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THE REVOLT OF 1857 IN BRITISH INDIA: CASE OF SOME LOYAL ROYALS

Abstract: The Revolt of 1857 was the first major challenge to the East India Company and literally put comma to the colonial ambitions of its masters in England. During the Revolt, which took place in many parts of Central, Northern, and Eastern part of India, different sections of society joined the rebel sepoys of the East India Company in what has been described by some scholars as First War of Indian Independence². The rebels proclaimed a reluctant Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar as their 'leader', although the sepoys were hard to be controlled and disciplined. The rebels got support from different quarters, but there existed a large section of princes, landlords and other ruling elite who were against the uprising. These aristocrats drew their power and pomp from the Company rule and depended on them to further their interests and hegemony. They resisted the rebels and at many places were the main bulwark against the rising tide of anti-British feelings. This paper attempts to study their role by taking into account some selective cases from India.

Keywords: Indian Rebellion of 1857, sepoys, British East India Company, imperialism and colonialism, Company rule in India (Company Raj, 1757-1858), British Crown rule in India (British Raj, 1858-1947), maharajas, rajas

When a hesitant Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafer accepted to lead the rebel sepoys in the Revolt of 1857, the fate of millions of people living in South Asia—including hundreds of Rajas and Nawabs—became uncertain. They were divided in opposite camps. The rebels were up against the mighty East India Company and its supporters, which included a strong network of spies and many loyal Rajas. These loyal Rajas, Nawabs, Begums and other ruling elite depended on the continuation of

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² V. D. Savarkar described the Revolt of 1857 as First War of Independence.

the East India Company's rule for their rule and legitimacy. These loyalists derived their power and position from the colonial power.

From the petty Rajas to the big Maharajas, they crawled when they were only asked to bend. In the race for proving their loyalty to the Company, they lined up and offered all kind of services, logistics, arms, armed men to help crush the rebellion. As we will see in this paper, at times they even competed among themselves in this race of loyalty and sycophancy. At many places of the rebellion, the Rajas were spying for the British. They also appeared as eyewitnesses before the 'military-courts', which publically hanged and executed thousands of rebels. In this backdrop, we look at the role of some royal families, landlords, Rajas, and Maharajas, who betrayed their own people to support the cause of the British Empire.

When the rebel sepoys raised the banner of revolt against the Raj, after decades of discontentment against the colonial policies of the British, the Rajas were shocked. They set out to help the Raj in suppressing the revolt with an iron hand. The company officials, who might have fled to their native country, if the revolt had succeeded in overthrowing the company rule, acted fast in acknowledging the favour and support of these Rajas. Even the appeal of Bahadur Shah Zafar went in vain. Bahadur Shah Zafar in his address to Indian Rajas said on May 20, 1857: 'All you Rajas are famed for your virtues, noble qualities and liberality, and are moreover the protectors of your own faith and of the faith others. It is incumbent therefore on such of you as have the power to kill those who may injure your religion...and thus protect your faith...' ³ However, very few came out in support of the old emperors and most of them sided with the Company for secure and certain future and safety of their estate and social position. Now, we turn to these loyalists and examine their role and the rewards they were bestowed upon for their services.

Hyderabad

This was an important state and was supposed to be gateway to Southern part of the British Indian Territories. Sir Salar Jang became minister in 1853 and remained in office till his death thirty years later...perhaps his greatest achievement was keeping Hyderabad loyal during the mutiny. During that crisis of British rule the great Muslim state acted as buffer between north and south, and in the South its active support did more than anything else to maintain tranquillity. Had Hyderabad joined the movement practically every Moslem in India would have followed Ni-

³ Sharma, H. D. 100 Best Letters 1847-1947, Harper Collins Publishers India, New Delhi, 2000, p.14.

zam's lead. A despairing telegram from the Bombay government, 'If the Nizam goes all is lost,' reflects the feelings of the time.⁴ Hyderabad played a crucial role in cementing the British rule in India by siding with them during the troubled times, and ignoring the call of co-religionists and compatriots for support. ...there came and acknowledgement that the princely states as a body had proved remarkably steadfast during the crisis and that their support had helped to turn the tide. Citing particularly the contribution of Hyderabad and Gwalior, Governor General Lord Canning declared, 'these patches of Native government served as breakwaters in the storm which would otherwise have swept over us in one great wave.'⁵

The attitude adopted by the Nizam during the great rebellion of 1857 proved very decisive. It prevented the embers of war engulfing the whole of South India. It not only succeeded in preserving an uneasy peace in the Deccan, but was also responsible for maintaining general tranquillity in the South. The policy adopted by Salar Jung and the Nizam was responsible for making Southern India secure to the British. The reconstituted Hyderabad Contingent by playing decisive role in the battle fields of Malwa and Central India brought the first war of Independence of 1857 to speedy conclusion.⁶

The rebels were however, successful in penetrating deep in the ranks and file of Hyderabad state. They won over supporters—although small in number—in this important state. As writes Mishra, 'the Hyderabad movement was purely political-targeting Salar Jang and picking up a concrete issue (of Buldhana prisoners) Hyderabad revolutionaries, began spreading propaganda. By 10th July, even Salar Jang with all his resources and a spy system was failing to procure information. The mass movement penetrated deep even within the Kuwaiti Arabs, Salar Jang's allies.⁷ The ruling family of Hyderabad crushed the rebellion despite the valour of the rebels. Now, we turn to Western Indian state of Punjab, which not only remained loyal, but its populace played important role in defeating the rebels elsewhere in British India.

⁴ Barton, Sir William. *The Princes of India and Nepal*, Pointer Publisher, Jaipur, 1997.

⁵ Copland, Ian *The Princes of India in the endgame of Empire, 1917-47*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 16.

⁶ Regani, Sarojini. *Nizam-British Relations, 1724-1857*, Concept Publishing Company, 1988, Hyderabad, p. 301.

⁷ Mishra, Amaresh. *War of Civilizations; India and 1857, the Road to Delhi*, Vol.1, Rupa & Co., 2008, p. 248.

