

Freedom Struggle in Mewat

Dr. Aijaz Ahmad¹, Sunil Kumar²

¹Associate Professor in History, YMD College Nuh

²Research Scholar, History and Archaeology, MDU Rohtak

ABSTRACT

The freedom movement of India, right from the rebellion of 1857 to the Independence of India is, although, considered to be the most written event of the world history, but still many of its events and personalities at the local level needs to be mentioned in history. More particularly the Mewat region of Haryana state played most important role during the entire period of Indian freedom struggle, including the first war of independence, but unfortunately the important events and role of the freedom fighters of this region are still unsung or not exactly highlighted.

Keywords: Meo, Mewat, Rebellion of 1857, Freedom Movement, Nuh, Jhirka.

INTRODUCTION (HISTORICAL BACKGROUND)

Mewat is a geographical and cultural region rather than an administrative unit, located within the triangle formed by Delhi, Agra and Jaipur, loosely touching the districts of Nuh, Palwal, Gurguram, Faridabad, Mathura, Aligarh, Alwar and Bharatpur of the states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. As the Mewat region is a mountainous area with jungles large enough, the rulers of Delhi in medieval period used to go there for tiger hunting. Mewat was firstly heard in the historical narrations around 1194, when Hemraj, the brother of Prithviraj Chauhan, took refuge in the hills of Mewat while attack of Mamluk ruler of Delhi.¹ After that event, the region gets its fame during Balban's attack on Mewat. During the Delhi Sultanate, Mewat was a small kingdom with its capital at Kotila. At the time, when Babur attacked on Hindustan in 1526, the Mewati ruler Hasan Khan sent his son in favour of Ibrahim Lodi in the first battle of Panipat. In 1526, during the battle of Khanwa, Hasan Khan Mewati fully supported Rana Sanga against Babur. Hasan Khan Mewati was martyred in the battlefield in Khanwa.

During the British period, the Mewat region was divided into many parts; Gurgaon district under British, Bharatpur under Jats and Alwar under Narukas. The other parts of Mewat was also divided under several local principalities, such as Tijara and Tapukara under George Thomas; Firozpur Jhirka under Nawab Ahmad Baksh Khan; Ghasera under Badgajar Hathi Singh and Bahadur Singh; Rewari under the Rao Tej Singh; Bahora under Rao Ram Baksh; Shahjahanpur under Harnarain Haldia; Jharsa under Begam Samru, Hodal under Mohammad Khan Afridi; Palwal under Nawab Murtaza Khan; Hathin under Faizullah Beg; Gurgaon under Hakim Abdul Haq; Pataudi under Faiz Talab Khan; Jhajjar, Dadri, Kanaud, Narnaul and Bawal were under Nawab Nizabat Ali Khan; Rewari and Sohna were under Rao Tej Singh as Istamrari land, etc.² However, before the rebellion of 1857 most of the Jagirs were confiscated and annexed in the British Empire.

During the rebellion of 1857, the Mewatis very actively participated in the popular uprising. After getting the opportunity of the Sepoys revolt, all the Mewatis jumped into the rebellion irrespective of their caste and religion. The common people and peasants of Mewat region were the leader as well as the fighter in the absence of the ruling family. It happened for the first time in Indian history when almost all the rural as well as urban population of Mewat raised their banner of revolt against the British tyranny and tried their level best to uproot the foreign yoke from their homeland. The Mewati enthusiasm regarding the rebellion could be gazed that even after the re-conquest of Delhi by the British, the rebellion continued in Mewat for two months more.

During the freedom movement the Mewat region was also not untouched. Most of the rural population participated in the movement against the tyranny of their rulers of Bharatpur and Alwar. The people of Nuh region of the British territory also participated in the national movement waged by the national leadership of the Indian National Congress.

However, as a martial community the people of the Mewat region actively fought as a fighter of the Indian National Army of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Hundreds of Mewati people fought shoulder to shoulder with Shubhash Chandra Bose and his commanders and jailed after the suppression of that army.

HISTORY WRITING IN MEWAT

In the field of history writing, unfortunately, no trained historian has touched the most sensitive area of Mewat in the suburb of Delhi. The Mewati history writings, generally indigenous, are based on the stories told by the Mirasis or bards or Jagga of Mewat. These Mirasis inherit the history of the region from last many hundred years. The Mewati scholars are continuously writing their texts based on these indigenous sources such as Mirasis or bards or Jagga, which are the best oral history ever maintained by any group of the people. In their documentation there is abundance of local hyperbolic narrations, which generally deviate from documenting the chronological events and other true stories.

The history writings of the Mewati scholars are in Urdu and Hindi script and deploy an impassioned language with slight exaggeration. Their work depicts the viewpoint of the person deeply loyal to their community. They are writing history with a mission by claiming a past and using it for the furtherance of their future. Some of the scholars such as Hakeem Abdus Shakoor, Ajmal Khan, Mohammad Swaleh Khan, Dr. Aijaz Ahmad, Siddiq Ahmad, Shamsuddin Shamsh, etc. have given their contributions in writing the history of Mewat region.

