

The Events of 1857 in Contemporary Urdu Writings

Tariq Rahman

Abstract

This paper describes two discourses in Urdu on the events of 1857. The first is that of the rebels and the second those of loyalists [of the British government]. Almost all the rebels who survived 1857 joined the latter group at least in the attitude they displayed in their public writings. The second discourse, which calls these events a mutiny (ghadar), dominated Urdu writing as well as the private domain so much that the earlier one can only be partially reconstructed by historical research. Later, this discourse was replaced by the nationalistic discourse which, among other things, changed the ghadar to jang-i-azadi (first war of independence) in Urdu writings. However, this new discourse is not the focus of this article which confines itself to the argument that, the discourse of resistance being lost or less in evidence, most of the available contemporary or near-contemporary writings in Urdu construct 1857 as a mutiny and not a war of liberation.

Introduction

The year 2007 marks the 150th anniversary of the events of 1857 which are described as ‘War of Independence’ in the nationalist historiography of both India and Pakistan but ‘mutiny’ by British historians.¹ V.D. Savarkar, a revolutionary not a historian, called it a national war of independence in his 600-page book entitled *Indian War of Independence* (1907). Since then nationalist historiography in India and Pakistan calls it just that. In India it is seen as a predominantly secular, joint Hindu-Muslim project,² but in Pakistan the Muslim role is emphasized while the

¹ K.C. Yadav, ‘Interpreting 1857, A Case Study’, in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (ed.), *Rethinking 1857* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007), pp.3-21.

² *Ibid.*, p.15.

Hindu one is ignored.³ The debate as to whether it was a ‘mutiny’ or a ‘war of independence’ goes on among historians.⁴ It also features in the works of the literary critics of Urdu. Ibadat Bareilvi, Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, Hasan Askari and Izhar Kazmi all agree that though called a mutiny (*ghadar*) earlier, it was actually a war of independence being more organized and widespread among ordinary people than a mere mutiny of the soldiery.⁵ However, Kazmi is aware that his use of the term ‘*ghadar*’ in the title (*‘Ghadar ki Tā’ bīrēn*) may be seen as being a national insult a century after the events.⁶ In this article I use the term ‘events’ or ‘uprising’ instead of the one or the other terms used for them. My objective is to describe how the contemporary writings in Urdu allude to these events. Sources in Persian and Arabic, though they are alluded to in passing, are not the focus of this article. Among the sources in Urdu which are mentioned below are contemporary, near-contemporary and some later works. Works in the last category are mentioned only if they shed light on the changing perceptions about 1857.

The emergence of Urdu as a language for non-creative discourse

Though used in poetry for a long time—as Gujrati from the 14th century and Dakkani from the 15th—Urdu was not a language for non-creative discourse till the early nineteenth century. The first Hindustani newspaper, the *Bengal Gazette*, was published from Calcutta in 1816. However, the first newspaper said to be in Urdu was *Jam-e-Jahan Numa* which was published in 1822. During the 1850s the following facts about publication are available about the North Western Provinces (NWP)—the area where anti-British feelings were very strong.

Total number of printing presses	40
Total number of newspapers	37

³ The textbooks of school children in Pakistani government schools seen by the author call the uprising of 1857 a ‘war of independence’ but do not mention the role of the Hindus in it. They imply, and sometimes assert, that it was a Muslim struggle. The recruitment of soldiers by the British in the Pakistan areas is not mentioned at all.

⁴ R.P. Singh, ‘Re-assessing Writings on The Rebellion: Savarkar to Sarendra Nath Sen’, in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *op.cit.*

⁵ Nasir Kazmi and Intizar Hussain (eds.), *1957-1857 Khial Number*, Repr. (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2007), pp.17-44.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.40.

Total number of copies of newspapers	
circulated	1,839
Turnover	Rs. 19,950 (approximately)
Books	195
Copies of above	1,03,615

Source: Report on the Native Presses in the North Western Provinces, 1853, IOR v/23118 Pt.19 Art 26, Acc No 11479 National Documentation Centre, Islamabad.

As for the books, several are reported in the early 1850s and the number shows a steady increase till after the 1860s when Hindi started competing with it. In short, Urdu had replaced Persian as the language of written communication for educated people, both Muslims and Hindus, in the areas when the soldiers of the East India Company rose against its rule.

Review of literature

The events of 1857 have featured in literature earlier—Hindi,⁷ Urdu,⁸ Bengali⁹ etc—as several works testify. The issue of the literary magazine *Khayal* [Urdu] of 1957¹⁰ for instance, is a good example relevant to our purposes. These writings refer to works in several languages, including Urdu, about 1857. The publications of the Sang-e-Meel press in Lahore for the 150th anniversary of 1857¹¹ have Urdu writings and critical responses to them. However, none of the critics have studied the diction of the contemporary Urdu writings. This article studies this diction in the work of ‘non-rebels’ and ‘rebels’. The term ‘non rebels’ refers to people who did not fight against the British or, if they did, this fact is not clearly

⁷ P.C. Gupta, ‘1857 and Hindi Literature’, in P.C. Joshi, *Rebellion 1857: A Symposium* (New Delhi, Peoples Publishing House, 1957), pp.225-35.

⁸ S. Ehtesham Husain, ‘Urdu Literature and the Revolt’, in *ibid.*, pp.236-41.

⁹ Gopal Haldar, ‘Bengali Literature Before and After 1857’, in *ibid.*, pp.257-70.

¹⁰ Nasir Kazmi and Intizar Hussain (eds.), *op.cit.*

¹¹ Mohammad Ikram Chughtai (comp.), *1857: Roznamche, Mu‘asir Taehriren, Yaddashten* [Urdu: Diaries, Memoirs and Contemporary Writings] (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2007); Chughtai (comp.), *1857: Tarikhi, ‘ilmi aur adabi paehlu* [Urdu: 1857: Historical, Scholarly and Literary Aspects] (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2007); Chughtai, *1857 Majmua’ Khwaja Hasan Nizami* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2007).

known. The ‘rebels’ (*baghi*) are those who actually fought against the British or were said to have done so in the sources of that period.

The argument

The argument of this article is that, the ‘rebels’ used the language of resistance towards the British whereas the ‘non-rebels’ did not. The former, however, mostly used categories borrowed from the religious discourse for this resistance. They legitimized their actions with reference to the alleged British attempt to destroy their religious identity. The ‘non-rebels’, on the other hand, saw this resistance as a ‘mutiny’, ‘disorder’, or catastrophe in society. The ‘rebels’ felt that the British had lost political and moral legitimacy because of bad governance and, especially, attack on religion. The ‘non-rebels’, however, appear to believe that the British were guilty of mistakes and bad governance but they had not lost political legitimacy and, therefore, armed resistance against them was, indeed, a ‘mutiny’ (*ghadar*). Both groups did not use modern terms associated with nationalism with the meanings with which these terms are used since the advent of modernity in India. Such meanings, indeed, were not available in those days.

