

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France  
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz  
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz  
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
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# **Rung Ho!**

Talbot Mundy

# Imprint

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**RUNG HO!**

**A Novel**

**By  
Talbot Mundy**



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# RUNG HO!

## CHAPTER I

Howrah City bows the knee  
More or less to masters three,  
King, and Prince, and Siva. Howrah City pays in pain  
Taxes which the royal twain  
Give to priests, to give again (More or  
less) to Siva.

THAT was no time or place for any girl of twenty to be wandering unprotected. Rosemary McClean knew it; the old woman, of the sweeper caste, that is no caste at all,—the hag with the flat breasts and wrinkled skin, who followed her dogwise, and was no more protection than a toothless dog,—knew it well, and growled about it in incessant undertones that met with neither comment nor response.

"Leave a pearl of price to glisten on the street, yes!" she grumbled. "Perhaps none might notice it—perhaps! But her—here—at this time—" She would continue in a rumbling growl of half-prophetic catalogues of evil—some that she had seen to happen, some that she imagined, and not any part of which was in the least improbable.

As the girl passed through the stenching, many-hued bazaar, the roar would cease for a second and then rise again. Turbaned and pugreed—Mohammedan and Hindoo—men of all grades of color, language, and belief, but with only one theory on women, would stare first at the pony that she rode, then at her, and then at the ancient grandmother who trotted in her wake. Low jests would greet the grandmother, and then the trading and the gambling would resume, together with the under-thread of restlessness that was so evidently there and yet so hard to lay a finger on.

The sun beat down pitilessly — brass — like the din of cymbals. Beneath the sun helmet that sat so squarely and straightforwardly on the tidy chestnut curls, her face was pale. She smiled as she guided her pony in and out amid the roaring throng, and carefully refused to see the scowls, her brave little shoulders seconded a pair of quiet, brave gray eyes in showing an unconquerable courage to the world, and her clean, neat cotton riding-habit gave the lie and the laugh in one to poverty; but, as the crowd had its atmosphere of secret murmuring, she had another of secret anxiety.

Neither had fear. She did not believe in it. She was there to help her father fight inhuman wrong, and die, if need be, in the last ditch. To a two-hundred-million crowd, held down and compelled by less than a hundred thousand aliens. And, least of all, had the man who followed her at a little distance the slightest sense of fear. He was far more conversant with it than she, but — unlike her, and far more than the seething crowd — he knew the trend of events, and just what likelihood there was of insult or injury to Rosemary McClean being avenged in a generation.

He caused more comment than she, and of a different kind. His rose-pink pugree, with the egret and the diamond brooch to hold the egret in its place — his jeweled sabre — his swaggering, almost ruffianly air — were no more meant to escape attention than his charger that clattered and kicked among the crowd, or his following, who cleared a way for him with the butt ends of their lances. He rode ahead, but every other minute a mounted sepoy would reach out past him and drive his lance-end into the ribs of some one in the way.

There would follow much deep salaaming; more than one head would bow very low indeed; and in many languages, by the names of many gods, he would be cursed in undertones. Aloud, they would bless him and call him "Heaven-born!"

But he took no interest whatever in the crowd. His dark-brown eyes were fixed incessantly on Rosemary McClean's back. Whenever she turned a corner in the crowded maze of streets, he would spur on in a hurry until she was in sight again, and then his hand-

some, swarthy face would light with pleasure—wicked pleasure—self-assertive, certain, cruel. He would rein in again to let her draw once more ahead.

Rosemary McClean knew quite well who was following her, and knew, too, that she could do nothing to prevent him. Once, as she passed a species of caravansary—low-roofed, divided into many lockable partitions, and packed tight with babbling humanity—she caught sight of a pair of long, black thigh boots, silver-spurred, and of a polished scabbard that moved spasmodically, as though its owner were impatient.

"Mahommed Gunga!" she muttered to herself. "I wonder whether he would come to my assistance if I needed him. He fought once—or so he says—for the British; he might be loyal still. I wonder what he is doing here, and what—Oh, I wonder!"

She was very careful not to seem to look sideways, or seek acquaintance with the wearer of the boots; had she done so, she would have gained nothing, for the moment that he caught sight of her through the opened door he drew back into a shadow, and swore lustily. What he said to himself would have been little comfort to her.

