Singh dominated the entire region from Kunch to Kalpi and the Sagar leader Daulat Singh swept through Jalaun, Jhansi, Hasangabad and Rajputana. There are many other instances to show that the leaders of the rebellion looked beyond their own immediate circle and showed a combination of wide vision and patriotic solidarity. Though they were mostly engaged in local rebellion, they frequently united their forces against the English in many sectors of the war to deliver the country as a whole, and not simply parts of it, from the yoke of the British rule. This combination is all the more remarkable as it cut across all barriers of caste and creed and of regions and provinces and united the Hindus and the Muslims – despite communal flare-ups here and there which broke out during this period – in a common endeavour to shake off the fetters of British rule and demonstrate their hatred of the regime in a perfectly national way. Disraeli's attack against the government in the House of Commons on 27 July was typical of the British imperialists, whose motto was Divide and Rule, yet it was an admission of the fact; for the first time in the history of your rule, you have the Hindu and Mohammedan making common cause against you.²⁹

The numerous proclamations of the time which urged the people to combine and slay the British, added with the measures adopted by Bahadur Shah, the Nawab of Furrukhabad, and Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly and many others to placate the Hindus, roused to a great extent, a new feeling, a feeling of solidarity which reached its peak during the siege of Lucknow when in the face of a great impending danger the Hindus swore of the Ganges and the Mahomedans on the Koran and rushed out crying chalo bhai, to wipe out the English at Alambagh.³⁰ Similarly in Delhi it was a national defence which the British confronted. Colvin informed Havelock that the spirit in which both Hindus and Muslims acted together at Delhi was very remarkable.³¹ W. Tayler³² communicated to the government that the letters discovered in the house of Peerali Khan disclosed that for the purpose of the successful execution of the conspiracy, common cause was made by merging all religious differences.³³ At Jhansi the Mahomedans were wholly on the side of the Rani. Even in Rohilkhand, where communal tension prevailed, efforts of all kinds were made to raise the Hindu population against the British.³⁴ On this question of a common opposition to British rule by the Indian masses in those memorable years the evidence is of so compelling a nature that to Forest, the historian of the Mutiny, the great revolt only pointed to the stark fact that the British monopoly rested a thin crust. He observes: Among the many lesson which the Indian Mutiny conveys to the historian and administrator none is of greater importance than the warring that it is possible to have a revolution in which Brahmin and Sudra, Mahomedan and Hindu, were united against us.³⁵ The result of the British policy, for by the end of that period certain trends were emerging out of the confused mass of events which indicated that the mutiny was gradually merging into a rebellion. In a sense all mutinies turn into a mass movement

when they attain a certain measure of success but the Indian mutinies of the year 1857 had the peculiar feature that the rebel Bengal Army had from the beginning drawn the sympathies of the country people. The sepoys were not so much the avengers of professional grievances as the exponents of general discontent. They revolted against the authority, which they had sworn to obey, on grounds of national interest. The justification of sacrificing the military obligations rested on a widely based belief that their religion was in danger and since they were children of the soil, though mercenaries and had not abnegated their obligations to the country, their countrymen viewed them as martyrs to a great cause, holy and national, and as district magistrate said, willingly supplied their wants in almost all instances.³⁶ The subversion of the British system of administration in all its aspects by the abasement of the British rule to its utmost extent its extinction if it could be managed, was the ruling motive in general of the non-military chesses. The interaction of the two ideas, increasingly as the mutiny was turned into a rebellion, generated such a wave of popular feelings as can fairly be distinguished with the name of a national movement in its incipient form.³⁷ The city of Jhansi heard to the beat of drums the proclamation. The people are God's, the country is the king's (pad Shah's) and the two religions govern.³⁸ The mutineers did not intend to stay in Jhansi, for their chief purpose was to reach Delhi and install an alternative order that would replace British rule.³⁹ In this perspective Lakshmi Bai came to depend upon her two able lieutenants Raghunath Singh and Jawahar Singh. The first was her diwan, or finance minister and the second the landlord of Katili, who commanded her soldiers. Both of them were Bundela Rajputs of Jhansi and Powerful landlords in their own right. They were instrumental in inducting as many as 500 mounted Bundela soldiers into the Rani's army. It is unknown

when and how these two men joined Lakshmi Bai's close circle of trusted and faithful men but they proved fiercely loyal and passionately devoted to their queen. They were one of the reasons why the Bundelas in Jhansi and Lalitpur in the south supported Lakshmi Bai.⁴⁰ Robert Hamilton had left for England before the outbreak and was replaced for the time being by Lieutenant Colonel H.M. Durand as the officiating agent. His observation in October 1857, that Jhansi and the surrounding areas, the original source of great evil, were in the blazing state of insurrection,⁴¹ was therefore not unexpected. From Indore, the situation appeared quite desperate. Durand feared that if matters were not corrected soon, the region in the south, more or less peaceful, would be threatened by a similar blaze. The Rani of Jhansi, though professedly ruling Jhansi on behalf of the British government, was for all practical purposes acting on her own. She was still under a cloud over the killings in Jhansi. On the other hand her dispute with her neighbors confirmed British suspicion that she was trying to strengthen her rule and that the uprising had fortuitously given her the opportunity that she had been negotiating so hard with the British for - the right to rule over her husband's kingdom. Her regular contact with Mardan Singh did her no good in the eyes of the British for, as we observed before, the Bundela Raja was already a condemned man. The British deputy commissioner A.C. Gordon had no doubts that he was at the centre of the Thakurs' rebellion, playing a double game with the British while promising to protect their interests.⁴² Mardan Singh and Lakshmi Bai were in regular touch. When and how this connection was established between the Bundela chief and the Marathi Rani is hard to say. He visited Jhansi to settle her differences with the neighbouring Rajput state of Orchha. Even though both were ostensibly trying to restore peace and order in the hope of

returning the region to the British, the latter had stopped listening. Drowned in the mass of people celebrating the end of foreign rule, the Rani of Jhansi and the Raja of Banpur became, in British eyes, inseparable.⁴³ The town of Kalpi in Jalaun, overlooking the Yamuna, was emerging as the alternate centre of resistance from the time Tantia Tope moved there in October 1857. The chief of other states in Bundelkhand, except Jhansi, and leaders of the mutiny now began a resolute drive to mobilize support and galvanize defiance one last time in the south after Delhi and Kanpur were taken by British counter-insurgency forces. From the end of 1857, there began a frequent exchange of letters, notices and proclamations. They reached Jhansi, of course, and even though none were addressed to the Rani, they caused her some consternation, for the language used was very provocative.⁴⁴ The Nawab of Banda wrote to the rulers of the surrounding states of Shahgarh, Chattapur, Rewa, Bijaraghogarh and to Nana Sahib. His letter to the Raja of Shahgarh was fairly representative of the nature and purpose of letters exchanged: After expressing my desire to see and consult with you, which is so intense that the pen cannot describe, I have to state that after the destruction and flight of the infidels who were enemies to the religion and customs of everyone, in and from almost all the towns, the Emperor's rule has, by divine mercy, been established and several princess have declared themselves for the emperor, and fought memorably to protect their religion and destroy the enemy. Maharajah Sreemunt Nana Sahib Bahadoor began the praiseworthy act; and though evil tidings have lately been received, still the Sreemunt Sahib Bahadoor aforesaid has taken coverage and is reported to drive away the enemy.⁴⁵

In the same section of letters was his mail seeking help from the Nana Sahib: after paying my respects and obeisance, I beg to inform you, that some time ago I forwarded to you a

letter by the hands of the trustworthy and confidential Madho Rao Punth, informing you the state affairs here, and requesting you to send troops, Artillery, Ammunition and money, of which I have not been honoured with an answer, not with-standing the lapse of a long time. Now the real fact is that this Government was supported only by pension, which has now ceased and the District of Banda being in the centre surrounded on all sides by the territories of the Bundelas, troops and money are necessary to retain possession of it. But this government is in want of both. The Bundelas have accordingly surrounded the District and some have advanced with their troops to a short distance from this, I am unable to drive them away owing to want of means. If now, you send me assistance agreeably to my request, I can take possession of the pergunnahs of Band....which belongs from time immemorial to the family of peshwa (i.e. you)...⁴⁶

The purpose of these letters sent during December 1857 and January 1858 and the urgency with which they were composed were to persuade anyone unsympathetic to the cause. They were appeals and exhortations regarding the need for action to eliminate the enemy such as the infidel British rulers were. Religion offered a practical device for forgoing unity among different people against a common adversary. From January 1858, these letters became more urgent and more frequent as frenetic activities were afoot in the rebel camp with different leaders trying to coordinate their efforts. Tantia Tope regularly sent reports to Nana in Bithur, keeping the latter abreast of his plan of action. There was a small state in the district of Hamirpur called Chirkhari whose ruler remained staunchly in favour of the British government. Tantia decided to invade the fort of Chirkhari so that when British forces marched, the rebel army would not be distracted by a possible attack from the rear by an accomplice of the enemy. The justification for such actions was not

one of a struggle for power but safety of faith.⁴⁷ Circulars and proclamations urging those undecided to join used the strong, persuasive idiom of religion. It was a war fought to defend the faith of the Muslims and the Hindus that was being defiled by Christian rule:

God has provided you with bodies for the performance of his sacred rites; these are revealed to all by their religion and are stringently enjoined upon all. God has created you, oh Rajahs, for the destruction of the destroyers of your creed...⁴⁸ the circular goes on to list all the transgression that the English committed as 'preventers of all men's religion'. Missionary activities had deliberately defiled both Islam and Hinduism as had government measures against practices such as the forcible marriage of widows and abolition of the practice of Sati. The British had also prohibited adopted sons from inheriting thrones which are the stratagems by which the Europeans deprive us of our thrones and wealth. The latter thus urged that Hindus in the name of Ganga, Tulsi and Salikram, and Muslims by the name of God should:

Join us, in destroying the English for their mutual welfare. Let not this opportunity pass away. Know oh people! You will never have such another. Since letters are considered to be the half of a meeting it is hoped that the contents of this letter may be considered and replied to.⁴⁹ The Rani Lakshmi chose to ignore the gathering storm and instead concentrated on giving her people confidence and a sense of normalcy and routine. In keeping with royal traditions, she celebrated her army's victory in Mau Ranipur by firing a five gun salute in the city. But the battle, which was little more than a skirmish, was not enough to obscure the imminent danger. Some not so brave men packed their belongings and left with their family for the safer refuge of Gwalior, where the Scindia was an unwavering supporter of the British. Lakshmi Bai now tried hard to stop people from

being afraid, for widespread alarm was the last thing that the town could afford. Instead, she decided to divert the attention of her people by organizing the ‘Haldi-Kumkum’ ceremony. This was indeed a masterstroke in political tactics. For the ordinary residents, the times seemed to be normal, with the Rani in charge. Haldi-Kumkum, or ‘turmeric-vermilion’, was an annual ritual that all married Marathi women followed in spring. Lakshmi Bai decided to organize the ceremony in the royal palace inside the fort rather lavishly.⁵⁰ In this occasion married women from all castes and communities were invited to the fort. Hundreds of women came for offering. One hundred women were engaged to distribute turmeric, vermilion powder, flowers, sandal wood paste, sweets, and in small silver bowls, soaked gram, betel leaves and nuts, all symbolic of good fortune to women and long lives to their husbands. Huge quantities of flowers and sweets were given away and women dressed in their finery forgot they were living in uncertain times. The rich flaunted their expensive palanquins while the humble came to admire them. In the royal court, a tall throne measuring as high as the ceiling was built to install the image of ‘Gauri’, the goddess of beauty, as her loving subjects called her. Steps leading to her throne were filled with gifts and the best samples of Jhansi’s arts and crafts. It was a huge public spectacle staged for the political intent of assuring people that things were fine, and just as they should be. Festivities over, the Rani returned to her responsibility, which now was to keep vigilant. Villagers were asked to light a fire to indicate the route that the British army was taking. Lowe described what it looked like, “a mile or two ahead of our force, on an elevated piece of ground. A bright beacon was blazing out and then some seven or eight hundred yards in advance of another of this another burst up in flames, and as the column marched on and on, another and another bright fire shone out of the dark

masses of Jungle on the different hills, first on our right, then on our left, until the rendered them useless. The tension on both sides was palpable.”⁵¹ The iconography of Hindu goddesses undergirds people’s diverse perceptions of the Rani: the adoring local populaces see her as ‘an incarnation of the glorious Uma’. While her fleeing enemies, when she enters Gwalior after defeating Sindhia in Battle, attribute her power to the “Sinister Durga, under whose protection... she was preserved from death”. It is said that she was “great in their eyes to be a terrible, awe inspiring figure”. Thus interestingly enough, the figuration of the rani in this novel feeds into what may be called an “Indian Nationalist” paradigm of patriotism and anti-colonial struggle. Indeed, at the end, when the Rani lies mortally wounded in her tent, her dying words express a “passionate love for her country, as she bids farewell in a patriotic outburst, o India, she cried... farewell”, prophesying a future of liberation from colonial domination: ‘A day will come when their law shall be no longer obeyed, and our temples and palaces rise a new from their ruins.’ By figuring the rani as voicing patriotic sentiments for ‘India’, rather than love for Jhansi alone. (“Mein Jhansi nahi Doongi”), the text projects her as an embodiment of patriotism.⁵² As she comes to be inscribed as an icon of anti-colonial resistance, the narrative does seem to gesture at a conceptualization of the “Mutiny” as the “First War of Independence”.⁵³ The rani’s death itself is mystic and spiritual, rather in keeping with European chivalric traditions of the west; mortally wounded, she is laid, at her request, to die quietly alone in her tent with request that “no foreign eye doth gaze upon my body after I am dead;” In a little, a wail of lamentation rose across the intervening space between the camps of the two armies. The foreign soldiers asked its meaning to one another. The answer might have been that the spirit of the heroic Laxmi

Bai had been gathered to the protecting arms of Parameswars the merciful, the just, the all supreme God, alike of the Hindu, the Mohammedan and the Christian. Michael White's strikingly unconventional novel 'Lachmi Bai' breaks free from the stereotypes of cruelty, treachery and sensuality usually associated with the rani in colonial "Mutiny" novel. Instead, it goes even beyond Taylor's sympathetic scripting of the Rani as a deeply wronged person and presents her in an idealized manner. As its title suggests, it attempts to situate Lakshmi Bai in the mould of Joan of Arc, who was associated with driving out the English from her land and the suggestion is that the chaste Rani will similarly drive out the English occupiers of her beloved country. Moreover, it gives greater multilayered depth to the trope of the heroic Virangana that Taylor had used 30 years ago. It enriches the concept of the fearless "Women warrior" by intermeshing various strands drawn from European and Indian traditions of the courageous female fighter who resists evil and oppression. In this section the image of the rani of Jhansi was etched diversely in colonial literary discourse in the 19th century. Numerous colonial "Mutiny" novels that appeared in the 30 years period stretching from the 1870s-1900 inscribed the historical figure of the rebel queen variously. Some novels on Rani of Jhansi represented Lakshmi Bai within colonial race, class and gender stereotypes. They figured her as cruel and licentious and circulated colonial stereotypes about the 'Mutiny' in order to disseminate colonial knowledge about the events of 1857 as well as the Rani's role in it. However there were two unusual novels which were written right at the beginning and the end of this period which presented her with sympathy and admiration. Both of these texts, Philip Meadows Taylor's famous novel 'Seeta' (1872) and the lesser – known 'Laxmi Bai, Rani of Jhansi' (1901) by Michael White, drew upon the paradigm of the virangana or warrior women,

and indeed, the latter novel which appeared at the turn of the century went further and projected her as a patriotic and fearless freedom fighter in a manner that fed into Indian nationalistic iconography.⁵⁴ Take Rabindranath Tagore's great novel *Gora*, serialized first in the Bengali magazine *prabasi* between the years 1907 and 1909. The novel is set in Calcutta in the 1880s. Gora, the central character of the novel, is a child brought up by Hindu-Bengali foster – parents. In his 20s, he becomes a convert to the stridently Hindu nationalism that was sweeping across Bengal at the time. It is only towards the end of the novel, faced with a dying father who tells Gora that he has no right to perform “Sradhha” should the father die, that he discovers suddenly his biological identity: he was not born a Hindu. He was born of Irish parents during the tumultuous events of 1857. Krishnadayal, his foster – father says to him: “It was during the Mutiny. We were in Etawa then your mother fled from the sipahis and sought refuge one night in our house, your father was killed in the previous day's fighting. He was an Irishman. That very night your mother died after giving birth to you. Even since then you have been brought up in our house.” Krishna Dayal offered to tell Gora the name of his biological father: “His name was -”. Gora stopped him midway through the sentence: “His name is not necessary. I don't need to know his name.”⁵⁵ As is well known, it was on this deliberate refusal on Gora's part to know the lost object of his grief – on this void – that Tagore outlined the condition that made it possible for Gora to be both expansively and inclusively Indian. “Today” says Gora in the last chapter of novel, “I am Bharatiya, within me there is no conflict between communities, whether Hindu or Muslim or khristan. Today all the castes of Bharat are my caste, whatever everybody eats is my food”. And he continues in this vein. “I have taken birth this morning, with an utterly naked consciousness, in my own

Bharatvarsha....Teach me the mantra of that deity who belongs to all – Hindu, Musalman, Khrishtan, Brahma – the doors of whose temple are never closed to any person- the deity not only of Hindus but of Bharatvarsha’’.⁵⁶ It was as if only by making the grief of the Irish family (including his own) unavailable to any order of signs that Gora could bring his identity as Indian within the sphere of representation. For the Indian rebels there is not even this much detail, about the complexities of familial grief and the process of remembering / forgetting that challenge became representation.⁵⁷ Eric Stokes commented on the heat of reactions even in the late 20th century to the rebellion of 1857-58. He referred to the notorious scene of the massacre in Kanpur, the well down which victims were stuffed, and the site of a memorial from which Indians other than Christians were barred until independence. It was then replaced by a bronze effigy of Nana Sahib's general, Tatya Tope. This singularly tasteless and vicious reprisal was curious evidence of the power of symbols, according to Stokes. The memory of Europeans dead was desecrated while more numerous Indian victims of British atrocities went without memorial. For both India and Pakistan, Stokes argued, the rebellion had become the formative violence of their national history; the proof that colonialism had been withstood even unto blood.⁵⁸ The revolt is still so prominent in the popular imagination in India today as it was in Britain in the later 19th Century. The key aspect is that it is regarded not just as mutiny in the Indian army and an uprising in regions of India but as an Indian revolt against the British. The rebellion was thus a crucial stage and expression of two nations in making. States built from sentiment and loyalty as well as from self interest and force. In this section technological and material changes are equally important to the creation of nations. The Indian uprising mattered much more if the

British had been thrown out of India. Its material consequences were minor by comparison with its impact on the mind.⁵⁹ H.G. Keene⁶⁰ did recognize the important sentiment, as well as the immediate loss of life, the interruption of business, and the financial burden; he considered there were major long-term costs from the suspension of all good feeling between the European community and the native population.⁶¹ Many contemporary officials blamed disaffected Muslims; and later that friend of Pakistan, Ian Stephen (among other) attributed a decline in Muslim fortunes to their consequent victimization by the British.⁶² Saiyed Ahmad Khan made his initial reputation among the British by rebutting this supposed Islamic perfidy, while echoing those who blamed British incompetence. On the other hand, another contemporary official, Charles Metcalfe, thought Muslims too clumsy to plot whereas Hindus had a 'genius for conspiracy'⁶³. Muslim responsibility had been assumed from their alleged violence and fanaticism while Hindus were thought passive and Metcalfe's view as they faced Hindu protesters and revolutionaries, and sought to make allies of the Muslims. Even in the 1920s, Al cart hill (the pseudonym of BC Kennedy, ICS) was convinced there had been a Hindu revolt in 1857, fomented out of the brahminical supremacy that had arisen among the Marathas and that later would inspire those Hindu nationalists who reacted against western rule and knowledge, by Cart hill. According to Kennedy's account, the rebellion was an early part of "a secular war with the west" that would eventually grip both Hindus and Muslims.⁶⁴ In such colonial histories we find the familiar tropes of contented and ignorant dupes led astray by cynics or fanatics, and of secret combinations among opponents unknown to the British. They were not devised in 1857, and are arguably inherent in the attitudes of all governments. But certainly the many accounts of mutiny

and revolt gave them credence and publicity. Elements were repeated many times in a wide range of different situations during colonial rule. They were applied, we may note, particularly to religions as units of political analysis and fitted neatly with stereotypes about Indian religiosity. Rice Holmes thought he 'ought to reserve his detailed narrative for events of historical importance'. The choices he made are plain to see. His much reprinted book, first published in 1883, was called in full a History of the Indian Mutiny and of the disturbances which accompanied it among the civil population.⁶⁵ Late 19th century British accounts it was no longer acceptable to think that under interference by Dalhousie and Canning had stirred up feelings and caused a popular rebellion. V.D. Savarkar famously dubbed character of the revolt of India's first war of Independence; later his followers appropriated it for an Indian history. Savarkar justified violent resistance, noted Hindu- Muslim cooperation in 1857, and rejected Muslim domination⁶⁶. S.N. Sen found that there had been a spontaneous revolt from all sections of the people. He admitted that law breakers were not necessarily patriots. He studied the multiplicity of actions and motives that combined in the rebellion. He agreed and that 'the conception of Indian nationality was yet in embryo' and there was "no conception of Individual liberty" either. However, sen asserted, there was nonetheless a 'main movement' that was a popular revolt of a national character.⁶⁷ By contrast, Michael Mann's stimulating study identified major economic, social and ecological damage in north India even, from the early years after British annexation, and an agricultural transformation carried on by cultivators who had to exploit the land beyond its natural capacity.⁶⁸ The real problem, however, is not in showing economic or other general motives for the rebellion. It is that people who feel aggrieved have a choice of how to act. There may be passivity,

avoidance, individual or group protest, political organization, or insurrection. Common actions require not only a common purpose but generalisable means and understandings. The vivid diary of Munshi Jeevan Lal, who was so terrified at the Mutiny of the army that “his heart almost ceased to beat”, supports the accidental and extempore character of the revolt in Delhi.⁶⁹ Markovits uses the cliché of the prairie fire to describe the spread of the revolt. But a veritable cult, he asserts, has grown up around two now-legendary figures, the unassailable Tantya Tope and Lakshmibai, Rani of Jhansi.⁷⁰ There is still a reluctance to think through the implications of Stokes’ work. No serious historian believes the myth of unity among all Indians or even all Hindus that legitimised, in advanced, the struggles for independence. But Stokes’ findings sit uneasily with popular and much scholarly understanding. Sen’s “main movement” expressing generic interests, even though there may well have been common grievances. But it is being described as a general movement every time we talk of Indian and the British, or Hindus and Muslims. The stereotypes in the picture of 1857 were of two large opponents, Europeans and Indians, and of two components within India: Muslims and Hindus. We know that both are misleading. But both remain fundamental to almost all studies of the rebellion, and certainly are taken to be axiomatic in all popular accounts, both in India and in Britain. In these sections Hindus and Muslims operated as fully unitary categories in 1857.⁷¹ But even without the detailed evidence of the nature of local revolts that has now accumulated, it seems wrongheaded to regard the rebellion as a wide spread reaction against the British because they were foreign. Rule by outsiders (or people of different kind) was the norm rather than the exception in India, and had been for many hundreds of years. For the rebellion to have been a reaction against “foreign” rule, the two sides would have needed to be

