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Revisiting the Parganas and the Tehsils of Meerut District prior to Indian Revolution of 1857 : A Case Study (1803-1856)

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Abstract

The East India Company got its control over the upper Ganga-Yamuna Doab territory and the treaty of Surji Anjangaon had legitimized the settlement between Daulat Rao Sindhia, the ruler of Gwalior and the Company. The pargana system remained intact right from 1803 to 1842 when the new tehsil system was introduced in the district of Meerut. In may 1853 the number of estates were changed and generally it remained same upto 1856. Next year, the Indian Revolution of 1857 out broke from the very city of Meerut.

Keywords

East India Company, Mahadji Sindhia, Daulat Rao Sindhia, Rani Bala Bai, Nawab Fath Ali Khan Tyagi, Ganga-Yamuna Doab, Dehli, *Paragana, Mahal, Dastur, Sirkar, Suba, Tahsil*, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Begum Samru, Rao Harkaran Singh Tyagi, Rao Diwan Singh Tyagi, Rao Amar Singh Tyagi, Etawa, Agra.

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Revisiting the Parganas and the Tehsils of Meerut District prior to Indian Revolution of 1857 : A Case Study (1803-1856)

The East India Company¹ under the Governor-Generalship of Lord Wellesley² adopted the policy of colonial expansion³ and so in the last months of 1803,⁴ it had occupied the area of the Hindi speaking people of the upper Ganga-Yamuna Doab right from Etawah⁵ to the Shivalik foot-hills⁶ including that of neighboring Delhi and Haryana. The treaty of Surji Anjangaon⁷ between the Sindhia ruler and the Company had legitimized the arrangement.

The '*pargana*'⁸ system introduced during the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar was still prevailing and in 1842,⁹ a new system displaced the old one. The age old paraganas were replaced by the newly formed *tehsils*. A number of the *parganas* were joined together to form a tehsil whose administration was to be undertaken by a *tehsildar*. A number of *tehsils* were included in a particular district and the certain number of the districts was kept under division as earlier.

The district of Meerut, in those days had two natural boundaries the Ganga in the east : and the Yamuna in the west, though some of the villages of Meerut District had been transferred to Delhi time to time; some such changes were made to facilitate the revenue administration.

Under the heading "Changes in the administrative subdivisions", Mr. Edwin Thomas Atkinson gives a graphic description. He writes¹⁰:

"There have been such numerous changes in the Meerut district since its formation that there is much difficulty in tracing out the boundaries of the district in different years, and though tradition ascribes an attempt at settled government in the upper *Duáb* to the Pandavas many centuries before the Christian era, but very little is known concerning the early local history of the district until the reign of Akbar. According to the

revenue records of that monarch the *parganahs* at present found in the Meerut district belonged to the *súbah* of Dehli and, excepting the present Sardhana *parganah*, to the *sirkár* of Dehli. The *parganah* of Sardhana was in the *sirkár* of Saharanpur and constituted with what now forms a considerable part of the Muzaffarnagar district a *dastúr* or sub-division of itself. Meerut city was the centre of another *dastur* containing *parganahs* Kithor, Hastinapur, Sarawa, Hápur, Garhmuktesar, Meerut, Jalálabad, and Barnawa. The present *parganahs* of Loni, Dásna, Bágpat, Baraut, Kutána, and Chhaprauli formed portions of *dastúr* Dehli. Púth formed a part of the Baran *dastur* in the Bulandshahr district. Under the Marhattas Meerut formed a portion of the Saharanpur *báoni* or division including 52 *parganahs*, and was conquered by the British in 1803. A month after the battle of Laswári, on the 4th December, 1803, Sindhia signed the treaty of Surji Anjengaon, by which he ceded all his possessions between the Jumna and the Ganges to the British. The conquered territory was distributed into three parts and attached to the districts of Etáwa, Moradabad, and Aligarh. Mr. Leycester, Collector of Moradabad, received charge of the upper *Duab*, comprising Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, and the *parganahs* in the neighbourhood of Hápur and Meerut, altogether containing 53 *maháls*, on the 2nd October, 1803, and on the 28th of the same month the three new Collectors met at Koil and fixed the boundaries of their several charges. This arrangement lasted until the following year (September, 1804), when the *Duáb* territory was detached from Moradabad and formed into a separate *zila*, known as Sabáranpur. In November, 1804, the boundaries were fixed : “On the east the Ganges, on the west the Jumna, on the north the hills of Srinagar, and on the south the Aligarh district.” Between 1804 and 1806 *parganahs* Bágpat, Loni, Dásna, Saráwa, Jalalabad, Chhaprauli, and Dadri (now in Bulandshahr) were placed under the charge of the Resident at Dehli, but were subsequently attached to the southern division of the Saharanpur Collectorate, with a Collector resident at Meerut, while the revenue affairs of the northern division were administered by a Collector resident at Saharanpur..

