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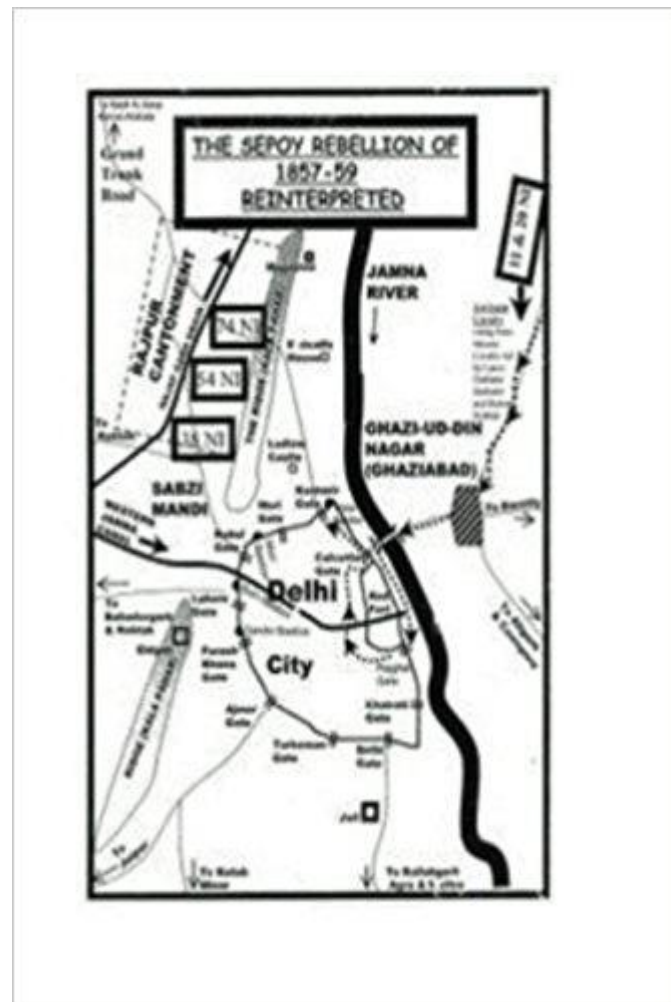
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# Sepoy Rebellion of 1857-59 Reinterpreted Paperback – October 10, 2012

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## . Chapter Two

### The Causes Of The Rebellion

- . Maj (Retd) AGHA HUMAYUN AMIN from WASHINGTON DC gives a brilliant analysis of the 1857 war of Independence
- . **T**he events of 1857 were unique both in terms of historical precedence and in terms of the socio-political sphere as far as India was concerned. India as a

**region has known foreign invaders more frequently than any other region in world history. The reason for it does not lie in the docility or weakness of the Indo-Pak people but in the peculiar geographical position of India by virtue of being bounded in the north by a vast inhospitable and unproductive region which starts from beyond the Indus valley and stretches far north into the steppes of central and eastern Asia. It is an irony of history that the east Asian tribes and races forced the west Asian nomads of Mongol and Turk origin to seek their barbaric design for plunder westwards and these central Asian people repeatedly invaded India. In the process these central and north east Asian nomadic people conquered and colonized China also but also extended their sway in South Asia as well as West Asia.**

- . The first important aspect of the whole affair is to broadly analyze the conduct of the races who conquered India. This is a relatively simple exercise. Starting from the Aryans, Huns, Greeks etc. the invaders of India can be classified into two broad categories i.e. 'Settlers' or 'Plunderers'. The settlers were the ones who came to the country, conquered it and settled here. They can be compared with Normans or Saxons who went to Britain and gradually got assimilated in the country which they had initially conquered. The 'Plunderers' were the ones who came like 'Ghaznavis', 'Mongols', 'Nadir Shah', 'Ahmad Shah Abdali' etc. looted the country and went back to their country of origin. For those who do not know Indian history it is important to specify that the first Muslim invaders of India i.e., the 'Arabs' were settlers and not plunderers. They conquered and annexed a part of India and made it a province of their empire. Mahmud of Ghaznavi was both a plunderer and a settler. Initially his concentration was on simply acquiring the material wealth which during that age was done by 'Plunder'. Subsequently geographical and logistical factors forced him to also act as a part settler and thus he made present 'Punjab' and 'Frontier' a province of his empire. But even then area east of west Punjab remained his area to be plundered. The 'Ghuri' Turks who were 'Muslims' by religion were the first Muslim settlers in India east of Indus valley region. They made Delhi their capital and gradually got assimilated in India. They were followed by various Muslim dynasties of Central Asian or Afghan/Pathan origin who may be classified as usurpers. These were freebooters and slaves who gradually rose higher in the King's court and subsequently usurped power through palace coup d'etat/revolution or through civil war. The only exception to these settlers was Tamerlane who sacked and destroyed Delhi in 1398 and**

**did not establish a dynasty in India. The relevance of discussing only the Muslim invaders of India prior to the British while omitting pre-Muslim invaders is simple. In 1857 people belonging to three religions or three broad groups who were fighting with certain objectives. These were the British, the Hindus and the Muslims. It is in this context that an endeavour is made in these paragraphs to acquaint only the layman reader about the broad mechanics of Indo-Pak history**

- . The last settler - invaders of India prior to the British were the Mughals. They came to India in 1526. They defeated the then Pathan Muslim King of Delhi at Panipat and established the Mughal dynasty. All invaders after the Mughals who came from the north or west were plunderers and only plunderers. These include 'Nadir Shah' and 'Ahmad Shah Abdali'. In justice to Ahmad Shah Abdali it must be stated that Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1761 did want to become a settler and establish his dynasty in India but he failed to do so because his soldiers had rebelled and demanded a return back to Afghanistan. All Muslim invaders who attacked India from the north did not distinguish the Hindus from Muslims and subjected all Indians to indiscriminate looting.**
- . For a casual reader of history in this light the British may also appear as just one of the earlier invaders of India. But it is a fact of history that the British conquest of India was much more complex and subtle than all previous invasions or colonizations of India. Four features make it different: (1) The Third Religion Factor. (2) The Communication Factor. (3) The Economic Factor. (4) The Organizational Factor. India's history prior to Plassey was relatively simple. Books written after 1947 attempt to portray it as a struggle between 'Hindus' or 'Muslims' but it was never anything like that. But then historians are prisoners of time and the society they live in at least in the vast majority of cases. Those who endeavour to write history as it happened do so at the risk of their life or loss of social approval or just because they are not bothered or pushed about pleasing the majority. The struggle in India prior to 1757 and even after 1757 was between individuals who were 'Muslims' or 'Hindus' by pure chance and who manipulated their followers or subjects in a certain direction guided and propelled not by any religious convictions but by personal whims and subjective designs. 'Religion' was just one of their tools, a political expedient, a wartime slogan, a matter of policy. Muslims killed Muslims and Hindus killed Hindus for simple power or for patronage or economic benefit. Hindus killed Hindus for Muslim Kings and Muslims killed Muslims for Hindu**

**Kings. Everything was mixed, diverse and complex. Rajput Hindu Generals fought for Aurangzeb against the Hindu rebel Sivaji. Aurangzeb preferred to ennobles Mahratta Hindus who formed 16.7% of his nobles in the period (1679-1707) than lets say 'Punjabi Muslims' who were not even 2% .Thus Hindu Rajputs and Hindu Mahrattas were the bulk of Aurangzeb's nobility and their number in the period (1679-1707) stood at 31.6 %<sup>32</sup> .**