“Indian” and British or Hindu/Muslim and European. Ethnicity has to be at the heart of any so-called ‘Indian’ revolt against British rule. There were two models of modern nationhood presented to India during colonial rule. They are not usually separated, though they (Indians or rebels) have been implicitly by scholars of international law, for example by James Crawford in a volume discussing the extension of the concept of rights. He advanced a thoroughly intermingled definition of the state as the social fact of a territorial community of persons with a certain political organization. But he then went on drawing on Sieghart’s definitions, to distinguish between rights relating to sovereignty and rights relating to the continuity of groups.⁷² Similarly the first concept of the state that identity is based around territory. It was reinforced by claims to sovereignty through regulation and policy, and by notions of national interest and state responsibility.⁷³ It produced citizens of the land and the law. It was potentially multicultural. Heterogeneity of class and culture was immaterial to this nationalism because of the common place of birth, the common allegiance to a state, the common subjection to the rules, and the common involvement in national project. This nationality was constructed from actions, jurisdictions and benefits defined within bounded space. As Sugata Bose put it, modern colonial empires drew heavily from the model of European nation states in their centralized structures and unitary ideologies of Sovereignty and they bequeathed these to post colonial nation states.⁷⁴ The second model of nation hood depended on ethnicity and culture. It became important in the history of modern states, especially for its rhetorical force. Here were citizens by type, or the nation as community. It was effectively monoculture. A fundamental homogeneity had to be imagined, regardless of class or other conflicting interests, though of course within perceivable limits and affinities. One

touch stone was the degree of constitutional prominence given to the idea of representation. The emergence of people's war allowed the women in India to come out of purdah in order to direct public affairs. The participation of women in warfare in India before 1857 was very limited. The Nizam of Hyderabad had two battalions of female sepoy of 1,000 each. In 1795 they took part in the battle of Khardah against Marathas. In 1857, the most famous female warlord to emerge on the Indian side was Wajid Ali's beautiful Begum Hazrat Mahal. Hazrat Mahal, originally a dancing girl named Iftikhar-un-nisa hailed from poor family. In 1856, when Wajid Ali Shah was deposed by the British and left Lucknow for Kolkata, she remained in Awadh. The Begum's ambition was to make Awadh independent of the British and to place her son Bajris Qadr on the throne. In August 1857, 12 years old Bajris Qadr was crowned and his mother emerged as the real power behind the throne. She got her son's enthronement legitimised by the rebel government in Delhi. She symbolised the spirit of resistance in Awadh. In Awadh the chief centre of rebellion was Lucknow, where the rebels under the leadership of Begum went on a strategic defensive. Hazrat Mahal used to hold durbar where she provoked the chieftains and the soldiers to fight the British with vigour. However, during the 1857 Uprising very few women actually took position on the firing line. The women played very important role in strengthening morale, sustaining the home front and in vital non combat jobs associated with army's i.e., providing food, munitions and other logistical back up.⁷⁵ In people's war most participants risk their lives not for tangible incentives but for ideological reasons. The confederate and the union soldiers were inspired by the ideas of liberty and republicanism. Many confederate soldiers were willing to die for the idea of self government. James M. McPherson in his study of the

combat motivation of the American civil war soldiers asserts that patriotism was the last refuge of genuinely committed soldiers especially when the going became tough. Along with the secular ideology of nationalism, religion played an important role in egging the participants to participate in the “firing line”⁷⁶. C.A. Bayly writes that at least in some portions of India, the rebellion assumed the proportions of a patriotic revolt.⁷⁷ In mid 19th century India, a complex compound between religion, caste and racial feelings gave rise to anti-foreign (white men) nationalism among large chunks of Hindus and Muslims in north India. The rebels to great extent relied on mobilising the Indians on the issue of religion. The civilian bureaucrat George Clerk was quite right in asserting before the Peel Commission (which was set up in 1859 to ascertain causes behind the 1857 uprising) that religious fanaticism played an important role in the 1857 rebellion.⁷⁸ The rebels did not fight merely professional pride or the lure of monetary gains. Those who joined the side of the rebels had an ideology to fight or die for the unity against British rule. The use of religion as a motivating ideology was spontaneous among the common masses as well as rebel leaders. On June 6, 1857, a group of 50 sowars and 300 sepoys led by Bakshi Ali the jail darogha in Jhansi raised the cry of “deen ki Jai” (victory of religion).⁷⁹ When the 3rd cavalry entered Delhi, they shouted “Deen Deen”. And they were followed by an excited Muslim mob. The rebels used religion to legitimize their action within the wider Indian Society. And the Indian leaders used this card with, ruthlessness. The rani of Jhansi utilized the issue of religion for gaining recruits to her standard. The Rani used religious mendicants to fan the embers of religious hatred among the people.⁸⁰ Nana Sahib also played a religious card. Rumour being the principal subaltern means of communication played an important role in mobilisation of the insurgents. Rumour

evoked comradeship. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes that the mindset of the illiterate peasants is influenced by the phonocentrism of a tradition where ‘Sruti’ – that which is heard – has the greatest authority. Her observations are all the more applicable to the peasants of mid – 19th century India.⁸¹ The emergence of the people’s war also witnessed the rise of several civilian leaders among the Indians who were gathered and influenced the masses within the revolt’s lap. The best commander on the rebel side was Tantia Tope (real name Ramchandra Pandurang) a Brahmin aged 41 with pock marked face.⁸² The rebels were motivated by a ‘mix’ of religion and caste pride that constituted a short pre-modern nationalism. About women participation, if we compare Indian revolt of 1857 with American Civil War then we can find women both in the American civil war and in the mutiny played an important role. Comparative history is also a short parallel history. And parallel history like parallel lines never meet. So a lot of dissimilarities do exist and can be observed between the people’s war in the mid 19th century North America and in 1857-59 India. In American civil war the participation of the marginal group (i.e. blacks) was much more intense in North America during the civil war compared to the role played by the tribes and low castes in India during the 1857 uprising which changed the face of war and breaking the traditional socio-religious division created by the society, fighting shoulder to shoulder against common exploiter, and which was also done within socialistic way. The latter half of the 19th century was a period of social and religious awakening and the growth of a new spirit leading to socio – religious movement. These movements with regional differences were more or less identical in character, because the focus was on the socio-economic and religious uplift of the society and free from exploitation by British. This movement produced a multifarious intellectual expression of

the social and cultural transformations.⁸³ In majority of the cases religion was the basic guiding force.⁸⁴ In Haryana also, some movements sprang up among the Muslim and Hindu communities. Their main objects were the eradication of social evils, the education of the people and the revival of their old religion. In order to know the popular awakening in the different spheres, it would be pertinent to have a graphic account of the socio-religious against such common enemy. Marx had suggested in his article published in the New York Daily Tribune of 14 August 1857 that the rebelling sepoys were in reality acting as the “instruments of the Indian people’s” upsurge against British colonial rule.⁸⁵ According to him, by creating the 200,000 strong native army British rules had brought into existence the first general centre of resistance which the Indian people ever possessed.⁸⁶ In 1857, it was this center, comprising the peasants and artisans in uniform, that were apparently seeking to act, with all its ideological and organizational failures, as the vanguard of the spontaneous people’s uprising.⁸⁷ Marx’s own subsequent information as well as the detailed researches of the later writers have fully upheld these early insights into the character of the 1857 Revolt: that all the sections of the native army, including some of the exclusively Sikh corps were affected by the rebellious sentiments, that in many places the sepoy revolts were followed by the stirring into action of the artisans and other poor sections of the urban and rural populace,⁸⁸ that in the northern subdivisions of the Muzaffarnagar districts the rival khaps of the jats peasantry had come together, defying the English authority, under the leadership of a Mewati Muslim; that the Jat peasantry of the same district had also aligned itself with the petty Muslim gentry elements, then fighting last ditch battles against the advancing English troops,⁸⁹ that the Zamindars and other landowning groups in Awadh as well as in other parts of the then

North-Western provinces and central India, at least initially, not only looked with approval at the rebellious acts of the sepoys, but, in many cases actually participated in the rebellion;⁹⁰ that the so-called wahabis armed with a consistent anti British ideology and also having at their disposal a network of organized centers spread all over northern India, were in the forefront of the struggle in all main centers of the Revolt,⁹¹ are now well known and almost universally recognized as the general features of 1857 rebellion that testify to its character as a national or people's uprising spearheaded by the sepoys. If the sepoy mutiny formed the backbone of the 1857 Revolt, it is equally certain that it would not have acquired the dimensions it did, had the revolt not immediately touched a sympathetic chord in the heart of large sections of the civil population of the large tract from Haryana to Bihar from whose villages the sepoys came. The Mutiny took on the complexion, over large areas of an agrarian revolt. The participation of the city's poor as auxiliaries in the Revolt was quite a noticeable feature at many places. At Delhi, weavers, artisans and other wage earners' joined the sepoys under the rebel commander Bakht Khan.⁹² In the detailed memoir that Syed Ahmed Khan wrote on the events of the Revolt in the district of Bijnor, he noted scornfully that the professional sepoys and soldiers under the local rebel leader Mahmud Khan, were reinforced by cotton-carders and weavers who had never held any sword, except yarn.⁹³ The terminology continues to change in accordance with the new spirit as the days pass: the Rebel Army becomes the Sipah – I – Hindostan (the Army of India) and there are appeals to fellow countrymen (ahl-i-wantan), 'dear compatriots'(aziz-ham-watan), with specific exhortations for a united rallying of Hindus and Muslims. The English being Christians and so believing in the trinity of God are held to be polytheists and infidels (kafir), while the Hindus being

believers in 'Adi purush' share the basic belief in one God with Muslims and so closed to them.⁹⁴ In view of this close proximity in belief, both Hindus and Muslims are called upon to unite and fight and destroy the Christian English.⁹⁵ There is very little help from the official sources in trying to reconstruct the various constituents of popular culture notions of 'dharma' and life the systems of symbolism and ritual significance active within polity and society and arrived at by different groups of rebels all of which are essential to truly be able to grasp and understand the modalities and idioms of popular grievances and actions in 1857 with the causal and characteristics inter-relations and spatial variations. It is here that the importance of sources of oral and popular history like folk songs, folk tales etc., as a primary source for reconstructing the history of 1857 from the point of view of a common rebel acquires relevance. Though historians have made use of the proclamations and letters of rebel leaders of note to comment on the particulars of the ideological inclinations, aims and interests of the Rajas and chieftains, for a deeper insight into the ideological predilections, mental makeup and the arena of realities of the common rebels during 1857. For the rebels, destruction had its own joy. It signified triumph, liberation from perpetual exploitation and oppression under the colonialist institutions.⁹⁶ In fact folklore has a valuable advantage in that it denotes the voice of feelings of a community rather than the individual. Even if they are seen as hailing the glories of an individual leader; the semiology and the choice of words and their presentation often provide us with a significant insight into the mental domain of the community, its normative structure, its systems of deference to tradition or resistance to forces of change and the trajectories through which such attitudes moved during 1857-59 in different areas. In some folk songs the reasons given for Kunwar Singh's rebellion

indicate less of his actual motivations than the fact that people created images of Kunwar Singh based on their own miseries and hopes. *Kailas des par julum jor firangia/julum kahani suni tadpe kunwar singh/ Ban ke lutera utral fauj firangia/sahar gaon looti phunki, dihlas firangia/sunsun kunwar ke hirday legal agia.* (The firangi forcibly oppressed the country and Kunwar Singh was deeply moved when he heard the tales of their atrocities. The firangi army arrived to loot and it looted and burnt cities and villages. When he came to know of all this, Kunwar Singh was enraged.⁹⁷ It is true that the impact of British policies in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the changes affecting various sections of the population provide us with a proper perspective to study 1857. In this perspective people visualized the revolt in terms of their grievances, expectations, desires and hopes.

Needless to say, different sets of people had different aspirations from the revolt, and they reacted to it in various ways. Again the same issue could be interpreted differently by different sets of people depending on social outlook, political inclinations, region specific situations or cultural traditions and they fought against common enemy. The rebel figure Kunwar Singh here is a symbol of these proud warriors fighting to redeem the infringement of their honour. For the people, Kunwar Singh is not a remote ruler on the throne, he is a community leader attached to the commoners through ties of blood and kinship.⁹⁸ In popular perception, Kunwar Singh seemed to be fighting less for his personal jagirdari privileges and much more to keep safe our pride and our plenty/our religion, our cows! /oh Babua, to protect the rent free lands of our father and grandfather.⁹⁹ The song shows that the narrow definition of Kunwar Singh as a defender of Hinduism in Bihar is not an adequate description. Dharma in popular understanding

stood for a whole range of political and social values that their hero sought to defend. The notion of Dharma, honour and prosperity intermingled with each other in popular consciousness. This political articulation derives its legitimacy from a cultural code where traditions and customs of the past are venerated, and where changes brought about by the British are resented as they tarnish these tradition which are symbolized by the 'fair names of our father and grandfathers'. Thus it is not only material deprivation, but politics of a particular kind-rooted in cultural traditions and articulated through cultural symbols-that insighted and signified the broad sweep of rebellion in Shahabad. In fact, a comparison of the folk songs of the Awadh heartland with those of Shahabad reveals that while in the case of Awadh such concerns as outlined above, though present, were often over determined and overshadowed by images of pathos for the Nawab and his lost splendour and kingly opulence, in the case of Shahabad community concerns occupied a privileged place. It is for this reason that Shahabad and the adjoining Bhojpuri belt provides us with perhaps the best region to study popular mentalities during 1857. A popular Bhojpuri folktale, in fact goes to the extent of giving the credit, for the taking up of arms by Kunwar Singh, to a call by the people as well as masses of the region. Popular memory in the Bhojpuri region recalls one Bunsuria Baba as having been the 'guru' and advisor of Kunwar Singh.¹⁰⁰ The fact that traces and images of the Revolt of 1857 are still imprinted in the various folk cultures suggests that it was a popular mass struggle. Its memories were transformed into a stream of folk tradition and popular values which are, even today, very much a part of village culture. The peasants of the regions where the Revolt spread were so deeply and actively involved in it that it became a part of their collective memory. D.D. Kosambi, in his quest for social and historical truths, made

meaningful attempts to analyse popular forms of the cultural behaviour of peoples.¹⁰¹ In Indian society studying folk culture is crucial to understanding peasant society because the everyday life of peasants is reflected in their folk culture. On the other hand folk culture itself influences the consciousness of the peasantry. Popular folk culture perceived the Ghadar of 1857 as an attempt of the people to free their mulk from the rule of the hated English (firangis). The popular perception of people towards the colonizers as Firangis, connotes certain characteristics and features. Firangis were perceived by the people as those who were fair skinned (gora) and looters, and exploiters of the country (mulk) and those who corrupted their religion and caste. The folk perception of 1857 was that it was an attempt towards the liberation of their mulk from the oppressive rule of the Firangis. A Bhojpuri folk song is cited here which conveys the collective feelings of the people.

“Ab chhod re firangiya hamar deswa/ lutpat kaile tuhun, majwa udaile/ Kailas des per julion jor/sahar gaon luti, phunki, dihiat firangiya,/suni suni kunwar ke hridaya me lagal agiya/Ab chhod re firangiya Hamar deswa”(British, now quit our country, for you lost us enjoy the luxuries of our countrymen(in return). You have looted and burnt the hamlets our cities and villages. Kunwars heart burns to know all this. O British! Now quit our country).¹⁰²

Popular culture has perceived the revolt as an expression of self sacrifice by the rebels. This self-sacrifice is reflected in the form as well as content of folk cultures. Folk lore or folk song actively invites the people to participate in the struggle against the British. The folk song or culture also worked as a medium of communication. The folk songs of patia tried to motivate people to join the rebels, asking them to make the sacrifice of their lives.

This call has been put forward in the patia form and subsequently used by masses during various popular mobilizations.¹⁰³ Some lines of a patia form, and the ghadar of 1857 are as follows: *Bajan ganwai ke nevtā/ churl forwai ke nevtā/sindoor pochhwai ke nevtā/jei ho hamar to nath del/jei ho hamar te sath del!* This patia inviting people to sacrifice for their mulk and exhorting women to be prepared to break their bangles and to remove vermilion from their forehead represents the popular mentality of people and presents a model of peasant consciousness. Thus in folk culture, the revolt of 1857 does not appear as a struggle confined to a caste, religion or specific class. In popular perception it was a war of liberation from foreign oppression and humiliation. Communal and caste harmony is very much evident in such folklore. The folk consciousness contains much hatred against the exploiter. In the context of 1857, people were organized, committed and involved in conscious mass mobilization. The continuum of folk consciousness assimilates cultural and historical memories within it to make these memories within the cultural traditions of people through popular practice come alive. People keep alive only those memories that still have relevance for their lives. The contemporaneity of the past provides reference points for the recurrence of the concerned memory. Many values are reflected by these popular traditions and people relate themselves to these values. In fact the values that emerged from 1857 provide the relevance of the event in contemporary life. Through these popular practices and traditions the memory of the unfinished agenda of this struggle remained imprinted in the psyche of people as well as common masses. The narratives, the memories and the values of 1857, have thus become a part of folk tradition, which remain alive and are practices even today.¹⁰⁴ The entire discussion on resistance in 1857 indicates that during the revolt of 1857 resistance

actually took a social form and for that reason it is apt to declare the resistance during the revolt of 1857 as popular resistance. The most noticeable point is that peasant and adibasi and general masses resistance to the colonial rule originated not from within a separate domain of the peasants and adibasi. They fought together within one revolt's lap. The revolt of 1857 demonstrates a massive and willing participation of the peasants and adibasis on the basis of their own initiative.

REFERENCES

- 1) Letter from Railway Engineer Boyle, Danapur to Turnbull, 30/31 March 1858, in, Kalikinkar Dutta, State of Shahabad, March to August 1858, in Bengal past and present, Vol.LXXVI, No.142, 1957.
- 2) Chakraborty, Kaushik, “*Decolonising the Revolt of 1857 (colonial order, Rebel order, Rebel vision and the Shakespearean Weltans Chauung of the Bengali Babus)*, Reader Service, Kolkata, 2007, pp.32-48.
- 3) Pati ,Biswamoy, (ed.), “*The 1857 Rebellion,*” OUP, New Delhi, 2007, P.53.
- 4) *Ibid.*, p.54.
- 5) Cooper, F, *The crisis in the Punjab* (1858), London, p.139.
- 6) The Englishman, 17 November, 1857.
- 7) *Ibid.*
- 8) CRO, *Secret Letters*, vol.163, p.434.
- 9) Dodd, G, *The History of the Indian Revolt* (known as Chamebr’s History, London, 1859), p.427.
- 10) Robertson., H.D, *District Duties during the revoltin the North West provinces of India*, (1859), p.190, Thornihil, *The personal Adventures*, London, 1859, p.333.
- 11) Pati, *op. cit.*, p.55.

- 12) *Ibid.*
- 13) Chick, N.A, *The annals of the Indian Rebellion (1860)*, Calcutta, 1859, p.159; Narratvie of occurrences by Chunilal, the newswriter, Kaye, *History of the Sepoy War*.ii, London, 1880, pp.99-100.
- 14) Wilberforce, R.C, *An Unrecorded chapter of the Indian Mutiny*, London, 1894, pp.42-43.
- 15) Pati, *op. cit.*, P.56.
- 16) Sessional papers of the house of Lords, Vol. xi, 1857-58, pp.4-6.
- 17) Kaye, J.W, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, ii, London, 1864, p.264.
- 18) Malleson, G.B., *History of the Indian Mutiny 1857-58*, London, 1896, Vol. I, p.191.
- 19) Pati, *op. cit.*, p.65.
- 20) Ludlow, J.M., *A pamphlet on the war in Oudh*, London, 1860, p.50.
- 21) Kaye, *op. cit.*, iii, p.286.
- 22) *Ibid.*, pp.250-1.
- 23) Pati, *op. cit.*, p.65-66.
- 24) Kaye, *op. cit.*, ii, p.260.
- 25) Pati, *op. cit.*, p.66.

- 26) *Ibid.*
- 27) *Ibid.*, p.68.
- 28) *Ibid.*
- 29) *Ibid.*, p.69.
- 30) Forrest, G.W, Selection from the letters Despatches and other state papers preserved in the military department of the Government of India, 1857-58, ii, p.377.
- 31) Further papers Relative to the Mutinies in the East Indies presented to both Houses of parliament by command of her Majesty, iv, p.140; Fort Agra, 22nd July, 1857.
- 32) Civil English Administrator of Patna.
- 33) Pati, *op. cit.*, p.70.
- 34) Further papers, ix, p. 852.
- 35) Forrest, *Selections*, ii, p.150.
- 36) Pati, *op. cit.*, p.71.
- 37) *Ibid.*
- 38) Pinkney, J.W, *Narrative of Events Attending the Outbreak of disturbances and the Restoration of Authority in the District of Jhansi*, p. 513, Para.37.

- 39) Roy, Tapti, *Raj of the Rani*, New Delhi, Penguin Books, 2006, p.111.
- 40) *Ibid.*, p.115.
- 41) Durand, Lt. Col. H.M, Officiating Agent Governor General for Central India to G.F. Edmonstone, Esq, Secy. to the Govt. of India, Foreign Department, Secret Proceedings, 18th December, 1857, No.453.
- 42) From Gordon to Erskin, 17th Sep. 1857, Foreign Secret Consultations, 18th December, 1857, no.237.
- 43) Roy, *op. cit.*, p.127.
- 44) *Ibid.*, p.133.
- 45) From F.O. Mayne, Magistrate of Banda C.B. Thornhill, offg. Commr., 4th Division Banda, 4th August, 1858. Foreign Department Political Consultations, 8th October, 1858, No.13.
- 46) *Ibid.*
- 47) Roy, *op. cit.*, p.135.
- 48) *Ibid.*, p.136.
- 49) Rizvi, S.A.A, and Bhargava, M.L, (ed.), *Freedon Struggle in Uttar Pradesh*, Vol.III, New Delhi, 2011, pp.225-227.
- 50) Roy, *op. cit.*, p.145.

- 51) *Ibid.*,p. 146.
- 52) 1857, Essay from EPW, Hyderabad, 2008, p.272.
- 53) The concept of the '*First war of Independence*' was first mentioned by VD Savarkar in his anonymously authored *The Indian war of Independence of 1857*.
- 54) EPW, Vol.42, issue no.19, may 12, 2007
- 55) Tagore, Rabindranath, *Gora*, translated by sujit Mukherjee, Sahitya Academy, Delhi,2001, p.471
- 56) *Ibid.*, pp.475-76.
- 57) *Ibid.*
- 58) Stokes Eric, *The peasant Armed. The Indian Rebellion of 1857*, Bayly C.A, (ed.), Oxford, 1986, pp.2-4.
- 59) *1857, op. cit.*, p.60.
- 60) Keene, H.G, (Henry George keene, C.I.E, went out to the north western provinces in the East India Company's service in 1847,when the mutiny broke out 10 years later he was superintended).
- 61) Keene, H.G, *History of India from the Earliest Times to the present Day for the use of Students and Colleges*, Vol. I, London, 1893, See Chapter XX, p.277.
- 62) *EPW, op. cit.*, p.61.

- 63) CT Metcalfe, *two Native Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi*, Westminster, 1898; Delhi, 1974, p. 8.
- 64) *EPW*, *op. cit.*, p.61.
- 65) *Ibid.*, p.62.
- 66) *EPW*, *op. cit.*, p.61.
- 67) *EPW*, *op. cit.*, p.64.
- 68) Mann, Michael, *British Rule on India Soils North India in the First half of the Nineteenth Century*, tr. Benedict Baron, New Delhi, 1999.
- 69) Metcalfe, C.T, *Two Narratives of the Mutiny in Delhi*, Westminster, 1898; Delhi, 1974, p.76.
- 70) *EPW*, *op. cit.*, p.66.
- 71) *Ibid.*, pp.66-68.
- 72) *Ibid.*, p.71.
- 73) See Peter Robb; *Empire, identity, and India, Peasants, political economy and Law (Vol.2)*, New Delhi, 2006, Chapter.5.
- 74) *EPW*, *op. cit.*, p.71.
- 75) *Ibid.*, p.144.
- 76) *Ibid.*

- 77) Bayly, C.A, *Empire and information; Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, New Delhi, 1999, p.317.
- 78) Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the organization of the Indian Army; together with the minutes of Evidence and Appendix, 1859 (hereafter peel committee), cd.2515, NAI, p.38.
- 79) Roy, Tapti, *The politics of a popular uprising: Bundelkhand in 1857*, Delhi, 1994, p.30.
- 80) Forrest, George W, (ed.), *Selections from the letters, Despatches and other state papers preserved on the military Department of the government of India, Vol.4*, Supdt. Of Government Printing, Calcutta, 1912, p.3.
- 81) Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, “*Discussion Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography*” in Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies, Vol.4*, pp.351, 353-54.
- 82) FSUP, Vol.3, Appendix.7, P.701; Indumati Sheorey, Tatyia Tope, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1973, p.3.
- 83) Mittal, S.C, *Haryana: A Historical perspective*, New Delhi, 1986, p.62.
- 84) Narain, V.A., *Social, History of Modern India: Nineteenth Century*, Meerut, 1972, p.V:
- 85) Marx, Karl, “*The Indian Question*”, New York Daily Tribune, 28th July, 1857, reproduced in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The First Indian War of Independence*, Moscow 1975, p.48.

