

ROLE OF N.W.F.P AND PUNJAB IN THE WAR OF MUTINY- WAY FORWARD FOR PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The 1857 War of Independence, often referred to variously as the Sepoy Rebellion, the Indian Mutiny, or the First War of Independence, represents a watershed moment in South Asian colonial history. Rooted in decades of political manipulation, economic exploitation, religious provocation, and social interference by the British East India Company, the revolt signaled a collective resistance that united diverse communities across the subcontinent. While traditionally dominated by narratives from Delhi, Cawnpore, and Meerut, this paper expands the scope of analysis to include the lesser-documented but equally critical contributions from Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). By examining the multidimensional causes of the uprising and analyzing the role of key figures like Nana Sahib and Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral, this research argues that the revolt was not merely a spontaneous military mutiny but a coordinated and symbolic assertion of indigenous identity, sovereignty, and dignity. The rebellion's failure, while tragic, became the ideological bedrock for future movements of independence, especially for the Muslims of the subcontinent, ultimately culminating in the creation of Pakistan.

Keywords: 1857 War of Independence, British East India Company, Nana Sahib, Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral, Punjab Uprising, NWFP Resistance, Muslim Nationalism, Greased Cartridges, Mughal Decline Anti-Colonial Movements, Pre-Partition India

INTRODUCTION:

The East India Company was established as a joint-stock company in 1600 to foster trade in the Indian Ocean Region. Its official name was "The Governor and Company of Merchants of England trading into the East Indies." The emperor Jahangir initially granted permission to establish the factory in 1613 in Surat. It ruled the subcontinent from 1757 to 1857. Sir Thomas Roe established English self-governance, liberating the company from the Mughal court within Surat. This autonomy empowered the company to implement its rules and regulations for English residents, preserving British customs amongst Indian law. The first Charter Act of India came in 1773, which is also known as the Regulation Act. After that, Charter Acts were enacted every 20

years until 1853. The Charter Act was introduced by the British Parliament as a regulatory body for the company's internal and external affairs. With each Charter Act, the powers of company rule declined the power of government so that there would be direct control by the British in the subcontinent. The East India Company acted as a mediator between provinces and the British before 1857. After 1857, the subcontinent came under direct British control, and Britain ruled the subcontinent directly through representatives called the Governor General.

In 1857, a revolt occurred, known by various names in history, which is a topic of discussion in itself, including the First War of Independence, the Sepoy Rebellion, and the Indian Mutiny of

1857. It was the first major resistance against British rule and paved the path way for present-day Pakistan. Initially, it began on 10th May as a Sepoy Mutiny under the de jure direction of the Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal Emperor, and then as a coordinated effort by Indian rulers.

Despite being unsuccessful, it is a landmark in Indo-Pak history, not just against British Rule but also in the act of ultimate independence.

With increasing British influence, the previously established hegemony was in danger, *Muslim Molivs* and *Hindu Brahmins* were losing their position and strength among the masses and within state courts. It wasn't long before the people started plotting against the company, for instance, the Black Hole incident of Calcutta in 1756. Siraj al-Dawlah, Nawab of Bengal, led an army to capture William Fort in Calcutta. The incident shook the British to the core. 146 people were thrust into the narrow chamber, including children and women; only 23 of them made it out alive. In reaction, the British, under the command of Robert Clive, launched an attack to recapture Calcutta and succeeded in taking back the William Fort. This set the stage for the infamous 1757 Battle of Plassey, the Battle of Buxar, the Anglo-Mysore War, and the Anglo-Maratha War and Anglo Sikh Wars. Furthermore, sepoys were made to be drilled, dressed, and shaved like Englishmen; their cockades were made of hog and cow leather.

The changes in political, religious, military, social, and economic law were the main grounds of this revolt. The establishment of British dominance was a huge threat to the subcontinent's socioeconomics.

The revolt spread widely into almost every region of the subcontinent, focusing on the northern region, the uprising from Meerut, followed by Delhi, Cawnpore (Kanpur), Lucknow, Haryana, Jhansi, Bihar and Punjab, leaving out the southern and eastern regions.

Various numbers of sepoys and civilians sacrificed their lives during the 1857 revolt; however, the exact number is ambiguous, some argue it was 40,000 while others write more than 100,000 soldiers and 800,000 civilians. Meanwhile, between 6000 to 13000 Britishers (army +

civilians) were killed. Various diverse personalities from different regions organized and master planned the revolt. Manghal Pandey, Rani Lakshmibai, Nana Sahib, Baji Rao and Ahmed Khan Karral are a few of the prominent figures to mention.

Background:

The cause is hard to pin down to one reason or an actor due to its multilateral character and events. When news of the mutiny first spread, despite early alarming reports, the British initially did not respond swiftly and remained largely unaffected. The British thought the mutiny would be over soon and be limited to Delhi. The more they heard about the massacre, carnage, and atrocity, the more the rebellion changed their minds, and they became more serious about the whole affair. The mutiny now had to be considered as a much more dangerous threat, and no longer just a military one. The Manchester Guardian (now Guardian) was quick to brand the panic as ill-founded, then had to review their position.

1. Political Causes

The revolt of 1857 cannot be understood outside the political policies followed by the British in the previous decades. A thorough examination of this period reveals that the British systematically undermined traditional Indian power structures through legal, administrative, and symbolic methods. One of the most notable instances was the Doctrine of Lapse, which was Lord Dalhousie. Although the British justified it as a legal reform, it was perceived by Indian rulers as a maneuver for aggressive expansion. The annexation of states such as Satara, Jhansi, and Nagpur under this policy conveyed a strong message that no princely state remained politically secure under British domination. Analysis shows that this policy was especially inflammatory due to its neglect of Indian customs concerning succession, particularly the right to adopt heirs. It was not merely a political act, but was seen as an intentional insult to indigenous laws and autonomy. The annexation of Oudh in 1856 was even more provocative. Unlike other regions, Oudh remained loyal to the British, and its

annexation under the guise of mis-governance exposed the colonial authorities' tendency for arbitrary interference. As Mukherjee (1957) explains, this move displaced not just the royal family but also the social and military networks connected to the state, many of whom later participated in the rebellion. The second reason that was involved in the tense political situation was the exclusion of Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. Declaring that his title would be abolished after his death effectively eliminated the last remnants of a symbolic political order that had persisted for centuries. It was a clear statement that no Indian political identity, even symbolically, would be acknowledged. The growing exclusion of Indians from both administrative and military positions shows the political alienation. On one side when western educated class was emerging, Indians were still deprived from holding offices in government institutes, this resulted in politically aware but powerless group, an idea that resonates with the outlook of early rebel leaders, Therefore, the causes of 1857 went beyond land disputes and titles; they signified a profound legitimacy crisis, stemming from policies that systematically eroded Indian political traditions and kept Indians out of their governance.

