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Racial Supremacy Bias Witnessed in Robert Henry Wallace Dunlop's 'Service and Adventure with the Khakee Resselah; or, Meerut Volunteer Horse during the Mutinies of 1857-58' : A Historical Survey

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Abstract

The Indian Revolution of 1857–58 was a large-scale uprising against British rule in India, sparked by a mutiny of Indian soldiers (sepoys) in Meerut on May 10, 1857. The revolt quickly spread to various regions, including Delhi, Agra, Kanpur, and Lucknow. Despite its reach, the rebellion was ultimately unsuccessful, with the British forces suppressing it after the rebels were defeated in Gwalior on June 20, 1858. On November 1, 1858, the British offered amnesty to those rebels not involved in murder, although they did not officially declare the conflict over until July 8, 1859. The racial discrimination and exploitation of Indians was a major factor in the Revolution of 1857. The present paper is a historical survey of racial supremacy bias witnessed in Robert Henry Wallace Dunlop's Service and Adventure with the Khakee Resselah; or, Meerut Volunteer Horse during the mutinies of 1857-58

Keywords

Indian Revolution of 1857–58, Racialism, Racial supremacy bias, Robert Henry Wallace Dunlop, False and perverted history, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Euro-centric approach, supremacy.

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Writing on the episode of 1857 in the 'Acknowledgements' Prof. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya while editing the proceedings of the conferences held in December 2006 addresses the 1857 as the 'Uprising of 1857'. He remarks¹:

"On behalf of the Indian Council of Historical Research I would like to thank the Chairman of the National Implementation Committee, Shri Arjun Singh of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, for a generous grant for funding the conference at which the papers in this volume were presented in December 2006 as well as for other projects to commemorate the uprising of 1857."

Why does a professor like him use the noun 'Uprising of 1857'² is not beyond doubt. A great freedom fighter named V.D. Savarkar, more than 100 years ago, has named it as '*Indian War of Independence of 1857*'.³ Quoting his work while in the Ahmadnagar Fort Prison Camp from August 9, 1942 to March 28, 1945.* Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru writes⁴:

"A great deal of false and perverted history has been written about the Revolt [1857] and its suppression. What Indian think about it seldom finds its way to the printed page. Savarkar wrote 'The History of the War of India Independence' some thirty years ago, but his book was promptly banned and is banned still."

Exposing 'Racialism' of the Europeans during 1857, the following is worth-mentions⁵:

"Nehru deals with the Revolution of 1857 in the seventh chapter of his book under the sub-titles—'The Great Revolt of 1857. Racialism' and 'The Techniques of British Rule : Balance and

Counterpoise'. He discusses many aspects of this great historical event in the history of Indian people."

Jawahar Lal Nehru, on Indian Revolution of 1857, again writes⁶:

"The Revolt threw up some fine guerrilla leaders. Feroz Shah, a relative of Bahadur Shah, of Delhi, was one of them, but, most brilliant of all was Tantia Topi who harassed the British for many months even when defeat stared him in the face. Ultimately when he crossed the Narbada river into the Maratha regions, hoping to receive aid and welcome from his own people, there was no welcome, and he was betrayed. One name stands out above others and is revered still in popular memory, the name of Lakshmi Bai. Rani of Jhansi, a girl of twenty years of age, who died fighting. 'Best and bravest of the rebel leaders', she was called by the English general who opposed her."

What Indian people witness is a change from the 'Revolt' in 1942 to the 'Uprising' in 2006: though Savarkar named it 'War of Indian Independence of 1857' in 1907 while commemorating the martyres who had lost their lives during 1857-59. The author of this article suggested it as '1857 ka Viplava'⁷ in 2006 and again based on the strongest evidences, he writes naming it "Indian Revolution of 1857"⁸.

In fact, the Euro-centric approach⁹ to Indian history suggests automatically same inbuilt bias towards both the nature of the event and the Indian people taking part in it. The early European writers tried their best to prove this event as merely the 'Sepoy Mutiny'¹⁰ and they were, due to their racial prejudice of the opinion that the Indians taking part in it against the colonial British imperialism were not parallel to their European counterparts in terms of bravery and competency.

One of the finest examples is that of Mr. Robert Henry Wallace Dunlop who was posted as the Magistrate and Collector of the Meerut District in the then North-Western Provinces of India during 1857.¹¹

He was out of the station and so unaware but suddenly he came to know about the outbreak of Indian Revolution of 1857. In his own words¹²:

"On the 31st of May, happening to arrive at the village of Nuggur, near the source of the Beas river, we met Major Hay, the Assistant Commissioner of Kooloo, with a young officer, on his way to Lahoul on sick leave, from them we learnt of the

massacres of Meerut and Delhi, of the rapidly spreading flames of revolt; the aspect of affairs (our misfortunes only reaching us) looked even more gloomy than the reality."