Further, the discourse initiated by the ‘rebels’ was completely eliminated and supplanted by the alternative discourse favoured by the ‘non-rebels’ and, of course, the British. Thus, some of the contemporary and all the later writings in Urdu which have survived categorize the events of 1857 as a ‘mutiny’ and the ‘rebels’ as *baghi*. This colonial discourse was, in turn, supplanted with the internalization of nationalism as a principle of categorization of social reality in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The new vocabulary, calling 1857 as a ‘war of independence’ is misleading in so far as neither the ‘rebels’ nor the ‘non-rebels’ thought of these events in nationalistic terms. Moreover, the assumption that the ‘nation’ can be constructed of unitary space (the whole of India) or a unified people (transcending religious, ethnic and other categories) is also inapplicable to the events of 1857 since the uprising was not spread all over India – the areas now in Pakistan experienced very little of it—nor did the anti-British fighters transcend their religious identities.

The study of the key words used by different people gives us an insight into their political ideas.¹² Thus, we can understand how the ‘Other’—in this case the British or the ‘rebels’—are seen by the writers

¹² Anna Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures through their Key Words: English, Russian, Polish, German and Japanese* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997).

of Urdu. How certain discourses, backed by power of the state, became hegemonic and shaped peoples' perceptions of 1857 afterwards and how, with the rise of new ideologies, this hegemonic discourse was replaced by another equally hegemonic discourse.

Let us begin, then, with the most well known writings of the period by contemporary authors.

The writings of non-rebels

Among the types of writings considered below are memoirs, letters and histories which were written by people who were eyewitnesses except in the case of literature in which imaginative re-creation of the events was necessary.

Let us now turn to the most famous writers of the period.

Memoirs, histories and letters: The major apologist of the British, but the only one who took great pains to explain the Indian position to the British at some personal risk, was Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-98). Sir Syed probably started writing *Asbab Sarkashi-e-Hindustan ka Jawab-e-Mazmoon* (1858) in Muradabad in Urdu and then got it translated into English. However, he was in such a hurry to send it the members of the parliament in Britain that he sent the Urdu version initially. The first edition was of 500 copies and Sir Syed sent most of them to London keeping a few for himself and one for the Government of India. This was translated into English and such was the paranoia against Indians that even this was objected to by the foreign secretary.¹³

Sir Syed begins by defining the term '*sar kashi*' (literally, taking out or raising one's head) which he says is fighting against, defying or even entertaining ideas of resistance to one's government. Those who help or support the opponents of the government are also guilty of this act. He also uses the term '*baghawat*' by which he refers to the armed mutiny of the Indian soldiers.¹⁴ From this point of view, while many ordinary people were guilty of '*sar kashi*' only the armed fighters were guilty of mutiny. However, while admitting all this Sir Syed makes the point—not an easy task in those days—that the British had brought this upon themselves by acts of callousness, exploitation and cruelty towards the Indians. It was for making this point that Sir Syed's pamphlet is considered an act of great courage under the circumstances. However, one thing is clear, Sir Syed regards the Company's rule as legal and any opposition to it is, therefore, a transgression in legal and moral terms.

¹³ Mohammad Ikram Chughtai (comp.), *1857: Roznamche, Mu'asir Taehriren, Yaddashten*, op.cit., p.805.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.10.

The poet Asadullah Khan Ghalib (1797-1869) is probably the most famous poet of Urdu and certainly the greatest man of letters of his day. His Persian work *Dastanbu* (1858) is specifically written in order to appease the British. It is a journal purporting to describe what the poet experienced or what he heard about others experiences (*yā ān khuāhid būd ke shunīda mishavad*) during May 1857 to 31 July 1858. It was published in 1860 (this date is given by the chronogram *rast khez beja*)¹⁵ in the Maktaba Mufid-ul-Khalaiq in Agra by Munshi Hargopal Tafta. The first edition was of 500 copies and copies were sent to high British officials in the hope of getting financial and other benefits. It may have been 'suitably revised to meet the requirements of the situation'¹⁶ but there is no evidence either for or against this conjecture.

Ghalib begins with the usual praise (*qasida*) of Queen Victoria and describes the events in negative terms (*rastkhez beja*—unwarranted revolt; *ghadar*, *fitna* etc). These terms point to Ghalib's public stance that the whole event was morally and legally unjustified. However, even in this book he calls Delhi a jail (*zindan*) and points out that the Muslims had suffered tremendously so that their houses were dark at night (*shabāna khāna hai īn mardum bē chirāgh ast*). He was among the first to lament the discriminatory attitude of the rulers towards the Muslims. The Muslims, he says, could not even burn their dead while the Hindus could 'take them to the river and burn them' (*Hindū hamī tawānand ke murda rā bā dariyā burd o bar lab-e-abdar ātish sozand*). However, despite mentioning these grievances, Ghalib's lexicon confirms the legality of British rule.

In his letters too, where he could have been more frank, Ghalib does not challenge this basic assumption of the legality of British rule. Here, however, he laments the destruction of the city, and above all his own class, more openly. However, when writing to his friends he says he was afraid (*dartā hūn*).¹⁷ In several letters he uses the words '*fasad*', '*fitna*' etc in many letters. At one place he suggests that the name of a

¹⁵ In his letter to Mirza Tafta dated 30 March 1860 Ghalib says that according to the formula of assigning numerical value to the letters of the alphabet (*abjad*) the letters of '*rastkhez beja*' add up to 1276 Hijri (1859-60). So, if the day of reckoning is the year after, it would be in 1277 Hijri (1860-61). He also adds that the inappropriate (*beja*) doomsday or revolt (*rastkhez*) has already occurred (in 1273 Hijri or 1857), so the real one will be next year. See Ghulam Rasul Mehr, *Khutut-e-Ghalib* (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali and Sons, 1982), p.155.

¹⁶ K.M. Ashraf, 'Ghalib and the Revolt of 1857'. in P.C. Joshi, *op.cit.*, p.245.

¹⁷ To Mirza Shahab uddin Saqib, 8 February 1858, in Ghulam Rasul Mehr (ed.), *Khutut-e-Ghalib* (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali and Sons, 1982), p.92.

new magazine to be brought out by his friends about 1857 should be ‘*Ghogha-e-Sipah*’ (Chaos of the Soldiers), ‘*Fitna-e-Mehshar*’ (Evil of the Doomsday) or ‘*Rastkez-e-Hind*’ (Doomsday of India).¹⁸ He did have English friends and lamented the death of one, Major John Jacobs, at the hands of the ‘dark-faced blacks’ (*ru siah kalon*).¹⁹ In another letter Ghalib says that Delhi was attacked by five forces: the rebels (*baghi*); the British army (*khaki*) and so on.²⁰

In short, the cumulative evidence of Ghalib’s writings suggests that he regarded the uprising of the sepoys and the events which succeeded it as a breach of order. While he did condemn the brutalities of the British after their conquest of Delhi, he also considered them the legitimate rulers of the city. His references to the sepoys as ‘*kale*’ and ‘*rusiah*’—racist terms both—indicate that he regarded their power in Delhi as something of an anarchy. The British troops (*gore*) are no better than the native soldiers but, though guilty of individual excesses, is part of a legitimate order which Ghalib trusts so as to keep anarchy at bay.