- 86) Marx, Karl, '*The Revolt in the Indian Army*', New York Daily Tribune, 15th July, 1857 reproduced in Marx and Engels, *The First Indian War of Independence*, pp.36-37.
- 87) Moosvi, Shrine, *Facets of the Great Revolts*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2008, p.51.
- 88) *Ibid.*
- 89) Stokes, Eric, *The Peasants Armed*, (ed.) Bayly, C.A, Oxford, 1986, pp.216-27.
- 90) For large scale participation of the Zaminders of Awadh, see Mukherjee, Rudrangshu, *Awadh in Revolt 1857-58*, Delhi, 1984. For a contemporary assessment, see also Letter from M.H. Court, Magistrate and Collector, Allahabad, to C. Chester, Commissioner Allahabad Division, dated 21st July, 1857; in Judicial File No.3, year 1858, Allahabad Collectorate, Mutiny records, State Archives of U.P, Allahabad; reproduced in S.A.A.R. *Freedom Struggle of Uttar Pradesh*, Vol. IV, p.558.
- 91) Ashraf, Cf. K.M, '*Ghalib and the Revolt of 1857*', in P.C. Joshi (ed.) *Rebellion 1857*, p.71.
- 92) Iqbal, Husain's biography of Bakht Khan in *we Fought Together for Freedom*, edited by Ravi Dayal, Delhi, 1995, p.18.
- 93) Mirza, Sharafat Husain, (ed.), *Sayyid Ahmad (Syed Ahmad Khan), Sarkashi-i-Zila-I Bijnor*, Delhi, 1964, p.178.

- 94) *Delhi Urdu Akhbar*, 14th June, 1857.
- 95) Moosvi, *op. cit.*, pp.21-22.
- 96) *Ibid.*, p.87.
- 97) Badrinarayan, *Lok Sanskriti men Rastrawad*, Delhi, 1996, p.94.
- 98) Moosvi, *op. cit.*, p.95-98.
- 99) Source of folk song in translated form from Joshi, P.C, "Folk Songs of 1857", in Joshi P.C, (ed.), *Rebellion 1857 – A symposium*, Delhi, 1957, p.280.
- 100) Badrinarayan, *op. cit.*, p.38.
- 101) Moosvi, *op. cit.*, p.78.
- 102) *Ibid.*
- 103) *Ibid.*
- 104) *Ibid.*, pp.78-81.

CHAPTER –V

THE IMPACT OF THE REVOLT OF 1857: AN ASSESSMENT

Socialism remains on the agenda of human struggle for a just and humane society. Only socialism can effectively challenge the capitalist rationality of poverty amid opulence, growth via natural destruction and the accompanying socially, morally and culturally retrograde denouements in society. Doing away with capitalisms market rationality, that governs its 'industries' of both work and leisure, socialism can put economic rationality at the service of individual and social autonomy, engaging the masses in socio-economic planning for sustainable economic development and meaningful life for all. Socialism alone has the possibility of achieving that integration of political with economic democracy, of centralized with decentralized socio-economic planning, of representative with participatory democratic structures. Socialism involves the processes which give us the mastery of social change and conservation that we need to acquire in the decades immediately ahead if we are to secure rather than lose forever the human future. Socialism alone can enable us, humans, to have the final say on the future of not only civilization proper but of the human species and indeed the planet which has become a matter of such vital concern today. Against capitalism which today cannot offer anything more for the future of humanity than a diminished life in a rapidly diminishing ecosphere, socialism holds the promise of life of rationally planned abundance with people at last gaining mastery over their lives and their world, of a more transparent and non-alienated life, which of necessity involves a reconciliation of human-kind with nature, something impossible for capitalism. Such has been the emancipatory socialist project since 1848. It remains on the agenda of human struggle today.¹ Socialists of course have no illusions

that the struggle for socialism is going to be easy or expeditiously successful. After the first failure it will be far more difficult in many ways than before, it is going to be a long detour to socialism next time. But they have no reason to feel gloomy about its prospects either. The material conditions are more favourable and objective compulsions far stronger than appeared possible a few years ago and the constituency for the socialist cause can only grow as capitalism shows itself increasingly incapable of coping with the crises it produces. Old bases of struggle among the classes and popular masses have not entirely disappeared.² There is a new ferment among the people, new protests and struggle everywhere in the North as well as the South. With grievances expressed, demands made, and rights affirmed against capitalism, there is a growing refusal to accept the future that capitalism offers. The importance of this refusal is not to be underestimated. It provides the basis for constructing a different future, for forgoing the socialist alternative to capitalism. Protest is progressive and speaks a language which is well in tune with socialist aspirations. This is particularly true in case of the more disadvantaged groups – women, dalits, tribals, repressed and discriminated against ethnic and other identities, etc. – now waking up to their oppressions, and of movements on such issues as women rights, racism, peace, human rights and environment. These protests and movements can hope for fulfillment only in a socialist social order. They are crying out to be articulated with the struggle for socialism. The truly global character of capitalism and its worldwide depredations and the world people's common interest in its overthrow do constitute a material foundation as it were for a new internationalism of struggle for socialism which could draw in a huge array of progressive political forces and social interest. It has in a way expressed itself and its socialist gains. The people's

experiment with different paths of struggle and alternate models of socialism can be found during the revolt, resulting in setbacks as well as victories. In this perspective, the notion that socialism is dead says more about those who voice that notion than about future prospects of socialism. For socialists who are serious in intent, not content to live in or cry over the past or be a sermonizing minority, the conditions exist. The build mass support and forge new alliances, to hopefully carry on or resume the struggle for socialism.³ This struggle, learning from the past, has to resolve any number of old and new problems. Even as it seeks the much-needed ideological clarity, it must reaffirm the ethical commitment of socialism. It has to challenge the established political traditions of elite conciliation and negotiations as well as cooperation of popular leaders. In a situation of deep dissatisfaction with the status-quo, with people drifting or being led into all kinds of anti people channels, it has to seek and provide positive alternatives. The alternatives involve a new and vigorous role for the organizations of the people, especially those of the most oppressed the worst victims of the local and global capitalism and colonial exploitation. There has to be recognition of their autonomy, of their specific concerns and demands, independent of or in complementarities with the party or parties. It has to be a struggle from below which pushes forward the diverse emancipator agendas of the people. Given the structural nature of the transformation that socialism represents, building class and mass organizations of the working people, but shunning their economist deformation, remains central to the politics of this ongoing or resumed struggle for socialism as they requisite class alliances.⁴ The revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth century have increased our collective knowledge about how to build movements for revolutionary transformation of society as also about how not to

build socialism. They have certainly indicated the potential for more successful future revolutions and building of socialism. Statism over emphasized the role of centralized political power, state ownership of the means of production, and abolition of the market by decree as a lever of socialist transformation, instead of laying the stress on self-government and intellectual-moral reform in the construction of a new hegemony. The western model could be extended worldwide, defining the social subjects and reducing them to the rank of mere allies. This whole complex of mentalities helped to produce degeneration in societies where a revolution was accomplished, but it has also hindered the western Left from uniting the Third World movements and from mobilizing the new social subjects that are emerging under advanced capitalism.⁵

This is necessary to face reality and rebuild the required politics and culture on the left. But it is equally necessary to be properly balanced about it. In other words, it also needs to be recognized that this past is not entirely a bitter heritage. Historical communism as it has been called, the outcome of October Revolution including the Soviet experiment, has extraordinary achievements to its credit. We have taken note of them in the foregoing pages. As with lessons, there is no need to recapitulate them either. Behind these achievements lie heroic sacrifices of generations of communists and the people led by them, and a wealth of revolutionary theory and practice, implicit in a long record of people mobilized, movements built, struggle waged, battles fought and won, revolutions made and entire societies transformed. The idea of socialism has caught on, especially with the poor and oppressed of the world that no failures can now efface. Beneath the socialist idea are a core of egalitarian values, the human right to creative, productive work; the right to accessible and dependable health care, the right to decent

housing; the right to public education; freedom from oppression based on race, gender or ethnicity; the elimination of great concentrations of wealth, power and privilege in the hands of a tiny minority; the democratic empowerment of those who historically have experienced the burden of exploitation and oppression. These values have now come to stay, not as something to be only cherished but as a distinct possibility in our times. The record of even advanced capitalism on all this only reinforces the belief that the socialist alternative continues to be both relevant and politically necessary.⁶ The enhanced possibility of moving towards socialism as Marx visualised it, to which democracy, it needs to be re-emphasised, is a central concern. Among other things they effectively challenged the sacredness of private property, common ownership of the means of production, despite bureaucratic usurpation in the Soviet Union, has come to be associated with values of solidarity. Revolutions have certainly left capitalism more vulnerable to be next wave of revolutions in India as well as the World. A genuinely public or common ownership of the means of production is an absolutely indispensable foundation for a social order radically different from capitalism. For this alone makes society-wide planning and conscious decisions about the overall use of resources possible. It may be added, public ownership is not synonymous with state ownership. It can and must assume many different forms, from socialist state's ownership of the commanding heights of the economy to municipal and co-operative ownership. Nor need public or social ownership. Even in its different forms, be all-encompassing. For socialism to have any future, the movement for it needs to make a critical assessment of its past, indeed not only after the October Revolution but also seventy years before it to know where it has come from, what it aims at, know not only the resources it lacks but

also the ones it has. Its self-accounting has to be a proper one which does not throw any baby out with the bathwater, but remaining careful of its basic principles critically appropriates its past or heritage for the tasks of the present. Making a mess of this past or heritage in any manner, apart from being poor politics, is an evasion of the responsibility, of the elementary care and sense of proportion which each generation of revolutionaries owes to the efforts of generations of revolutionaries before it. The specific character of capitalism or capitalist domination in a country and notwithstanding capitalism's remarkable resilience in surviving, which resilience we have noticed on more than one occasion earlier and which any serious struggle against capitalism must take note of. It was Marx's radical critique of the prevailing social order, of capitalism as a system structured by contradictions which are insoluble in its own terms, which led him to affirm that an entirely different social order, based on radically different foundations is not only desirable but possible. The socialist project depended not on the appeal of a theory but on the reality and power of contradictions, tendencies and possibilities that the theory correctly identified within capitalism, on Marx's analysis and prognosis of the inner logic of capital, which analysis and prognosis stands fully vindicated by the development of capitalism over four centuries. The critique of capitalism was indeed the starting point of Marxism and Socialism and is the point to which, quite properly, the socialist movement can and must now turn. The capitalist private property is specifically antisocial because of its exclusive pursuit of profit making and accumulation regardless of the consequences. If the main structural weakness of capitalism lies in its inability to ensure this as a smooth, uninterrupted process whose inability finds expression in periodic crises of profitability, if investment and of economic activity in general, its social or moral

weakness lies in the fact that its pursuit of profit and accumulation inevitably has disastrously damaging consequences for the vast majority of humankind. These consequences, the widely acknowledged economic, social, political, moral and ecological failing of the system must not be viewed as unfortunate deviations from its normal working, they are on the contrary an intrinsic outcome of the structural logic of capitalism. It is the attenuation of these damaging consequences by way of public intervention or regulation which must be taken as deviations from the essential dynamic of capitalism, as contrary to its spirit and purpose, which intervention or regulation capitalism has always opposed, evaded or sought to shake off at the first opportunity. It is important to note that the liberal or social democratic critiques of capitalism have typically tended to be piecemeal and specifically related to immediate problems, shortcomings and failings of the system. It is of course important to know how preciously the logic of late capitalism is at work in the advanced capitalist countries of the World, where mass unemployment, great inequalities in all spheres of life, material constraints of all kinds, moral and cultural disorientation, widespread sense of spiritual want, anomie and alienation are a reality for vast masses of people during colonial period to till today. But it is equally and in some ways perhaps more important to focus on Revolt of 1857. Set of interactions between the so-called first and third worlds where with the ongoing globalization and imposed structural adjustment, the basic relationship of exploitation backed where necessary with military power has assumed a still grosser form of the transfer of resources from the poorest people on earth to the richest. The situation within the third world countries are such that the collaborating native exploiting classes are content with their share of the loot, and the people-their countries increasingly locked

into the global capitalist system and helpless in the face of its logic-face the prospect of further impoverishment, mass deprivation and hunger. And all this when resources produced by social labour under capitalism itself are available that make possible decent livelihood and a life of dignity for all on this earth. The structural logic of capitalism is visible as never before and people's experience of capitalist exploitation and domination is only being accentuated by the current crisis of capitalism. With the crisis and the decline of revolutionary opposition, the prerogatives of capitalism are being reasserted with increasing cynicism, at the centre through restructuring of the economy union busting and dismantling of the welfare state, and in the periphery through globalization which, in collaboration with the local ruling classes, makes reinforced exploitation of the poor and oppressed of third world. This capitalist offensive is helping the common people as well as common masses everywhere to see more clearly the real face of capitalism. The loss of the old enemy is proving painful to the capitalist power-brokers and profiteers, the new enemies being discovered. Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism, the so-called rough state, etc. – are rather poor substitutes for it. With capitalism's new offensive against the working people undermining its legitimacy, and some of the ideological props gone, the abuses of the capitalist system are more difficult to make and those criticizing its irrationalities harder to silence. The discrepancy between the high rhetoric of capitalist apologetics – about freedom and democracy, fairness and equal opportunity, justice and common interest, development with a human face, prosperity for all, etc. – and the reality as it is daily experienced by the vast majority of people under capitalism stands more clearly revealed, threatening the fragile structures of bourgeois hegemony over society. And the way things are going it may not be long before people

come to recognize the ugly face of capitalism in the looming environmental crisis. All this surely provides a terrain increasingly favourable to renewal of argument and struggle for socialism. Capitalist societies everywhere are in deep economic and social crisis, crisis and contradictions of capitalism, its globalized depredations, are at the centre of popular concern and there is a renewed search for an alternative. Anti capitalist struggles have surfaced and any number of new movements have come up whose aspirations can be realized only in socialism. But evidence indicates that without an organized theory, and practice based on it, they will have surfaced and come up only to be frustrated and defeated, lending legitimacy to the claim that there is no alternative to the present order. To be successful, even for their limited aims and purposes, they need a theory which enables them to see the interconnections of their particular concerns with the social reality as a whole and provides them with a visible strategic alternative.⁷

Socialist society is far more difficult than it was ever visualized. Answers have to be found to any number of important questions involved in this construction, indeed in any transition to socialism, such as how to ensure genuine social ownership and popular participation in and control over the economy, how to secure democracy in society, combining its representatives and direct forms, how to articulate democratic planning with the inevitable, if necessary, relics of the market, how to reconcile economic growth with ecological imperatives, and so on. The overall perspective of struggle for socialism in the more or less backward, peripheral capitalist countries of the third world in a situation of global domination of capitalism. In India during revolt of 1857 period rebels were perceived them (common masses) theoretically and then forge them into practices or actions which made sense to the working people and linked their ongoing struggles to

the coming of a socialist future. Providing revolutionary leadership to partial, reformist struggles is only a part of the more basic task that faces the socialist today. The struggle for socialist, of course is governed by the historical specificities of the situation in different countries of the world. But everywhere it involves the question of hegemony in society, a renewed ideological – political struggle to so build up a movement for socialism that it wins a cultural – intellectual hegemony, becomes increasingly the enlightened common – sense of our age.⁸ This common sense indicate to the idea of Nationalism. Like all social phenomena, nationalism is a historical category. It emerged in the social world at a certain stage of evolution of the life of the community when certain socio-historical conditions both objective and subjective, matured. Before national communities, national societies, national states, there were feudal phases of social existence. At a certain stage of social, economic and cultural development, nations came into being. They were generally distinguished from non-national communities of previous periods of social existence by certain specific characteristics such as an organic welding of the members of the nation, living in a distinct territory within a single economy, so that they felt conscious of common economic existence; generally one common language used by them; and further, a similar psychological structure among its members and a common culture evolved by it. The integration of communities into nations was a prolonged historical process. The nation had to struggle against various obstacles and also British exploitation as well; which kept the people economically disunited and thwarted the free growth of trade and manufacture, the prime levers of the economic consolidation of the people.

The English people were among the first to be welded into a nation. As a result of a number of historical reasons, nationalism was born in England earlier than a number of other countries. For example, the early growth of trade and manufacture which enveloped the people more and more in a network of exchange of relations, paved the way for the growth of a national economy. It also led to the early emergence of democratic and nationalist ideas which attacked feudal conceptions of state, society, and the status and position of the individual.⁹ In course of time, historical conditions for the rise of nationalism matured in other countries also. This was the result of the development of internal forces as well as the impact, on those countries, of outside forces. The history of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is primarily the history of the formation of nations in enlarging zones of the human world, of the struggles of nascent nations seeking to be full-fledged nations against internal and external obstacles, and of the struggles of already formed nations, among themselves, for self-preservation or self-aggrandizements. The nation is recognized as the dominant form of community prevailing in the present epoch. In fact the principle of nationalism has primarily governed various schemes of political and other reconstruction evolved by modern sociologists, statesmen, and politicians with a view to eliminating discord from the social world and creating a premise for the free and full expression of the creative power of human groups.¹⁰ The nation is thus the prime fact of the present epoch and the national sentiment, the dominant emotion of man. Contemporary movements in the spheres of economy, politics, or culture (barring the field of such, objective sciences as natural sciences and technology) are inspired by conscious national motives and urges, irrespective of whether they are organized to defend and develop the freedom and culture

of respective nations or to mitigate or suppress the freedom or culture of other nations. The nation remains, also, a unit in all contemporary programmes of world reconstruction which seek to integrate humanity, on a capitalist or socialist basis. This decisive significance of the role of nationalism in the life of humanity, some of the most acute and eminent thinkers of the world have made nationalism a special subject of study and investigation. They have attempted to study and solve problems concerning nationalism such as what constitutes a nation, under what socio-historical conditions the nation came into existence. What role nationalism plays in human progress and what its relation with internationalism or the urge of men to integrate on a world scale is? Further they have also tried to study the various expressions of nationalism in diverse fields such as social, economic, political and cultural. Finally some of them have also investigated the history of the rise and development of nationalism in separate countries and attempted to lay bare the genetic causes of this rise and growth in each individual country. Nationalism represents an attempt to unveil the complex and multifold process of the formation of nations, their traits, struggles and modes of self-expression and self-assertion. Since nationalism emerged in its own unique way in different countries, the study of nationalism in each country became a separate task.

Nationalism in Indian context is a modern phenomenon. It came into being during the British period as a result of the action and inter-action of numerous subjective and objective forces and factors which developed within the Indian Society under the conditions of the British rule and the impact of world forces. The process of the growth of Indian nationalism has been very complex and many sided. This is due to a number of reasons. Pre-British Indian Society had a social structure quite unique and perhaps

without a parallel in history. It sharply differed in its economic base from the pre-capitalist medieval societies of European countries. Further India was a vast country inhabited by a huge population, speaking many languages and professing different religions. Socially, the Hindus, comprising two-thirds of the population were almost atomized in various castes and sub-castes, a phenomenon peculiar to the Hindu-society. Again Hinduism itself was not a homogeneous religion but a conglomeration of religious cults which divided the Hindu people into a number of sects. This extreme social and religious division of the Hindus in particular and the Indians in general presented a peculiar background to the growth of nationalism in India. Nationalism in other countries did not rise amidst such peculiarly powerful tradition and institutions. India's peculiar social, economic, and political structure and religious history, together with its territorial vastness and a teeming population, make the study of the rise and growth of Indian nationalism more difficult, but more interesting and useful also. The self-preservative will of the past social, economic and cultural structure was stronger in Indian than in perhaps any country in the world. Further the significance of the Indian nationalist movement for the present and future history of humanity is also great since it is the movement, increasingly becoming dynamic, of an appreciable section of the human race.¹¹

Such startling changes in the religious outlook of the people in the village, however, did not bring about any fundamental change in the consciousness of the people, did not extend their consciousness, could not engender and build up any national consciousness. The same narrow village perspective continued to dominate the outlook of the villagers. Instead of considering himself a Hindu, he considered himself a Buddhist or

instead of feeling himself as a Vaishnavite, he now felt himself as a Shaivite. He never developed the consciousness of being an Indian, which the growth of the national sentiment signifies. Even when he felt the unity of India, it was only in a religious sense, i.e. India to him was the land of the Hindus who were united by the common religion of Hinduism and not that of the Indians who inhabited the Indian territory and who were economically and politically welded into a single unit. It was the consciousness of a religio-ideological unity and not that of a politico-economic unity.¹² Since unlike in the past, India was now ruled by a capitalist nation, this rule had a profound effect on her economic structure. It must however, be noted that capitalist society, a historically higher social formation than the feudal type, is still composed of classes with a divergent and even irreconcilably conflicting interests. However, in its early phase, the national bourgeoisie, as a rule, is able to gather all progressive social groups within the fold of national unity, instill the sentiment of nationalism among them and secure their support in the movement against feudalism and for a democratic reconstruction of society as also in their projects of capitalist consolidation and expansion. This becomes increasingly difficult with the decline of capitalism and growth of labour movements based on the principle of class struggle. It may here be remarked that the destruction of the economic disunity of India based on self-sufficient independent village economy and the transformation of India into a single economic unit. In fact the Indian nationalist movement was the product of the pressure exerted by British interests on the free evolution of the Indian people and the various social classes composing it. This was done by subordinating the interests of such free and normal development to British interests, by obstructing or restricting Indian industrialization, by distorting her agricultural

production to meet the raw-materials needs of British industries. In short, by keeping India as primarily an agrarian raw-material producing colony of Britain and as a market for British Industries. The very fact of the Indian nationalist movement being in opposition to Britain indicated the pressure of Britain on India. Capitalism penetrated the Indian village during the British period. It is necessary to follow this process the growth of capitalism since, thereby it destroyed the village self-sufficient economy and made village economy an integral part of a village unified Indian economy. It was this economic unification of India which became the objective material basis for the steady amalgamation of the disunited Indian people into a unified nation, for the growth of national sentiment and consciousness among them and for the rise and development of an all-India national movement for their political freedom, and social and cultural progress.¹³ The centralized state also took-over other functions of the village community such as defense. The village slowly but steadily became transformed from a self-governing community into an administrative unit of the centralized state and a dependent economic part of the national economy. The economic and administrative autarchy of the traditional village disappeared. Collective village life based on common economic interests and the resultant co-operative relations gave way to a new village existence based on competition and struggle. Competitive economic relations resulting out of private property and market replaced former co-operative socio-economic relations. The creation and penetration of capitalist economic relations into the village together with the political-administrative unification of India by assembling all hitherto independent centres into a single unified state system struck a mortal blow to the seemingly impregnable traditional village. Formally custom had most governed the relationship

between the members of the village community. The village committees had regulated the relations between and adjusted disputes among villagers. Now legal codes and law courts established by the new regime governed the complex social relations arising out of the new land system based on private property in land. Over the face of the agrarian world took place a change such as England had witnessed in the sixteenth century; the disruption of the medieval framework, the influx of foreign agent's considerations and of contractual relations, and the substitution of individual responsibility, enterprise and freedom for coordinated effort along paths prescribed by custom. Thus twilight fell over the ancient traditional Indian village, the seemingly invulnerable Rock of Ages. It could successfully resist all former political upheavals, wars and invasion. History moves dialectically, progress is achieved not through the quantitative extension of the good aspects of the old but its qualitative transformation. Higher forms of co-operation and social existence emerge not through the quantitative expansion of old forms but their dissolution. It is true that the capitalist transformation of the village co-operation but its historical progressive role lies in the fact that it broke the self-sufficiency of the village economic life and made the village economy a part of the unified national economy. It was a historically necessary step towards integrating the Indian people economically. It simultaneously broke the physical, social, and cultural isolation of the village people by creating the possibility of large-scale social exchange through the establishment of such means of mass transport as railways and automobiles. Capitalist unification of India based on the destruction of the village autarchy and co-operation on the narrow village scale paved the way for higher forms of economy and social collaboration. It paved the way for a national economy and nation scale collaboration among the Indian people. It

becomes the material premise for the emergence of the Indian nation out of the amorphous mass of the Indian people which, before this unification, were scattered in numerous villages between which there was very little exchange, social or economic, and hence which had hardly any positive common interests.¹⁴ However, tragic, the destruction of the autarchic village and the collective life of the people living in it, it was historically necessary for the economic, social and political unification of the Indian people. Social progress is achieved as history shows, through the moral action of historical forces.¹⁵

