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PhD. Thesis Title: **The Military and Civil Administration of Delhi during the
Period of Rebellion, 1857**

ABSTRACT

This work is a micro study focusing on the period of four months i.e. from 11th May to 14th September 1857, when the rebels took over the city of Delhi from the control of British officials and started managing and administering it. The objective is to bring into light the political thinking and vision of the rebels and to show that the rebels had a vision of future state. The significant marker of their vision was the establishment of an alternative government in Delhi which began working by drafting a constitution and by re-shuffling/reorganizing various institutions of governance.

The thesis takes into account the aspirations of the rebel leaders, their ‘vision’ for India after the British, their strategies of mobilization and the ‘classes’ sought to be mobilized and the type of polity/ies the rebels have envisioned after their victory. It argues that though there was anarchy and confusion during the initial days of the revolt but as soon as the confusion settled, much support came for the rebel government. There was help coming in from the neighbouring *ryasats* and regions in form of money, men and food.

There are debates over the question of loyalties and degrees of contribution by people like Maulvi Mohammad Baqar, Bakht Khan and Fazl-e Haq Khairabadi. I have taken up these debates and tried to argue that the loyalties of the educated classes keep shifting according to the circumstances. Maulvi Baqar, for example, initially wrote negatively about rebels as they created unrest in the city. But, few days later he changed his opinion and thus, we see the newspaper (*Dehli Urdu Akhbar*) issues of June 1857 were full of encouraging write-ups & editorials, supporting the rebel cause. Similar debate about the personality and contribution of Bakht Khan in revolt has been taken up. Historians have labelled him as a *wahabi* forgetting the fact he was making efforts for Hindu-Muslim unity, his *Farman* to stop cow slaughter, that his Court has members from both the community, that he had good relations with Bahadur Shah, who was a liberal and it was difficult

for *wahabi* to adjust this, and finally, that he issued a *fatwa* urging both Hindus and Muslims to unite and stand against British.

The central point of the thesis is *dastur-ul amal*, a 12-point document drafted by the rebel ideologues and sepoys of the Bengal army. Translated as constitution, this document is an important landmark in the history of the Indian sepoy mutiny. It talks about a Court Administration (written so in Urdu) and carries a number of clauses related to appointments, secrecy of the discussions, quorum, filling of the vacancies, the ceremonial role for the King, his heir-apparent and veto in military and civil deliberations. The secular character of the document is commendable: initially, the basis of the election was communal: Hindu and Muslim were the criteria, this was crossed on the draft itself. It is interesting to note that the establishment of this constitution appears to be the impact of British influence/s on the soldiers of the Bengal army. The rebels were using modern technologies without abandoning the indigenous system of governance. The criteria of rebels in following a balanced approach in governance need to be emphasized.

The new appointments in various departments were significant since many of these people were working without money and many of them were not just doing their jobs, they were well aware of the results of their engagements with the rebels, yet they did not resign from their jobs. The department of police, revenue, judiciary all played immensely in the functioning of the new government. It is also interesting that numerous nobles who had close connections with the Fort, were serving under the British regime in a very normal manner, and still maintained their connections with the Red Fort. It is these people which weakened the efforts of the rebels.

In contrast to this, the neighbouring kingdoms which had declared themselves independent previously, have now joined hands with the Delhi government and have acknowledged the sovereignty of Bahadur Shah. And therefore, the new established government was much like a federal State where regions acted in centripetal motion. They also followed the pattern of Delhi pattern of governance and established courts to deal with the disorder. The thesis uses most of the Mutiny Papers and various other indigenous sources along with the British official sources to arrive at conclusions which are closer to the reality and helps us to reconstruct the civil and military administration in the city of Delhi from the period of 11th May 1857 to 14th September 1857.