2. Economic Causes

Abusive colonial policies worsened the economic situation in pre-Partition India, fueling widespread dissatisfaction and demands for political reform. One major complaint was repressive taxation, especially land taxes, which heavily impacted peasant farmers and landowners. British institutions like the Permanent Settlement mandated fixed revenue payments in cash, even during bad harvests, pushing many rural families into debt and poverty. These policies were enforced through strict revenue collection systems by colonial authorities, which damaged local trust and decimated confidence in government institutions. The British East India Company's economic exploitation was extensive, transforming India from a hub of textiles and crafts into a supplier of raw materials for British industries. The restructuring of the handicrafts sector and forced integration into the global capitalist system

resulted in millions of workers and artisans losing their jobs.

The British industrial revolution fueled economic change by enabling the export of cheap, machine-produced products to India. This competition undermined the local industry, leading to increased poverty and unemployment in urban and semi-urban areas. The losses were not only monetary but also included dignity, independence, and cultural integrity for many Indians. The rise of nationalist movements was fueled by the view that colonial economic policies favored British interests over Indian needs. This perception directly contributed to the Partition Movement, which opposed the exploitative economic practices of British colonialism in India.

3. Social Causes

The causes of the 1857 Indian War of Independence were deeply rooted in the British colonial administration's interference in India's religious and cultural life. Among these, efforts to abolish Hindu social customs sparked significant resentment, especially in conservative areas. Lord William Bentinck's abolition of Sati in 1829, motivated by humanitarian concerns, was seen by many Hindus as an attack on their religious traditions. Such actions, along with subsequent social reforms, were viewed as blatant colonial interference in religious practices. Additionally, the ban on female infanticide legalized in the early 1800s also went against traditional practices upheld by certain communities for years, fueling further suspicion and distrust of British motives. The Hindu Widows Remarriage Act 1856 decreed the remarriage of widows, and this was perceived by orthodox Hindus as additional pollution of sacrosanct social norms. The Reformers of the day, such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, supported the Act, but its enactment created the feeling that the British were out to destroy the Hindu family system. The Act of 1850, which gave a convert to Christianity the right to inherit ancestral property, aroused a strong alarmism as well. The traditionalists took it to be a legal inducement to conversion as well as the violation of dharma, and it further damaged the belief of British religious neutrality.

Rani Lakshmi Bai, known as the Queen of Jhansi, became a powerful symbol of resistance against British rule during the 1857 rebellion. Her opposition to the Doctrine of Lapse and her bravery in battle exemplified the convergence of political dissent and social unrest, especially in response to colonial threats to sovereignty and traditions. This collective social resistance alienated many segments of Indian society, notably the upper-caste Hindu and conservative elites, many of whom joined the rebellion in 1857. They viewed British policies not only as political domination but also as religious and cultural domination.

4. Religious Causes

The other concerns were related to religion, such as the fear of crossing the sea, known by Indians as *Kalapani* (Black water). In Hindu tradition, crossing the ocean was believed to cause a person to lose their caste and religious purity. Despite this, many Indian soldiers were being sent abroad by the British to fight in countries like Burma and China. They felt that the British were forcing them to act against their faith, viewing these actions as part of a conspiracy to eliminate Indian customs.

5. The Last Straw

These accumulating tensions found their flashpoint in a singular but symbolically loaded event: the issue of greased rifle cartridges. The matter of greased cartridges was one of the greatest sources of controversy that led to the revolt of 1857. Indian sepoys in the British army were forced to bite them open; however, it was thought that they had been greased with cow and pig fat. This was extremely insulting. Hindus are of the view that cows are sacred, and Muslims regard a pig as unclean. Due to this fact, most of the sepoys held the view that the British wished to kill their religion and compel them to join Christianity. This problem led to a lot of anger among the communities, and it functioned as a recurrent point that united them. A tipping point was reached when everything fell apart, starting with young sepoy Mangal Pandey, a Brahmin in the British army. In March 1857, at Meerut, he refused to load the new Enfield rifle cartridges in

Barrackpore (Calcutta). Pandey didn't just protest; he armed himself and attacked a British officer, driven by religious outrage and patriotism. His actions were seen as mutiny by the British. Despite having many sepoys supporting him, Pandey was executed on April 8, 1857. To many Indians, however, Pandey symbolized more than a rebel; he was a hero of resistance. Brave enough to stand against an empire face. Among some religious leaders who used their influence strongly during the revolt was Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah of Faizabad. He referred to the uprising as a jihad, or holy war, against the British. This offered the struggle a religious value, rather than a political to most of the Muslims. He toured extensively, giving speeches that motivated people to view the war against the British as an obligation to their respective religion.

"British observers at the time believed this uprising to be the result of increasing British hegemony and Christian encroachment, exemplified by rifle cartridges greased with pork and beef fat."

This statement made it clear that this issue was more than military equipment; it was a direct attack on religious sentiments, triggering rebel groups and massive fear.

A month later after this incident the tension grew as in the garrison town of Meerut, 85 sepoys refused to load the greased cartridge. In spite of being aware of the consequences of this act, they preferred their religious beliefs; as a result of this act, they were punished by the British by being publicly humiliated and sentenced to 10 years of hard labor. Their fellows, sepoys on May 10, 1857, raided the prison and released all of them. They collectively marched to Delhi and sought the assistance of the old Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar. At this time, the uprising was converted into a full mass insurrection that was systematic and spread widely within the subcontinent.