The type of agricultural organization we are visualizing is an organization based on the state regulation of production in the general interests of our people and the conversion of agricultural production into a public utility service.¹⁶ It is obvious that only a real national government of the Indian people could put such a plan into successful action. Thus the restoration and further development of Indian agriculture was not a mere techno-economic problem. Basically it was bound up with rapid and free all round development of Indian industries which not only could absorb surplus population in the countryside but could also provide agricultural machinery for the modernization and mechanization of Indian agriculture. It also was bound up with the problem of the overhauling in land. It further raised the problem of political power, of the establishment of an independent sovereign state of the Indian people where power lay in the hands of the producing and exploited strata of the people themselves and not in those of Indian vested interests. Thus bound up with the problem of freedom and a socio-economic reconstruction of Indian society of a historically higher level, the problem of agricultural reconstruction had a progressive national character.¹⁷

The vital historical fact that the destruction of the pre-capitalist urban handicrafts and the village artisan industry of India brought about by the forces of modern industries and trade, made way for the transformation of India into a single economic whole. It objectively unified the entire people – and not a section – within the web of a system of exchange relations. It thus contributed to the building of the material basis for the growth of a common and joint economic existence of the Indian people into a nation. The mass of ruined handicraftsmen, in part, took to modern Indian Industries, and became factory and transport workers, but in the absence of sufficient growth of these industries, in the main, took to agriculture and became tenants or land labourers. They had rarely sufficient capital to purchase land to become free peasant proprietors. Thus the class of Indian handicraftsmen, a class based on medieval handicrafts, steadily dissolved itself into and increased the class of the modern proletariat, of tenants and land labourers. They became integral parts of the new classes in India which arose on the basis of the new capitalist economic relations which developed in India during British rule. They became a part of the capitalist socio-economic structure of Indian society however insufficiently developed. They became parts of the new classes which were nationally unified and had to confront problems which transcended a mere town but were national in scope. The new class of land labourers or industrial workers or tenants or peasant proprietors had a community of interests and common problems which could not exist among Indian handicraftsmen in pre-British India. The ruined handicraftsmen now achieved the status of being members of classes which were component parts of the Indian nation and existed as national units with common interests and problems. This was a distinct historical advancement.¹⁸

The bourgeoisie and the proletariat are the basic classes of the modern capitalist society. As capitalist economy based on competition and commodity production develops, the intermediate classes of small producers such as artisans, and others, being unable to compete with powerful industrial rivals in the market, are ruined and increasingly fall into the ranks of the workers. In the countryside, too, the intermediate stratum of peasant proprietors, due to progressive impoverishment in the circumstances of capital economic environment, increasingly lose land to users and merchants and other capitalists and a good proportion of them become landless labourers or agricultural proletariat. Thus while the intermediate social groups are unstable and dissolving social categories, the proletariat remains a stable and increasing class. The conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is, therefore, the basic conflict in capitalist society, providing movement to it. In this class struggle, the working class set to itself the goal of socialism, a social system based not on wage labour and private property in means of production as in the capitalist system, but on social ownership of those means and free co-operative labour of all workers.¹⁹

Industrialization played almost a revolutionary role in the life of the Indian people. It led to the consolidation of the unified national economy which evolved in India as a result of the introduction of capitalist economic forms in agriculture by the British government, penetration of India by the commercial forces of the world and spread of modern transport during the British rule. Industrialization made the Indian economy more unified, cohesive and organic. It raised the tone of the economic life of India. It also brought into existence modern cities which became the centres of modern culture and increasing democratic social life and from which all progressive movements,

social, political and cultural, emanated. The progressive social and political groups in India realized the advantages, direct and indirect, of industrialization. Though they differed in their views regarding the social organization of industrial and other economic forces and resources whether on the laissez faire principle of private enterprise and unlimited individual completion or on a planned national basis, capitalist or socialist they all stood for rapid, all-sided expansion of industries while sharply divided on many vital issues, they put up a united demand for it. They jointly struggled for the removal of the various handicaps on industrial development. The demand for industrialization thus became a national demand. The establishment of modern industries, in addition, engendered two important classes of the contemporary society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, whose great significance in the national movement will be subsequently discussed.²⁰

The top-sided and limited character of the development of modern means of transport and communications in India prevented the unfolding of the potential power of these means to accomplish a still closer social and economic integration and more rapid cultural advance of the Indian people. The problem of extensive and adequate expansion of those means was closely bound up with the problem of the political power in the hands of the Indian people, as also with that of a rapid development of the productive forces of the Indian society through a scientific plan of economic reconstruction which would have been fully possible if society, as a whole, owned all means of production. In spite of the growth of a modern intelligensia and an educated middle class, an overwhelming portion of the Indian people, however remained illiterate. The principal reason for this was their great poverty. The liquidation of mass illiteracy was, therefore, bound up with the

problem of the removal of the mass poverty of the Indian people. This great poverty of the Indian people, as we have seen, was the product of the colonial character of Indian economy, the resultant low development of the productive forces of the Indian society and, furthers the prevailing system of land and other economic relationships. Elimination of mass poverty, therefore, implied national freedom, power in the hands of the mass of the Indian people instead of in those of vested interests, and a comprehensive plan of national socio-economic reconstruction. Such a plan could be fully realized only if society owned the means of production. The state of a free and economically prosperous country alone could evolve a financial budget such could pay adequate attention to mass education and social service. The problem of complete solution of mass illiteracy and further the extensive spread of the rich scientific and artistic culture of the contemporary era among the Indian people was, thus, closely bound up with national freedom and an economic plan based on the social ownership of means of production.²¹

The British established a uniform reign of law in the country. In establishing the new system of law and tribunals, the British had to supersede the customary law which prevailed in pre-British India and expropriate village and caste committees of their power to enforce the customary law which further varied from place to place in the absence of a uniform system of law.²² The villagers had an organization designed to make them self-supporting and self-governing. Their autonomy was part of a loosely organized system of government, in which the sovereign power left communal and local institutions to function independently, each in its limited sphere. Each village coordinated the social activities of its inhabitants and was an independent unit.²³ The new legal system was based on the democratic conception of equality of all citizens before the laws of the state.

In pre-British India, a Brahmin offender was meted out a lighter punishment than a non-Brahmin offender for the same offence. Under the new law, all citizens, no matter what their caste or creed, were considered equal before law the jurisdiction of which further covered the entire territory of the state. Thus, the British brought about a legal unification of the Indian people on a democratic basis for the first time in Indian history. The establishment of British rule in India brought about an extensive and basic political, administrative, and legal unification of the country for the first time in Indian history. Such a state structure became necessary to the new type of economy which came into existence in India under the British rule. The capitalist economic transformation of India broke up the multitude of separate village economies, welded the Indian people economically, through a system of exchange relations, and made contract the key basis of their economic relations. The British government created a new land system on a private property basis and introduced money economy. A uniform system of law had to be evolved to maintain and regulate the new land relations and contractual transactions such as purchase, sale, and mortgage of land resulting inevitably from the new system. It was primarily and basically designed to meet the requirements and sub-serve the political, economic, and strategic interests of British capitalism. Hence along with certain historically progressive features, it also inevitably exhibited and suffered from basic and vital limitations and defects. This contradiction, namely that of a foreign state governing a native population, was one of the main factors which gave rise to the Indian nationalist movement.²⁴ The presence of the British in India did not stimulate Indian national consciousness simply by bringing all Indians under an effective common government, and by making accessible western ideas. The incursion of an alien race, themselves

imbued with a strong consciousness of nationality and of colour, had its customary effect in stimulating a similar consciousness among their subjects. the British rule did not merely make the Indians aware that they possessed characteristics in common, it also provided them with common interests and common grievances.²⁵ The Indian people, as they became politically conscious, organized movements to secure demands like administrative reforms, Indianization of the services, representative institutions, elimination of racial discrimination, franchise, elected legislatures, civil liberties, a constitution on lines of self-governing colonies, and finally a constituent Assembly as they were the sole authority to shape the constitution for the Indian people. In fact these demands sought to democratize the state machinery and to transfer, in varying degrees administrative initiative and political power from the British to the Indian people. Thus the national movement became essentially a democratic movement. Indian national movement had a multiclass basis and was directed against the British foreign rule. Each social group or class put forth demands which reflected its interests and aspirations. These groups, however united for such demands as civil liberties, Swaraj and other which were of common interest, while the Indian Nationalist Movement had reached a stage when it had put forth the demand of Independence or a sovereign state existence for the Indian people, various political group representing different classes had their own conception of nature of the future state division of India into Hindu and Muslim League which stood for the division of India into Hindu and Muslim Sovereign States, other political groups and organization desired to preserve the single state existence of the Indian people accomplished by Britain (though granting the right of self-determination to nationalities). However, while some of them visualized a democratic Indian state based

on modern capitalist economy, others like the All-India-Trade Union Congress and socialist groups stood for a socialist state based on socialist economy. It is to be noted that the nationalist movement deserved to retain the political and administrative unification of India, accomplished by the British, which represented a historical advancement of Indian society. It did not aim at the resuscitation of the self-governing village at the general political and administrative disunity of pre-British feudal India. The Indian nationalists aimed at putting the state structure on a democratic basis. It's most progressive section finally set, as the objective, Independence in terms of a sovereign state existence for the Indian people.²⁶

The imperial power consolidated its hold and expanded its control over new areas of Indian rural life. During the course of the next half century, new areas of conflict emerged. These conflicts were, however, more easily contained by the state. The history of peasants and mass resistance during the period 1858-1914 is, necessarily, disjointed from a collection of histories of local agrarian relationships and struggles, each of which had its own timetable of revolt. Only with the development of new forms of leadership at the national level after 1918 – with Gandhi, and with the congress championing peasant demands more militantly did peasant resistance begin to link up once more across the sub-continent to pose a formidable challenge to the colonial state, becoming, once again, something more than a collection of isolated struggles. Although peasant resistance did not thus pose a direct threat to British rule between 1858 and 1914, it was a force which continually worried colonial officials. Always in the background lurked the spectre of 1857, a reminder of what could happen if the peasants once more came together in revolt. Such resistance also provided a continuing rebuttal to the claims made by colonial

officials that India had become a more prosperous and stable society under the British.²⁷ The eminent scholar Kathleen Gough, who wrote an influential article in 1974 on 'Indian Peasant Uprisings', argued that the peasant militancy seen in the Naxalite movement had a long history. This had been denied in many studies, which argued that rural resistance had in most cases been led by the upper classes of the countryside, such as landlords and rich peasants, who had used ties of patronage and caste to mobilize or influenced the poorer peasants, or common masses as well.²⁸ The Great Revolt of 1857 was often explained in such cases. In these circumstances when the poor had rebelled, their resistance was often described as mere outlaw or a form of communalism, rather than as a protest against harsh agrarian conditions. In this way, most peasant resistance had been written out of Indian history. Gough also argued that there was in fact a strong history of rural revolt against colonial rule and the indigenous beneficiaries of colonial rule. British rule had led to an extreme disruption of rural relationships throughout India. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the peasantry had been impoverished through extremely high rates of land tax levied by the East India Company. After these taxes were lowered, new forms of expropriating the surplus of the peasants through intermediaries, such as landlords, merchant money lenders and British planter, were evolved. These intermediaries often acquired property rights in land of a capitalist kind, which allowed them to exploit the peasants more thoroughly. The British also destroyed much local handicraft industry, forcing the handicraft producers to turn to agriculture and compete for land with the existing peasants. The same was true for pastoralists and forest dwellers, who had their pasture lands and forests expropriated by the colonial state. There was, as a result, a massive impoverishment and marginalization of the rural population of

India during the nineteenth century.²⁹ Gough attempted to divide peasant resistance into five types – (a) restorative rebellions to drive out the British and restore earlier rulers and social relations; (b) religious movements for the liberation of region or an ethnic group so as to establish a new form of government; (c) social banditry, (d) terrorist vengeance, with ideas of meting out collective justice; (e) mass insurrections for the redress of particular grievances.³⁰ Certain features of a movement so as to slot it into one or the other category, even though only one movement is likely to have elements to it which cut across all kind of limitation and as well as categories. Colonial historiography, which deputed Indian history as a story of never ending conflict between primordial groups, such as castes and religious communities, which failed to develop and change with the times. Historians have rightly challenged this view, showing that changing socio-economic realities have provided much of the underlying dynamic to such conflict and solidarities. In the process, however they desired too much. Community became a residual category which explained why given the same socio-economic conditions – mobilization was successful in some instances but not in others. Thus it was said, ties of caste or religion could help the richer peasants mobilize the poorer in what were essentially the class interests of the former, poorer peasants might use ties of caste, tribe or religion to achieve greater unity in the struggle for socialism.³¹ Partha Chatterjee has argued that in India masses and also peasants have generally conceptualized relationships of power in terms of the idea of the community. They conceive of the community as a collective which exists in a close relationship to the land which it controls. By right, the individual is allowed access to the land only as a member of the community. Chatterjee states that, the place of the individual in the social ordering or rights is determined by his

membership in the community, the collective in prior to the individual parts and its authority larger than the mere sum of the parts. He argues that political power in such a community is organized as the authority of the entire collectivity.³² Chatterjee goes on to say that both feudal and bourgeois states have sought to destroy peasant communities and the bases of peasant community ideology, as they have provided an alternative focus of power and loyalty. The absolutist monarchs of medieval India waged a constant struggle with these communities – described as tribes or clans in the literature. They were never entirely successful, always having to reach some sort of compromise with the colonial state. The colonial state, representing the class interests of the bourgeoisie, like wise attacked the solidarity of these groups.³³ He also argues that, the language of organized politics often characterizes such forms of mobilization as an alliance of various classes or strata within the peasantry, but ideologically the notion of the alliance is hardly ever relevant in collective action of this kind; it is always the concept of the community as a collective whole, a form of authority incapable of being broken down into constituent parts, which shapes and directs peasant politics vis-à-vis state.³⁴ Community consciousness is very different from bourgeois consciousness. The latter operates from the premise of the individual and a nation of his or her interests, with solidarities being based on alliances of common interests. In present consciousness people are required to act together because of existing bonds of solidarity. Collective action does not flow from a contract among individuals; rather individual identities themselves are derived from membership in a community.³⁵ In any discussion of community – based political action, it is important to make a clear distinction between communities as actual social groups and the community as a form of consciousness.³⁶ This consciousness indicates to the idea

of socialism. The history of peasant or mass resistance after the great revolt 1857 must necessarily be the history of many disparate movements. Resistance never linked up with that cumulative explosive power which transformed local struggles into wide ranging rebellion. It had happened in 1857, it occurred less dramatically in 1920-22; it happened on a wide scale once more in 1942.³⁷ Like Bengal also in Bihar struggles against the planters continued into the twentieth century. By then, the industry was in any case in the decline – though it revived briefly during the First World War. Again resistance was led by the richer peasants. In 1907-08 there was a powerful movement in which the indigo factories were boycotted and factory employees intimidated. Meetings were held and planters threatened with violence. The government intervened and forced the planters to give substantial concession to the peasants. The system however, remained and the struggle continued. It attracted support from local lawyers, teachers and political activists, who managed to win increasing support for the cause at all-India level after 1912.³⁸ In other words, it is the function of *Neel-Darpan* to generate illusion about British rule in India as a good thing with only a few minor faults here and there than can be easily mended. Put so bluntly, it might hurt liberal sensibilities. These had fed for over a hundred years on its reputation as predominantly a play of protest Bankim Chandra called it the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of Bengal. Priest, professors and politicians have been unanimous in their description of the work as exclusively an indictment of the planters' tyranny. One has to turn to the text to see for oneself how partial and misleading such a description is. For the author's aversion to the planters is equated by his reverence for the Raj. One is a measure of the other. The blacker the planters, the whiter the regime.³⁹ The developed of Indian socialism during the two crowded decades which span the First and

Second World War can best be studied in the political and social context of the time. This growth was not, however, in a straight line; it suffered from false starts and setbacks; it was affected by the hostility of the British authorities, recurrent economic crises, the changing international scene, and the rather violent shift in the attitude of the communist international towards the nationalist struggle in India. The periods favourable to socialist ideas were those which formed the troughs of the Gandhian Waves of Satyagraha Struggles. There is no doubt that socialist ideas and parties gave a certain social content and occasionally a sharper edge to Indian nationalism as represented by the Indian national congress. That they could not achieve more was due to the internal contradictions of the left parties, and the charismatic, but dynamic and skilful leadership of the Indian National Congress by Mahatma Gandhi throughout this period. There was also a built-in fear of drastic changes. Memories of the civil disorder and instability in the eighteenth century, doubtlessly exaggerated by the British writers, conditioned the first generation of Indian nationalists against root-and-branch reforms. The agrarian disturbances in the decan in the 1870's and the 1890 have struck the Indian intelligentsia not as the welcome stirrings of an oppressed peasantry, but danger signals of a possible relapse into anarchy. The Congress leaders wanted gradual changes towards a rational secular, progressive society and an administration at first responsive and ultimately responsible to public or mass opinion. The Indian educated class constituted a small minority, but it was not merely the mouthpiece of the upper and middle classes. That it did not neglect the interests of the masses is shown by its persistent and persuasive advocacy of increase in the minimum limit for income tax, the abolition of the salt tax, the extension of local self-government, the establishment of the village panchayats, the

reduction of land revenue and the institution of free and compulsory elementary education – reforms which would benefit the poorer sections of the community.⁴⁰ In the world context Russian Revolution was to make socialism a word to conjure with. It was only natural that Indian nationalism, engaged in a continual debate with the British government, should have seen in the fall of Tsarist autocracy the confirmation of its hope that British autocracy in India would also crumble one day. The annulment of the partition of Persia and Turkey by the revolutionary government in Russia was well received in India; it was a practical token of the renunciation of imperialism by a European power. But the other important aspect of the Russian Revolution – the fashioning of a new socio-economic system – seems curiously to have made relatively little immediate impact on the Indian imagination. This may have been due to the fact that Marxist literature had enjoyed little vogue in this country and the news from Russia, filtered through the British press, tended to produce a dark picture of disorder and bloodshed, wholesale executions of political opponents, expropriation of property, censorship and regimentation.⁴¹ The Russian Revolution seems to have stimulated the organization of labour and the formation of trade Unions in India. In April, 1918, wadia formed a trade union in Madras, and in the same year, Bombay saw the emergence of the Indian seamen's Union. The G.I.P. Railway Union came into existence in 1919, the Ahmedabad Textile Workers Union and All India Trade Union Congress in 1920. The success of the proletarian revolution in Russian powerfully affected a few individuals such as the poet Nazarul Islam who wrote his *Byathar Dan* in 1919, and young men like A.K. Fazlul Haq and Muzaffar Ahmed who brought out a *New Bengali Paper*, the *Navayug* in 1920 in Calcutta, and S.A. Dange who published *Gandhi and Lenin* in 1921.

The effect on established political parties and its leaders was however hardly perceptible. Raja Mahendra Pratap, Barkatullah and other romantic revolutionaries, who assured Lenin in Moscow that India was ripe for a revolution in 1919, had been so long in the terrorist underground or in exile that they had little knowledge of the real conditions in India. M.N. Roy operated from European capitals with an unending stream of journals, leaflets, and letters aimed at potential and actual sympathizers of the revolution in India.⁴² Roy's propaganda and emissaries did not make much headway in India so long as the non-cooperation movement was on the crest of a rising wave. His chance came in the wake of the Chauri Chaura tragedy and the demoralization following the revocation of civil disobedience. Deviating somewhat from his own thesis at the second congress, he made a bid to cultivate support within the Indian National Congress and even to wrest the leadership into communist hands. He tried to win over C.R. Das who was known to be in favour of simultaneously prompting the economic welfare of the masses as well as the struggle for political liberation.⁴³