This arrangement lasted until 1818 A.D. In that year the *parganahs* forming the southern division of the Saharanpur district, with the Aligarh *parganahs* of Sikandarabad, Tilbegampur Ara (Ada), Dankaur, Kásna, Baran, Málágarh, Agauta, and Ahár-Malakpur, yielding a revenue of Rs. 2,51,682, were joined together to constitute the new district of Meerut. The new distribution lasted until 1824, when the Aligarh *parganahs*, with Thána Farida and Dádri, were transferred to the new district of Bulandshahr; and Khátauli, Soron, Lalukheri, Jánsath, Shamli, Baghra, and Jauli were transferred to the new district of Muzaffarnagar.”

Under the heading “Paragraph in 1837-40”, he further writes¹¹:

“In 1823 the Meerut tahsils were Meerut, Paríchhatgarh, Khátauli, Kándhla, Dásna, Hápur, and Sikandarabad. In 1834 the *jágír* of Bálá Báí Sáhíba of Gwalíar fell in, and in 1835 the tahsils were seven in number:- Meerut, Hastinápur, Kándhla, Bágpat, Dásna, Hápur, and Púth Sayána. In 1836 the estates of Begam Sumru also lapsed, and *parganahs* Sardhana, Barnáwa, and Kutána were included in this district. These *parganahs* formed distinct *tahsils* until 1840, when Barnáwa was attached to Baraut, and Hastinapur and Tárápur were added to Sardhana. Gangiru, Phugána, Titarwára, Bhúma, and Sambalhera were transferred to Muzaffarnagar soon after the death of Begam Sumru.”

Making comments on the scene between 1837 to 1840, he further mentions¹²:

“At the settlement in 1837-40 mention is made of *parganahs* Chhaprauli, Rucha, Púth, Sayána, Hastinapur-Niloha, Bhúma, Sambalhera, Tárápur, tappa Gaura, Bágpat, Loni, Barnáwa, Tánda, Dásna, Jalalabad, Meerut, Sardhana, Burhána, Baraut, Kutána, Shikárpur, and Kandhla. Of these *parganahs*, Shikarpur, Sambalhera, Bhúma, Kán- dula, Kairána, and Burhana were transferred to Muzaffarnagar in 1842. Rucha formed a portion of *parganah* Chhaprauli and is now included in it. *Parganah* Sayána was transferred to Bulandshahr in 1844. Hastinapur-Niloha, also known as Niloha-Tárápur from its principal towns, is now known as Hastinapur only. Tappa Gaura or Gohra formed a part of Hápur, separated from it by Nain Singh, Gujar, at the close of the last century, and is now

included in Hápur. The Tanda portion of Tauda Phugána or Tanda Bhagwán contained twelve villages, absorbed in Chhaprauli in 1834, while Phugána was transferred to Muzaffarnagar, and is now included in *parganah* Kándhla. Kithor was originally a tappa of Sarawa, separated from it by Jít Singh, Gújar, of Parichhatgarh, in the time of Najib Khán. Tappa Ajrára, separated from Hápur by Fateh Ali Khán, and also known as Saráwa-Ajrára, was incorporated with Sarawa in 1842.

