

Rangpur in Transition: The Aftermath and Consequences of the Rangpur Dhing of 1783

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Abstract

In this paper, the author would like to focus on the aftermath of the Rangpur dhing (rebellion) and its consequences. The focus shall remain mostly on the two commissions that were set up directly after the dhing to enquire into the causes of the rebellion. The lead role was taken by J.D.Paterson. The paper shall discuss how the first commission was discredited and Paterson's veracity was questioned by the administration, consequent of which the second commission was set up. The paper shall conclude that even the second commission failed to provide redressal to the peasants and some of the minor players were punished while the principal culprit Devi Singh eluded justice. Paterson's reputation was completely destroyed and Rangpur had to go through a transition after the death of their nawab and their Raja. The peasants remained marginalized as always.

Keywords: Dhing, Devi Singh, Richard Goodland, J.D.Paterson, Transition, Nawab, Raja.

Introduction

The Rangpur dhing or the Rangpur peasant rebellion started in 1783 and continued for several months. From the contemporary poems and ballads, it becomes evident that there had been instances of wanton cruelty on the part of the revenue farmer Devi Singh. His undeniable culpability had led thousands of peasants from Rangpur and Dinajpur to protest. After the events of the dhing, the administration set up the Rangpur commission under the leadership of J.D.Paterson. While he did his best, it appears the administration found some of his documents to be questionable. Subsequently the second commission was set up. This commission determined the causes of the dhing and subsequent remedies. But the main culprit Devi Singh eluded punishment. The district of Rangpur made a transition after the death of their Nawab and the Raja. The zamindars eventually benefitted from the second commission's decisions. But the peasants remained marginalized.

Existing Historiography

There are no substantial works on the aftermath of the Rangpur dhing and its consequences. Most scholars had focused on the events of the dhing and its causes. Narahari Kaviraj's seminal work on Rangpur dhing is crucial for our understanding of the subject. According to Kaviraj, the Rangpur dhing was a peasant uprising which exposed the evils inherent in the colonial system of exploitation.¹ Ranajit Guha had viewed the rebellion as a division between peasantry and government, against the government-zamindar alliance.² Jon Wilson took a new position on the subject. In his 'A thousand

¹ Narahari Kaviraj, *A peasant uprising in Bengal 1783: the first formidable peasant uprising against the rule of East India Company*, Delhi: People Publishing House, 1973, p. 76.

² Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.

countries to go',³ Wilson argued that the Rangpur uprising was against their British and Indian rulers. It was a peasant uprising, opposing an oppressive socio-political regime. James Lees's article⁴ used the example of Richard Goodlad (Goodland)⁵ and the Rangpur dthingto illustrate the nature of the Company's district bureaucracy and its relationship with the central colonial authorities in Calcutta during the late eighteenth century, examining the aims and limitations of the European officials who were sent out to administer Bengal's districts. The present author would like to shift from these arguments and focus mostly on the aftermath of the dthing and its consequences.

Methodology

Archival documents, printed primary sources, contemporary songs and ballads and secondary materials have been used in drafting the article.

Where were Rangpur and Dinajpur located?

Before we begin our discussion of the rebellion, we must consider the physiographic and geographic features of the area - Rangpur and Dinajpur, the two hotspots of the disturbances. Rangpur lies between 25 degrees 4 minutes and 26 degrees 19 minutes north latitude and 88 degrees 46 minutes and 86 degrees 55 minutes east longitude bounded on North by Jalpaiguri, on North East by Cooch Bihar, East by river Brahmaputra and the districts of Goalpara and Mymensingh, South by Bogra, and South West and West by Dinajpur. It extended over 96 miles and had an area of 3788.⁶ Dinajpur lies between 24 degrees 55 minutes and 26 degrees and 23 minutes north latitude. It falls between 88 degrees and 2 minutes and 89 degrees and 19 seconds east longitude. According to Buchanan Hamilton, Dinajpur signified the abode of beggars (from the word Diiwaj) It runs 5374 miles.⁷The district was bounded by Jalpaiguri on the North East, Purnea on the North West and West, Rangpur on the East, Bogra on South East, Rajshahi on South and Malda on South West. Karatoya river separated it from Rangpur for about 50 miles South East.⁸

Who was Devi Singh?

