Chapter - IV

Annoyance of the People of Bundelkhand
CHAPTER – 4

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Lord Dalhousie had provided the coping stone to the edifice of the British dominion in India and during the eight years of his Governor-Generalship, had ceaselessly and indefatigably worked to this end. He had extended the bounds of the British Empire in India to their farthest limits and had brought under direct British rule as extensive an area as possible by conquest and applications of Doctrine of Lapse.

Lord Wellesley’s Subsidiary Alliance system had paid rich devidents and its applications had resulted in bringing all the native rulers with in the orbit of British paramountcy. But Lord Dalhousie’s zeal for conferring the ‘Boon of British rule’ directly on as many Indians as possible, outran his discretion. By persistently annexing the various native states indiscriminately, and on one ground or the other, justifiable or otherwise, he had caused great uneasiness in the Indian mind already agitated due to the many reforms and innovations already introduced. In all these acts of his the Governor General had displayed but little imagination and thoughtfulness. Further, the missionary activities were at another cause for aggravating Indian feelings. Indians scented danger to their religion in all their activities; and the ruling chiefs felt extremely insecure as a result of rootless application of the Doctrine of Lapse.

Such was the atmosphere created by Lord Dalhousie. There were discontent everywhere and thus the Indians were greatly annoyed. There was sullenness everywhere. But it was mistaken for the quiet of peace by the white rulers. It however, proved to be the lull before the storm. The
British rulers in the hey day of their expanding empire where in a mistaken move of absolute complacency and Lord Canning, the successor of Lord Dalhousie had been assured of a very smooth sailing of the ship of the state. Superficially, the political weather looked quite calm and fair, obviously the British had reached the height of their power and nothing seemed wanting to complete it. Sad disillusionment, however, was in store for them. The whole country was soon to be convulsed with and upheaval which shook the British Empire in India to its foundations and resulted in disappearance of foreign rule from many a part, for some time at least.

Historians have, therefore, rightly regarded the year 1856 as the period of ‘lull before the storm’. The atmosphere of sullen discontent was highly inflammable and explosive, and any untoward incident could act as a matchstick to set the conflagration of revolt a blazed. Discontent was slowly giving birth to disaffection and annoyance. The people and princess a like, were feeling the working of this process and were regaining political consciousness.

The Indian soldiers, however, was free from any such notion of weakness or helplessness. On the contrary, he was quite. Conscious of his power and might, for it was mainly by his loyalty and valour that the structure of British rule had been raised in India a fact of which he was not oblivious. Besides, he was as good an Indian to his very core as anyone else. As religious as people of any other walk of life could be.¹ The Sepoy felt that his was the strong arm that has sustained it so long, and he could over throw it whenever he wanted. He had hitherto remained loyal to his salt, but when he thought that his employers aimed at nothingless then his ancestral faith, the very basis of that loyalty was shattered. The revolt had been long brewing the greased cartridges only hastened it.²
The soldier was therefore, no less disturb and uneasy. He felt the strangle hold of subjection still more keenly, for he was directly the victim of many inequities. His pay was ridiculously low as compared to that of the British soldiers and there was little scope for him to rise in the military service. The highest rank to which he could aspire to rise was that of Subedar Major. Beside, the numerous restrictions that had been lately imposed on him, had further, aggravated his feelings of dissatisfaction, which had been especially noticeable after the First Afghan War.

The latest of these restrictions were the Services Enlistment Act in 1856, which required him to sign a bond to serve in any part of the country or abroad, even across the sea, without demur. The Hindu soldier clearly saw in this regulation the loss of his caste and religion. Besides, he disliked annexation, which meant it decreases in his importance. The Sepoy is not the man consequence he was. He dislikes annexations-among other regions, because each new province added to the Empire widens his sphere of his service and at the same time decrease our foreign enemies and there by the sepoys importance. The other day and an old sepoy of the Bombay cavalry at Nimach being asked if he liked the annexations replied, ‘No, I used to be a great Man when I went home; the best in the village rose as I approached; now the lowest puff their pipe in my face.’