Freedom Fighters:

There is a long list of the Mewati heroes, both amongst the military as well as civilians, whose patriotism and involvements in the first war of independence and the later national movements until the independence of India needs to be highlighted. The remarkable role of the Mewatis beyond the Mewat region, who also fought against the British until their last breath, also needs to be mentioned prominently and enlisted in the martyrs of the freedom movement of India. Their actions were as noble, and their endurance was as great, though their valorous deeds have not been so obviously recorded and needs further research in this regard.

Nawab Shamsuddin Khan and Karim Khan: Nawab Shamsuddin Khan (1827-1835) was the ruler of Ferozpur Jhirka Jagir which was granted by the British Government to his father Ahmad Baksh Khan in 1803. After his father's death Shamsuddin Khan became nawab of the Ferozpur Jhirka principality. Nawab Shamsuddin Khan had enmity with the Commissioner of Delhi William Fraser over his illegal and undue intervention in political affairs of Ferozpur Jhirka. As the animosity arose, Nawab Shamsuddin Khan employed his sharp shooter servant Karim Khan Meo of Rangala village to kill William Fraser. Karim Khan as popularly known as "*Bhar Maru*" (sharp-shooter) due to his sharp shooting was of the courageous and murderous characteristics. Karim Khan easily agreed to end the game of William Fraser, and accordingly went Delhi along with his servant Annia Meo, a famous runner. Karim Khan Meo, after a long wait of many months, finally got the opportunity on 22nd March 1835, and at 11.00 pm of the same night, he shot dead Mr. Fraser near his residence.³

After a detailed enquiry, the British Officers reached on the conclusion that Nawab Shamsuddin Khan was behind the murder of Mr. Fraser. They arrested Annia, the servant of Karim Khan Meo, made him the government witness on the condition of sparing his life. On the witness of Annia, both the Nawab and Karim Khan arrested and executed on Thursday morning, 3rd October, 1835, close outside the north of Kashmiri Gate, leading to the cantonments.⁴

By the execution of both the Mewatis, and confiscation of the Ferozpur Jhirka State, there spread the resentment and non-cooperation to the government in Mewat. Many leaders even revolted against the British Government. Maulana Abdullah Khan Mewati of Ferozpur rose in an open revolt in which hundreds of Mewatis arrested and killed, including Maulana Abdullah Khan Mewati.⁵ Although, the British Government brutally crushed the Mewatis before their rising, but they could not be controlled at the time of the Rebellion of 1857. Many scholars believe that the execution of Nawab Shamsuddin Khan was one of the reasons of Mewati Rebellion of 1857.

Sharfuddin Mewati: Sharfuddin Khan Mewati of village Mahun ka Chaupra was a leading Meo revolutionary during the rebellion of 1857. Sharfuddin Mewati, the most experienced revolutionary, was considered the commonly accepted leader of the rebellion in Mewat region. He began targeting the towns of Mewat region where some police personnel and loyalist Rajputs and Khanzadas were the main obstacle. Sharfuddin Mewati did the wonderful job against the British, fought with them on several fronts, but his main area of activity was Pinangwan and nearby villages. When Mewat was re-occupied by the British Sharfuddin Mewati was caught and hanged in January 1858.⁶

Saadat Khan Mewati: Saadat Khan (not Saadat Khan of Indore) was much active in and around the town Firozpur Jhirka, Doha, Rauli, etc. and headed the revolutionaries in those areas. Saadat Khan also gave tough resistance to Major W. F. Eden, Political Agent of Jaipur, in Sohna and Tauru at the beginning of June 1857. Hundreds of the hard nut Meos under Saadat Khan, fully equipped with arms, fought valiantly at every step and suffered heavy losses. Saadat Khan and other revolutionaries killed many army men of Major Eden. When the British advanced towards Firozpur Jhirka, Saadat Khan was leading the revolutionaries. Saadat Khan was finally killed in a battle at Doha along with a lot of Mewati revolutionaries.⁷

Majlis Khan: A revolutionary named Majlis Khan was very active in Firozpur Jhirka. Following the other revolutionaries of Mewat, Majlis Khan too fought against the British along with the Mewati band of revolutionaries. It was reported that Majlis Khan had also waged war against the loyalists of Mewat and killed and imprisoned many of them. He was also having the close connection with the famous revolutionary leader Rao Tula Ram of Rewari.⁸

Chaudhary Firoz Shah Mewati: Firoz Shah Mewati was also a leading revolutionary of Mewat during rebellion of 1857. He organized the revolutionaries of Sohna, Tauru and Raiseena areas. When Brigadier General Showers, in assistance of Wigram Clifford, attacked the rebellious village Raiseena, Firoz Shah Mewati immediately called the people to fight against the British. A fierce battle took place on 31st October 1857, and lasted for four hours. The infamous Wigram Clifford was killed by a shot from a revolutionary Sepoy; he died almost immediately on being wounded. Firoz Shah Mewati also fought several other battles against the British and inflicted heavy losses to the British forces.⁹