Devi Singh, a man styled Raja from Bijapur became these districts' revenue farmer. Devi Singh was the revenue farmer of Rangpur and Dinajpur. He belonged to an aristocratic family from Bijapur in Deccan. He was introduced as a revenue farmer in Rangpur by the Company state. He had previously been appointed as a revenue farmer in the early 1770s. He was reappointed as a farmer in 1780-81 because of his local knowledge and his vast experience. Richard Goodland, on the other hand, was the Collector

³Jon Wilson, 'A Thousand Countries to Go: Peasants and Rulers in Late Eighteenth Century Bengal', *Past and Present*, (November 2005), pp.81-109.

⁴ James Lees, 'A Character to lose': Richard Goodlad, the Rangpur dthing, and the priorities of the East India Company's early colonial administrators, (pre-publication draft), 2014.

⁵There are two spellings are of the name. Goodlad and Goodland. I have used Goodland in my article as I found this version of the name in the documents at West Bengal State Archives. Printed Materials use the name Goodlad. Goodland and Goodlad is one and the same person.

⁶West Bengal State Archives, Letter to MacDowall, dated 23rd September 1783, 24th- March -7th April 1783, Committee of Revenue.

⁷Francis Buchanan Hamilton, *A Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of the District or Zilla of Dinajpur in the Soubah of Bengal*, Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1833.

⁸Ibid., p.3.

of revenue in this area.⁹ According to the contemporary ballad Rangpur Jager Gaan¹⁰ and peasant testimonies, Raja Devi Singh was complicit in torturing the peasants both physically and psychologically. Devi Singh's monstrous nature and the cruelty that he inflicted on both the ryots and the zamindars made them terrified of him. There was a massive uproar against him. There was chaos and widespread terror because of him. When his cruelty became unbearable, the ryots rose up in a rebellion. Moreover, eventually, Devi Singh had to flee to either Murshidabad or Dhaka. The poem indicates the culpability of the Devi Singh in the dhing. His extortions and excessive revenue demands from zamindars and peasants alike prompted the Rangpur dhing.¹¹ We must delve into the causes of the rebellion.

Causes of the rebellion: institutuion of the first Rangpur Commission

As a direct consequence of the Rangpur dhing, a commission enquiring into the causes of the rebellion had to be instituted. J.D. Paterson headed the commission. When the Rangpur Commission was set up after the dhing, J.D. Paterson, the commissioner also cited a few causes. He referred to the following:¹² It is significant that Richard Goodland held the view that the riots had no legitimate reason to rebel.

- The imposition of an increase of Rs.162401(appx) on the jama of 1780 on the people of Rangpur.
- Instituting certain taxes for realising the revenue.
- The imposition of illegal taxes: derinwallah, batta, hoonderan, rusum ('rusoom'), mustajir ('mustageer') on the peasants.
- The infringement of the year's engagement entered into by Devi Singh and forcing zamindars to pay their rents in French Arcot rupees. It resulted in a loss of revenue on the part of the zamindar.
- Altering Kistbandi in the middle of the year and charging additional batta.
- Compelling the zamindars, naibs, amla, to pay sums they could not possibly pay. Beating them if they refused.
- Houses and effects of ryots are seized, ploughs and oxen were put up for sale, silver was sold at 10anna, brass and copper at 8annas, cattle were sold at 1.5anna. Ryots were forced to pay interest at 5gundas per dam on a rupee.
- Zamindari taluk was sold for less than a year's rent, then separated from the year's jama at less than the hustabud rate. The deficiency was charged to the zamindar's khamar.
- Lands of the zamindars were sold, and some of this land was given in fees to the mutasuddies.
- That by these severities Devi Singh compelled the Aluminda zamindar of Chowdranee of Conknea, Taotorgan of Mintonna (or Mintoma), Mir Mohan zamindar of Tepah, Ragubir of Bapettee, Sham Chowdhury and Ram Kant Chowdhury of Kazirhat, Kali Prasad of Fatehpur to flee the country.
- Use of corporal punishment for non-payment of revenues.
- The charge of cruelty against different persons employed in the collections like Krishna Prasad, Hareram, Surajnarain, Bahadur Singh.