Then came the greased cartridges which ultimately proved the last straw and the Hindu and the Muslim soldiers a like had perforce to, unsheathe their sword to save their religions and to rid the country of the curse of foreign rule. The time also was quite opportune for such an action. The armies of the East India Company had been practically demanded of British troops due to the Crimean War and the existing the disparities of members between the Indian and British troops was an added impetus to
revolt. The disparity in members between European and Indian troops had been growing greater; when Lord Dalhousie left India the army consisted of 2 lakhs 33 thousand natives and 45 thousand British soldiers.  

Such were the causes and the circumstances which led to outbreak, the explosion having been caused by the greased cartridges.

No doubt the above happenings which were taking place on the National scene of India had created great impact on the people of Bundelkhand who had already been facing the evil effects of the foreign rule. Apart from the above the following circumstances became responsible for outbreak of the great apprising in Bundelkhand.

(1) Annoyance of the Ruling Chiefs & Princes

Among the ruling chiefs of Bundelkhand, who were pained or aggrieved with the British Government, the most important was Rani Laxmi Bai, widow of the late Raja Gangadhar Rao of Jhansi, a scion of the Maratha family. The other smaller denomination were Raja Mardan Singh of Banpur, Raja Bakhat Bali of Shahgarh, Narain Rao and Madho Rao of Karwi, Nawab Ali Bahadur of Banda, Tai Bai of Jalaun and wife of Parikshit, a former chief of Jaitpur. All of them was resentful of the high handedness of the British Government and was possessed by a sense of frustration and disappointment was smouldering only to flare up in course of time.
(i) Application of Doctrine of Lapse in Bundelkhand

The origin of “Doctrine of Lapse” has been discussed by a number of historians and they unanimously held that it was not a child of Lord Dalhousie’s brain; on the other hand it hand it had stemmed out of the directive of the Court of Directors who laid down as early as 1834 that “where as it is optional with you (Governor-General) to give or to withhold your content to adoptions, the indulgence should be the exception and not the rule, and should never be granted but as a special mark of approbation.” Fortunately the application of this doctrine after 1834 was not universal and the intensity of resentment against it remained subdued.

A number of exponents of Hindu Law have condemned the principle of prohibiting adoption. Among the British writers the opinions of Colebrooke⁸ and Thomas Strange⁹ may be cited. Among the historians, Edwin Arnold, Evans Bell and Dr. S.N.Prasad vehemently uphold the right of adoption. Bell calls it ‘the specific and inherent principle of the Hindu Law of Inheritance’ and adds that ‘there is no religious obligation that is held more sacred among Hindoos.’¹⁰ (P.T.O) At another place he observes, “when the full effect and benefit of the Hindoo law of Inheritance are allowed to all our Hindoo subjects, how could we ever pretend to refuse or restrict it in the case of Hindoo Princes, who are our friends and allies; but who are not our subjects”.¹¹ Arnold is more specific and says, “with Orientals, however, the right (of adoption) is also a duty, and one of the most imperative kind, the object of adoption being altogether religious, rather than domestic”.¹² Dr. S.N.Prasad says, “The paramount was not entitled to withhold his recognition altogether and annex his subordinate principality.”¹³
It stands to reason to presume that the responsible members of Government of India had a great appreciation of the susceptibilities of the people than the members of the Court of Directors. The Supreme Government not only sanctioned adoption but urged it on the native princes. Daulat Rao Sindhi and Malhar Rao Holkar had died childless. The latter had adopted a son during his lifetime; where as a successor to the former was adopted by his widow. ¹⁴ Both adoptions were deemed to be regular and lawful.