Sadrudin Meo: Sadrudin of Pindhua was also a leading revolutionary of the revolt of 1857 in Mewat. He was mainly active in and around Nuh, Mahu, Tigaon, Pinangwan and Rupraka region. When Captain Drummond attacked Rupraka on 19th November 1857, he met a huge gathering of around 3500 Meo revolutionaries under Meo leader Sadrudin. The Meo revolutionaries fought heroically, but unfortunately lost the battle due to the superior artillery of the British forces. It followed the street fighting but eventually that too came to an end. In that battle of Rupraka, around 400 Meos were martyred on the ground.¹⁰

On 27th November 1857, Mewati revolutionaries under Sadrudin attacked the Pinangwan town. The British responded quickly, and a military contingent (Gurkha Regiment) from Palwal and Gurgaon was immediately dispatched under Captain Ramsay with assistance of Joint Magistrate of Gurgaon Mr. Macpherson. They find that the revolutionaries were assembled at a different nearby village Mahun. The revolutionaries gave tough resistance to mighty British army. At last, the three Gurkha Regiments began bombarding the village from three sides and destroyed the village completely. The Meo revolutionaries were ultimately defeated with the loss of 28 men, including a son of Sadrudin. After the defeat, the revolutionary leader Sadrudin along with his loyalists fled towards Rajasthan by crossing the mountain Arawali. Sadrudin was never heard afterwards.¹¹

Ali Hasan Khan: Ali Hasan Khan, the hero of the Mewati rebellion of 1857, was responsible for overthrowing the British rule from Mewat region and also gave tough resistance to the British forces while reoccupying the area by them. His centers of main activity were Nuh, Ghasera and surrounding villages. Ali Hasan Khan Mewati organized the revolutionaries of Nuh and surrounding villages to fight against the local police and Khanzadas, the British loyalists. Ali Hasan Khan, due to his numerical strength, became victorious and Khanzadas suffered heavy casualties. A large number of them were treacherously put to death after their surrender. The Khanzadas along with other loyalists and British troops were completely routed by the Meo revolutionaries. The victory of the Meo revolutionaries at Nuh town resulted the complete withdrawal of the British administration from Mewat.¹²

Ali Hasan Khan Mewati also attacked William Ford, the Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon, while fleeing towards Mathura and Hodal. Mewati revolutionaries under Ali Hasan Khan Mewati fought a battle with the British forces of William Ford at Ghasera. The battle was so fierce that British were completely routed, and William Ford saved his life by fleeing towards Mathura cantonment. Another column under Lieutenant H. Grant and Lieutenant Rongton was sent to Mewat from Delhi. In Ghasera village the revolutionaries were assembled in a large number under the leadership of Ali Hasan Khan Mewati. A bloody and fierce battle took place in the village but due to the well-equipped and trained British forces, the revolutionaries lost the ground.¹³

Maulana Mehrab Khan: The Ulema class was also active during the rebellion of 1857 in mobilizing the common people to wage war against the British. Maulana Mehrab Khan Mewati toured the village after village to encourage the Mewatis to fight against the British for the sake of their religion and nation. Maulana also distributed the talisman to the Mewati fighters and assured their victory. Maulana Mehrab Khan Mewati along with Saadat Khan also gave tough

resistance to Major W. F. Eden, Political Agent of Jaipur, in Sohna and Tauru at the beginning of June 1857. In these battles, the Meo leaders Saadat Khan and Mehrab Khan killed many army men of Major Eden.¹⁴

Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan: Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan (1886-1970) was born in the village Rehna of district Gurgaon (now Nuh). He was the great educationist, politician, social activist and above all the torch bearer of the Mewati community. He established a school at his village Rehna which was later shifted at Nuh and wanted to raise it as High School. Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon district Mr. F. L. Brayne assured him every kind of help. The Deputy Commissioner Mr. F. L. Brayne, himself an educationist found a rare person Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan to improve the condition of backward community of Mewat. By their joint efforts, a High School was established on 20th March 1923 by merging the Middle School Nuh and Middle School of Zilla Parishad at Nuh. Sir Fazal-e-Husian, the Education Minister of Punjab, had laid the foundation stone of that High School.¹⁵

Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan was also well known by his Alwar and Bharatpur movements and by actively supporting the cause of the Meo peasantry. He was also a great political leader who was elected a member of the Punjab Assembly on the ticket of the Unionist Party when the first general election was held in 1926. From that very time, he was continuously elected as Punjab Assembly member from 1926-1946. After the partition of India, Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan came in contact of Congress party as he sought their help in controlling the mass emigration of the Meos to Pakistan. He joined the Indian National Congress in 1947 and continued to hold his position as a member of the Punjab Assembly from 1952-1962.¹⁶

Major Places of Events of Mewat in the Freedom Movement:

In 1857 the rebellion started as the mutiny at Meerut by the Sepoys but it soon snowballed into the national war against the British due to the large-scale involvement of the people of every class, race and religion. They entered Delhi and enthroned Bahadur Shah Zafar as emperor of Hindustan. The Mewatis responded over the Rebellion as soon as it overpowered Delhi and subsequently Gurgaon. In this Rebellion, the Mewatis threw themselves into the war with their ancient valour and bravery. It was really amazing that without any commonly accepted leader, the Meos ousted the British and formed their own government under the different chaudharies of the villages.

