

META DATA

Theme: Forgotten Icon of 1857 - Begum Hazrat Mahal

Subject : History

Class : Class XIII Part III

Linkage of Theme: Rebels and the Raj – The Revolt of 1857 and its Representations.

Objectives:

1. To create awareness on the contribution of different sections of society in the Revolt of 1857.
2. To appreciate the courage and valour displayed by Begum Hazrat Mahal in her struggle against British forces.
3. To encourage discussion on the importance of memorialising events and personalities.

Key Words : Revolt, Hazrat Mahal, Awadh, Nawab, Queen Victoria, Wajid Ali Shah, Wali.

Description

The Revolt of 1857 is an important chapter in the history of colonial India. While many scholars have termed it as *India's first war for Independence* and *'an uprising'*, some call it a *'sepoy mutiny'* and *'an unorganized rebellion destined to fail'*. Its causes lay deeply embedded in the grievances that many sections of Indian society nurtured against the British rule. Much has been written about the revolt and a number of books have provided ample space to various leaders who led the revolt. But we must not forget that there were many others who played a significant role during the revolt, most of who have been confined to a small paragraph in history books. The names of Rani Laxmibai, Tantia Tope, Nana Saheb and Bahadur Shah Zafar are familiar to many in the context of the Revolt of 1857. But it is equally

important to remember that there were many others belonging to different sections of society who stood their ground against the British. One of those unsung icons of the Revolt of 1857 was the erstwhile Begum of Awadh, Begum Hazrat Mahal, wife of the then ruler of Lucknow, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. By sheer strategy and strength of character she led the revolt against the British in the absence of her husband who was deposed in 1856 and sent to exile in Calcutta.

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BEGUM HAZRAT MAHAL – The Forgotten Icon of 1857



Nawab Wajid Ali Shah



Begum Hazrat Mahal

<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/23/Washah1.jpg>

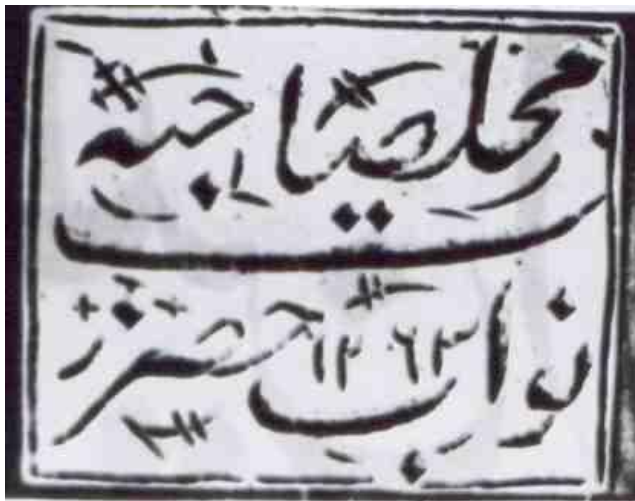
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/64/Begum_hazrat_mahal.jpg/200px-Begum_hazrat_mahal.jpg

Silver rupee of Wajid Ali Shah, struck at Lucknow in AH 1267 (1850–51 CE) and showing the Awadh coat of arms on the reverse. The two figures holding the pennants are intended to be fish.



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/af/Rupee_of_Wajid_Ali_Shah_of_Awadh.jpg/240px-Rupee_of_Wajid_Ali_Shah_of_Awadh.jpg

Seal of Hazrat Mahal



"While the seals of all other queens bore the symbol of 'bel-butes' and flowers hers showed the 'sword' and the 'dagger'..."

'Ghadar ke Phool'

<http://oudh.tripod.com/bhm/bhmseal.jpg>

Early Life of the Begum

Begum Hazrat Mahal was the wife of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, ruler of Lucknow. According to local legends she was brought up to be a dancer but she caught the fancy of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah and became part of his harem. After she gave birth to a son, she was given a higher status of Begum. Her maiden name was Muhammadi Khanum and she was bestowed the title 'Hazrat Mahal' after the birth of their son, Birjis Qadr. She was an extraordinary woman who decided to revolt against the mighty British. She has been given the name Iftikharun-Nisa, 'the pride of all women' as she had the courage to rebel against the British in 1857.