During the next three years, even as Gandhi led non-cooperation movement, he was reluctant to launch mass civil disobedience without adequate preparation. In February 1922, he succumbed to pressure from within the congress for launching mass civil disobedience in selected areas, but immediately afterwards, when he heard of the riot at Chauri Chaura, he applied the reverse gear. There is little evidence to show that the reasons which Gandhi gave for cancelling the aggressive phase of his movement were not honest. He knew the outbreak in Chauri Chaura was no revolutionary rising of the peasantry, but another manifestation of the mob violence that had been creeping into his movement. The occasional communal riots culminating in the fanatical moplah outbreak

in Malabar, and the riots at Bombay on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales had disconcerted him.⁴⁴ For Gandhi, the Chauri Chaura incident was, as he wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru, “the last straw I assure you that if the thing (civil disobedience) had not been suspended, we would have been leading not a non-violent struggle, but essentially a violent struggle... The movement had unconsciously drifted from the right path.”⁴⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, the son of the veteran Motilal Nehru introduced socialist ideas into the Congress. His interest in economic and social questions developed in the enforced leisure of the prison in 1922-23 when he delved into the history of the Russian Revolution. In 1926-27 he visited Europe and came into closer contact with the anti-colonial as well as the anti-capitalist crusaders from Asia, Africa, Europe, and America, particularly at the Brussels Congress of oppressed Nationalities. Already a student of Marx and an admirer of Lenin, he was deeply impressed by his brief visit to Moscow in November, 1927 and returned to his homeland just in time to attend the Madras Congress where he piloted resolutions with a radical slant. In the following year he clashed with the congress establishment on the issue of dominion status versus independence. As a gesture of defiance, he joined hands with Subhas Bose to found the Independence League, vowed to the severance of all relations with Britain and to “a socialistic revision of the economic structure of society.”⁴⁶ Nehru’s presidential address at the Lahore Congress was at once an onslaught on British imperialism, Indian feudalism and capitalism. He frankly introduced himself as a socialist and a republican and no believer in kings and princes, or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry”⁴⁷ The philosophy of socialism, he asserted, had permeated – the entire structure of society the world over, and “the only point in dispute was the pace and

methods of advanced to its realization". He questioned the proposition that the Congress should hold the balance fairly between capital and labour, and landlord and tenant. The balance was, said Nehru, "terribly weighted on one side," to maintain the status-quo "was to maintain injustice and exploitation." He called for changes in land laws, a minimum wage for every worker in the field or factory, organization of industry on a cooperative basis and effective liaison between the congress and the labour or mass movement. That all this was not merely a verbal exercise became evident 15 months later when under his pressure, but with the backing of Gandhi, the Karachi Congress embodied some of his ideas in a catalogue of fundamental rights and economic principles, including a living wage, imposition of death duties, and state ownership or control of basic industries. These may seem "mildly socialist" today; in 1931 they sounded revolutionary.⁴⁸ A group of young congressmen who were admirers of Nehru, felt a similar disenchantment with Gandhi's leadership. The members of this group, Jayaprakash Narayan, Asoka Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan, Yusuf Meherally, N.G. Goray, and S.M. Joshi, were ardent nationalists as well as ardent socialists. They felt that a new orientation to the congress was necessary, and drew up the blueprint of a new political party which was to function within the congress. They were later joined by some of the senior congressmen in the U.P. – Acharya Narendra Deva, Sampurnanand and Sri Prakasa – all from the Benares Vidyapeeth. The foundations of the Congress Socialist Party were laid at Patna in May 1934 when a meeting of the A.I.C.C. was held there. A few months later, the party had its first conference at Bombay and adopted a 15-point programme which included the repudiation of the public debt of India, transfer of all power to producing masses, planned development of the economic life of the country by the state, socialization of key

industries, state monopoly of foreign trade, cooperative and collective forming, organization of cooperatives for production, distribution, and credit, and the elimination of princes and landlords without compensation. This was a thorough-going socialist programme, which the communist party could well have included in its manifesto. Indeed the leaders of the new party swore by the Marxian theory, and believed that planned economic development on the soviet model was the answer to the problem of Indian poverty and backwardness. They criticized the congress leadership, but avowed loyalty to the organization.⁴⁹ Their professed object was, “to resuscitate and reinvigorate the congress,”⁵⁰ to rid it of its defeatist mentality,” and to draw into it the mass of workers and peasants, both to ‘socialize’ the nationalist struggle and to forge a massive anti-imperialist front. They were critical of Gandhi, of his self-imposed limitations on the score of non-violence, of his ethical approach to politics and of his theory of “trusteeship.”⁵¹ The approach to the Act of 1935, the formation of ministries in 1937, the organization of Kisan Sabhas and agitation for agrarian reforms, the release of political detenués and agitation in Indian states. There was the curious spectacle during these years of congressmen leading agitations against congress ministries in the provinces. There were prolonged and bitter controversies in which the congress leadership was continually under fire. “Gandhism has played its part”, announced J.P. Narayan. It cannot carry us further and hence we must march and be guided by the ideology of socialism.⁵² The socialist leaders did not realize the predicament of the congress executive, harassed as it was by a ceaseless cold war with the Muslim League and never – ending battle of wits with the British government. Without a minimum discipline in the party and stability in the country, the Congress could hardly speak effectively on behalf

of nationalist India.⁵³ In the historical perspective the progress of socialist ideas and organization seems to have been affected by a series of events on the national and world stage and a complex interplay of personalities and politics. It is difficult to say what the results would have been if the second communist international had endorsed only Lenin's thesis on colonialism; if M.N. Roy had not been the chief guide of the international in the twenties, and Indian communists had been allowed to function within the national movement during this period, if Nehru and other left leaders had joined hands in the pre-war years and revolted against the congress establishment; if Gandhi, the most charismatic as well as the most tolerant, receptive, and creative leader of nationalism in history had not been at the helm of the national congress; if Nehru's bonds with the Mahatma had not been as strong as they actually were, and he had chosen to lead the congress socialists; and finally, if the British had not skillfully alternated reform with repression and in 1947 confounded the theoreticians of revolutions by deciding to go while the going was good.⁵⁴ Lenin is also reported to have dismissed the delegation with the remark: Religion would not save the Indian people. Tolstoy and others like him tried the same thing in Russia but failed. Go back to India and preach class-struggle, and the road to freedom to India will be nearer.⁵⁵ M.N. Roy on the other hand, asserted in his supplementary thesis that the "bourgeois – democratic nationalist movements" were not worthy of communter support because they were not "revolutionary" and also because the nationalist bourgeoisie was likely to 'compromise with Imperialism in return for some economic and political concessions to their class.'⁵⁶ As he surveyed the colonial world, he saw two distinct movements in the colonies: The bourgeois – democratic nationalist movement, with a programme of political independence under the bourgeois order and

the mass struggle of the poor and ignorant peasants and workers for their liberation from various forms of exploitation. He saw in the second movement the seeds of progress and urged that communist parties should be organized in order to revolutionize the social character of this movement and to “organize the peasants and worker as well as common masses and lead them to the revolution. While Lenin believed that there were no proletarian organizations of any consequence in the colonies, Roy insisted that in most of the colonies there already exist organized revolutionary parties which try to keep in close contact with the working masses and that the communists should work with them in preference to bourgeois organizations. Though he considered it profitable to make use of the cooperation of the bourgeois national revolutionary elements, he held that, the leadership of the revolution should be in the hands of a communist vanguard.⁵⁷ Again, Lenin held that Gandhi was a ‘revolutionary’ because he inspired and led a mass movement’ while Roy maintained that as a religious and cultural revivalist” Gandhi was bound to be a reactionary socially, however revolutionary he might appear politically.⁵⁸ In the year 1916 the provocative question raised by Lala Lajpat Rai in a socialist meeting in New York had been tormenting him: What difference would it make to the Indian masses if they were exploited by native capitalists instead of foreign imperialists?” This question made him uncomfortable and ultimately led him to the New York Public Library to read the works of Karl Marx and accept Marxism? ⁵⁹ How could he now think of political independence alone? His commitment to the new social order called for organizing the poor and ignorant peasants, common masses and workers, in the colonial stage, especially in India.⁶⁰ The Revolution in Russia and its beginning was regarded in India as a triumph over despotism notwithstanding the fact that it has involved that

unhappy country in anarchy and dismemberment. It has given an impetus to Indian political aspirations.⁶¹ The widespread nature of such propaganda, emanating from influential Anglo-Indian sources, compelled the nationalists to take a defensive position. They argued that Home Rule would not bring about revolutionary chaos, but that in fact a delay in reform could lead to a revolution. Characteristic of the contemporary opinions on this controversy was the following comment from a nationalist daily. It is not the Home Rule that brought about troubles in Russia. It is the Revolution which is the parent of this chaos. Had the erstwhile rulers of Russia had the wisdom to make a timely concession of Home Rule, there would have been no revolution and no outbreak of lawlessness and disorder Reforms indefinitely postponed are inadequate in their scope and comprehension, and prepare the ground for revolt.⁶² In the international sphere the Bolshevik Revolution and the rise of Soviet Russia introduced an explosive new factor in Indian politics to all intents and motives. It created a deep-rooted suspicion of the bonafides of the nationalist movement partly because of the apparent community of interest between the Indian nationalist were concerned. The British Government looked with alarm and suspicion at every demand the nationalists advanced and every agitation they undertook. In them, the British detected a mysterious Bolshevik connection and failed to evaluate the nature of the growing upsurge of nationalism objectively. In the ultimate analysis, the Bolshevik Revolution, later events in Soviet Russia, and Soviet interest in colonial affairs, did exercise a remarkable influence in the whole process of the beginning of liquidation of British Rule over India and in the growth of socialism in India. The Indian nationalists looked to the Soviet Union with sympathy, admiration and good will. This widened their perspective, which had always been traditionally confined

to Britain and encouraged them to take a radically new approach to the socio-economic problems then confronting the country; and thus to gain more and more support from the various strata of the Indian masses, particularly the workers, peasantry and lower middle classes. Britain's fear of Soviet propaganda and hostile activities and the wide publicity given to this by the British and Anglo-Indian Press did help in promoting the image of the Soviet Union as the only foreign power interested in bringing about the end of British Rule in India. All this helped in fostering world interest in the independence of India. A new realization began and grew among the Indian nationalists that their cause had acquired an international character of anti-imperialism shared and supported by Soviet Russia. Thus, by 1929, anti – imperialism became the main hallmark of the Indian Nationalist Movement which paved the way for the development and propagation of the socialist movement and socialist ideas later in the thirties.⁶³ The political form of socialism, again, there are certain general observations available from Nehru rather than an exposition of any political theory or doctrine. These observations, however, give a fairly clear idea of his view of the political structure associated with socialist transformation in India. He is categorical and firm in his view that India should have a democratic state structure with maximum regard for democratic freedoms – freedom of speech and organization and individual liberty. Indian socialist transformation, he suggests, should be based on a wide consent of different sections of Indian society and even on a large measure of cooperation of some at least of the groups who were normally opposed to socialist doctrine. He is hopeful that a free national government which is both strong and popular would be capable of introducing fundamental changes in the social and economic structure. He is therefore; keen to avoid the path of regimentation and

concentration of power for bringing about basic changes. At the same time, he clarifies that democracy should not provide a sanction for the status-quo and if social changes through the method of consent was not possible on account of the resistance of the vested interests, the use of coercion in the limited context should not be ruled out. Nehru thus seems committed to explore the possibility of socialist transformation through a democratic political structure; his view therefore stands in sharp contrast to the classical view which stresses the necessity of dictatorship of the proletariat as the political form inevitable for transition to socialism.⁶⁴ Nehru repeatedly emphasized that socialism is not just an economic doctrine but a philosophy of life which involved a profound change in habits, instincts, values and motivation. He also posed the problem of giving socialist ideology an Indian form so as to make it meaningful to the common people of India. He was aware of the fact that European socialism originated in an entirely different social context and it addressed itself to the Industrial proletariat. In India, on the other hand the national factor was of great significance and the bulk of the masses lived in villages and was illiterate. In this context, he stressed the need of “speaking of socialism in the language of India, through the idiom and categories which were current coin among Indian people.”⁶⁵ In the history of socialism in India, the period intervening between the two world wars will always be treated as crucial. It was then that the socialist idea gained a foothold in the Indian soil and the conception of a new India was gradually enlarged and transformed in the mind of the elite into the vision of a socialist India. It is also during this period that the intellectual framework of Indian socialism was evolved in a rudimentary form. In bringing about this turn in Indian nationalism, an outstanding role was played by Indian leaders.⁶⁶

REFERENCES

- 1) Singh, Ranadhir; “*Struggle for Socialism Some issues*,” Delhi, Aakar Books, 2010, pp.26-27.
- 2) *Ibid.*
- 3) *Ibid.*, p.30.
- 4) *Ibid.*
- 5) *Ibid.*, p.34.
- 6) *Ibid.*, pp.35-37.
- 7) *Ibid.*, pp.37-46.
- 8) *Ibid.*, pp.47-62.
- 9) Desai, A.R, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Delhi, 1946, pp.1-2.
- 10) *Ibid.*, p.3.
- 11) *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
- 12) *Ibid.*, p.21.
- 13) *Ibid.*, p.35.
- 14) *Ibid.*, pp.47-49.
- 15) *Ibid.*
- 16) Wadia, P.A, and Marchant, K.T, *Our Economic Problems*, p.270.
- 17) Desai, A.R, op.cit, pp.76-77.
- 18) *Ibid.*, pp.90-91.

- 19) *Ibid.*, pp.102-03.
- 20) *Ibid.*, p.124.
- 21) *Ibid.*, pp.134, 164.
- 22) *Ibid.*, p.167.
- 23) O'Malley (ed.), *Modern India and the West* (1941), p.3-4.
- 24) Desai, *op. cit.*, pp.168-172.
- 25) Carr, E.H, (Chairman, Study group), *Nationalism*, 1939, p.153.
- 26) Desai, *op.cit.*, pp.171-72.
- 27) Hardiman, David, (ed.), *Peasant resistance in India 1858-1914*, OUP, Delhi, pp.1-2.
- 28) *EPW*, Vol. IX, No.32-33-34, August 10, 1974.
- 29) *Ibid.*, p.6.
- 30) *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.
- 31) *Ibid.*, p.8.
- 32) Chatterjee, Partha, *Agrarian relations and communalism in Bengal 1926-1935*, in Guha, R, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I* (New Delhi 1982) p.12.
- 33) Hardiman, David, *op. cit.*, pp.8-9.
- 34) Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, pp.34-35.
- 35) Chatterjee, Partha, 'For an Indian History of peasant Struggles; *Social Scientist* 16:11, November 1988, p.11.
- 36) Hardiman, *op. cit.*, p.9.
- 37) *Ibid.*, p.11.

- 38) *Ibid.*, p.18.
- 39) *Ibid.*, p.73.
- 40) Nanda, B.R, (ed.), *Socialism in India*, New Delhi, 1972, pp.1-2.
- 41) *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.
- 42) *Ibid.*, pp.3-5.
- 43) *Ibid.*, p.5.
- 44) *Ibid.*, p.8.
- 45) Nanda, B.R, *The Nehrus: Motilal and Jawaharlal*, London, 1962, p.202.
- 46) Nanda, *op. cit.*, pp.8-9.
- 47) Congress Presidential Address n.10, p.894.
- 48) Nanda, *op. cit.*, p.10.
- 49) *Ibid.*, p.11.
- 50) Deva, Acharya Narendra, *Socialism and the National revolution*, Bombay, 1946, p.28.
- 51) Nanda, *op. cit.*, p.11.
- 52) Singh, Harikishore, *A History of the Praja Socialist Party: 1934-59*, Lucknow, 1959, p.42.
- 53) Nanda, *op. cit.*, p.12.
- 54) *Ibid.*, p.16.
- 55) *Ibid.*, p.22.
- 56) *M.N. Roy's Memoirs*, N-17, p.382.
- 57) Nanda, *op. cit.*, p.25.

- 58) Roy's Memoirs, *op. cit.*, p.379.
- 59) *Ibid.*, pp.28-29.
- 60) Nanda, *op.cit*, p.28.
- 61) Report on Indian Constitutional Reform (HMSO, cmd. 9109, 1918),
p.14.
- 62) *The Bengalee*, 25 November, 1917.
- 63) Nanda, *op. cit.*, p.68.
- 64) *Ibid.*, p.136.
- 65) *Ibid.*
- 66) *Ibid.*, p.139.

CHAPTER- VI

CONCLUSION

India's conquest by the British led not only to the loss of her political freedom; it also brought to light India's social and economic inferiority to the West, thus posing a challenge to her total identity. The failure of the 1857 Mutiny further confirmed what had already been demonstrated earlier – the vast gulf which separated the vanquished from the victor in terms of material and social progress. India was defeated because she had lagged behind on account of her grave internal weakness. The lesson of the Mutiny was not lost on sensitive Indians nor on the Indian society as a whole. This constituted the starting point of the new wave of Indian nationalism during the period following the Mutiny.¹ Bipan Chandra quoting from Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India* argued that under the colonial rule the dominant impulse was of fear, strangling fear, fear of army, police, secret service, law, prison, moneylender, unemployment and starvation.² There are ample example to suggest that it is justified to show actually how much the rebellious spirit exhibited by the popular militant movements or mass movements were deeply embedded in society. Bipan Chandra's opinion is insufficient to answer the question that does the entire population, especially poor landless peasants, workers, and also the adibasi peasants were in the grip of a never ending fear? Rather it appears that the poor peasants, adibasi peasant or artisans and workers never exhibited any fear and on the contrary always challenged the colonial state or imperial power. As in the 1834 during the chuar rebellion the judicial department in its letter to court observed that the insurgents rejected all terms of submission.³ In the national government of Delhi, Bahadur Shah was only a nominal head and in reality sepoys used to take decision and

publish everything. If the proclamation issued from Delhi can be regarded as rebel voice and not a Badshahi voice then it becomes clear that the rebels did not want to restore Mughal Empire Sultanate or Gupta Empire. The proclamation addressed to Zaminder merchants, public servants, artisans and pandit or Fakir, Scholars, and to all the Sections, it was addressed that Badshahi government will bring back and restore the tradition and customs.⁴ Similarly, in the proclamation of peshwa in late 1858 the villagers were assured that peasants were the friends of the rebels.⁵ Thus it appears that far from establishing the old feudal regime the rebels had in mind something else. It appears from the proclamation that the rebels were trying to restore their previous condition, which were excluded by colonial rule and without uprooting colonial rule it was not possible. From the rebel proceedings and proclamation it appears that the rebels were actually trying to restore the old traditions, customs and practices of the country which formed the knowledge system of the country. Knowledge system of India which included indigenous history, philosophy, agriculture and irrigation, medicine and all were deeply embedded in the traditions and customs of the country, that which was excluded by the colonial rule from the very beginning. The rebel proceedings and efforts of restoring indigeneity also indicates that the rebels had a vision of “nation” and “nationalism” also in their mind but that was distinctly different from European “nation state” and “nationalism”.⁶

The Revolt of 1857 started with the call to protect religion. During the entire phase of the rebellion religion acted as the inspirer and the battle cry of the revolt. Everywhere the rebels killed several Europeans and the remaining Europeans fled. Immediately after that the rebels set-up a government with the apparatuses of a regular

government and tried to restore and even restored also the order. The main function of the rebel governments was to promote war. Promotion of war implied preservation of that which has been achieved and what was achieved was the power of ruling the country by its own people.⁷ Henry Mead has observed that in Fyzabad a rebel told to the British officer that “proclamations have been received from the king of Delhi, informing all that he is once more on the throne of his fathers, and calling upon the whole army to join his standard..... The only ruler in India empowered to give Sunnuds is the king of Delhi, it is from him only that we shall receive our orders.”⁸ In this context Marx also observed that Delhi was not a strategically important place. Still Delhi became important in the eyes of the rebels due to Historical tradition. This idea was visible everywhere. Charles Griffiths has observed that in Ferozpur after the outbreak the sepoy “quietly but firmly announced that they released themselves from the service of the East India Company and were about to become enrolled as subjects of the king of Delhi”.⁹ Once this idea became firmly established people started to act. Similarly everywhere Revolts started to breakout Delhi became centre of assemblage, more than that Delhi became a symbol. Once people thought that the British rule has ended, people started to destroy all the signs of the British rule everywhere.¹⁰ The rebel order gave highest priority to a consolidated effort to continue what has been achieved. The early proclamation from Delhi not only invited everybody to join the fight to save religion but it also requested everybody to remain united in the struggle for nation, “so that good order may be maintained”. The poorer classes kept contented, and they themselves be exalted to rank and dignity.¹¹ In another subsequent proclamation to everybody the rebel focused some more reasons. The rebels observed that, “In Hindustan they (the British Indian State) have exacted a revenue of

Rs.300 where only Rs.200 were due and Rs.500 where but Rs.400 were demandable. The people will thus be ruined and reduced to beggary". The proclamation also mentioned that the government has ruined Hindustan by heavy assessment and improper cesses and has attempted to destroy religion. The learned and respectable men lost their occupation.¹² At this stage religion and exploitation acted as the sole force of appeal, bondage and unity. The Delhi proclamation observed that man dies once but to die for religion being a laudable deed means that those who will die in the battle will become martyrs, the Muslims will attain Ghazidom and Hindus will reach to Baikunth.¹³

The proclamation of Kanpur gave the call to everybody to join in the fight to protect religion. It gave call to Muslims and gave call to Hindus by observing that those Hindus who will not join in such a noble act will be treated as an outcaste who can eat beef.¹⁴ The proclamation issued from Bareilly also gave a similar call. The Bareilly proclamation also observed that under the British rule religion will definitely become destroyed. So the Muslims were given call in the name of Koran and the Hindus were given call in the name of Tulsi plant, image of Shalgram and water of Ganges. The proclamation also observed that if Hindus united with the Muslims in killing English then the Muslims will not only abstain from eating beef but will consider beef with similar horror which was associated with pork, but on the contrary if Hindus does not join in the fight then they will be considered guilty of eating beef.¹⁵ The Delhi proclamation also observed that those Hindu and Muslims who will join the opponent of the rebels will have their face blackened in both the worlds and will get no peace.¹⁶ Above all the Kanpur proclamation claimed that the British government due to its attempts to destroy the religion of Indians have "Incurred upon themselves the displeasure of the deity, who

has given the rule into our hands to punish them".¹⁷ In the whole process what was marginalized, displaced was the indigenous tradition, indigenous knowledge system, indigenous custom which as a whole formed a 'nation'. The nation existed territorially although but it existed more in perception and vision. It was this nation which the rebels were thinking about in 1857 as it becomes evident from the rebel proclamations where they questioned new revenue, introduction of English customs, loss of occupancy right peasants, introduction of new knowledge, science and medicine. It will not be incorrect to argue that this obviously does not contradict with Marxist ideas. Lenin has observed that "The self determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, and the formation of an independent national state."¹⁸ Our entire study is demonstrating that in 1857 they were only desperately, and wholeheartedly want to separate themselves, to separate the indigenous nation from the alien British Indian State. In the Indian tradition the nation always existed in the commonness and continuity of custom and tradition up to the end of pre-colonial period. History was embedded in custom and tradition which formed part of itihasa purana tradition. Romila Thapar has observed that itihasa purana means something between perceived past and historicity.¹⁹ The nation existed not as a territory but in perception of past which included the age old traditions and customs.²⁰ Rajat kanta Roy has observed that the revolt was a "legitimate restoration" - accomplishment of an act which the Mughal Cavaliers failed at Buxar is not exactly appropriate because it contradicts his own view and conclusions. Others like Susobhan Sarkar, Suproakash Roy, Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Hirendranath Mukhopadhyay, P.C. Joshi, Talmiz Kahldun, S.N. Sen, S.B. Chaudhury and John Pemble also viewed the revolt generally in this way. Such a view and an effort to accommodate

that view in the parameter of the nation state contradicts their own view, specially P.C. Joshi, Rajat Roy and Irfan Habib also observed that it was not a mere or a photocopy type of restoration.²¹ P.C. Joshi has observed that the rebel army dictated terms to and crowned the Mughal Badsha.²² Rajat Roy has observed that the restored chieftains had to come to terms with the Sepoy councils.²³ Irfan Habib has observed that the rebel regimes were not merely royal or princely old order restorations.²⁴ As a logical sequence came the general conclusion in all these works that it was a movement of freedom from colonial rule within the parameter of socialistic Mentality of the rebels. Mass extra-parliamentary Socio-political movements and struggles indeed remain the central axis, the decisive terrain of the struggle for a socialist revolution. The amount of violence that will be involved in a given revolutionary process is indeed impossible to predict in advance. It depends on the one hand on the nature and amount of ruling class resistance but in a large part, also, on how successfully the socialists have built people's social power from below and how hegemonic or influential they are in society as a whole. For socialists, revolution is a matter, not of violence or non-violence, but of fundamental structural change in society, revolutionaries to defend revolution with violence when the ruling classes violate the victories and rights of the people. People have a natural aversion to violence and revolutionaries respect it. Struggle for power or equality brings into focus the issue of revolutionary leadership in the struggle for socialism. The kind of socialist organizations that are required at any point of time is always linked with the kind of tasks required to be carried out.

They are needed to affirm a socialist presence, to advance socialist alternatives, to inscribe immediate demands and grievances into a larger framework, to mount a moral

and intellectual challenge to capitalist hegemony, and to provide leadership to a society wide struggle for socialism. The need for a revolutionary party of socialism can never be over-emphasized, well described as the concrete expression of the Marxist synthesis of determinism and voluntarism in revolutionary practice, it has to be a party which is capable of bringing together under socialist hegemony all the actual and potential anti-capitalist forces in society, including the new social movements, and mobilizing and leading the mass of the working people in their struggle for political supremacy in the state, it has to be party which aims to achieve representation within existing institutions but which is even more actively involved in actions and struggle outside and can successfully articulate all the different forms of struggle in pursuit of its revolutionary objective.²⁵ Socialism is not just a changed society, a superior social order, it is today the necessary defence of humanity and our planet earth. This in its own way makes socialism all the more possible as an alternative to capitalism. Alternatives are discovered or invented, or even recovered when it becomes clear that we cannot survive without them. Pointing to the human tragedy that capitalism's continued existence now portends for humankind, this is how Chomsky has put it in his characteristically simple manner. At this stage of history, either one of two things is possible. Either general population will take control of its own destiny and will concern itself with community interests, guided by values of solidarity, sympathy, and concern for others, or alternatively there will be no destiny for anyone to control. Socialism is necessary and also an objective possibility defined by the socio-economic conditions of capitalist and the alternative people may come to seek. It is the subjective factor, the conscious political intervention which is decisive in the actualization of the possibility of socialism. As in the past so

now, the possibility of socialism is spur enough for them to act and the perspective remains on the one hand of a long march guided and fired by the vision of a radically different society and on the other of a movement which learns and becomes more conscious as it advances and whose members do not mix up their own mortality with a timetable for the achievement of socialist goals, they know that history does not always deliver victories within mentality of the rebels.²⁶

REFERENCES

- 1) Nanda, B.R, (ed.), “*Socialism in India*” New Delhi, Vikash Publishing House, 1972, p.122.
- 2) Chandra, Bipan, (ed.), *India’s Struggle for Independence*, Kolkata, 1988, p.20.
- 3) Judicial letter to the Court of Directors, 31st March, 1834, No.3 (WBSA).
- 4) Proclamation of Delhi, (In Ball, Charles, *The history of the Indian Mutiny*, London & New York, 1887, Vol - II), p.630-32.
- 5) Proclamation of Rao Sahib, 7th November, 1858, in *Ibid*, p.546.
- 6) Chakraborty, Kaushik, *Decolonising the revolt of 1857. Colonial order, rebel order, rebel vision and the Sahkespearean Weltans Chauung of the Bengali Babu*, Kolkata, Readers Service, 2007, p.47.
- 7) *Ibid.*, p.201.
- 8) Mead, Henry, *The Sepoy revolt*, London, 1858, Reprint, New Delhi, 1986, p.122.
- 9) Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p.202.
- 10) *Ibid.*
- 11) Delhi proclamation, in *Ball-I*, p.459.
- 12) Delhi proclamation, in Nigam, N.K, *Delhi 1857*, New Delhi, 1957, p.86.
- 13) *Ibid.*, pp.83, 86.

