



Freedom Struggle of 1857 And Role of Dehli Urdu Akhbar

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ABSTRACT

The British rule in India had created chaos and unrest among the Indian people, which led them to revolt against the British government, culminating in the war of independence of 1857. Though this war of independence was a total failure and Indians could not resist this powerful tyrant rule. Urdu journalism was one of those means which played an outstanding role in infusing the spirit of freedom among the people and making their opinion against the suppressive government. Delhi Urdu Akhbar was one of them whose role was very significant and matchless.

KEYWORDS : freedom Struggle, War of Independence, Urdu Journalism, Delhi Urdu Akhbar.

Introduction:

At the height of the Rebellion, in June 1857, the Governor-General Lord Canning is reported to have said that the 'native press', sedulously, cleverly artfully and craftily spreading seditious sentiments among the Indian people. This reminds us that the Rebels were able to use the printed word to serve their cause. The four months that Delhi remained in the hands of the rebels (May-September 1857) saw the city served by three weekly newspapers, of which perhaps the major one, to judge by its detailed reporting and commentaries, was the *Dehli Urdu Akhbar*.

The 1857 war stands out as the first most aggressive opposition by the Indians to the world's largest colonial power, the British. The aim was simply to uproot the exploitative colonial regime of the British and regain country's lost power and prestige.

Contribution of DUA:

The weekly "*Dehli Urdu Akhbar*" has honour to be the first newspaper of North India and 3rd of Urdu in All India. It was started in the year 1837 A.D. "*Dehli Urdu Akhbar*" was the 1st Urdu newspaper of North India and 2nd of All India level. It was a weekly printed on four pages of 20 X 30 in size, issued every Saturday.

Through its news, the paper started instigating its readers against British rule, and when the torch-bearers of the freedom movement stormed Delhi on May 11, 1857, it devoted the entire front page to highlight their gallantry. *Dehli Urdu Akhbar* had given up its usual restraint and showed little sympathy for the victims of the rebels' violence. The issue of May 17, 1857 carried a detailed first hand report of the unprecedented violence in Delhi. It was the first example of "*Spot Reporting*" in Urdu journalism.

The report written in first person says: "The present scribe too came out of his house to see things for himself, inspired as he was by a regard for the glory of his faith and hearing the sound of gunfire. I was confronted by a strange sight: people were running from *Kashmiri Gate* side into the market. Personal safety was no doubt in danger, but dearer to me than my personal safety was the desire to see unusual sights and the other equally strong desire to give a faithful eye-witnessed account of events to my readers. As I moved forward, I heard gunshots... a little ahead of me. Soon, I saw the *Sahib Bahadur* running for his life, sword in hand and a native following him with gun close at heel. In the rear was a crowd of common people, some with sticks in their hands, others with bamboos, chasing the beleaguered Englishmen at hot speed. They hunted down from Zeenat Bara towards the canal."

The text of the paper that contained the news of revolt began with the verses of Holy Quran, the editor declared:

"The mighty rulers whose strength, rule and administration, could not even imagine of the downfall, it did happen in the blink of an eye ... Most of the people still think whether this all has happened or they are still in a state of dream"

When the Revolt of 1857 A.D. brought in its wake a brief period of Independence, The *Dehli Urdu Akhbar* got a fresh youthfulness. A

retorical and dramatic style emerged in the presentation of news in it, which in the journalistic language of today is known as 'feature'. While reading such items of news it appears that we are sitting in some corner of this bride of cities and watching with our own eyes this horrible game of blood and fire which certainly brought about a sense of relief in the collective life of Dehli for a few months. But if on the one hand this period was a harbinger of freedom, on the other it also brought its train the oppression of the people of Dehli at the hands of Tilangs. Dehli people themselves ushered in an area of loot. The situation became so serious that *Bahadur Shah Zafar* had to issue the following Farmans against it which was published in *Urdu Akhbar* dated May, 21-24, 1857 A.D.:

"Often swordsmen and musclemen oppress and trouble the people of the city and the royal servants. Before this, the Europeans used to issue whatever orders they wanted and our dear subjects were always worried and troubled. Now you trouble them and loot them. If this is your condition then having no regard for wealth or property in these last days of ours, we shall go in the direction of Khawaja Saheb along with all the loyal subjects or move to the Kaba of Allah so that the remaining years of our dear life are spent in the contemplation of Allah."