**There were three types of Indian states:**

(a) Sovereign States

(b) Protected or Tributary States

(c) Subordinate States

It may however be pointed out that Metcalfe was fully aware of the difficulty of categorizing the states of Bundelkhand in the light of distinction enunciated by him. The case of Treaty States was clear and so also that of the subordinate States. But there were some states in Bundelkhand which did not conform to any of the three patterns.¹⁵ Thus so far as the ‘Doctrine of Lapse’ is concerned; its application in Bundelkhand was brought with serious complications. The states of Bundelkhand which were absorbed into the British Empire under this doctrine were Jalaun in 1840, Jaitpur in 1849 and Jhansi in 1853. The annexation of the last named occasioned for reaching consequences. It was responsible to a great extent for the outbreak of 1857 not only in Jhansi but also in the neighbouring areas.
(ii) Harrasment of the Rani of Jhansi

The refusal of Lord Dalhousie to allow succession to her adopted son subsequent to the annexation of the state of Jhansi, together with a number of other measures proclaimed (promulgated) in quick succession, not only wounded the feelings of the Rani but even of the people of Jhansi as well. The Rani was asked to furnish security and execute a written bond for the safe custody of the personal property of the late Raja in trust for the adopted son.\(^{16}\) Then she was called upon to pay the debts of her late husband out of her paltry pension of 60,000 rupees a year.\(^{17}\) Cow slaughter was introduced in Jhansi in spite of her protest as much as those of the people against it.\(^{18}\) Add to this, large scale resumption of religious endowment, e.g. the villages assigned to the temple of Mahalakshmi at Jhansi\(^ {19} \) and the lands granted by the Rani as Bhumidan in connection with the funeral rites of her husband.\(^ {20} \)

The British Government also resumed some gardens and cultivated lands which were in possession of the Rani.\(^ {21} \) It also prevented her from performing some religious rites. When the Rani sought permission to go to Benaras to have her head shaved as was the custom among Hindu widows in those days, but it was refused.\(^ {22} \) When she applied for one lakh of rupees out of six lakhs kept in Government treasury in trust for the adopted son to meet the expenses of the sacred thread ceremony of Damodar Rao, the Government declined to pay it unless she could find four sureties for its repayment, in case the boy should demand it on his coming of age.\(^ {23} \) Last but not the least, the reputation of Rani was lost. She petitioned in vain to be kept under the control of the Agent to the Governor-General in Central
of North-Western Provinces.\textsuperscript{24} In short the attitude of the British Government towards the Rani was not just.

(iii) Ill Treatment to Raja Mardan of Banpur

Raja Mardan Singh was the son of Mor Prahlad, who was obliged to cede two third of his former state to the Sindhia. He was henceforth styled as the Raja of Banpur after the name of a town in his share. In 1843, Mardan Singh succeeded his father as Raja of Banpur on his death.

About April 1857, Thakur Jhujhar Singh of Nanikpur dies. His tenure was resumed by the Government, and a settlement was made with his heirs. But one third of the state was not given to Raja Mardan Singh and he induced Jawahar Singh, the heir of Thakur Jhujhar Singh to revolt in order to compel the Government to restore his tenure.\textsuperscript{25} Raja Mardan Singh had a number of grievances to be redressed and he entertained the hope of recovering the entire state of Chanderi, the ancient possession of his ancestors in the event of the overthrow of the British Supremacy.

(iv) Grievances of Raja of Shahgarh

The Shahgarh territory was the remnant of the Garhakota state; its remaining parts had fallen either into the hands of the Peshwa’s representatives at Saugar or those of Sindhia. The Garhakota or Shahgarh family descended from Hirde Shah, i.e., the Panna Branch of Chhatrsal which was comprised of the Eastern Bundela Chiefs.\textsuperscript{26} By Article XIII of the Treaty of 1817 with the Peshwa Baji Rao II, the Saugar territory came under the British.\textsuperscript{27} In 1818 the Shahgarh chief had received possession of Garahkota from Sindia and had been holding it for some time. But when he
was expelled from there, he retired to Shahgarh. The British took possession of Garakhota on behalf of Sindia.

