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The Strategic Architects of the Revolt of 1857: An Analysis of the Historical Role of Azimullah Khan and Rangoji Bapu

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Abstract: *The Revolt of 1857 was a landmark event in Indian history that gave a new direction to national consciousness, self-respect, and the idea of freedom in colonial India. It is regarded as the first large-scale war of Indian independence, in which soldiers, peasants, rulers, landlords, intellectuals, and common people united against British imperialism. Among the many prominent figures of this great uprising, the contributions of Azimullah Khan and Rangoji Bapu were especially significant and inspiring. Azimullah Khan was a trusted advisor, visionary diplomat, and political strategist of Nana Sahib Peshwa, while Rangoji Bapu emerged as a strong representative of Maratha pride, Indian identity, and resistance against colonial domination. Both personalities played a vital role in uniting Indian rulers, soldiers, and the masses against the British and in preparing the ideological, political, and organizational foundation of the revolt. This research paper presents a historical, political, and social analysis of the roles played by Azimullah Khan and Rangoji Bapu in the Revolt of 1857. It examines in detail their lives, political ideas, views toward British rule, relationship with Nana Sahib, foreign travels, revolutionary strategies, and contributions to the growth of Indian national consciousness. The study concludes that the Revolt of 1857 was not merely a military mutiny; rather, it was a widespread national resistance against political exploitation, cultural humiliation, economic oppression, and attacks on Indian identity, in which visionary leaders such as Azimullah Khan and Rangoji Bapu played a central role.*

In the contemporary global and Indian context, when society is confronting ideological divisions, cultural challenges, social inequalities, and moral crises, the struggle of these great revolutionaries emerges not merely as history but as a philosophy of life and a source of inspiration for nation-building. The lives of Azimullah Khan and Rangoji Bapu convey the message that national unity, cultural self-respect, visionary leadership, and public participation constitute the true strength of a nation. Their struggle inspires today's youth toward national commitment, social harmony, democratic values, and the vision of a self-reliant India. This research paper is not only an attempt to re-establish the neglected heroes of history, but also presents an important message for contemporary governance, policymakers, and society: that the sustainable progress of a nation cannot be achieved solely through economic development, but must also rest upon historical consciousness, social justice, cultural dignity, and public trust. In this sense, the Revolt of 1857 and its strategic architects continue to remain enduring sources of inspiration for India's democratic, social, and national renaissance.

Key words: Revolt of 1857, Azimullah Khan, Rangoji Bapu, Nana Sahib, National Consciousness.

Introduction- India's struggle for independence was not merely a political movement aimed at the transfer of power; it was a profound quest for self-respect, cultural identity, and national awakening. The Revolt of 1857 emerged as the first major expression of this collective consciousness, shaking the foundations of British colonial rule that had long appeared invincible. Although many British historians dismissed it as a mere "Sepoy Mutiny," Indian scholars and nationalist thinkers have regarded it as a widespread manifestation of popular resentment, patriotic aspiration, and the early spirit of national unity. The uprising was not fought only on battlefields through swords and firearms; it was equally shaped by ideas, political strategy, and covert organizational efforts. History often remembers those heroes who stood visibly at the forefront of war, yet many intellectual architects who worked behind the scenes remain overlooked. Among such figures, Azimullah Khan and Rangoji Bapu occupy a significant place, for they played a crucial role in providing ideological direction, political vision, and organizational momentum to the Revolt of 1857.

Azimullah Khan was far more than a close associate and advisor to Nana Sahib. He belonged to a rare group of educated Indians who closely observed British political culture and imperial policy during his visit to England. His experiences enabled him to understand that British domination in India rested not only upon military strength, but also upon the internal divisions and psychological subordination of the Indian people. Similarly, Rangoji Bapu emerged as a determined advocate of Maratha resurgence and national self-respect. He was not merely a symbol of resistance; rather, he represented a broader tradition of organized opposition that sought to build ideological unity between leadership and the masses. In the contemporary context, when India continues to engage with questions related to democracy, social justice, cultural identity, and accountable governance, the study of the Revolt of 1857 acquires renewed relevance. It is no longer simply an episode from the past; it serves as an intellectual mirror through which the present may also be examined.