There is also a European’s account of the events. The author, George Puech Shore (1823-1894), was born of ancestors who had come from France and settled down in Gwalior. His father, however, moved to district Aligarh where he died in 1876. Shore settled on the land and picked up the habits of the feudal landlords of Delhi. He even wrote poetry in Urdu which Ram Baba Saksena has referred to in his book on the European poets of Persian and Urdu.²¹ He was one of the last ‘white Mughals’ William Darlymple has written about.²²

Shore also wrote a book in Urdu called *Waqae’ Hairat Afza’* (Astounding Incidents) in 1862.²³ He and his family, being Europeans, suffered in 1857 which, of course, he describes as ‘*ghadar*’. Later, like other writers, he also uses the words ‘*fitna*’, ‘*fasad*’ and describes the ‘rebels’ as marauders. However, he uses ornate prose on the model of Rajab Ali Beg Suroor’s *Fasana-e-Ajaib* (1824) as well as verse. The book was commended in verse giving its date of completion by Munshi

¹⁸ To Munshi Shiv Naraen, 12 June 1859, in *ibid.*, p.212.

¹⁹ To Tafta, July 1858, in *ibid.*, p.130.

²⁰ To Anwar ud Daula Shafaq, in *ibid.*, p.305.

²¹ Ram Babu Saksena, *European and Indo-European Poets of Urdu and Persian*, 1943, Reprinted (Lahore: Book traders, n.d), pp.228-47.

²² William Darlymple, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (London: Harper-Collins Publishers Ltd, 2003).

²³ Ram Babu Saksena, *op.cit.*, pp.243-45.

Hargopal Tufta, Ghalib's friend, and Muzaffar Ali Raqim.²⁴ Moreover, like other Indian poets, Shore also wrote verse (*musaddas*) lamenting the ruin of Delhi.²⁵

The author makes a special note of his diction which, he claims, is specially meant to be easily comprehensible by all, especially, the British. The poet Munir gives the date of the book (1295 A. H = 1887) with reference to the language—a well-written lamentation of India in Urdu (*ik shaher ashōb Hind Urdu men acchā likh diā*).

As for the histories, Kunahiya Lal's history of 1857 in Urdu, called *Maharaba-e-Azeem* calls it 'the great war' only in the title. The rest of the book uses the same diction—*baghawat*, *fasad* etc—which other works do. Similarly, Maulvi Zaka Ullah's *Tarikh-e-Hindustan* uses the term '*hangama-e-baghawat*' for this event and '*baghi*' for those who fought the British.²⁶

Poetry: There is also a good deal writing in verse about 1857. The major responses are lamentation over the ruin and devastation of Delhi and, in general, other urban centres of north India and agony and despair over the cruel deaths of contemporaries. There is another response, that of resentment and resistance to British rule or the handling of the crisis, but it is muted because of caution. However, some people were aware of the East India Company's exploitation of India. Thus the poet Mushafī said that the 'infidel' (*kafir*) British had snatched away the wealth of India by fraud (*daghā bāzi*).²⁷ However, despite this choice of diction, used otherwise by the rebels, it is not clear which poet took what part in the uprising if any. However, poetry which is clearly rebellious has been described in the section on rebel writings.

The response of lamentations, in the form of 'Shahr-e-Ashob', is in *Faghan-e-Delhi* (1861) which contains verses of about 40 poets on the ruination and devastation of Delhi. The main focus is on the cruelties endured by the Muslims. While this may be factually correct at places it should be remembered that the poets are mostly Muslims.

²⁴ Nasreen Mumtaz Basir, '*Halat-e-Ghadar ka Aik Chashm Did Gawah: George P. Shore*' [Urdu: An Eyewitness of the Events of the Mutiny: G.P. Shore], in Muhammad Ikram Chughtai (comp.), *op.cit.*, see p.927.

²⁵ Ram Babu Saksena, *op.cit.*, p.239.

²⁶ Munshi Zakaullah, *Tarikh-e-Hindustan: Saltanat-e-Islamia ka Bian*, Vol.9 (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 1998), pp.347-48.

²⁷ Syed Ehtesham Husain, '*Urdu Adab aur Inqilab 1857*' [Urdu: Urdu literature and the Revolution of 1857], in Muhammad Ikram Chughtai, *1857: Tarikhi, 'ilmi aur adabi paehlu*, *op.cit.*, p.563.

Some of the famous names are those of Azurda Dehlavi, Afsurda Dehlavi, Tishna, Dagħ, Salik, Sozan, Zaheer, Aesh, Kamil, Mubin and Mohsin. The tone is of lamentation, resignation, fatalism and nostalgia. In some cases the victims are blamed because of their alleged ‘sins’.

Zulm goron ne kiyā aur na sitam kalōn nē

*Hum ko barbād kia apnē hīs amālon nē*²⁸

Dagħ’s attitude towards the soldiers (*purbiye*)²⁹ is similar as he calls them ‘*khuda ka qaher* (God’s wrath). He also says that they who chant ‘*Dīn, dīn*’ do not know what religion is.³⁰ The poets lament over the devastation of Delhi; they cry over the deaths of so many beautiful and talented people but they do not see the events of 1857 as a war for freedom from British rule. However, so great was British prejudice against Indians during these years that it is not surprising that anti-British language—even in the form of grievance—is muted.

Fiction: One of the most famous novelists of the period is Deputy Nazeer Ahmad (1830-1916).³¹ Nazeer Ahmad’s novel *Ibn ul Waqt* (1888), refers to the events of 1857. The protagonist, an Indian Muslim gentleman called Ibn ul Waqt, saves the life of an Englishman, Mr. Noble when he was lying wounded near Delhi. He gives him the hospitality of his house for three months after which the British prevail and Mr. Noble is again installed in a position of power. Out of gratitude he extends his patronage to Ibn ul Waqt making him an official and encouraging him to live in the European part of the city and adopt Western sartorial and culinary practices. However, this anglicized Ibn ul Waqt is ridiculed by the English and rejected by his compatriots. In the end one of his relatives, Hujjat ul Islam, convinces him that he should stop wearing western clothes while serving the British.

Hujjat ul Islam’s argument is not that British rule is wrong or it is to be resisted. Instead, he considers it a blessing. One of his arguments against westernization is that those who are westernized might consider themselves equal to the rulers and this, in his opinion, is to be discouraged if the state is to be preserved (*aur hakim o maehkum men*

²⁸ Quoted from Syed Mohammad Abdullah, *Ghadar-e-Dilli Sir Syed ki Nazar Mein* [The Mutiny of Delhi in the Eyes of Sir Syed], see in Muhammad Ikram Chughtai, *ibid.*, p.593.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.544.

³⁰ Khwaja Hasan Nizami, ‘*Dilli ki Jan Kani*’ [Urdu: Delhi’s living death], see in Muhammad Ikram Chughtai, 1857, *Majmua Khwaja Hasan Nizami, op.cit.*, p.526.

³¹ Iftikhar Ahmad Siddiqui, *Maulvi Nazeer Ahmad Dehlavi: Aehval-o-Asar* (Lahore: Majlis Tarraqi Adab, 1971).

musawat ka hona zof-e-hukumat naheen to aur kya hai?'.³² Because of such views critics have accused him of having called the 'war of independence' an evil conspiracy (*mufsidana shorich*) and made fun of the cowardice and incompetence of the Mughal princes. However, he also expresses the sufferings of the Indians after the British attack over Delhi.³³

Besides this novel and poetry, a lot of other kinds of prose writing also exists about 1857 in Urdu. Although it is not contemporary, it is relevant here because it has had so much impact on the public mind. Among the most important are Khwaja Hasan Nizami's (1878-1955) prose descriptions of the fate of the Mughal royal family. Although they read like short stories they are said to be real biographical accounts. Basically, the theme of all the accounts may be summed as: 'how the mighty are fallen'. The details and characters change but the theme remains the same. Most stories flashback to life in the palace, the eventful day of 11 May when the rebel troops enter the Red Fort, the chaotic period of a few months and then the princely characters flee in the villages and jungles of India despairing for their lives.