"By the breath of God!" he growled. "These preachers of new creeds are the last straw, if one were wanting! They choose the one soft place where Mohammedan and Hindoo think alike, and smite! If I wanted to raise hell from end to end of Hind, I too would preach a new creed, and turn good-looking women loose to wander on the country-side!—Ah!" He drew back even further, as he spied the egret and the sabre and the stallion cavorting down the street—then thought better of it and strode swaggering to the doorway, and stood, crimson-coated, in the sunlight, stroking upward insolently at his black, fierce-barbered beard. There was a row of medal ribbons on his left breast that bore out something at least of his contention; he had been loyal to the British once, whether he was so now or not.

The man on the charger eyed him sideways and passed on. Mahommed Gunga waited. One of the prince's followers rode close to him—leaned low from the saddle—and leered into his face.

"Knowest not enough to salute thy betters?" he demanded.

Mahommed Gunga made a movement with his right hand in the direction of his left hip—one that needed no explanation; the other legged his horse away, and rode on, grinning nastily. To reassure himself of his superiority over everybody but his master, he spun his horse presently so that its rump struck against a tented stall, and upset tent and goods. Then he spent two full minutes in outrageous execration of the men who struggled underneath the gaudy cloth, before cantering away, looking, feeling, riding like a fearless man again. Mahommed Gunga sneered after him, and spat, and turned his back on the sunshine and the street.

"I had a mind to teach that Hindoo who his betters are!" he growled.

"Come in, risaldar-sahib!" said a voice persuasively. "By your own showing the hour is not yet—why spill blood before the hour?"

The Rajput swaggered to the dark door, spurs jingling, looking back across his shoulder once or twice, as though he half-regretted leaving the Hindoo horseman's head upon his shoulders.

"Come in, sahib," advised the voice again. "They be many. We are few. And, who knows—our roads may lie together yet."

Mahommed Gunga kicked his scabbard clear, and strode through the door. The shadows inside and the hum of voices swallowed him as though he were a big, red, black-legged devil reassimilated in the brewing broth of trouble; but his voice boomed deep and loud after he had disappeared from view.

"When their road and my road lie together, we will travel all feet foremost!" he asserted.

Ten turnings further away by that time, Rosemary McClean pressed on through the hot, dinning swarm of humanity, missing no opportunity to slip her pony through an opening, but trying, too, to seem unaware that she was followed. She chose narrow, winding ways, where the awnings almost met above the middle of the street, and where a cavalcade of horsemen would not be likely to follow her—only to hear a roar behind her, as the prince's escort started slashing at the awnings with their swords.

There was a rush and a din of shouting beside her and ahead, as the frightened merchants scurried to pull down their awnings before the ruthless horse-men could ride down on them; the narrow street transformed itself almost on the instant into a undraped, cleared defile between two walls. And after that she kept to the broader streets, where there was room in the middle for a troop to follow, four abreast, should it choose. She had no mind to seek her own safety at the expense of men whose souls her father was laboring so hard to save.

She got no credit, though, for consideration—only blame for what the swordsmen had already done. One man—a Maharati trader—half-naked, his black hair coiled into a shaggy rope and twisted up above his neck—followed her, side-tracking through the mazy byways of the bewildering mart, and coming out ahead of her—or lurking beside bales of merchandise and waiting his opportunity to leap from shadow into shadow unobserved.

He followed her until she reached the open, where a double row of trees on each side marked the edge of a big square, large enough for the drilling of an army. Along one side of the square there ran the high brick wall, topped with a kind of battlement, that guarded the Maharajah's palace grounds from the eyes of men.

Just as she turned, just as she was starting to canter her pony beside the long wall, he leaped out at her and seized her reins. The old woman screamed, and ran to the wall and cowered there.

Very likely the man only meant to frighten her and heap insults on her, for in '56, though wrath ran deep and strong, men waited. There was to be sudden, swift whelming when the time came, not intermittent outrage. But he had no time to do more than rein her pony back onto its haunches.

There came a clatter of scurrying hoofs behind, and from a whirl of dust, topped by a rose-pink pugree, a steel blade swooped down on her and him. A surge of brown and pink and cream, and a dozen rainbow tints flashed past her; a long boot brushed her saddle on the off side. There was a sickening sound, as something hard swished and whicked home; her pony reeled from the shock of a horse's shoulder, and—none too gently—none too modestly—the

prince with the egret and the handsome face reined in on his horse's haunches and saluted her.