Meerut and Cawnpore:

With the cartridge issue igniting widespread unrest, two key cities; Meerut and Cawnpore, emerged as pivotal battlegrounds that transformed mutiny into mass rebellion. They are the scenes of

two of the most memorable, as well as crucial in terms of strategy, events of the rebellion. These incidents not only initiate mass action in northern India, but also provided moral as well as emotional intensity to the rebellion, on both sides British as well as Indian.

Strategic Context:

Meerut was the greatest military cantonment of the British East India Company in North India. It hosted over 4,300 soldiers comprising of 2,357 Indian sepoys, 2,038 British troops. Animosity was already brewing under the backdrop of discrimination, interference of religion as well as cultural insensitivities.

“The place of the first revolt was not the only reason of Meerut to be the pressure cooker of colonial arrogance and native resentment”.

Meerut, the Spark which Ignited the Conflagration:

The Meerut rebellion in a large military garrison town represented the watershed where local unrest became full blown rebellion. The direct trigger was the new Enfield rifle-cartridges, anointed, it was believed, in cow and pig fat-which was invidious to both Hindu and Muslim troops. 85 sepoys of the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry, on 24 April 1857, were ordered not to use the cartridges and were condemned to ten years imprisonment with hard labor. This was a humiliation to them in front of their colleagues. The other soldiers revolted at night, 10 May 1857, and liberated the confined sepoys, killed about 50 Europeans, including women and children, and attacked the British officers and civilians before marching to Delhi (60 kilometers away) and declaring the aged Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar sovereign ruler of India. This act of symbolism signaled the shift of the mutiny between the military and the national ruling.

British reprisal at Meerut was barbarous. Still, it is estimated that 200 to 500 Indians were killed as a result of executions, with a particularly gruesome technique of cannon blow used to execute them. This controversy in Meerut is commonly viewed as spontaneous, but tensions were suppressed for many decades. Indian soldiers were subject to

racial discrimination and they were not offered promotions but also were not allowed to follow their religious customs and put any religious symbols on. The incidence at Meerut is an evidence of how religious insult combined with injustice at the military level and political alienation may breed the ideal environment of the rebellion.

Cawnpore: The Memory of Uprising that Shaped Colonial Memory

Meerut was the kindling, but Cawnpore was the conflagration that defined the memory and revenge of the British who were colonizers in India. Nana Sahib, the adopted son of the deposed Peshwa Baji Rao II led the Kanpur uprising, caused by the denial by the East India Company of the pension of his father under the Doctrine of Lapse. This grievance of Nana Sahib could be easily identified with the large number of those who are feeling dispossessed by British policies. His envoy Azimullah Khan had been earlier to England to beg the pension question and had come back disappointed, and was said to have a leading part in organizing the revolt.

At Wheeler Entrenchment, the rebels besieged the British garrison on 5 June 1857, in which about 900 British men, women, and children had sought refuge in deplorable conditions, including lack of food, illness, and intense heat. After almost twenty days, Nana Sahib proposed them safe conduct on 27 June to evacuate their hideout by boats at Satichaura Ghat but as evacuees got into ships, they were fired upon. An estimate holds that 200-300 British people were killed in this massacre. Other 120 women and children were captured and jailed in Bibighar in a small house. On 15 July 1857, they were subsequently murdered in one of the most notorious crimes of the revolt and hacked to death with swords before being dumped in a well.

With appalling savagery, the British struck back. Under the leadership of General Havelock and Neill, thousands of so-called rebels and civilians were executed publicly. Anecdotes of the prisoners being forced to lick the blood of the killed women and some of them were tied to cannons and pounded to pieces are there. The slogan of

‘Remember Cawnpore’ became the rallying point of the British soldiers taking revenge and killing in huge numbers at every corner of the subcontinent.

Strategic significance and symbolic significance:

Both the Meerut and Cawnpore rebellion exhibits the complex depth of 1857. Meerut demonstrated that the disrespect of religion and the injustice of the military could allow the breaking of the army, which the British so desperately needed, whereas Cawnpore showed that the political dispossession and emotional distress could ignite both the rebel and the colonial army into a spiral of excessive carnage. With Bibighar cast as some form of barbaric crime, the British were able to justify their infamous counterinsurgency with violence, and Indian rebels saw executions and racial hierarchy as a source of oppression.

Besides, the symbolic reinstatement of the Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar at Delhi (after Meerut) and the strategic supremacy of Nana Sahib in Kanpur demonstrated that the uprising was not just anarchic violence, but a tongue teemed with coordinated political vision, albeit short-lived or locally fractious as it might have been.

1857 Rebellion: Contributions of Punjab and NWFP

While northern cities bore the brunt of early violence, resistance also simmered in the outer regions of Punjab and the North-West Frontier, where local dynamics created unique responses to colonial rule. Most of the literature on the 1857 War of Independence revolves around the uprising in Delhi, Meerut, Kanpur, and Lucknow, undermining the role Punjab and NWFP played. Punjab’s role is often portrayed as one of helping the British in suppressing the rebellion, but it is not entirely true. Though the elites and Sikhs helped the British Raj in suppressing the mutiny, the local people staged powerful resistance against the British. Similarly, in NWFP, some of the tribes did extend assistance to the British in crushing the rebellion, but the Mujahideen offered strong resistance to the British, which was later praised by the British men.

Punjab’s Dual Role: Recruitment ground and rebel soil

Punjab was annexed by the British in 1849, for less than a decade at the time of the 1857 War of Independence, so it did not suffer a major rebellion as the colonial power administration was still adjusting, and the people of Punjab, especially the tribal leaders and chieftains, had fewer grievances under British administration than the Sikh Empire. Additionally, the elites and influential people were gaining rewards and benefits, which further suppressed the ambitions for rebellion. The local, non-centralized rebellions were mainly the result of the efforts of the local tribes in the rural parts who considered the British as alien figures who invaded and captured their territory. Thus, the patriotic feelings pushed them to oust the foreigners from their lands. Additionally, the land revenue policies of the British forced the rural communities, already under economic stress, to rise against the British. Punjab’s role was dual in nature: on one hand, the urban elites, leaders, and Sikh aristocrats helped the British in suppressing the rebellion by providing possible help and manpower, whereas the rural tribes, peasants, and the tribal leaders in the western Punjab started local armed resistance movements.