Although written sometimes between 1919 and 1946 at a time when nationalism was being created, the word used for the events of 1857 is still '*ghadar*'. The rebel soldiers are called '*baghi*' and many of the narrators, Mughal princes and princesses, clearly state that the rebel soldiers perpetuated all sorts of cruelties on the British. British cruelties, of which the narrators are victims, are also reported graphically.³⁴

Rashid ul Khairi's stories of the woes of the princesses are very similar in tone and theme.³⁵ In the story about Maulvi Abdul Qadir's heroic rescue of a wounded British woman from certain death the Indian soldiers are called not only rebels (*baghi*) but also cruel (*zalim*). The whole event of 1857 is called not only '*ghadar*', which is the usual term of reference to it, but also a terrible affliction or misfortune (*musibat*).³⁶ Impoverished princesses, having become the scum of the earth in the '*ghadar*'—a word they themselves use—through the pages of Rashid ul Khairi's stories.

³² *Ibid.*, p.253.

³³ Waqar Azeem, 'Ghadar Ke Afsane' in Nasir Kazimi and Intizar Hussain, *op.cit.*, pp.160-61.

³⁴ Khwaja Hasan Nizami, *op.cit.*, p.136.

³⁵ Rashid ul Khairi, '*Dilli ki Akhri Bahar*' [the last Spring of Delhi], see in Muhammad Ikram Chughtai, *1857: Tarikhi, 'ilmi aur adabi paehlu*, *op.cit.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.876-77.

The writings of the ‘rebels’

These fall into two categories: the writings of those who wrote after the war was over and those who wrote during the upheaval. The former knew that their work would be seen by the British and, very often, wrote under the patronage of British officers. As such their work is not very different in diction than the non-rebels. The writings of those writing in order to fight the British represent the true ‘rebel’ diction and worldview. Let us first take two major prose writers, Zaheer Uddin Dehlavi (1825-1911) and Moinuddin Hasan Khan as examples of former ‘rebels’.

Writings of former rebels: Syed Zaheer Uddin Dehlavi (1825-1911) was a student of Zauq and an official in the court of Bahadur Shah. He was a poet and during the events of 1857 he, along with his brother, travelled to Jhajar, Sonipat, Najeebabad, Bareilly and Rampur. In 1864 he returned to Delhi but then went to Alwar where he became a police official. He spent a fairly long time (16 or 17 years) in Tonk and then went to Hyderabad where he died in 1911. It is not known as to when the book was written but some scholars believe it must have been in 1910 when he settled down in Hyderabad.³⁷ However, the narrative begins in the present tense plunging the reader directly into the dramatic events of the hot May of 1857.

He begins by calling the mounted soldiers who had approached the Red Fort ‘*baghi*’ ‘*namak haram*’ (not true to their salt) and ‘*bala-e-asmani*’ (bolt from the blue). Moreover, he says that the soldiers themselves claimed that they were infuriated by the insistence of their British officers that they should cut greased cartridges with their teeth and, therefore, decided to mutiny all over India (*tamam Hindustan mein ghadar macha do*).³⁸ The king’s answer, corroborated by other evidence, proclaims his powerlessness and neutrality. He even offers to mediate between the rebel soldiers and the British and tells them that he would take the advice of the resident about his course of action before and when he talks to the resident, he uses the terms ‘*fitna*’, ‘*fasad*’, ‘*mzhab ka jhigra*’ (religious quarrel) etc. His diction is totally against the ‘rebels’ whom he blames for disturbing the peace of the city and the king himself. One couplet out of several is:

Nā roz-e-hashr sē kam thī azāb kī sūrat

³⁷ Asghar Hussain Khan Ludhianwi and Salahudin Ahmad, ‘*Dastan-e-Ghadar*’ [Urdu: Story of the Mutiny], 1955. Reprinted in Mohammad Ikram Chughtai (comp.), *1857: Roznmache, Mu’asir Taehriren, Yaddashten*, op.cit., p.864.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.376.

*Khudā dikhāe nā is inqilāb kī sūrat*³⁹

Although the word ‘*inqilāb*’ (revolution) has positive attributes since the French Revolution, the author’s use of the word in the context of chaos, evil and anarchy points to its negative connotations.

Dehlvi does not, however, conceal the fact of British brutalities after their conquest of the city. He says that the heads of the princes were sent to the king. But even here he blames the rebels for beginning the evil.

*Gharaz ke dīn ko samajhtē thē vo sitamgarī
Namak harāmī o mohsin kashī thī dīndārī*⁴⁰

He goes on to describe how British soldiers (‘*gore*’) intruded into people’s homes, robbed and killed people and set new records of cruelty. However, while he condemns the excesses of the British, he considers the uprising as morally reprehensible, illegal and wrong. It was, in his view, the actions of the mutinous soldiers in the first place which brought down British vengeance upon the innocent people of Delhi and the king and his family. In short, he too supports the legality of British rule.

Moinuddin Hasan Khan was the son of Nawab Qudratullah Beg from Delhi. His ancestors served the British after Lord Lake’s conquest of the North Western Provinces and were rewarded with estates, titles and pensions. The author himself, however, was the chief of police (*kotwāl*) in the service of Bahadur Shah. In May 1857, when the rebel soldiers marched to Delhi, he was on duty in the Paharganj Police Station. He saved the life of Sir Theophilus John Metcalf and his own house was raided and robbed by the rebels. After the British victory, however, he went to Mumbai and then to Arabia. Upon his return he was charged with mutiny but was absolved of all charges on the intercession of Metcalf.

His book makes it clear that the ordinary people of India, including women and men of the working classes, supported the rebel cause at least in the areas around Delhi and Lucknow.⁴¹ However, the references do not point to an organized uprising even in these areas. Of course, in the other parts of British India the common people remained indifferent to the rebel cause even if they received scanty and belated information about it.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.418.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.423.

⁴¹ Khwaja Ahmad Faruqi, ‘*Khadang-e-Ghadar*’, see in Mohammad Ikram Chughtai (comp.), *ibid.*, p.872.

This book was translated by Charles Theophilus Metcalf in English in 1898. The present author has not, however, seen the original Urdu version of the book. Though written under the watchful eyes of a pillar of the British empire, in 1878, it was published only after 1885 when the author had died. Such extreme terror of the British bears evidence of the ruthlessness with which the Indians had been put down and the resulting trauma. Was it because Moinuddin Hasan Khan had been in the anti-British camp and it was only because of the intercession of Metcalf that he was pardoned? Or because his writings were in British hands to begin with? Or because he was traumatized even when writing his memoir?—that he chose to praise the British and call his own side ‘*baghi*’ (rebels), one cannot say. However, Moinuddin, despite all his caution, does not entirely absolve the British of all wrongdoing.

