

3. If these two castes formed distinct Regiments, perhaps the Mahomedans would not have objected to use of the new cartridge.
4. The pride of the Indian forces, and its causes.
5. The league of the Indian Army against the use of the new cartridges, formed after January 1857.
6. The impropriety of punishing the Non-Commissioned Officers at Meerut, which touched the vanity of the Indian forces.
7. Want of confidence in the Indian forces towards Government after the occurrences at Meerut.
8. Why the mutiny did not break out in the Punjab, and its causes.

AN ESSAY

On the Causes of the Indian Revolt

BY

SAIYID AHMAD KHAN,

PRINCIPAL SUDDER AMEEN OF MORADABAD.

Humility adorns the slave,
 Mercy befits the Deity;
 Should I commit an act unworthy of me,
 Do thou that which is worthy of thee.

It was my desire to suppress and even to forget what I had written on the causes of the rebellion in Hindoostan; for the Proclamation which Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria—may she reign for ever—has been pleased to issue in this country, has in reality acted as a complete remedy for all those evils in which it had its origin. The truth is, the pens have dropped from the hands of those who intended to write on this subject, for it is no longer necessary to investigate into the causes of evils that have been fully remedied. But notwithstanding that a remedy, such as has fully met the circumstances of the case, has been applied, yet I consider it my duty, as a loyal subject of this Government, to inquire with true sincerity of purpose, into the real causes of the rebellion, and having done so, to publish my own views on the subject. It is true that several wise and experienced men have already written on the causes of this rebellion; but I think that perhaps no Native of India may have as yet attempted the task, and it will be as well that such a person should record his opinion.

What led to the revolt in Hindoostan? Before I proceed to answer this question it is necessary to define the term rebellion. To oppose

the Government to which one owes allegiance,—to take part with its enemies,—to disobey, or not to execute its orders with a hostile intention,—or, regardless of consequences, to usurp its authority and encroach upon its prerogatives, is rebellion, *viz* :

1st.—For a servant, or subject, to fight with and oppose his own Government.

2nd.—Or, to disobey and not execute its orders with a hostile intention.

3rd.—Or, to aid and abet its enemies, and to become their accomplice.

4th.—Or, for subjects, fearless of the Government, to fight with each other; or, wholly regardless of consequences, to break the law.

5th.—Or, not to entertain at heart feelings of attachment and loyalty to the Government, and not to espouse its cause in time of trouble.

Of the various sorts of rebellion above described, there were none which did not occur during the crisis of 1857. Indeed there could be found but a very few well informed persons who would be excepted from the last of the several kinds of rebellion above enumerated; and, though it may appear the least of all, in proportion as it may seem so, importance should be attached to it.

There is but one thing which causes rebellious intentions to arise in the mind, *viz*. the introduction of measures unsuited to the dispositions and characters, or opposed to the wishes, institutions, and customs of those who rebel.

From this it is evident that no one circumstance [affecting a particular class] can be the cause of a general rebellion. A general rebellion can originate either in something generally repugnant to the feelings of all; or in a combination of causes, some of which tend to generate disaffection in one class, and some in another, and which gradually eventuate in a wide spread insurrection.

Now for a long time previous to the outbreak of 1857, various circumstances were being accumulated in the minds of the people. In short a vast magazine was prepared wanting only the spark to cause an explosion.

This spark was supplied by the mutiny of the troops last year.

In 1857 *chapátis* were distributed in the villages throughout various districts of Upper India. A short time afterwards the mutiny broke out. At the time that these *chapátis* were distributed, a violent pestilence raged throughout the country; and though it is probable, as is the custom with ignorant people in India, that they may have been so handed about as a sort of charm to put a stop to the plague,—the fact is, that the real cause of the affair is yet enveloped in mystery. But there is no doubt that these *chapátis* could not be the origin of any conspiracy. It generally happens that such things are meant to confirm some verbal message; but it is well known that no verbal message was circulated simultaneously with the *chapátis*. Had such been the case, it is not possible that the fact should have remained concealed, as the *chapátis* were distributed among all classes and descriptions of people. From the manner too in which the rebellious spirit made its appearance in the country, extending gradually from this to that place, it is sufficiently clear that in the beginning there did not exist any general conspiracy.