At the time of the 1857 War of Independence, Punjab had seven divisions which were: Cis-Sutlej Division, Trans-Sutlej States Division, Lahore Division, Jhelum Division, Multan Division, Leiah Division, and Peshawar Division respectively. These divisions were further divided into twenty-seven districts. Out of these seven divisions and twenty-seven districts, native sepoys arose at the following eleven places.

1. Ferozepur (On 14 May, 1857, a large portion of the 45th and 57th Native Infantry (NI); 10th Light Cavalry (LC) on 19 August, 1857)
2. Hoti Mardan (On 21 May 1857, 55th Native Infantry (NI))
3. Jalandhar (On 7 June 1857, 6th Light Cavalry (LC), 36th and 61st Native Infantry (NI))
4. Phillaur (On 8 June, 3rd Native Infantry (NI))
5. Jhelum (On 7 July 1857, part of the 14th Native Infantry (NI))

6. Sialkot (On 9 July 1857, Wing of 9th Light Cavalry (LC) and 46th Native Infantry (NI))
7. Thanesar (On 14 July 1857, part of the 5th Native Infantry (NI))
8. Lahore (On 30 July 1857, 26th Native Infantry (NI))
9. Peshawar (On 28 August 1857, 51st Native Infantry (NI))
10. Ambala (On 30 September 1857, remnants of the 5th and 60th Native Infantry (NI))
11. Mianwali (in District Leiah, thirty men from the 9th Irregular Cavalry (IC))

During the initial days of the War of Independence, 1857, troops from Punjab were being sent from the garrisons of Punjab to suppress the uprisings in Delhi, Lucknow, and Cawnpur. So, it remained unaffected in the initial days. The first crisis in Punjab occurred at Mian-Mir cantonment, 5 miles from Lahore, when the news of the uprising in Delhi and Lucknow reached Lahore on 12 May 1857. On 13 May 1857, after the decree of disarming the 34th Bengal Regiment was being read in front of the 81st (2nd North Lancashire) Regiment, the Native troops were ordered to submit their weapons, which included 2000 rifles and 600 swords. These sepoys then initiated the resistance in the Punjab region. The resistance then gradually spread to the Gugera, Murree, Jhajjar, and Haryana districts.

The reason for the collaboration of the Maharajas and Jagirdars was the rewards and the benefits they were awarded for their support under the Treaty of Amritsar, 1809. Under the treaty, the Sutlej River was considered the boundary line between the British and the Maharaja Ranjit Singh's kingdom. The territories north of the Sutlej were considered a part of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Kingdom. So, under the banner of this treaty, the influential people and leaders of Punjab found it utmost necessary to assist the British to avoid meeting the same fate as they endured during the Sikh rule. Other reasons included: the opportunity to regain confiscated land lost to the Sikh Empire during the Anglo-Sikh wars, economic opportunities during wartime, the loyalty of Sikhs as an opportunity to take revenge on the Muslims for their atrocities, the prosperity of the agriculturists, and power politics among

clans. Ali Raza Khan Qizilbash, and Baghel Singh Sindhu of Wadala from Lahore division; Mustafa Khan Khakwani, and Dhara Singh Nakai, from Multan division; Deva Singh of Ferozepur district from Cis-Sutlej Division; Hamid-Allah Khan of District Kangra from Trans-Sutlej Division; Jahandad Khan Hindwal of Hazara district from Peshawar Division; Nawab Allah Dad Khan of Khangarh from Leiah Division, and Baba Khem Singh Bedi of Rawalpindi district from Jhelum division were some of the notable personalities who assisted the British before, during, and after the War of Independence, 1857. They raised troops, provided weapons, and some even led the soldiers to Delhi and other areas to re-establish British rule and punish the rebels.

Though the leaders and chiefs of many areas decided to assist the British, the civilian people of Punjab planned and carried out resistance movements along with the cooperation of the elites of Jhajjar, Bahadurgarh, and Farrukhnagar, and the chiefs of clans of Gugera and Murree. Out of all the resistance movements in Punjab, the Gogera movement is considered one of the most widespread and successful uprisings in Punjab, which, at one time, even threatened the British rule in Punjab. The war at Gugera started on 17 September 1857, and eventually overtook important stations like Pindi Sheikh Musa, Saiyyidwala, Harappa, Chichawatni, Tulumba, Shorkot, Sahuka, Kabula, and Pakpattan. Gogera district served as a base for Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral and other tribal leaders for the planning and execution of the operations. Additionally, it was located near Britain's key administrative points and strong tribal networks, making it a hotspot of strategic significance. The news of the planning and initiation of the war was being transmitted to the British by the 'loyalists', including Sarfaraz Khan Kharral, a rival of Ahmed Khan Kharral. Immediately, the forces were being dispatched to suppress the uprising, but the delay in transmission of the messages and the opposition being faced by the messengers from the freedom fighters' friendly tribes paved the way for the spread of rebellion. At Murree, in July 1857, protests had been initiated against the preaching of Christianity at the marketplace. The news of the

