CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTORY

A Critical Analysis of Source Material
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The most important difficulty in attempting the history of great revolt in Bundelkhand is the paucity of historical source material. It is well known that there was general destruction of records\(^1\) and historical documents during the revolt of 1857 which resulted in the non-availability of the most authentic documents of the period. This destruction was confined not only to the official records but the literary works of the age also met the same fate. The famous library of famous Sanskrit manuscripts which had been built up by Raja Ganga Dhar Rao and the other earlier rulers was totally destroyed during the sack of Jhansi in 1857\(^2\).

Dr. Mahor called it as “Martyred Literature”\(^3\). Perhaps those literary works had contained the records of the events pertaining to the National liberation in the form of heroic sagas of the Rani of Jhansi; therefore, the British destroyed it. We do not know exactly the factors responsible for such destruction but it is beyond doubt that the loss of records has created a great difficulty in understanding the situations. The settlement officers also realized this difficulty when they tried to prepare the revenue records a fresh after the establishment of peace and order in 1858.\(^4\)

Another difficulty regarding the day to day happening of the revolt of 1857 in this region is preserved in the traditional account which ended with the martyrdom of Rani Laxmi Bai and whatever survives is the history in the traditional style. D.V. Parasani’s account\(^5\) of Rani Laxmi Bai, Vishnu Bhatt Godsey’s Majha Pravas\(^6\) are the works of such nature. These works of course narrate the heroic deeds of Rani of Jhansi, but the real policies of the
British forces from one place to another and their inner strategies is not mentioned in the above books. This attitude of the British and their military strategies are mentioned in Pinkaney’s narratives which are secret corresondents addressed to the British superior officers. The present work is almost depended on these secret informations of Major F.W. Pinkaney’s report. Thus the Pinkaney’s report is of high value. These reports are, in form of letters, written to the secretary of N.W. Provinces as a matter of routine to familiarise the latter with the current situations and events that were taking place during the period of great revolt of 1857 and subsequently to it. These reports throw sufficient light over the general conditions of inhabitants. Besides, they also throw light the policies of Zamindars and native rulers of Bundelkhand who extended the support to the British during those critical days.

(a) Analysis of the Settlement Report

One of the sources of the history of the revolt of 1857 in Bundelkhand are the various settlement reports. Infact with the establishment of law and order in 1858 the British Revenue Officers posted in the Districts in Bundelkhand started the revenue settlements of the district under their charge. No doubt these revenue settlements basically calculated the revenue rates classified the soils and compared the prevailing rates with that of the old revenue rates. Thus basically these settlement reports are a short of revenue history. But while going through its introductory and historical account it appears that the settlement officers has mentioned the events of mutiny from place to place. These settlement officers have also shown their latitude towards the Zamindars and the big land owners who had extended support to the British. These reports have been compiled by the British Officers for the purposes of revenue assessment from time to time. First of
these reports is Jenkinson’s report on the settlement of Jhansi printed at the Government press Allahabad, in 1871. It gives vivid account of revenue administration of Jhansi district. The other settlement report of the district of Jhansi (1864, 1892 & 1903) and Lalitpur (1869, 1898 & 1903) also deal with these aspects. These reports have also indicated from time to time the British policies which they had adopted in suppressing the revolt in Bundelkhand.

The district of Jalaun was also settled by the British revenue officers similarly as the District of Hamirpur and Banda were also settled separately. The basic concept as discussed earlier this settlement report was the assessment of the revenue rates. But if examined critically these reports indicate here and there about the British policies of rewarding those Rajas, Maharajas, Chiefs and Petty Zamindars who had helped the British force in suppressing the Revolt of 1857. One thing is clear that the settlement officers had always blamed the inhabitants of Bundelkhand for their being unenterprising and thriftless but they did not put blame on British for their responsibility of keeping the region backward so the people of Bundelkhand could have been penalized for their past conduct of revolting against the British. Thus while analyzing the settlement report we have to be very cautious to derive the results.

(b) Analysis of the other existing works on the Revolt of 1857 in Bundelkhand

The Revolt of 1857 has been attracting the attention of scholars as a subject of historical study and research. Prior to independence of India many standard works discussed the above revolt but the study of the great revolt in its proper and wider perspective could only be done when
many more record where thrown open. On the first centenary celebrations of the revolt of 1857 many works were brought out relating to its wider perspective. But it is more surprising that no separate study could be made about the happenings in Bundelkhand which was so rich in the activities. No doubt some scholars gave passing references of Bundelkhand in their works which dealt with the entire country. However, Dr. S.N. Sinha\(^7\) has attempted well and published his book in December 1982. Dr. Sinha had analyzed the cause of unrest very carefully pointed out the role played by Rani of Jhansi, Nawab of Banda along with the activities of the revolutionaries of Bundelkhand. The most important aspect of Sinha’s work is the fact that he vividly described the circumstances which prevailed in those days, but it will be proper mentioned here that Dr. Sinha did not properly base study on the narrative of Major F.W. Pinkaney, who was the Superintendent of Jhansi, Superintendency and died in 1862.\(^8\)