- 14) Kanpur proclamation, in Shepherd, p.29.
- 15) Bareilly Proclamation, in Ball-II, *op. cit.*, p.29.
- 16) Delhi proclamation, in Nigam, *op. cit.*, p.88.
- 17) Kanpur proclamation, in Shepherd, W.J, *Massacre at Cawnpore, Lucknow, 1879*, New Delhi, 1973, p.29.
- 18) Lenin, V.I, *Collected Works*, Vol.20, Moscow, 1977, p.397.
- 19) Thapar, Romila, *Interpreting Early India, in History and Beyond*, New Delhi, 2000, p.151.
- 20) Chakraborty, Kaushik, *op. cit.*, p.215.
- 21) *Ibid.*, p.219.
- 22) Joshi, P.C, *1857 in our History*, New Delhi, NBT, 2007, p.188.
- 23) Ray, Rajat Kanta, *The Felt Community commonality and mentality before the emergence of Indian Nationalism*; OUP, New Delhi, 2007 p.356.
- 24) Habib, Irfan, The coming of 1857, in *social scientist*, Vol.26, No.1-4, January – April, 1998.
- 25) Singh, Randhir, “*Struggle for Socialism*”, New Delhi, Aakar, 2010 pp.146-149.
- 26) *Ibid.*, pp.162-163.

BIBLIOGRAPHY**PRIMARY SOURCES****LETTERS**

Lt. Col. H.M. Durand, officiating Agent Governor General for Central India to Edmonstone ESQ, Secy. to the Gov. of India, Foreign department, secret proceedings, 18th December, 1857, No.453, NAI, New Delhi.

Letter from Gordon to Erskin, 17th Sep.1857, Foreign Secret consultation, 18th December, no. 237, NAI, New Delhi.

From F.O Mayne, Magistrate of Banda C.B Thornil, offg.commr. 4th division Banda, 4th August, 1858, Foreign Department, political consultation, 8th October, 1858, No.13, NAI, New Delhi.

Translation of a letter arrived from Lucknow, 15th Feb.1858: For Dept.political, 30th Dec.1859, Supplement No.952, NAI, New Delhi.

Translation of letter from Naipal Singh to Thakur Bulkari singh and Situl Singh: for Dept.secret.cond.25th June 1858, Cons.No.57, NAI, New Delhi.

Letter chief of staff to Edmonstone, 19th June, 1858: For Dept. Secret cons, 30th July 1858, Cons., No.76.NAI, New Delhi

Judicial letter to the court of Directors, 31st March, 1834, No.3, WBSA.

BOOKS

- Brooks, Adams, *The Laws of civilization and decay*, England, 1896
- Gubbins, M.R, *An Account of the mutinies in oudh and of the siege of Lucknow presidency* (2nd ed.), London, 1858
- Holmes, T. Rice, *A History of the Indian Rebellion* (5th ed.), London, 1898
- Inglis, Julia, *The Siege of Lucknow: A Diary*, (London: James R. Osgood, Meilvaine & Co. 1892)
- Thornil, Marx, *The Personal Adventures and Experiences of a Magistrate during the rise, progress and suppression of the Indian Mutiny*, London, 1884
- Lowe, Thomas, *Central India during the Rebellion of 1857 and 1858*, London, 1896
- Vibert, Edward, *The Sepoy Mutiny as seen by a subaltern*, London, 1898
- Rotton, J.E.W, *The Chaplain's Narrative of the siege of Delhi*, London, 1858

SECONDARY SOURCES**LIST OF ENGLISH BOOKS**

- Alablaster, Anthony, *Revolution*, (New York: World View, 1997)
- Asad, Husain, *British India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal 1857-1947*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970)
- Aziz, Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan: 1857-1964*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967)
- Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar, *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*, (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2004)
- Bali, D.R, *Modern Indian Thought: From RamMohun Roy to JayaPrakash Narayan*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private limited, 1980)
- Beteille, Andre, *Marxism & Class Analysis*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- Bhatia, BM, *History and Social Development: Elites in Modern India*, Vol. I (Delhi: Bharati Printers, 1974)

- Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi, ed, *Rethinking 1857*, (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2007)
- Bhattacharya, Harihar, ed, *Indian Political Thought and Movements: New Interpretations and Emerging Issues*, (Kolkatta: KP Bagchi & Company, 2007)
- Biswas, Anil, *Democracy and Marxism*, (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1993)
- Calvert, Peter, *Revolution and Counter –Revolution*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990)
- Chaudhuri, Sashi Bhusan, *Civil Disturbances during the British Rule in India (1765- 1857)*, (Calcutta: World press, 1955)
- Chakraborty, Kaushik, *Decolonising the Revolt of 1857: Colonial Order, Rebel order, Rebel Vision and the Shakespearean Weltanschauung of the Bengali Babu*, (Kolkatta: Reader Service, 2007)
- Dalrymple, William, *The Last Mughals: The Fall of Dynasty*, (New Delhi: Penguin Group, 2006)
- Dunlop, Robert Henry Wallace, *Service and Adventure with the Khakee Rassalah or Meerut Volunteer Horse during the Mutinies of 1857-58*, (Allahabad: Legend Publications, 1974)
- Edwards, Michael. *Battles of the Indian Mutiny*, (London: B.T. Bastsford, 1963)
- Edwards, William, *Personal Adventures during the Indian Rebellion in Rohilkhund, Futteghuhr and Oudh*, 4th Ed. (Allahabad: Legend Publications, 1974)
- Embree, Ainslie T, *India in 1857: The Revolt against Foreign Rule*, (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1987)
- Fisher, Michael, ed., *The Politics of the British Annexation of India, 1757 – 1857*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993)
- Fisher, Michael, *Indian Travelers and Settlers in Britain 1600-1857*, (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004)
- Habib, Irfan, *Essay in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perception*, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 1995)
- Heehs, Peter, *India's Freedom Struggle 1857-1947 A Short History*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988)

- History of the Indian Revolt and the Expeditions to Persia, China and Japan*, (London: W & R. Chambers, 1859)
- Husain, SM Azizuddin, *1857 Revisited: Based on Persian and Urdu Documents*, (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2007)
- Hutchinson, David, ed., *Annals of the Indian Rebellion 1857-58*, (London: Charles Knight, 1974)
- Jayapalan, N, *History of the Freedom Movement (1857 to 1947)*, (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1988)
- Jeffrey Robin, Brenan Lance, Masselos Jim, Mayer Preter, Reeves Peter, *India Rebellion to Republic selected writings, 1857-1990*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1991)
- Joshi, P C, *Rebellion 1857*, (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2007)
- Joshi, Vandana, *Social Movements and Cultural Currents 1789-1945*, (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2010)
- Kumar, Deepak, *Science and the Raj 1857- 1905*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997)
- Maxey, Chester. C. *Political Philosophy* New York The Macmillan Company 1948.
- Majumdar, R.C, *Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, 2nd Ed, (Calcutta: Firma KL Mukhopadhyay, 1963)
- Majumder, RC & Chopra PN, *Main Currents of Indian History*, (New Delhi: S.K. Ghai, 1984)
- Malleson, GB, *Indian Mutiny of 1857*, (Delhi: Datta Book Centre, 1977) (First Published in 1891)
- Meguire, John, *The Making of a Colonial Mind: A Quantitative study of the Bhadrakol in Calcutta 1857-1885*, (Canberra: ANU, 1983)
- Metcalf, Thomas R, *The Aftermath of Revolt: in India: 1857-1870*, (London: Princeton University Press, 1965)
- Michael H. Lessnof, *Modern Political Philosophers*, (New York, Routledge, 1987)
- Mittal, S.C, *Haryana: A Historical Perspective*, (New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 1986)

- Mukherjee, Rudrangshu, *Awadh in Revolt - 1857-1858: A Study of Popular Resistance*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984)
- Mukherjee, Rudrangshu, *Spectre of Violence the 1857 Kanpur Massacres*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998)
- Nanda, B.R, *Socialism in India*, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Private Limited, 1972)
- Nigam, NK, *Delhi in 1857*, (Delhi: S. Chand, 1957)
- Parag, Tope, *Tatya Tope's Operation Red Lotus*, (New Delhi: Rupa & Co,2010)
- Palmer, JAB, *Mutiny Outbreak at Meerut in 1857*, (London: Cambridge, 1966)
- Palit, Chittabrata, *Continuities of Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies*, (Kolkatta: Institute of Historical Studies, 2009)
- Regani, Sarojini, *Nizam - British Relations: 1724-1857*, (New Delhi: Concept PublishinCompany,1988)
- Roy, Tapti, *Raj of the Rani*, (New Delhi, Penguin Books, 2006)
- Roy, Tapti, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising - Bundelkhand in 1857*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994)
- Roy, Koushik, ed, *The Uprising 1857 Before and Beyond*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2010)
- Roy, Tirthankar, *The Economic History of India 1857-1947*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006)
- Savarkar, Vinayak Damodar, *The Indian War of Independence 1857*, 8th Ed., (New Delhi: Rajdhani Granthagar, 1970)
- Sen, Sukomal, *Communist Manifesto and Theory of Revolution*, (Calcutta,national book Agency Private Limited,1998)
- Sharma, Suresh K, *1857: A Turning Point in Indian History*, 3 vols. (Jaipur: RBSA, 2005)
- Shastri, Prakash, *Socialistic Thought in India*, (Jaipur: Printwell Publishers, 1985)
- Sherer, JW, *Daily Life during the Indian Mutiny*, (Allahabad: Legend Publication, 1974)
- Singh, Zabar, *The East India Company and Marwar (1803 - 1857)*, (Jaipur: Panchsheel, 1973)

- Singh, Randhir, *Struggle for Socialism: Some Issues*, (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2010)
- Srivastava, Khushhali Lal, *The Revolt of 1857 in Central India – Malwa*, (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1966)
- Srivastava, KV, *The Great Indian Revolt of 1857: Flames, Fire and Freedom* (New Delhi: Regal Publication, 2007)
- Stokes, Eric, *The Peasant Armed: The Indian Revolt of 1857*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)
- Sen, Surendranath, *Eighteen Fifty seven*, (New Delhi: Publication Division, Government of India, 1957)
- Subramanian, Lakshmi, *History of India 1707-1857*, (New Delhi, Orient Blackswan, 2010)
- Taylor, PJO, *What Really Happened during the Mutiny: A Day - by - Day Account of the Major Events of 1857-1859 in India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997)
- Tumin, Melvin M, *Social Stratification: The Forms and Functions of Inequality*, (New Delhi, Prentice Hall of India Private Limited, 1992)
- Vashistha, Vijay Kumar, *1857 Revolt in the Princely State Jaipur*, (Jodhpur, Book Tresures, 2008)
- Yadav, KC, *Delhi in 1857*, 3 Vols. (Gurgaon: The Academic Press, 1980)
- Yechuri, Sitaram, *The Great Revolt: A Left Appraisal* (New Delhi: People's Democracy Publications, 2007)

BENGALI BOOKS

- Basu, Shymaprasad, *Bharatiyo Mahabidroho*, (Kolkatta: Patra Bharati, 2007)
- Bandyopadhyay, Premangshukumar, *Tulsi Pata Gangajaler Sapath: Baracpurer Prothom sipahi Bidroho*, (Kolkatta: K.P.Bagchi and Company, 2006)
- Chattopadhyay, (Sara) *Bharater Swadhinata Songramer Kromo Bikash*, 2nd ed., (Calcutta: West Bengal State Book Board, 1990)
- Devi, Mahasweta, *Collected Works, Vol. 1, Jhansir Rani*, (Kolkata: Dey's Publishers, 2001)
- Ghosh, Anandagopal, Das, Nilangshushekhar, ed., *Sanyasi Theke Sipahi Bidroho: Prasongo Uttarbanga*, (Malda: Sangbedan, 2011)

Gupta, Rajanikanta, *Sipaijuddher Itihash*, 5 Vols, (Calcutta: Nabapatra Prakash, 1388) (First published (1286 Bng))

Roy, Aniruddha, *Prosango: Mahabidroho 1857-1858*, (Kolkatta: National Book Agency, 2008)

Roy, Suprakash, *Mahabidroho o Tarpar*, (Kolkatta: Radical, 2008)

Sengupta, Promod, *Bharatiya Mahabidroha*, (Calcutta: Subarna Rekha, 1981)

MAGAZINE

The Sandhyani Magazine, March 01, 2009.

Mahabidroher Dersho Bachor, *Digangan*, (New Delhi: Bengal Association, 2006).

Drohokal, 1857, (New Delhi: Bengal Association, 2009).

JOURNALS

Archana Prasad, “The 1857 Rebellion: A Pre-History”, *People’s Democracy*, vol. XXXI, no. 09, March 04, 2007

Basu, Jyoti, “The 1857 Revolt in India: Lessons For Us”, *People’s Democracy*, vol. XXXI, no. 10, March 11, 2007

Gupta, Amit Kumar, “Bourgeoisisation And the Great Revolt of 1857”, *People’s Democracy*, vol. XXXI, no. 20, May 20, 2007

Habib, Irfan, “Marx and Engels on the Revolt of 1857”, *People’s Democracy*, vol. XXXI, no. 8, February 25, 2007

Habib, Irfan, “The Coming of 1857”, *Social Scientist*, vol.26, no. 1-4, January-April,1998.

Marx, Karl, “The Revolt in India”, *People’s Democracy*, vol. XXXI, no. 19, May 13, 2007

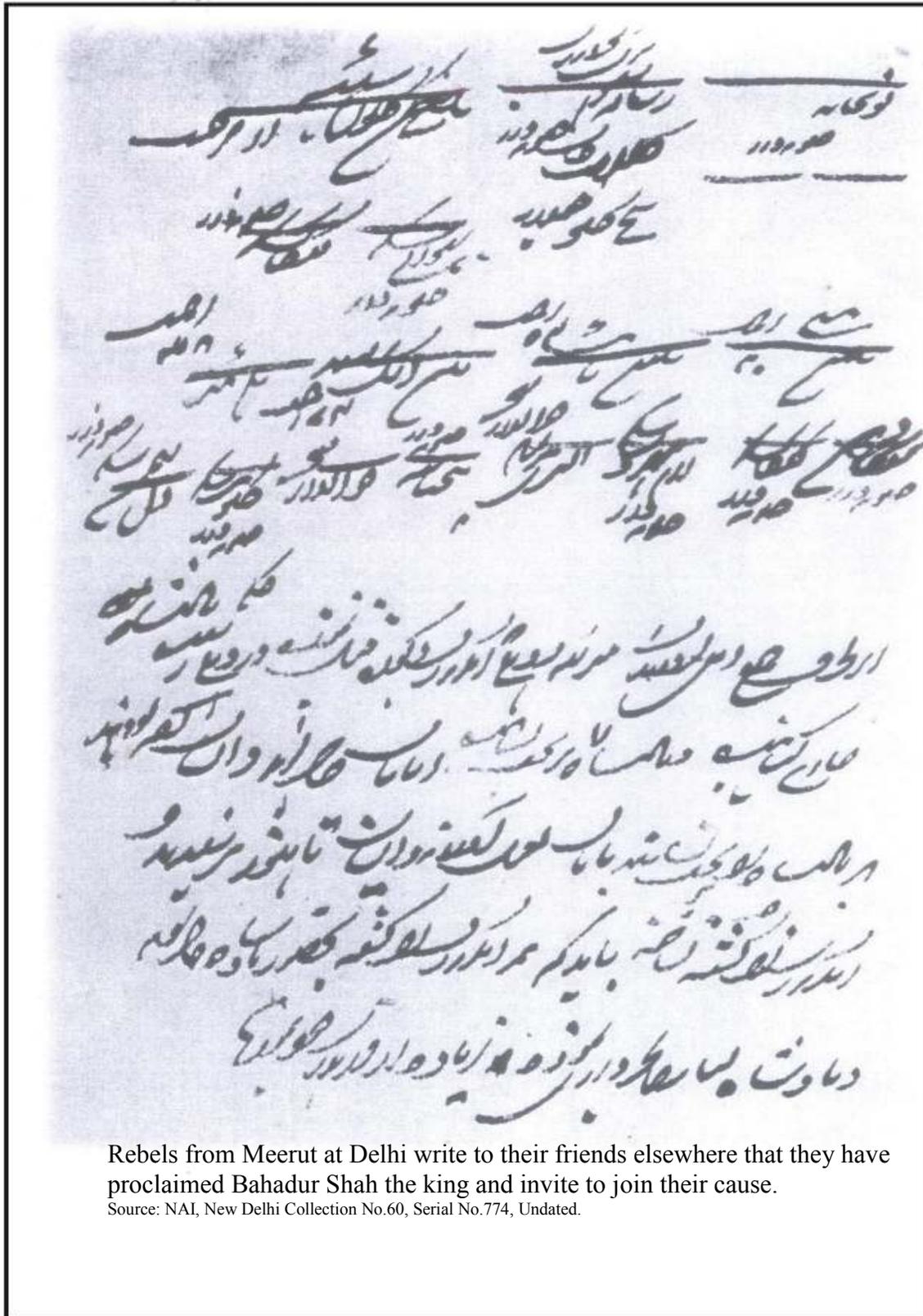
Mukherjee, Hiren, “1857 And Our Struggle For Freedom”, *People’s Democracy*, vol. XXXI, no. 19, May 13, 2007

Namoodiripad, EMS, “Sepoy Mutiny Or Popular Revolt”, *People’s Democracy*, vol. XXXI, no. 19, May 13, 2007

Pati, Biswamoy, “The Revolt And Its Historiography: An Overview”, *People’s Democracy*, vol. XXXI, no. 05, February 04, 2007

- Patnaik, Utsa, "Patriotic And Comprador Zamindars In The Great Rebellion Of 1857", *People's Democracy*, vol. XXXI, no. 11, March 18, 2007
- Renascent Bengal (1817-1857)* Proceedings of a Seminar organized by the Asiatic Society, Calcutta with a foreword by Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, 1972
- Robb, Peter, "On the Rebellion of 1857: A Brief History of an Idea." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42 (19), 2007
- Sharan, Shree Shankar, "150 Years of 1857", *Mainstream*, vol. XLV, no.32, July 29, 2007
- Singh, Lata, "Courtsans and the 1857 Revolt: Role of Azeezun in Kanpur", *The Indian Historical Review*, vol. XXXIV, no. 2, July 2007, New Delhi, pp-58-78
- Sweezy, Paul M, *Four Lectures on Marxism*, (Kharagpur: Cornerstone Publications, 2008)
- Yechuri, Sitaram, "Remember the Glorious Chapter with All Its Ramifications", *People's Democracy*, vol. XXXI, no. 42, October 2007

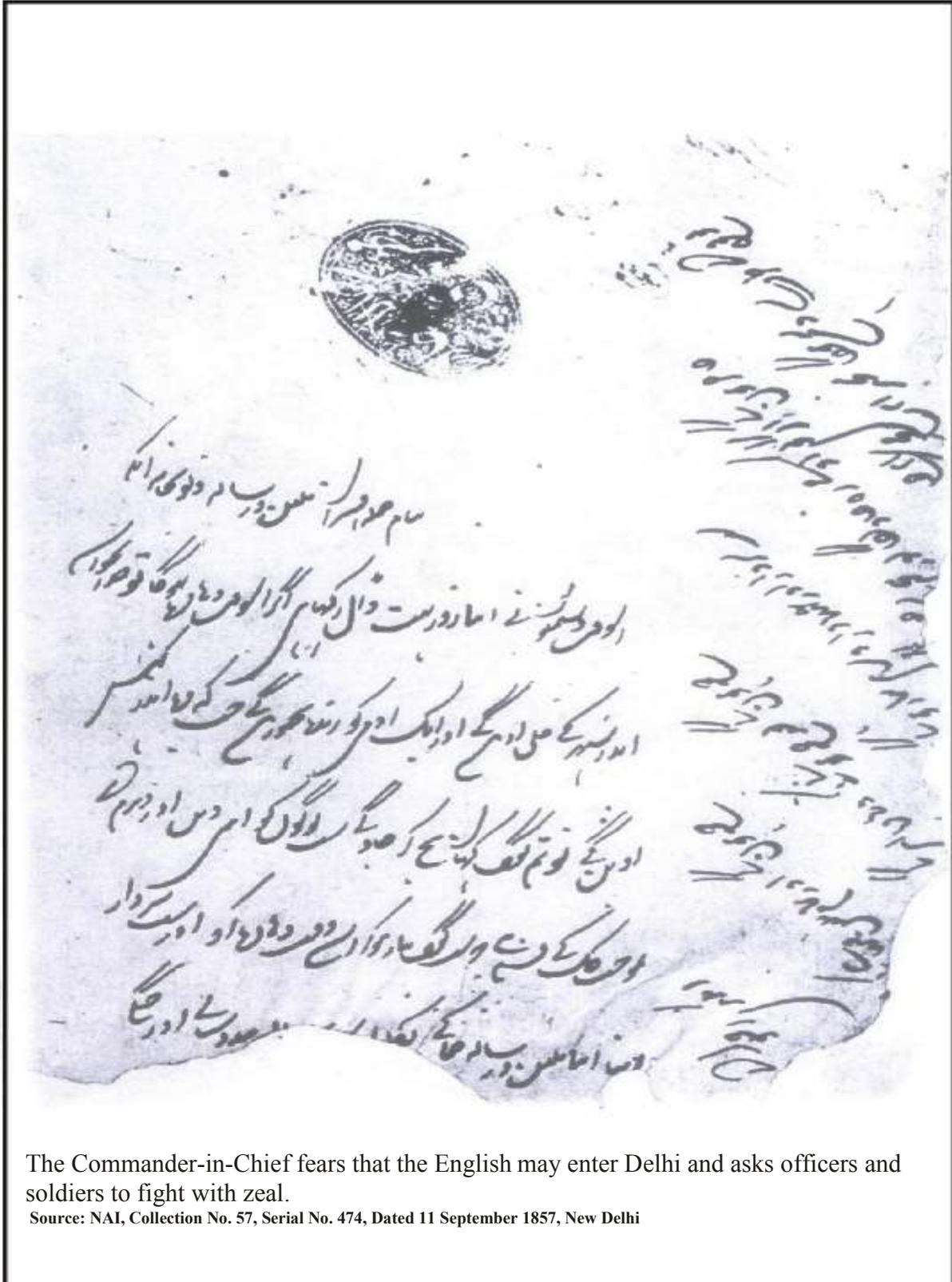
APPENDIX A



Rebels from Meerut at Delhi write to their friends elsewhere that they have proclaimed Bahadur Shah the king and invite to join their cause.

Source: NAI, New Delhi Collection No.60, Serial No.774, Undated.

