Chapter - III

Socio - Economic

Background

of the Revolt of 1857
CHAPTER – 3

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British sovereignty Bundelkhand started with the treaty of Bassein in 1802 by which the English got certain territories in the region from the Marathas. With the result Capt. John Belly arrived in Banda hurriedly and took over the possession of the territory. Since the intention of the foreign rule was to exploit the region from the socio-economic point of view. Therefore, Belly made out a revenue settlement from the Kisans and Zamindars and settled out the rates hurriedly. Since he was not familiar with the nature of the tract. Therefore, he invited Mirza Zafar from Lucknow and entrusted him to settle the proper revenue rates. Mirza Zafar compared the revenue rates prevailing during the time of the Nawab of Banda and fix out temporarily the rate of revenue till the permanent settlement was made. It is well known that almost whole of the Banda District came under the British in accordance the provisions of the treaty of Puna, which took place in 1803. This treaty ensued the Regulation no.4 in this area. As far as the territory adjoined the Kalinjer was concerned it was managed by the Chaube Jagirdar till 1812. When the exchange of territory took place between he British and Chaube Jagirdars in consequence of this exchange the Chubes acquired some villages in Bhitari and Badausa. In exchange the British acquired Kalinjer. Pargana Khandeh which were under the possession of Maratha subedar of Jalaun was too acquired by the British with the death of Raja Gangadhar Rao.

However, at the time of his death the state of Jhansi had included nine paraganas namely, Jhansi, Pichore, Karera, Mau, Pandwaha and
Vijaygarh. Besides, Moth, Bhandar & Garothe were too part of the British rule. About half of the portion of the Jhansi district was settled by Capt. Gordon prior to outbreak of Mutiny in 1857. Gordon had settled the parganas of Moth, Bhandar and Garothe. Where as the rest portion of district Jhansi was settled by Jen Kinson after the establishment of law and order. First of all the parganas of Moth, Bhandar and Garothe had been part of the district of Jalaun till 1854.

With the result these parganas were settled by the Supdt. of Jalaun summarily for time being. Later on Erskine settled them along with the other parganas.

**Revenue Settlement of Banda**

J.D. Erskine, the first collector of Bundelkhand district made the first settlement for a single year 1805-06.

He also made the second settlement for three years i.e., 1806-07 to 1808-09. The ultimate demand fixed for the entire district for 1808-08 was rupees 13,53,723. The assessment was rather high in the eastern parganas and low in the western ones.

The third settlement was framed by John Wauchope (who succeeded Erskine in December 1808) for 3 years i.e. 1809-10 to 1811-12. His assessment marked an enhancement by over 13 percent. This settlement was continued without any alteration for a second period i.e., 1812-13 to 1814-1815.
Scott Waring made the fourth regular settlement in 1815 and subsequently years. The year 1816 was memorable one in Bundelkhand because Waring, the settlement officer raised the Govt demand at that time when the agriculturist were in ruinous state. The gross was not less than 46 percent exclusive of the assessment of seven mafi villages resumed by him. In the western parganas the jama was enhanced by 21 percent exclusive of the assessment of 32 resumed villages. It raised the revenue of Hamirpur by three lakhs and a quarter. Waring seized at every pretext which could warrant increase of revenue. The Tahsildar of Kalpi was dismissed for submitting too low an estimate and the Tahsildar of Jalalpur was turned out of Collector’s camp with indignity because he failed to procure a farming officer of sufficiently higher bid. Due to heavy assessment when revenue could not be smoothly realized, Waring was compelled to seek permission to sell estates in the whole district, the arrears of which amounted to 1,86,249 rupees. Consequently transfers of property became very frequent and arrears accumulated on a large scale.

The fifth regular settlement in Banda was begun by Cambell and finished by Reade. The former jamas were carried on with alterations in estates that had begun to suffer from over assessment. Campbell effected a total reduction of rupees 87,138. This settlement being quinquennial lasted till 1825, and marks a turning point in the fiscal history of Banda district.

The sixth regular settlement began in 1825 and were conducted by Wilkinson, Fane, and Begbie. Begbie, who succeeded Fane as Collector in 1827 admitted that the assessment fixed by Fane and himself in Banda, Pailini, Augasi and Simauni were too high. In 1829-
30 proposals were put forward for the sale of 116 villages, nearly one seventh of the district, paying a demand of rupees 2, 73,031 and defaulting to the extent of rupees 1,22,227.  

After Begbie, the settlement work was entrusted in 1842 to W.B. Wright, a Deputy Collector. R.M.Bird, a senior member of the Board of revenue was of opinion that the jama of the district in the aggregate was fair and reasonable. Wright was, therefore, instructed to simply equalize the assessment. But when the settlement work was completed, it was found that he had exceeded Bird’s estimate by 29,000 rupees.  

