

K. C. YADAV: *The Revolt of 1857 in Haryana*, New Delhi, 1977, 192 pp.

The author of this book, Dr. Kripal Chandra Yadav, is Reader of the Department of History at B.N.C. University, Kurukshetra of the Haryana State in the north-western part of India. His subject is the modern Indian history but most of his writings, Hindi and English, were mainly concentrated on the history of Haryana. The book under review is also on the same line and in it he tries to make it clear how the great revolt of 1857 of Indian people against the rule of the British East India Company was launched in this region. By analyzing in detail many documents concerning this revolt which are kept at the National Archives of India and the Punjab State Archives, private papers and those books on the uprising which were published both in India and Britain, the author describes the social and historical background, the process and the historical character of this revolt in Haryana.

The book contains nine chapters. Chapter I refers to the general outlook of Haryana, the social structure and caste relations of the people there who took part in this uprising and Chapter II covers the background and some important reasons for the revolt. In the following seven chapters, the author treats the process and the meaning of the revolt itself. They are as follows: The Outburst (Chapter III), Haryana Goes Independent (Chapter IV), The Administrative Arrangement (Chapter V), The Communal Problem (Chapter VI), The Role of

Princes (Chapter VII), Restoration of British Rule (Chapter VIII) and Conclusion (Chapter IX). Appendices which include the list of names and deeds of martyrs and forgotten leaders of the 1857 uprising in Haryana, letters of a British lieutenant and the list of names and social status of the leaders in each locality (pargana) in this area will be also interesting.

In this book, the author gives us one fact which has not been mentioned in preceding studies on the revolt. We have been told that the very beginning of the rebellion commonly called "the Sepoy Mutiny" or "the Great Revolt of 1857" was a rising of the Indian sepoy in Meerut where was placed the headquarters of the Bengal Regiment of the East India Company's Army (in the evening of May 10th, 1857). According to the author, however, the first uprising was launched by the sepoy of Ambala in northern Haryana, one of the three Musketry Depots, at nine o'clock in the morning on the same day. Though this was soon subdued by the British, it became an incentive to a great popular revolt which mustered all the strata from farmers to feudal rulers in most of the districts of Haryana. Dr. R. C. Majumdar, the leading historian on the 1857 revolt, in his letter to the author (April 21, 1969) congratulates him on "bringing this point to public notice" (p. 137).

Besides, the author tries to answer the complicated question whether the uprising was an incidental or well-planned one. With the facts that the Indian soldiers of Ambala had planned to rise even before May 10th, that they kept an incessant contact with their compatriots in Delhi and Meerut and that these sepoy at Ambala and Meerut rose on the same day, he proposes a hypothesis that at least the sepoy of Delhi, Meerut and Ambala must have made a plan of rising against the British simultaneously on May 10th and, in due course, marching for Delhi. But, he asserts, there was no common plan between the sepoy and the other elements of the revolt, and peasants were encouraged by the sepoy's movement to rise. Though this is a very original and attractive hypothesis, the author himself knows that this plan of simultaneous rising among the sepoy of these three areas cannot be proved by the documents at present and that the hypothesis remains a hypothesis.

Lastly, Dr. Yadav refers to one of the most controversial and important arguments about this uprising, that is, which classes of people joined the revolt and whether this was a national uprising or not. He disputes the arguments of Dr. R. C. Majumdar and Dr. S. N. Sen that most of the leaders of this revolt were reactionary feudal lords and no ordinary people, with a few exceptions, played an active part in it. He emphasizes that in the case of Haryana, at least, there was no exclusive leadership of feudal elements and in spite of this absence a vast majority of ordinary people, mainly peasants, rose in revolt in the whole area. In fact, according to the list of the leaders of this uprising in each locality, prepared by the author (p. 170), seven out of 22 listed were peasants and a small trader

against 10 feudal chiefs. Another important aspect of this popular movement in Haryana which Dr. Yadav points out is 'communal amity' among people of different castes and religions in this region (p. 134). This subject is discussed at length in Chapter VI. As to the character of this revolt as a whole, he concludes that it had "all the elements which go to make a revolt a national effort for independence" (p. 136).

Though it may be difficult to define simply the true character of this movement with many complicated aspects and vast regional expansion, it is a great contribution of this book that the situation of the uprising in Haryana, very near to the centre, Delhi, which has hitherto not been known to us, was now described here in detail. But one argument which does not seem to be persuasive to the readers is that while the author severely criticizes the attitude of the princes and other feudal elements who truckled both to the British and the revolting forces, he overlooks the absence of a progressive programme or outlook about the future of the society among the leaders of the revolt with the Mughal Emperor as a top, only because they were anti-British and "national-minded".

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