eruption of war added fuel to the fire, and then ultimately, during August 1857, people from the villages of Mussiari, Rewat, Khaya, Sa'in, Guhra, Hukra Kher, and Samli Byromal took up the ground against the British along with the leaders of Dhoond and Sati clans. The leakage of the plan of the freedom fighters by the Hakim Khan provided the British enough time to prepare for the attack, and thus, when 300 freedom fighters attacked the station of Murree station under the leadership of Ahmed Khan, they did not succeed in taking hold of the Murree station. At the front of Jhajjar, Abd al-Rehman Khan, along with the Nawabs of Farrukhnagar and Bahadurgarh and Bhatti chiefs of Hisar and Sirsa, resisted against the British and succeeded in capturing Rohtak. But, on 17 October 1857, the British were able to recapture Rohtak and defeat the freedom fighters. Similarly, people of Ludhiana and other areas of Punjab revolted but were put down by the British owing to several reasons. The War of Independence of 1857 in Punjab failed due to several reasons. Firstly, there were rivalries between the tribes as either tribe had killed a member of the ruling class of the other tribe, stretching the rivalry over the decades. The most famous of these rivalries were: Wutto-Bharwana conflict, Wutto-Fatiana conflict, Kharal-Kathia conflict, Gurchani-Buzdar conflict, and many others. Secondly, there were also clashes within the clans and tribes, straining the level of trust and cooperation among the freedom fighters' groups. Thirdly, no central authority was present to instruct and guide the groups. The indigenous population of every area arose with its respective commanders, and the situation deteriorated further after the martyrdom of Ahmed Khan Kharral, as it created a leadership vacuum in the Punjab region. Fourthly and most importantly, the collaborators and spies played a significant role in suppressing the uprising. Their timely messaging and relaying of plans to the British administration helped the British nip the evil in the bud. Lastly, the defeat of freedom fighters at Delhi proved to be the last nail in the coffin. It is generally quoted that "if with the last aid, Delhi was not taken, and that speedily, there would then be a struggle not

only for European domination, but even for European existence within the Punjab itself."

In a nutshell, the British used the 'carrot-and-stick policy' for the Punjab region. They used grants and benefits to lure the elite, Maharajas, and jagirdars. This ensured that in the event of any unfortunate incident, they would extend help to the British for additional benefits. Whereas, they enforced strict laws and enforcement mechanisms to keep the general masses in their subservience, and when they revolted, they used massive force to crush their ambitions and imposed heavy punishments on them. Thus, their policies effectively bore fruit and ensured the region remained under the British administration.

NWFP: frontier silence, tribal defiance

Before diving into the role of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) during the 1857 War of Independence, it is important to understand the geographical and administrative composition of NWFP at that time. Although NWFP, now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), was officially established as a province by the British in 1901 for administrative and strategic reasons, it was not a separately established administrative unit at the time of the 1857 War of Independence. Instead, the regions that later became part of NWFP included north-western districts of 'Punjab Proper' and the frontier tribal regions along the Indo-Afghan border. These comprised settled districts that were under the British administration, including Peshawar Valley, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Hazara, as well as tribal areas under indirect British administration, controlled through political agents and local tribal structures. The role of the north-western districts has been discussed under the Punjab section in detail, so this section aims to highlight the role of the tribal areas and the British response in the context of the 1857 War of Independence. The areas under the tribal belt include Malakand, Khyber, Kurram, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan. In these tribal areas, the Mujahideen were the ones who stood up against the British, while getting extended help from some tribes. These Mujahideen escaped the Balakot massacre, in which their leader, Syed Ahmed of Ra'i Bareilly,

was killed, in 1831, and established their colony at Sithana. It is important to note that the Mujahideen were already in a scuffle with the British, got defeated several times, and re-emerged time and again to defeat the British. The ruler of Swat, Syed Akbar Shah, passed away, the same day when the news of mutiny reached Peshawar on 11 May 1857. This gave a setback to the Mujahideen as the leadership vacuum preoccupied Swat with its affairs. Since Mujahideen were already in contact with the Muslims in the British Army and were persuading them to join hands with them to push the British foreigners out of their native lands, the soldiers of the 55th Infantry, who ran away before they could be disarmed, reached Swat and took refuge with Sayed Mubarak Shah, the elder son of Syed Akbar Shah. After being expelled by Swatis, he then allied with Maulvi Inayat Ali, whose writings inspired the soldiers who rebelled during the 1857 War of Independence. Mujahideen launched an attack on English camps at Sheikh Jana and Naway Kalay, in collaboration with Mubariz Khan of Chinglay. They moved towards Shawa afterwards. Having witnessed the destruction caused by the Mujahideen and to put an end to the further disturbances, Major Vaughan arrived, defeated the Mujahideen, and recaptured the villages of Sheikh Jana and Shawa. Mujahideen, along with Syed Mubarak Shah and his followers, Maulvi Inayat Ali, sepoys of the 55th Native Infantry, and the tribesmen sent by the Khan of Panjtar, launched an attack on Naranji village. The British launched a counter-offensive, but had to retreat owing to their lower position. However, they relaunched an attack from three sides, and the Mujahideen were unable to fight the well-equipped and well-trained British army. The Mujahideen initially emerged victorious, but they could no longer hold ground because of a lack of proper training, advanced equipment, and manpower. The attitude of some tribal leaders had changed towards the Mujahideen after the Naranji village defeat. Moreover, the communication systems of the Mujahideen with the forces in Delhi and other areas had been severely affected. Maulvi Inayat Ali did not remain idle and secretly assembled forces. Under the leadership of Maulvi Inayat Ali and with the assistance of people of

Khudukhel, Sheik Jana and Naranji, they invaded the English camp near Shekh Jana.

The British were now fed up with the repeated uprisings of the Mujahideen and chose to launch a decisive strike against the Mujahideen. Under the command of Sir Sydney Cotton, the British forces defeated the Mujahideen and occupied Chinglay, followed by Panjtar, Salim Khan, and Mangal Thana. Next, they planned to wipe out the Mujahideen from Kaya and Kabul, before attacking the strongest hideout of the Mujahideen, Sithana. Mujahideen fought bravely till the last bullet and the last man at Sithana. With only 40 men, the Mujahideen offered sound resistance to the British soldiers. Some notable personalities, including the leader Ikram Allah, Jamadar Allah Bakhsh, and Niamat Ali, died while fighting. Sithana was destroyed and demolished to such an extent that even the trees were cut down. The fighting spirit, zeal, and zest of the Mujahideen were often praised by the British as they fought valiantly and gallantly. But the Mujahideen's resistance movement did not end here, as they proved to be a thorn in the side of British colonial authorities. They re-emerged and launched offensive campaigns, building up potential threats to the British administration.