Surrounded by these difficulties H. Rose and Edgewarh proposed reductions in 1847-48. In spite of this relief too the arrears could not be cleared and the transfer of land continued unprecedently. F.O. Mayne who was the Collector of Banda in 1855-56 also found it impossible to realize the demand. Thus, he proposed further reductions to solve the problem which of course, was the outcome of severe assessments.

Due to high rates of revenue the condition of the agriculturists became from bad to worse and feeling of hatred towards the British was strengthened. No doubt the Collector of Banda proposed a large reductions in 1855-56, but by that time the stream of unrest had become full and the people had raised a standard of revolt. Keene rightly remarked that the first outbreak was not military, but a rural rising.

**Revenue Settlement of Hamirpur**

Governor General’s Agent Capt. Bellei made the revenue settlement of district in 1805-06. Its Collector Eriskin had realized the great difficulty in
dealing with the notorious leaders of the area like Parasnath, Gopal Singh and Dauva. However, with the military he managed to restore the law and order and settled the district. Erskin had made second settlement of district Hamirpur in 1805. But the notorious leaders like Gopal Singh and others had been able to maintain their influence were the western parganas of district.

The third revenue settlement was carried out in between 1811-12 by Wauchope which was followed subsequently. Scott and Waring settled Hamirpur in 1815. It was the fifth regular revenue settlement which was completed in five years from 1815-1820. However, it was thought proper to revise the revenue rate of pargana Kalpi. It is well known that Allen had settled the parganas of Sumerpur, Mahoba, Rath, Panwari and Kharka in 1842. Where as the rest of Parganas like Hamirpur, Kalpi, Jalalpur, Khaka and Konch (these area included in Hamirpur) were settled by W. Muir. Freeling had settled Mahoba in 1855-56.

Revenue Settlement of Jalaun

The parganas were included in the state of Jalaun in 1838 were kept under the supervision of Lieutant Doolan. It included the parganas of Kalaun, Kanar, Mohammadabad, Itaura, Rampura, Mahoba and Moth which were settled in 1839 for a short period. Subsequently, it was settled for the second time for the period of one year in 1840. The third revenue settlement of the above parganas were made in between 1841 to 1845 for the period of five years. However, Chirgaon was kept under the British rule in 1841 because its Zamindars had become rebellion. The Parganas of Kachwagarh and Bhandar which had been included in the state of
Gwalior in 1844 was settled by Capt. Ross. Later on these parganas were transferred to the British which included in the district of Jalaun.  

Capt. Erskine succeeded Capt. Ross in 1849 and he settled Jaitpur in the same year. The parganas Moth and Jaitpur were subsequently transferred to Hamirpur in March 1853 and in exchange Jalaun was given to parganas of Kalpi and Konch. However, these were again change in territory of the Jalaun district in 1854 when the parganas of Moth, Chirgaon and Garotha had been transferred to Jhansi and thus the revenue settlement of the district of Jalaun like the other adjoining districts was carried out by the different officers which lacked uniformity.

**Character & Working of Revenue Settlements**

A critical appraisal of revenue settlements of Bundelkhand districts under the British revealed the fact that the foreign rule was adamant to collect more and more revenue from the rural population and that is why rights from the time of Capt. Ballie in 1803 the rates of revenue were increased rapidly by every settlement officers a respective of the paying capacity of the agriculturists. The other important feature of the settlement was the fact that the officers assigned to settle the revenue rates where military officers. They did not bother to assess the economic capacity of the people. Moreover, the uniform policy fixation of revenue rate was applied. In some parganas the rates were high while in others the rates were comparatively very low. This was particular through in regard the village, inhabited by the notorious chiefs. Similarly concession in revenue rates where also given in the villages of Lalitpur which had been under the influence of notorious Bundela Chiefs. Thus the British gave concession to the notorious elements were as forced to give higher revenue.
It is known facts that the revenue rates were too high and the officers engaged in this task were determined to collect more and more revenue. So that the jama could be increased the higher bosses be pleased. The practice of fixing the higher rates were started right from the arrival of Captain John Bellie in 1803. He had fixed so big amount which agriculturists were unable to pay. With the result Eriskin had to reduce the rates in 1805.\textsuperscript{29} However, the settlement made afterwards again increase the rate of revenue.