(v) Ill Treatment to Rao of Karwi

Narain Rao and Madho Rao were the adopted sons of Binaik Rao, the son of Amrit Rao. Amrit Rao died in 1824 and was succeeded by his only son Binaik Rao, who died in July 1853b without any issue. He had first adopted Narain Rao, but subsequently disinherited him for undutiful conduct and threw him into prison. On the death of Binaik Rao, the pension was discontinued; his troop's dispanded and all arms and guns were confiscated.

The alienment of the funds for the maintenance of temple at Benaras by the British Government annoyed the Raos and the people of Karwi. In 1827 Amrit Rao had deposited 2 Lakhs of rupees at six percent interest with the Government of India for the perpetual maintenance of charities band temple which he had established at Benaras. In 1837 the Government reduced the rate of interest to 4 percent. Three years after the death of Binaik Rao, the payment of the interest was stopped, the reasons for which were never divulged by the Government of India. It shocked everyone and the people felt that no faith could be placed in the promises of the British government.29
(vi) Nawab Ali Bahadur of Banda

Nawab Ali Bahadur was the son of Nawab Zufiqar Ali of Banda. He succeeded his father on his death in 1849. Nawab ali Bahadur on his succession was deprived of almost all his privileges. Nothing was conceded to him who could mean an acknowledgement of sovereignty, chiefship or independence. Instead of being designated as Nawab of Banda, he was asked to add Nawab as Suffix to his name. No salutes were to be given. Even his army was also reduced to mere retinue of 25 sowars and one company of foot soldiers.

The only consideration shown to him was that during his life time he was to remain exempt from the jurisdiction of the British courts.\textsuperscript{30} The Nawab’s feelings were further hurt when the British officer at Banda refused to offer the customary felicitations to him on the birth of a son to him.

The officiating Collector of Banda served a notice upon the Nawab while conducting an enquiry about the rent-free lands in mauza Larakapurwa of pargana Banda. The Nawab protested in strong terms as the notice was derogatory to his honour and rank.\textsuperscript{31} In this way his position and rank were lost reduced, the Nawab represented his sad plight in a Memorial dated March 25, 1856 to the Governor-General. In it he requested for the restoration of the honours and privileges enjoyed by his ancestors.\textsuperscript{32}
(vii) Annoyance of Rani of Jalaun and Ex- Rani of Jaitpur

The annexation of Jalaun throttled the interests of Tai Bai. Her claims to the State as the grand daughter of Nana Govind Rao were extremely sound but they were ignored by the British authorities.33

After the deposition of Parikshit, the Chief of Jaitpur in 1842 by the British Government, on account of his insurrection, the state was conferred upon Dewan Khet Singh. But the State lapsed on his death in 1849 due to the want of a male heir. The widow of Parikshit still considered herself as the claimant of the State. On the commencement of the revolt in Hamirpur, she set herself up again at Jaitpur.34

(2) GRIEVANCE OF GENERAL PEOPLE

(i) Over Assessment of Revenue Rates

The land settlements made by the British Government together with the sale of land in default of payment of the Government revenue created discontent and uneasiness among the farmers as well as the landlords of Bundelkhand.

The first Collector of Bundelkhand districts made the first settlement for a single year 1805-06. After that he made second settlement also for three years, i.e. 1806-07 top 1808-09. The assessment was rather high in the Eastern parganas and low in the Western ones.35 The third settlement was framed by John Wauchope. It was for three years, i.e. 1809-10 to 1811-12.
This settlement was continued without any alteration for a second period, i.e., 1812-13 to 1814-15.

In 1815 Scott Warrimg made the fourth regular settlement. The year 1816 is memorable one in Bundelkhand.

The district of Bundelkhand was divided into 2 districts in 1819. The settlement of Banda and Hamirpur were made separately.