He uses the words ‘*Shorish-e-Mufasssida*’, ‘*ghadar*’, ‘*balwa*’, ‘*shor*’, ‘*shar*’, ‘*fasad*’ and ‘*baghawat*’ for the events of 1857.⁴² The soldiers are called ‘*baghi*’ ‘*namak harām*’, ‘*mufsid*’ and ‘*badmāsh*’.⁴³ The story of Delhi, where he was present, confirms other peoples’ account that the rebel soldiers forced the king to acquiesce to their will and that he (the king) tried to save the lives of women and children. The soldiers, however, were not really in the control of anyone and the overall impression which emerges is that there was anarchy in the city.

Another interesting issue which emerges is that of socio-economic class. Indian society was (and remains) hierarchical and the working classes were considered unfit for war. A certain Mir Mohammad Hasan Khan, no relation of the author, had recruited weavers’ spinners of cloth, sellers of oil, and sellers of betel leaf (*dhunē*, *julahē*, *tēlī*, *tanbōlī*) in the army. This does not meet with the approval of the author who is from the gentlemanly class (*ashrāf*).⁴⁴ The author narrates incidents from all over India which, obviously, he had not witnessed personally. His tone, as already mentioned, is pro-British throughout and he regards the upheaval of 1857 as a chaotic event against legitimate rule.

‘*Rebels*’ who wrote during the struggle: Among these are those large numbers of people who produced the documents required to administer, equip, feed and lead troops and those who provided the ideological motivation.

⁴² Moinuddin Hasan Khan, *Khadang-e-Ghadar* [Urdu: the Arrow of the Mutiny], 1887, in *ibid.*, p.221.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.222.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.293.

The most effective means to disseminate anti-British feelings, however, was the press. The *Delhi Urdu Akhbar* (henceforth DUA) is referred to from 1837 but the surviving copies are from 1840.⁴⁵ Maulvi Muhammad Baqir, father of the Urdu man of letters Muhammad Husain Azad, was its editor during the crucial year of 1857. After the British conquest of Delhi he was hanged for having instigated the ‘rebels’. According to Shireen Moosvi sixteen issues of this paper from 1857 are preserved in the National Archives of India, New Delhi.⁴⁶ As the present author has not had access to these archives, all quotations and references to this and other newspapers are from secondary sources.

Baqir used Islamic diction to legitimize the uprising. Baqir’s columns from May 1857 are about the punishment of the infidels (*kafir*) by God because they planned to wipe out the religions of India.⁴⁷ He rejoiced in British defeat and considered the struggle as a war for faith. The son, not one to be left behind, supplemented this rhetoric with a poem:

O Azad, learn this lesson:
For all their wisdom and vision,
The Christian rulers have been era,
Without leaving a trace in this world⁴⁸

This newspaper also published the *fatwa* against British rule which gave Islamic legitimacy to the Muslims to rise against British rule.

According to Shireen Moosvi, the paper begins with ‘gleeful surprise’ at the sudden conquest of Delhi by the native troops (*Tilanga*) but this changes to appeal for further resistance.

However, from 14 June both the vocabulary and attitude change. Now the sipah-i-diler (‘the brave army’) the Tilangan-i nar sher (the lion-like Tilangis) are being enjoined, if Muslims, to take the name of God and the Prophet, and, if Hindus, to pray to Parmeshar and Narain.⁴⁹

The English are called infidels (*kafir*) while the Hindus share with Muslims the belief in one God (*Adi Purush*).⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Margrit Pernau, ‘The *Delhi Urdu Akhbar* Between Persian Akhbarat and English Newspapers’, *Annual of Urdu Studies*, Vol.18, 2003, pp.105-31.

⁴⁶ Shireen Moosvi, ‘Rebel Journalism: *Delhi Urdu Akhbar* May-September: 1857’, in *People’s Democracy*, XXXI: 17 (29 April 2007), pp.1-6. http://www.cpim.org/ps/2007/0429/04292007_1857.htm. Retrieved on 06 Mar 2008.

⁴⁷ DUA, 17 May 1857, in William Darlymple, *op.cit.*, p.25.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 24 May 1857.

⁴⁹ Shireen Moosvi, *op.cit.*, p.25.

⁵⁰ DUA, 14 June 1857.

Another Urdu newspaper, the *Sadiq-ul-Akhbar*, was published by Saiyad Jamiluddin Khan of Delhi. This newspaper reports the resentment prevalent in Awadh against the British annexation.⁵¹ Although the number of copies published were about 200, it was passed on from reader to reader and also read out aloud so that many times that every one knew about its contents. This newspaper was presented during the trial of Bahadur Shah Zafar as evidence against the king.

In the issue of 19 March 1857 there is the story of a person Sadiq Khan who has come from Iran and sends news about India to him. Upon this the editor asks him as to what kind of happiness the rule of the Shah of Iran will give to the people of India.⁵² The paper keeps reporting the movements of Iranian troops.

In the beginning the paper is incredulous about such reports and later it seems to be gleefully reporting about them. The *Sadiq ul Akhbar*, of 13 September says that, although news of the movement of Iranian troops was not credible just then, they would arrive one day.⁵³ On the 14th of the month the city was conquered by the British.

The newspapers retained their sympathies with the former ruling family even after the British victory. For instance, on the occasion of the former king, Bahadur Shah's death on 7 November 1862, the *Kashf ul Akbbar* (27 November 1862) laments that the empire of Taimur had ended; the state established by Akbar had disintegrated and so on. The newspaper gives the following hemistich for the date of his death (*Sarosh-e-ghaibi ne sal-e-raehlat kaha, bujha hai chiragh-e-Dehli* the angel of the unknown says the year of passing away, the lamp of Delhi is put off).⁵⁴

Similarly the *Tilism*, a newspaper in rhyming Urdu prose published from Lucknow, dwells upon the forceful annexation of the Awadh by the British.⁵⁵

In short, on the whole the most famous newspapers pointed out instances of British mismanagement before May 1857 and some turned against the British after that.

⁵¹ Anjum Faruqi Taban, 'The Coming of the Revolt in Awadh: The Evidence of Urdu News Paper', *Social Scientist*, 26:1/4 (Jan-April 1998), p.23.

⁵² Muhammad Ikram Chughtai, 1857 *Majmua* 'Khwaja Hasan Nizami, *op.cit.*, p.433.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.440.

⁵⁴ Ghulam Rasul Mehr, '1857 *Mutafarriqat*' [Urdu: miscellaneous items], *Aaj Kal*, Delhi, September, 1957. Reprinted in Muhammad Ikram Chughtai, 1857: *Tarikh, ilmi aur adabi paehlu*, *op.cit.*, p.163.

⁵⁵ Anjum Faruqi Taban, *op.cit.*, p.18.

Based on this evidence Shireen Moosvi claims that the ‘Delhi Akhbar mirrors the feelings of much of the Delhi populace, especially its educated section—its elite-- and it is singular how from the early feeling of estrangement towards the sepoys, they become in its pages, much before the fall of Delhi, the object of admiration, and then begin to be viewed as the valiant defenders and protectors of the city’.⁵⁶

But, with all deference for Moosvi’s superior knowledge of archival material in Delhi, it is not clear to me whether the *DUA* does, indeed, ‘mirror’ the feelings of much of the Delhi populace’ or even its ‘elite’? Ghalib’s letters certainly do not confirm this though, it could be argued that the poet, like everybody else who was writing after the event, was so frightened of the British that even in personal letters he was too cautious to express his real views. Moreover, whatever Ghalib’s own views were, there is no way of knowing how other people looked upon 1857.