**. Thus we see that in the period between 1526 and 1707 the India of the Mughals was a state which had opened its doors to the 'Natives' as the British later degradingly referred to the Indians. The British who became a force to reckon within India after 1757 brought a totally new phenomena to India i.e., 'slavery' and 'subjugation'. An 'Indian' could be a common soldier or a non-commissioned officer or a junior commissioned officer but remained junior or subservient to the junior most British officer who may have been a cook or son of a cook in Britain! The civil servants, the governors, all ranks and appointments of any consequence were open to only the white man. This was a new experience for the Indians. They had been colonized by the Aryans, the Greeks, the Arabs, the Turks, the Pathans. But all these people had either plundered them and left or if they had stayed, they always allowed the native Indians to be a part of the dominant classes. The problem with the British was that they thought that they were very special whereas India had been conquered even by 'Horse Thieves'<sup>33</sup> and central Asian adventurers who could not fight with the Uzbeks! The Indians were surprised and disillusioned and there grew a feeling in north India that these new invaders were different. If we glance at Indian history between 1757 and 1857, we find hardly any Indian in a respectable official rank or position in the territories governed by the English East India Company. Whereas if we compare this with lets say the Mughals we find that the third Mughal Emperor Akbar just about three decades after his grandfather Babar had established the Mughal Empire in India was freely employing Indians both Hindus and Muslims in all the ranks and appointments of his army and civil service. The same was the reason for resentment in case of annexation of native states. It closed all doors of advancement to an Indian in any profession/service.**

**. The British were different not because they were racists or fascists but because of the circumstances in which history had placed them. We will take the first of these i.e., 'The Religion Factor'. Before 1757 all contenders in Indian politics were either Hindus or Muslims. But this was irrelevant because**

**both the parties used religion just as one of the means to a personal or political end. Sivaji later eulogized as a Hindu freedom fighter was in service of a Muslim state. Aurangzeb's most famous general Jai Singh was a Hindu Rajput. Ahmad Shah Abdali later on portrayed as a purely Muslim hero could find no better governor of Muslim majority Lahore than 'Kabuli Mal'34 a Hindu! Ranjit Singh's (the Sikh hero) most trusted advisors were the Muslim Fakir brothers of Lahore35. Now suddenly after 1757 a third religion 'Christianity' appears on the Indian scenario. The British were 'Christians' by accident and religion was an insignificant factor in their list of priorities. But the very fact that there was a third religion made the scenario complex. New probabilities and possibilities opened for political leaders, religious thinkers and all those who held positions of power or patronage. Had the British assimilated like the earlier conquerors their religion would not have been given much importance. But since their conduct was discriminatory and biased 'Christianity' also became an issue. The new possibility that the Hindus and Muslims could combine against a common enemy provided a good propaganda theme for manipulators (politicians) for purpose of political propaganda. This is ironic since 'Islam and Christianity' have many things in common. But even then between 1757 and 1857 most of the conflicts were between states and groups in which Muslims frequently allied with the British and the British frequently allied with the Hindus or Muslims against other Muslim states or other European powers. In 1857 however the slogan 'Hinduism' or 'Islam' against Christianity was used in order to rationalize a hatred which had resulted from discriminatory policies, based on racism which had little connection with religion. Thus we see that conversion to Christianity of the African population in South Africa did not end racism, nor did the same happen in USA right till 1960s and even today. 'Religion' was not an issue in itself but the EEIC policy of discrimination made it an issue and 'Religion' in a symbolic sense was used as a slogan by the freedom fighters' leaders in 1857**

**. The second factor which made the British different from all other previous invaders was the communication factor. England was many months journey by sea or overland from India but the 'sea communications' which the British used were guaranteed and reliable by virtue of British naval mastery established after 1588 and consolidated as a result of a series of naval victories in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Thus reliable/guaranteed communications kept the British in touch with the home country. The Greeks who came with**



**Alexander could not do so and so gradually were assimilated and absorbed in the Indian society. The Mughals also could not maintain direct contact with their home country since they themselves had been expelled from their home country by the Uzbeks. The Mughals did employ many men of Turko-Mongol origin but political expediency and the demand and supply gap both necessitated a nobility drawn from a diverse array of Persian Afghan/Pathan and selected Indian background. In the British case the communication factor made it different. Had the Mughals reached India by sea from a far off island and had good naval commanders like Drake, Rodney and Nelson they may also have behaved differently! Thus reliable overseas communications ensured a constant supply of manpower for lower intermediate and higher military civil and political jobs. Britain at this time was experiencing a population boom and India was an opportunity for many Britons who may have ended unemployed or in debtor jails had they stayed in Britain.**

- . The third factor was the economic factor created because of trading objectives and the industrial revolution. The English East India Company's presence was based on trade between India and Britain and pure business or economic activity confined to India only was not their sole objective. India was a base for raw material which had to be transported to Britain. This necessitated economic exploitation and discriminatory taxation and commercial regulation. The English East India Company in this aspect was a prisoner of circumstances and its consequent unpopularity in the Indian populace was regarded by its British Directors sitting in London as a necessary evil. In this aspect, the East India Company was a sophisticated version of Mahmud Ghaznavi or Nadir Shah or Sivaji or Ahmad Shah Abdali. These honourable gentlemen graced the scene for a short duration and then left. The East India Company was there to stay.**
- . The fourth and the most crucial factor which made the British racist and discriminatory and thus different from all previous invaders of India was the 'Organizational Factor'. The Mughals who came to India from Central Asia were exiles or political refugees. Their first founder King Babar could not hold his ancestral state 'Ferghana' in Central Asia. He crossed the Oxus and went southward into present day Afghanistan where he established a new Kingdom. Subsequently he came to India, defeated the reigning Pathan Muslim King of Delhi, and then decided to stay on in India although he detested India's hot weather just like the English East India Company's officials later on. Babar**

was an independent King and there was no board of directors controlling him from Tashkent or Bokhara in Central Asia. He had decided to stay in India and his descendants never thought like an Englishman of 19th century that one day they would go back and live in a palace or cottage in Central Asia. This was so not because they disliked Central Asia but because it was not economically viable or safe to go and live there. Babar, the founder of the Mughal Empire despised native Indians just as much as many arrogant officials of the English East India Company. But Babar's descendants had no option but to employ Indians in their army and civil service keeping in view the dictates of their situation by virtue of logistical political and social necessity. The Britisher who came to India in 1757 or in 1847 was not always a racist. Many of them married here, intimately mingled with Indians, took a deep interest in Indian history and made very positive contributions in the literary, social, educational and economic spheres. But all said and done these Britishers were servants of a company which had its headquarters in London, where all policies pertaining to general operations, legislation, recruitment etc. were made. Even if they wanted to, they could not follow a policy which was fair and just for the Indian natives. The British parliament had many Indian lovers in its ranks but these legislators could not directly interfere with the government of the East India Company. Lord Dalhousie, one of the Governor Generals in India wanted for example to include Indians in the higher government of India but his wish was overruled by the court of Directors of the English East India Company. During the discussions while drafting the India Act of 1853 in the British Parliament a proposal was made to have Indian members in the viceroy's legislative council. This proposal was defeated due to opposition on part of Sir Charles Wood who stated that 'No two Indians could be found to represent adequately the diversity of Hindu and Muslim society'.<sup>35a</sup> There was an element of truth in Charles Wood's argument but it was just a minute fraction of the truth against the whole argument in favour of having Indian members. Later on after 1857, the British by and large accepted it as one of the principal causes of the rebellion of 1857. Sir Syed writing in the post-1857 era declared 'Exclusion' as the principle cause of the rebellion<sup>35b</sup>.