(ii) Resumption of Rent-Free tenures: (See on earlier pages)

(iii) Loss of Ubari Rights in Jhansi: (See on earlier pages)

(iv) Decline of Trade and Commerce: (See on earlier pages)

(v) Duty on Salt

The Lieutenant Governor, North-Western Provinces by a Notification dated May 9, 1855, established a Customs Line for the levy of a duty on salt in the territories under the superintendence of the Commissioner of the Sagar division. It ran from the junction of the rivers Jamuna and Sindh, through the districts of Jalaun, Jhansi, Chanderi, Sagar, and Narsinghpur to a point on the river Narbada and from there along the
left bank of the Narbada to the Western boundary of the above mentioned territories.

The manufacture of alimentary salt in the territories under the Government of North- Western Provinces, East and South of the Customs Line was prohibited. Customs Houses were established at Jhansi, Sagar and Hoshangabad and Deputy Superintendents and Deputy Commissioners of Districts in which Customs 'jurisdiction was established were invested with the powers of Customs' line was modified. The prohibition of the manufacture of alimentary salt caused much distress to the great mass of the population.

(vi) Civil Justice and Stamps

The system of civil justice and stamps was complicated and expensive. So, the people were dissatisfied with the system of civil justice also. The British Government had introduced stamp paper, and it was made a law that no petition or complaint or redress would be received in any court of justice, unless it was written on a stamped paper of certain price.

Thus when the people were unable to purchase stamped paper, they were often compelled to submit to injury, oppression and wrong. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan in his essay on the causes of the Indian revolt while deprecating the use of stamp papers has remarked that the introduction and gradual increase in the price of stamp papers in a country like India, where people due to poverty were not in a position to bear such a burden, was improper.
The was strictness in the use of stamp paper for filling petitions sometimes resulted in incalculable loss. Early in 1857, Ganeshu, a son of Jawahir Singh, Thakur of Nanikpur, presented a petition to Zain-Ul-Abdin Khan, Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector, Chanderi Stating that his father was about to go into rebellion, but his petition was rejected simply because it was not written on stamp paper. Ganeshu waited for two or three days, endeavouring to obtain hearing, but in vain. A few days after Jawahir Singh and other Thakurs went into rebellion.  

(vii) Disaffection Among the Former Employees of the Annexed States

In 1800 Colonel Wellesley had declared that the extension of the British territory and influence had been greater than its mean. “Whenever we spread ourselves,” he said, “We increase this evil. We throw out of employment and means of subsistence, all who have hitherto managed the revenue, commanded or served in the armies...these people become additional enemies.”

The lapse of Jalaun and Jhansi states, the discontinuance of the pension of Binaik Rao of Karwi and the withdrawal of the privileges of Nawab Ali Bahadur II of Banda had resulted in the disbandment of a large number of troops, unemployment of numberless courtiers and officials, dismissal of thousand of retainers and deprivation of the means of subsistence of numerous families, which were dependent on these states or on the above name chiefs. Their discontent like that of their chiefs was only natural and they joined their old masters when they took the lead in the revolt and some of them took a very conspicuous part in the movement.
(viii) Dread of Conversion

When the activities of the missionaries, social legislations relating to abolition of infanticide, sati, widow remarriage, inheritance of converts, expansion of Western education and the introduction of railways and telegraphs were creating alarm along the people of the entire country, Bundelkhand could no remain unaffected and both the Hindus and the Mohammedans there became panicky about their religion. In Bundelkhand, 66 cases of sati were officially reported between 1815 and 1823.42

It was prohibited in 1847 throughout the Bundelkhand states by proclamations issued by the Cheifs.43 The reaction of the general public against the Christian religion and the missionaries manifested itself during the course of the revolt in this region. In Hamirpur, the Christian preacher Jeremiah with his whole family was put to death.44

In Banda, the missionary school was plundered a day after the outbreak. The Pappanah Paul Khan of this institution who was released after having been converted to islam.45 Also the Church building at Banda was damaged and its roof was blown off.46

(ix) Superstition and Rumours

Like the rest of the country, the people of Bundelkhand were also excited by the circulation of chapaties there. The officials records of the period confirm that the chapaties had been in circulation in most of the villages there.47 Even its starting point was believed to be Bundelkhand.48 It stirred up the rural population of the region for participating in the revolt.49
The rumour was spread that the flour sold in the market was mixed with finely ground bones of cow and pig. This rumour agitated the minds of the people of Bundelkhand. It is confirmed by the official accounts of the outbreak at Jhansi, Banda and Gwalior.

