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## CIVIL REBELLION IN THE INDIAN MUTINY IN BIJNOR-1857-59

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### Abstract

**Abstract:** The story of the mutiny in Bijnor is in many ways remarkable because it was not a military station. It presents a picture of the revolt of the civil population. British officials had to flee from Bijnor and took refuge in Roorkee. Nawab of Najibabad Mahmud Khan could not control the mob. His administration was weak enough. He also could not unite Hindu & Musalman for the cause. There was strong line of cleavage that developed from the first between Hindu & Musalman. But in Bijnore British authority was completely overthrown.

**Keywords :** 1857, Bijnor District during 1857, Concept of civil rebellion in Bijnor, Syed Ahmad Khan, Sadar Amin of Bijnor, Nawab Mahmud Khan of Najibabad, Role of Hindus & Musalman in Bijnor

The story of the mutiny in Bijnor is in many ways remarkable. It was not a military station. It presents a picture of the revolt of the civil population.<sup>1</sup> Though there was no sudden upheaval nor were there any of those in human massacres and cowardly outrages which sullied the annals of so many districts, the course of events proceeded slowly and surely to an almost complete extinction of British authority, a revolutionary government was established with some show of sovereignty and then the whole structure collapsed like a pack of cards.<sup>2</sup>

But what was more noteworthy than any other feature in History of that brief epoch was the strong line of cleavage that developed from the first between Hindu and Musalman. The distinction of faith led immediately to the formation of rival and marked by antagonistic parties; and the followers of Islam proclaiming their allegiance to the throne of Delhi,<sup>3</sup> it

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necessarily followed than their Hindu opponents declared themselves in favour of the company and the British Crown.

On 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1857, Rumours reached Bijnore, though only forty miles distant, of the outwards at Meerut. There was perhaps fortunately, no military force stationed in the district.<sup>4</sup> The nearest posts being those at Meerut, Roorkee, Moradabad and Shaharanpur.

After the mutiny and consequent withdrawal of the British from Bijnor on 5<sup>th</sup> June, self styled Nawab Mahmud Khan at once assumed the control of the city, proclaiming himself Nawab on behalf of the Emperor. He soon abolished the standard weight, substituted a ser by hundred tolas, with his own seal impressed thereon. He also raised fresh troops and sent all the treasure to his own house at Najibabad.<sup>5</sup>

Nawab instigated the mutineers to attack Bijnor. News of their advent preceded them, and the magistrate put his house in a state of defence but the soldiers who were short of ammunition, determined to make straight for Moradabad, hoping there to gain assistance from the disaffected 29<sup>th</sup> N.I. Entering Nagina on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May they plundered the market and the tahsil treasury. They then proceeded to Dhampur, but news of their arrival had worried the officials at the tahsil which was well adapted for defence and they were compelled to proceed without further gain.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile a serious occurrence had happened at Bijnor on the 21<sup>st</sup> June the prisoners in the district Jail apparently with the convenience of the guard, broke out. Their complete escape was only frustrated by the timely arrival of the collector. In all about 215 prisoners thus obtained freedom.<sup>7</sup>

The contents of the treasury were then secured by throwing all the money down a deep well. Mohammad Khan, the Nawab of Najibabad arrived with a number of empty carts to remove the treasure to a more secure place<sup>8</sup> in Mandawar tahsil of Bijnor and all along the Ganges the Gujars were engaged in systematic plunder and their example had been followed by the Banjaras on the north and the Mewatis on the Moradabad border. British Officials did much to restore confidence but only for a time. When the news of Bareilly mutiny arrived, Nawab Mahmud Khan returned to Bijnor with 200 well armed men<sup>9</sup>. On 8<sup>th</sup> of June Mr. Shakespear and the whole party quitted the district eventually reaching Roorkee on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Sayyid Ahmad, the Sadar Amin of Bijnor was among those Muslims who remained loyal. When the mutineers first appeared in Bijnor, he arranged for the safe evacuation of the European residents and round for ten days took charge of the district on behalf of the British Government. In recognition of his services during the uprising he was awarded a pension of Rs.200- month for life.<sup>10</sup>

The Bijnor presents a unique feature because Bijnor was not a military station. British authority was completely overthrown. But the Nawab of Najibabad, who assumed authority, could not restore law and order, He was unable to stop the communal war between the Hindus and Muslims. The Bijnor rising clearly brought out into prominence the lines of cleavage working to antagonise the two communities.<sup>11</sup>

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