The revolt reminds us that the true strength of a nation lies not only in military or economic power, but also in collective consciousness, social cohesion, and moral leadership.

This research paper attempts to analyze the historical role of Azimullah Khan and Rangoji Bapu in order to demonstrate that the Revolt of 1857 was not an accidental or isolated military disturbance. Rather, it was supported by a developing political vision and an emerging framework of national resistance against colonial domination. At the same time, the study seeks to encourage contemporary readers, policymakers, and institutions of governance to reflect upon a larger question: Can a nation attain true greatness solely through material progress, or does it also require historical awareness, national unity, and ethical leadership?

1. The Revolt of 1857: Historical Background- India's struggle for independence was not merely a movement for achieving political freedom; it was also a great struggle for the protection of self-respect, cultural identity, and human rights. The Revolt of 1857 was the first broad and organized manifestation of this struggle, which shook the very foundations of British imperialism in India. This uprising did not emerge suddenly; rather, it was the result of years of political exploitation, economic injustice, social interference, and military discrimination. When the suffering of a society exceeds the limits of endurance, history transforms itself into revolution. The Revolt of 1857 stands as a testimony to this historical truth.

i) Political Causes: The expansionist policies of the British East India Company gradually deprived Indian rulers of their authority and autonomy. The "Doctrine of Lapse," introduced by Governor-General Lord Dalhousie, became a major instrument for the annexation of Indian princely states. Under this policy, Satara, Jhansi, Nagpur and several other states were annexed into British territory. As a consequence, feelings of insecurity and resentment intensified among Indian kings and landlords. In particular, the discontinuation of the pension of Nana Saheb was a clear example of British political rigidity and humiliation. The British administration failed to realize that power cannot be sustained solely through force; it must also rest upon justice and trust. When a government disregards the sentiments of rulers and the people alike, dissatisfaction gradually transforms into rebellion.

ii) Economic Causes: British economic policies pushed India's traditional economy into a deep crisis. Excessive taxation, commercial monopoly and the destruction of indigenous cottage industries forced peasants, weavers and artisans into poverty. India's textile industry, once renowned throughout the world, steadily declined due to the influx of cheap machine-made British goods. Peasants were subjected to harsh taxation, while no relief was provided during periods of famine and poverty. Consequently, the people developed the belief that British rule existed solely to exploit India's resources. Economic injustice further intensified the flames of rebellion.

iii) Social and Religious Causes: The British increasingly interfered in Indian society and religious traditions. The activities of Christian missionaries, along with the colonial approach toward certain social reforms, were perceived by many Indians as an attack on their religion and culture. Although some reforms were progressive from a modern perspective, their implementation without social sensitivity created fear and mistrust among the people. Gradually, Indians began to fear that the British intended to destroy their cultural identity and religious freedom. The soul of a nation lies within its culture and traditions; when that soul is threatened, resistance becomes inevitable. In this sense, the Revolt of 1857 also symbolized the defense of cultural identity.

iv) Military Causes: Indian soldiers in the British army faced deep discrimination. Compared to British soldiers, they received lower salaries, inferior facilities, and limited opportunities for promotion. The appointment of Indians to higher military positions was almost impossible. Such discriminatory treatment generated intense resentment among Indian sepoys. The rumor that the cartridges of the Enfield rifle were greased with cow and pig fat gave an explosive dimension to this discontent. Both Hindu and Muslim soldiers regarded it as an insult to their religious beliefs. Consequently, the very soldiers who were considered the backbone of British authority became the principal force behind the rebellion. Moreover, social inequalities were also reflected in military recruitment policies. Certain castes and communities were given preference, which further deepened public resentment. This situation demonstrated that no system lacking equality and dignity can remain stable for a long time.