Let us now turn to the categories of thought regarding affiliation in the middle of the nineteenth century in India. These could be personal, ‘feudal’ loyalty expressed by terms like *namak halali* (being true to one’s salt) or ethnic (*biradari*) affiliations. But, to transcend the narrowness of these, the wider categories of religious identity were also available. The ‘non-rebels’ often accused the ‘rebels’ for being ‘*namak haram*’ (betrayers of their salt). The ‘rebels’, however, used the idiom of religion though ideas of local patriotism (not giving Jhansi for instance by the Rani of Jhansi) were also used to a lesser instance. The idiom of religion was used in the Urdu pamphlets and proclamations of the rebels to legitimize their struggle against the British. Tapti Roy, for instance, refers to a 124-page long pamphlet written, or finished, on 15 September 1852 in the handwriting of Sheikh Saied Rungin Rakam. It acknowledges the British right to rule because they had started by good governance and keeping their word. Lately, however, they had lost legitimacy by breaking their word, indiscriminate taxation and, above all, attempting to destroy the faith of the Indians. This is supported by anecdotes, stereotypes and stories of British lust and drinking.⁵⁷ Yet another pamphlet, *Fateh Islam* (Victory of Islam) written between 5 and 17 July 1857, appealed to Muslim religious sentiments and was abused

⁵⁶ Shireen Moosvi, *op.cit.*, p.6.

⁵⁷ Tapi Roy, ‘Rereading the Texts: Rebel Writings in 1857-58’, in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *op.cit.*, pp.226-32.

as a fanatical piece of writing by the British.⁵⁸ Appeal was also made to *ashraf* snobbery. The British, it is alleged, treat the upper classes at par with the lower ones which, of course, is unendurable for the former.⁵⁹

Another rebel leader was Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah. There is a poetic biography of his by F. M. Taib in Urdu called *Tawarikh-i-Ahmadi* (1863). The author was an aristocrat of Lucknow and a disciple of Ahmadullah Shah. He composed the above mentioned *masnawi* in forty sub-sections. The biography glamorizes the anti-British exploits of Ahmadullah Shah who is a hero for whose actions no apology is needed.⁶⁰

Yet another known 'rebel' is Fazlul Haq Khairabadi (1798-1861). He was condemned by a British court to imprisonment and exile to Andaman in 1859. He had been charged with signing a religious decree (*fatwa*) supporting armed struggle (*jihad*) against the British. While in jail he wrote a book in Arabic called *Al-Suria al-Hindia* (1860). In its Urdu translation the words used for the war are *jihad* and for those who fought in it, *mujahidin*. However, the Maulana's point of view is religious not nationalistic. He talks of martyrdom (*shahadat*) but it is obvious that he refers to Muslims not non-Muslims who died opposing the British. As for the Muslims who fought for the British, he stigmatizes them as '*bad bakht*' (unlucky) and '*bad kaesh*' (of evil belief) and even goes so far as to dub them '*murtid*' (apostates). The British are called 'Christians' (*Nasara*) throughout and the Hindus are accused of having helped them. However, these are the Hindus of the West (*Gharbi* Hindus). The others, who were so prominent in the anti-British movement, are generally ignored. In short, for the Maulana, the mutiny was a religious war, a *jihad*, which could only be won in the name of Islam. The British were usurpers for him but so was the majority community, the Hindus. The Maulana acted on the beliefs and values of a theocratic form of rule and neither on the medieval Mughal (dynastic rule) nor on the colonial (paternalistic imperialism) nor yet on the secular democratic one.

The *fatwa* of *jihad*, written in Urdu, and attributed to Maulana Khairabadi does not contain either his name or his signature. It was first published in *Akhbarul Zafar* in Delhi. Then *Sadiq-ul-Akhbar* published it on 26 July 1857. As the Maulana reached Delhi in August he was not

⁵⁸ Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri, 'Indigenous Discourse and Modern Historiography of 1857: The Case Study of Maulavi Ahmadullah Shah' in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.240.

⁵⁹ Tapti Roy, *op.cit.*, p.233.

⁶⁰ Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.243-52.

its instigator nor did he sign it.⁶¹ However, his book mentioned above makes it clear that he agreed that *jihad* was ‘a religious duty for the people of Delhi in proportion to their capability’ (*farz-e-aēn hai ūpar tamām is shaher kē lōgōn kē aur istā‘at zurūr haē is kī farziat kē wāstē*).⁶² But Syed Ahmad Khan says that he actually saw a *fatwa* saying that this was not *jihad*. Moreover, he argues that this particular *fatwa* was fake. It even had the seal and signatures of certain dead *ulema*.⁶³ However, this point of view was not confined to the *ulema* only. A number of lay persons must have agreed with it as is evidenced by some couplets in Urdu. For instance, Munir Shikohabadi wrote on the hanging of the nawabs of Farkhabad and Maulvi Mohammad Baqir.

*Kahī Munīr nē ye un kī marg kī tārīkh
Shahīd o muttaqī o ‘ālim-e-‘ulūm-ē-nehān*⁶⁴

However, this remained a minority opinion even in the areas—sometimes called Hindustan proper—where most of the action took place. In the areas with Muslim majorities—the present day Pakistani Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Sind, Balochistan and Bangladesh—the idea of *jihad* did not gain credence or currency.

However, whatever Maulana Khairabadi’s personal opinion may be, he tried his best to save himself from punishment contrary to the romantic view that he gave evidence against himself inviting such punishment.⁶⁵ Thus there is a letter from him to Yusuf Ali Khan, the Nawab of Rampur, imploring him to intercede on his behalf with the British authorities. The nawab, being a great supporter of the British, was perceived by him as the right person to approach for such a favour. The letter in Persian dated 18 February 1859, contains the word ‘*ghadar*’ (*dar ibtidaē ghadar*—from the beginning of the mutiny) and states that ‘he has been imprisoned by them without any crime’ (*fidwī rā mahez bē jurm muqayyad kardā und*).⁶⁶ This is the Maulana’s third letter to the nawab but the only one to have survived. The Maulana’s main argument is that another person, Mir Fazle Haq of Shahjahanpur, had fought against the British.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Imtiaz Ali Khan Arshi Rampuri, ‘Maulana Fazl-e-Haq Khairabadi aur 1857 Ka Fatwa-e-Jihad’ [Urdu: Khairabadi and The Deeree of Jihad of 1857], n.d., in Mohammad Ikram Chughtai (comp.), *1857: Roznamche, Mu‘asir Taehriren, Yaddashten, op.cit.*, p.877.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.878.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.883.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.830.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.874-75.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.881.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Besides these pamphlets written in Urdu, there were proclamations, announcements, letters, orders (*farmans*), advertisements (*ishtihars*), appeals and circulars which were written in a number of languages: Persian, Urdu, Marathi etc. They were printed in the presses otherwise used to print stories and newspapers but many were simply handwritten and passed on from hand to hand. Hence, it is correct to say with Tapti Roy:

Like the *chappaties*, these cheaply printed handouts spread far with the travelling soldiers and moving civilians. Read out and listened to, printed words had the power of persuasion. It gave the mysterious, circulating *chappatis* a tangible form.⁶⁸

Thus, rebel writings did try to delegitimize British rule but more in the name of recent mis-governance and, especially, interference with traditional belief systems than any pan-Indian feeling of nationalism.