The reasons for the failure of the Mujahideen-led resistance movement were: lack of proper training, less manpower, failure to gain support from all tribes, and the pleasing attitude of some tribes to gain monetary benefits from the British. Additionally, a lack of proper leadership and a halt in the supplies of funds to gain necessary equipment further worsened the situation. The 1857 War of Independence led to a drastic change in British policies. It created a sense of fear among the British, as it only cared for the NWFP, owing to geo-political reasons. It served as a buffer zone against Afghanistan and the Russian Empire's expansionism. The British adopted the 'Forward Policy', which gave them more authority to intervene in the internal affairs of the British, giving them the space to punish the tribes for misconduct. Moreover, they carved out some districts from the Punjab region, assembled them with the tribal areas, and named them the North-West Frontier Province in 1901. To maintain

effective control over the rebellious Pashtuns, they guaranteed internal autonomy, but bound them to keep passes, including Khyber Pass and Chitral Pass, open to access for them at all times. This also provided them enough space to form military posts and stations to maintain effective control over the region.

Two Sides of the Same Coin: Analyzing the Key Figures of 1857:

Amid these diverse regional uprisings, individual leaders emerged as powerful symbols of rebellion, some celebrated, others vilified; each shaping the legacy of 1857 in their own way. The stories of monumental figures have been narrated over and over, reminding us of the history that has shaped present-day South Asia. Taking the liberty that has been bestowed, narrating the accounts of Nana Sahib and Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral opens horizons to the different perspectives of the 1857 Rebellion.

The Disputed Legacy of Nana Sahib: Treason or Triumph?

The Rebellion of 1857 changed the entire trajectory of South Asian colonial politics. Every actor played its part in this master plan. Nana Sahib was the adopted son of Baji Rao II, Peshwa of the Maratha Empire. His status as an adoptee became a point of major strife between him and his colonizers. The British colonizers, however, disagreed with this tradition and institutionalized this disagreement through the “Doctrine of Lapse” as discussed above in the paper. The doctrine became a bone of contention between Nana Sahib and the colonizer's administration. Eventually, this contention exacerbated into revenge and led to the Bibigarh massacre in Cawnpore during the 1857 Rebellion.

The Maratha Empire had dissolved under the prevailing British dominion and the increasing internal strife. Baji Rao II gave up his power for a generous compensation in the form of a pension. After Baji Rao II's death, Nana Sahib demanded that the pension be ultimately granted to him as he is the sole heir to his father's legacy. The British administration refused to comply.

However, Nana Sahib enjoyed a privileged and comfortable life in Bithur, a small village in the outskirts of Cawnpore, where his father had been initially exiled.

When the rebellion was instigated throughout the Subcontinent, Nana Sahib remained steadfast and loyal to the British. Now, some historians or record-keepers assume that an increasing pressure from his native counterparts was building, especially during the siege of Cawnpore by the rebels, when the British were dependent on Nana Sahib's loyal dispositions for protection.

A substantial amount of the British populous had been residing in Cawnpore. Not just the administration, but a sizeable number of vulnerable British women and children were seeking refuge in the garrisoned fortress of the British forces.

Subsequently, the siege of the British garrison in Cawnpore lasted for almost three weeks, spanning over the months of June and July 1857. The rebels had become more and more armed, their advances seemingly never-ending.

It is widely believed that Nana Sahib, under the influence of his most trusted advisors Azimullah and Taty Tope, collaborated with the rebels, aligning himself as an ally to the native cause. This alliance encapsulated the beginning of a demise that was to follow the British soldiers and civilians trapped in the siege.

The garrisoned British administration had become aware of Nana Sahib's alliances but were still hopeful for his mercy. However, much is contested in this regard. Some believed that Nana Sahib wasn't directly involved in the massacre of Cawnpore and had left all the dealings to his advisors. A grave decision on his part for the events that followed were nothing short of atrocities.

Three weeks into the siege, the command of the garrison had realized that their fortress won't hold for much longer and requested Nana Sahib's mercy and assistance in letting the women and children go by sending him a letter discreetly. Apparently, Nana Sahib had then made arrangements along the river banks of the Ganges, a plethora of boats docked along the river delta

providing an escape route to the innocent civilians.

As the boats were being boarded and sailed away, Nana Sahib seized this opportunity and attacked the British soldiers. Outnumbered and overpowered, the British soldiers perished in the waters of the Ganges. The event became known as *“the massacre of Satichaura Ghat”*. The women and children were taken as hostages and relocated to Bibigarh, a small settlement overlooked by Begum Hussaini Khanum (her role in the massacre is often considered negligible due to lack of much evidence).

According to some sources, the surviving captives remained in Bibigarh for two to three weeks. Nana Sahib was nowhere to be seen. He disposed of the lives of the British women and children in the hands of Azimullah Khan, Begum Hussaini Khanum, and Taty Tope. All three had planned a merciless demise for the captives.

The execution of approximately 120-200 women and children was orchestrated by the three individuals. Apparently, Nana Sahib himself had never visited Bibigarh and wasn't much involved in the massacre. Being uninformed regarding the plans of execution, does not justify the violence and brutality that were committed on Nana Sahib's behalf. He was just as complicit as his advisors.

The British defensive forces, clearing out their paths while fighting against the rebels, eventually reached Bibigarh and the sight before their eyes was nothing short of sheer atrocity, cruelty, barbarism, and brutality. The large well near the Bibigarh was filled to the brim, comprising of decomposing bodies of innocent women and children. An attempt by the perpetrators to hide their actions.

Ultimately, the Cawnpore massacre of July 1857 became the sole legacy of Nana Sahib. The Indian natives hail him as a hero but the British colonizers identified him as a deranged heretic who had no regard for the lives of innocent civilians. Triumph or treason? Nana Sahib's legacy still remains contested.

Unsung Warrior: Rai Ahmed Khan Karral and the Spirit of Resistance

Most of Rai Ahmed Khan Karral's unprecedented legacy has been preserved and eulogized through folk songs, folk stories, and the scarce British records of the Punjab buffer area. Consequently, the role of Rai Ahmed Khan Karral is almost perceived as negligible in South Asian Colonial studies.