⁹WBSA, 1st-19th November 1781, Committee of Revenue, Vol.9. See also W.K. Firminger, ed., Bengal District Records: Rangpur, 1779-85 (Letter Issued), Vol.4, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1921.

¹⁰Ratiram Das, 'Rangpur Jager Gaan', Rangpur Sahitya Parisad Patrika, Rangpur, B.S.1315, cited in Narahari Kaviraj, *A peasant uprising in Bengal 1783: the first formidable peasant uprising*.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹²WBSA, 1st-17th July 1783, Committee of Revenue, Vol.29.

- Devi Singh left the farming of Conknea and Tepah to Surajnarain of Punga and Basetee to Ray Judamuddin and the appointment of Sheikh Mohammad Sezawal of Kazirhat.
- The nomination of Gouri Mohan Chowdhury to the farm of 'Kharije' mahals at a newly increased sum amounting to Rs.100,195 (appx).
- Settling of Bedah, Patgong, Baikanthapur, and Perabhanj at a jama of Rs.127,668 (appx) to Mirza Taki. Paterson cited it as a cause.
- Imprisonment of zamindar Shiv Chand Chowdhury and putting him in irons for complaining to Paterson. about batta and derinwallah
- Devi Singh collected balance of riots who absconded from those who remained contrary to the general orders of the government.¹³

The commissioner of the Rangpur Commission Paterson believed, "there must have been oppression of such a nature that the wonder would have been if the people had not risen".¹⁴ He did not merely want to discover the causes of this particular rebellion, but also wanted to find a way to prevent it from happening ever again.¹⁵ He felt these complaints were not merely confined to Rangpur but extended over Dinajpur as well. Investigation into the causes of the rebellion, he felt, was going to be a lengthy process.¹⁶ Paterson felt the government must remedy 'the evils which have already occurred and prevent the consequences from becoming more extensive'. When a significant part of the country was deserted, he felt a mere investigation was not enough. He also needed to encourage them to come back, cultivate those abandoned lands, and secure revenue for the Government.¹⁷ The Rangpur dthing had led to peasant desertion, and that had subsequently resulted in a decrease in revenue collection. We may assume that the Government's decision to set up the Rangpur commission to look into the causes of the dthing and 'remedy the evil' had everything to do with these two factors.

Given the extent of the rebellion and its formidable nature, he should have been able to find evidences and testimonies but he felt thwarted by Richard Goodland, the collector of Rangpur and Dinajpur and a long time ally of Devi Singh. Devi Singh also interfered with his investigation. In fact Devi Singh complained against the ryots and zamindars. Meanwhile Paterson discovered that the areas not only were not in arrears but had paid significantly more. The ryots paid derinwallah- Rs.12,8 (appx), batta- Rs.14,11 (appx), hoonderan- Rs.1,115 (appx), mahmane- Rs.12,8 (appx), bearer and coolie – Rs.4,11 (appx), zaminee- Rs.6,14 (appx). The ryots had deserted because of these exactions. Devi Singh's complaint of balances against the country was without foundation.¹⁸ Paterson knew that it would be an uphill task if Devi Singh and Richard Goodland had so much influence. Paterson appealed to the government. Paterson eventually received the reassurance he needed from the administrators. The Committee instructed him to conduct his investigation without requiring any authorisation from anyone. The Committee of Revenue even instructed Goodland, "we have authorised M. Paterson to hear, examine, and decide upon complaints relating to oppressions preferred(sic) by the farmer on his collectors and summon such persons as he may deem necessary for ascertaining the objects of his commission without any application to you". They instructed Goodland to furnish Paterson with all the information regarding the insurrection, nature and extent of it, persons allegedly connected with it. Devi

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴WBSA, Letter from Paterson dated 22nd March 1783, 24th March–7thApril 1783, Committee of Revenue, P.V.

