

## The Power Structure of the Delhi Government in the 1857 Rebellion (2)

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The present report is an attempt to examine relations between villages and Delhi Rebel Government at the time of 1857 Rebellion.

In most of studies in this field done so far, revolts in villages and Delhi Rebel Government are taken up separately, without consideration on relation between the two levels.

The Rebellion of 1857 is the process in which Delhi Rebel Government came to regard the peasants in revolts as their allies.

At the outset of the Rebellion, Sepoys who rose at Meerut marched into Delhi, leaving behind peasants in the area who rose almost at the same time with them. Peasants, however, submitted petition to Delhi Rebel Government, received audience of the Emperor to present Nazr, asking for the Royal Order giving legitimacy to their action.

In revolts at village level, the unit of revolts was villages, beyond which caste ties united revolts in a wider framework. There were even cases of different castes fought a revolt jointly. Though incidents of revolts were more in the areas where village communities remained solid, the self-contained nature of the village communities was undermined in the process of the revolts.

Peasants joined hands beyond the boundaries of village communities which had been self-contained, to fight against the authorities, soon come to identify their authority with that of Delhi Rebel Government, involving themselves positively with the Rebel Government.

Some scholars maintain that the Rebellion, being led by traditional

leaders, is of feudalistic nature. Categorical argument on the character of the Rebellion using the definition of feudalistic rebellion may not be so meaningful. More significant is to see how the seed of anti-tradition wa was germinated during the process of the Rebellion, though led it might have been by traditional leaders.

At the outset, the Delhi Rebel Government was not apparently ready to be involved in the revolts of the peasants. In due course of time, however, they came to regard them as their allies, Delhi Rebel Government which in the beginning approached big zamindars mainly later widened its scope down the hierarchy to include medium and smaller zaminders in the villages who were the core of revolts.

The point of notice in the text of petition is frequent request for dispatch of army. 'Army and Royal Order with the Emperor's Seal' were requested out of necessity of the social groups in their efforts to liberate themselves of communal character. 'Ksyatriyas castes of several tens of villages', when combined with army, gained univarsalistic nature to some extent, transcended themselves from communal existence.

There is another factor which should not be left unnoticed. In asking for dispatch of army, what peasants complained was 'unlawful villagers' who started 'to shed eyes to all radical matters'. One of the role of dispatched army was to suppress forces which were breaking up village order from grassroots. In the process of the Rebellion, villages which were trying to get rid of self-contained nature of traditional community, joined with Delhi Rebel Government, at the expense of growing forces suppressed by the army dispatched.

Villages which almost amputated limbs for fighting, lost the opportunity which might have developed the Rebellion further.