Punjab (Patiala / Kapurthala)

Punjab also supplied soldiers to the different units of Company and soldiers recruited from this part of the land were known for bravery and loyalty. As William Howard Russel, a well-known war correspondent, who came to India to cover the 'Mutiny' for the Times, London, wrote in one of his dispatches: "Our siege of Delhi would have been quite impossible, if the rajahs of Patiala and Jind had not been our friends, and if the Sikhs had not recruited (in) our battalions, and remained quiet in Punjab..."⁸ Talking of the role of different Rajas from the state of Punjab, he wrote: 'Raja Narinder Singh of Patiala played the most crucial role in the British victory. Raja Sarup Singh of Jind State too sided with the British, whose loyalty, according to Russell was conspicuous during the mutiny. Bharpur Singh, the Raja of Nabha, Raja Randhir Singh of Kapurthala and Raja Wazir Singh of Faridkot State also acted with exemplary loyalty during the revolt of 1857.⁹ At the time of mutiny, there were about 60,000 soldiers in the army, mostly Sikhs. The Punjabi population, comprising of all sorts of martial races (Sikhs, Pathans, Muslims and the hill Rajputs) was naturally volatile and posed a great threat to the British rule in Punjab. In fact Punjab was a challenge and the Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, was keen that there should be peace in the Punjab. Punjab between the Sutlej and the Ravi (Lahore, Amritsar, Ferozepur, Jullundhur, Phillaur, Multan and Kangra) was the weakest link in the chain as it consisted of hereditary soldiers – Sikhs and Mohammedans with their own vested interests.¹⁰

Popular perception based upon the accounts by historians, including Sikhs, is that the Sikhs supported the British. Sikh rulers of Patiala (Maharaja Narender Singh), Jind (Sarup Singh), Nabha (Bharpur Singh) and Kapurthala (Raja Randhir Singh) had been substantially "supplying war materials as well as sepoy to the British Army" for which they were suitably rewarded. William Howard Russell of London Times wrote in a dispatch: "Our siege of Delhi Would have been impossible, if the Rajas of Patiala and Jhind (Jind) had not been our friends".¹¹

The extinction of erstwhile state of Maharaj Ranjit Singh before the Revolt of 1857, brought lesser known rajahs in the forefront of Punjab region. When the revolt

⁸ Quoted in Ahluwalia, M S. http://sikhinstitute.org/jan_2010/6-msahluwalia.html 20. 09.2014.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ahluwalia, M S. op. cit.

¹¹ Islam, Shamsul. *Rebel Sikhs in 1857*, Vani Prakashan, Delhi, p. 58.

broke in Delhi, the princely state of Patiala played active role in the recapturing of Delhi and enforcing British rule. Maharaja Narendar Singh of Patiala was in demand during the troubled times from both sides, and he played his cards deftly. At times, he was double crossing and even reported his correspondence with the Mughal Emperor to the British. The Mughal Emperor from Delhi wrote to Narendar Singh inviting him to cover to his side. He would be suitably rewarded...The Sikh prince declined to support the Mughal Emperor. He was in touch with British officials and offered full support to the East India Company.

During the great Mutiny of 1857-8, no Prince in India showed greater loyalty or rendered more conspicuous service to the British Government than the Maharaja of Patiala. He was acknowledged head of the Sikhs, and any wavering on his part would have been attended with most disastrous results, while his ability, character and high position would have made him a most formidable leader against the Government. But Maharaja Narindra Singh unhesitatingly placed his whole power, resources and influence at the absolute disposal of the Paramount power during the darkest and most doubtful days of the rebellion. From the commencement of the Mutiny to the end of the year 1857 Patiala supported the British with eight guns, 2,156 cavalry, 2,846 infantry and 156 officers; while in 1858 the drafts included two guns, 2930 infantry and 907 guns.¹²

The wisdom of British policy was borne out during the crisis of 1857, when the petty Sikh rajas mobilised the entire resources of their country to help the smooth flow of military traffic from Punjab to Delhi. The roads were kept safe, carriage and provisions were taken care of. A small contingent of 500 horse and foot, under the command of Sardar Pratab Singh, was even sent by the Maharaja of Patiala to assist in the assault of Delhi.¹³ The espousal of the British cause by the Maharaja of Patiala served to undermine at least in the Punjab the rumours about greased cartridges about the mixing of the powder of cow bones with flour and such other 'subtle designs to destroy their caste'. The Maharaja was an orthodox Hindoo, whose position and career alike commanded respect, wrote Lepen Griffin, and his support at such a crisis was worth a brigade of English troops to us, and served more to tranquilise the people than a hundred official disclaimers would have done.¹⁴

¹² Wright, Arnold. *Indian States: A Biographical, Historical and Administrative Survey*, Asian Education Services, 1922, p. 234

¹³ Bates, Crispin Ed., *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, Vol. 1: Anticipants and Experiences in the Locality, Chanda Chatterjee Essay, Contextualising Truth, Sage Publications India, 2013, p.136.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

Maharaja Narendar Singh gave open support to the British in 1857. For this he has earned post facto Indian disapproval. He was in good company. Most Indian princes including the Nizam and Gwalior opted to help the British. In far away London, Karl Marx was following Indian events. With lacerating thoroughness he noted --'Rajah of Patiala--for shame! sent large number of soldiers in aid of English.'¹⁵

The *London Times* sent William Howard Russel to cover the revolt. In his diary he acknowledges the debt the British owed to Patiala during 1857-58. He gave a hilarious account of his visit to Patiala in October 1958: 'The breakfast table was ready, laid with snow-white cloth and napkins, silver plate and an odd assortment of delft and china-ware of many different patterns...breakfast was announced. Champagne, Worcester sauce, pale ale claret, hock, bottled port, pickled salmon, pate de foi gras, ad sausages. Next arrived cakes, tea, biscuits, coffee, wine, fish, fired and boiled, curries of many kinds, roast fowl.'¹⁶

The splendid services of the Maharaja was greatly acknowledged by the British Government, who made a grant to him of the rich parganas of Narnaul, forming part of the forfeited state of the Nawab of Jhajjar, on condition of political and military support in times of general danger and disturbances and he was also permitted to acquire the parganas (estates) of Kanaud and taluqa of Khamanon in perpetual sovereignty in liquidation of certian loan transaction with the British Government during 1848, and also during the Mutiny. He was also given all the rights of the paramount power over the Bahadur Sirdars (Sardars). His titles were, at the same time, increased by the addition of 'Farzand-i-Khas, Dault-i-Englishia, Mansur-i-Zaman, Amir-ul-Umra Sir.'¹⁷

After the British had put down the uprising, the Maharaja was not forgotten. Large territories in Manjha were given to him. Their revenue was Rs. 2 Lakhs annually. Zeenat Begum's palace in Delhi was a welcome present. On November 1, 1861, he was made a memeber of the Order of the Star of India and appointed to Governor General's Council.¹⁸

To the Maharaja of Patiala, the Governor General said: 'It is very agreeable to me to have this opportunity of thanking you, personally and in public for the valuable services which you have rendered to the state. I esteem them not more for the effective aid which they gave to the forces of the Government than for the promptness

¹⁵ Singh, K Natwar. *The Magificent Maharaja*, Rupa Publications, New Delhi, 1998

¹⁶ Ibid.,

¹⁷ Wright, Arnold. *Op. Cit.*, p. 234.