The identities the unrepentant rebels' works seem to invoke are religious and, therefore, potentially divisive for the would-be 'nation'. This point is taken up in the next section.

Mobilization of religious identities

William Darlymple, in an insightful article on the subject, points out that religion 'might not have been the only force at work, nor perhaps the primary one; but to ignore its power and importance, at least in the rhetoric used to justify the uprising, seems to go against the huge weight of emphasis on this factor given in the rebels' own documents'.⁶⁹

In this paper the language of the rebels who wrote during the uprising has been referred to. In addition to that Khairabadi's writings in Arabic which use the same theological categories (belief/unbelief) have also been mentioned. The *mujahidin*—a term reminiscent of the Afghan war against the Soviets—were about 25,000 in number (the sepoys being about 25,000 too)⁷⁰ and very articulate. Although the Muslim religious idiom—*jihad*, *dar ul Islam*, *ghazi* etc—is the most commonly visible in Urdu writings, Muhammad Baqir uses evocative terms from Hindu mythology to mobilize the Hindus against the British.⁷¹ Even otherwise, the Hindus also have to save their faith (*dharma*) from the British like the Muslims.

⁶⁸ Tapti Roy, *op.cit.*, p.234.

⁶⁹ William Darlymple, 'Religious Rhetoric in the Delhi Uprising of 1857', see Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *op.cit.*, p.38.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, see Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, p.37.

⁷¹ DUA, 14 June 1857, in *ibid.*, p.32.

However, even if the Hindus are asked to join forces against the British for the sake of expediency, it is clear that the idiom of religion is potentially divisive and medieval and not nationalistic or modernistic. One point of Taib's account is of significance for us in this context. It is that when the sepoys chose Prince Birjis Qadar, the son of Zeenat Mahal and the former ruler of Awadh, Wajid Ali Shah, as their leader, Ahmadullah Shah opposed this on the grounds that the *jihad* could only be conducted under the guidance of an *imam* and, since the prince was a Shia, he could not lead the *mujahidin* among whom the Muslims were mostly Sunnis.⁷² Moreover, Shah also destroyed the Hindu temples of Hanumangarhi which had allegedly been built 'at the site of a destroyed mosque' by Wajid Ali Shah.⁷³ In short, the religious identity, once invoked, had the potential of polarizing the country along religious lines. It was, in a sense, the opposite of the unification brought about by the secular, nationalistic sentiment.

It should, however, be mentioned that there are some references to motherland (*watan*), country (*Hindustan*) and freedom (*Azadi*). However, it is not clear whether they refer to the present-day U.P (Hindustan proper) or what came to be called British India.⁷⁴ It appears from the general use of such terms in other contexts that the particular area of present-day U.P is referred to. In any case, these references, opinion, are far less in number than the references to religious identities.

In short, the identities mobilized were predominantly religious ones as the only concept of identity available to Indians which transcended the kinship (*biraderi*) or occupational (*zat*) identities was religious in nature. Nationalism was yet to be born so the 'Indian' identity was non-existent. It is another matter that this appeal to religious identities was confined to only the writings of the rebels. It does not appear that other users of Urdu—the ones whose works have been quoted above—shared this religious outlook.

The constructions of 1857 through Urdu writings

While it is possible that many people shared the rebels' anti-British feeling in the general area of present day U.P and parts of the Punjab, the

⁷² F.M. Taib, *Tawarikh-i-Ahmadi*, 1863, Lucknow, quoted from Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri, *op.cit.*, p.249.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.247.

⁷⁴ Flag Song, 'Revolt of 1857-Flag Song', South Asian Research Centre for Advertisements, Journalism and Cartoons. https://www.sarcajc.com/Revolt_of_1857_Falg_Song.html on 06 Mar 2008. Retrieved on 29 Feb 2008.

Urdu writings which we find today are predominantly by those who thought that the upheaval of 1857 was a mutiny. It is very much possible that the fear of the British was so great that people dissembled their true sentiments but this remains a hypothesis which needs to be proved.

Most importantly, it is the use of these words – *ghadar*, *baghi*, *fitna* etc – which constructed the hegemonic discourse of the period from 1858 till about 1930. These were the words which were passed on to the next generation and into history. It was how the literate and the illiterate referred to the events of 1857. It was, indeed, the hegemonic discourse and the alternative to it came much later when nationalistic histories came to be written. And this diction conferred legitimacy upon the British. The rebel's own vocabulary of resistance, even if it was in circulation for some time, quickly gave way to the hegemonic discourse of the non-rebels we have described earlier.

So, although Savarkar's alternative view that 1857 was a war of independence was written in 1907, it was in Marhatti and its English translation became available in 1909 but was quickly banned. So, while access to this new perception was confined to the *avant garde*, ordinary users of Urdu still kept using the discourse of the mutiny constructed earlier. Even up to 1930 when Khwaja Hasan Nizami wrote his book *Ghadar ka Natija*, it was called mutiny (*ghadar*). In 1946, when this book was reissued, it came to be called *Dilli ki Saza*. He also mentions that the people of India do not like the word '*ghadar*' and it is because of this that it was changed. This book was a hand-written manuscript of a Persian book about the hangings in 1857 by the son of Ziauddin Ahmad. He wanted to call it *Ghadar ki Phansian* (the hangings in the Mutiny). However, there were objections to the word '*ghadar*' and it was changed to results ('*natija*')—*Ghadar ka Natija*.

In *Ghadar ka Natija* Ghulam Hussain Khan narrates the events of 1857 as he saw them. The usual words '*fasad*', '*hangama*', '*ghadar*' etc are used. He curses the '*talangas*' (a term for the rebel soldiers) and accuses them for being 'not true to their salt' (*namak haram*).⁷⁵ The point is that it is only by the 1940s that the idea of 1857 being a 'war of independence' rather than a 'mutiny' had gained such ascendancy over the Indian mind that the old terminology had to be changed. But when it changed, the new terminology was so sanctified with reference to nationalist sentiment that it became the new hegemonic discourse. It became part of school textbooks and gained such ascendancy over the

⁷⁵ Khwaja Hasan Nizami, *Ghadar Ka Natija*, 1930, Republished as *Dili Ki Saza* April 1946, in Khwaja Hasan Nizami, '*Dilli Ki Jan Kani*' 1925, *op.cit.*, pp.673-709.

education system, at least in Pakistan, that it is difficult to challenge now. This makes it very difficult for Pakistani historians to explain how the Punjab and the North West Frontier Province actually supplied soldiers for the British conquest of India.

Conclusion

This paper describes two discourses in Urdu to describe the events of 1857. There is the minor discourse of the ‘rebels’ themselves which describe their resistance against the British in terms of gaining freedom from unjust rulers and, for the most part, the major injustice they point to is the alleged British attack on the religious identities of the Indian (Muslims and Hindus). This discourse, however, is replaced by those who were either non-rebels or wrote after the event and they consider British rule legitimate though unjust. For them the uprising was a ‘mutiny’ and those participating in it were ‘rebels’. This alternative discourse, supported as it was by the British, gained currency to such an extent that it is no longer clear how widespread the ‘rebel’ discourse was even in the areas in which the uprising took place. However, during the first quarter of the twentieth century the discourse of nationalism, newly imported into India, changed the discourse about 1857 once again. Now, instead of ‘mutiny’, it came to be seen as the ‘first war of national independence’. This discourse, so much a part of school textbooks, does not take into account the way the events of 1857 were perceived when they occurred before the category of nationalism was internalized in the Indian consciousness.