¹⁵WBSA, Letter from Paterson dated 31st March 1783, 24th March–7thApril 1783, Committee of Revenue.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷WBSA, Paterson, letter, dated 24th March 1783, 24th March- 7th April 1783, Committee of Revenue, Vol.25.

¹⁸Ibid.

Singh was also similarly instructed.¹⁹ Thus, Paterson was free to investigate the causes of the insurgency, the charges of oppression against the revenue farmer Devi Singh and infer based on the witnesses', and the rebels' and Devi Singh's testimonies. They all needed to be either proved or disproved.²⁰

The Committee examined testimonies of the rebels and the veracity of Paterson's report

Unfortunately with the passage of time, it became clear that that the Committee covertly shared Goodland's view on the peasant insurgents. That they had created the violent disturbances without legitimate causes and should be accordingly punished. The Committee claimed that some of the charges had been lodged without evidence. They alleged that the document that Paterson used as evidence was questionable. Consequently, the Committee decided to question Devi Singh on the matter. They asked both Paterson and Goodland to provide an estimate of the revenue of the district and accordingly they gave their reports on the estimated amount for the years 1780-1781. Paterson was asked to provide evidence for his claims. Goodland was also asked to give his testimony as the Collector of the districts. The Committee discovered there were certain discrepancies in their accounts.²¹ When Devi Singh was asked to defend himself, he accused the zamindars of falling into arrears and that they had instigated the ryots to rebel, thus stripping the latter off their agency.

Paterson's response and his report

However, Paterson did not believe that the zamindars were the instigators of the insurgency. They had neither the power nor the resources to create such disturbances. However, Paterson was not the only person who found Devi Singh guilty. Allegations of negligence had started to pour from different quarters. It was alleged that the area was in a deplorable condition due to lack of care by Devi Singh. That he had under-farmed in the previous year at the time of cultivation and due to his negligence, the whole year was lost.²² Eventually, Paterson wrote two formal reports on 17th May and 10th June. He cited oppressions as the cause of Rangpur rebellion.²³

The Government's dilemma

The Company government had to decide the course they could take. On the one hand, they had the evidence and testimonies of the rebels, the riots and Paterson himself, on the other hand, they could not possibly ignore the testimonies provided by Goodland and Devi Singh. Hence, they resolved to investigate the matter further. They had to ask some difficult questions. How far were the accusations against the Raja correct? How far was Hareram, the gomasta of Devi Singh involved in the crimes committed and cruelty inflicted on the ryots?²⁴

Eventually, a scapegoat was made of Paterson. Paterson was accused of falsifying evidence against Devi Singh and using forcible confessions from various people to implicate the revenue farmer.²⁵ The Committee had not been particularly impressed with Paterson's work. For example, they believed that Paterson's deputation was important. But Paterson himself was unaware of how crucial it was in the

¹⁹WBSA, Letter from Committee of Revenue to Goodland, 24th March -7th April 1783, Committee of Revenue Vol.25.

²⁰WBSA, Letter from Paterson dated 25th March 1783, 24th March-7th April 1783, Committee of Revenue, P.V.

²¹ WBSA, 1st-17th July 1783, Committee of Revenue, Vol.29.

²²WBSA, Letter from the collector of Rangpore with enclosures, 3rd- 29th February 1783, Proceedings of the Committee of Revenue, 1781, Vol.2, pp.19-31.

²³ WBSA, 1st-23rd September 1783, Committee of Revenue, Vol.32.

²⁴WBSA, Report of the Rangpore Commission on the cause of the insurrection in Rangpore in 1189, 21st-30th March 1787, Revenue Department, Governor General in Council Proceedings, Vol.107.

²⁵ WBSA, Testimony of Md Mallik, Committee of Revenue, 25th September -3rd October 1783, Vol.33.

proceedings. The Committee also felt that he had repeatedly delayed in providing the Committee with evidence and proofs of accusation. They also believed some of the questionnaires Paterson had formed was based on the facts he had himself provided. This is, however, not to say that the Company was unwilling to acknowledge his effort. The Committee may not have believed in Devi Singh's culpability without any concrete proof, but the officials claimed they would not have ignored any evidence presented to them by Paterson. Paterson had enough time to present his case coherently, but he did not. Instead, he omitted several points. It delayed the entire process. If the allegations of oppression against Singh turned out to be accurate and universal, the Committee claimed they would have punished him adequately.