- Lord Macaulay a man who is very often grossly misunderstood and unjustly criticized in India and Pakistan was a matter of fact a great advocate of inclusion of Indians in the higher ranks by virtue of allowing them to compete in the open competitive examinations. Macaulay had been trying to promote



**the Indian cause since 183336. He laid the foundation of modern education in India.**

- . However, in sum total the 'organizational' factor was the principal cause of the deep British-Indian divide which led to the events which erupted like a volcano in 1857. This 'Discrimination' was a major underlying cause of the rebellion of 1857. It was this 'Discrimination' which compelled Indians to think of the British as alien exploiters. It led to exclusion of Indians from the higher legislative and political forums and thus contributed to evolution of laws which were perceived by Indians as an attack on caste and religion.**

#### **. THE POLICY OF ANNEXATION**

- . The policy of annexation and conquest has also been widely pointed out as one of the principal causes of the rebellion of 1857. This aspect is not as simple as it appears at first sight. The standpoint from which it is mostly condemned is morality or moral grounds but there is no morality in empire building or politics. The policy of annexation on part of the English East India Company was nothing but a logical outcome of superior military strength. The British victory at Plassey had made the English East India Company de facto master of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The abolition of the Nawabi in Bengal made them the de jure master also in 1765 or in 1773 technically speaking<sup>37</sup>. By 1764 after having won at Buxar from the political and military point of view the English East India Company (EEIC) was the master of north India at least as far as all territory of the Oudh state extended. The EEIC could have annexed Oudh in 1765 but they did not do so in 1765 because they assessed that it was practically not possible for them to manage this vast territory. But they started the process of annexation in 1775 when the Nawab of Oudh agreed to cede to the EEIC territories comprising Benaras, Jaunpore, Mirzapur etc. held by Chait Singh as a subsidiary of the Nawab<sup>38</sup>. This process was once again exercised when the EEIC's viceroy Lord Wellesley forced the Nawab to cede half of his remaining territory to the Company in 1801<sup>39</sup>. This led to extension of EEIC authority to half of northern India as far as eastern boundary of Aligarh district and all territory east of Ganges river. As a matter of fact, Lord Wellesley was planning to annex whole of Oudh state in September, 1801 when for this purpose he had sent his brother Henry Wellesley to the state's Capital Lucknow<sup>40</sup>. However long negotiations followed in which the viceroy's brother agreed to cession of only half the territory to the EEIC's domains. This annexation rendered Oudh politically geographically and militarily little more**

than a petty vassal state of the East India Company. The probable reason why the viceroy's brother agreed to only half the territory appears to have been partly a fear that complete annexation may be perceived as politically inexpedient being a violation of 1798 between Sir John Shore and Oudh. The EEIC had guaranteed in this treaty that it would protect Oudh in perpetuity. There are two aspects of this annexation. From the strict legal point it can be criticized as unjust. However from the political military or economic point of view it strengthened the EEIC's position in northern India. It brought a vast increase in land revenue since the land revenue was approximately 13,523,474 rupees<sup>41</sup>. Militarily it rendered Oudh incapable of concluding an effective alliance with the Mahrattas or another power since now Oudh was surrounded on all three sides by EEIC's territory whereas previously the EEIC territories were only on its eastern borders. An interesting fact to be noted here is that the EEICs acquisitions from Oudh in 1801 comprised almost half territory which had initially been assigned by the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam to EEIC in 1765 i.e. the Kora and Allahabad areas<sup>42</sup>. This also included Rohail Khand which had been conquered by the Nawab of Oudh by employment of EEIC's Bengal Army brigade which the Nawab had hired in 1774<sup>43</sup>. But this is not the appropriate place to go into any further details. Our aim is to debate the influence of the EEIC's policy of annexation as a subsequent cause of the outbreak of the 1857 rebellion.

- We see that the EEIC annexed half of Oudh state whereas they were initially planning to annex the whole of it. It was the viceroy Lord Wellesley's decision and was approved by the Board of Directors. Oudh's army also as per this agreement was to be reduced to less than one tenth of its previous size. Viewed from the political and strategic expediency point of view this treaty was a masterstroke. In the long term, it laid the foundations for future war against the Mahrattas in the North and against Sikhs and Afghanistan subsequently. How should we view this action today? Keeping in view the origins of the Oudh Nawab we see that his ancestors were the governors of the Mughal Emperor in Oudh. Subsequently when they assessed that the Mughal Empire had become weak, they usurped power and became for all purposes independent rulers. Militarily they were convincingly defeated by the EEIC at Buxar in 1764. But after Buxar the EEIC did not annex Oudh because Lord Clive felt that it was too big to be practically controlled or managed by the EEIC, keeping in view the EEIC's organization and potential at that time. The EEIC

resident was not far from the truth once he explained to Nawab Saadat that 'These countries did not belong to your ancestors but were added to the family possessions by the power of the British arms'<sup>44</sup>.

- There was however one subtle contradiction in all this. All things said and done Oudh remained an independent and comparatively peaceful region at a time when, most of other parts of India including Delhi, Punjab and Central India witnessed considerable bloodshed, anarchy and destruction. Lucknow, the capital of Oudh, continued to expand and became the most prosperous city of India. New palaces continued to be built, roads were constructed and widened and the people of Oudh had a pride which was much more than inhabitants of any part of India except the Hyderabad state, another British lackey in the south. Here comes in the contradiction, men of vision like Sir Syed even in 1840s knew that the English East India Company was there in India to stay, but the man with average perception and these constitute the vast majority in all historical situations, always naively thought that Oudh still was a great power and the EEIC will not swallow what remained of Oudh after 1801. The military lessons of Buxar figured nowhere in the minds of the large majority of the population of Oudh. We see exactly the same phenomena in Germany after 1918 once the German populace mistakenly believed that they had never been militarily defeated but had been stabbed in the back. Myths in themselves are nothing but once whole nations believe in them, the consequences can be disastrous. The Pakistani public was at a loss once they learnt from the terms of the peace agreement of Tashkent that the impression that Pakistan had won the war of 1965 was false.
- We are discussing Oudh in considerably greater detail because it was in this region that the rebellion of 1857 came closest to what we call a 'Peoples War'. Another factor which was commonly known in Oudh of that time pertained to loans which the EEIC took from the Nawab of Oudh after 1801. These were less loans and more of a forced exaction since the Nawab clearly knew that in case he refused a loan the EEIC may use force in order to make him pay. There are three aspects about the loans. From the strict pragmatic and expediency standpoint the EEIC was squeezing a docile vassal who they had militarily defeated and who was under their political bondage. Secondly, from the strictly moral or emotional point of view the conduct of the EEIC was regarded by the people, the nobles and the king as blackmail. This added to the prevailing hatred against the EEIC. The third aspect is the Nawab's behaviour.