Gurugram: When the Rebellion of 1857 started from Meerut and gave a national shape in Delhi, the neighbouring area of Gurgaon was under Deputy Commissioner William Ford. In the morning of 12th May, the Sepoy's assisted by Meos and Goojars of the neighbouring areas defeated William Ford and his forces by the heavy revolutionary force. He was compelled to leave the station, which was thereupon plundered and burnt by the victorious revolutionaries. The revolutionaries at Gurgaon seized and occupied a gun, four camels and many of the tents. They also killed 25 Englishmen, burnt all the revenue records of the district administration and records of the Mahajans.¹⁷ The withdrawal of the British from the station resulted a complete political vacuum thus caused the people to believe that the British rule had ceased to exist. The revolutionaries also attacked the jail and freed the prisoners and took the whole administration of the district in their own hand.

After the fall of Delhi the British forces, on 2nd October, a strong column of 1,500 men with a light field battery, a few 18 two-ponder-guns, and mortars were sent under Brigadier General Showers to punish the turbulent Meos, Goojars, Ranghars and Ahirs and the rebel princes. The Gurgaon city was easily captured and dispersed the leaders of the Rebellion. Baktar Singh, the chief of the revolutionary leader of Gurgaon, was captured and hanged. William Ford, the Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon, also left Delhi and resumed his duty on 13th of October 1857.¹⁸

Sohna and Tauru: At the beginning of June 1857, Major W. F. Eden, Political Agent of Jaipur with a big Jaipur force comprising of 6000 men and seven guns marched to Delhi, however between Sohna and Tauru, Meo revolutionaries gave tough fight to Me. Eden. William Ford, the Gurgaon Deputy Commissioner also joined Major Eden at Sohna. Hundreds of the hard nut Meos, fully equipped with arms, fought valiantly at every step and suffered heavy losses. Eden's forces burnt and destroyed a number of villages, but the gallant Meos were never subdued. In these battles, the Meo leaders Saadat Khan and Mehrab Khan killed many army men of Major Eden. Had he not been in possession of the artillery guns, his force would have experienced heavy losses. Major Eden's artillery opened fire in different quarters, burnt villages and killed a number of the Meo revolutionaries.¹⁹

From Gurgaon, Showers sent one of his firebrand officers Wigram Clifford, the Assistant Collector (ADC) of Gurgaon to subdue the Mewati revolutionaries. Wigram Clifford burnt villages of Mewat from Gurgaon to Sohna and brought this region under British control. According to him, he put to death all those who came across and did not spare even women and children. All the villages between Dharuhera and Tauru were indiscriminately burnt, and their inhabitants were shot down ruthlessly. At the deserted town of Tauru some 30 persons were killed. About the tough resistance of

the Mewati revolutionaries, Brigadier General Showers writes, "They are in numbers on Mewattis in the hills and in the villages near Sonah. Some Bandidies and horsemen are associated with them, and if I were to leave this part of the country without going in among them they would come forward again and give a great deal of trouble. I have therefore decided on going to Sonah via Kasun and Taoroo."²⁰

Nuh: Nuh town in Mewat proved very tough for the Mewati revolutionaries like Ali Hasan Khan Mewati and his fellow men. Because of the local police, the Khanzadas, loyal to the British, gave a stiff battle the Meo revolutionaries. However, due to his numerical strength, Ali Hasan Khan became victorious and Khanzadas suffered heavy casualties. A large number of them were treacherously put to death after their surrender. The Khanzadas along with other loyalists and British troops completely rooted out by the Meo revolutionaries. The victory of Nuh town resulted in a complete withdrawal of the British administration from Mewat.

While returning the British column under Mr. Macpherson from Firozpur Jhirka, they were attacked by the Mewati revolutionaries at Nuh. It is said that Chaudhary Nahar Khan was leading the Mewati revolutionaries of Nuh, Adbar and Shahpur Nagli. In a sudden attack, the Mewati revolutionaries under Nahar Khan defeated and killed Mr. Macpherson. A lot of Khanzadas, who were fighting for the British, were also killed. In retaliation, another column of the British forces attacked the revolutionaries at Nuh town and defeated them, in which Chaudhary Nahar Khan was killed. The British forces combed and arrested a lot of the revolutionaries. On the instructions of Khairullah Khanzada, 52 Meos from Nuh and nearby villages were arrested and hanged. It is said that when the Meos were being hanged, Meda Khan of Meoli village requested the British to stop the hanging of the Meos. Out of 52 Meos, who were hanged, four were from Adbar, 12 from Shahpur Nagli and 36 were from Nuh town. A penalty of Rs. 3500 realised from the suspected revolutionaries. Chaudhary Ujagar Khan, Shahamat Khan, Wazir Khan, Jawahar Khan, Dhan Singh, Dhannu, etc. were the martyrs from Nuh.²¹

