

A Study of the Revolt of 1857 and its Onward in Mewat

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Abstract – From 1803A.D. TO 1857A.D. the colonial power i.e. the East India Company ruled over Mewat. The colonial power terribly exploited the poor masses of Mewat because the foundation or the very base of this colonial power was mainly based on force, sheer exploitation and on atrocities. How could the bold Mewatis, who were the lovers of freedom, tolerate it? Unfortunately such a situation gave birth to the revolt of 1857. The brave Mewatis continued their fight against the mighty colonial power for a very long time. Now, here, a pertinent question emerges that what were the causes of the revolt of 1857 in Mewat.

ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE OF MEWAT

Because barren and blocky nature of the land of Mewat the economic condition of the people of Mewat was not satisfactory. The Mewatis made good this financial deficiency by resorting to theft stealing and plundering.¹ As the nature condition of Mewat provided them adequate places of shelter after committing such unsocial activities, on the one hand, and it made them bold, warlike and rough and tough, however stood in their way and checked the their Anti-Social activities. This had made their life miserable.

The village communities as well as the village panchayats were very powerful before the company's rule and the people of this region considered themselves completely safe under these institutions. But the Britishers, not only, made these institutions powerless, but also, interfered in the internal matters of The villages. Thus the feeling of insecurity took place among the people.

The land revenue policy of the company was also not in the interest of the peasants. As more than 50% of the production was taken as land revenue from the peasants of the Mewat area of Haryana.² The land revenue was taken Sternly and even a single penny of it was not left with a peasants and, moreover, it was also taken long before the harvest. Thus the condition of the peasants of this reason was very bad.

LAND REVENUE POLICY

The land revenue policy of the princely state of Alwar and

Bharatpur was also not in the interest of the peasants of Mewat. As in both States more than 50% of the total production was taken as land revenue from the peasants and this revenue was taken through the farming system or the Ijaradari system. Moreover the peasants of Mewat were being exploited very badly as it is evident from the following accounts. The compiler of District Gazetteer Alwar writes, 'The land revenue had prior to that year (1838A.D.), been levied in kind, the state often claiming half the gross produce, plus a thirteenth of the remainder on account of the expenses of collection. Payment in coin were substituted--3 Lockett's description of the contract system (farming system) of revenue collection is very vivid. As he writes, 'The districts were rented to the highest bidder for the year, or the season, without any, or very little respect to the character of the cultivators. During his short tenure year, he exercises very species of severity and exaction or those placed under him and is himself in turn, fined, degraded expelled and frequently in imprisoned---. The country is consequently in the hand of a number of greedy, unprincipled, adventures. He further writes, 'All land in Alwar (including temples) is formed out..... to the highest bidder with the understanding that half the revenue would be remitted. We also come to know that banias took the contract to revenue collection or became Ijaradars. Because like the noble of Western countries they could not invest their money to establish industry etc. Therefore, they invested their money in taking contract of the revenue collection and through this way they try to become rich. Lockett gives two examples of revenue contractors from the bania caste. In Lachhmangarh, land was formed to jiva ram for Rs 1,75,000. Four districts of the Rao Raja's dominion including Alwar was found to Nand Khan 'a man of property' who assumed the dress

and appearance of a Rajput.⁵ Generally they (banias) lived in towns and cities and therefore they had no connection and sympathy with the peasants of The villages and therefore, they realized revenue very hardly. In comparison to these revenue contractors or Ijaradars the Mughal zamindars had sympathetic attitude towards the peasants. As they almost lived in villages and had connection with the peasants of the villages.

Thus high rate of revenue as well as very harsh behaviour of the farm contractors in collecting revenue created unrest among the peasants of Mewat. 'We know from conventional "texture" sources that several movements against the payment of revenue took place in Mewat; between 1806 and 60 to 1831 in Northern Alwar and in 1818, 1829 and 1831 in eastern Alwar.⁶ Thus from the above account it is evident that there was strong resentment among the peasants of Mewat against the authority and the rulers of the princely state of Alwar and Bharatpur.

As in 'self-sufficient economy' the village artisans were dependent upon the production of the peasants. Because they rendered their services to the peasants and in lieu of them they got share of corn from the peasants. When the peasants suffered, they were also bound to suffer, thus the feeling of discontent was also prevailing among the artisans of Mewat.

During the rule of East India Company many famines occurred in Mewat area of Haryana and these are given below in Table Number 1.

Table No.-1: Famines in Mewat Area of Haryana ⁷

SR. No.	A.D.	Samvat	Remarks
1	1803-04	1860	Scarcity
2	1812-13	1869	Scarcity
3	1817-18	1874	Scarcity
4	1824-25	1881	Scarcity
5	1833-34	1890	Sever Famine
6	1837-38	1894	Sever Famine
7	1843-44	1900	Scarcity
8	1850-51	1907	Scarcity

During those famines the people of Mewat suffered a lot but government did not take any concrete steps to improve their conditions. The East India Company gave only nominal assistance to the famine stricken people. During famine almost same condition was of the people of Mewat who were under Alwar and Bharatpur States. Thus there was a strong Resentment among the people of Mewat against the rule of the East India Company.

- (I) In the end it can be said that the above mentioned economic and other difficulties made the people of Mewat the bitter or the man fatal enemy of the

Britishers.