In May 1857, a report was circulated in Jhansi that the Government had caused ground bones to be mixed in the flour sold in the market. The people were agitated although the authorities adopted every means to contradict the report.\textsuperscript{50} In Banda, F.O. Mayne, the Collector stored food provisions in the jail to be used in case of emergency. A rumour was immediately circulated that the grain was being stored to be mixed up with ground cow bones and was to be served to the Najibs. Luckily their rising was nipped in the bud, but four persons were immediately dismissed and the rest were publicly paraded and warned.\textsuperscript{51} Before the outbreak of the Gwalior Contingent at Gwalior there was a strong rumour that polluted flour and sugar had been received from Agra for consumption.\textsuperscript{52}

The causes narrated above were responsible for the growing anger of the people of Bundelkhand. Their grievances further aggravated because of the British declaration of the merger of the British Empire because of the ‘Doctrine of Lapse’. Although Major Ellice political agent did his best to cool down the tension by forwarding the representation of Rani of Jhansi for the recognition of adopted child at every effort in this direction failed because Dalhousie had turned down the request. Thus the atmosphere was surcharged and the outbreak could have taken place at any time.
References

(1) S.N., Sen., Eighteen hundred & fifty seven , page 40.

(2) I bid.

(3) Kaye, Life of Indian Officer- Vol. I page 216.

(4) I bid.


(6) I bid.


(8) "He who means to adopt a son, must assemble his Kinsman, give humble notice to the King; and then; having made an oblation to fire, with words from the Veda in the midst of his dwelling house, he may receive, as his son by adoption, a boy nearly allied to him, or, on failure of such, even one remotely allied- H.T.colebrooke: A Digest of Hindu Law on Contracts & Successions, Vol. III page 321.

(9) According to Sir Thomas Strange,'the notice to the King may be dispensed with'. Thomas Strange: Hindu Law, Vol. II page 88.

(10) E.Bell: The Empire in India, page 137.
(11) I bid page 134.

(12) E. Arnold; The Marquis of Dalhousie’s Administration of


(14) S.N. Prasad: Paramountcy under Dalhousie page 155.


(20) I bid. Vol. 84, Deptt. XIX, File No. 175.


(24) D.B. Parsanis: Jhansi Ki Rani lakshmi Bai, page 81-82.

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(26)  N.E. Jhansi division, page3.

(27)  Bundelkhand Agency Records, File No. 3 of 1857.


(29)  Bundelkhand Agency Records, file No. 3 of 1857.


(31)  Agra narratives, Foreign Department, 1844-1852, Vol. No. 15,

(32)  page 781-783.

(33)  S.B.R. (N.W.P) Progs. 9 December, 1853, Nos. 10 & 11.

(34)  Foreign Department, Persian Letters Received, No. 256, dated , 15 April 1856.

(35)  For Pol. Cons. 13 August, 1858, No. 140.

(36)  N.E. Hamirpur District page 8.


(39) For Pol.Cons.8 October, 1858, No.82.

(40) Causes of Revolt by a Native of high rank in the confidence of the Government Ball: II page 634.


(42) N.E. Jhansi Division page.3.


(45) Aitchison: Iii page 229.

(46) N.E. Hamirpur District page5.

(47) For Sec. Cons.31 July 1857, Cons. No. 182.

(49) Bundelkhand Agency records, file No. 2 of 1857; Ball: I, page 39.

(50) N.E., Agra division, page 2.

(51) Kaye's & Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny, 1857-58,

(52) Vol. v, Page 281.

(53) N.E. Jhansi division, page 2.

(54) N.E., Banda District, Part I, page 3.

(55) For Pol. Cons. 8 October, 1858, No. 82.