



1857: The First War Of Independence In Jaunpur

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The district of Jaunpur was bounded on the west by the district of Allahabad; on the south by Mirzapur and Banaras; on the east by Ghazipur and Azamgarh; and on the north by the Sultanpur district, of which a narrow strip separated it from Faizabad. The boundary was for the most artificial, though the river in some places marked it. The total area of Jaunpur was 991,876 acres in the 19th century.¹

In 1719, Muhammad Shah bestowed four *sarkars*- Jaunpur, Banaras, Chunar and Ghazipur on a nobleman named *Nawab* Mir Murtaza Khan. These areas were still included in the province of Allahabad. In 1722, these areas came under the jurisdiction of Awadh *Nawab's* reign jurisdiction; Saadat Khan (Burhan-ul-Mulk) transferred these *sarkars* to Murtaza Khan, who paid seven lakhs annually in 1727. The Nawab Wazir Ali leased this territory to his old friend, Mir Rustom Ali, for eight lakhs.² Later, he took Mansa Ram into his service, a *Bhumihar* of Gangapur in Banaras (some scholars used Benares), who rose rapidly in favor of his employer and soon became the estate manager. In 1737 Saadat Khan went to Delhi and Safdar Jang took charge of Awadh and thereupon, Rustom Ali's enemies poured out accusations against him, bringing Safdar Jang from Faizabad to expel Rustom Ali, so in a decade, Mansa Ram was able to oust his Muslim overlord. He became directly responsible to the nawab for the administration and revenue collection of a major portion of the Banaras region, including Jaunpur.³

Mansa Ram managed three *sarkars* (Banaras, Jaunpur and Chunar) for thirteen lakhs revenue collection, but Ghazipur went to Abdullah for three lakhs, but he failed to obtain the governorship of Jaunpur fort, which the *Nawab* retained in his possession. In 1739 Mansa Ram's successor Balwant Singh managed to sanctify and make permanent his *amildari* zamindari status by obtaining a *sanad* from the nawab and the title of *raja* from emperor Muhammad Shah.⁴

¹ *Jaunpur A Gazetteer, District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Awadh*, Vol-XXVIII, pp.1-2

² *Ibid*, pp.174-175.

³ Kamla Prasad Mishra, *Benares in Transition 1738-1795*, Munshilal Manohar Lal, Publisher Private Limited, New Delhi, 1973, p.9.

⁴ *Ibid*.

Balwant Singh sent a gift to Delhi and procured by its means the confirmation of his title of *raja* and his appointment continued. He continued to enjoy administrative and revenue rights over the Banrasa region and Jaunpur; in return, he paid revenue on time. In 1764, Jaunpur and the rest of the Banaras division were ceded to the company after the battle of Buxar, and Mr. Marriott was appointed Resident: but home authorities quashed proceedings, and the old condition of affairs resumed.⁵

Soon afterward, in 1772, Balwant Singh died and was succeeded by his son, Chait Singh, who the following year obtained recognition from the *Nawab* Wazir Ali, and enhanced revenue demand, the agreement with Shuja-ud-Duala was effective at Jaunpur. Balwant Singh's same policy was steadily pursued by Chait Singh so long as he had controlled the province.⁶

In 1775 Shuja-ud-Duala died, and one of the first acts of Asaf-ud-Duala, the successor of Shuja was to cede Banaras province to the company by a treaty of 21st of May, 1775. In April 1776, Chait Singh was confirmed in his tenure of the province, under the control of a Resident, the first to hold that post Mr. Francis Fowke. After that, he was replaced by Mr. Thomas Graham in September. In 1780 Fowke was restored to the post, but the old feud broke out again and in 1781, Mr. William Markham appointed a resident of Jaunpur. Two years later, F.Fowke once more became a resident of Jaunpur, but in 1786 he resigned hurriedly, and he was replaced by the more incapable officer, Mr. James Grant, who was removed in 1787 to give place to Jonathan Duncan.⁷

From the Permanent settlement declaration in 1795 (implemented by Jonathan Duncan, an English resident of Banaras), the company officers were merely concerned about the administrative matters of Jaunpur, and they mainly focused on the land revenues. The most important among them was the formation of the Jaunpur district in 1818.⁸ Nothing important occurred for over sixty years, and the district was happy in possessing no history till the outbreak of the mutiny in 1857. The district was then far from satisfactory, as nowhere were auction-purchasers more numerous, the old zamindars were more powerful, the most of the landlords were connected by blood relationship with the *Rajput* leaders in the Jaunpur district. In contrast, the present landholders were fighting among themselves and the disgruntled with the *taluqdars* of Awadh (Oudh), who were their near neighbors.⁹

The Beginning of the Uprising:

At the beginning of the revolt of 1857, the company staff included the magistrate, Mr.H.Fane and joint magistrate Mr. Cuppage. The only military force was a treasury guard of the Ludhiana Sikhs under lieutenant Mara in the Jaunpur district, protecting the treasury. The actual outbreak was sudden and unexpected. On June 5, the news of the British troops opening fire on Sikh's regiment of Banaras reached Jaunpur. So the Sikh soldiers of Jaunpur got angry. They shot joint Magistrate Mr.Cuppage dead, opened fire upon the commanding officers, looted the government treasury, and after taking the weapons kept in the armory, left for Awadh.¹⁰

⁵ *A Gazetteers of Jaunpur* Vol.XXVIII, p.175.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.178.