**The Nawab's sole interest was to stay in power. Had he taken a resolute stand and resisted the EEIC's unjust or unfair demands we could have said that he was a hero. But the Nawab's sole interest was in his personal comfort, his concubines and in his debauchery. Here a sharp distinction has to be drawn. The ruling house led by the Nawab had little to do with patriotism or any other lofty moral ideals. Their sole motivation was self-interest. Militarily they had lost the contest in 1764. EEIC's agreement to let them rule stemmed not from any fear of the Nawab's military might but from a simple pragmatic assessment in 1765 and even in 1801 that Oudh was too large a morsel to be swallowed in one go. The EEIC was above all a commercial organization and thoughtless, unplanned impulsive expansion figured nowhere in the principles which guided its foreign policy in India. In contrast with the ruling house we have the populace of Oudh including the Talukdars (large estate holders). This group was a better lot as compared to the Nawab. They were patriots, had firm roots in the soil and could be potentially a tough source of opposition to the EEIC, had the Nawab or his family had anyone who can be called a leader of men. But alas! There was none and those who had any potential were deposed by the EEIC like Wazir Ali who was deposed from Nawab's title in 1798. It is important to note that the vast majority of Oudh's Talukdars were Hindu Rajputs. Wazir Ali unlike most of Indian rulers after 1757 was surprisingly a true patriot. He succeeded his father Asif-ud-Daula who ruled Oudh from 1775 to 1797 in September, 1797. The Wazir Ali episode is not directly connected with the events of 1857 but my purpose in relating it here is to acquaint those readers who are not aware of this incident about the self seeking and ulterior motives of majority of Indian rulers in the period 1757 - 1857. Wazir Ali was claimed to be his son by Asif-ud-Daula and was generally acknowledged to be so by the vast majority in Oudh at least till 1797 when he succeeded his father Asif-ud-Daula as Nawab of Oudh in September 1797. Whether he was or not is a minor issue once we view Wazir Ali as a true patriot. But there is one thing we know with certainty, that once the EEIC discovered that Wazir Ali was anti-EEIC and wanted to strengthen his army they immediately started digging facts to prove that Wazir Ali was a bastard, since the late Asif-ud-Daula was impotent! Wazir Ali immediately after his assumption of power had annoyed his nobles by declaring his intention to reduce their power. He also wanted to reduce the influence of the EEIC's Resident at Lucknow who were performing the same role as Ambassadors of some so-called super powers perform in**

today's third world countries. The nobles immediately started their intrigues and urged the EEIC Resident to depose Wazir Ali. Sir John Shore, the Governor General received a divine revelation that Wazir Ali was an illegitimate son<sup>45</sup>! EEIC lackey Saadat Ali Khan who was half brother of Wazir Ali's father and had been fed on crumbs thrown by the EEIC for some 20 years in form of a pension also played an instrumental role in this affair. Saadat Ali Khan had attempted to overthrow his half brother, Asif-ud-Daula in 1776<sup>46</sup> and once his attempted coup failed he sought asylum in EEIC territory. The EEIC gave him asylum and assigned him a handsome pension. Saadat Ali Khan intrigued with the EEIC in late 1797 and a bargain was struck. Initially the EEIC demanded cession of more territory in return for placing Saadat Ali as Nawab. Subsequently this was changed to financial exactions and handing over of the impregnable and strategic Allahabad fort to the EEIC<sup>47</sup>. Saadat Ali's elevation to the rulership of Oudh was the result of acceptance of a humiliating treaty consisting of 23 articles which further weakened Oudh. The Company was now solely incharge of the external defence of Oudh. The annual subsidy which Oudh had to pay was increased to 76 lakh rupees. The Oudh army for internal security was now not to exceed 35,000 men. Oudh could no longer have any contact with any other foreign country and was barred from allowing any European to either serve in its army or even to settle in Oudh without the EEIC's permission<sup>48</sup>. Thus we see Saadat Ali, a pensioner of EEIC residing at Banaras being informed about his elevation to the Nawabi of Oudh. Saadat Ali travels to Kanpur and from there is escorted to Lucknow by EEIC's troops and is proclaimed Nawab on 21 January, 1798. But this is not the end, it is the same Saadat Ali who again yields to the EEIC half more of Oudh in 1801. Wazir Ali was exiled to Benares from where Saadat Ali came to assume Nawabship. The EEIC however was not happy to allow Wazir Ali to stay so close to Oudh's border. They, therefore, resolved in end of 1798 to transfer him to Calcutta. Wazir Ali resisted this attempt and in this connection visited the British Resident a certain Mr. Cherry on 14th January 1799. Mr. Cherry reportedly raised his voice during the course of discussion upon which Wazir Ali lost his temper and struck Mr. Cherry with his sword. This was a signal for Wazir Ali's armed retainers to attack which they did killing the Resident Mr. Cherry and four other Englishmen. The fifth Englishman in that room managed to escape<sup>49</sup>. Wazir Ali fled from the scene, raised an army of 6,000 but was defeated. He sought refuge with a Hindu Maratha Chief who was honourable enough to



**agree to hand over Wazir Ali to the English East India Company only if the Company spared his life. The Company kept its promise. Wazir Ali was shifted to Calcutta from Benares in 1800 and died a natural death in March 1817. The English Company was more honourable than some third world armies of the post-1947 who first swore on the Holy Quran to do the same as in Wazir Ali's case and later handed some insurgents to the EEIC. The Wazir Ali affair was used by the new EEIC Viceroy Lord Wellesley to pressurize Saadat Ali to disband his army and to replace it by a pure EEIC force<sup>51</sup>.**

**. The writing that the EEIC wanted to annex whole of Oudh was on the wall right from 1775 when they took Benares from Oudh. It became clearer in 1797 during the Wazir Ali affair and by 1801 it was crystal clear. The Oudh Nawabs made the EEIC designs easier by gross mismanagement and debauchery. From 1798 to 1856 their guiding principle of conduct was to somehow stay in power, however much Oudh is reduced in sovereignty or territory or in financial terms. The EEIC did not end the matter of exactions in 1801. In 1814 they again interfered with succession to Nawabship on Saadat Ali Khan's death and placed the candidate of their choice Ghaziuddin Haider on the throne<sup>52</sup>. The price of this succession was forced loans to the EEIC by Oudh on extremely low interest rates. Thus Ghaziuddin Haider loaned the EEIC some 3.085 million Pound Sterlings during his reign from 1814-2753. Famous among these was a loan which EEIC pressurized him into giving once they attacked Nepal in 1816<sup>54</sup>. Ghaziuddin was also influenced by the EEIC viceroy Lord Hastings into declaring himself King in 1819 and thus theoretically setting aside his political subservience to the Mughal Emperor at Delhi<sup>55</sup>.**