Born in 1786, Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral was a man of exemplary valor and enthusiasm. Despite not being born into the role, he was offered the chieftainship of the Gogaira District (now known as Bangla Gogera under the union council of Okara) by his renowned uncle Rai Saleh Mohammad. All in all, he was a well-known Punjabi Muslim landlord bestowed with the leadership of the Kharral tribe.

With great titles, comes great responsibilities and connections. Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral was a man of honesty and determination, who had cordial affiliations with his Sikh counterparts. Unfortunately, it is exactly these very cordial relations that lead to his untimely demise.

The Cawnpore massacre and the Meerut uprisings had permanently changed the navigational strategies of British authorities and policy-makers. They opted for hardliner approaches and were seldom merciful in their dispositions. The 1857 Rebellion had engulfed almost the entirety of the Sub-continent as revolts and rebellions paraded throughout the landscape. The horrors were endless.

The mutinies in Punjab, though smaller in extent, were easily contained in the buffer zone. Subsequently, the figures and statistics involved in Punjab mutinies were barely kept in records. Even to this day, extracting information regarding the Punjab mutinies remains a complex task.

When it comes to assessing the role of Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral in Punjab mutinies of 1857, it is important to understand that despite the conflict not really escalating to massive violence, tensions were rising rapidly. Eventually, these tensions would manifest into a full-scale catastrophe for both the natives and the colonizers.

The natives in the buffer Punjab had been disarmed as a result of the Meerut uprisings. The

British feared an armed rebellion might break out if the natives were allowed to keep arms. The underlying objective of the British administration was to neutralize the threat while maintaining the regular state of affairs. This, however, became impossible when the British authorities reached the Tehsil of Pakpattan and demanded taxes from the Joiya tribe on 8th July 1857.

The refusal of the Joiya's to pay the taxes became the point of discontent for the authorities, ultimately leading to the arrest of numerous tribe members.

Upon hearing this news, Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral went to the Gogaira jail and tried negotiating with the British officers for the release of the tribe members. The negotiations failed as the British authorities refused to comply. Opting for the way of patience, Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral sought a permit to visit the prisoners whenever he'd liked. Granted permission, the Khan decided to leverage this leniency as a way to scheme a jail break with the prisoners.

Eventually, on the day of 26th July 1857, Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral, along with the Joiya prisoners, orchestrated a jail break resulting in a violent conflict between the prisoners and the British soldiers stationed there. The total number of casualties is still contested but many sources speculate that deaths on the British end outnumbered the natives. Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral had prevailed in his cause.

During the rebellions of 1857, the phenomenon of informers was a common occurrence. Family ties were shattered through betrayal. All for a few pennies, a status, and a badge of loyalty to the British. One such informer turned out to be Sarfaraz Khan Kharral, a distant relative of Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral and the tribal chief of Kamalia. Their relations were familial due to their mutual kinship; however, that wasn't enough to ensure Sarfaraz's loyalty to the Kharral of Gogera. Sarfaraz shifted his alliance from the rebellious charters of Ahmed Khan Kharral to the oppressive dispositions of British authorities. Eventually, this shift in alliance would lead to Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral's tragic end.

On the eve of 16th September, 1857, Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral had organized a closed gathering

with his fellow chieftainships in Kamalia. The matters discussed revolved around the acquisition of arms and ammunition from the Multan depot and scheming the strategy for attacking the British. Sarfaraz, the notorious informer for the British, was also a part of this gathering. Unfortunately, Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral failed to see past his familial affiliations.

Sarfaraz Khan was complicit in leaking the schemes of Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral to the British authorities. Consequently, on 17th September 1857, the British governor-general of Punjab had convened a meeting of the entire chieftainship in the area of Montgomery (now known as Sahiwal). Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral refused to participate and ordered his accomplices to do the same. An aggressive refusal to the British demands. An open rebellion had now been instigated much to the British dismay.

This refusal led to the British Deputy Commissioner of Futtipoor Gogera, Lt. Elphinstone to raise an army of 150 British soldiers to fight against Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral and his accomplices. The escalations resulted in bloodshed, violence, and the burning of settlements in Jhamra.

The battle lasted for a short period and on 21st September, 1857, outnumbered, compromised, and surrounded by the British armed onslaught, the tribal natives fought gallantly till they no longer could. Sarfaraz knew of Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral's whereabouts and led the British soldiers to his compound, where he had taken a break from the fighting to offer his prayers. Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral was struck two times with a sword in the state of prayer.

Some folklores draw parallels between the events of Karabala and Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral's death of being similar in nature. Both Imam Hussain and Kharral were struck with tyrannical prospects, meeting their tragic end. A painful correspondence that many local storytellers emphasize on. Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral's head was severed from the rest of his body and put on display by the British authorities, symbolizing the implications of revolting against the colonial masters. He was later given a proper burial alongside the rest of his body.

His most loyal companion, Fatiana, avenged his demise and killed Lord Berkeley who had ordered Rai's head to be severed. A painful tale of blood and vengeance, Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral's story is one part of the millions of similar stories that occurred during the revolt.

The informers and collaborators of the British were awarded with incentives, compensation, and titles. All built on betrayal to their nativity.

Lastly, the contributions of freedom fighters are recorded in the hearts of people, which remain transferred from generation to generation in the shape of folklore and folk songs. Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral's legacy of perseverance and loyalty to his people is one of honor and diligence.

Linkage to Present Day Pakistan:

The renaissance of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, which culminated in their political awakening and the creation of Pakistan, was sparked by the failure of their national struggle for independence in 1857. This uprising redefined the core principles of Muslims by reshaping their identity. It ignited Muslim nationalism among the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent for a separate homeland. A wave of freedom and a sense of liberty emerged. Multiple separatist and independence movements eventually led to the creation of Pakistan. The modernization of educational policies among Muslims in the Indian subcontinent aimed to align Western education with Islamic principles. Setting up a high-quality institution that ensures modern education. An organized political party for representing solely the Muslims of India, which had directed various political freedom movements for the liberation of Pakistan from the dominancy of Hindus and British rulers. Economic reforms for the prosperity and maximum profit for the Indian subcontinent, as the Western world had industrialized itself to achieve a sound economy for gaining stability. Muslims of India struggled hard and sacrificed a lot to achieve the present-day Pakistan.