It is perfectly groundless to suppose that Russia or Persia had any thing to do with the rebellion in India. How can it possibly be supposed that the Natives of this country, who, generally speaking, have no notion of who the Russians are, could have conspired with them? With the Persians the Hindus could form no league; and that the Mosalmans of Hindoostan and Persia would agree together is as impossible as that Protestants and Roman Catholics should do so. If it is possible for the day and night to take place at one and the same time, then this coalition is possible but not otherwise.

It is admitted, that when there was war between Russia and Persia, there was no disturbance in Hindoostan; but when the latter country was convulsed by rebellion, peace and tranquillity prevailed in the former. How then can it be conceived that they were leagued together?

The proclamation that is known to have been found in the tent of a Persian prince, does not furnish any proof of the existence of a league between Hindoostan and Persia.

It was issued only to excite the Persians. Reference to the miserable condition of Hindoostan was made more with a view to incite the Persians to warlike deeds than from any consideration of a league already formed with that country.

I do not consider it a matter for surprise that the ex-King of Delhi should have despatched a *firmán* to the King of Persia. Such was the credulity of the former, that had any body told him that the King of the Genii, in fairy-land, owed him fealty, he would unhesitatingly have believed him, and have written ten *firmáns*, instead of one. The ex-King was in the habit of imagining that he flew about like a fly or mosquito, and brought back news from different countries and people. All this he used to believe himself, and have it confirmed by his courtiers, who did as they were bid. That such a monomaniac should write a *firmán* at some body's request, is not at all wonderful; but this *firmán* was by no means the origin of any conspiracy. Were it otherwise is it not strange that such a formidable conspiracy against the British Government should be hatching so long, and not come at all to the knowledge of its officers? Even after the breaking out of the insurrection, no rebel, whether belonging to the army or otherwise, made mention of any conspiracy of the kind, though at that time he neither cared for, nor feared any body.

Again, I do not consider the annexation of Oude to have been the cause of the rebellion, though there is no doubt that it was a cause of dis-

satisfaction to every body, and gave rise to a general conviction that the Hon'ble East India Company had violated treaties. The people in general evinced as much dissatisfaction at the annexation of Oude, as they invariably did, (and as shall be noticed in a subsequent part of the essay), whenever any new territories were conquered and acquired by the Company. The independent chiefs and princes of India were especially afraid, dissatisfied, and disgusted, for all were naturally under the firm impression that they would be similarly deprived of their territories and authority; yet notwithstanding, not a single ruling prince rebelled against the Government. Those who did so were not in possession of their territories; and though the Nawab of Jhujhur, the Rajah of Bullubgurh, and a few others, did turn rebels, they are exceptions to the rule, and consequently their cases ought not to be cited in refutation of my remarks.

Nor is it correct to suppose that a feeling of grief and regret at the domination of foreigners over this ancient country, led the people to league together, and rise up in arms against them. It ought to be considered that British rule, which commenced in 1757 with the defeat of Sirájood-Dawlah at the battle of Plassey, had not been established all at once, but had extended itself gradually over the country. From that time until very lately the people, as well as the Chiefs, were well inclined towards our Government. The report of its justice, mercy, generosity, faith in keeping treaties, and admirable arrangements for ensuring happiness to the people and peace in the country, had made the neighbouring Hindu and Mosalman States wish to be taken under its protection. Even foreign kings and princes used to place implicit confidence in our Government, and to regard the treaties and engagements entered into with it as documents written on stone, *i.e.* never to be violated. The British Government is now much more powerful than it was in those days, while the Native Princes, Chiefs, and Sirdars, have not even one hundredth part of the strength and might they formerly possessed. In those days our Government had to carry on wars with every tribe of Hindus and Mosalmans, and as its career was one of victory, it was currently believed that its