¹⁸ Singh, K Natwar, *op.cit.*

with which they were offered, and for the the example of hearty and unhesitating loyalty which you thereby set before the Queen's subjects in upper India from the very beginning of the strife.¹⁹

Another important loyal state from Punjab was Kapurthala, which was bestowed with honours and ceremonial titles. Raja Randhir Singh may (in a sense) be regarded as the founder of the present Kapurthala State. He succeeded in enhancing its importance and prestige by his splendid services and achievements during the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. He placed all his resources at the disposal of Government, marched into Jullundur at the head of his troops, consisting of 1,200 infantry, 200 cavalry and 5 guns, guarded the civil station, the Treasury, and the Jail and pursued the rebels... these signal services evoked a warm acknowledgment from the Government of India. A year's military cash contribution was altogether remitted. Khillats of RS.15000 and Rs.5000 were conferred on him and his brother Kanwar Bikram Singh respectively. A salute of 11 guns was assigned to the Raja, who also received the honoured title of '*Farzand-i-Dilband Rasikh-ul-Itiqad, Daulat-e-Englishia, Raja-e-Rajgan*.'²⁰

He also proceeded to neighbouring Awadh state (centre of rebellion) and participated in six engagements with rebels. For these conscious services in Awadh, Raja Randhir Singh was lavishly rewarded. The rich estates of Baundi and Bhitauli which yielded to Government a yearly revenue of Rs. 100,000 were granted to the Raja on Istimari tenure.²¹

Raja Sarup Singh of Jind marched with all his troops towards Thanesar and from there to Karnal. This all thereby gave the clear and strongest proof of his faithfulness and courage. He too sent his troops to Hansi, Jhajjar, Rohtak and Gohana to assist the British in crushing the rebels at all these places. To the Raja of Jheend: 'your cordial adherence to the British government during the time when this part of India was harassed by rebellion, the aid of which by all means in your power you rendered to the forces of the government and the share which your troops had in the operations against the mutineers occupants of Delhi...it is pleasure to me to congratulate you upon the increase of your territory and dignity...'²²

Raja Bharpur Singh of Nabha, a young prince of 18 years acted with the utmost loyalty and intelligence for the British. When the Jullundur rebels slipped towards

¹⁹ Parliamentary Papers, 1860, III, No. 172 A, Foreign Deptt, 20 June 1860; On the 18th January his Excellency the Viceroy held a durbar at Umbala (Ambala).

²⁰ Wright, Arnold. Op. Cit., p.429

²¹ Ibid.

²² Parliamentary Papers, 1860, III, No. 172 A, Foreign Deptt, 20 June 1860; On the 18th January his Excellency the Viceroy held a durbar at Umbala (Ambala).

Phyllaur, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana took a detachment of the Nabha forces, consisting of 50 horsemen, 100 infantry and 2 guns, to chase the rebels. The Nabha soldiers fought gallantly against the rebels on the bank of the Sutlej. To the Raja of Nabha: 'The assistance which you gave to the Queen's army in the transport of its heavy artillery from Sutlej to Delhi, was signal and valuable service...the power and dignity of your loyal family should endure and flourish...to confer on Mean Uger Singh the title of Rajah and the state of Hindoor...this is done as an acknowledgment of his own loyal adherence and service to the Government in 1857.'²³ Hence, Punjab played a crucial role in the suppression of the revolt in Delhi and Awadh region. Now, we turn to Central India, where many stories of valour and bravery are famous. Mention can be made particularly of Rani Jhansi, who fought 'like a man' in the words of poet subadhra Kumari Chauhan. Her stories of bravery have been talk of the nation for generations, and poetry eulogising her role are even now recited by school children. Here, we look at the role of loyalists, who defended the British against the storm. And the first important state was Bhopal, which was ruled by Muslim women.

Central India (Bhopal)

The growing rebellion was the supreme test for the calm, mature and far-sighted governance of Sikander Begum. At the first signs of trouble, Sikander banned the circulation of seditious pamphlets, introduced strict security in the state and threw a sop to the army by improving their accommodation, food allowance and pay. She even wrote personal letters to selected soldiers asking them not to heed seditious rumours against the British. She then tightened up her intelligence network and ordered patrols and guards at markets in order to control the sale of arms. She sent emissaries to the strongholds of the rebel leaders and managed to win over the Gond soldiers who had joined their ranks by offering them monetary benefits.²⁴

During the Mutiny a piquant exchange took place between the famous Jhansi-Ki-Rani (Queen of Jhansi), a legendary women leader who had taken up arms against the British, and Sikander Begum who was leading her forces in favour of the East India Company. The Jhansi-ki-Rani sent a message to Sikander during the Mutiny which threatened, 'As soon as I have my hands free, I shall deal with you at the point

²³ Parliamentary Papers, 1860, III, No. 172 A, Foreign Deptt, 20 June 1860; On the 18th January his Excellency the Viceroy held a durbar at Umbala(Ambala).

²⁴ Khan, Shaharyar M The Begums of Bhopal: A History of the Princely State of Bhopal, I.B.Tauris, 2000, p. 98.

of a sword.' Sikander replied defiantly to the message, 'I have firearms in readiness for you. Come when you will.' The Jhansi-ki-Rani died fighting, dressed as a man, Sikandar on the other hand, had backed the winning horse!²⁵

Begum not only kept the rebels at bay, but also provided security and safety to British and other Europeans. Her state became a centre of refuge for Europeans living around Bhopal. Sikander Begum also provided safe passage for important British civilians including Colonel Durand, the British Resident in Indore, to the safety of Hoshangabad Fort which was protected by a loyal Pathan contingent. The following account by a British Lady who sought refuge in Bhopal from rebellious forces of Indore, describes the role of Bhopal Queen:

'The troops at Indore cantonment were the first to revolt in Central India. They murdered several Europeans, and this obliged Colonel Durand, Agent to Governor General Mr. Shakespeare, Mr. Stockley, and Colonel Trevor to go to Sehore via Ashta along with their wives and children. But the Bhopal contingent at Sehore contained a large number of purbiahs or natives of eastern Hindustan; and as these men had been induced to join the rebellion all the officers above-mentioned took refuge in Bhopal. Nawab Sikander Begum treated them with great kindness, and sent them (with exception of Colonel Trevor who remained with Sehore troops) in safety to Hoshangabad. The state provided them with provisions and clothing, as well as twelve elephants for the journey. These acts of kindness greatly pleased them. They questioned the Muhammadan messenger who told them that her Highness the Begum had herself undertaken the responsibility of preserving order at Sehore...Nawab Sikander Begum, besides doing her utmost to preserve order within the boundaries of her territories, sent provisions to a number of Europeans who had taken refuge at Kalpi, and dispatched her soldiers to Sagar, Chanderi, Jhansi and other parts of Bundelkhand, to help in the restoration of order. On November 29th, 1858 the Agent to Governor General expressed, through the Political Agent, his great appreciation of the valuable work they had done. It was acknowledged in all dispatches and Government reports that, during the Mutiny, no rulers had remained a firmer friend to the English than Nawab Sikander Begum, and that the state had done signal service to British rule.'²⁶

Sikandar's support to the British crown placed her on the highest pedestal of reverence and admiration by the British government. Accolades, tributes, decorations

²⁵ Ibid., p. 99.

²⁶ India Office Library Records, quoted in Khan, Shaharyar M *The Begums of Bhopal: A History of the Princely State of Bhopal*, I.B.Tauris, 2000, pp. 100-101.

and messages, even from Queen Victoria, were showered on the Begum who now became a leading jewel in the British Crown.²⁷ On 7 January 1861 a durbar was arranged by Viceroy Canning at Jabalpur in which Sikandar Begum was specially invited. The Begum was presented with a sanad conferring on her the Pargana of Berasia, which was under the Dhar state, as a reward for her loyal services rendered during the uprising. In November of the same year Nawab Sikandar Begum was invested with the G.C.S.I at Allahabad. In this particular Durbar the Begum was invested with the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India. In the medals and titles were also conferred upon Maharaja Syaji Rao Sindhia, the Nawab Sahib of Rampur and the Maharaja of Patiala.²⁸ Sikander Begum received the special thanks of the British Queen for her services during the Mutiny, particularly in protecting British refugees.²⁹

Apart from Bhopal, there were other states in Central India, which remained loyal to the British Empire. Raghuvendra Singh (1831-1874) the then ruler of Nagod remained loyal to the British and tried to help his best. But he could not face the rebels on account of lack of funds, ammunitions and soldiers. Later he was rewarded for his loyalty to the British.³⁰

The British exercised strong hold over Maharaja Raghuraj Singh, who was the ruler of Rewa, during the period of revolt, that is why the wave of rebellion could not spread all over the state...³¹ The Governor General held a Darbar at Cawnpur on the 3rd distant (November, 1859) for the reception of Maharaja of Rewah...on arrival and departure, the Maharaja of Rewa received a salute of 17 guns³² The following reward was given for loyal services during the rebellion: To the Maharaja of Rewa a Khillat of 10,000 Rupees, and the district of Sohaspur to him.³³ Now, we turn to the important region of erstwhile region of Awadh and areas surrounding it. While Awadh was a centre of rebellion, where the wife of deposed Nawab was leading the rebels, the scene was different in places like Rampur, and Benaras. The Raja of Benaras, in fact turned out to be one of the most loyal princes of the British empire. Af-

²⁷ Shaharyar M Khan, op.cit., p.102.

²⁸ *Nawab Sultan Jahan* quoted in, Srivastava, Gouri The Role of Begums of Bhopal in Girl's Education, NCERT, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 18-19.

²⁹ Barton, Sir William The Princes of India and Nepal, Pointer Publisher, Jaipur, 1997.

³⁰ Siddique, A U. Indian Freedom Movement in Princely States of Vindhya Pradesh, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 2004, p. 49.

³¹ Ibid, p. 52.

³² Parliamentary Papers, 1860, III, Foreign Department, No. 257, Camp Kanpur, 4 Nov 1859.

³³ Ibid.

ter the suppression of revolt, it was the Raja of Benaras, who along with Muslim reformer Sir Syed Ahmed Khan founded 'Patriotic Association of India'.

Awadh/ Rampur / Benaras

Rampur, a descendent of erstwhile Rohilla Afghans which survived as an important regional force came to the service of the British near Awadh region. While British Resident Henry Lawrence was addressing the soldiers at Lucknow on the virtues of non-partisan, non-sectarian and secular nature of the British rule to win over support in Awadh, the Rampur Nawab was arranging all resources to fight the rebels. The rulers of Rampur were loyalists and provided all kinds of support to restore order and calm in the region. Alexander (local British agent) recommended to Lord Canning (Governor General): 'I recommend the grant of the honour title of Bahadur to be conferred on Hakeem Sadat Ali, with a Khillat of 5000 and a Zamindaree of Rs. 10000 per annum. This was accepted by the Governor General, and he sent a note appreciating the services of the Rampur Nawab.

Lord Canning commending the role of Rampur Nawab said: 'It is well known to me that, notwithstanding intrigues among your relations, mutiny among your troops, and the threats and abuse of fanatical men, your highness never severed from the beginning to the end of the rebellion from your allegiance to the Government; that you spared neither personal exertions nor material resources to support it; and that it is due you that any portion of the revenues of Moradabad was realised to the British Government, and that tranquillity was restored in that district.'³⁴

Canning added, 'The Government is also under great obligations to your Highness for the protection of Christian life...and for the example of unrest raining and untiring loyalty which you have set before all around you. I had pleasure in acknowledging these eminent services at a public durbar held at Futtehar...at this durbar a Khillat of the value of Rs. 20000 was conferred upon you; and I informed you at the same time that in, consideration of of your steadfast loyalty, and the valuable aid you afforded to the Government, the pergunnah of Kasheepur in Moradabad was granted to you and your heirs, as part of your territory; that your salute was increased from 11 to 13 guns; and that an addition would be made to your honorary designation and form of address; Khillat and Jagirdari has also been conferred on some of your relations and servants...'³⁵ The Governor General was also happy with

³⁴ Parliamentary Papers, 1860, III, No. 350 Of 1858, Rampur.

³⁵ Ibid.

the show of unity in the Rampur ruling family, which otherwise were engaged in strife. Canning in his letter said, 'I request you to convey my thanks to your brother Kazim Ali Khan, for having rendered assistance to you in administration of Rampoor, and for his acting opposition to the enemies of the British Government.' As mentioned above, Benaras was an important loyalist state, and it was important given the importance of the city for large number of people.