Unfortunately for the peasants, there was a massive furore against how Paterson's Rangpur commission conducted the investigation. For instance, some of the British officials like John Dynely²⁶ and John Shore²⁷ were sceptical about Paterson's ability to prepare the report on time. They believed that Devi Singh might have been culpable, but the evidence should have been appropriately examined which had not been done. Paterson had failed to address all the questions raised in the allegations against Devi Singh. That left the Committee with the task of examining all the omissions. They felt the trial would not be a fair one without doing so. Paterson's thesis that widespread oppression had led the ryots to insurrection also remained to be proved. Since the disturbances broke out in Tepah, these officials suggested they begin their investigation from there. If there was any oppression, it must have spread from Tepah.²⁸

In addition the administrators also felt Paterson's reports were pre-mature and were not based on facts. They were mere accusations. Now Paterson's reports came under the scanner. The administrators felt –

- The charges contained the zamindars' allegations. There were also some specific charges which were not itemised in the initial list of complaints.
- Paterson appeared to have based his judgment without adequate evidence.
- In the amounts of jama and collections of Rangpur for the year 1781, as sent to the Committee by Goodland and Paterson, there was a difference in the amount of jama and collections. Paterson claimed it to be Rs.1,074,000 (appx). Goodland claimed Rs.968,340 (appx), difference being Rs.105,660 (appx).²⁹
- It also appeared there was a huge discrepancy between the accounts of revenue submitted by Goodland and the one submitted by Paterson. In thana Bihar, the difference was Rs.99,560 (appx). There were discrepancies in the accounts of the sundry articles of the zamindars as well.³⁰

In addition they felt that Paterson omitted parts of the testimonies to suit his agenda. Thus a second commission was set up.

The second commission and its judgment

Despite the misgivings, the Committee had to take the findings of the commissions into account before passing judgment. There were some merits in both the reports. The Government inferred "the

²⁶John Dynely- Director to the Durbar

²⁷John Shore-Governor General of Bengal from 1793-1797.

²⁸WBSA, 25th September -3rd October 1783, Committee of Revenue, Vol.33.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

insurrection did not appear to be the result of a deliberate and preconceived plan". The people were in an agitated condition, yet they aspired to find some redress from the Government. They were encouraged later to join a common cause in order to strengthen it. As a result, many others became their accomplices and thus became guilty according to the authority. They no longer remained eligible for any 'indulgence' from the Government anymore. However, the Government also realised that if they had received the redress they had initially sought, there never would have been a disturbance in the first place. The Government also realised zamindars' influence had waned, and they personally and materially suffered. They would not be able to involve the Government in anything anymore as it would further alarm the ryots. By this time the 'ringleaders' had taken flight. Sezawals had managed to oppress both the zamindars and the ryots equally.³¹

By the report of the commissioners on the insurrection in Rangpur and Dinajpur, which were the areas under Devi Singh, it was decided that the zamindars who had been complaining against Singh's oppression had themselves oppressed people once, long before Singh had entered the scene. However, Singh's conduct was not innocent either. The Government could have distinguished between the crimes committed by Hareram and the ones Devi Singh had committed. It was apparent Devi Singh was aware that in some cases oppression was being committed. The Government felt that he must be held responsible for them. As for Hareram, they concluded, "the proofs are specific and he as the most culpable merits the greatest punishment".³²