authority would sometime or other be extended all over the country, and that all classes of its people, whether Hindus or Mosalmans, would come under its sway. Notwithstanding this state of things, it does not appear that any attempts were made, in those days, to rebel or bear arms against the Government. There is nothing of the kind to be found in history, and had the present disturbances originated from the cause alluded to, it is certain that at least something of the kind would have occurred in those times, as there existed then greater facilities for such outbreaks. No insurrection took place in Hindoostan during the war which was commenced in 1837, notwithstanding that the country had been for centuries past under the dominion of the family then at enmity with the British Government, and the Mohammadans of India had been indebted to those princes for their advancement and prosperity. It is not, therefore, likely that a feeling of regret at the loss of their dominion and power should have led the Mohammadans to originate the present disturbances.

Nobody felt desirous for the sovereignty of the ex-King of

The position of the ex-King of Delhi well known within the town and its environs, but over-rated in the distant Provinces.

Delhi, for the absurd and foolish doings of the family had deprived it of the honor and dignity it once possessed. Certainly those living in distant

provinces, who were not acquainted with the condition, position, and absurdities of the King, used to regard him with feeling of great respect, and consider him the Sovereign, and the Hon'ble East India Company merely the administrators of Hindoostan. The inhabitants of Delhi and its environs however felt little or no regard for him.

No one felt any sorrow for the extinction of the sovereignty of

The declaration of Lord Amherst in the year 1827, to the effect that the sovereignty of India belonging to the British Government, and that it no longer existed in the Taimoor family, did not offend any body.

the King. When in 1827, Lord Amherst openly declared that the British Government had ceased to recognize the sovereignty of the House of Taimoor, and that it had passed into its own hands, neither did the people nor the

princes of India feel any regret at the intelligence. The members of the royal family might have felt somewhat aggrieved but no one else.

There is not the slightest foundation for the belief that the

The Mohammadans did not contemplate a *Jihád* against the Christians prior to the outbreak.

Mohammadans had, for a long time past, formed a league among themselves with the view of proclaiming

a *Jihád* against people of a different faith, and of releasing themselves from their authority. As long as they were allowed to live peaceably under our Government, so long they could not contemplate a *Jihád* within its territories.

Thirty-five years ago, when a renowned Mawlawi, named

The preaching of *Jihád*, &c. &c.

Mohammad Ismaíl, preached a *Jihád* and excited people to it, it was clearly

stated that those who lived in Hindoostan under the protection of the British Government, would not be justified in taking part in it within its possessions. Accordingly great numbers of *Jiháds* who had assembled in every district of India, without creating any disturbances within British territories, proceeded to the Punjab, and there commenced hostilities. Now this *Jihád* which was spoken of in every district by the ignorant and the mean, even if called by that name, does not appear to have been thought of before the 10th May, 1857.

When it is considered that those who raised the standard

of *Jihád* were men of dissolute habits and depraved character, passing their time in drinking, dancing, and singing, it strikes one to enquire how could it be possible to call them the *leaders* and

None of the acts committed by the Mohammadan rebels during the disturbances were in accordance with the tenets of the Mohammadan religion.

chiefs thereof. During these disturbances nothing was done in accordance with the doctrines of religion. Every body knows that the plunder of public treasure and property by servants to whom they had been entrusted, is treachery that no religion enjoins or approves; and that the murder of innocent persons, especially of women and children, and old men, is denounced by religion as a very great crime. How then could these disturbances

be pronounced to have originated in a *Jihád*? I admit that certain wicked persons, with an eye to their own advantage, and with the hope of gaining their ends, had given out that a *Jihád* had been proclaimed, so that ignorant people might be deceived, and large numbers flock to them, but this was one of the misdeeds of the rebels—there was no *Jihád*.