The *tahsil* arrangement adopted by Mr. Plowden in 1842, after the transfers to Muzaffarnagar, was as follows :

The *tahsil* Arrangement adopted by Mr. Plowden in 1842, after the Transfers to Muzaffarnagar

| <i>Tahsil</i> | <i>Parganah</i> | No. of Villages | <i>Tahsil</i> | <i>Parganah</i> | No. of Villages |
|---------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Sardhana | Sardhana, ... | 80 | Baraut | Kutana | 37 |
| " | Hastinapur - Niloha | 127 | " | Chhaprauli | 36 |
| " | Tarapur | 48 | Bhagpat | Bagpat | 157 |
| Baraut | Baraut | 51 | " | Barnawa | 79 |
| Dasna | Jalalabad | 112 | Dasna | Dasna | 150 |
| " | Loni | 97 | Hapur | Púth | 46 |
| Hapur | Hapur | 75 | " | Garbmuk- tesar | 108 |
| " | Ajrára | 12 | " | Kithor | 60 |
| " | Sarawa | 50 | Meerut | Gohra Meerut | 20 357 |

Giving the details, similar innature about the administrative system, he further mentions¹³:

In 1853-54 the *parganahs* were again re-arranged, and the changes that then took place are shown in the following table because of their topographical interest, and as showing the difficulty of attempting any comparison with the statistics previous to the 1st May, 1853, when these changes came into force¹⁴:

Changes in the distribution of *Parganahs* effected in 1852

| <i>Parganah</i> | Increase | Decrease | Remarks |
|----------------------|----------|----------|---|
| Meerut | ... | 45 | 58 villages transferred to and 18 received from other <i>parganahs</i> . |
| Sardhana | 2 | ... | 5 received from and 3 transferred to Muzaffarnagar. |
| Barnáwa | ... | 8 | 18 received from and 26 transferred to other <i>parganahs</i> . |
| Jalálabad | 39 | ... | 43 received from and 2 transferred to other <i>parganahs</i> and 2 to Dehli. |
| Dásna (Ghaziabad) | | 47 | 14 transferred to Dehli, 35 to other <i>parganahs</i> , and 2 received. |
| Baraut | 4 | ... | 20 received and 16 transferred to other <i>parganahs</i> . |
| Bágpát | ... | 19 | 21 transferred to other <i>parganahs</i> and 2 received. |
| Kutána | 11 | ... | 11 received from other <i>parganahs</i> . |
| Chhaprauli | ... | 4 | 2 transferred to Baraut and 2 to Muzaffarnagar in May, 1853. |
| Niloha-Tárápur | ... | 9 | 1 gained by alluvion, 2 received from Muzaffarnagar and 12 from Meerut, 14 transferred to other <i>parganahs</i> , and 10 to Muzaffarnagar. |
| Kithor | 60 | ... | 61 received and one transferred. |
| Hápur Gaura | 38 | ... | 52 received and 14 transferred. |
| Saráwa-Ajrára | ... | 12 | 10 received and 22 transferred. |

| | | | |
|------------------------|------------|------------|--|
| Púth | 1 | ... | 1 received from Garhmuktesar. |
| Garhmuktesar | ... | 34 | 53 transferred to other <i>parganahs</i> . |
| Loni | ... | 112 | 2 transferred to other <i>parganahs</i> and 110 to Delili. |
| Total | 155 | 290 | |
| Deduct increase | ... | 155 | |
| Net decrease | ... | 135 | |

Next year, further changes were made in the district as follows¹⁵:

In May, 1853, the district was arranged amongst the following *tahsils*:

Meerut, 323 estates; Sardhana, 154; Bagpat, 277; Murádnagar, 266; Hápur, 329; Mawána, 289, or a total of 1,638 estates. The head-quarters of the Murádnagar *tahsil* were subsequently (1859) transferred to Ghaziabad. In 1859 Loni was restored to Meerut and then included 130 villages, comprising 132 estates, of which 104 were a portion of the 110 given over to Dehli in 1852, and 26 were new villages formerly belonging to the Dehli district, giving an increase of 99,784 acres to the area of the district. The number of inhabited villages in the present fiscal subdivisions are shown in the table given above, and represent the results of the union and partition of estates and the changes caused by alluvion and diluvion as found in 1872. Amongst the old subdivisions which have been allowed to fall into disuse are the following : Garhmuktesar contained the tappas of Dahána Bagsár (now called Gangadhar Bazar) and Garhmuktesar; in Hápur were tappas Gaura or Gohra, Hájipur and Hápur; and in Sarawa the tappas of Bhojpur, Kharkoda, Sarawa and Kithor (now in the Mawána *tahsil*). These *maháls* were in the dastur of Meerut, which was subordinate to the chakla of Sikandarabad (now in the Bulandshahr district), and the chakla itself was in the *sirkár* of Saharanpur and *súbah* of Dehli. Tappa Láwar and twelve others were included in *parganah* Meerut. The tappas of Chhaprauli are given under the notice of that *parganah*.”

It is a matter of no less interest that the district of Meerut, in 1856, was free from larger personal *jagirs*. It was due to death of the persons concerned and as a result of various treaties concerned. Mahadji Sindhia's daughter Rani Bala Bai, died in 1834 and her *jagirs* lapsed. During her life time, she had constructed a Shiva temple in Begamabad, a village of her *jagir*. This soon became a principal village.¹⁶ During Indian Revolution of 1857 it was attacked by the forces of Indians' side.¹⁷ Its neighboring village named Bisokhar was out of her *jagir* and it belonged to the *jagir* of another lady, much influential and too powerful popularly known as Begum Samru. During 1998-99, a number of stone panels were recovered from a field in Bisokhar¹⁸ which belonged to the Rajput period of ancient Indian history. The two villages of Begamabad and Bisokhar form the industrial township of present Modinagar.¹⁹ The 'Chhatriwala Mandir'²⁰ of Modinagar is the very temple built by Bala Bai. Another Shiva temple built or modified by the Marathas still stands at the village of Ajrara.²¹ It is said that it had been constructed by Mahadji Sindhia in the memory of both the successful military action against Nawab Fateh Ali Khan Tyagi,²² the Nawab of Ajrara, and the comemoration of his grand child born to his daughter Bala Bai at that place during that action. The Matatha *Thana* installed by him, though a double storied kuchcha building was in good condition until 1996, when the author had been conducting the village-to-village dense field work in this region of the upper Ganga-Yamuna Doab.²³ Similarly, the villages of Angadpur-Sangadpur-Garhi Tamela yield the evidences of historical importance preserved in oral traditions of history. The author came to encounter the oral evidences while conducting field work there during 1995-96. There are innumerable sites evident to the fact of same effect. It is so because of the region of the upper Ganga-Yamuna Doab had been placed under the control of the Marathas from 1788 to 1803. Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II appointed Mahadji Sindhia as the Mir Bakshi²⁴ i.e., the Commander-in-Chief of the Mughal Empirical forces; and to support his army, the area from Etawa to Haridwar was assigned to him including the qiledarship of the fort of Agra.²⁵ After the death of that great Maratha General, his adopted son Daulat Rao Sindhia²⁶ had his hold over the territories. It remained as such until the treaty of Surji Anjangaon held on December 30, 1803.²⁷ This was the reason Rani Bala Bai had a *jagir*