Thus, it is evident that the Revolt of 1857 was not merely an event of the past; it continues to convey a profound message for both the present and the future. History demonstrates that whenever a government suppresses the voice of the people, neglects their rights, adopts self-centered policies, and commits injustice merely to remain in power, social unrest inevitably emerges. Therefore, the younger generation must learn from the Revolt of 1857 that rights and justice are not granted through mercy or favor; they must be secured through awareness, struggle, and unity. For contemporary Indian leaders as well, the Revolt of 1857 remains



an important source of inspiration. It teaches that the politics of power can be meaningful only when it is founded upon justice, equality, and the protection of human dignity. The true strength of democratic governance lies in the trust of the people; if a government adopts the path of authoritarianism, exploitation, and inequality, history itself rises against it.

The revolutionaries of 1857 proved that the consciousness of a nation cannot be suppressed indefinitely. Freedom, dignity, and rights are fundamental necessities of human society; whenever attempts are made to snatch them away, revolution becomes an inevitable force of history.

2. Azimullah Khan: A Biographical Sketch- It is believed that Azimullah Khan was born in the early years of the nineteenth century, approximately between 1810 and 1820, in the Bithoor region of Kanpur, which is presently located in the state of Uttar Pradesh. However, some historians consider him to have been a resident of the Patkapur area of Kanpur. Although no authentic records regarding his exact date and place of birth are available, his life was marked by struggle, suffering, and hardships. Azimullah's father, Bahimullah, was a mason. It is said that during work, an English officer became displeased with him and, in a fit of anger, pushed him from a rooftop, causing his immediate death. This tragic incident had a profound impact on Azimullah's life. After her husband's death, his mother, Karimun Bi, moved from Bithoor to Kanpur in search of livelihood. She began working as a domestic helper in the houses of British officers. At the same time, she enrolled the young Azimullah in a good school so that he could have a better future. As Azimullah grew older, he worked in various capacities for the British-sometimes as a cook and at other times as a domestic servant. Despite difficult circumstances, he continued his education. In later years, he came to be regarded as one of the principal strategists of the Revolt of 1857. Azimullah Khan was a multilingual, farsighted, and highly intelligent individual. He acquired a strong command of English, Persian and French, which helped him understand the complexities of international politics and diplomacy. His intellectual ability, logical insight, and political acumen earned him a place among the most trusted and closest associates of Nana Sahib.

i) Close Associate of Nana Sahib: Azimullah Khan was not merely an ordinary advisor; he was also Nana Sahib's chief political guide and a skilled diplomat. He carefully studied British policies and strategies and attempted to unite Indian rulers and local powers against colonial rule. His primary objective was to formulate a broad framework of resistance against British authority. He played an active role in matters related to Nana Sahib's rights and pension claims. His political understanding and administrative capabilities inspired Nana Sahib to intensify resistance against the British. He firmly believed that the British policy of "Divide and Rule" could only be countered through Indian unity.

ii) Journey to England and Transformation of Political Thought: In 1853, Nana Sahib sent the revolutionary Azimullah Khan Yusufzai to England to present his claims regarding pension and legal rights before the British authorities. Azimullah Khan served as the secretary of Nana Sahib Peshwa of Bithoor. During his stay in England, he closely studied the British political system, administrative structure, and the actual condition of the British Empire. He also conducted an in-depth analysis of European politics and contemporary diplomatic developments. Although his mission did not succeed, the journey greatly broadened his political consciousness. He realized that, despite its apparent strength, the British Empire was not entirely free from internal contradictions and political challenges. While returning to India, he also observed the military conditions related to the Crimean War. This experience further strengthened his belief that the British Empire was not invincible and that, if the Indian forces united in an organized manner, British rule could be challenged effectively.