Firozpur Jhirka: The same episodes of fights were also noted from Firozpur Jhika, another stronghold of the Mewati revolutionaries. A revolutionary named Majlis Khan was very active in Firozpur Jhirka. Following the other revolutionaries of Mewat, Majlis Khan too fought against the British along with the Mewati band of revolutionaries. It was reported that Majlis Khan had also waged war against the loyalists of Mewat and killed and imprisoned many of them. He was also having the close connection with the famous revolutionary leader Rao Tula Ram of Rewari.²²

After the British victory over Mahun on 29th November 1857, the British forces went towards Firozpur Jhirka and occupied the town and neighbouring villages. The British force showed its extreme brutality by burning the village falling in the way. The villages of Shahpur, Kherla, Chitora, Niharika, Bai Khera, Kala Khera, Goojar Nagla, Bahri Pur, Kheri, etc., were set on fire and wiped out of existence.

Raiseena (Alipur): Under Brigadier General Showers, the British column, in assistance of Wigram Clifford, attacked a rebellious village Raiseena. On hearing the news of British advance, a Meo revolutionary named Firoz Shah Mewati immediately called the people to fight against the British. On his call hundreds of the Meos assembled to repulse the attack of Mr. Clifford. Some of the revolutionary Sepoys were also arrayed under Firoz Shah Mewati and a fierce battle took place on 31st October 1857, and lasted for four hours. A portion of the British force led by Wigram Clifford attacked a body of the revolutionaries of Raiseena and Mohammadpur, who had taken up a position on the hill of a village named Alipur. Wigram Clifford was killed by a shot from a revolutionary Sepoy; he died almost immediately on being wounded, as the ball passed through his head. The local traditions say that the total loss of the British force in the battle of Raiseena was three officers, including Wigram Clifford and 150 army men. The rest of the British force was fled away after the shameful defeat.²³

Brigadier Showers also carried fire and sword to avenge the killing of Mr. Clifford and his army. He destroyed and burnt the Raiseena and adjoining villages. The British also confiscated the agricultural lands of the Meos of adjoining villages of Raiseena such as Naunehra, Mohammadpur, Saanp ki Nagli, Haryahera, Baiki, Hirmithla, etc. The confiscated lands were awarded to the Rajputs of Bhondsi and Kayasths of Sohna.

Ghasera: After the return of Showers' Brigade to Delhi, a new column was formed for service under Lieutenant H. Grant and Lieutenant Rongton. On 7th November, 1857, the English army under the command of Lieutenant H. Grant attacked upon the villages of Barka, Rewasan and Ghasera. The village Ghasera was the centre of the revolutionaries, where they were assembled in a large number under the leadership of Ali Hasan Khan Mewati. The British forces attacked the village on 8th of November from two sides. About 500 revolutionaries under Ali Hasan Khan Mewati defeated the British forces and forced to return.²⁴

However, at the same time another British force advancing from Rewasan side, attacked the village Ghasera and started bombarding on both the revolutionaries and innocents. A bloody and fierce battle took place in the village on 8th November 1857. The Meo revolutionaries fought valiantly but could not stay long before the well-equipped and trained British forces. In that battle at Ghasera, about 150 Meo revolutionaries and innocent villagers lost their lives. After their victory, the British force looted and burnt the villages of Barka, Rewasan and Ghasera.²⁵

Rupraka: Brigadier General Showers had deputed Captain Drummond for the subjugation of the Mewatis, Captain Drummond, along with 59 Tohana Horses, 50 Hodson Horses, and 102 men of Kumaon Battalion under Lt. Temple proceeded towards Rupraka. The 1st Punjab Infantry under Lt. Coke, coming from Ballabgarh, also joined Captain Drummond in the way. While advancing from Sohna to the village Rupraka, Captain Drummond burnt the villages like Pachanka, Gohpur, Malpuri, Chilli, Utawar, Kot, Mughla, Mithaka, Khilluka, Guraksar, Maluka, Jhanda, etc. Captain Drummond reached Rupraka on 19th November 1857, where he met a huge gathering of around 3500 Meo revolutionaries under a Meo leader Sadruddin. The Meo revolutionaries fought heroically, but unfortunately lost the battle due to the superior artillery of the British forces. It followed the street fighting but eventually that too came to an end. In this battle of Rupraka around 400 Meo revolutionaries were martyred on the ground.²⁶

Pinagwan and Mahu: On 27th November 1857, Mewati revolutionaries under Sadruddin attacked the Pinangwan town. The British responded quickly, and a military contingent (Gurkha Regiment) from Palwal and Gurgaon was immediately dispatched under Captain Ramsay with assistance of Joint Magistrate of Gurgaon Mr. Macpherson. They reached Pinangwan on 29th November, but they find that the revolutionaries were assembled at a different nearby village Mahun. The British force made for that village next day and reached there at 7 a.m. The revolutionaries were only 70 in the number, but given tough resistance to mighty British army. Until the noon of the 29th November, the revolutionaries didn't lose heart and fought gallantly. At last, the three Gurkha Regiments began bombarding the village from three sides and destroyed the village completely. The Meo revolutionaries were ultimately defeated with the loss of 28 men, including a son of Sadruddin. British forces killed another 42 men in the neighboring villages.²⁷