From the next sentence, he can be judged to what this article is going on to expose. It is not difficult to smell the racial supremacy bias when he uses the words 'Anglo-Saxon name' and 'our supremacy'. He remarks¹³:

"It was evident that the time had really come, of which I had frequently reflected on the possibility, when all who bore the Anglo-Saxon name in this country must join their brethren to defend our supremacy, or die hard in losing it."

Mr. Dunlop, knowing about the order of the Commander-in-Chief to military men on general leave to come back to join their duty, decided to return to join his duty too. This sense of dutifulness is witnessed in the following narration of his own¹⁴:

"An order of the Commander-in-Chief to military men on general leave required speke's immediate return, and, as the few weeks of cool air I had enjoyed had given me, apparently, a fresh lease of life, I deemed the commands of duty equally imperative in my own case: the next morning, saw us bidding adieu to our hospitable host, Major Hay, and returning by forced marches to the plains."

In the very next line Mr. Dunlop, refers to 'young Willoughby' and underlines the words—'Anglo-Saxons' and 'supremacy' as follows¹⁵:

"Here we rapidly acquainted ourselves with the unredeemed horrors of Meerut, of the 10th May, or the dreary detail of foul treachery and butchery at Delhi, ... the light struck by young Willoughby, the first hero of our great Indian tragedy, and which roused throughout India the stern devoted spirit that led a handful of Anglo-Saxons to battle with indomitable energy for the supremacy their fathers had won, and which finally planted the colours of England on the shattered site of that during deed which Willoughby has left us, as heirloom to be treasured in the memories of his countrymen."

Describing the incidents of the outbreak of 1857 in different villages in the then rural area of the district of Meerut including those of Bhojpur, Gagol, the 5 Baghi villages of Kumhera,¹⁶ Khindora, Bhanera, Suhana and Ghayaspur inhabited by the 'Tugga Brahmins'¹⁷

[Dunlop uses it for the Tyagi Brahmin zemindars], he refers to Begamabad and Sikri episode. Goojar villages of Sikri, Nagla and Devsa come in his narration followed by the racial comments as follows¹⁸:

“The Jats who followed had been so cowed by their losses of the previous day that they were useless, except for plunder, hundreds of them flying from a few Goojurs.”

Mr. Dunlop seems summing up his feeling full of racial prejudices when he completes Chapter VI of his book. The last but two and the last but one are the paragraphs which contain the matter to this effect. He writes¹⁹:

“I have often noticed that the courage of the native (unlike that of the European, which rises with his difficulties,) is invariably in proportion to his hopes of success; that individuals, if accompanied by an overwhelming force, will frequently do acts of bravery, through they will.....

.....attacking party, and possibly a threatened approach, the moral influence of this ‘firm front’ is immediately recognised in the sudden collapse and ignominious rout of number one.”

He further adds²⁰:

The saying, that “a coward will fight at bay”, seldom applies in this country [India].

For India and Indians, his opinion what he opines is again worth-mentioning²¹:

“A Bahadoor brought to bay, grows a cowards”, would be more correct.

When examined thoroughly, Dunlop seems full of racist prejudice feeling not only towards India and Indian but he shows, to some extent, same feelings towards the Arabs and the Italian and the Spaniards also. He, in one of the related paragraphs, refers to both the nationals as follows²²:

“Two of the party distinguished themselves, but in a very different way: the one, a little dentist, whose military predilection and pluck ought to have placed him in the army; and the other a gentleman who would be styled an Italian or Spaniard as a euphonium for a bronzed complexion in Europe, but whom we class in this country, by ambiguous metaphor, as an ‘Arabian’.”

Giving information about the military expedition upon the village of Sikri near present day Modinagar, in the present day district of Ghaziabad [then in the *tehsil* of Muradnagar in the district of Meerut during 1857], he mentions²³:

“The dentist fairly earned the mural crown; for when the scaling party got to the roof of a house abutting against the walled enclosure where the principal Goojurs were, he requested me to give him a lift, and being but a light weight, I quickly sent him over the wall, where he stood a good chance of receiving the contents of any spare matchlocks that might be ready. Some volunteers in the crowd having performed a similar friendly turn to myself, and our party being augmented by a few more lifts from outside to some seven or eight, our revolvers and swords soon settled matters with its defenders.”