iii) Diplomatic Vision and Strategic Thinking: Azimullah Khan's European journey gave a new direction to his political thinking. Drawing upon the experiences and information he gathered abroad, he began formulating organized plans of resistance against British rule in India. He believed that if Indian rulers, soldiers, and the common people united in struggle, foreign domination could be overthrown. He attempted to establish coordination among various Indian powers and made a significant contribution to awakening national consciousness. His strategy was not confined merely to military conflict; rather, he sought to challenge British rule at ideological and political levels as well. It was this ideological vision and political foresight that made his role in the Revolt of 1857 exceptionally significant. Azimullah Khan is therefore regarded as one of the foremost strategic thinkers and inspirational figures of the uprising.

iv) Contemporary Relevance of Azimullah Khan: In the contemporary Indian context, the ideology and political vision of Azimullah Khan remain highly relevant. The importance he attached to national unity, political awareness, and diplomatic understanding continues to hold significance in modern democratic India. In present-day global politics, diplomacy, strategic partnerships, and information



management play a crucial role. Azimullah Khan had already understood in the nineteenth century that military strength alone was insufficient; political foresight and ideological organization were equally essential. Similar principles continue to influence India's foreign policy and national security strategies today. Furthermore, his life conveys the message that education, linguistic knowledge, and political consciousness can provide new direction to any national movement. His personality continues to inspire the younger generation.

Thus, it may be concluded that Azimullah Khan was one of the most significant personalities of the Revolt of 1857 who provided ideological and strategic foundations to the Indian freedom struggle. His diplomatic skill, political foresight, and national consciousness earned him a distinguished place in Indian history. Although many aspects of his life remain unclear and debated, it is undeniable that he made an important contribution to organizing Indian resistance against British rule. Even today, his ideas continue to inspire discussions on national unity, political awareness, and strategic vision.

3. Rangoji Bapu: Life and Ideology- Rango Bapuji Gupte was a great nationalist, diplomat, and a personality inspired by the spirit of self-rule in the early nineteenth century. He is commonly known as Rango Bapuji. He is believed to have been born in the Rohidkhor region near Pune in the Maratha territory, which was associated with the historic family of Dadaji Naras Prabhu. He belonged to the Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu community. Reliable information regarding his birth year, childhood, and early education is very limited; however, it is evident that he was deeply influenced by the heroic legacy of Shivaji Maharaj and the Maratha ideals of pride and self-respect. Rango Bapuji Gupte served for a long time as a loyal aide, diplomat, and legal representative of Pratapsingh Bhosale of the Satara State. When the British placed Chhatrapati Pratapsingh under house arrest along with Bajirao, Rango Bapuji courageously conveyed messages to the British authorities and played an important role in securing his release with the assistance of Governor Elphinstone. In order to defend the rights and justice of the Satara State, he travelled to London in 1840. There, he engaged in a legal struggle against the East India Company for nearly thirteen to fourteen years.

He presented the real condition of Satara before British society and the world through public speeches, correspondence, petitions, and publications. His strong command of the English language and powerful oratory skills established him as a prominent Indian representative. After the death of Chhatrapati Pratapsingh in 1847, Rango Bapuji Gupte continued to protect the interests of the Satara State as the guardian of the young heir and trustee of the royal property. He was not limited to legal resistance alone; he also attempted to organize Indian rulers against British authority and planned a broader movement of resistance. He played an active role in the preparations for the Revolt of 1857. His nephews Yashwantrao and Wamanrao participated in the uprising in northern India along with about five hundred Maval warriors. After the Revolt of 1857, the British carried out severe repression against his family and associates. His son Sitaram, along with his brother-in-law Keshav Nilkanth Chitre and several others, was executed. Rango Bapuji himself escaped arrest and later lived as a wandering ascetic. Around 1870, he is said to have appeared in Darwha on the banks of the Kupri River under the name "Bairagi Baba" and also spent time in the forest region of Mahur. In his later years, he adopted a life of spiritual practice, but his commitment to national consciousness and self-rule never diminished. He passed away in 1885 at his monastery in Darwha.