Alwar and Bharatpur Movements:

Some areas of Mewat region was under the principality of Alwar and Bharatpur. The rulers of these states imposed heavy taxes on the peasants mostly Meos by race. Maharaja of Alwar, Sawai Jai Singh also began to suppress the Meo peasantry and increased the land revenue and other taxes in his dominion, which directly affected the Meo population. The agriculturist farmers and peasants in the Alwar territory were the Meos who were already living under heavy taxation and miserable life. The enhanced tax was the great burden on Meo peasants and beyond their paying capacity. The Meo peasants showed their resentment and decided not to pay taxes and revenue until they were reduced.

Around 1930-1931, Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan supported their demand and led them in their struggle. Soon the petty protest of the Mewatis took the shape of a movement known as 'Alwar Movement'. It was a big challenge to Maharaja of Alwar, and he tried hard to crush the movement. Having failed in his attempt to control the Meos struggle, the Maharaja transformed the entire movement into a communal movement. At the instance of Maharaja, the Muslims of Alwar forced to abandon the city. They camped near Jama Masjid in Delhi and demanded central intervention. All India Meo Panchayat, earlier founded by Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan, called a conference at Ferozpur Jhirka popularly known as 'Alwar conference'. The leader of the movement Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan received the advice and assistance of national leaders such as well-known Marxist-Nationalist Kunwar Mohammad Ashraf, Sayyed Mufti Faridabadi of Congress party and Ahrar Party volunteers.²⁸

The demands of the people were sent to the British Government and were also published and distributed among the people including national leaders. Subsequently, in the area of Govindgarh, the army of Alwar State fired upon the Mewatis, killing hundreds of them and injuring many. The Mewatis began to demand to deploy the British army to save them from Maharaja's atrocities. The British Government under the pressure of the Mewatis swung into action and the Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh was deposed was sent to France in exile where he died in 1937 and cremated in Alwar. The new Maharaja finally conceded the demands and reduced 1/4 of the land revenue. Illegal taxes and begars were also declared unlawful.²⁹

Alwar Movement greatly influenced the people of Bharatpur. Maharaja Brijendra Singh (1929-1947) of Bharatpur decided not to take a risk by disturbing the Mewatis. He sent Batra, Dewan of the Bharatpur State, accompanied with Chaudhary Azmat Khan and other chaudharies, to Nuh and met Chaudhary Yasin Khan and assured him to give special attention to the upliftment of the Mewatis.³⁰

Role of Alwar and Bharatpur against Meos during Indian Independence:

The Mewatis had to face the worst period in 1947 when the Congress and Muslim League accepted the partition of India. Communal riots broke out in Alwar, Bharatpur and the adjoining areas. The Rajas of Alwar and Bharatpur were actively involved in these riots. It was alleged that he made every effort to overthrow the Meos from their territory. Maharaja of Bharatpur State was deadly against the Meos and his forces fired upon the Mewatis and ousted them from his territory. Towards the end of July 1947, there was a large-scale evacuation of Mewatis from Bharatpur State into Alwar State and Gurgaon district.

The plight of the Mewatis became worst when the Alwar State also followed the same policy. Maharaja Tej Singh of Alwar, along with his Deewan Dr. Khare, an activist of a Hindu organization, was already against Meos. He killed thousands of Meos who had taken shelter in the hills of Arawali. Murder, loot, and plunder, forcible conversion of the Muslims became a general affair. Seventeen thousand Muslims became Hindu in Alwar, and three thousand Muslims became Hindu in Bharatpur. However, they came into Muslim fold by the efforts of Maulana Ibrahim, Vinova Bhawe, Satyam Bhai, and Maulana Hifzur Rahman, etc. Soon the same situation developed in the Jaipur State. Mewatis had to suffer due to the discriminatory policy of the state. According to an estimate about 3,00,000 Meos including ladies and children were killed in riots that took place in the State of Bharatpur, Alwar and Jaipur. Only in Alwar and Bharatpur districts around four thousand mosques were demolished. The whole area became a graveyard for the Muslims.³¹

Meos' Migration of Pakistan and Intervention of Mahatma Gandhi:

In view of the above grave situations, most of the Meos were forced to leave for Pakistan. It is reported that most of the Hindus, especially Jats were against the Meos' migration. Even a deputation of some Hindu Jats went to the Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nahru, to assure him of their good relations with the Meos and to ask him to stop their migration to Pakistan. It was also stated that the massacre of the Meos was organized by the Rajas of Alwar and Bharatpur, and the British Brigadier at Gurgaon was one of the main figures behind them.