In the last paragraph of this chapter, he gives a graphic description of the “Arabian”. He, thus describes²⁴:

“The Arabian equestrian above alluded to, who had been for some time keeping up his courage and keeping out the rain by repeated libations of ration rum, was seized with a sudden desire for martial distinction; but unable to discriminate very clearly between friend and foe, shot one of our unfortunate Jat auxiliaries through the head. He was of course promptly deprived of his weapons, and was finally sent off to Meerut by Palkee Gharree, in a state of ‘coma’ possibly of ‘clairvoyance’.”

Notes and References

1. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *Rethinking 1857*, New Delhi : Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd., 2006, vii.
2. *Ibid.*
3. For details, please see: Savarkar, V.D., *Indian War of Independence 1857*, [London, 1909]; reprint Calcutta, 1930.

* About his book, the Discovery of India, Jawahar Lal Nehru writes:

“This book was written by me in Ahmadnagar Fort prison during the five months, April to September 1944. Some of my colleagues in prison were good enough to read the manuscript and make a number of valuable suggestions. On revising the book in prison I took advantage of these suggestions and made additions. No one, I need hardly add, is responsible for what I have written or necessarily agrees with it. But I must express my deep gratitude to my fellow-prisoners in Ahmadnagar Fort for the innumerable talks and discussions we had,

which helped me greatly to clear my own mind about various aspects of Indian history and culture. Prison is not a pleasant place to live in even for a short period, much less for long years. But it was a privilege for me to live in close contact with men of outstanding ability and culture and a wide human outlook which even the passions of the moment did not obscure.

My eleven companions in Ahmadnagar Fort were an interesting cross-section of India and represented in their several ways not only politics but Indian scholarship, old and new, and various aspects of present-day India. Nearly all the principal living Indian languages, as well as the classical languages which have powerfully influenced India in the past and present, were presented and the standard was often that of high scholarship. Among the classical languages were Sanskrit and Pali, Arabic and Persian; the modern languages were Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu, Sindhi and Oriya.....”.

Nehru dedicated his book to his colleagues and co-prisoners in the Ahmadnagar For Prison Camp. He uses the words:

“To my colleagues and co-prisoners in the Ahmandnagar Fort Prison Camp from 9 August 1942 to 28 March 1945”.

In the “FORWARD” to the “First Impression 1981” of *The Discovery of India*, Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, on 4 November 1980, writes:

“My father’s three books and *The Discovery of India, Glimpses of World History and An Autobiography* have been my companions through life. It is difficult to be detached about them...I had to correct the proofs of Discovery while my father was away, I think in Calcutta, and I was in Allahabad ill with mumps! *The Discovery* delves deep into the sources of India’s national personality.”

4. Jawahar Lal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* [First published by the Signet Press, Calcutta, 1946]; Jawahar Lal Nehru Memorial Teen Murti House, New Delhi, First Impression 1981, Nineteenth Impression 1999, 325.
5. Vighnesh Kumar, *The Baraon Estate : A Brief History*, Meerut : Hastinapur Research Institute, 2010, 17.
6. Jawahar Lal Nehru, *op.cit.*, 324.
7. Vighnesh Kumar and Mudit Kumar, *1857 ka Viplava* (in Hindi), Meerut : Hastinapur Research Institute, 2007, i, iii.
8. Vighnesh Kumar, *1857 IN 1857: Original Mutiny Narratives*, Vol. I, Meerut, Hastinapur Research Institute, 2013, xiv.
9. For the Euro-centric Approach to Indian history, please also see: Vighnesh Kumar, *Smarika : Hastinapur and the Kuru-Panchal Kingdoms through the Ages* (History Culture, Art and Archaeology)

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 12. Robert Henry Wallace Dunlop, *op.cit.*
 13. *Ibid.*, 3.
 14. *Ibid.*, 3-4.
 15. *Ibid.*, 6.
 16. *Ibid.*, 40-45; Edwin Thomas Atkinson, *Statistical Descriptive and Historical Account of North-Eastern Provinces of India*, Vol. III, Part II, Meerut District, North-Western Provinces Government Press, Allahabad, 1876, 332-35; H.R. Nevill, *Meerut : A Gazetteer being Volume IV of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*, Allahabad : United Provinces Government Press, 1903, 169-170.; Vighnesh Kumar, *op.cit.*, 51; Vighnesh Kumar and Mudit Kumar, *op.cit.*, 117-29.
 17. Robert Henry Wallace Dunlop, *op.cit.*, 42.
 18. *Ibid.*, 75.
 19. *Ibid.*, 76-78.
 20. *Ibid.*, 78.
 21. *Ibid.*
 22. *Ibid.*, 75-76.
 23. *Ibid.*, 76.
 24. *Ibid.*, 78.