About the complaints against Devi Singh, the Company resolved –1) The lands purchased by Devi Singh in the name of his household Brahmin, Devi Dutt Dube and by Kushal Chand were declared invalid. They were to be returned to the zamindars without compensation. 2) Similarly, land bought by Hareram or his men were to be restored to the zamindars. 3) Singh must be compelled to repay the purchasers of the land the balances of 1781, excepting Canknea, and the lands must be restored to the zamindars once again. 4) They (zamindars) should not be held accountable for collections during that time, and the distribution would take place every Bengali year. 5) Mortgage bonds were to be declared invalid and destroyed. 6) Devi Singh must refund the following lands taken by him under amalnama fee – Rs.2911 (appx), rusum and mustajiry - Rs.1,375 (appx), chundah- Rs.393 (appx) batta (on Naraini rupees) Rs.10,100 (appx). He was directed to refund the excess batta as well. 7) He was to be compelled to pay Ganga Narain, the gomasta of Kali Prasad, zamindar of Kazirhat, the sum of Rs.1000 as the damages for the severity used towards him. 8) It was suggested that Singh was to be made accountable for the charges lodged by Paterson from February 1783 to the appointment of a new commission on 11th April 1784. 9) The amount he was to pay should be deducted from the security money he had deposited for the balance of Rangpur for the years of 1781 and 1782. 10) The rest may be returned to him after a sum is deducted from the account of Dinajpur. 11) Hareram³³ may be compelled to refund the zamindars the amount on account of seven parganas. 12) Hareram must be jailed in faujdari jail for one year. He was to be released after that period, but he should not be taken to Rangpur or Dinajpur. Whatever money he owed, that was to be paid immediately even if it meant selling off his property. He was to be declared incapable of holding the office of collections for the Government. He also had to pay Sab Chand Chowdhury, Gouri Mohan gomasta of Kazihat, Bhabani Sarkar the gomasta of Sab Chand, Krishna Chand Gupta gomasta of Brahin daroga, Kalu Choudhuri gomasta, Amos division Fatehpur or Fattapur, Jugal

³¹WBSA, 2nd-26th June 1783, Committee of Revenue, Vol.28.

³²WBSA, Letter to John Shore from Cornwallis, Fort William December 1st 1788, 13-20 January 1789, Board of Revenue proceedings Vol.58, Part 2. See also Letter to M. G. Hutch. See also Letter to McDowell, the collector of Rangpore.

³³ Hareram is spelt as Hurrām in original documents. In some secondary sources, it is spelt as Harrām. It is the same individual.

Das gomasta of Tepah, Ram Kishore gomasta of Purnea, and Gobind Majumder Naib of Gouri Mohan, for cruelty and punishment. 13) That the sums Singh was required to pay by 5th resolution must be paid to the Government, and be added to the credit of the zamindar of Rangpur, in part payment of the balances due from them, on account of 1782, the remaining balances after deducting this sum was to be claimed from the zamindars. However, after that, they would not be held responsible for that period again. 14) Drijinarain was to be released from confinement, but he should never return to Dinajpur or Rangpur again, or else he would be jailed again. 15) Raja Sunder and Kanak Sarkar were to be released but banned from Rangpur and Dinajpur. Kriparam and Ramnarain, two people, found guilty of cruelty in Dhee Jumla were be whipped 20 times and then forever banned from the Jumla.³⁴ However, Devi Singh was later elevated to being a Maharaja from a Raja. According to Demetrius C. Boulger, the Government bestowed him with numerous khillats of honour. He lived for another twenty years but he had nothing to do with taxes or revenue anymore.³⁵ So, the Second Commission succeeded where the First Commission failed. It found a readymade criminal in Hareram who was made to shoulder all the blame while Devi Singh was let go with a mere slap on the wrist. Paterson's reputation was entirely ruined.

Afterword: Rangpur in transition

Thus, the Government found Hareram to be guilty of cruelty. Moreover, they refunded the money and lands taken by Devi Singh. However, he was never sufficiently reprimanded, imprisoned or even made accountable for his acts of oppression. Goodland, who allied with him throughout his ordeal, remained in Rangpur. He would be later instrumental in bringing about the changes in the district. Rangpur would transform under him. As for Paterson, they believed him to be the 'propagator of malicious calumny'. They recommended severe punishment for his conduct.³⁶ Paterson, who had found enough evidence against the Raja and had government officials and who believed the ryots had a legitimate reason to rebel, was found guilty of misconduct. He may have been genuinely benevolent, or he may have been pragmatic. He may have assumed correctly that the peasants as the producers of lands, the Company's primary source of wealth must be protected in order to secure the following year's revenue. However, allegations against him tainted his image. The Commission led by him was eventually discredited. A Second Commission was formed, whose recommendations were accepted by the Company state in dealing with the situation. Moreover, everyone lost something. Rangpur and Dinajpur were ruined to the extent that people refused to take responsibility for collecting revenue or to farm them.³⁷