**. Practically the Mughal Emperor was also an EEIC pensioner<sup>56</sup> from 1803 once the EEIC captured Delhi but theoretically EEIC was his subject and servant. Here it is interesting to note that Tipu Sultan had also declared himself King repudiating the Mughals and had acknowledged the Sultan of Ottoman Turkey as the Caliph of Islam. Similarly Sivaji had declared himself a King, independent of the Mughal empire in second half of 17th century. It is interesting to analyze EEIC's subsequent excuse in 1856 of citing mismanagement in the final annexation of Oudh. As a matter of fact it was the policy of forced loans which destroyed the economy of Oudh. These loans were exorted from Oudh at 5% to 6% rate of interest which at that time was considered very low since from 1793 the EEIC had been paying its shareholders 10.5% per annum<sup>57</sup>. The first loan of 1.85 million pounds was**



taken in 1814. The second of 1.00 million Pound Sterlings in 1815 and the third of 1.00 million Pound Sterlings in 1825. The second loan was never repaid and instead a worthless part of Terai forest territory taken from Nepal was given to Oudh<sup>58</sup>. The same territory was returned to Nepal in 1858-59 as a reward for sending a force to assist the EEIC in the final capture of Lucknow in March 1858. In 1837, the Governor General Lord Auckland forced on Oudh a treaty by which it asserted its right to take over what remained of Oudh if the Company felt that the country was being mismanaged. The treaty also imposed on Oudh an annual payment of 1,600,000 Rupees. This last clause was in violation of treaty of 1801 by which the Company had agreed to defend Oudh in return for cession of half of its territory. Even the Board of Directors of the EEIC viewed this treaty as unjust and unfair and declared it null and void. The Governor General however never informed the King of Oudh that the treaty was entirely annulled<sup>60</sup>. He only informed him that he would not have to pay for his defence. King Muhammad Ali Shah (1837-42) continued to appease the EEIC. In around 1839 he granted them a loan of 3,240,800 Rs. at 4% interest<sup>61</sup>. In 1842 he again loaned the EEIC 1,400,000 or 140,000 Pounds at 5% interest. These two loans were exorted to make up for the disastrous First Afghan War. It is significant to note that all interest which the EEIC paid back to Oudh was used for pensions and allowances of the Oudh Royal Family. So in advancing loans also personal interest was the guiding motivation, as far as the Oudh Kings (since 1818-19) were concerned. Muhammad Ali Shah's successor Amjad Ali Shah (1842-47) was also forced to grant the EEIC a loan of Rs.3,200,000 on his accession in 1842<sup>62</sup>. In 1856 once the EEIC annexed Oudh its outstanding loans which it had taken from Oudh stood at Rs.35,000,000 or 3.5 million Pounds<sup>62A</sup>. The purpose of this considerable attention devoted to the EEIC conduct in Oudh may seem a little too detailed. It is however important since it illustrates bad faith and greed on both sides and the sufferers in this case were the common people.

- The year 1848 was an important year for India. It was in this year that the 36 years old Lord Dalhousie came to India. Dalhousie was a utilitarian and progressive man<sup>63</sup>. He rightly viewed the princely states of India as an unnecessary anachronism. On 18th September 1848 he in a letter said, 'I have got two other kingdoms on hand to dispose of, Oudh and Hyderabad'. But this was not all, Dalhousie went further and he made another profound observation which convincingly proves that Dalhousie had a remarkable insight about the

**character of the Indo-Pak rulers of that time. This observation was true not only for the king of Oudh but for almost all Indo-Pak rulers of that time and to a certain extent even those of today in many third world countries. Dalhousie thus wrote about the king of Oudh 'The king won't offend or quarrel with us, and will take any amount of kicking without being rebellious!'<sup>64</sup>. Thus Dalhousie made a firm resolve to annex Oudh. In 1849, Dalhousie appointed Sleeman as Resident of Oudh. Sleeman was instructed by Dalhousie to prepare a report on the existing affairs of Oudh. Sleeman by his deep knowledge of India and its languages was ideally suited for this task. Born in 1788, Sleeman joined the East India Company's Bengal Army as an ensign in 1810 at Allahabad Fort. He fought in the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-16. He became famous for the decisive part he played in suppression of 'Thugs' in India from 1826 to 1832<sup>65</sup>. Sleeman's report was published in 1851. He agreed to the fact that Oudh was mismanaged but also expressed his opinion against annexing it. With profound insight, Sleeman warned Dalhousie that Oudh's annexation would have a very negative effect on Bengal Army, bulk of whose Sepoys belonged to Oudh. Sleeman actually warned Dalhousie that annexation of Oudh would lead to a mutiny in the Bengal Army<sup>66</sup>. The next Resident James Outram who succeeded in 1854 also prepared another report largely based on Sleeman's report. Outram also agreed with the 'mismanagement' concept but was not in favour of outright annexation. Outram favoured a regency council led by the EEIC who would reform Oudh's state of affairs. Dalhousie prepared a minute on the 'Oudh' question in which he recommended that entire administration should be taken over by the EEIC while the king of Oudh should be allowed to retain his title. The viceregal council of Dalhousie was however against violating the 1801 treaty which guaranteed the sovereignty of Oudh. The difference of opinion however was resolved by the EEIC court of Directors and the British government's decision to annex Oudh<sup>67</sup>. Wajid Ali Shah resisted the decision but was forced to abdicate and Dalhousie issued a proclamation dated 13th February 1856<sup>68</sup> through the medium of which he declared annexation of Oudh to the territories of the EEIC. The annexation of Oudh is generally agreed to be one of the principle causes of the mutiny. This was not true. As we shall see later that the rebellion began from Meerut and Oudh followed the lead given by the Meerut Troopers only after two months! What was true was the fact that the rebellion lasted for a far longer time because bulk of the Bengal Army was recruited from the Hindu Rajput and**

**Hindu Jat population of Oudh. This was why the struggle in Oudh did come closest to the modern conception of people's war in 1857. It did take the EEIC almost one year to recapture Oudh. The reason for this protracted affair was concentration of some 80% sepoy regiments<sup>69</sup> in Oudh and the immense pride of Rajput Talukdars.**

- . The foremost cause of resentment in the people of Oudh against the EEIC was its extortionist policy from 1775 onwards. The EEIC to a considerable extent rightly accused the Oudh Nawabs and subsequently its kings of misgovernment and mal-administration. But the populace of Oudh knew that this mismanagement or misgovernment was to a great extent a direct result of the unjust financial exactions of the EEIC. And yet the EEIC annexed the state in 1856. Inwardly or militarily Oudh may have been very weak but culturally or symbolically Lucknow of 1820s or 1830s had outshone Delhi. It was a modern city of palaces spacious gardens and paved road. The nobles and a large part of populace were prosperous and owed their prosperity to Oudh being an independent state. The king had an army and a host of other officials numbering more than 1,60,000. On annexation most of these were rendered jobless. Heavy tax was imposed on opium which was a very frequently used drug. This enraged a considerable part of the populace. Land deeds and titles of ownership were subjected to scrutiny and zealous young civil servants of the EEIC in a bid to emancipate the peasants annoyed the Talukdars (Jagirdars or big landlords). This phenomenon was paradoxical, since the British intention in this case was positive but the landlord of that day had a much greater influence and, this the British agreed to accept at the cost of enlightenment of the people of the sub-continent after 1857. Thus, though 1857 which in itself was a positive affair resulted in retarding growth of progressive ideas in India which men like Dalhousie wanted to advance. Thus after 1857 the British Government which assumed the Government of India decided to ally with the feudals whereas before 1857 their predecessor the EEIC were following an excellent policy of destroying feudalism in India. There were cases where estates were rightfully held but the proofs of ownership were missing. Confiscation of these estates also alienated a large number of landowners in Oudh. Even if the annexation of Oudh itself was not a negative step, the conduct of many officials of the EEIC alienated a vast majority of the populace. Sir James Outram the Resident at Oudh who had been appointed the Chief Commissioner on annexation of Oudh was a reasonable man. He was however**