The *Fatwa* of *Jihád*, printed at Delhi, is considered a strong proof that the rebellion *was* a crusade; but I have heard, and my information has proof to support it, that it was altogether counterfeit. I have learnt that when the faithless Meerut sowars arrived at Delhi, some one desired a *Fatwa* enjoining a *Jihád*, but all agreed in giving their opinion that no *Jihád* could take place. I have further seen a copy of the *Fatwa* alluded to, but as the original is not extant, I cannot say how far this copy can be relied upon. When the mutineers from Bareilly entered Delhi, and the *Fatwa* in which a *Jihád* was sanctioned, was published for the second time, that *Fatwa* was undoubtedly not an authentic document. The printer of it, a noted rebel, and well known old *bad-mash*, inserted therein the names of certain persons, and to give an appearance of respectability to the document, and there-by mislead and impose upon the ignorant, even the seals of two or three parties who had died before the disturbances, were affixed to it. There were, however, the signatures of some real persons upon it; but they are well known to have been forced by the Bareilly mutineers and their companions to put their seals to it.

There were at Delhi besides many Mawlawis and their followers who used to consider the ex-King a wicked man and a schismatic. They believed that prayers [*namáz*] performed in a mosque under the control or management of the King, were not lawfully correct. Accordingly they had left off reading the *namáz* even in the Jama Masjid, and *Fatwas* on this subject, printed long before the disturbances, are yet in existence. Under such circumstances the mind refuses to be convinced that they [the Mawlawis] printed a *Fatwa* sanctioning a *Jihád*, and appointing the King leader thereof.

Of the persons moreover whose seals the documents referred to contains, several gave shelter to Christians, and saved their lives and honor. None of them opposed or fought with the Government. Had they really been such as they are reported to have been, why then should they have acted as they did? In short, in my opinion, it does not seem probable that the Mosalmans should have even thought of uniting together in a *Jihád* against authorities professing a different faith:—and that the ignorant and rebellious were excited by the cry of A Crusade! A Crusade! and persons went about shouting a War-cry, is no proof whatever of the fact. I shall certainly detail subsequently the extent of the dissatisfaction of the *Moslims*, and the cause: for there is no doubt whatever that they were in every respect more dissatisfied than the Hindus, and hence in most districts they were comparatively more rebellious,—though the latter were not wanting in this respect.

There was in the beginning no league or mutual understanding in the army regarding the outbreak. It is an undoubted fact that even after the event, the mutineers never alluded to this subject. I admit that after the occurrences at Barrackpore had taken place, and especially at the time when various Regiments were assembled in the Punjab to exercise the new Rifle, the sepoy may have unanimously resolved not to use the new cartridge; but even at that period there did not exist any other design or object. On the contrary the sepoy felt convinced that the Government would repeal the order; and it *was* at last withdrawn; yet as that took place after the 10th May, 1857, it failed to produce any beneficial results towards the suppression of the disturbances that had broken out. Nor was the fire that had blazed forth of a nature that could be extinguished by such a measure.

It is perfectly groundless to suppose that there existed from the very first any league between the ex-King and the army. Nobody regarded the King as a saint or a person of great

piety. People were in the habit of flattering him to his face, and laughing at him behind his back.

Nor was there any league between the army and the ex-King, though it is not impossible that some Sepoy or Non-Commissioned Officer may have been his disciple.

Men became his disciples with a view to personal advantages, not from any faith in his superior sanctity. It is not therefore at all wonderful that some privates or subahdars, even in the army should have become his disciple; but certainly that circumstance had no connection whatever with any league for revolt. It is true that the mutineers assembled at Delhi; but when the troops turned rebels to the Government, there was no one around whom they could rally excepting the King. This however does not prove the previous existence of any plot. Certainly the importance which the ex-King had been allowed to assume was highly objectionable. The decision of Lord Ellenborough was worthy of adoption, nay, it was advisable to go even beyond what his Lordship meditated, for the King was like a spark from a heap of hot ashes, which, blown about by the winds, ultimately set the whole country on fire.

I believe that there was but one primary cause of the rebellion,

The non-admission of a Native into the Legislative Council was the original cause of the outbreak.

the others being merely incidental, and arising out of it. Nor is this opinion either imaginary or conjectural. It is borne out by the views entertained

by wise men of past ages: and all writers on the principles of Government agree in it; besides, all history, whether European or African, (*sic*) bears ample testimony to the truth of it.