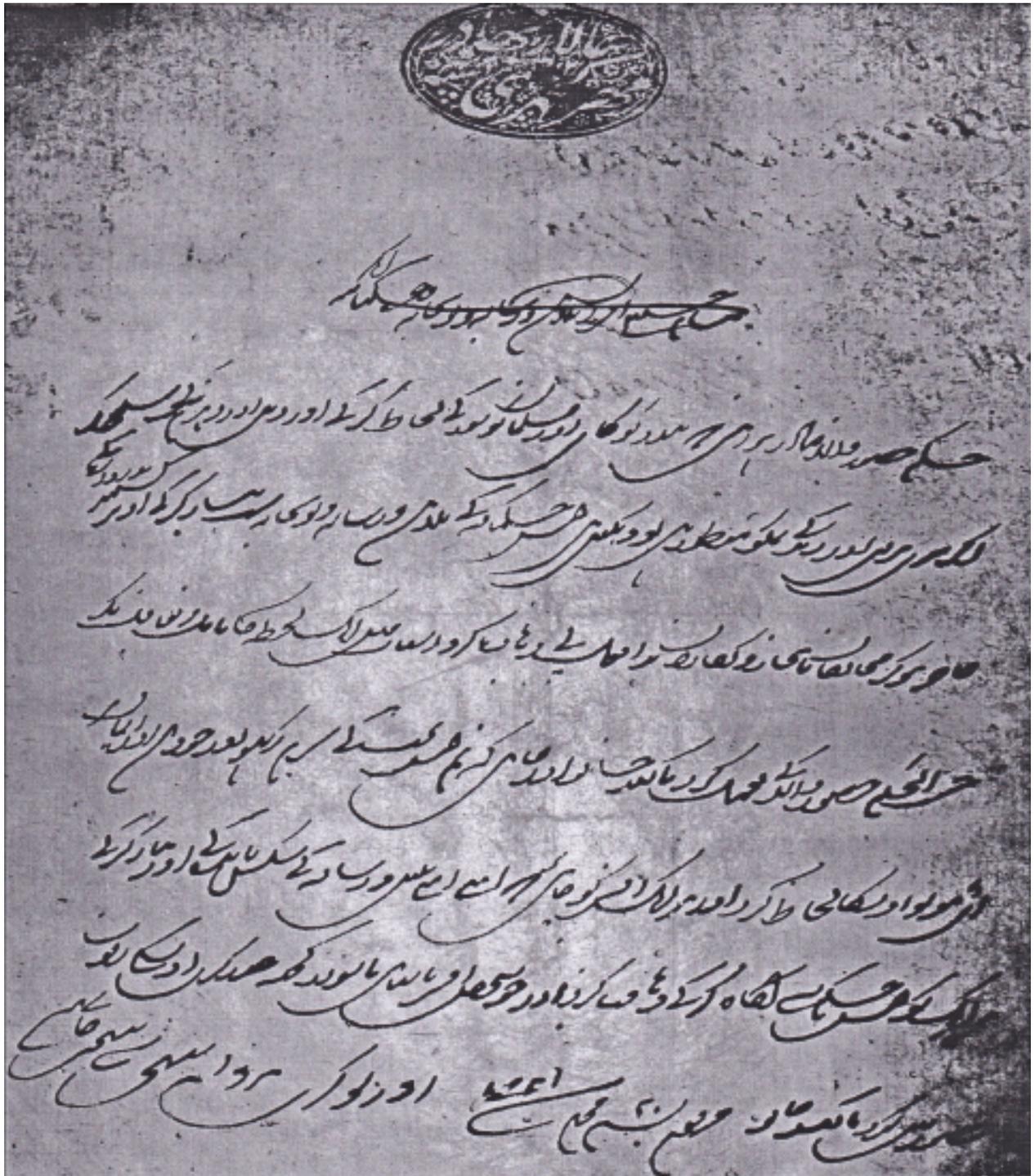
APPENDIX B



The Commander-in-Chief fears that the English may enter Delhi and asks officers and soldiers to fight with zeal.

Source: NAI, Collection No. 57, Serial No. 474, Dated 11 September 1857, New Delhi

APPENDIX C



The C-in-C charges the Hindu and Musalman troops by all that they hold sacred to fight with effort against the British.

Source NAI, Collection No. 57. Serial No 461, Dated 10th Sep.1857

INDEX**A**

Agriculture-9, 16-17, 19-20, 42,109;

Aggressive-16, 21;

Assessment- 20, 27, 34, 50, 56,
58,149,191;

Administration- 20-24, 37-38, 61, 71,
73, 77,110,172;

B

Bania-56;

Bengal- 15, 20, 32, 38, 48-50, 54, 56-57,
70, 75, 80, 82-83,102,109,118,171,173;

Bhumij- 16;

Bourgeois-9, 30, 32-33, 35, 39-
40,151,157,162-163,170,178-179;

Brahmin – 80,109,126,165

C

Capitalist – 5, 8,13,19,33

Chappati – 66-67

Civil–6,27,65,69,76,81,83,101,104,
107,126, 174

Civilization – 17, 38, 34

Colonial-11, 22, 29, 32, 38, 42, 63- 64,
71, 75, 99-116-117,119-120, 122, 123,
127,

129, 133,150,164,167-170,175,178,180;

Commercialization- 17, 18

Country-4,19,23-35,30,33,36-37,39-
40,48,54-57,61,66- -
67,70,74,79,83,103,106,110,132,149,156
,162,173,180,189

Company–

12,16,19,23,27,30,53,57,60,63,69-80,
168,189

D

Dacca – 26, 55, 82

Dalhousie – 49, 57,121

Destroy-6,31,37-38,56,

75,114,158,168,170

Decades – 31, 144

Development – 2, 6-8, 18-19, 33, 39,

40,153-154,160,163-164,167,176,180

Devoted – 26

Decisively – 18

Disruption – 159, 168

E

Enemy - 9, 22, 69, 83,103,113,130,151

Equality – 10, 13, 17-18, 192

Exploitation-1,4,12,16,19-20,24,29,34,

38-39,41-42,48,57,68,107,126,129, 146,

151, 153,179,190

F

Freedom-9,13,21,24,37,155,159,160,

164

Firangi – 70,132

Foreign- 24, 40, 54-55, 83, 111, 116,

124, 159,166,179,181

G

Gora – 70,132

Government-11,15,17,21-22-23,25,

38,49,55,57,61-62,74,84,105,162,169,

180,190

H

Hindu – 26, 31, 37, 55, 60, 63,

74,108,113-114,116,120-

122,126,128,156,166,190

Hazrat Mahal – 124

Hyderabad - 106

I

Imperialism - 4, 11,33,39,42

Independence – 1, 12, 22-23, 27, 33, 49,

83,116,121-22,166,179

Indian—1,13,21-22,27,29-30,36-38,

48,52-55,59,62,66,72,77-79,82,84,101,

109,116,121-123,127,155-156,

159-169,171-175, 177-183,187,189-191

Inhabitant – 16, 81,105

J

Jhansi—51,53, 80,108,110-112, 115,

116-117,125

L

Landlords – 17.20, 26-27, 29, 33, 40, 55,
65-66,168,176

Land—4,10,15-16,20-22,24-33,40-42,

50,53,55,59,63,65-66,74,77,117,161,

169,173,

M

Masses—1,3,7,9-10,12-13,15,16,21,

26,27-29,30,34,49,

61,62,66,68,71,74,77,81,102,104,109,11

5,126,131-33,144-145,169,176,179

Mahajans – 107

Mahomedan - 109

Mopla – 27, 28, 50

Monopoly – 6,8,54,109

Movement-1,3-5,10,13,22,30,34-37,40-

41,81,101,103,105,107,121-122,126,

147,152,156-158,169,171,176,181,194,

Muslim – 26-27, 31, 55,109, 113,120-

121, 127,166, 177,190

N

Nation – 4

Nationalism—11,36,118,123,125,154-

157, 173,178,180,183,188,

Nawab – 48.51,57,67,108,112,131

O

Oudh – 57, 81, 99,104

P

Pagalpanthi – 26

People–4,10,15,16,21,25,30,42,50,52-53,61-62,65,67,69-70,73,74,79,103,110,124,133, 145,158, 160,166,178,190

Peasant–1,15-17,22,27,34,42,51-52,71, 78,99,127,130.132,162,168,171,179, 188, 191

Peninsular - 104

Poverty – 20, 32

Poligar – 30

Prabasi – 118,

Population – 9, 11, 19, 35, 37, 40, 50, 64, 81-82,100,107,121,156,165,193

R

Revolt–1-2,4,6,12,28,48,51-52,68,75,79,83,101,105,127,133-134,152,168,191

Rebel–51,66,75-76,100.103,105,113, 125, 129,152,168,191,194

Religion–31,48,71-72,77,100,110,113, 114,120, 125,156,169,178,188,190

S

Santal – 21-24, 26-28, 32, 42, 50,100

Sepoy – 21, 50, 52-53, 57, 60, 65, 70-84,101,104,109,124-125,127-128,188,191

Sidhu - 21

Socialism–4-7,9-10,17-

18,35,68,144,145-149,152-

153,171,173,175,177,180-182,192,193-194

Sradhha – 118

Subedar – 53, 67, 76

Sudra – 109

T

Talukdar – 50, 58, 77-79

V

Village-20,21,24,27,29-30,36-

38,48,52,55,59,62,66,72,77-

79,82,84,101,109,116,119,121-

123,127,155,159-169,171-175,177-

183,187,189-191,

W

Worker-1,8-10,13,16,30-31,41,107,

161-162, 173,176-177,179,181

Z

Zamindar – 51-53, 56-57, 65,127

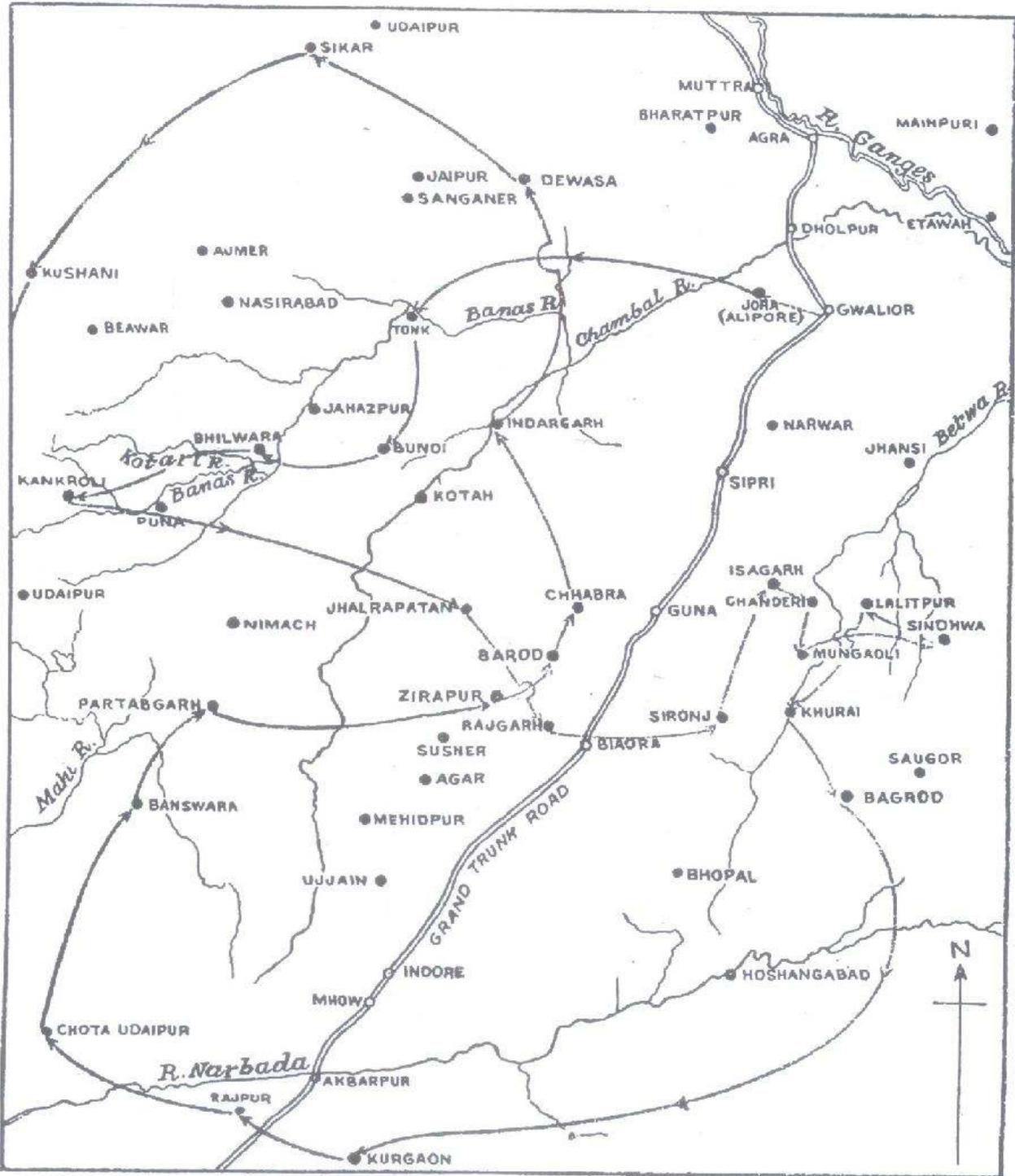
LIST OF MAPS

1. M1-Tatya's Marathon race;
Source: NAI, New Delhi
2. M2- Dispositions of Tatya tope's troops, 17th November, 1857
Source: NAI, New Delhi
3. M3- Battle of Cawnpore, 27 nov. 1857
Source: NAI, New Delhi
4. M4- Central India during revolt (1857)
Source: NAI, New Delhi
5. M5- Oudh and Rohilkhand during Revolt
Source: NAI, New Delhi
6. M6- Various places of Delhi during revolt, 8th June-19th September, 1857
Source: NAI, New Delhi
7. M7- The war of 1857 in Delhi. 26th May to 25th August 1857
Source: NAI, New Delhi
8. M8- India during 1857. Various Centres of Revolt
Source: Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi

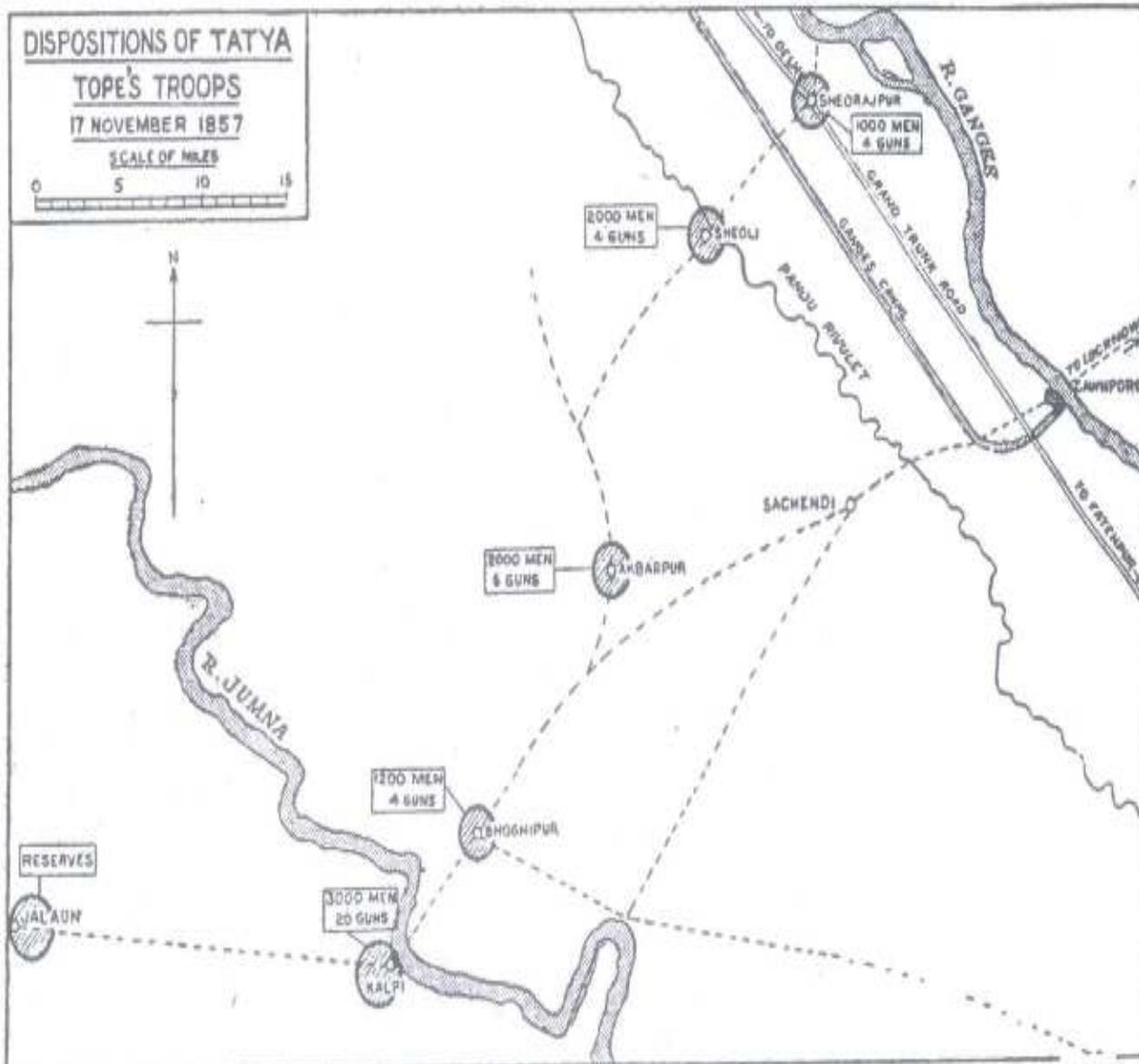
M1 TATYA'S MARATHON RACE

21 JUNE 1858 — 8 APRIL 1859

SCALE OF MILES



Source: NAI, New Delhi

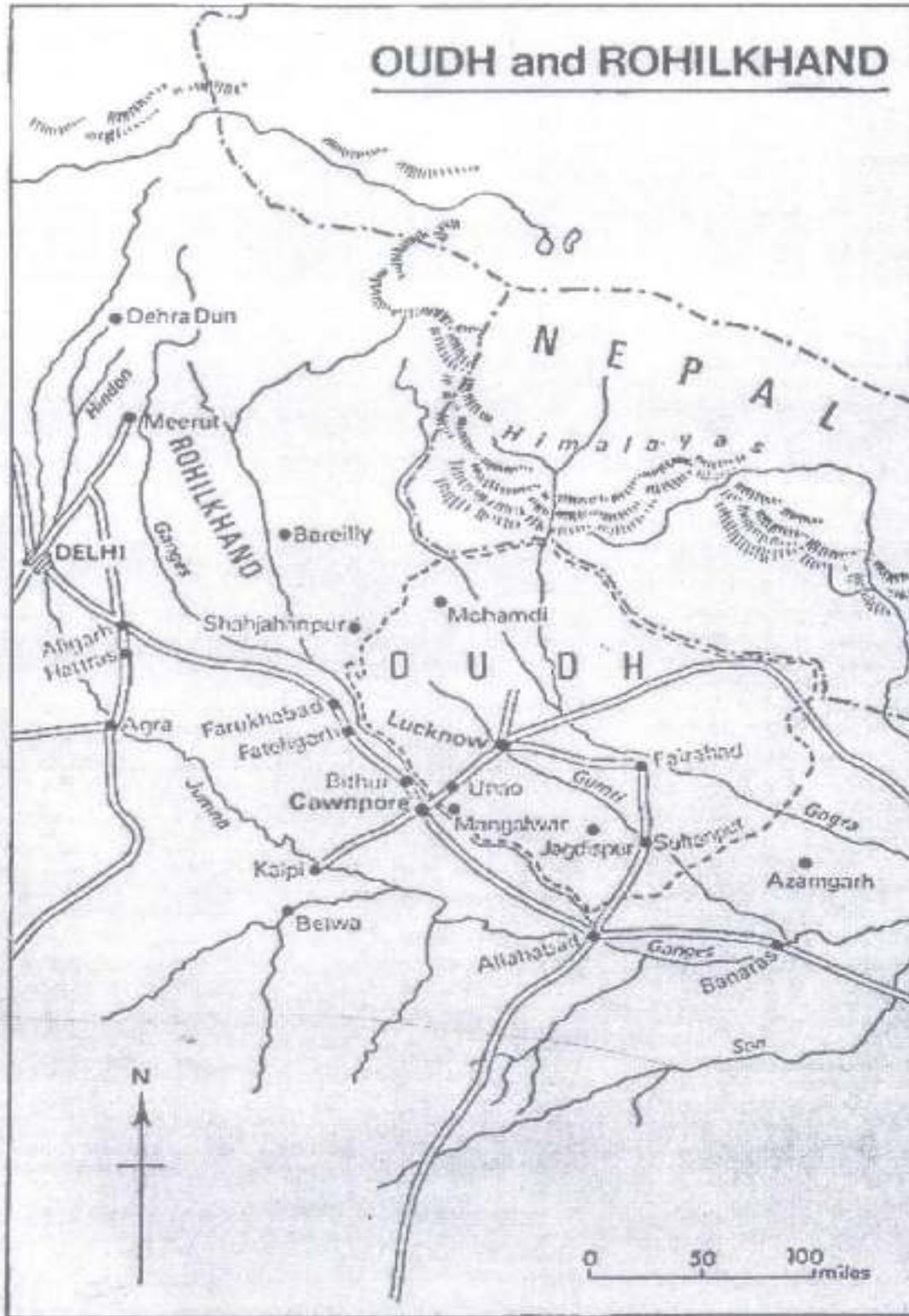


Source: NAI, New Delhi



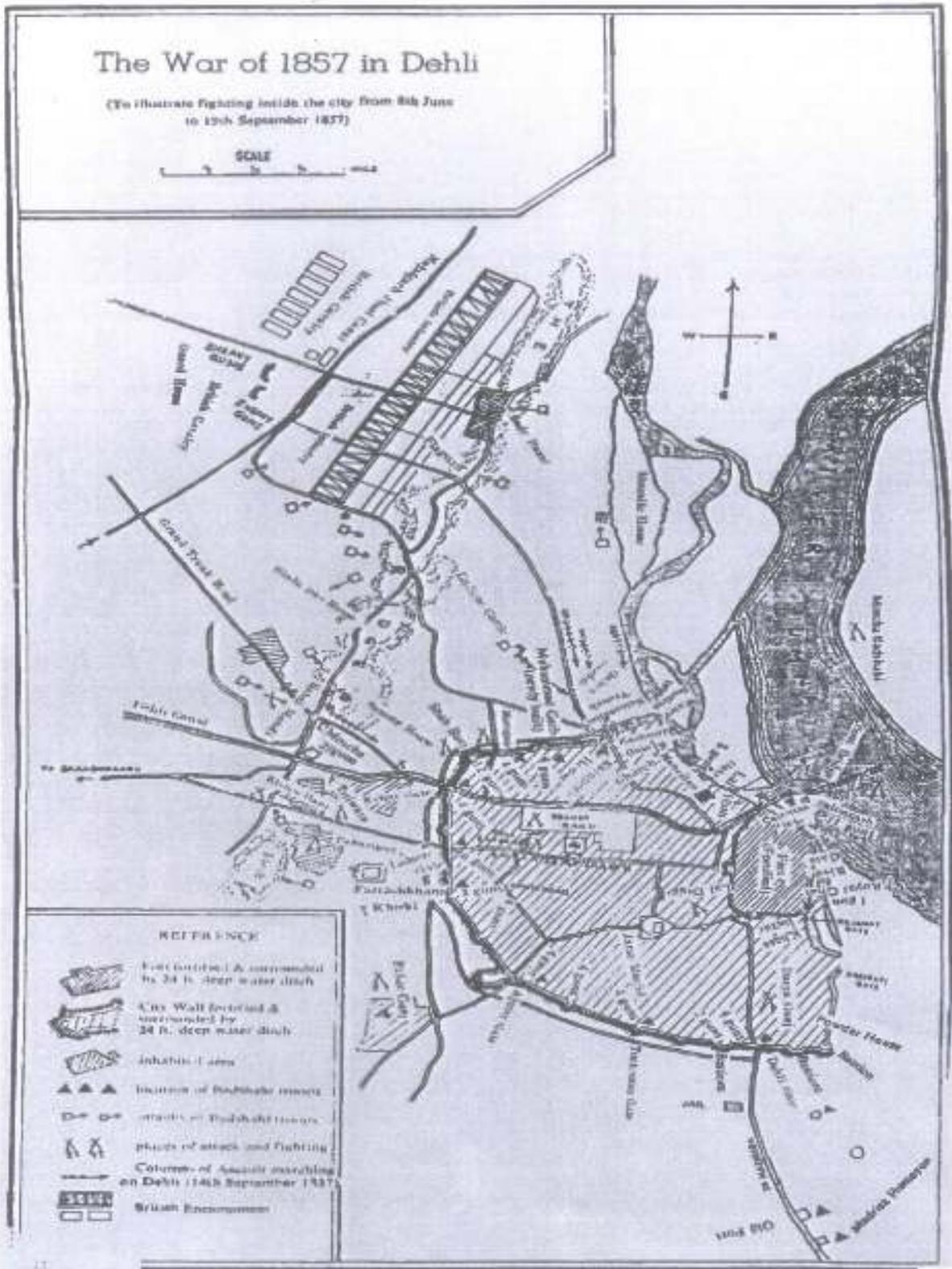
Central India during Revolt (1857)