**forced to leave for England due to illness. His successor a certain Mr. Coverly Jackson who was only the officiating Chief Commissioner was a very short-tempered and irrational man. His arrogant and racist behaviour immediately alienated all those people who came into contact with him<sup>69</sup>. The conduct of the EEIC officials was careless and irresponsible and in the process made the EEIC administration more unpopular. For more than an year through sheer carelessness and negligence the allowances were not paid to pensioners which was part of the EEIC settlement terms. Covertly Jackson occupied the palace which had been earmarked for the Oudh Royal family<sup>70</sup>.**

**. The EEIC committed yet another significant tactical blunder. Dalhousie had given detailed instructions to Outram regarding disarming the populace of Oudh who at the time of annexation were well armed since in those days security of the common citizen or village was their own affair. Outram however did not carry out this order since he felt that it could be done after the summer. Dalhousie in a demi official letter addressed to Outram in 1856 had thus written, 'It is my intention that not a single fortified place should be left in Oudh with the exception of those that belong to Government. It is further my intention that the whole population should be disarmed ... as was done with such excellent effect in the Punjab in 1849 <sup>71</sup>'. This disarming was as a matter of fact not carried out and thus prolonged the war of independence in Oudh till almost 1859. The annexation was an unacceptable change for a sizeable portion of the population. Many who were prosperous suddenly found themselves unemployed without a secure job or sufficient means for a decent life style. The Bengal Sepoys who belonged to Oudh were a privileged class in Oudh since they were EEIC employees. They were given a preferential treatment in their private dealings with Oudh state officials once they visited their houses and villages on long leave. Now they were just like any other common man living in Oudh. Thus a sepoy noted that 'I used to be a great man when I went home, a servant would carry my bags, the rest of the village rose when I approached. Now the lowest puffs their pipes in my face<sup>72</sup>'. In sum total the net situation in 1856 was explosive in Oudh in particular and Northern India in general.**

#### **. THE ATTACK ON SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS**

**. The EEIC was different in another way from all other conquerors of India. Apart from being a commercial entity many of its officials took a deep interest in emancipation of the population and eradication of many genuine social evils**

and outmoded practices. In this regard, they sharply differed from their predecessors the Mughals who were not really bothered about social or religious enlightenment. There were definitely some Mughal Kings and Governors who at least tried to ensure that no woman was forced to commit Satti (Self-immolation on her husband's death) against her own free will, but there was no definite policy and varied from ruler to ruler<sup>73</sup>. This perceived attack on caste and religion was generally more relevant to the Hindus, but the bulk of Bengal Army soldiers were Hindus, some 80%, and these were either Brahman or Rajput both the highest Hindu castes and very fussy and fastidious about matters pertaining to religious beliefs and rituals. Lord William Bentinck who was Governor General from 1828 to 1835 abolished Satti (widow burning) in 1829 vide Regulation No.XVII of 04 December<sup>74</sup>. It is of interest to note that Akbar the Mughal Emperor had also made an attempt to restrict this practice. The Mahrattas were also against it and it was a practice mostly found in High Caste Hindus or Rajput landlords. Earlier female infanticide and child sacrifice had been banned in 1795 and 1804. Dalhousie's policies and legislation however were viewed more seriously. His religious disabilities Act of 1856 gave protection to Hindus all over India who had converted to Christianity. In the year 1832 a similar law was passed giving protection to Christian converts in inheriting property, but this law was confined only to the Bengal presidency area<sup>75</sup>, notably in the case of inheriting property. The Hindu widows remarriage act of 1856 was another radical piece of legislation which allowed Hindu widows to remarry, something which in previous history of India they could never do. All these were highly progressive and radical pieces of legislation.

- The activities of Christian missionaries were also very critically perceived by both Hindus and Muslims. But in this case also the Hindus were more seriously affected since the most lucrative target of the Christian missionaries were low caste Hindus who were more prone to become Christians since conversion to Christianity improved their degraded and oppressed position in the caste conscious Hindu society. In 1855 Mr. Edward a Christian missionary of Calcutta published a leaflet distributed all over India in which he urged all Indians to convert to Christianity. The Government schools held Bible classes which was again perceived as an attack on religion.
- Before we proceed further it is important for the sake of posterity to examine various EEIC attitudes about missionary activity in India. It would be unfair to



**brand all EEIC officials as Christian fanatics. The following excerpt from the EEIC Board of Directors Despatch to Lord Minto proves that the EEIC was not following an organized policy aimed at religious conversion; 'On the other hand, wrote the court (Court of Directors) it will be your bounded duty vigilantly to guard the public tranquillity from interruption, and to impress upon the minds of all inhabitants of India, that the British faith, upon which they rely for the free exercise, of their religion, will be inviolably maintained<sup>76</sup>.'**

**. But by and large, the common man perceived that his religion was in danger and thought that the EEIC aimed at converting all Indians to Christianity. This belief was reinforced by the presence of many missionary minded people in the ranks of the EEIC's civil service and the Bengal Army. This feeling that both Hinduism and Islam were in danger played a decisive role in uniting both the Hindu and Muslims. At least till 1857 the British policies in India were more anti-Hindu and this demolishes the myth in Pakistan that the British were more anti-Muslim.**

**. CAUSES SPECIFICALLY RELATING TO THE BENGAL ARMY**

**. Today we find historians very confidently asserting that there was no conspiracy in 1857 and it was a spontaneous act. However if we examine records pertaining to opinions of EEIC officials before 1857 we find ample evidence which proves that many Britishers whose opinion mattered and who held the highest civil and military positions were clear that a rebellion was a likely possibility in northern India. Sleeman warned Dalhousie about it in the case of annexation of Oudh as we have already seen. Sir Charles Napier, the Commander-in-Chief prophesied it and Dalhousie was very apprehensive about it and we can see this from following actions of Dalhousie :- (1) He gave detailed instructions to Outram, the Chief Commissioner of Oudh regarding disarming of the population of Oudh and dismantling of fortification. He foresaw that a rebellion was possible. (2) He repeatedly urged the British government to increase the number of European troops in India in ratio to the native troops<sup>77</sup>. Despite repeated reminders Dalhousie's suggestion were not even discussed by the EEIC Board of Directors for two years. (3) Dalhousie also realized that Indians felt excluded from the government and it was necessary to include Indians in higher policy formulation. Keeping this in mind Dalhousie made various attempts to obtain authorization of the British Government and EEIC Board of Directors to have an Indian as member of his legislative council. This however was not agreed to in the British Parliament<sup>78</sup>. Sir Syed Ahmad**



**Khan, in his famous pamphlet 'Causes of Indian Mutiny' singled this out as one of the salient causes of the events of 1857. Dalhousie was aware that the policy of annexation was creating unrest. However as we have seen that Dalhousie did not want to abolish the King's title in Oudh but was ordered to do so by the Board of Directors of EEIC. In the case of Hyderabad, Dalhousie refused to interfere soon after he arrived in India despite the fact that he was urged to do so by the Directors of the EEIC. In this case he actually threatened to resign. In the case of Bahawalpur state he refused to interfere<sup>80</sup>. Dalhousie encouraged recruitment of troops from Nepal and Punjab. We will see that these troops played a crucial role in 1857. It was Dalhousie who ordered the raising of the Punjab Frontier Force vide G.G.O. dated 18 May 1849<sup>81</sup>.**