After the British took over Awadh, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was exiled to Calcutta. However, Hazrat Mahal did not accompany her husband to Calcutta. She preferred to stay behind and taking advantage of the discontentment in Awadh arising due to British rule, took charge of the administration. With the help of popular support and revolutionary forces, she proclaimed her 14 year old son as the Nawab of Awadh. She took charge of the affairs in the state of Awadh and seized control of Lucknow. By virtue of her bravery and intelligence and with the help of supporters like Sarafad-daulah, Maharaj Bal Krishna, Raja Jailal Singh and Mammon Khan she tried to take over Awadh. She appointed Raja Jailal Singh as the leader of her forces. With his help, she arranged for her son, Prince Birjis Qadr, to become Wali of Awadh.

Nawab Birjis Qadr 1856



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/4/47/Birjis_Qadr.jpg/200px-Birjis_Qadr.jpg

Qaiserbagh complex at Lucknow built by Wajid Ali Shah (1847-



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/78/La_Martini%C3%A8re_02.jpg

The Begum Asserts Herself

When she assumed control of Awadh, they started forcing Company officials to leave Lucknow. Orders of British officials to vacate the palace, Hazrat Mahal decided to fight and with the help of her loyal followers, she took control of Lucknow. However, her army was ill-equipped and had little training. Moreover, the British were offering pardons to those Indians who could prove they were not responsible for the deaths of British citizens. Many people took up the offer of the British to save themselves and on March 6 1858, the British recaptured Lucknow.

The Begum Started Fortifying Lucknow When the British Attacked It



Gates Of Palace At Lucknow-

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9d/Gates of Palace at Lucknow William Daniell 1801.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9d/Gates_of_Palace_at_Lucknow_William_Daniell_1801.jpg)

La Martiniere Where Fierce Fighting Took Place Here

The British forces fought a fierce battle with the forces of Hazrat Mahal.



http://lucknowupindia.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/6/9/22692634/6895134_orig.jpg

The Begum's Efforts to Save Lucknow

Begum Hazrat Mahal was forced to leave the city with her army and followers. She joined Nana Sahib and attacked the British army at Shahjahanpur in collaboration with Maulvi Ahmadullah of Faizabad. However, she could not reestablish herself and her son in Lucknow. She was ultimately forced to leave the country and finally found asylum in Nepal where she died in 1879.

The Gun Used By the British During The Revolt

There were many reasons for the defeat of Begum Hazrat Mahal. One was the use of superior weapons by the British.



<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-T4PSbqFcL0k/Um3jPhiOuAI/AAAAAAAAADfs/8Evq0RvJhjQ/s1600/2013-10-27-081.jpg>

The 93rd Highlanders entering the breach in the wall of the Secunderbagh, Lucknow

<http://i.dawn.com/large/2015/10/56348162321f4.jpg>



British Troops Sinking A Shaft, And Lying In Wait For The Rebels Mining Their Way Into The Residency

http://www.outlookindia.com/public/uploads/images_old/lucknow_residency_mining_20060703.jpg



The Sikander Bagh .



During the 1857 uprising in Lucknow Sikander Bagh was the venue for a fierce battle

British Forces Retaking Lucknow In March 1848

<http://www.robinsonlibrary.com/history/asia/india/history/graphics/sepoy.gif>



British Residency before The Revolt Of 1857

http://www.laxys.com/city_lko/1British%20Residency.jpg



The British Residency before it was destroyed during the siege of 1857

Ruins of The British Residency

<http://www.sheldonchsmith.com/images/india/lucknow1.jpg>



The Defiant Begum in Nepal

Despite all this, she remained defiant and declined all overtures of the British. She remained in Nepal and refused all terms of agreement made by the British government. When Queen Victoria issued a proclamation taking over the Company's possessions in India, she was the only one who responded and criticised the British. She accused the British of taking over the country by taking advantage of disunity among the Indians. She remained in Nepal and refused all terms of agreement made by the British government.