'The Governor General held a Darbar at Cawnpur on the 3rd distant for the reception of Maharaja of Benaras. He received a salute of 13 guns. He was given a Khillat of the value of 10,000 rupees and honour of a hereditary salute of 13 guns.³⁶ The Maharaja of Chirakee received a Khillat of the value of 10,000 Rupees, the pergunnah (state) of Futtehpur and hereditary salute of 11 guns.

The Raja of Benaras was on moon when Queen Victoria became the Empress of India or Qaiser-i-Hind in 1858 and took no time in assuring her of full support and loyalty. Ishree Prasad Singh (Raja of Benaras) wrote to Empress of India: 'With your graceful .., I most respectfully seize this opportunity of laying at your august feet my humble but sincere congratulations on the auspicious occasion of you assuming the Government of British territories in India...I beg most respectfully to assure your Majesty of my earnest conviction of the good and wise policy of your Majesty's government has shown in maintaining the ancient rights of the people in the land of their forefathers, in observing strict neutrality in religious matters, in promoting peace and social enhancement among people, and in acknowledging the engagements entered into by the Honourable... I most humbly crave your Majesty's gracious acceptance of the small nuzzur laid at your feet as a token of respect and homage, by your Majesty's most loyal and most faithful subject and servant.'³⁷ Not far from Benaras, was the state of Shahabad (Ara), where 80-years-old Kunwar Singh was raising the banner of revolt against the British rule. He found support from civilians as well as a section of Indians serving in the Company army. Against the likes of Kunwar Singh were a number of rajas, and landlords, who played important role in suppressing the revolt in the Eastern India. Here, we look at the role of these loyal ruling elite in 19th century Bengal.

Eastern India

In this part of India, there were many supporters of the British Raj. Maharaja of Chotanagpur was one of many die-hard loyalists of the Raj. E T Dalton wrote this to

³⁶ Parliamentary Papers, 1860, III, Foreign Department, No. 257, Camp Kanpur, 4 Nov 1859.

³⁷ Parliamentary Papers, 1860, III, No. 5373.

secretary of Bengal in Letter No. 20, on 12 Sept, 1857 after the mutineers in Ranchi, burnt the bungalows of their officers: 'I have however; received assurances from all the Zamindars and ghatwals they will to the most of their power oppose the mutineers. I received confidential message from the Maharaja of Chotanagpur informing me that his jagirdars and followers were all prepared in cooperate with the government troops and expressing his anxiety for the speedy reoccupation of Chotanagpur. The influential men with one or two exceptions are in our favour.'³⁸In another letter of Dalton, these Rajas came for praise: The Maharaja Jagurnath Sahi Deo of Chota Nagpur appears to me to deserve the commendations of Government for the steady loyalty he has evinced to the State. The loyalty of his three nephews, Lala OopendraNath Sahi, MahendraNath Sahi and MukhundNath Sahi, in resisting all invitations from the mutineers is very creditable to them. ThakoorIndraNath Sahi, a cousin of the Maharaja deserves praise for his successful exertions to maintain order in his Zamindari during the disturbances.³⁹When Dalton made successful return to Ranchi in September 1857, these Rajas were at his beck and call. Dalton confirmed this after taking charge in Ranchi: 'I have the honour to report my return to the Headquarters of this division and the arrival here yesterday and today of the force under Major English. The Maharaja of Chota Nagpur and his subordinates had made excellent arrangements for supplies in the villages of his estate through which we marched and at this station, the bazar here having been plundered by the mutineers and deserted by the shopkeepers.'⁴⁰

About the Ramgarh Raja, Dalton explained to his superiors in Bengal: 'Madhub Singh, has on his side only the Bhojporeans and men of western India, Behar etc., Most of these men have lands on the estate of the Ramgarh Raja on which their families reside and I have called on the Rajah to furnish with lists of all who are so situated and directed him to take measures to prevent (them from joining rebel ranks).'⁴¹The Raja of Seraikellah, who was at loggerheads with Raja Arjun Singh of Porahat also helped the English. Lieutenant Birch deserves great credit for having boldly assumed charge of his division without any assistance except what he could obtain from the Seraikellah Rajah...⁴²

³⁸ Bihar State Archives, 5 August 1857-November 2 1857, 566/1961, Letters from E T Dalton to Govt. of Bengal.

³⁹ National Archives of India, Home, Pol, Nov. 2, 1857, 75.

⁴⁰ National Archives of India, Home, Judicial, Sept. 23 1857, 28.

⁴¹ Bihar State Archives, 5 August 1857-November 2 1857, 566/1961, Letters from E T Dalton to Govt. of Bengal, No. 5.

⁴² National Archives of India, Home, Judicial, Sept. 30 1857, 41.

The case of Bisnath Sahai of Barkagarh was ironical. He faced the gallows in the end. But, he faced challenge to his leadership from fellow rebels in Ranchi. In the beginning, he was also not sure about the revolt. Dalton wrote on August 6, 1857: 'The rebels approached ThakoorBisnathSahai of Barkagarh to be their leader but he refused'.⁴³ Within a fortnight, he changed his mind and joined the rebel ranks. Dalton wrote on Aug 19, 1857: Bisnath Sahai of Barkagarh accepted the offer of the rebels and sits today daily in one of the Cantonment Bungalows to administer justice.⁴⁴

These rajas were not only disloyal to their land. Many of them were jealous of each other, and as it happens in corporate houses today, or other government offices, where backbiting and sycophancy are accepted norms for promotion and favours, these rajas were always looking for opportunity to please and polish their English masters by adding all the known adjectives and titles and appearing more humble than the servants of the Company. Ramgarh Raja exactly this in his submission to the English officials, and Dalton wrote to his Bengal seniors on August 21, 1857: 'Ramgarh Raja reports that Bisnath Sahib of Burkagarh had come out with 150 followers and had cut several breaches in the road leading over the Ramgarh Ghat with the obvious intention of making it difficult for the troops advancing against the Dorandah.'⁴⁵ Another example is provided by this another letter of a raja to the Company officials. Maharaja SambhooNath Singh wrote to the Chotanagpur Commissioner on August 22 1857: 'I have to state that having heard that the *Numuck haram* sepoy of Dorundah intended coming down the hills, I issued *Parwanah* to my several Ilaqadars to guard the ghaats against them...military succour may be sent immediately otherwise, I think, the force of the mutineers is too great for me to cope with..⁴⁶

It is well known that the Zamindars were not only interested in their own future, and promotion but also provided intelligence and even advised. Here is one example. Maharaja ShambhooNath Singh Bahadoor, Zamindar of Ramghur, in his *arzee* to Commissioner of Chota Nagpur addressed on 22 Aug. 1857: Whatever I have heard up to this moment, I report to you and will continue to inform you of everything of importance. I recommended you the other gentlemen to remain at Burhee, but the sepoy should be sent to Hazareebagh. Their presence there, will

⁴³ Bihar State Archives, 5 August 1857-November 2 1857, 566/1961, Letters from E T Dalton to Govt. of Bengal, No. 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid., No. 5.