At Agra merely on the basis of favouritism an English officer dismissed a native employee of 25 years, standing and appointed his own man on the plea that the local people do not have the capacity to do the work. *Dehli Urdu Akhbar* wrote in its issue dated 28th June 1840 A.D.:

"Indian officials have been unnecessarily given a bad name. if they get a reasonable salary like their English counterparts and their suspension and reinstatement is done by higher authorities and not by inexperienced and young collectors, Magistrate and deputy collectors, the qualities that the English officials are supposed to have will surely be found in Indians"

The tone is rather bitter in its comments on the increasing incidents of robberies. Blaming Thanedar harassing the public, it wrote:

"Things have come to such a pass that money is extorted from people and their neighbours through threats and now people are even afraid of complaining against theft and the officials are doing nothing".

In the subsequent text the editor gave an objective eyewitness account of the events that took place on 11th May 1857 in Delhi. The paper continued to publish the contents that reflected different dimensions of the revolt; these contents were filled with anti-English sentiments. In the subsequent editions the paper kept on providing the details of the events, especially the edition of 17th May 1857. At-eque Siddique has reproduced the full text of that paper. The *Dehli Urdu Akhbar* covered the news of uprising extensively. The news of Kol, Buland Shahar, Kanpur, Lucknow, Agra, Jhajhra, Sikandra, Ghaziabad, Ballabgarh, Meerut and Dehli had got special coverage.

KOL:-"It has been heard that four companies of Kol appeared before the king after disgracing the English, killing every Englishman they came across and allowed the people to loot the treasury and the public looted it thoroughly and everyone grabbed what he would catch hold of".

LUCKNOW:-“It is reported that in Lucknow Englishmen suffered the way they fared here. It is also rumoured that the brother of the deposed king, who was known to be mad, has occupied the throne and the state is being ruled in his name but it is known what the disposition of the king of dancers and the friend of music is and where is the ruler.”

KANPUR:-“It has been reported that the condition of Kanpur is similar to that of other places. Whenever English is found, he is killed”.

AGRA:-The **Dehli Urdu Akhbar** described the achievements of freedom fighters of Agra as:

“Now a days the rumour has spread everywhere that Mr. Bija Bai has taken over the charge of Agra. Some people believe that Britishers themselves have handed over charge to him saying that it is not possible for them to control the situation in Agra”.

MEERUT:-“It is said that the situation there in Meerut is completely different. Anyhow the result is same as the Britishers and White people are still there. Some soldiers who came from Bareilly are camped near the Black river, ready for war. But they are waiting for help, if some help come from there they may prove themselves as the Quran says: *“الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ رَبِّهِمْ يَدُ تَسْوِئَةٍ لَمْ سَوَاهَا”* (So their Lord crushed them for their sin and levelled them). But it is not known why the help did not come yet from there. Allah’s anger will definitely fall on Britishers. They will die their own death without killing them. But it is world of reasons as the system is being run in this way”

GHAZIABAD:-“It is said that the Gujjars have occupied Ghaziabad with the help of two cannons and looted and destroyed it. Gujjars is strange kind of community. They signed the agreement not to create any disturbances and handed over the administrative arrangements to Tahsildar”

DEHLI CITY PROPER:-

“The public feels greatly harassed and troubled because of the prevalent loot. The city people themselves as well as outsiders are indulging in loot and the authority of the police posts is less than one – tenth of what it was earlier. In short every respectable and rich person is facing great difficulties these days”

Dehli Urdu Akhbar published many articles and speeches which provoked the freedom fighters and encouraged them. Some extracts of a speech is given below:

“Your this Battle will also be remembered in the history, how bravely you crushed the pride and arrogance of such ambitious and

arrogant kingdom and mixed their radical Shaddadi pride and Pharaonic vanity with dust, and kept the Empire of India from Britishers which was desired by many great kings. You saved the country from their control and its people from the unexpected disaster”.

In such a situation only a courageous journalist speaks the truth, for when Goondas become respectable and chaos is prevailing, common people cover their heads and sit down in a corner to save their lives and honour. These were the few glimpses of brave and bold efforts of **Dehli Urdu Akhbar**, otherwise it is true that this was the only newspaper of India which kindles the hopes of Jihad in the hearts of Indians and gave the message that Hindu-Muslim unitedly can drive away the Britishers.

And then the land covered by dark clouds, Delhi became like widowed lady. **Dehli Urdu Akhbar** was closed. Its proprietor, **Muhammad Baqar** was shot dead in connection with the murder of Taylor, the principal of Delhi collage. However all available records as well as the oral evidence of men in the know of things show that the **Maulvi Baqar** was innocent. He even gave sanctuary to Taylor, but after he escaped from the Baqar’s House, he was killed by a move. but he became immortal since he was the first Journalist to have obtained glory of martyr. **Maulvi Mohammad Baqar** had to pay very heavy price of his courage, his son veteran Urdu writer and poet **Maulana Mohammad Hussain Azad** and his family suffered a lot, their property was confiscated and was forced to leave Delhi.

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