The ideology of Rango Bapuji Gupte was based on the principles of self-rule, national honour, organised resistance, and sacrifice. He considered British expansionist policies a serious threat to the independence and identity of Indian princely states. He sought to defend Indian self-respect through legal, political, and organised struggle. His life reflects a remarkable combination of patriotism, duty, sacrifice, and spirituality. He was not only a representative of the Satara State but also one of the early pioneers of Indian nationalist consciousness and the freedom struggle.

4. The Combined Role of Azimullah Khan and Rango Bapuji- The Combined role of Azimullah Khan and Rango Bapuji clearly indicates that the historical struggle of 1857 continues to serve as a source of inspiration even today. The unity of various princely states against British rule highlights the fact that collective effort is essential for the achievement of any major national objective. In the present context as well, institutional and regional unity is extremely necessary for addressing national and social problems, which can be understood through the following points in this research paper:

i) Political Organization: Azimullah Khan and Rango Bapuji Gupte attempted to establish coordination among the rulers, Nawabs, and military leaders of various princely states. Both clearly understood that successful resistance against the British required the unification of different centers of power; therefore, they recognized that no single princely state could defeat the British alone. On this understanding, they developed a strategy of collective action. Azimullah Khan himself wrote letters to local



rulers, calling for resistance against the British and encouraging them to support the rebellion. Rango Bapuji Gupte organized armed groups in Satara, Kolhapur, Sangli, and Belgaum, and, in cooperation with Nana Saheb Peshwa and Tatya Tope, formulated military strategies.

ii) Development of National Consciousness: Azimullah Khan and Rango Bapuji played a significant role in fostering national consciousness among the Indian populace against foreign rule. Through the publication of the newspaper Payam-e-Azadi (“Message of Freedom”) in Hindi and Urdu, Azimullah Khan sought to shape public opinion against British rule. He propagated the view that the British were not indigenous rulers of India but foreign occupiers who were continuously exploiting the country’s wealth and resources. The famous song associated with Azimullah Khan, “Hum Hain Iske Malik, Hindustan Hamara” (“We Are Its Owners, Hindustan Is Ours”), is regarded as a powerful symbol of national independence, patriotism, and the spirit of national ownership. Thus, his ideological and literary contributions played an important role in creating a favorable environment for the Revolt of 1857 and in strengthening national consciousness among the Indian people.

iii) Planning of the Revolution: According to historians, Azimullah Khan and Rango Bapuji played a significant role in planning the Revolt of 1857. Azimullah Khan is regarded as a “revolutionary messenger” and an ideological leader of the uprising. During his visit to England, Azimullah Khan carefully observed the British political and military systems. He also studied military strategies during his travels to Russia, France, and Crimea. Rango Bapuji Gupte is considered one of the key architects of the 1857 revolt. His activities included sending messages to military cantonments, establishing contact with rulers, and organizing secret meetings as part of a wider revolutionary strategy.

iv) Hindu–Muslim Unity: Azimullah Khan (Diwan Azimullah Khan Yusufzai), who served as the secretary and later the Prime Minister of Nana Sahib, was one of the prominent leaders of the Indian Uprising of 1857. Through his inspiring songs and influential speeches, he played a significant role in fostering mutual goodwill, harmony, and unity between the Hindu and Muslim communities. He clearly understood that the British policy of “Divide and Rule” could be effectively resisted only through broad-based social and religious unity. During the Revolt of 1857, Hindus and Muslims in many parts of India jointly opposed British rule. The strength of the uprising rested to a considerable extent on Hindu–Muslim solidarity, and extensive cooperation between the two communities was evident among both soldiers and the general population. Several later nationalist thinkers, among whom Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was particularly prominent, regarded Hindu–Muslim cooperation as a vital foundation of India’s national strength during the freedom struggle. Throughout his public life, Maulana Azad consistently advocated Hindu–Muslim unity and firmly opposed the partition of India.

v) Role in the Kanpur Rebellion: Kanpur was a major center of the Revolt of 1857, where the uprising took place under the leadership of Nana Saheb. Azimullah Khan was one of the key strategists of this rebellion and served as the Diwan (Prime Minister) of Nana Saheb. He played an important role in organizing both soldiers and civilians. During the siege of Kanpur, he attempted to negotiate with the British commander, Major-General Hugh Wheeler, regarding the release of prisoners. The temporary British defeat in Kanpur dealt a serious blow to British authority, although they later regained control. Rango Bapuji Gupte supported Nana Saheb and Tatya Tope by organizing armed groups in the Maratha regions, thereby providing significant assistance to the uprisings in Kanpur and central India.