Major Pinkaney has been in deep touch with the day to day happening of the great revolt which took place in Bundelkhand. The secret correspondence which is in a form of letters and appended in this thesis throws sufficient light on the nature and activities of the revolutionaries who were facing the unslaughter of the British with great courage and dedication. In judging their role it appears beyond doubt that the people of Bundelkhand had been determined to over throw of British Raj. Major Pinkaney’s letters on which one can rely as further evidence also throw light on the activities of Rani Jhansi, Laxmi Bai’s role and the attitude of his Generals along with the activity participation of the people of Bundelkhand.

I have been able to get the correspondence of Major Pinkaney from a local person in Jhansi. These letters are from letter No. from 19 to 679
and tried to produce the day to day happenings in Bundelkhand on the basis of above reports.

(c) A Critical Survey of District Gazetteers

The District Gazetters occupy secondary place in the series of the sources of the history of this region. The first Gazetter of Bundelkhand known as Satistical Descriptive and historical account of the N.W. Provinces of India was edited by Edwin T. Atkinson, under the orders of the Government of India. Its first volume dealt with Bundelkhand and was printed at Government Press, Allahabad in 1874.

In fact, the preparation of the Gazetteer of the Provinces of India received the attention of East India Company as early as 1803; in order to enable the Company’s historiographer to complete a general history of British affairs in the East Indies. The N.W.P. Gazetter was a step in that direction. It is merely a compilation of official statistics received from the district authorities, of course, in very methodical and skilful manner, yet, it is not free from shortcomings. Burges points out that “To the best of our beliefs, Mr. Atkinson has never been stationed in any part of Bundelkhand and if he has visited any, even of its most historic sites, it can only have been as a hurried traveller. It may also be regretted that while the whole of Bundelkhand is populated almost exclusively by Hindus, their historian is evidently a completely stranger to Hindu legends and literature at first hand, and is in the habit of consulting only either Mohammedan of pseudo- Mohammedan authorities, who are for the most part both prejudiced and ignorant.” However, this book can not be called ‘A County History’ as the latter is generally the result of life long labour. The editor of the above Gazetter had only undergone
the process of translation. Being unfamiliar with the constitutions and traditions of Bundelkhand, he only depended on the information supplied by the Patwaris and Munshis.¹¹

Atkinson never had much opportunity for mixing with the ruler population or acquiring knowledge of popular speech. It is also evident from the Indian Antiquary. “Atkinson wrote that in 1872 the number of Baniyas in the Lalitpur district were, Jainis 6556, Sarugis³22, and Maheshwaris 26-a form of expression which would be exactly paralleled by a statement that in some parts of India the followers of the Prophet numbered 500 of whom 200 were Mohammadan were the terms of identical import.”¹² This is a sufficient proof of the lack of knowledge which frequently reflects from Atkinson’s Gazetters.

In spite of all these shortcomings, this account throws ample light on the socio-economic life of Bundelkhand. It supplies important informations upto 1872 as the account ends with 1874. This gazetteer is also valuable because Atkinson has referred to the official report of Major Pinkaney on certain occasions, who was the eye witness of many of the events.¹³ In all circumstances, it needs a critical enquiry into the facts supplied on various topics.

Different British officers has compiled the Gazetteer of the district of Bundelkhand after Atkinson’s Gazetteer. It was modified after certain period so that the new information regarding the District could have been incorporated. After Atkinson’s Gazetteers the District Gazetteer of Jhansi was compiled by D.L. Drake-Brockman in 1909. The same officer had also compiled the Gazetteer of district Banda, Jalaun and Hamirpur. After a period of 10 years Drake Brockman again modified
his Gazetteers in 1919. It is mostly like a county history the purpose of which was to familiarize with the nature of the District and its people to the British officers posted in this District as District Magistrate. The tradition of writing Gazetteers continued even after the attainment of freedom in 1947. The latest in this series with the Gazetteers of Jhansi 1965. However, the gazetteers compiled during the British rule obviously tried to define the British. This one sided approach had also been due to the fact that those Gazetteers were based on various settlement reports which were also one sided.

If we compared the gazetteer of Jhansi 1909 with that of the Gazetteer 1965, it appears that the latter has clearly criticized the British policies for the backwardness and general deteriorating conditions of the District. On one such occasion the District gazetteer of 1965 boldly declares: “The British made it a policy to discourage local manufactures by the imposition of prohibitive duties causing indigenous and more people to take agricultural pursuits.”