It has been universally allowed that the admittance of the

The importance of such an admission discussed.

people to a share in the Government under which they live, is necessary to its efficiency, prosperity, and permanence. It is from the people of the country alone that the rulers can ascertain the propriety or impropriety of a measure, previous to the state of things reaching that point when no remedy can prove efficacious. For hath not the poet said—

“A spade may the young rill restrain,
Whose channel, swollen [by storms and rain]
The elephant attempts in vain.”

Now it is useless to expect such information until the people are allowed to participate in the administration of the Government. The British, in particular, being foreigners in the country, and differing from the people in religion, habits, customs, and tastes, Government should have felt it incumbent on itself to recognize this fact. The administration of the country and the prosperity and permanence of the Government, depended equally on the possession of an accurate knowledge of the manners, customs, usages, and habits of the Natives, and on a proper regard for them. The perusal of ancient history, which in reality is nothing more than a journal of daily life, will prove that the peculiarity of manners, customs, and habits of different nations owe their existence less to the suggestions of wisdom than to mere accident. It is therefore evident that the laws and regulations of the Government should be framed so as to suit the habits and customs of the people, rather than that the latter modified to suit the former. Indeed, Government depends on such a course; inasmuch as the peculiar habits and customs of the people take so strong a hold on them, that any attempt to act contrary to them, is to oppose nature itself, and must be productive of general discontent. With Marshman's History of Bengal before me, I cannot forget that the mismanagement of that Province in 1765, when the Diwani was made over to the Company, resulted from this very ignorance of the usages and customs of the Natives. Neither can I cease to remember the prosperity which Bengal enjoyed during Lord Hastings' administration, owing to his Lordship's acquaintance with the language, manners, customs, and habits of its people.

I admit that it was impossible as well as undesirable for the people of this country to be represented in Parliament; but certainly there did not exist any objection to their admission into the Legislative Council of India, and undoubtedly their non-admission formed the main originating cause of this rebellion, to which all other causes were secondary.

I do not however mean to say that the Government did not endeavour to make themselves acquainted with Native habit

usages, and institutions; but on the contrary I heartily acknowledge that it did so, and I would refer to certain Regulations and Acts of the Legislature, the orders and directions by the Board of Revenue, and the Hon'ble Mr. Thomason's Guide to Revenue Settlements, in proof of the truth of my assertion. But there can be no doubt whatever that it did not properly attend to the acquirement of a thorough knowledge of the condition and ideas, manners and customs, hopes and aspirations, temper and ability of the people of this country. The Government knew not in what trouble its subjects passed the day and night; how, day by day, they became involved in fresh difficulties; and how, gradually, discontent filled their minds, till, all at once, a slight commotion produced a terrible outbreak.

The non-admission of Natives into the Legislative Council not

only disabled the Government from ascertaining the injurious effects of laws and regulations already in force, and the real wishes and wants of the people to which its attention was urgently necessary,—and deprived the latter of the opportunity and power to make them known, or of adopting measures for the removal of evils under which the whole country suffered,—but it led to the far more serious result of keeping the people in the dark as to the real intentions and designs of the Government towards them. As a necessary consequence of this state of things, the orders and measures of Government were frequently misunderstood; while, owing to the Natives having no share in originating them, and being incapable of ascertaining their scope and object, they remained ignorant of the basis upon which they had been founded, and often lay under the impression that all had been done with a view to entail upon them and their fellow-countrymen poverty and ruin, and the loss of their religion. Certain measures promulgated by the Government, moreover which,—irrespective of any considerations as to their real merits or demerits,—were directly antagonistic to the customs and usages of the people, served to confirm them in their unfounded