5. Perspectives of English Sources and Indian Historians- There are clear differences in the interpretation of the role and character of Azimullah Khan in English historiography and in Indian nationalist and critical historical writings. In English sources, he is often portrayed as a conspirator or extremist, whereas many Indian historians regard him as a political leader and a representative of nationalist consciousness during the Revolt of 1857.

i) V. D. Savarkar’s Perspective: Freedom fighter and historian V. D. Savarkar described the Revolt of 1857 as the “First War of Indian Independence.” In his major work *The Indian War of Independence – 1857* (first published in 1909, London/Netherlands), he presents the uprising not merely as a military mutiny but as a well-organized national movement. According to Savarkar, figures such as Azimullah Khan, Nana Saheb, Tatya Tope, Rani Lakshmbai and Bahadur Shah Zafar were key leaders of the revolt. He argues that the uprising of 1857 was a coordinated and widespread movement in which various leaders actively resisted British rule. In this context, Azimullah Khan played an important role in giving the movement an ideological and political national character.

ii) S. N. Sen’s Perspective: Under the official centenary study (1957), S. N. Sen examined the Revolt of 1857 in a more objective manner in his book *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*. According to him, the uprising



was not merely a Sepoy Mutiny but the result of widespread political, social, and economic discontent. Sen argues that the revolt arose from multiple causes and, in certain circumstances, was almost inevitable, as no subjugated nation can permanently coexist under foreign rule. However, he does not agree with Savarkar's concept of the revolt as the "First War of Independence" or the idea of national unity implied in it. Sen regards leaders such as Azimullah Khan as part of the political dimension of the revolt, but he does not interpret it as an organized national war, as Savarkar does. Instead, he views it as a multicausal uprising.

iii) R. C. Majumdar's Critique: R. C. Majumdar considered the Revolt of 1857 primarily a limited regional uprising. In his work *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857* (1957), he clearly stated that the event was neither fully national in character nor a war of independence. According to Majumdar, the actions of the sepoys lacked any clear sense of nationalism or a consciousness of independence. He interprets the revolt as a breakdown of the old feudal structure and an expression of political discontent. However, he acknowledges that individuals such as Azimullah Khan and Nana Saheb posed a serious challenge to British authority and played an active role in resisting it. Majumdar disagrees with Savarkar's arguments regarding "Hindu-Muslim unity" and the idea of a national uprising. Nevertheless, he accepts that some local leaders organized resistance against British rule. His interpretation is based on the activities of Azimullah Khan and other primary historical sources.

6. Main Causes of the Failure of the Revolution/Rebellion- The objective of this research paper is to present a logical, source-based, and holistic analysis of the given causes in order to clarify that the failure of any revolution or revolt was not merely the result of military or immediate factors. Rather, it was the consequence of the combined impact of organizational, technological, socio-political, and economic structures, along with the dialectical factors embedded within them. The major points of this analysis are as follows:

i) Lack of Organization: The revolutionaries lacked unified leadership and a clear organizational structure. The objectives, strategies, and leadership of various regional groups differed from one another, resulting in a lack of coordination and long-term planning. Furthermore, the absence of trust and cooperation among different social groups—such as military officers, peasants, royal families, and the urban intellectual class—further deepened the weakness of central leadership. Consequently, there was a lack of continuous and well-planned campaigns against the British, and temporary successes could not be sustained over the long term.