Allen\textsuperscript{30} was of opinion that the main cause of increasing revenue rates in pargana Panwari of Hamirpur district in 1803 was the fact that the two Kanoongoes engaged in this work in that area had rivalry with each other and the rate was increased because of their conspiracy. It was the basic duties of revenue officers of that district to have taken this development and devised corrective measures. The higher revenue officers knowing the rivalry in between those Kanoongoes could have transferred them are they could have been removed or penalized. But the British officers were happy because of the increased proposals initiated by those Kannongoes. The increased rate ruined the farmers of Panwari to the maximum extent with the result they came on the brink of ruined \textsuperscript{31} which the Scott and Warring were settled the Pargana in 1815.\textsuperscript{32} They found that the increase in Eastern pargana was 46 percent of the existing rates where as in the western pargana in 21 percent. The most surprising aspects of the settlement was that the commission of the Board of revenue had indicated towards the above anomaly but even then the settlement officer Warring supported the higher rates of revenue.\textsuperscript{33} Thus the people who basically were agriculturist suffered a lot and the rural unrest increased which pave the way the rising of revolt of 1857.
Conditions of Agriculture, Natural Calamities Famine & Floods

The higher rates of revenue along with the natural calamities like-frequent famine, flood resulted into the economic ruin of the people of Bundelkhand. The rates of revenue were so high that the agriculturist had to mortgage the landed property and subsequently were forced to dispose the Marwaries, Jainies and other moneylenders. In Hamirpur district itself 815 Jagirs were auctioned in between 1815-1819 because its owners, landlords, were unable to pay Government revenue. In 1842 Allen had submitted his report which described the poverty of the district which in his words was the result of the high rates of revenue. He had pointed out that “Qutubuddin Hussain Khan, a renowned leader of Lucknow had purchased many villages of Hamirpur districts of the value of 8000 rupees because its landlords were in arrears and could not pay the revenue. Thus the landed property slipped out from agriculturists to the moneylenders.

At the same time another trader Zailuddin Khan had also purchased the villages paying a revenue of Rs. 7000.00 but left the district a pauper all his villages having being sold for arrears. Allen had given vivid examples of the transfer of property to the moneylenders. He had pointed out that in Hamirpur itself another moneylender Dayaram had purchased the land holdings yielding the revenue of 12000 rupees. This landed property belonged to those farmers who were in arrears of revenue and did not pay the Government demand because of the poor economic conditions. Thus tied with the circumstances they sold out the landed property to the moneylender.
The noteworthy feature of this revenue settlement was that Dayaram who had purchased so much land holdings too could not pay the Government demand and he too was forced dispose of his land holdings. Similarly Zailuddin Khan had also met with the same fate. Mirza Mohammad Khan of Allahabad had also purchased the zamindaree two of villages at the same time and its revenue was of 4000 rupees. There was a Government lawyer name Nunayat Rai of Hamirpur who had also purchased the Zamindari in some villages but both the purchasers (Mirza & Rai) suffered heavily and disposed of land holdings to clear of Government revenue. Similar was the situation of Diwan Madan Singh who had also disposed of this landed property. The surprising feature of the result of this higher rate of revenue was the fact that and European zamindar Gulls had purchased some agriculture farmer in Hamirpur district. But he declined so much economically that ultimately Gull had no way but disposed of his landed property.

The socio-economic poverty was not limited to Hamirpur district only but it was wide spread.

As early as 1839 short term settlement had been made for the parganas of Moth, Garotha and Bhandar which were the parts of district Jalaun till 1854, by the superintendent of Jalaun. Later on Major Eriskin Supdt. of Jalaun made the large summary settlements which were based on in accurate measurements and on the basis of Maratha documents showing revenue much above what those parganas could properly pay and prosper. Thus the settlements of Jalaun were equally harsh with result the agriculturist suffered heavily.
If the people of Bundelkhand had been forced to pay the heavy land revenue and thus to suffer because of the policy of exploitation of British. Then on the other hand they had to face disastrous effect of the British policy of trade and commerce a part from the ruinous effects of natural calamities.

It is well known fact that the British had exploited the whole of India from the socio-economic point of view and thus the Bundelkhand was not an exception to it. East India Company after its establishments sprang up rapidly. Its traders brought the maximum numbers of commodities to India from England. Especially foreign clothes, iron made goods and other articles of daily need. These commodities were manufactured in the factory of Manchester. Liverpool, Lankashire and Beringham. The articles imported from England of English factories soon dominated the market of Bundelkhand. In order to facilitate English trade heavy duties were imposed on local manufactures. With the result the local made things became costly and the people started purchasing of trade had ruined the small scale of industries and the people depended on it became unemployed.