- . Sir Charles Napier, the Commander-in-Chief of Bengal Army was also convinced that the Bengal Army was the most serious threat to EEIC rule. In 1849 he wrote that it was apparent to him and to all officers on the spot who were conversant with Native and Sepoy habits and feelings, that a widely spread and formidable scheme of mutiny was in progress, and great danger impending<sup>82</sup>.'**
- . Whatever historians may state now a cursory glance at the situation in 1857 makes one thing very clear that without the Bengal Army there would have been no rebellion, but this is only one aspect. The other aspect is that without the Bengal Army or for that matter the Madras or the Bombay armies there would have been no EEIC's conquest of India. So the 'Bengal Army Factor' works both ways, it was instrumental in EEIC's success in the first place and it was instrumental in the rebellion also. But the Bengal Army's alienation was a slow process. Mutinies started right from 1757 but these were over administrative, financial and caste matters and not to overthrow EEIC's rule. The transition of rebellion or a bid for independence is always a slow and subtle process. It is in this regard that the British argument that 1857 was just a soldier's mutiny is baseless. The Bengal Army did fight for EEIC for hundred years but by 1857 it was no longer the force that it was in 1757. We will examine the salient aspects which brought this change of perception in the Bengal Sepoy :- (1) The prime motivation of the Bengal Army soldiers in joining the army was economic. Just like the Irishmen of 18th, 19th or 20th centuries. It is true that the British were masters in making other races fight their wars through a subtle system based on regimental pride, motivation, resolute leadership esprit de corps etc. But the essential fact was that the Bengal**

**Sepoy was an Indian and a subject. It is true that the British treated their native soldiers much better than most native soldiers were treated by native rulers. But race is a very rigid barrier and is made more rigid by difference of religion. Man's basic needs are food, water and air, but once these are fulfilled he strives for higher needs and ideals like freedom and independence. The racial barrier which made it impossible for a native to ever be an officer was a major factor in producing alienation. (2) The Bengal Army was composed of 80% Hindu Brahman and Rajputs. Their daily rituals were complicated and conflicted with demands of military life. Slowly and steadily it increased their hatred of their officers and EEIC not because of any personal reason but simply because they belonged to an alien race who they perceived as bent upon damaging their religious sensitivities. Two aspects were important in this regard i.e. travel across sea which was regarded by the high caste Hindus and Rajputs of that time as something which would soil and pollute the purity of their caste. The second was going across the Indus westwards which again in their opinion polluted the purity of their caste. Thus once the First Afghan War started the Bengal Army was deployed west of Indus. This had a serious effect on the morale of the Hindu Brahmans for the reasons : (1) Once the Brahmans crossed the Indus their caste was rendered impure and on return to India they had to spend heavy sums of money on the rituals through which they had to undergo in order to be readmitted to their high caste<sup>83</sup>. (2) West of Indus they had to eat food which they considered impure and this also soiled their caste. (3) In Afghanistan due to cold climate the Hindus could not carry out the rituals of bathing etc. This was the major reason for the post 1841 rapid decline in the Hindu soldiers morale and not the initial reverses suffered in the First Afghan War. (4) The Muslim troops employed in the First Afghan war were demoralised because they were deployed after a long time against the Muslims. The last time they were deployed against a Muslim state was in 1774 during the Rohilla war. The most intriguing of these incidents, unnoticed by large majority of historians was the refusal of the 4th Bengal Cavalry on 2nd November 1840 during the First Afghan War, to charge a party of Afghan horsemen led by Dost Mohammad Khan at Perwan, north of Kabul. The British historian John Fortescue had no answer for the reason why the 2nd Bengal Light Cavalry fell back and fled from the battle field. Fortescue thus said about this incident that; 'And then followed one of those incidents which after endless explanation remain always mysterious. The 2nd Light Cavalry was a**

**good corps with good officers; but such misconduct could not be overlooked and the regiment was with ignominy disbanded'84. The British did not understand why 2nd Light Cavalry had behaved like that. There was another likely explanation for this behaviour which had a deep connection with 2nd Light Cavalry's history. The 2nd Light Cavalry was raised from Afghans of Kandhari origin settled at Lucknow in 1788 by the Nawab Vizier of Oudh. It became the 2nd Bengal Light Cavalry only in 179685. It is possible that their peculiar Afghan origin may have played a part in their reluctance to charge the Afghans at Perwan!**

- . The EEIC forces retreat from Kabul in January 1842 shook the faith of the Bengal Army native soldiers in the invincibility of EEIC and the Britishers. Although hardly 700 out of total of this force of some 4,500 troops were Europeans<sup>86</sup>, the psychological effect of this debacle on the sepoys was tremendous. The EEIC did subsequently capture Kabul and inflicted such a sharp defeat on the Afghans that they dared not attack India in 1857 once the EEIC position was highly vulnerable. But all this was not registered by the Sepoy. He saw the EEIC retreat from Kabul to Jalalabad of a column in which only one doctor reached Jalalabad. The human mind is not a computer and its mechanism is subject to various biases. Thus while the Afghans were administered a tough lesson, the Indian soldiers drew erroneous conclusions from this single episode of the Afghan war about the fighting potential of the EEIC. Had occupying Afghanistan been worth it the EEIC would have done it. But it was simply not cost effective being a barren, desolate and unproductive country .**
- . The EEIC conquest of Punjab in 1849 created another unique situation. Firstly the EEIC had conquered the whole of India and the Bengal Sepoy feared that now the EEIC may reduce their army. As a matter of fact the EEIC did start reducing their army after 1849<sup>87</sup>. The second fear pertained to the new recruitment policy of the EEIC. The British recruited from Oudh because they regarded the Oudh Rajput or Brahman as suitable fighting material, but they did so because till 1845 the Hindustani was their best available choice. The EEIC officers were fed up with the caste prejudices and hang-ups of the Hindus who formed 75% the of the Bengal Army. But till 1845 the EEIC did not have any other option. After 1845-46 (First Sikh War) and 1848-49 (Second Sikh War) the EEIC found that they could recruit good soldier material from Punjab and trans Indus about whose fighting qualities in case of Sikhs the EEIC was**

**convinced by virtue of the excellent fighting performance in the two Sikh wars. Secondly, Punjab was a Muslim majority province and the Muslim potential soldiers of Punjab had no caste complications. The Muslims were in minority in the Bengal Army before 1845 because in Oudh and North West provinces (later UP) the Muslim were an overall minority in terms of population.**

- . There was yet another military cause which played a far more crucial role than the annexation of Oudh in alienating the Hindus who were the vast majority of the Bengal Army. This was a major change in the terms of service of the Bengal Army which was conceived and planned by Dalhousie but introduced by his successor Lord Canning greatly demoralised the Hindu soldiers. As per the terms of service prior to 1856 the Bengal Army regiments could not be transported across the sea. This severely restricted the mobility of the Bengal Army. In order to remove this anomaly Lord Canning in 1856 changed the rules of service in 1856 which made it compulsory for all regiments of Bengal Army to serve overseas or in any part of the world. This was again perceived/viewed by High Caste Hindu soldiers as an attack on their religion. This was the General Service Enlistment Act of 1856.**
- . News of British reverses in the Crimean War of 1856 also encouraged Bengal Army sepoys belief that the Britisher was not invincible.**
- . But the introduction of the Greased Cartridges in 1857 was the final and decisive blow. These cartridges which the sepoys thought contained cow or swine's fat was a definite attack on the religion of both Hindus and Muslims. These cartridges gave a simultaneous common ground to both to rationalize their hatred of the EEIC European. The dispersion of British troops and their being outnumbered overwhelmingly in 1857 was the final blow. 'Petty parsimony on part of supreme government in matters of allowances provoked a number of small mutinies in 1843 and 1844.'88 This is the verdict of Sir John Fortescue, the official historian of the British army. Fortescue went further, he noted that 'the same cause amounting to positive injustice brought a number of Bengal Regiments to the verge of revolt in 1849'89. In this case, Sir Charles Napier the Commander-in-Chief of the Company's Bengal Army's confrontation and subsequent resignation was a decisive event. There were two mutinies in the two respective regiments of Bengal Army over stoppage of allowances. Sir Charles Napier disbanded one and restored the allowances for the second. Lord Dalhousie censured him and revoked his orders. Dalhousie was a civilian and a young man. He did not understand the demoralizing effect which this**