ii) Lack of Modern Resources: The British possessed modern weapons, advanced military training, and a well-structured military-administrative system. They also had an effective communication network, including railways and the telegraph, along with a strong logistical framework. Furthermore, they were capable of minimizing communication-related errors, which enabled the rapid and efficient movement of troops and essential supplies. In contrast, the Indian rebels depended on traditional weapons, limited financial resources, and inadequate training. This disparity provided the British with a significant tactical and strategic advantage.

iii) Moderate Attitude or Collaboration of Local Rulers and Influential Classes: Many Indian rulers, zamindars and influential local groups maintained their alliances with the British or actively supported them. Some chose to side with the British in order to safeguard their feudal authority and the security of their states, while others considered participation in the revolt to be highly risky. Due to the indifferent, moderate, or mixed attitude of these local powers, the rebellion failed to receive the essential political, military, and financial support it required.

iv) Limited and Incomplete National Unity: During this period, national consciousness was gradually developing; however, it had not yet attained a broad and inclusive character. The priorities of different communities varied on the basis of language, religion, caste, varna, sectarian affiliations, social hierarchy, untouchability, regional identity, and local interests. These social and cultural divisions hindered the development of widespread public support and confined the rebellions to isolated regional events.

The above analysis makes it clear that the effectiveness of rebellions and social movements does not depend solely on satyagraha or collective uprisings; rather, it also requires strong organizational structures, efficient resource management, and inclusive leadership. Priority should be given to capacity building by strengthening organizational capabilities at the local level, including administrative coordination, transparent financial management, and effective information systems. At the same time, investment in shared leadership and the development of an inclusive identity is essential so that movements can become broader, more organized, and more influential.



Effective resource management requires systematic planning, transparency, and equitable distribution mechanisms, as unequal access to resources often intensifies social fragmentation. Likewise, it is necessary to establish clear and accountable coordination mechanisms between local interests and national objectives. As part of an effective communication strategy, transparent, multilingual, and participatory dialogue policies should be adopted in order to maintain public trust and participation.

7. The Historical Legacy of Ajimullah Khan and Rangoji Babu- Ajimullah Khan and Rangoji Babu provided an ideological direction to the Indian independence movement. Both leaders demonstrated that an organized and systematic struggle against foreign rule was essential. Their political foresight and organizational capacity subsequently inspired the broader Indian national movement. Scholarly opinion varies regarding the nature of the Revolt of 1857 and the role of Ajimullah Khan in it. According to V. D. Savarkar, the uprising of 1857 was “India’s First War of Independence.” He regards it as a planned national movement and considers leaders such as Ajimullah Khan to have played an important role in shaping its national character. This view is presented in his work *The Indian War of Independence–1857* (1909).

In contrast, S. N. Sen argues that 1857 cannot be regarded merely as a military mutiny, as it also reflected widespread political, social, and economic discontent. However, he does not fully accept it as a complete national war. In his work *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* (1957), Ajimullah Khan is associated with the political aspects of the revolt, but he is not presented as a decisive national leader. R. C. Majumdar, on the other hand, considers the Revolt of 1857 to be limited and regional in nature rather than a comprehensive national struggle for independence. He recognizes individuals such as Ajimullah Khan as leaders who challenged British authority, but he questions their sense of nationalist consciousness. This interpretation is found in his work *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857* (1957). Despite these differing views, it is evident that the impact of the 1857 uprising was widespread. The movement spread across Delhi, Kanpur, Jhansi, Lucknow, Bareilly, Bihar, and Central India, involving participation from various sections of society. Ajimullah Khan and Rangoji Babu sought to elevate the struggle beyond a mere change of power by linking it to national honor, dignity, and the aspiration for freedom. Ajimullah Khan’s diplomatic skills and Rangoji Babu’s organizational vision significantly contributed to broadening the scope of the revolt.

Thus, their contribution remains inscribed in the golden pages of Indian history as a symbol of national unity, dignity, and the consciousness of freedom. Their ideas and actions continue to serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for future generations.