Nationalism and the Rebirth of Muslim Identity:

Nationalism is a concept that denotes the common interests of people who reside in a specific geographical area of the planet.

"Nationalism comes into existence when the people of a geographical area consolidate themselves emotionally as well as socially and politically for a single cause, especially to gain and maintain the nation's sovereignty over the place where they live. Nationalism is an idea that prevents human beings from living a life of slavery under foreign authority. It teaches a nation to refrain from accepting any foreign superiority over its people and promotes the full power and right to govern the people of a nation without having any interference from the people or authorities who came from outside". Though the concept of modern nationalism emerged in India in the early nineteenth century, it never denotes that the people of early Indian were lack of national feelings. From the day the British entered India, the Muslim intellectuals always saw themselves playing a role against British authority, which was based on the ideology of Shah Wali Ullah Dehlovi, who, for the first time, opposed the governing system of British authority and tried to establish a nation that was full of the principles of modern nationalism. Shah Waliullah Dehlovi, a profound literary giant and a torchbearer of nationalism, socialism, and federalism, who speaks on behalf of equality, justice, freedom, and prosperity of Indian natives irrespective of cast, color, and religion long before the event of 1857. After the war of independence in 1857, the roots of nationalism deepened to regain their lost identity. Muslims of the Indian subcontinent awaken religiously, socially, economically, and politically to gain former objectives. Ultimately, to achieve their rights for being nationals of the Indian subcontinent. Unity between the Hindu and Muslim communities against British rule was one of the greatest examples of Indian nationalism. The freedom movement fought by them was nothing but the result of unity and brotherhood. They together, irrespective of cast, color, creed, and religion, fought against the British. And that unity was the main headache and unturned hindrance for the British.

Paradigm Shift in Education:

After the war of independence, the Muslims of India realized that they were lagging in education,

science, and technology. Muslims feel reluctant to Western language and their education with the perspective of propaganda and corrupting them from their values and religious principles. Muslim leaders such as Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, and Ulemas. We will never defeat the colonial powers of Muslims until and unless we achieve a balance of power. Muslims established the Anglo-oriental college, which later became Aligarh Muslim University, to modernize Muslim education and bridge the gap between traditional and Western learning. Aligarh Muslim University was not simply an educational institution but also served as a training ground for the Muslim youth of British India, preparing them to play a leading role in all walks of life, from politics to sports. The students from Aligarh University also went on to play a vital role in the Pakistan Movement. *"I was at Aligarh University from 1940 to 1948, a time when the Pakistan movement was at its peak,"* says Mr. Khan. When the Pakistan movement gained momentum after the Pakistan Resolution of 1940, Aligarh University encouraged its students to participate in the struggle for independence. Quaid-i-Azam first came to the University in 1940 and would then visit almost every year. Numerous leaders and influential figures have been educated at this prestigious institution, playing a critical role in steering the direction of Pakistan, including Liaquat Ali Khan, Ayub Khan, Khwaja Sarwar Hasan, Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Usmani, Syed Ross Masood, and Mohammad Ali Jauhar, who tirelessly work for the stability of the newly unstable developing country.

Transforming the Society into an Industrial Society

The Indian society is an agrarian and trading society, not an industrial society, likewise to the Western world. The Muslims of India realized the significance, productivity, profit, and efficiency of the industrial system. Economically awakened after independence that economic stability leads to freedom from suppression of colonial powers. For transforming society, we need to educate and innovate ourselves, so that our resources shouldn't be taken to another continent but rather be

manufactured and produced here in our land. The Muslims of India realized the importance of the laboratory, manufacturing, and technology after the war of independence of 1857, and keeping in view the model of the British government, established universities, technical institutions, research institutes, academic institutes, laboratories, and industries for the development of the newly established dominion of Pakistan.

Political Representation through a Political Party

The Muslims of India, after the war of independence of 1857, realized that they lacked a political platform. An organized political party that can represent the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent is now the time to address their needs, demands, and grievances systematically. Their voices would be heard, and their voices matter for the freedom of the Indian subcontinent from the brutality of foreign rulers. Muslims of the Indian subcontinent united on one platform to frame a political party that they could call their party. A delegation to take the voices of Muslims to the tables of British rulers who direct the future of India. A manifesto to inculcate the values, norms, and ideas of Islamic laws for the jurisdiction of Muslims. Later, after significant turmoil and difficulties, Muslims parted ways from the Hindu-dominated party. The All-India Muslim League represents India in name but is fundamentally Hindu representative party.

Conclusion:

The revolt of 1857 was not the result of any sudden event; it had been brewing for years.

It was not a singular eruption of discontent but the culmination of prolonged political subjugation, economic exploitation, cultural humiliation, and religious interference. From the plains of Cawnpore to the valleys of NWFP, the revolt illustrated a multifaceted resistance that defied the colonial narrative of a disorganized mutiny. Figures like Rai Ahmed Khan Kharral and Nana Sahib embodied the localized yet deeply interconnected nature of this rebellion. While the uprising was brutally suppressed, its ideological aftermath sowed the seeds for Muslim political

consciousness and the long journey toward a distinct national identity. The emergence of educational reformers like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the foundation of institutions like Aligarh Muslim University, and the formation of political platforms such as the All-India Muslim League were not isolated phenomena but direct consequences of the collective awakening sparked in 1857. Despite getting defeated at various fronts, they did not back down; instead, they arose time and again and put a brave face on against the British.

In essence, the rebellion marked the death of illusionary coexistence under colonial rule and the birth of a defiant, sovereign aspiration that would shape the geopolitical destiny of South Asia.

The tales of the 1857 Rebellion, infested with power, politics, bloodshed, deceit, and betrayal, still haunt the kaleidoscopic landscapes of South Asia, gone but never forgotten.

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