⁴⁵ Ibid., No. 7.

⁴⁶ Ibid., No. 9.

preserve the peace of the country and inspire the persons with confidence in the power of the Government.⁴⁷

I submit copy of letter bringing to notice the landholders and others of Lohard-agga who conducted loyally and faithfully...the conduct of Parganait Jagat Pal Singh of Pithuria whose conspicuous loyalty in closing and holding his Ghaut against the two companies of the mutinous sepoy of 8th Native infantry has already been favourably viewed. Paraganait was in steady communication with me during the whole period of my absence from Ranchee and it was from him that I obtained my best information as to the movements and intentions of the Mutineers. He was the first to welcome us back and has been in attendance ever since and greatly assisted us in procuring supplies..I respectfully propose as a suitable recognition of his services that the title of RaiBahadur be conferred on him and that a pension of Rs. 313 per annum which for faithful and gallant services was bestowed on the Parganait's father Jaimangal Singh and lapsed on his death in August 1853 be now assigned for life to the equally loyal and energetic son. I believe with the title a khillat is generally given. I have heard that the Parganait is very anxious to be presented with a handsome and serviceable double barrelled rifle.⁴⁸

There are few others of less note who opposed the Mutineers at the Tikoo and Chandwa Ghauts to whom I should like to give English double barrelled guns if the Government see no objection: Barak Hair Sing, Emumbux Khan, Baraik Jaboo Sing, ThakoorBhim Sing, Chammun Sing, BechumMissir.⁴⁹ There were also small zamindars and jagirdars who were rewarded for their loyalty and services. The Secretary Government of India wrote to Secretary Government of Bengal: The President in council sanctions the rewardsto the loyal Zamindars and jagirdars in the Palamow District viz⁵⁰:-

Thakoorais Raghoobeer Deyal Singh: title of RaiBahadur, Khillat, double barrelled rifle; Thakoorai Kasson Dyal Singh: title of RaiBahadur, Khillat, double barrelled rifle; RaghoobeerDeyal Sing was also given confiscated Jagheer of 12 villages bearing a quit rent of rupees 43-11-9 a year. To Shiv Charn Roy, a Khillat and an addition to his present Jagheer so as to add rupees 100 or rupees 150 to his annual income. To Koer Bhikari Sing a Khillat, and a small confiscated jagheer of five villages, paying an annual rent of Rs.30 a year.

⁴⁷ National Archives of India, Home, Pol, Aug. 21 1857, 8 camp Barhee.

⁴⁸ National Archives of India, Home, Pol., Nov. 2, 1857, 75.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ National Archives of India, Home, 27 July 1858, No. 1732.

Another Zamindar, who was the beneficiary was Neelmony Singh Deo. The Chotanagpur Commissioner wrote from Hazareebagh: 'When I heard of Purulia Mutiny to call upon Neelmony Singh Deo, Zamindar, to render active assistance, I sent him a perwanah of which I have now the honour to submit a copy. I had received your letter intimating that the supreme Government had consented to confer on him the title of Maharajah and not supposing for a moment that there would be any demur on his part in accepting what had been so pressingly solicited or delay in investing him...'⁵¹ Most of the zamindars were happy to receive such rewards and titles from the colonial master. Neelmony Singh Deo, Zamindar, ChuklahPuchete, in his petition to Chotanagpur Commissioner wrote on on 13 Bhado, 1264 BS: '...I have been informed by a Perwanah of the 13 August 1857 from the Commissioner of Burduwan that the Government has been pleased to confirm the titles of 'Maharajadheeraj' on me. Now I beg to express my happiness in your Perwannah.' The loyalty of the landlords also came in handy in garnering information and spying on the rebels. Dalton wrote from Chutupaloo: 'I have just received an *Urzee* from the Zamindar of Choorea, Hurry Sing Baraik, reporting that he was actually engaged with the Mutineers at the TikooGhaut. He states he had felled numerous trees in the road and thrown up a breast work from behind which he can fire at them and his messengers tell me thta on the 19th the firing commenced.'⁵² Palamau, where the rebellion lasted longer than other parts of Jharkhand, also offered support to the English. A R Young, Secy. Bengal Govt. confirmed this to Secretary Board of Revenue and wrote: 'I am directed to forward rewards to certain jagheerdars in Palamow for services rendered by them to the State during the late disturbances.'⁵³

However, the most interesting case is that of Raja Arjun Singh of Porahat. He is hailed as a great leader of 1857 revolt in the region. But facts, archival sources, imperial records, his own repeated letters to the English officials for favours and restoration of his estate, and even his conduct of dilly-dallying and blurred vision, prove otherwise. The Raja of Porahat was reluctant to take sides during the 1857 revolt. He was not sure about his fate and wanted to be in the good books of the Company, just in case the rebels lost and the revolt failed. He was ready to escape unhurt and unscathed from the blood stains of the revolt. For English his loyalty was uncertain, yet not impossible. Dalton reported: 'I have this morning received an *urzee* from the Porahat Raja dated 26th instant. He states that the Chyebassa sepoy after plundering the Treasury attempted to get away first by Seraikella and Kurswa but being opposed

⁵¹ National Archives of India, Home, Judicial, Sept. 16 1857, 22.

⁵² National Archives of India, Home, Judicial, Sept. 21 1857, 27.