Conclusion- The Revolt of 1857 was a significant event in Indian history, representing one of the earliest organized expressions of resistance against colonial rule. It challenged the legitimacy of British imperial authority and contributed to the emergence and development of nationalist consciousness within Indian society. The revolt was not merely the result of military discontent; rather, it was a manifestation of widespread public grievances arising from political, economic, social, and cultural factors. In this context, leaders such as Azimullah Khan and Rangoji Babu played a crucial role in strengthening the ideological and organizational dimensions of the movement. Azimullah Khan critically examined British policies and sought to establish coordination among various Indian political and military forces, while Rangoji Babu contributed to the revival of Maratha political traditions and the promotion of aspirations for self-rule. Both leaders encouraged national unity, self-respect, and resistance to foreign domination. In particular, by emphasizing Hindu–Muslim cooperation and collective struggle, they helped broaden the social base of the revolt and strengthened its nationalist character. Although the Revolt of 1857 did not achieve its immediate political objectives, its historical significance remains profound. It provided a strong foundation for the development of Indian nationalism, the articulation of anti-colonial sentiment, and the aspiration for independence. In the subsequent phases of the Indian national movement, the experiences and memories of 1857 continued to influence the evolution of ideas related to national unity, self-government, and freedom. Thus, the contributions of Azimullah Khan and Rangoji Babu were not confined solely to the events of 1857; rather, they occupied an important place in the broader process of the formation and development of Indian nationalist thought.

आया फिरंगी दूर से, ऐसा मंतर मारा, लूटा दोनों हाथों से, प्यारा वतन हमारा।
आज शहीदों ने है तुमको, अहले वतन ललकारा, तोड़ो गुलामी की जंजीरें, बरसाओ अंगारा।
हिन्दू मुसलमों सिख, हमारा भाई भाई प्यारा, यह है आजादी का झंडा, इसे सलाम हमारा।

The above song is widely discussed in the context of the Revolt of 1857. According to popular belief, it was published in the newspaper *Payam-e-Azadi* and is generally attributed to the revolutionary Azimullah Khan. Renowned scholar of revolutionary literature, Dr. Bhagwan Das Mahaur, in his doctoral thesis “The Impact of the 1857 War of Independence on Hindi Literature” and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar



in his writings, accorded special significance to this song. Some historians and literary scholars have regarded it as one of the earliest national songs of India. Although there is no complete scholarly consensus regarding its status as the “first national song of India,” the song nevertheless serves as a powerful expression of the national consciousness that emerged during the Revolt of 1857, resistance to colonial rule, and the ideal of Hindu–Muslim–Sikh unity.

Even in the era of neoliberalism and globalization in the 21st century, the literature related to the Revolt of 1857 and the ideological and literary expressions associated with Azimullah Khan provide an important foundation for understanding the historical process of the development of Indian national consciousness, cultural unity, and collective resistance against colonial rule. This body of literature not only preserves historical memories but also offers significant ideological insights for contemporary society. Just as the voice of national unity emerged powerfully in 1857 by transcending divisions of religion, caste, language, and region, so too does this literature continue to inspire the values of dialogue, tolerance, social harmony, and collective responsibility in the present age—an age marked by social polarization, communal tensions, caste-based inequalities, cultural intolerance, and the widespread dissemination of misinformation through digital media. From this perspective, a contemporary reinterpretation of the literature of 1857 is not merely an exercise in historical retrospection; rather, it constitutes a significant intellectual intervention for both present and future India. It reminds us that the true strength of a nation lies not solely in its military or economic capabilities, but also in its unity amidst diversity, shared cultural heritage, democratic values, and collective sense of responsibility. Therefore, a critical and contextual study of the literary legacy of 1857 remains as relevant today for nation-building, social cohesion, democratic consciousness, and inclusive development as it was during the period of the struggle for independence. Thus, the literature of 1857 is not merely a repository of the past; it also serves as a source of inspiration for understanding contemporary challenges and for building a more inclusive, democratic and integrated India in the future.

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