Urdu Newspapers in the 1850s

1853

Name of Newspaper	Press	Circulation
<i>Koh-i-Nor</i>	Lahore	259
<i>Zoobdul-ool-ukhbar</i>	Agra	53
<i>Noor ool Absar</i>		244
<i>Mutba-ool-Ukhbar</i>		36
<i>Usud-ool-ukhbar</i>		44
<i>Ukhbar-ool-Huquaik-o-Taleem-ool-Khalaiq</i>		55
<i>Mutba-o-Oomdut-ool-Ukhbar</i>		33
<i>Mutba-i-Futteh-ool-Ukhbar</i>	Aligarh	42
<i>Sadiq-ool-Ukhbar</i>	Delhi	11
<i>Delhi Oordoo Ukhbar</i>		46
<i>Sadiq-ool-Ukhbar</i>		28
<i>Qiran-oos-Sadyn</i>		35
<i>Ryaz-i-Noor</i>	Multan	93

Annexure-2

Words Used by Urdu Writers about the Events of 1857

Sir Syed	Ghalib	Zaheer Uddin	George P. Shore	Moinuddin Hasan Khan	Fazlul Haq Khairabadi
<i>Sar kashi</i>	<i>Rast khez Beja</i>	<i>Bala-e-asmani</i>	<i>*Fitna</i>	<i>*Fasad</i>	<i>Jihad</i>
<i>*Baghawat</i>	<i>*Fasad</i>	<i>Inqilab</i>	<i>*Fasad</i>	<i>*Fitna</i>	
<i>*Ghadar</i>	<i>*Fitna</i>	<i>Marka-e-rastkhez</i>	<i>Shar-o-fasad</i>	<i>Shorish-e-Mufasssida</i>	
	<i>*Afat</i>	<i>Marhaba-e-Qiamat Angez</i>	<i>*Ghadar</i>	<i>*Ghadar</i>	
	<i>*Ghadar</i>	<i>Hangama-e-Jadal-o-Qatal</i>			
	<i>Ghogha-e-Sipah</i>	<i>*Ghadar</i>			
	<i>Fitna-e-Mehshar</i>	<i>Mohsin Kashi</i>			

* These words are used as synonyms in the dictionaries of Urdu.

Words Used by Urdu Writers about the Indians Fighting against the British in 1857

Sir Syed	Ghalib	Zaheer Uddin Dehlavi	George P. Shore	Moinuddin Hasan Khan	Fazlul Haq Khairabadi
<i>Baghi</i>	<i>Baghi Kale</i>	<i>Baghi</i>	<i>Baghi</i>	<i>Baghi</i>	<i>Ghazi</i>
<i>Namak Haram</i>	<i>Rusiah kale</i>	<i>Namak haram</i>	<i>Fasadi</i>	<i>Namak haram</i>	<i>Mujahidin</i>
		<i>Baghi-e-be Din Kurnamak</i>	<i>Badmashan</i>	<i>Mufsid</i>	
		<i>Ghas khudde</i>	<i>Kale</i>	<i>Badmash</i>	
		<i>Sawaran-e-Mohsin Kash</i>	<i>Namak harami</i>		
		<i>Mughwiya-e-Shaitan Sirisht</i>			
		<i>Zalman-e-be-Khauf</i>			
		<i>Shafawat Asar</i>			

Annexure-4

**Words Used by Urdu Writers about the British and the Indians’
Fighting with them**

Sir Syed	Ghalib	Moinuddin Hasan Khan	Fazlul Haq Khairabadi
<i>Angrezi fauj</i>	<i>Gore</i>	<i>Angrezi fauj</i>	<i>Nasara</i>
	<i>Angrezi fauj</i>		<i>Murtid (Muslims with the British)</i>
	<i>Khaki</i>		<i>Bad Kaesh</i>
			<i>Bad Bakht</i>

GLOSSARY

A	
<i>Afat</i>	Calamity; trouble
B	
<i>Baghawat</i>	Rebellion
<i>Baghi</i>	Rebel
<i>Bala-e-asmani</i>	Bolt from the blue; sudden calamity.
<i>Baghi-e-Be Din</i>	Rebels without religious
<i>Badmashan</i>	Hoodlums; bad character; rough
<i>Bad Kaesh</i>	of bad creed; evil belief
<i>Bad bakht</i>	of evil fortune
<i>Balwa</i>	chaos, insurrection, rebellion, mutiny (synonyms: <i>fasad</i> , <i>danga</i> , <i>sar kashi</i> , <i>baghawat</i> , <i>halchal</i> , <i>bad intizami</i> , <i>danga</i> , <i>hangama</i> .)
<i>Beja</i>	at the wrong place: inappropriate
F	
<i>Fasad</i>	destruction; evil; opposition;
<i>Fitna</i>	Conflict, fight, evil
<i>Fasadi</i>	one who begins something evil; fighter; bad character
G	
<i>Gore</i>	Whites
<i>Ghadar</i>	Rebellion
<i>Ghus khudde</i>	the digger of grass; a pejorative term for one of low status.
<i>Ghazi</i>	fighter in a religious war
H	
<i>Hangama-e-Jadal-o-Qatal</i>	Event of lighting and murder

<i>I</i>	
<i>Inqilab</i>	Revolution
<i>J</i>	
<i>Jihad</i>	Religious war
<i>Jihadi</i>	One who fights in the way of God.
<i>K</i>	
<i>Kale</i>	Blacks
<i>Khaki</i>	Those who wear mud coloured clothes as worn by soldiers in the army.
<i>Khadang</i>	An arrow made of a special wood (used with <i>ghadar</i> = the arrow of the mutiny).
<i>Khuda mara</i>	One killed (cursed) by God
<i>Kur namak</i>	Kur in Persian means ‘blind’. The expression means ‘blind to one’s salt’ i.e. not cognizant of one’s loyalties.
<i>M</i>	
<i>Mufsid</i>	Troublemaker; evil person.
<i>Murtid</i>	Apostate
<i>Mohsin kashi</i>	The killing of one’s benefactors
<i>Mughwiyān-e-Shaitān Sirisht</i>	Seducers with the character qualities of Satan.
<i>N</i>	
<i>Namak haram</i>	Untrue to his salt; unfaithful
<i>Namak harami</i>	Unfaithfulness
<i>Nasara</i>	Christian
<i>R</i>	
<i>Rast Khez</i>	Newly sprung up; the day of resurrection.
<i>Ru siah Kale</i>	Dark-faced blacks.
<i>S</i>	
<i>Sherish-e-Mufasssida</i>	The fight or conflict of the evil ones
<i>Sar Kashi</i>	Taking the head out (literal). Rebelling
<i>Sawaran-e-Mohsin Kash</i>	Riders who killed their benefactors

<i>Shaqawat</i>	Bad luck; cruelty; evil (used with <i>azar</i> = pain; trouble etc)
<i>Shor-o-Fasad</i>	Great fight; conflict
<i>Shahadat</i>	Martyrdom
Z	
<i>Zalman-e-be khauf</i>	Cruel and fearless ones