assigned to her by his father Mahadji Sindhia which according to the above mentioned treaty honoured by the Company rule was enjoyed and mastered by her till her death.²⁸ Much famous lady is a similar case and that is that of Begum Samru of Saradhana who was respected due to military capability of her troops. Popular Hindi novelist Amrit Lal Nagar's '*Saat Ghunghton Wala Mukhda*', is the novel based upon her life. Her status remained unchanged and her *jagir* intact ever after the fall of the Marathas. And the rise of the East India Company's rule in the area in 1803.²⁹ She had a secret treaty with the Company and so she had left her master Sindhia's cause in the battlefield. She was a Christian convert³⁰ who is credited to build the Saradhana Church, the largest Roman Catholic Church of its kind.³¹ The 'Maratha Kothi' at Saradhana,³² still in existence is the monumental heritage of the Marathas where she used to live. In the last years of her life, she shifted to the grand palace built by her for her comfort.³³ That monumental building still stands there and the Saint Charles Intermediate College is run in it.³⁴ Begum died in 1836³⁵ and as per the condition in the secret treaty, her *jagir* lapsed³⁶ and was joined to several districts concerned. The *parganas* of Barnawa, Baraut, Kutana and Sardhana and few other villages were added to Meerut District. Her army was disband. The statues in the Church show the *darbar* of the Begam.³⁷ The courtier wearing the turban on his had standing just behind the Begam's statue is Rao Harkaran Singh Tyagi.³⁸ He was Begam's Prime Minister³⁹ who had been slain in a sudden attack while discharging his duties. His son Rao Diwan Singh succeeded his father.⁴⁰ Rao Diwan Singh's only son's name was Rao Amar Singh⁴¹ whose only daughter was married in the Sarawa family of the Tyagi clan.⁴²

Chaudhary Vikram Singh⁴³ and Chaudhary Narayan Singh⁴⁴ are Rao Aman Singh's daughter's descendants. The present Budhana family is Rao Harkaran Singh's grandfather's descendants by his uncle's dependency.

Col Raghuraj Singh Tyagi,⁴⁵ Ashok Tyagi⁴⁶ and their cousins each from one of the 6 real brothers claim to be Rao Harkaran Singh's⁴⁷ grandfather's brother's descendant. The house of Late Shamsher Tiagi alias Shammi Babu,⁴⁸ the husband of Smt. Chitra Tyagi,⁴⁹ daughter of late Chaudhary Yaduvansh Narayan Singh Tyagi⁵⁰ of Asaura *riyasat* still preserve the history that the family holds.⁵¹

Notes and References

1. James Mill, *History of British India* (First published in 1818, London) Vol. 2, New Delhi : Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, Reprint 1990, 100-103, 109-113.
2. *Ibid.* Vol. 3, 78-140.
3. T. G. Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughuls : Studies in Late Mughul Delhi* [First published 1951 by the Syndics of the Cambridge University, Press], New Delhi : Orient Book Reprint Corporation, Reprint December 1969, 32.
4. *Ibid.*, 35-36.
5. Edwin Thomas Atkinson, *Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of North-Western Provinces of India, Vol. III, Meerut Division Part II, Meerut District*, Allahabad : North-Western Government Press, 1876, 197-98.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. 4, Calcutta : M. C. Sarkar & Sons, 1950, 337.
8. Actually Akbar introduced the '*mahal*' which later on became identical to the work '*paragna*'. For details, Please see: Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari*.
9. Edwin Thomas Atkinson, *op.cit.*
10. *Ibid.*, 197.
11. *Ibid.*, 198.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, 199.
14. *Ibid.*; In foot-note, he mentions:

"It would take months of labour to exhume and arrange the statistics of the villages transferred and received in 1853, so as to bring the result in accord with the state of the district in 1865 and 1879, when the regular statistics of the district were compiled, which moreover, from the care taken in their preparation, are the only valuable ones that we possess. See Collector to Commissioner, No. 181, dated October 30, 1841, and G. O. No. 1506, dated April 22, 1853, on both changes."
15. *Ibid.*, 198.
16. Vighnesh Kumar, *Ghaziabad ke Char Hazar Varsha* [in Hindi], Meerut : Hastinapur Research Institute, 2006, 136.
17. Narrative of the Events Regarding the Mutiny in India 1857-58, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1881, Paragraph No 278; Vighnesh Kumar, *1857 IN 1857 : Original Mutiny Narratives*, Vol. I, Meerut : Hastinapur Research Institute, Meerut, 2013, 78.