- (II) The Britishers, not only, exploited the poor people of Mewat, but also, not spread the birds and wild beasts of this region. As they were very fond of hunting and Mewat has been a famous hunting ground since long. Due to such type of activities there was a strong resentment among the people of Mewat against the Britishers and by hearts they wish to end this tyrannical rule. As the song which was sung by the children of Mewat proves this fact. The song was:

'Kad jayago Firangi Biraj mein soo

Chirya churangla sab maravaya

Mora maro bar mein soo

Kad jayago firangi biraj mein soo'⁸

- (III) History tells us that the Mewatis always fought against the foreign powers. Because, they had strong passions of Patriotism and the love of Liberty.⁹ In spite of being their Muslims, they fought against the Muslim sultans and the Mughal rulers for the sake of their country or their motherland. Then, how could they tolerate this Firangi Government? Thus their strong Passions of Patriotism and love of Liberty made them hostile to the Britishers.

- (IV) The small Estates or Riyasats of Mewat namely Nuh, Rewari, Sohna (1809), Bohra (1809), Hotel (1813), Palwal (1817), Hathin (1823), tauru (1826) and Firozpur Jhirka (1836) were snatched one by one by the Britishers. As a result of these States confiscation, the dispossessed chiefs, their descendants, officials, Pandit or ulama, and a host of other retainers, who enjoyed their patronage became opponents of the British rule.¹⁰ Because, their future became insecure. Since Nawab sams-ud-din was hanged and his estate of Firozpur Jhirka was confiscated therefore there was a strong Resentment, not only, among the people of Mewat, but also, among the people of Delhi against the Britishers. They gave the proof of their strong resentment at the time of the revolt of 1857 by destroying the term of Mr. fraser which was situated in St. Jame's Church in Delhi.¹¹ The Meos of Mewat had special attachment with Nawab and his estate because the Nawab was the son of Begum Maddi Mewatan. This incident highly excited the the Meos and since then they were in search of an appropriate opportunity to take the Revenge of the execution of Nawab sams-ud-din Ahmed Khan.

(V) Already, there was a strong resentment among the people of Mewat to the rule of the East India Company and in 1854 such an incident occurred which 'added to the flames.' The incident was as such that some English officials come to Mewat on a pretext of hunting whereas their real motive was to control the dissatisfaction which was prevailing among the people of Mewat. The English officials arrested some of the Meo Chaudharies of Pargana Nagina and took them to Delhi. The Meos brought this matter to the notice of Raja Nahar Singh of Ballabgarh and it is said that Raja Nahar Singh, not only, raised the matter of the Meos Chaudharies in the Delhi Darbar, but also, took their special fever but his efforts proved futile.¹²

Due to above mentioned reasons there was a strong resentment among the people of Mewat against the Britishers but they did not know what to do for their solution or where to go. But, however, in the second week of May 1857, the sepoys, those 'peasants in uniforms' showed them the way to solution.

As soon as the revolt began, the Mewatis without losing any time, actively participated in the revolt. But the Mewati had to fight simultaneously on three fronts. On the first front, they had to fight against the British army and police; on the second front, they had to fight against the British loyalists such as the Khanzadas of Nuh, the Rajput of Hathin and honds, the Rawat jats of Hotel and the Kayasth of Sahna and on the third front, they had to fight against the Army of the British loyalists states such as Alwar, Bharatpur and Jaipur. The Mewat area of Haryana specially became the centre of struggle against these forces. The brave Mewatis fought and defeated all these powers. They, not only, removed the tyrannical rule of East India Company from the Mewat area of Haryana, but also, the grip of the East India Company became loose, to some extent, in the Mewat areas which were under Alwar and Bharatpur States.

The revolt of 1857 began from Meerut on 10th May, 1857. It spread with electric speed. In Delhi in the morning whereas in Mewat in the afternoon of 11th May, 1857. The Revolutionaries declared Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah as in 'emperor of India.' They declared him as their supreme leader.

On 11th May, afternoon 1857A.D. 300 sepoys reached Gurgaon from Delhi and there they received great support from the local population. As hundreds of peasants from surrounding villages and artisans and the poor people of the Gurgaon town joined them without losing any time. Some displeased and impoverished feudals like Nawab Ahmed Mirza Khan and Nawab Dula Jan also joined them. It is Interesting to note that the Rebels did not interest their

leadership to the two newly arrived feudal chiefs, but kept it in their Own hands. W Ford who was collector-magistrate of Gurgaon tried to check the rebels at Bijwasan (with the help of Pataudi sawars), a place 12 k.m. from Gurgaon, on the morning of 12th May, 1857A.D. But he failed. The rebels next attacked Gurgaon which was the District headquarter. Ford made the second attempt to repulse the rebels but he failed this time also. Demoralized by his twice defeats he fled to Mathura via Bhondsi, Silani and Palwal. He also took with him four or five clerks, others and all the custom officers of these places. The rebels occupied the district headquarters took rs 7,84,000/- from the district's treasury. They destroyed the houses of the Europeans and the British loyalist and released all the Prisoners from the district jail.¹³

As soon as the revolt began in Mewat many Muslim Mujahiddeen in came to Mewat from the border areas. The most important among them were: Moulavi Nur Ali, Moulavi Muhammad Mured, Maulana Abul Hasan Afghani, Hazar Khastiwala and Dr Nazar Muhammad Badshahpuri etc. The inspired the Meos to participate actively and in a great number in the revolt.¹⁴ The revolt of their efforts remained positive also.

We also come to know that rebels of the Jhajjar state come to Gurgaon District and inspired its people to revolt. Mr. Nasrullah, the then Deputy Collector Gurgaon, neither took action against these rebels nor informed about their activities to the high officials of Delhi. Although, he was directed to remain present at the headquarter, yet, he left the headquarter and fled to his village Kharja, District Bulandshahar. Therefore, Mr. Nasrullah was declared a irresponsible officer and he was dismissed from the service.

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