⁸ *A Gazetteers of Jaunpur* Vol. XXVIII, p.180.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Roberts Taylor, '*Narrative Event*, 15 October, 1858, *para* no.84, p.23.

This incident encouraged rebellion activities in the Jaunpur district; on June 6, the other rebels killed a deputy Magistrate Thomas Triplent and evacuated the court from the British. Then, the British escaped and took refuge in the house of Rao Hingan Lal (an old servant of the company); Dobhi's Raghuvanshi *Rajputs* knew about this information. So they came and drove away the British from there. The British escaped from Hingan Lal's house and took refuge in the Pasewa's opium factory, whence they safely reached Banaras on June 9.¹¹ Finally, the rebels demolished the bungalows of the European officers in the district. District Magistrate of Jaunpur, Mr. Fen, handed over the district's charge to King Shiv Ghulam Dubey due to fear of the activities of the rebels, who was a supporter of the British went to Banaras.¹² Thus, the British rule ended for some time in the Jaunpur district.

Zamindars who were deprived of their land earlier, at this time, found a favorable situation for recapturing their old zamindaris. They drove away the new landlords from their land and started capturing their land. The Raghuvanshi *Rajputs* of Dobhi *talluqa* attacked the nearby neighborhoods and disrupted the route on Banaras-Azamgarh road due to the disruption of this route, the EIC company sent an army under Mr. Chaipmen from Banaras to open the road of Azamgarh- Banaras and punished the rebels.¹³

The situation in Jaunpur improved on September 8, 1857, only after the Gurkha army arrived under Colonel Wroughton's leadership. The administrative system was then restored in the Jaunpur district. But the northern and western parts of the district were still dominated by rebels. Raj Iradat Jehan's *garhi* was the main center of the Mubarakpur rebellion. His commander, Amar Singh's *garhi*, was located in Adampur and the land was dominated by King Iradat Jehan and their followers, where they were teasing the British. Hence, British military officers and the Gorkha army campaigned against these rebels. The rebels faced defeat in the conflict on both sides (northern and western). King Iradat Jehan and Fasahat Jehan were caught and hanged, while Amar Singh died during the fighting. Due to this loss, the rebellion almost ended in the Jaunpur area. But the insurgents were still active in the western territories adjoining the Awadh.¹⁴ Meanwhile, a rebel named Malik Mehdi Bakhsh fled the police from the Kataghar police station. The British magistrate assured him of forgiveness with certain conditions, but he did not surrender. Hence his wealth was confiscated.¹⁵

On October 15, 1857, the English army moved to the western territory to be close to Awadh, as the rebels' activities intensified and spread rapidly. Mehdi Hasan, a *Nazim* of Sultanpur, planned to attack the Jaunpur district with 5000 soldiers in Chanda, bordering with Jaunpur. But Colonel Rotan came to know the activities of Mehdi Hasan. So, he reached Singramau on October 19 to thwart the rebels' attack. Mehdi Hasan nominated Hasanyaar Khan as the *chakladar* of Jaunpur and ordered him to attack the British. Hasan Yar Khan departed towards Singramau with 1,500 people. Mehdi Hasan stopped four miles before the village called Kuduwa. Unlike Hasanyar Khan's hope, *Diwan* Randhir Singh of Singramau supported the British. Therefore, Hasnyar Khan lost to the British army, and he ran back to Mehdi Hasan Khan. But the English army was tired

¹¹ Roberts Taylor, 'Narrative Event', 15 October, 1858, para no.25, p. 11.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid*, para no.26-27, p.11-12

¹⁴ *Ibid*, para no.35, p.13.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, para no. 27,68-69, pp.12,20.

of fighting against Mehdi Hasan's army. Therefore, the army returned to Jaunpur. The rebels stayed in Chanda and started preparing to attack Jaunpur. On the other hand, Colonel Wroughton departed towards Chanda on October 30, 1857, with 1,100 Gurkha soldiers and two cannons. The rebel army also advanced, and a war between both sides took place in a village called Koeripoor. In this battle, the rebel army suffered a massive loss, and the rebels calmed down for a few days.¹⁶

In November 1857, the rebels began to reorganize. Therefore, Colonel Longden had to proceed against the rebels for a final battle in Singra Mau. This time the strength of the rebels was more. The number of insurgents was ten thousand and increased to sixteen thousand between November 22-28. It also had trained soldiers of Mehdi Hasan and Muzaffar Jahan. Therefore, Colonel Langden faced defeat at the hands of the rebel army and returned to their camp.¹⁷ This victory encouraged rebel morale. They attacked the police station established on the district's border (Jaunpur and Awadh) and obstructed the company's revenue collection.