18. *Ibid.*
19. Rai Bahadur Gujar Mal Modi founded 'Sugar Industry' here and the name of newly emerged township became Modinagar after his surname.
20. H. R. Nevill, *Meerut : A Gazetteer being Volume IV of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, Allahabad : United Provinces Govt. Press, 1903, 209.
It mentions :
"It was founded by one Nawab Zafar Ali, who purchased the site. The place was subsequently obtained by Jats, who built a second village to the east of Zafar Ali's site and called it Budhana. From the Jats the lands passed into the hands of a lady of the Dehli royal family, who called the place Begamabad. There is a temple built by Rani Bala Bai of Gwalior and the ruins of a fine mosque erected by Zafar Ali just outside the town. The place now belongs to a body of Jats, who hold it on *bhaiyachara* tenure."
21. *Ibid.*, 188.
22. *Ibid.*, Vighnesh Kumar, *Ghaziabad ke Char Hazar Varsha* [in Hindi], Meerut : Hastinapur Research Institute, 2006, 145-60.
23. *Ibid.*, x.
24. Jadunath Sarkar, *op.cit.*, Vol. 3, 329.
25. *Ibid.*
26. James Mill, *op.cit.*; Jadunath Sarkar, *op.cit.*; T.G. Percival Spear, *op.cit.*
27. Vighnesh Kumar, *op.cit.*, 136, 184, 203.
28. For details, please see: Amrit Lal Nagar's *Saat Ghunghton wala Mukhda*.
29. The battle of Aligarh followed by the Battle of Delhi made the Company master on the actual field.
30. M. N. Sharma, *Begam Samru*.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Vighnesh Kumar, *Ghaziabad ke Char Hazar Varsha* [in Hindi], Meerut : Hastinapur Research Institute, 2006, 145-60.
33. Edwin Thomas Atkinson, *op.cit.*; H. R. Nevill, *op.cit.*, 303-304.
34. Esha Basanti Joshi, *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers: Meerut*, Allahabad : U.P. Govt. Press, 1963.
35. Brajindra Nth Benerji, *Begum Samru*, Calcutta : M. C. Sarkar, 1925, 128.
36. *Ibid.*, Edwin Thomas Atkinson, *op.cit.*, 198.
37. As soon as one enters the main historical building of the Church, he or she sees it on right hand side.
38. Preeti Sharma, *Begum Samru : Her Life and Legacy*, Delhi : Academic Excellence, 2009, 132.

39. It was at one village in Baraut. The *dhankar* episode is observed there as Rao Diwan Singh assumed the charge of the Prime Minister.
40. *The Bhat ki Pothi* preserves the genealogical history.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Genealogical table as is preserved in the *Bhat ki Pothi*, Kumhar Gate, Sonipat, Haryana.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Interview*, Shri Ashok Tyagi, son of late Chaudhary Raghbir Singh Sahib, one of the descendants of the owners of the Budhana Fort, Muzaffarnagar, U.P.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Vighnesh Kumar, *Meerut ke Panch Hazar Varsha* [in Hindi], Meerut : Hastinapur Research Institute, 1996, 122.
48. *Ibid.*
49. Vighnesh Kumar, *op.cit.*, 222.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*; *Interview*, Chauhary Yaduvansh Narayan Singh Tyagi (now late), Soodna Farm, Hapur, U.P. ★