The Company state felt the consequences of the disturbances. The farming system collapsed after the insurrection of 1783. The Government now had to settle the revenue with the zamindars. In 1783 the Government had to allow Rangpur and Dinajpur some leniency in terms of their revenue demands. However, when Mr. Moore took over the district as the new Collector, he increased the revenue demands. 1783 onwards we see the same trend. The revenue demands made by Moore were even higher than the ones made by Devi Singh. This nearly caused another insurgency. However, revenues were collected without any such incident.³⁸ Politically too Rangpur was in transition. Drijinarain, the Nawab of Rangpur passed away. He had been kept as a prisoner at Bhutan. The Raja of Rangpur died on

³⁴WBSA, Letter to John Shore from Cornwallis, dated 1st December 1788, Fort William, 13th -20th January 1789, Board of Revenue proceedings, Vol.58, Part 2. See also Letter to M. G. Hutch. See also Letter to McDowell, the collector of Rangpore, 13th -20th January 1789, Board of Revenue proceedings, Vol.58, Part.2.

³⁵Demetrius C. Boulger, *Maharajah Devi Sinha and the Nashipur Raj*, London, Bloomsbury Square, 1912 (no publisher's name is available), pp.87-88.

³⁶WBSA, Letter to McPherson, from Pole and Douglas, dated 8th November 1785, Calcutta, 21st-30th March 1787, Revenue Department, Governor General in Council Proceedings, Vol.107.

³⁷WBSA, 1st September- 23rd September 1783, Committee of Revenue Proceedings, Vol.32.

³⁸W. K. Firminger, Bengal District Records Rangpur.

16 aghran after the rebellion was quashed. Before his death, he bestowed his zamindari to his son Surindranarain. The Raja's wife became the dowager queen according to the wishes of the late zamindar. All the old amlas who managed the business of the malbundee according to the directions of the Raja were to remain in place. All the business was to be transmitted through the Shibanda Gossain, a man of 'great abilities'. The diwan was to carry on his work in his absence. However, on 1st of pous 1783, M. Goodland and his diwan Krishna Prasad forcefully transferred Shibanda and the servants of the late Raja to Bihar and confined them and placed them under the charge of the Nazir Deoguk. This particular man was the sworn enemy of the old Raja and his servants. He later appointed Shamchand Khas Naviz in place of the Shibanda with the fullest support from Goodland. He flogged the diwan and imprisoned him under a guard of sepoy and demanded the official seal from the Rani, put it into Nazir Deoguk's hands and made him a powerful bureaucrat of the zamindari. Then Goodland also dismissed two platoons of sepoy who were stationed from the time of Mr Purling (the Collector of Midnapur), for the protection of the country. The seal and the business of the zamindari had never been in the Nazir Deoguk's hands during the confinement, and after the restoration of the late Raja, it had remained in the Rani's hands. Taking advantage of the chaos and widespread confusion, Nazir Deoguk styled himself the master of Rangpur. In fact, after the death of late Raja Dhirchandranarain's son Harendranarain, the current Raja, Goodland made Nazir Deoguk, the guardian of Indranarain.³⁹ These men appear to be selected for the sole purpose of punishing the zamindar's family and those who were loyal to him. The widow of the late zamindar and her young son were deliberately put in charge of the people Goodland had chosen. The loyal amlas were replaced. It is evident that Goodland blamed the zamindar's family for his misfortunes and held them responsible for falling from the Government's grace. He wanted to isolate the family. He, therefore, replaced the old amlas and sepoy who were loyal to the zamindar's family with people of his choice.