Source: NAI, New Delhi

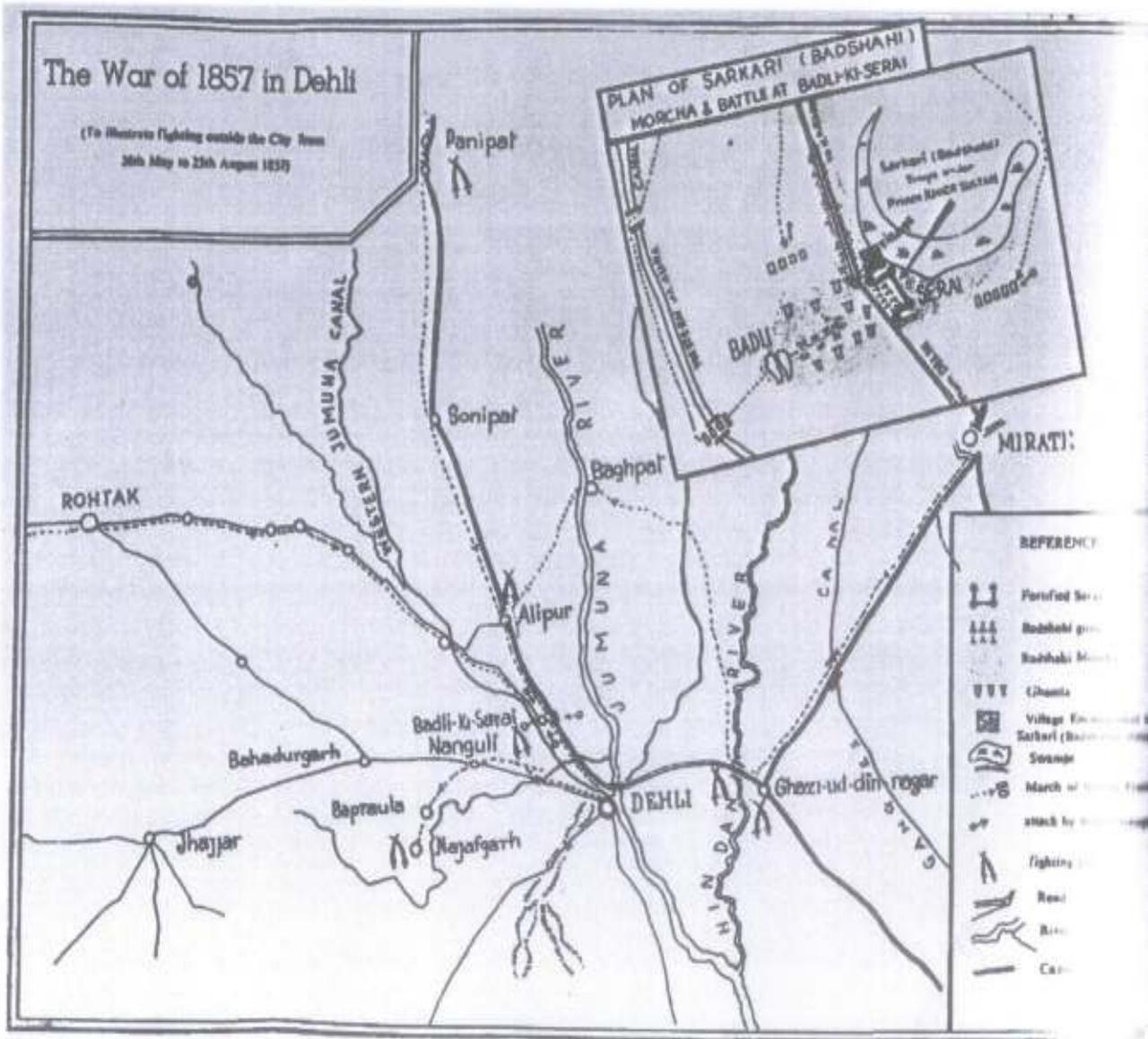


Oudh and Rohilkhand during Revolt (1857)

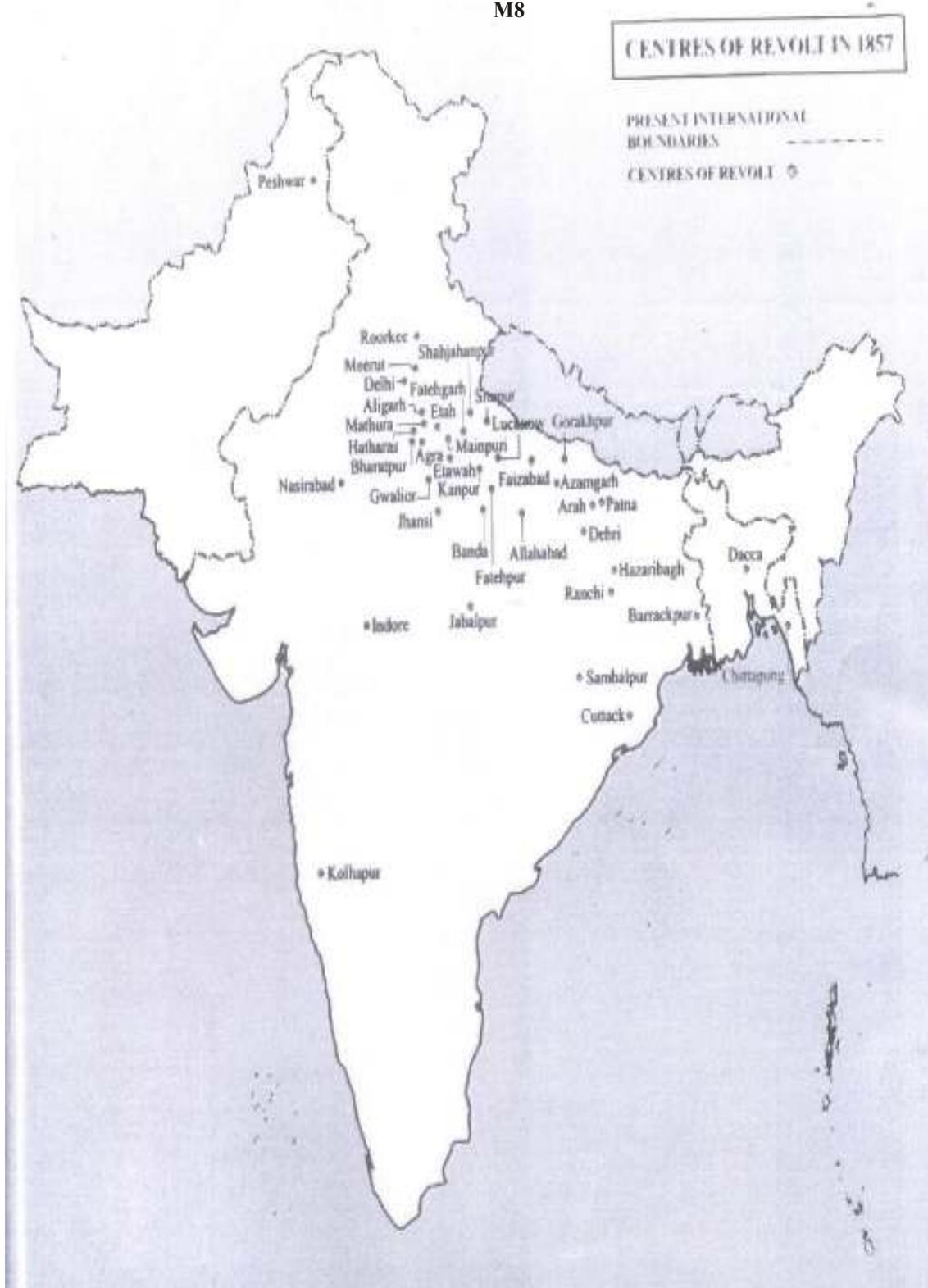
Source: NAI, New Delhi



Source: NAI, New Delhi



Source: NAI, New Delhi



India during Revolt (1857)

Source: Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi

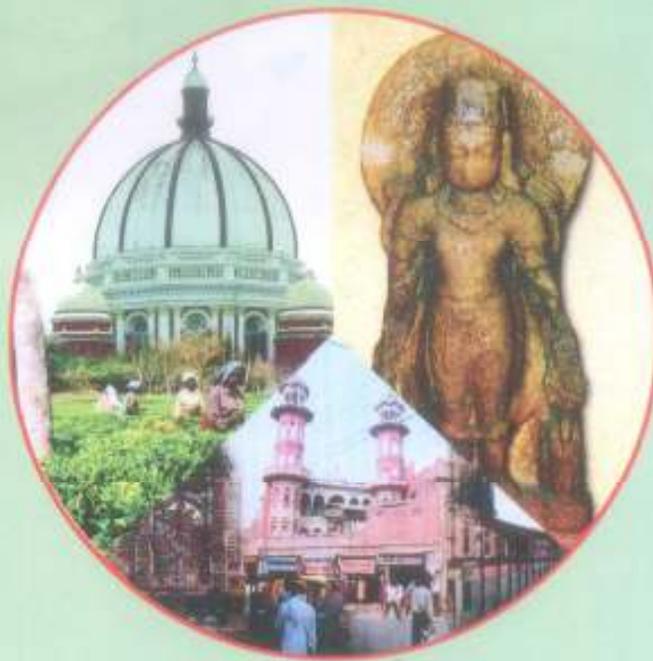
ISSN: 2229-4880

Karatoyā

NORTH BENGAL UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF HISTORY

Vol. 4

March 2011



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL
Raja Rammohunpur, Dist. Darjeeling

Karatoyā : North Bengal University Journal of History
Volume 4 March 2011

(A Refereed and Peer Reviewed Journal Published Annually)

Editorial Office

Department of History
University of North Bengal, P.O. North Bengal University,
District: Darjeeling, West Bengal, INDIA, Pin - 734 013
Telephone: +91-353-2776351
e-mail: historydept.nbu@gmail.com

Editorial Board

Editor-in-Chief
Dr. Anita Bagchi

Associate Editor
Mrs. Dahlia Bhattacharya

Editorial Assistance
Mr. Varun Kumar Roy

Members

**Prof R. Roy Sanyal, Prof. A. G. Ghosh, Prof. I. Sarkar
Dr. B.K. Sarkar, Mr. S. K. Das, Mr. S. Lama**

The Revolt of 1857: A Search for Secular Approach

Malay Saha

Secularism is a concept where government or other entities adopt the policy of separating the state from religion and/or religious beliefs. In one sense, secularism means a freedom from governmental imposition of religion upon the people within a state that is neutral on matters of religious belief. When someone caters to the word secularism, one certainly lays down two different paths for religion and politics to tread on. In medieval Europe there was a strong tendency for religious persons to despise human affairs and to meditate on God and the afterlife. As a reaction to this medieval tendency, secularism, at the time of the Renaissance, exhibited itself in the development of humanism, when people began to show more interest in human cultural achievements and the possibilities of their fulfilment in this world, which for some analysts were the initiation of Renaissance. From its birth, secularism started its journey with a view that state will remain free from religious affiliation. Another important feature of secularism was that religion is only an individual affair and in public affair religion should have no role to control or lead human life. It mainly arose to fight against Christian laws which led to blasphemy in medieval Europe. Secularism never denied religion in human life but it denies the necessity and importance of religion in politics. In the present day world, the term secularism encompasses all values and beliefs devoid of any religious-spiritual code.

In a general way, the definition of secularism is taken to be as a belief in the fulfillment of life in this world through material instrument, a belief in natural causation that there is a cause behind every event of nature located in natural laws, recognition of reason, free inquisition and conduct experiment as intermediary of human vocation, inviolability of each person irrespective of accidents of birth and inherent human rights to freedom and autonomy. In another sense, it refers to the view that human activities and decisions, especially political ones, should be based on evidence and fact unbiased by religious influence.¹

It has been argued that secularism is a movement toward societal modernization. This type of secularism, on a social or philosophical level, has often occurred but secularism on a social level is less prevalent.² Within countries as well, different political movements support secularism for varying reasons.³ Religious beliefs are widely considered a relevant part of the political discourse in India. This contrasts with other countries (Western) where religious references are generally considered out-of-place in mainstream politics. Positive ideals behind the secular society are —

- a. Deep respect for individuals and the small groups, of which they are a part,
- b. Equality of all people,
- c. Breaking down of the barriers of religious differences.⁴

In the Indian context, secularism from the mid 19th century has been viewed from a very positive dimension. The great revolt was a watershed in the history of modern India. It marked the first national challenge to the British rule in India, emboldened the growth of Indian nationalist politics and presaged significant constitutional changes in British India.⁶ The nineteenth century India witnessed many anti-imperialist uprisings against British imperialism. Amongst the most significant were the Kol Uprising of 1831, the Santhal Uprising of 1855, and the Kutch Rebellion, which lasted from 1816 until 1832. There was also precedence of a soldier's mutiny when Indian soldiers in Vellore (Tamil Nadu, Southern India) mutinied in 1806. Although unsuccessful, it led to the growth of unofficial political committees of soldiers who had several grievances against their British overlords. The 1857 revolt in India was much more powerful. The various societal fringes that existed during the revolt were broken up amongst various class and religious divisions since long. But when the revolt took place such division or barriers simply withered, where one can witness groups fighting against a single exploiter irrespective of their caste or religion. Such amalgamation of barriers can be attributed to a sudden birth of a sense of equality and secularism among the rebels who fought against the East India Company. One may also note that the barriers disappeared amongst the rebels only during the revolt. Difference existed, before and continued to exist even after the revolt. In this paper an attempt will be made to highlight the cohesive attempt of the sepoys against the common enemy as a whole. The revolt started with the mutiny of Indian sepoys over the use of greased cartridges, but the sepoys were soon joined by broader sections of people whose economic, political and social rights were encroached and had been exploited by the East India Company. The unique feature of the 1857 revolt was the solidarity amongst the rebels cutting across religious and cultural barriers. Leaders of the revolt issued proclamations to stress the importance of communal amity, emphasizing the need of unity of the Hindus and the Muslims to join hands together to drive out the Britishers and protect their own rights, customs and rituals. For the colonised, the feeling was of patriotism, sacrifice and of an overarching solidarity cutting across the traditional divides in Indian society. The Azamgarh proclamation⁷ called upon the Indians of all classes and of all religions to rise up against tyranny of the British. The rebel leader Feroz shah's proclamation of August 1857 reiterated the same national spirit: "it is well known to all that in this age, the people of Hindustan, both Hindus and Mohammedans, are being ruined under the tyranny and oppression of the infidel and treacherous English".⁸

Historians have also drawn our attention to such examples of muslim rebel leaders banning sacrifices of cows during the Id festival to avoid any Hindu- Muslim discord. The striking feature of the revolt of 1857 was that both the Hindus and the Muslims assiduously organized the front against the foreign rule. Hindu – Muslim unity was visible among soldiers and people as well as among leaders.⁹ The frustration the sepoys felt was largely caused by the policy of organizing the army by the British Imperial Government. For reasons of convenience, the British recruited soldiers for the Bengal army from an area where people spoke and understood the same language namely; Hindustani.¹⁰ Rules were framed in 1850 to include the stipulation that upper caste men only would be recruited to the Bengal army. At the same time in order to encourage cohesive action at command, divisions on religious

lines were not introduced in the Bengal army. Imperialism had not discovered till then that it could use everywhere religious divisions between Hindu and Muslims. For this lapse they were censured by a loyal official and future educationist, Syed Ahmed Khan, when he wrote his book *Asbab-e-Bagawat-e-Hind* (causes of the Indian rebellion), in which he argued that it was a mistake for the British government to put both Hindu and Muslim sepoys in the same regiments and companies, for when they shed their blood together, they became closer than brothers to each other, and could no longer be used against each other. Soldiers of this modern army, which had very little to do with the Indian ruling classes of older days, and which was perhaps the most numerous modern element in Indian society of that time, had thus evolved two important features. It was very highly caste sensitive, and yet it was not communal.¹¹ It was stated repeatedly on the floor of the British parliament that both the Talukders and the Hindu-Muslim peasants of Oudh had joined hands in the rebellion against the British government and the tie was strengthened by the proclamation of the Mughal prince Feroz shah (25th august 1857) the pundits, fakirs, and learned men, both Hindu and Muslim, would be given lands, provided they declare in favour of the rebels. Starting out as a revolt of the sepoys-it was soon accompanied by a rebellion of the civil population, particularly in the North Western Provinces and Oudh. The masses gave vent to their opposition to British rule by attacking government buildings and prisons. They raided the "treasury", charged on barracks and court houses, and threw open the prison gates. The civil rebellion had a broad social base, embracing all sections of society - the territorial magnates, peasants, artisans, religious mendicants and priests, civil servants, shopkeepers and boatmen. For several months after the uprising began in Meerut on May 10, 1857, British rule ceased to exist in the northern plains of India. Muslim and Hindu rulers alike joined the rebelling soldiers and militant peasants, and other nationalist fighters. Among the most prominent leaders of the uprising were Nana Sahib, Tantia Tope, Bakht Khan, Azimullah Khan, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Kunwar Singh, Maulvi Ahmadullah, Bahadur Khan and Rao Tula Ram. Former rulers had their own grievances against the British, including the notorious law on succession, which gave the British the right to annex, any princely state if it lacked "legitimate male heirs". The rebels established a Court of Administration consisting of ten members - six from the army and four from the civilians with equal representation of Hindus and Muslims. The rebel government abolished taxes on articles of common consumption, and penalized hoarding. Amongst the provisions of its charter was the liquidation of the hated 'Zamindari' system imposed by the British and a call for land to the tiller.¹² The support from the kings is good evidence of non communal attitude of the rulers as for example Nana Sahib's world view was not clouded by religious prejudices and the Rani of Jhansi, some of whose most determined fighters were Muslim gunners and Pathan guards. On the supposedly Muslim side, the way the standard of jihad was removed from the Jama Masjid in May 1857 at Delhi, lest it be apprehended as being directed against the Hindus, and all cow and buffalo slaughter was banned at the Muslim Iduz zuha festival in July, it showed the rebels' determination to prevent all religious disputation. At Bareilly, Bahadur Khan, the principal rebel leader, printed an appeal to Hindu chiefs to join the struggle against the British, detailing the attacks on Hindu customs and taboos by the British and offering, on behalf of Muslims, to utterly abjure cow slaughter and the eating of beef.

Rajat kanta Ray has very comprehensively dealt with the attitude of mind of the various sections of the rebels.¹³ He particularly underlines the fact that in the rebellion of 1857, in the minds of most of the participants, even when they were not sepoys, but civilians, the sense of religious differences receded to a surprising degree. Hindu contingents would elect Muslims as their representatives; Muslims contingents would accept a Hindu subedar major as their head. Among the Muslims who voluntarily joined the rebellion, under the impulse of joining a righteous war or jihad there was the same acceptance of the need for Hindus and Muslims coming together to fight for a common cause; the target was the British alone. The author argues that the concept of nation hood, although defined by the modernity, is nevertheless likely to be rooted in older feelings and ideas. Watershed events such as the uprising of 1857 and the wars that replaced the Mughal empire with British rule, along with the general evolution of sub continental identity over centuries, engendered a common emotional experience that formed the psychic foundation of the later nationalist movement.¹⁴

The famous rebel leader and theologian Ahmadullah Shah repeatedly appealed to both Hindus and Muslims to fight unitedly to defend their respective faiths against their English oppressors.¹⁵ During the period of 1857 one rebel leader Bahadur Khan was moving through Bareilly with two banners, one the banner of Islam, a green one and another large banner or the 'Holy Dhvaj'.¹⁶ A similar ceremony had been undertaken by Nana Saheb at Kanpur. On 11th may, 1857 the sepoys of the Meerut regiment captured Delhi and proclaimed the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar as their undisputed leader. The Delhi proclamation also exhorts that 'all Hindus and Mahommedans should be of one mind in this struggle'.¹⁷ A few instances of conflict between members of Hindu and Muslim communities occurred among the civil population. These were reported by spies employed by the English and their veracity has been questioned by competent historians like Mahdi Husain.¹⁸ The reports on battles fought by the rebels consistently show that Hindu and Muslim soldiers and officers fought side by side. A striking feature of the proclamations from the leaders of the rebellion is the oft repeated emphasis on the unity of the Hindus and Muslims in a common struggle. Almost every agenda making public documents on the rebels' side reflected the desire of the leaders of the rebellion to keep their Hindu and Muslim followers united, while denouncing Christians or firangis equal to English. This call for unity, among the Muslims and Hindus, is perhaps to be interpreted in the light of the rebel leaders' perception of secularity. Though a kind of religious fundamentalism had been the inspiration behind the rebellion, the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity was no less strong. The 1857 revolt, which had forged an unshakable unity amongst Hindus and Muslims alike, was an important milestone in our freedom struggle - providing hope and inspiration for greater unity among the Hindus and the Muslims. However, the aftermath of the 1857 revolt brought about dramatic changes in colonial rule. After the defeat of the 1857 national revolt, the British government embarked on a furious policy of "Divide and Rule", fomenting religious hatred between the two as seen never before. Resorting to rumors and falsehoods, they deliberately recast Indian history in highly communal colors and practised pernicious communal politics to divide the Indian masses. That legacy continues to plague the sub-continent even today. However, if

more people become aware of the colonial roots of this divisive communal gulf, it is possible that some of the damage done to Hindu-Muslim unity can be repaired. If Hindus and Muslims can join hand together and collaborate in the spirit of 1857, the sub-continent may yet be able to unshackle itself from it's colonial clutch of the past.

Notes and References

1. Kosmin, Barry A. 'Contemporary Secularity and Secularism.' in (Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, ed.) *Secularism and Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives.* Hartford, CT: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture (ISSSC), 2007.
2. Yavuz, Hakan M. and Esposito, John L. *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gulen Movement.* Syracuse University, 2003. p.xv-xvii.
3. Feldman, Noah. *Divided by God.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005, p.147
4. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
5. Munby, D. L., *The Idea of a Secular Society.* London, Oxford University Press, 1963, pp. 14-32
6. Yechury. S. (ed.), 'The Great Revolt: A Left Appraisal', *People's Democracy*, New Delhi, 2008, p.11.
7. Home Documents of 1857, File No.3, *National Archive*, New Delhi.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Prime Minister's address at Youth Convention for 150 years of First War of Independence, May 9, 2006, New Delhi.
10. Habib, Irfan. 'Remembering 1857, the great revolt: A left appraisal', *People's Democracy*, p.18.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
12. www.jmteens.com/1/revolution_1857.htm
13. Ray. Rajat Kanta, *The Felt Community (Communitality and Mentality before the Emergence of Indian Nationalism)*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003, pp.84-106,114-122.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-38.
15. Yechury. Sitaram (ed.), *Op.cit.*, pp.26-27.
16. A *Dhvaj* is the sacred flag or banner of the *God*, or a hero, or a royal house. It symbolizes Hindu culture.
17. Rizvi. S.A.A., (ed.), *Freedom Struggle in Uttar Pradesh*, Vol.I, Publication Bureau, Uttar Pradesh, 1957, pp.438-39.
18. Hussain. M., *Bahadur Shah II*, Aakar Books, Delhi 1958, pp.313-19.