**action had on the soldiers of Bengal Army. Sir Charles Napier resigned and went back to Britain in 1850. Sir John Fortescue's opinion on this episode is worth quoting, 'The sepoys thus saw the chief, who had observed equity on their behalf, rewarded by public disgrace'.<sup>91</sup>**

- . Another reason was the successive decline in the quality of officers of the Bengal Army by the process of secondment to civil duties after the annexation of Punjab. Yet another factor was the greater centralization which reduced power of units commanding officers to reward or to punish<sup>91</sup>. This reduced the esteem attached to the Commanding Officer in Sepoy eyes.**
- . In short all the causes though they did contribute towards the mutiny were insignificant compared to the last two i.e. the 'Greased Cartridges' and the dispersal of the British or white troops and their overwhelming inferiority in number to the native troops. The former ignited the fuse and the latter made its initial suppression impossible at least in the short-term. This gap in terms of time and space enabled the sepoys to occupy and concentrate at two strategic places i.e. Delhi and Lucknow.**
- . Since the 'Greased Cartridges' were the most immediate and specific cause of the rebellion of 1857 we will examine it in a little more detail. Till 1856, the British and EEIC armies used Brown Bess which was a muzzle loading rifle. Meanwhile from early 1850s trials had been carried out at Enfield in England on a new rifle with three grooves. This was called the Enfield or Enfield-Pritchett rifle. 'Enfield' because the trials were carried out at a place called 'Enfield' and 'Pritchett' because 'Pritchett' was the name of the man who invented its bullet<sup>91a</sup>. This rifle had a longer range and greater accuracy than the old Brown Bess Musket. It was again a muzzle loaded rifle. Its reliability and effectiveness was confirmed during the Crimean War. In the old Brown Bess musket lubrication was done with linseed oil and bees wax. Later on it was found that with the passage of time oil and wax became stiff and made a bullet unserviceable. Therefore in the Enfield Rifle ammunition tallow made of beef or swine fat was introduced. The cartridges for Enfield Rifle to be introduced in India were also to be manufactured in India by local contractors. It was evident that since in India mutton was twice as expensive as beef or pork the local contractors would use beef which was cheaper<sup>92</sup>.**
- . The bullet's cap had to be removed before being loaded. This could be done either by hand or by biting with the teeth, which was a quicker way and therefore the one used in loading drill. The EEIC also decided to introduce the**



**Enfield Rifle in its army in late 1856. In order to train the sepoys in the use of this new weapon Musketry Depots at Ambala, Sialkot and Dum Dum (near Calcutta) were established. From later 1856 and early 1857 detachments of five men each were sent from each battalion to these depots in order to train the sepoys in the handling of the new Enfield Rifle. The rumours that the greased cartridges contained pig and cow fat started circulating in the sepoys from January, 1857. It was this rumour which was the immediate and direct cause of the mutinies in the Bengal Army from March 1857-93.**

**. ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**. Major Agha Humayun Amin (Retd) was commissioned in March 1983 in 11 Cavalry (FF). He has been a General Staff Officer-3, instructor in School of Armour and mechanised Warfare and commanded an independent armoured squadron. Retired from the Army in March 1994, presently he is heading a private business concern.**

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- 60. Page-168 & 169-A Clash of Cultures-Op Cit.**
- 61. Page-169 & 182-Ibid.**
- 62. Page-170-Ibid.**
- 62A. Page-182-Ibid.**
- 63. Page-654-Concise Oxford History-Op Cit.**
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- 69. Page-177-1857 -Surendar Nath Sen-Delhi-1958.**
- 70. Ibid.**
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- 72. Page-299-Lawrence of Lucknow J.L Morison-London-1934.**
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- 75. Page-125-Cambridge History of India-The Indian Empire-Op Cit.**

- 76. Pages-513 & 518- The History of Christianity in India-Sir William Kaye,**
- 77. Page-285- Life of the Marquess of Dalhousie-Volume II Lee Warner-London-1904.**
- 78. Page-232-Ibid.**
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- 92. Page-265-Philip Mason-Op Cit.**
- 93. Pages- 14 & 15-J.A.B Palmer-Op Cit.**
- 32. Pages-30 & 31- The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb- M Athar Ali-Oxford University Press-New Delhi-1997**
- 33. Page-249- A History of Persia-Volume Two Brigadier General Sir Percy Sykes-Macmillan and Company Limited-Saint Martins Press-New York-1958. 'Nadir was not content to remain a mere brigand' in words of Percy Sykes.Leaders of third world countries are much bigger brigands in terms of white collar fraud and juggling with bank loans etc!**
- 34. Page-194- Later Mughal History of the Punjab- Hari Ram Gupta-First Published-**

**Lahore-1944-Reprinted by Sang i Meel Publications-Lahore-1976.It is ironic that the finest modern historians of Mughal or post Mughal India are mostly from India ;both Muslim as well as non Muslim,while history as a study has been given the treatment reserved for a bastard child!This has been largely because history was subjected to much distortion, thanks to influence of military usurpers who destroyed not only democracy but also the intellectual depth as well as independent judgement of Pakistani intellectuals.**

**35. Pages-295 & 296- The Punjab Chiefs-Volume One Sir Lepel .H. Griffin-Revised and Corrected by W.L Conran and H.D Craik-Civil and Military Gazette Press-Lahore-1909.**

**35a. Page-17-The Cambridge History of India-Volume VI-The Indian Empire-1858-1918-Edited by H.H Dodwell-Reprinted by S.Chand and Company-New Delhi-1987.**

**35b. Page-58-The Causes of the Indian Revolt-Syed Ahmad Khan Bahadur-First Published-1873-Reprinted by The Book House-8,Trust Building-Urdu Bazar-P.O Box No-734-Lahore-1950.**

**36. Pages-3,11, and 19-Cambridge History-Volume Six-Op Cit.**

**37. Page-598-Cambridge History of India-Volume Five-British India-1497-1858-Edited by H.H Dodwell-Reprinted by S.Chand and Company-New Delhi-1987.**

**38. Page-509-Concise Oxford History of India-Op Cit. Page-109-Map illustrating area annexed in 1775- North India between Empires-Awadh,the Mughals and the British-1720-1801-Richard.B.Barnett Manohar Publications-New Delhi-1987 and Page-233-Cambridge History of India-British India-1497-1858-Op Cit.**

**39. Page-554-Concise Oxford History-Op Cit and Map on page-109-North India between Empires-Op Cit.**

**40. Page-236-Ibid.**

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