On another front, the Government continued to make changes. Kazirhat, the epicentre of the Rangpur disturbances was eventually transferred to one Khair Ullah Chowdhury. Moreover, unsurprisingly, Mirza Mohammad Taki, who had once been accused of cruelty, was allowed to remain in Rangpur. The Company made its stand clear when they defended him when he had a dispute with the then zamindar of Kazirhat regarding arrears in revenue, and they ordered the immediate sale of the latter's zamindari.⁴⁰ In 1793, the Company state decided to settle the revenues of Rangpur permanently. In Rangpur, semi feudatory estates were still held by the descendants of the officers of the Raja of Cooch Behar. The Government permitted purchasers from outside to buy these estates, but they were given limited proprietary rights. The zamindars were, however, not mere contractors of revenue. Their offices were vested with the task of collection and superintendence of the revenues of their zamindaries. Eventually, they were no longer a proprietor but "a good and useful subject of the state". At the end of the decade, they finally asserted "the country belongs to the company and we zamindars are only appointed to transact the business of it". It is to be concluded that "while the zamindars held the scraps of proprietary rights which had naturally developed out of the hereditary character of their office, their position altogether was so vague and undefined and the authority of the government as a recent conqueror was so freely allowed that any conditions of settlement and limitations would not have borne the character of unjustness or harshness". The Permanent Settlement in Firminger's words "gave proprietary rights with some uncertain reservations in favour of the ryots". However, unfortunately, they were never really appropriately enforced. "It was a pure gift, a splendid one to those who had brains

³⁹WBSA, 19th January –5th February 1784, Proceedings of Committee of Revenue, Vol.36, Part.2.

⁴⁰WBSA, 2nd January –14th December 1792, Board of Revenue.

and money to make good use of it and a fatal one to those who had neither".⁴¹ The use of corporal punishment was one of the causes of Rangpur dhing. After the Permanent Settlement, confinement, corporal punishment and sale of the property were sanctioned and legitimised by the state. The zamindars were initially notified, then sent a dastak, fining them 12 anna per day till their dues were paid. Finally, they were confined, and their properties were sold off. The sale of their property was eventually codified by Regulation No. 3 of 1794. Mr McDowall thus implied after the Permanent Settlement; the zamindars had no longer any right to lands. If they refused to render services, all their lands would be automatically forfeited. The zamindars acknowledged that now the country belonged to the Government, they as zamindars were only appointed to transact the business of it. Mr Purling, who had commenced the Decennial Settlement, wrote in 1783, that the Government was no longer a mere participator, but the real possessor of the total profits of the soils. They allow maintenance to those whose duties were devoted to the state.⁴² According to Subhajyoti Roy, under the Permanent Settlement, Kankina, Kazirhat Manthana, Kundi and Tapa zamindaries which had been formed during the Mughal rule under Mahendra Narayan of Baikantapur and Panga, managed to exist separately, under the Permanent Settlement.⁴³

Conclusion

The entire population of Rangpur and Dinajpur had risen against the excesses of Raja Devi Singh. But when it came to punishing him, the administrators made a scapegoat out of J.D.Paterson and later Hareram gomostha. The Rangpur's royal family was penalized by Richard Goodland for their role in the dhing. The zamindars who had complained against Devi Singh got their lands back from the government. Comparatively the peasants received next to nothing. Their ill fortune continued under the collectorship of Mr.Moore. It appears there was almost another rebellion just waiting to occur.

There were people like Goodland who viewed their insurgency was a rebellion without a cause. Moreover there was a tendency to mark the zamindars as the main instigators of the rebellion. It stripped the peasants off their agency. Thus the peasants remained tragic heroes of the insurgency.

⁴¹W. K. Firminger, *Bengal District Records: Midnapur 1768-1770*, Vol. 2, Calcutta: Catholic Orphan Press,1915, p.34. See also W.K.Firminger, *Bengal District Records: Midnapur 1770-1774 letters issued*, Vol. 4, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1914.

⁴² Baboo Gopal Chunder Dass, *Report on the Statistics of Rungpore for the Year 1672-73*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1874, pp. 40-58.

⁴³ Subhajyoti Roy, *Transformation on Bengal Frontier: Jalpaiguri 1765-1948*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2002. p.48.