On 15th of August 1947, India was divided and Pakistan came into existence and the communal riots again clutched the Mewat region. The Mewatis suffered greatly due to the communal frenzy and began to migrate to Pakistan. However, Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan firmly decided to dissuade the Mewatis from migration to Pakistan. In Sohna, a transit camp was organized by the Mewatis with a view to migrate to Pakistan. Muslim League agents led by Khan Bahadur were playing an important role in discouraging the Meos to stay in India. About eight lakh Mewatis decided to leave for Pakistan.³²

At this crucial juncture, Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan was holding meetings with Gandhiji and other Congress leaders. On the request of Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan, Mahatma Gandhi, Vinova Bhawe, Pandit Sunder Lal, and other Gandhian leaders personally visited the Meo camps around Sohna and Delhi borders. They also arrived at Ghasera in Gurgaon district (now in Nuh district) on 19th December 1947, to prevent the forcible emigration and to assure the rehabilitation of the Mewatis. Gopichand Bhargava, the East Punjab Premier was also with Gandhiji.³³ The joint effort of the Gandhian leaders and Chaudhary Mohammad Yasin Khan succeeded in checking the mass migration of the thousands of the Meos. Even a large number of them who had already crossed the border of India returned to Mewat in the Following months.

REFERENCES

- [1]. After the attack of Ruknuddin Hamza, Hemraj took refuge in the hills of Mewat. Undoubtedly, the Mewatis would have supported him in his fight against the Muslims. Eventually, Hemraj was defeated by Aibak. On his shameful defeat, Hemraj mounted a funeral pyre and perished in the flames. Haig, Sir Wolseley (1928). *The Cambridge History of India, Volume III, Turks and Afghans*, Cambridge, p. 43.
- [2]. Channing, F.C. (1882). *Land Revenue Settlement of Gurgaon District*, Lahore, p. 22, see also Malleson, George Bruce (1911). *Kaye's and Malleson's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8*, Vol. IV, London, p. 76; *Punjab Gazetteer, District Gurgaon, 1883-84*, Lahore, 1884, pp. 23-24, *Gurgaon District Gazetteer*, Chandigarh, 1983, pp. 58-59, and Yadav, K. C. (2013). *1857: The Role of Punjab Haryana and Himachal Pradesh*, New Delhi, pp. 124-125.
- [3]. Khan, Mohammad Ashraf (ND). *Meo Qaum Aur Mewat*, Nuh, pp. 131-135, see also Ahmad, Iqbal (2010). *Nawab Shamsuddin Khan Aur Karim Khan Meo*, Lahore, pp. 20-27.
- [4]. Ahmad, Iqbal (2010). *Nawab Shamsuddin Khan Aur Karim Khan Meo*, Lahore, pp. 28-29.
- [5]. *Ibid*, p. 30.