apprehensions: and by degrees things came to this pass, that the people were in the habit of darkly alluding, in ironic metaphor, to the Government in such terms as the "sweet poison," the "honied knife," "the slow poison,"—the applicability of which similes was most implicitly believed. They had an impression that if Government spared them to-day, to-morrow they would not; but unfortunately there were none either to make inquiries about their condition, or to adopt measures for disabusing their minds of these unfounded apprehensions. If therefore the people looked upon the Government as their inveterate enemy, what loyalty could be expected from such subjects to such a Government? But when we consider that our Government was not in reality what the people took it to be, it must be admitted that the reason why such apprehensions had found a place in their minds, and why no remedial measure were adopted to convince them of their errors, was that the Natives of India were not allowed to sit in the Legislative Council. Had they been so allowed, all these erroneous notions would have been dissipated, and if we consider the matter in its true light, we shall find that it was this non-admission alone which, giving birth to many other causes, involved the country in disorder and disturbances.

In reply to these assertions, it will not do to bring forward the facts that the Government had given full permission to print and publish anything and everything, with the exception of libels and such matter as would tend to create disturbances and produce rebellion, and that all laws and regulations were published before their enactment, and that every person possessed the privilege of submitting his objections to them; for these means were not only inadequate, but absolutely impotent to remove the serious evils to which I have alluded. Nor do I wish that I should be here called upon to discuss how and under what rules and restrictions the Natives of India, ignorant and uneducated as they are, should be allowed a voice in the Legislative Council; as well as how, if like the British Parliament, the Natives of India had been represented in the Legislative Council, they would have been elected? To do so would be a matter of much difficulty; but here I have to prove nothing more than that the admission of Natives into

the Legislative Council would have been not only advantageous, but highly expedient, and that rebellion was the result of such a course not having been adopted. With regard to the mode in which the Natives may be allowed to have a voice in the Legislature, I have written elsewhere. Those who object to my views may reply to them separately.

This defect in our Government may be said to have exercised a baneful influence over the whole of India, and how many soever may have been the causes of the rebellion,—all resulting from this one circumstance,—a little attentive consideration will show that they immediately originated in the following :

1st.—Misunderstanding on the part of the people, or understanding the measures of Government contrary to their real intent and purpose.

2nd.—The promulgation of such laws and regulations and rules of procedure as were not adapted to a Government like that of India, and which were opposed to the customs of the Natives, or injurious to their interests.

3rd.—Ignorance of Government of the real condition, and the habits and customs of its subjects, as well as the evils which they were exposed to, and which alienated their affections from it.

4th.—Neglect on the part of Government of those measures to which its attention in the administration of the affairs of India was necessary.

5th.—The mismanagement of the army.

I now proceed to examine separately these five principal causes, and every subject connected with each of them.

Cause 1st.—Misunderstanding on the part of the people, or understanding the measures of Government contrary to their real intent and purpose.

From what I may have to explain on this head, I must not be understood to assert that the Government was really such as it was represented to be. I mean that the people misunderstood it, and from this circumstance the rebellion resulted, while had there been Native members in the Legislative Council, such misunderstanding could not have taken place.

There is no doubt that all persons, whether intelligent or ignorant, respectable or otherwise, believed that the Government was really and sincerely desirous of interfering with the religion, and customs of the people, converting them all whether Hindus or Mohammadans to Christianity, and forcing them to adopt European manners and habits. This was perhaps the most important of all the causes of the rebellion. People knew that the orders of Government took effect gradually and by degrees, and that whatever had been determined upon was done slowly. The Government, they thought, did not therefore profess like the Mohammadans to force the people, all at once, to discard their religion, but availed itself of every opportunity to obtain its ends ; and certain measures which gradually came to be adopted, and which will be mentioned hereafter, tended greatly to strengthen these erroneous notions. All had felt convinced that Government would not openly compel any body to change his religion ; but that just in the same manner as it had abolished the study of the Arabic and Sanskrit languages, and impoverished the country, it would devise secret means for converting the people, by keeping them ignorant of their religion and its inculcations, teaching them its own religion, and disseminating religious books and tracts ; at the same time holding out the enticement of employment and preferment. During the general famine of 1837, numbers of orphans were converted to Christianity ; and this fact was considered