There was blood, becoming dull-brown in the dust between them. He shook his sabre, and the blood dripped from it then he held it outstretched, and a horseman wiped it, before he returned it with a clang.

"The sahiba's servant!" he said magnificently, making no motion to let her pass, but twisting with his sword-hand at his waxed mustache and smiling darkly.

She looked down between them at the thing that but a minute since had lived, and loved perhaps as well as hated.

"Shame on you, Jaimihr-sahib!" she said, shuddering. A year ago she would have fallen from her pony in a swoon, but one year of Howrah and its daily horrors had so hardened her that she could look and loathe without the saving grace of losing consciousness.

"The shame would have been easier to realize, had I taken more than one stroke!" he answered irritably, still blocking the way on his great horse, still twisting at his mustache point, still looking down at her through eyes that blazed a dozen accumulated centuries' store of lawless ambition. He was proud of that back-handed swipe of his that would cleave a man each time at one blow from shoulder-joint to ribs, severing the backbone. A woman of his own race would have been singing songs in praise of him and his skill in swordsmanship already; but no woman of his own race would have looked him in the eye like that and dared him, nor have done what she did next. She leaned over and swished his charger with her little whip, and slipped past him.

He swore, deep and fiercely, as he spurred and wheeled, and cantered after her. His great stallion could overhaul her pony in a minute, going stride for stride; the wall was more than two miles long with no break in it other than locked gates; there was no hurry. He watched her through half-closed, glowering, appraising eyes as he cantered in her wake, admiring the frail, slight figure in the gray cotton habit, and bridling his desire to make her—seize her reins, and halt, and make her—admit him master of the situation.

As he reached her stirrup, she reined in and faced him, after a hurried glance that told her her duenna had failed her. The old woman was invisible.

"Will you leave that body to lie there in the dust and sun?" she asked indignantly.

"I am no vulture, or jackal, or hyena, sahiba!" he smiled. "I do not eat carrion!" He seemed to think that that was a very good retort, for he showed his wonderful white teeth until his handsome face was the epitome of self-satisfied amusement. His horse blocked the way again, and all retreat was cut off, for his escort were behind her, and three of them had ridden to the right, outside the row of trees, to cut off possible escape in that direction. "Was it not well that I was near, sahiba? Would it have been better to die at the hands of a Maharati of no caste—?"

"Than to see blood spilt—than to be beholden to a murderer? Infinitely better! There was no need to kill that man—I could have quieted him. Let me pass, please, Jaimihr-sahib!"

He reined aside; but if she thought that cold scorn or hot anger would either of them quell his ardor, she had things reversed. The less she behaved as a native woman would have done—the more she flouted him—the more enthusiastic he became.

"Sahiba!"—he trotted beside her, his great horse keeping up easily with her pony's canter—"I have told you oftener than once that I make a good friend and a bad enemy!"

"And I have answered oftener than once that I do not need your friendship, and am not afraid of you! You forget that the British Government will hold your royal brother liable for my safety and my father's!"

"You, too, overlook certain things, sahiba." He spoke evenly, with a little space between each word. With the dark look that accompanied it, with the blood barely dry yet on the dusty road behind, his speech was not calculated to reassure a slip of a girl, gray-eyed or not, stiff-chinned or not, borne up or not by Scots enthusiasm for a cause. "This is a native state. My brother rules. The British—"

"Are near enough, and strong enough, to strike and to bring you and your brother to your knees if you harm a British woman!" she retorted. "You forget—when the British Government gives leave to missionaries to go into a native state, it backs them up with a strong arm!"

"You build too much on the British and my brother, sahiba! Listen—Howrah is as strong as I am, and no stronger. Had he been stronger, he would have slain me long ago. The British are—" He checked himself and trotted beside her in silence for a minute. She affected complete indifference; it was as though she had not heard him; if she could not be rid of him, she at least knew how to show him his utter unimportance in her estimation.

"Have you heard, sahiba, of the Howrah treasure? Of the rubies? Of the pearls? Of the emeralds? Of the bars of gold? It is foolishness, of course; we who are modern-minded see the crime of hoarding all that wealth, and adding to it, for twenty generations. Have you heard of it, sahiba?"