- [6]. *Gurgaon District Gazetteer*, Chandigarh, 1983, p.64, see also *Haryana District Gazetteers, Faridabad*, Chandigarh, 1993, p. 53. *Haryana State Gazetteer*, Volume I, Chandigarh, 2001, p. 290 and Qasmi, Aatur Rahman (2011). *1857 Aur Haryana*, New Delhi, p. 146.
- [7]. Zakir, Kashmiri Lal (2008). *Tahrik-e-Azadi Aur Mewat*, Panchkula, p. 23&81, see also K. C. (2013). *1857: The Role of Punjab Haryana and Himachal Pradesh*, New Delhi, p. 146.
- [8]. Qasmi, Aatur Rahman (2011). *1857 Aur Haryana*, New Delhi, p. 70.
- [9]. *Records of the Intelligence Department*, Vol. I, Edinburgh, 1902, p. 243, see also *Haryana State Gazetteer*, Volume I, Chandigarh, 2001, p. 288, and Zakir, Kashmiri Lal (2008). *Tahrik-e-Azadi Aur Mewat*, Panchkula, pp. 20-21.
- [10]. *Haryana State Gazetteer*, Volume I, Chandigarh, 2001, pp. 289-90.
- [11]. *Gurgaon District Gazetteer*, Chandigarh, 1983, p. 64, see also *Haryana District Gazetteers, Faridabad*, Chandigarh, 1993, p. 53, and *Haryana State Gazetteer*, Volume I, Chandigarh, 2001, p. 290.
- [12]. *Punjab Gazetteer, Gurgaon District, 1883-84*, Lahore, 1884, p. 26, see also Yadav, K.C., *Revolt of 1857 in Haryana*, New Delhi, 1977, p. 58.
- [13]. Qasmi, Aatur Rahman (2011). *1857 Aur Haryana*, New Delhi, p. 144, see also Mayaram, Shail (2004). *Against History Against State: Counterperspectives from the Margins*, New Delhi, p. 195, and Zakir, Kashmiri Lal (2008). *Tahrik-e-Azadi Aur Mewat*, Panchkula, p. 59
- [14]. K. C. (2013). *1857: The Role of Punjab Haryana and Himachal Pradesh*, New Delhi, p. 146, see also Zakir, Kashmiri Lal (2008). *Tahrik-e-Azadi Aur Mewat*, Panchkula, pp. 18&79; *Haryana State Gazetteer*, Volume I, Chandigarh, 2001, p. 287, and Yadav, K.C. (1992). *Haryana, Itihas Avam Sanskriti*, part-2, New Delhi, p. 105.
- [15]. As stated on the stone inscription installed in YMD College Nuh.
- [16]. Ahmad, Aijaz (2013). *Mewat: A Retrospective*, Ghaziabad, pp. 182-86.
- [17]. Mead, Henry (1858). *The Sepoy Revolt: Its Causes and its Consequences*, London, 1858, pp. 101-2, see also *Punjab Gazetteer, Gurgaon District, 1883-84*, Lahore, 1884, p. 25; Yadava, S.D.S. (2006). *Followers of Krishna: Yadavas of India*, New Delhi, p. 78; *Haryana District Gazetteers, Faridabad*, Chandigarh, 1993, p. 51; *Akhbar-uz-Zafar*, 19 July, 1857, and *Gurgaon District Gazetteer*, Chandigarh, 1983, p. 60.
- [18]. *Haryana District Gazetteers, Faridabad*, Chandigarh, 1993, p. 52, see also *Gurgaon District Gazetteer*, Chandigarh, 1983, p. 62.
- [19]. *Gurgaon District Gazetteer*, Chandigarh, 1983, pp. 61-62, see also Zakir, Kashmiri Lal (2008). *Tahrik-e-Azadi Aur Mewat*, Panchkula, p. 79; *Haryana State Gazetteer*, Volume I, Chandigarh, 2001, p. 287. *Dehli Urdu Akhbar*, Delhi, 5th July, 1857; Husain, Iqbal, *1857 Ke Swatantra Sangram Me Mewatiyon Ka Balidan*, (Unpublished), AMU Aligarh, p. 40; *Haryana State Gazetteer*, Volume I, Chandigarh, 2001, p. 288, and Khan, Mohammad Ashraf (ND). *Meo Qaum Aur Mewat*, Nuh, p. 139.
- [20]. *Records of the Intelligence Department*, Vol. I, Edinburgh, 1902, p. 243.
- [21]. Abdul Shakoor (2010). Hakim, *Tarikh Meo Kshatri*, Shikrawa, p. 462, see also Zakir, Kashmiri Lal (2008). *Tahrik-e-Azadi Aur Mewat*, Panchkula, p. 132.
- [22]. Qasmi, Aatur Rahman (2011). *1857 Aur Haryana*, New Delhi, p. 70.
- [23]. *Records of the Intelligence Department*, Vol. I, Edinburgh, 1902, p. 243, see also *Haryana State Gazetteer*, Volume I, Chandigarh, 2001, p. 288, and Zakir, Kashmiri Lal (2008). *Tahrik-e-Azadi Aur Mewat*, Panchkula, pp. 20-21.
- [24]. Qasmi, Aatur Rahman (2011). *1857 Aur Haryana*, New Delhi, p. 144, see also Mayaram, Shail (2004). *Against History Against State: Counterperspectives from the Margins*, New Delhi, p. 195.
- [25]. Zakir, Kashmiri Lal (2008). *Tahrik-e-Azadi Aur Mewat*, Panchkula, p. 59.
- [26]. *Haryana State Gazetteer*, Volume I, Chandigarh, 2001, pp. 289-90, see also *Records of the Intelligence Department*, Vol. II, Edinburgh, 1902, p. 220, and *Records of the Intelligence Department*, Vol. I, Edinburgh, 1902, p. 283.
- [27]. *Gurgaon District Gazetteer*, Chandigarh, 1983, p. 64, see also *Haryana District Gazetteers, Faridabad*, Chandigarh, 1993, p. 53, and *Haryana State Gazetteer*, Volume I, Chandigarh, 2001, p. 290.



- [28]. Abdul Shakoor, Hakim (2010). Hakim, *Tarikh Meo Kshatri*, Shikrawa, pp. 480-81, see also Athar, Mohammad Swaleh Khan (2009), *Tarikh Meo Mehar*, Nuh, p. 593.
- [29]. *Ibid.* p. 482.
- [30]. *Ibid.* p. 484.
- [31]. The extent of atrocities may be imagined from the fact that even the officials were not spared by the state Police. For more details see Khan, Whiduddin (1988). *Mewat ka Safar*, New Delhi, pp. 15-20; Hashim, Amir Ali (1970). *The Meos of Mewat: Old Neighbours of New Delhi*, New Delhi, p.174 and Abdul Shakoor, Hakim (2010). *Tarikh Meo Kshatri*, Shikrawa, p. 507,
- [32]. Abdul Shakoor, Hakim (2010). *Tarikh Meo Kshatri*, Shikrawa, p. 518.
- [33]. *The Tribune*, 20 Decembers 1947, see also *National Herald*, 21 December, 1947, and Amir Ali (1970). *The Meos of Mewat: Old Neighbours of New Delhi*, New Delhi, p. 31.