Decline in Dye Industry

Dye industry was most developed in Bundelkhand during the beginning of the British rule. The root of the Al plant was profitable source of gain. Dye was prepared from the roots of Al plant, which was cultivated in good quality of Mars soil. It was highly prized for its beautiful and permanent dye. The roots of this plant were boiled and subsequently different types of colours were manufactured which was used in dying the clothes. This industry was most developed in Mauanganese and the adjoining areas.
Tharua, a local made cloth was coloured by this dye which were very popular in the market. It was the great source of income to the wavers engaged in this trade. The most striking feature of the British policy of exploitation were that this colour industry was declined and British could not do anything for its protection. It appears the foreign rule was adamant to crush it out so that the people could have depended on British made goods and colours.\textsuperscript{44} With the result of this policy the district of Bundelkhand suffered heavily.

**Resumption of Rent Free Tenures and Loss of Ubari Rights in Jhansi**

These tenures, relics of the times of Indian rulers and granted for services to the state were of different kinds. Some were burdened with conditions and some were not so. Some were personal life grants and some were hereditary and perpetual. Some of them had been fairly earned, while some had been fraudulently acquired. For sometime they had been part of the British administrative system, and had come to be regarded as rightfully belonging to the occupants.\textsuperscript{45} The new school of officers did not like the idea that so much land revenue should be lost to the state and be squandered away by an unprofitable class.\textsuperscript{46} The holders were called upon to prove the original validity of their titles. It was a part of the duty of the settlement officers to resume or release from assessment the lands thus held in Bundelkhand as in other parts of the North-Western Provinces. These were several cases where the estates had been acquired honestly but documents in support of them were not available.\textsuperscript{47}
There were instances in which strong proofs of validity were ignored and royal farmans and other authentic documents were rejected in order to bring on the rent roll of the company lands which had been for many generations free from assessment. The resumption or the conversion into life tenures, of hereditary rent free tenures of land of hereditary interests connected with the land or the land revenue had reduced many of the dispossessed landlords to a state of indigence, and thus resulted in promoting discontent against the British Government.

The Pawar, Thakurs and Ubaridars of Udgaon, Noner, and Jigna, who were men of influence, had lost their Ubari rights in several of their villages. Their estates had been in whole or part resumed. Naturally, it was bound to create resentment among them. On the commencement of the revolt they fought against the British.

Thus both the rural classes and the landed chiefs were victims of the land revenue policy of the British Government which had ruined them to a large extent. Both the classes goaded by similar grievances combined during the revolt in a common endeavour to regain what they had lost. It was certainly in the soil and hereditary holdings which forced them to revolt.

Decline of Trade and Commerce

At the time of British occupation of Bundelkhand, Kunch, Kalpi and Mauranipur were important centres of trade and commerce. As late as 1840 Kunch was said to have been an emporium so flourishing as to be celebrated throughout Bundelkhand. It possessed 52 banking houses. In spite of bad means of communication, an extensive trade in salt, sugar, gur, and ghee as well as foodgrains of every description was carried on with
Samthar, Datia and Gwalior. Kalpi was the largest mart in Northern India, its staple commodities were cotton and Al, which were exported by river to the various place in the North-Western Provinces. Ghee and gram too were exported by this route to Doab. Mau Ranipur was the largest trade emporium of Jhansi district, its export being Al dye, cotton and manufactured goods. It should ever be the first and highest object of a good government to diffuse the blessings of industry, content and plenty. But with the progress of the British rule in Bundelkhand, there was a sharp decline in the two principal article of trade—cotton and Al.\(^52\)

Cotton grows to great perfection in Bundelkhand. Its produce is not only abundant but the texture is soft and its colour whiter as compared to the cotton of the Doab. Naturally it fetched a higher price and was more eagerly sought after. It formed the staple commodity of Kalpi market. The purchase of Government alone one time amounted to 40 lakhs a year and that of private individuals to 18 lakhs; but after 1830, the former was discontinued and the latter dwindled down to bare 7 lakhs. This decline may be attributed to oppressive land settlements made by the British authorities in the district, which brought in its train misery and poverty.\(^53\)

The root of the Al plant was another profitable source of gain. It was exported to the different parts of the North-Western Provinces. Its trade also declined due to the imposition of a very heavy ‘advalorem’ custom duty. Add to this the arbitrary divisions of its quality for the purpose of levying duty. It was very difficult to draw any line of distinction between first and second and third qualities of Al, in consequence of which an exporter who paid the duty on the second quality was often liable to be accused of exporting Al of the first quality.\(^54\) The decadence in export that had set in advanced rapidly.
To sum up it can be said that the decaying in trade and industry proved disastrous and the inhabitants who had been suffering because of the ruinous effect of continuous famines and other natural calamities found it very difficult to earn their livelihood. Under these circumstances it appears that the socio-economic backwardness of Bundelkhand which was the consequence of the British rule inculcated in the minds of the people the feeling affected which ultimately became the responsible for the out break of the revolt in this region.

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