Makhdoom Baksh, a representative of King Iradat Jehan, attacked the Tighra (Khutahn *tehsil*) on December 24, fled away from the pro-British Kishan Narayan, and looted and destroyed the *tehsil*.¹⁸ On January 4, the rebels attacked Badlapur and tried to demolish the police station.¹⁹

The rebels continuously increased their strength. The EEIC sent General Franks and 3,200 Gurkhas, with 2300 British soldiers and 20 cannons, against the rebels. The insurgents could not face them and run away to Chanda. General Frank defeated them. On February 19, 1858, General Frank departed from Jaunpur towards Lucknow after wiping out the rebels.²⁰

But, after the arrival of *Babu Kunwar Singh* in Azamgarh, the revolt in Jaunpur again rose. Under Ghulam Hussain's leadership, the son of *Nazim Muhammad Hasan* of Gorakhpur gathered 3,000 rebels who planned to attack Jaunpur, but Mr. Lugard attacked him on April 11, 1858, and forced him to flee.²¹

On May 16, 1858, the rebellious activities almost ended, and the company ruled prevail in Jaunpur. Jhoori Singh (or Jhuri Singh), the rebel leader of the *Mona Rajputs* of the Bhadohi region, invaded the Machhali Shahr, but he failed. In the same month, Sangram Singh made a few attacks on the Mariahu region and Dragpal Singh in Badshahpur also attacked the region to create chaos. But Mr. Robert Taylor, the joint magistrate of Jaunpur, did not consider him an insurgent as he never faced a single *thanedar*.²² Hence, on June 12, 1858, Jaunpur district was freed entirely from rebel activities.²³

¹⁶ *Ibid*, para no.70, p.20.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, para no.71-73, pp.20-21.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, para no.82, p.23.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

²⁰ *Ibid*, para no.83, p.23.

²¹ *A Gazetteers of Jaunpur* Vol.XXVIII, p.194.

²² Foreign Department, Secret Consultation, no.65, date-29, May, 1858, NAI, New Delhi.

²³ *Ibid*.

Punishment and Rewards:

On the rebellious side were leaders like *Raja* of Iradat Jehan (Mahul), Makhdum Bakhsh and Thakur Akhilesh Singh of Dhubhi. *Raja* Iradat Jehan, the zamindar of Mahul and his zamindari spread in the district of Jaunpur. They played a significant role in the uprising of 1857 in the Jaunpur. After the suppression of the rebellion by the EEIC. King Iradat Jehan was caught and hanged. His zamindari was confiscated. Some writers had termed king Iradat Jehan as the first martyr of Jaunpur in the 1857 uprising. Makhdum Bakhsh and Thakur Akhilesh Singh of Dhubhi, played a significant role in the Jaunpur district's rebellion.

After the restoration of the British authority in the Jaunpur district, the British government started a punishment and rewards policy. Pro-Government were Hingan Lal of Kerakat in Jaunpur, zamindar Madho Singh, Judge *Raja* Mahesh Narayan, *Raja* Shiva Ghulam Dubey; for instance, Robert Taylor mentions the name of Pandit Kishan Narayan in Khutahn *tehsil* in Jaunpur.²⁴In eastern Uttar Pradesh, these people assisted to the British government and limited the rebellion activities. But in this period, there was no development of nationalism among Indians, and this fact is also to be kept in mind. In contrast, the British had a sense of nationalism and ethnic supremacy. The formation of the Bengal Yeomanry Cavalry on July 23, 1857, and its active role in suppressing the rebellion in eastern Uttar Pradesh, the defeat of the rebels by Mr. Peppe in Gorakhpur and Mr. Benibulls and Mr. Dunes in Azamgarh, with their lives on the palm is quite crucial.²⁵

we need more regional-based studies on the rebellion of 1857 to explore various regional grievances of the people and the nature of the leadership of the different regions.

²⁴ Robert Taylor, *Narrative events*, 15 October, 1858, para no.82, p.23.

²⁵ Home Department, Public, 13 March, 1861, NAI, New Delhi; Robert Taylor, *Narrative Events*, para no.37, 39-40,46, pp.13-15.