⁵³ National Archives of India, Home, Judicial, 13 Aug. 1858, No. 2859.

at the Ghaut they tried the Porahat route. On this the Raja met them took from them their arms, ammunition and Rs. 1,855-4-8 in cash intending when the gentlemen returned to their posts to give them up. He was however alarmed by the Seraikella forces advancing against him and feared to go to Chyebassa and now he learns that an order to seize him has been issued which makes him more fearful.⁵⁴ The Porahat Raja was expected to turn up and surrender before Birch with his supporters. When he did not turn up Dalton wrote this: 'The Porahat Raja had not up to that date fulfilled his promise of sending in the mutinous sepoys and treasures.'⁵⁵ Arjun Singh fulfilled his promise and Dalton confirmed this on 12 October, 1857: 'I have the honour to report that Arjoon Singh of porahat has reached this station bringing in disarmed and as prisoners the whole of the detachment of Ramghur Light Infantry that mutinied at Chayebassa, consisting of one hundred men of all ranks. The prisoners were handed over to the custody of a detachment of the 27th Madras Native Infantry, and they are in irons and secure in jail and will be tried without delay. The arms and ammunition and the treasure taken by Arjoon Sing from the mutineers have also been brought in and delivered up..⁵⁶ Within a week, these rebel sepoys were massacred by with utter disgust and brutality by Dalton's men. The record room confirms: Court martial of 100 Chayebassa mutineers commenced on October 19.⁵⁷

Till the end, he was looking for escape, and was sure of his rehabilitation when he along with rebels surrendered before the British authorities. Most of the rebels were put to sword without any trial or questioning, but the Raja was not welcomed with open arms, or, awarded any *Khillat* for this act. An upset Raja, swore to take vengeance and turned rebel, when his estate was not restored to him. He seems be ready with Plan 'B' but as it turned out, the result was same. His repeated pleas to the Empire owing loyalty and allegiance, were ignored and his estate was transferred to some other Zamindar.

Hurt, and humiliated, Arjun Singh decided to side with the rebels and provided all the necessary support and became an active participant in the revolt of 1857. He facilitated the rebel sepoys in crossing the Sanjay river and employed them in his service. The Deputy Commissioner of Chaibasa Lieutenant Birch put in force all

⁵⁴ National Archives of India, Home, Judicial, Oct 1, 1857, 42.

⁵⁵ Bihar State Archives, 5 August 1857-November 2 1857, 566/1961, Letters from E T Dalton to Govt. of Bengal, No. 41.

⁵⁶ Ibid., No. 51, Judicial.

⁵⁷ Bihar State Archives, A Handbook of the Bihar and Orissa Provincial Records 1771-1859, Superintendent, Govt. Printing, Bihar and Orissa, Patna, 1933, Record Room of the Commissioner of Chotanagpur at Ranchi, p. 131.

strength to capture Arjun Singh, and announced a bounty of Rs. 1000 for his capture. Arjun Singh was already declared a rebel and an outlaw by Birch. Dalton was not happy with Birch and considered Arjun Singh a loyal raja, who was hurt because of the proximity of Saraikella Raja to Birch. On October 1, 1857, Dalton wrote: 'Declaring the Porahat Raja a rebel and his estate confiscated. It appears to me highly probable that in the neglect of the Porahat Raja promptly to attend Lieutenant Birch, he has been actuated mainly by his dread and jealousy of the Seraikella Raja's influence.'⁵⁸ In another letter, Dalton wrote: I have reason to fear that this has resulted more from the bad advice given, and the evil rumours spread abroad by men who seek the ruin of Urjoon Singh than from any other evil disposition on his own part towards the British Government and I therefore trust that I may yet find occasion to recommend the Government to exercise clemency towards him.⁵⁹

Now, it is audacious to consider a person as a hero, who was responsible for breach of trust, and who was disloyal to his fellow countrymen. It is surprising to note, that researchers and historians have not consulted many sources available in the National Archives and Bihar State Archives, where he does not appear as a hero, but a clever man, who for his own life, took the life of 100 of sepoys, who had reposed faith in his leadership; who had agreed to fight for the motherland under his leadership; who were not afraid to die. And Arjun failed to even live up to his name.

The English forces attacked Porahat with full force, and his palace was razed to the ground. He was arrested with the help of Mewa Lal, Sheristedar of Chaibasa⁶⁰. The record room reports: 'Operations in Singhbhum resulted in capture or unconditional surrender of Porahat insurgents including Raja Arjun Singh and his brother Koar Baijnath Singh on Feb. 22 1859.⁶¹ Singhbhum occupied; Arjun Singh expecting an amnesty, and he wanted restoration of his entire estate.⁶² He was arrested and was sent off to Benares in December 1859 on Rs. 400 per month pension, where he died in 1890. The conversation between Dalton and his superiors gives a very interesting account of the Raja: 'It is ..I believe, quite true that Urjoon Singh would not have rebelled had he not been permanently treated as a rebel and further, that his loyalty might have been effectively secured had he been received with commenda-

⁵⁸ Bihar State Archives, 5 August 1857-November 2 1857, 566/1961, Letters from E T Dalton to Govt. of Bengal, No. 42.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 25.

⁶⁰ Devi, Ritambhri. *Indian Mutiny: 1857 in Bihar*, Chetna Publications, Delhi, p. 149.

⁶¹ BSA, *A Handbook of the Bihar and Orissa Provincial Records 1771-1859*, Superintendent, Govt. Printing, Bihar and Orissa, Patna, 1933, Record Room of the Commissioner of Chotanagpur at Ranchi, p. 132.

⁶² National Archives of India, Home, Public December 17, 1858, 36-38.

tion when he came up to Ranchi to deliver up the mutineers, and allowed to return with honour to his estate.’⁶³

Even under confinement outside Jharkhand, he had not lost hope owing to his service and loyalty. He wrote to the Governor General of India on 16 July 1861: ‘Your petitioner has never been convicted of treason, nor even formally and legally convicted; but, on the other hand, he was hastily proclaimed a rebel, and still more precipitately was his estate confiscated ... your petitioner himself voluntarily surrendered under the Amnesty, he submits that the confiscation of his estate and his perpetual exile at Benaras was not quite justifiable. Your petitioner most earnestly and respectfully begs that your Lordship in Council will be graciously pleased ... and not only order your petitioner’s release from service, but also the restoration to him of his estate in its integrity.’⁶⁴ The sulking Raja might have thought of getting his estate back in return for his loyalty. But, the English never allowed emotions to come in the way of business. Dalton puts to rest all speculation, when he wrote to Bengal officer on June 26, 1861: ‘Urjoon Singh’s rebellion must have cost the Government upward of two Lac rupees; and even if he were to receive a free pardon, we might very fairly still retain our hold on the assets of the estate.’⁶⁵ Raja Arjun Singh was an interesting character, who wanted to enjoy the luxury of royalty and at times even dreamt of being ‘leader’ to the rebels. His desire to enjoy the best of the both sides proved suicidal and he was declared a ‘rebel’ and died in Benaras. During the Revolt of 1857, the British realised their mistake in making rules, which would antagonise Indians. The Company was deprived of its ruling powers and Queen Victoria in his Proclamation of 1858 promised something for everyone.