Such critical and impartial views had not been expressed by the British officers who compiled the Gazetteers during the British rule. However, these gazetteers are only the secondary source of information because they did not supply the primary information regarding the outbreak of great revolt and the events subsequent to it. Infact most of these gazetteers had relied on the informations supplied by Atkinsons in Bundelkhand Gazetteers. However, while describing the history and traditions of the District its editor had referred the happening of 1857 from here and there. But that reference cannot be termed as impartial. The editors of the British Gazetteers have tried to seal the British measures and policies. They never revealed the atrocities of the British soldiers on the innocent natives. Thus while analyzing the information
left by the District Gazetteers we have to be very cautious and careful and its information can only we accepted after due verification from the primary sources. In other words Major F.W.Pinkaney’s account which given more weightage than the information supplied by district Gazetteers.

(d) Nature and Analysis of the other Historical works, Memoirs and Traditions

Apart from the Settlement Reports and the District Gazetteers, some other works relating to the history of the region are worthy of note as they also enlighten the contemporary conditions of the Districts Bundelkhand. Although they deal with the general history, yet studied thoroughly, may be of some use in ascertaining the events which were taking place in this region in 1857. Gore Lal Tiwari’s book 16 ‘Bundelkhand Ka Sanshipt Itihas’ is a general description of Bundelkhand but it provides valuable informations about the origin of the Bundelas and their past traditions. Another book of similar nature if the Bundelkhand Ka Sankshipt Itihas has written by Diwan Pratipal Singh, printed in Samvat 1985 by the Kitchintak Press, Ramghat, Varanasi. This work was under taken with a view to produce the history of the Bundelkhand as there was no authentic work available except the Tawari-khe- Bundelkhand of Munshi Shyam Singh and Tawari-khe-Jalaun.17

The work of Diwan Pratipal Singh is based on the official documents of the British regime and especially on the District Gazetteer of 1909.18 On many occasions, the author appears to have borrowed the material from the above Gazetteers. This is more true in regard to his
descriptions about the criminal tribes of the district of Jhansi and Lalitpur. However, its author is not to be blamed at all as he has accepted himself that the basis of his work had been the various Gazetteers. Besides, this book supplies sufficient information on the socio-economic history, literary activity and the cultural aspects of the region. The work mentioned above only refers to the general history of Bundelkhand. None of the above have attempted on the great apprising of 1857 and its surrounding events. Therefore, the above works give only the general history of the track.

As far as the beginning of the great revolt in Bundelkhand and its day to day happenings no such work has been attempted which could have analysed the report of Major F.W. Pinkaney who had given day to day secret information to his superior officers. Of course some scholars have attempted on upon the life and times of Rani of Jhansi, especially to mention the brilliant account Dr. S.N. Sen, R.C. Majumdar, Dr. D.V. Tahamanker and S.N. Sinha. But these scholars too described heroic deeds of Rani of Jhansi. Their account did not analyse and taken into consideration the day to day reporting of Major F.W. Pinkaney.

Joyce Lebra Chapman has very carefully analysed the role of Rani of Jhansi and more especially Rani's father Moropant's part in those critical days. In those critical days it was Moropant who guided Rani of Jhansi and the latter was in his complete confidence. Joyce Lebra found Moropant Tambe as a brilliant strategist and Lebra explored the circumstances in which Rani of Jhansi raised voice against the British. But the author laid great emphasis on the character and role of Rani of Jhansi and did not analyse the day to day information of Major Pinkaney which gives the clear picture of British Military operation in
Bundelkhand. Dr. M.S. Rennick\textsuperscript{21} also attempted on the role of Rani of Jhansi. He also centralized his study mainly of diplomacy of Moropant Tambe whose passion was the welfare of his daughter. Dr. Renick thinks that Moropant diplomacy was around the sole purpose towards the restoration of Jhansi to the ruling house, and the recognition of the adopted son as heir to the Jhansi throne. Dr. Renick analysed this aspect carefully and also pointed out the causes of the failure of Moropant’s brilliant plan. But he too did not analyse the day-to-day narrative of Major F.W. Pinkaney in detail along with the active participation of people of Bundelkhand.

Thus, after analyzing the above works I decided to bring into lime light the circumstances and the events of the great revolt in Bundelkhand on the basis of Major F.W. Pinkaney’s letters which are from letter No.19 to 679 in my appended in this work.
References

(1) Jen Kinson, E.G., Jhansi settlement report, Allahabad 1871 (forward note No.893)

(2) Sen, S.N.; Eighteen fifty eight, Calcutta. (page 288)


(9) Pathak, S.P. Jhansi During the British Rule, I Ed. Ramanand Vidya

(10) Bhawan, Kalkaji, New Delhi , Page No. 148.


(13) I bid.
(14) I bid.


(17) Joshi, E.B.; op. Cit. page 144.


(20) I bid.

(21) I bid.


(23) A New Light upon the History of Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi, Agam kala Prakshan, Delhi.