Memorialising Our Icons

Stamp Issued By The Government Of India In Memory Of Hazrat Mahal



Stamp Issue Date	:	10/05/1984
Postage Stamp Denomination	:	0.50
Postal Stamp Serial Number	:	1123
Postal Stamp Name	:	BEGUM HAZRAT MAHAL

<http://www.indianpost.com/>

To honour and acknowledge the contribution of Hazrat Mahal, the Government of India issued a commemorative stamp on 10 May, 1984. The first day cover was designed by C.R. Pakrashi and 15,00,000 stamps were issued.

Begum Hazrat Mahal Park , Lucknow

<http://images.mapsofindia.com/my-india/victoria-begam-hazrat-mahal-lucknow-665x498.jpg>



On 16 August,1962, Begum Hazrat Mahal of Avadh was honoured at a simple ceremony held in the Victoria Park(Lucknow) on Independence Day. Information Minister Banarsi Das declared the marble memorial open. It had been built by the state government in the memory of the Begum who had fought against the British in the First War of Independence of 1857. The memorial is a marble tablet which has four circular brass plaques bearing Coat of Arms of Avadh Royal Family.It was decorated with strings of flowers and illuminated with multi-coloured bulbs and neon tubes. The inaugural function was attended by two great grandsons of the Begum and other ministers of the state government. The Begum Hazrat Mahal Park was once a rally ground and was used for Dusshera and other celebrations. The monument is decorated with fountains, trees, flowers and stoned pathways which adds to the beauty of the park and attracts large number of visitors.

TOMB OF BEGUM HAZRAT MAHAL Near JAMA MASJID KATHMANDU



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/37/Hazrat_Mahal%27s_Tomb_in_Kathmandu.jpg/220px-Hazrat_Mahal%27s_Tomb_in_Kathmandu.jpg

Begum Hazrat Mahal's tomb is located in Kathmandu near Jama Masjid, Ghantaghar. It is looked after by the Jama Masjid Central Committee. There were reports of cracks in the tomb. The family of Begum Hazrat Mahal has urged Union and state governments to start a dialogue with Nepalese authorities so that restoration work on the tomb could be undertaken. Ali Mirza who is the fifth generation descendant of Wajid Ali Shah urged for the restoration of the monument. He however added that the restoration work can begin only when life returns to normal.

ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

1 Can you find a parallel in contemporary times of woman/women fighting bravely to save their land?

Answer.....(Hint-induction of women fighter pilots)

2 Who were the Hindu supporters of Hazrat Mahal?

1. _____

2. _____

(Answer -MaharajBal Krishna, Raja Jailal Sigh)

3 Suggest reasons for the failure of Revolt at Awadh.

..... (Hint: ill-equipped army, lack of materials, infighting, overtures made by the British)

Source Study For The Teacher

QUEENVICTORIA'S PROCLAMATION

Recognizing that one of the causes of the Mutiny had been the fear that the British intended to make all Indians Christians, Queen Victoria proclaimed that although *"firmly relying ourselves upon the truth of Christianity and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any other subjects."*

Begumhazrat Mahal's Reply To Queen's Proclamation

In the proclamation it is written that the Christian religion is true, but no other creed will suffer oppression, and that the laws will be observed towards all. What has the administration of justice to do with the truth or falsehood of a religion? That religion is true which acknowledges one God and knows no other. Where there are three gods in a religion, neither Mussulman nor Hindus - nay, not even Jews, sun-worshippers or fire-worshippers - can believe it to be true. To eat pigs and drink wine, to bite greased cartridges, and to mix pig's fat with flour and sweetmeats, to destroy Hindu and Mussulman temples on pretense of making roads, to build churches, to send clergymen into the streets and alleys to preach the Christian religion, to institute English schools, and pay people a monthly stipend for learning the English Sciences, while the places of worship of Hindu and Mussulman are to this day neglected - with all this how can the people believe that religion will not be interfered with? The rebellion began with religion, and for it millions of men have been killed. Let not our subjects be deceived; thousands were deprived of their religion in the northwest and thousands were hanged rather than abandon their religion. "

ACTIVITY FOR THE TEACHER

- Study the above Source and initiate a discussion in class on the attitude and courage of the Queen.
- Do you think the arguments made by the Queen are substantive? Do you agree with her arguments?
- Is it important to memorialize Events and Icons? Why?



