

**REJOINDER TO QUEEN VICTORIA
PROCLAMATION BY THE BEGUM OF OUDE (AWADH)**

“At this time certain weak-minded, foolish people have spread a report that the English have forgiven the faults and crimes of the people of Hindostan; this appears very astonishing, for it is the unvarying custom of the English never to forgive a fault, be it great or small; so much so that if a small offence be committed through ignorance or negligence they never forgive it.

The Proclamation of the 1st November 1858, which

¹ Charles Ball : “*The History of the Indian Mutiny*” Vol. II, Pp. 518-19.

has come before us, is perfectly clear, and as some foolish people, not understanding the real object of the Proclamation, have been carried away, therefore we, the ever-abiding government, parents of the people of Oude, with great consideration, put forth the present Proclamation, in order that the real object of the chief points may be exposed, and our subjects be placed on their guard.

“It is written in the Proclamation, that the country of Hindostan, which was held in trust by the Company, has been resumed by the Queen, and that for the future, the Queen’s laws shall be obeyed. This is not to be trusted by our religious subjects, for the laws of the Company, the settlement of the Company, the English servants of the Company, the Governor General and the judicial administration of the Company, are all unchanged. What, then, is there now which can benefit the people, or on which they can rely ?

2. “In the Proclamation it is written, that all contracts and agreements entered into by the Company will be accepted by the **Queen**. Let the people carefully observe this artifice. The Company has seized the whole of Hindostan, and, if this arrangement be accepted, what is there new in it ? The Company professed to treat the Chief of Bhurtpore as a son, and then took his territory; the Chief of Lahore was carried off to London, and it has not fallen to his lot to return; the Nawab Shumshoodeen Khan, on one side, they hanged, and, on the other side, they *salaamed*¹ to him; the Peishwa they expelled from Poona, Sitara, and imprisoned for life in Bithoor; their breach of faith with Sultan Tippoo is well known; the Rajah of Benares they imprisoned in Agra. Under pretence of administering the country of the Chief of Gwalior, they introduced English customs; they have left no names or traces of the Chiefs of Behar, Orissa, and Bengal; they gave the Rao of Furrackabad a small monthly allowance, and took his territory. Shahjehanpore, Bareilly, Azimgurh, Jounpore, Goruckpore, Etawah, Allahabad, Futtchpore, &c. . . our ancient possessions they took from us on pretence of distributing pay; and in the 7th article of the treaty, they wrote, on oath, that they would take no more from us. If, then, the arrangements made by the Company are to be accepted, what is the diff-

¹ Saluted.

erence between the former and the present state of things ? These are old affairs; but recently, in defiance of treaties and oaths, and, notwithstanding, that they owed us millions of rupees, without reason, and on the pretence of the misgovernment and discontent of our people, they took our country and property, worth millions of rupees. If our people were discontented with our royal predecessor, Wajid Ali Shah, how comes it they are content with us ? And no ruler ever experienced such loyalty, and devotion of life and goods as we have done. What, then, is wanting that they do not restore our country ? Further, it is written in the Proclamation, that they want no increase of territory, but yet they cannot refrain from annexation. If the Queen has assumed the government, why does Her Majesty not restore our country to us when our people wish it ? It is well-known that no king or **queen** ever punished a whole army and people for rebellion; all were forgiven; and the wise cannot approve of punishing the whole army and people of Hindostan; for so long as the word "punishment" remains the disturbance will not be suppressed. There is a well known proverb—"A dying man is desperate" (*muta kya na karta*). It is impossible that a thousand should attack a million, and the thousand escape.

3. "In the Proclamation it is written, that the Christian religion is true, but that no other creed will suffer oppression, and that the laws will be observed towards all. What has the administration of justice to do with the truth or falsehood of a religion ? That religion is true which acknowledges one God, and knows no other. Where there are three Gods in a religion, neither Mussulmans nor Hindoos—nay, not even Jews, Sun-worshippers, or Fire-worshippers can believe it true. To eat pigs, and drink wine, to bite greased cartridges, and to mix pig's fat with flour and sweetmeats, to destroy Hindoo and Mussulman temples on pretence of making roads, to build churches, to send clergymen into the streets and alleys to preach the Christian religion, to institute English schools and to pay people a monthly stipend for learning the English sciences, while the places of worship of Hindoos and Mussulmans are to this day entirely neglected; with all this, how can the people believe that religion will not be interfered with ? The rebellion began with religion, and, for it, millions of men have been killed. Let not our subjects be deceived; thousands were deprived of their religion in the North-West,

and thousands were hanged rather than abandon their religion.

4. "It is written in the Proclamation, that they who harboured rebels, or who were leaders of rebels, or who caused men to rebel, shall have their lives, but that punishment shall be awarded after deliberation, and that murderers and abettors of murders shall have no mercy shown them, while all others shall be forgiven. Any foolish person can see, that under this Proclamation, no one, be he guilty or innocent, can escape. Everything is written, and yet nothing is written; but they have clearly written that they will not let off any one implicated; and in whatever village or estate the army may have halted, the inhabitants of that place cannot escape. We are deeply concerned for the condition of our people on reading this Proclamation, which palpably teems with enmity. We now issue a distinct order, and one that may be trusted, that all subjects who may have foolishly presented themselves as heads of villages to the English, shall, before the 1st of January next, present themselves in our camp. Without doubt their faults shall be forgiven then, and they shall be treated according to their merits. To believe in this Proclamation, it is only necessary to remember that Hindostanee rulers are altogether kind and merciful. Thousands have seen this, millions have heard it. No one has ever seen in a dream that the English forgave an offence.

5. "In this Proclamation it is written, that when peace is restored, public works, such as roads and canals, will be made in order to improve the condition of the people. It is worthy of a little reflection, that they have promised no better employment for Hindostanees than making roads and digging canals. If people cannot see clearly what this means, there is no help for them. Let no subject be deceived by the Proclamation!"