Conclusion

From now, the princely states of India became a partner of Queen Victoria. Princely states such as Bhopal, Patiala, Rampur, Gwalior and Hyderabad which had remained pro-British during the uprisings of 1857 were of course rewarded with promotions and land grants. All princely states of importance were flattered with conscious ceremonial symbols, among them Gun Salutes. The number of guns fired—which typically ranged from 9 to 21—clearly reflected in princes’ status and his relative position within the imperial system; the queen herself was entitled to

⁶³ National Archives of India, Home, Public A, August 9, 1861, 44.

⁶⁴ National Archives of India, Home, Public A, 9 Aug 1861, 45.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 44.

101.’⁶⁶ He (Canning) ensured that in an undefined but substantial way, the fate of 600 royal houses in India became bound up with the reputation of the native princes as our own’.⁶⁷

The earlier attempt to introduce reform and interfere with existing customs and traditions was discontinued. The viceroy informed the Maharajas and the jagirdars (landlords) that in consideration of their loyalty to the British government...in the event of failure of anyone of them of direct heirs, recognise the privilege of adoption, according to the ancient customs of their respecting families.⁶⁸ In a proclamation to the Princes, Chiefs, and people of India, delivered in November 1858 Queen Victoria (1837-1901) pledged to ‘respect the rights, dignity, and honour of native princes as our own’. And guarantee that the policy of annexing princely states has come to an end.⁶⁹ There came an acknowledgement that the princely states as a body had proved remarkably steadfast during the crisis and that their support had helped to turn the tide. Citing particularly the contribution of Hyderabad and Gwalior, Governor General Lord Canning declared, ‘these patches of Native government served as breakwaters in the storm which would otherwise have swept over us in one great wave.’⁷⁰

The act of 1861 was passed which, for the first time placed Raja Narendra Singh of Patiala, Raja Dinkar Rao of Gwalior and Raja Dev Narain of Benaras in the (Viceroy’s) Council.⁷¹ The Order of the Star of India was founded in 1861 in time to reward Indian Princes who had stood loyal during the uprisings of 1857-58..the star of India was complimented in 1877 by the less exclusive Order of the Indian Empire, which carried the motto ‘imperatricis auspiciis’...’(Under the auspices of the Empress)’. In addition to orders, the Crown liberally elevated Rajas (kings) to rank of Maharaja (great King) eventually somewhat devaluing the significance of the lofty title.⁷²

To commemorate Royal Titles Act of 1876, Lord Lytton (1831-91) staged the first of a series impressive darbars in Delhi in 1877, to which ninety leading princes

⁶⁶ Jeffery, Amen. *Made for Maharaja, A design Diary of Princely States*, The Vendome Press, New York, 2006, p. 15.

⁶⁷ Copland, Ian. *The Princes of India in the endgame of Empire, 1917-47*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 17.

⁶⁸ Parliamentary Papers, 1860, III, Foreign Department, No. 257, Camp Kanpur, 4 Nov 1859.

⁶⁹ Jeffery, Amen. *Op.cit.*, p. 15.

⁷⁰ Copland, Ian. *Op.cit.*, p. 16.

⁷¹ Muhammad, Shan. *Education and Politics: From Sir Syed to Present Day: The Aligarh School*, APH Publishing, 2002, p. 263.

⁷² Jeffery, Amen. *op.cit.*, p. 16.

were invited.⁷³ In late 19th century and early 20th century, Indian princes came to symbolise pomp, luxury, and royalty which was second only to the British Queen. They were much sought after by the European and American companies specialising in personalised manufacturing and ‘specially ordered’ culture. They were living in a fantasy world of their own and could not ignore the Darbar of 1877, even when a large part of British Indian territory was experiencing draught and famine. As Raj loyalist Maharaja Jasjit Singh of Kapurthala state said: ‘Ever Since I can remember, it was my greatest ambition to travel in western countries, and judge for myself the marvellous things that were told me concerning them.’⁷⁴ This statement illustrates the views of majority of Indian Princely States, who were so much in awe of the west and occidental things.

Glossary:

Sepoy=soldier / English version of Persian word sipahi; Raja=King; Maharaja=Great King; Nawab=A viceroy or governor; usually for men but also used by women; equivalent to Raja in some cases; Raj: used before 1858 for Company rule (Raj) and after 1858 to denote the rule by British Queen; Khillat: Robe of honour; Awadh=region in central north India ruled by Nawab of Lucknow till 1856; Begum=Madam, a common title for the wives of Muslim princes.

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⁷³ Ibid., p. 16.

⁷⁴ Maharaja Jesuit Singh of Kapurthala, *My Travels in Europe and America, 1895* quoted on inside cover page, in: *ibid.*

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Абдул Азим Актар

ПОБУНА У БРИТАНСКОЈ ИНДИЈИ ИЗ 1857. ГОДИНЕ: ПРИМЕРИ ЛОЈАЛНОСТИ ИНДИЈСКЕ ВЛАДАЈУЋЕ ЕЛИТЕ КОЛОНИЈАЛНОЈ БРИТАНСКОЈ УПРАВИ

Апстракт: Индијска побуна из 1857. године представљала је први велики изазов за Британску источноиндијску компанију (под чијом политичком управом и економском контролом се Индија налазила) и дословно довела у питање остваривост колонијалних амбиција енглеских господара. Током побуне која се догодила у многим деловима централне, северне и источне Индије, различити слојеви друштва су се придружили устаничким сепојима (индијским војницима који су регрутовани у војску Источноиндијске компаније) у ономе што поједини научници називају Првим ратом за независност Индије. Побуњеници су за свог вођу прогласили могулског цара Бахадур Шах Зафара, иако је сепоје било тешко држати под контролом. Подршка је побуњеницима стизала са различитих страна, међутим знатан део индијских принчева, земљопоседника и других владајућих елита био је против устанка. Представници ових индијских аристократичких група црпели су своју моћ и привилегије управо из владавине Британске источноиндијске компаније, те су и њихови интереси и даље одржање повластица били условљени британском управом која им је то омогућавала. Они су из тог разлога пружали отпор устаницима и у многим местима чинили бедем против растућег таласа антибританских осећања, те су на тај начин, зарад подршке колонијалној власти, изневеравали интересе сопственог народа. Овај чланак настоји да проучи њихову улогу, на примеру одабраних случајева.

Кључне речи: Индијска побуна из 1857. године, сепоји, Британска источноиндијска компанија, управа Компаније над Индијом (1757-1858), управа Британске круне над Индијом (1858-1957), империјализам и колонијализам, махараџе, раџе