"Yes!" she answered savagely, swishing at his charger again to make him keep his distance. "You have told me of it twice. You have told me that you know where it is, and you have offered to show it to me. You have told me that you and your brother Maharajah Howrah and the priests of Siva are the only men who know where it is, and you lust for that treasure! I can see you lust! You think that I lust too, and you make a great mistake Jaimihr-sahib! You see, I remember what you have told me. Now, go away and remember what I tell you. I care for you and for your treasure exactly that!" She hit his charger with all her might, and at the sting of the little whip he shied clear of the road before the Rajah's brother could rein him in.

Again her effort to destroy his admiration for her had directly the opposite effect. He swore, and he swore vengeance; but he swore, too, that there was no woman in the East so worth a prince's while as this one, who dared flout him with her riding-whip before his men!

"Sahiba!" he said, sidling close to her again, and bowing in the saddle in mock cavalier humility. "The time will come when your government and my brother, who—at present—is Maharajah How-

rah—will be of little service to you. Then, perhaps, you may care to recall my promise to load all the jewels you can choose out of the treasure-house on you. Then, perhaps, you may, remember that I said 'a throne is better than a grave, sahiba.' Or else—"

"Or else what, Jaimihr-sahib?" She reined again and wheeled about and faced him—pale-trembling a little—looking very small and frail beside him on his great war-horse, but not flinching under his gaze for a single second.

"Or else, sahiba—I think you saw me slay the Maharati? Do you think that I would stop at anything to accomplish what I had set out to do? See, sahiba—there is a little blood there on your jacket! Let that be for a pledge between us—for a sign—or a token of my oath that on the day I am Maharajah Howrah, you are Maharanee—mistress of all the jewels in the treasure-house!"

She shuddered. She did not look to find the blood; she took his word for that, if for nothing else.

"I wonder you dare tell me that you plot against your brother!" That was more a spoken thought than a statement or a question.

"I would be very glad if you would warn my brother!" he answered her; and she knew like a flash, and on the instant, that what he said was true. She had been warned before she came to bear no tales to any one. No Oriental would believe the tale, coming from her; the Maharajah would arrest her promptly, glad of the excuse to vent his hatred of Christian missionaries. Jaimihr would attempt a rescue; it was common knowledge that he plotted for the throne. There would be instant civil war, in which the British Government would perforce back up the alleged protector of a defenseless woman. There would be a new Maharajah; then, in a little while, and in all likelihood, she would have disappeared forever while the war raged. There would be, no doubt, a circumstantial story of her death from natural causes.

She did not answer. She stared back at him, and he smiled down at her, twisting at his mustache.

"Think!" he said, nodding. "A throne, sahiba, is considerably better than a grave!" Then he wheeled like a sudden dust-devil and decamped in a cloud of dust, followed at full pelt by his clattering

escort. She watched their horses leap one after the other the corpse of the Maharati that lay by the corner where it fell, and she saw the last of them go clattering, whirling up the street through the bazaar. The old hag rose out of a shadow and trotted after her again as she turned and rode on, pale-faced and crying now a little, to the little begged school place where her father tried to din the alphabet into a dozen low-caste fosterlings.

"Father!" she cried, and she all but fell out of the saddle into his arms as the tall, lean Scotsman came to the door to meet her and stood blinking in the sunlight. "Father, I've seen another man killed! I've had another scene with Jaimihr! I can't endure it! I—I—Oh, why did I ever come?"

"I don't know, dear," he answered. "But you would come, wouldn't you?"

## CHAPTER II

'Twixt loot and law — 'tween creed and caste — Through  
slough this people wallows, To where we choose our road at  
last. I choose the RIGHT! Who follows?

HEMMED in amid the stifling stench and babel of the caravansary, secluded by the very denseness of the many-minded swarm, five other Rajputs and Mahommed Gunga — all six, according to their turbans, followers of Islam — discussed matters that appeared to bring them little satisfaction.

They sat together in a dark, low-ceilinged room; its open door — it was far too hot to close anything that admitted air — gave straight onto the street, and the one big window opened on a courtyard, where a pair of game-cocks fought in and out between the restless legs of horses, while a yelling horde betted on them. On a heap of grass fodder in a corner of the yard an all-but-naked expert in inharmony thumped a skin tom-tom with his knuckles, while at his feet the own-blood brother to the screech-owls wailed of hell's torments on a wind instrument.

Din — glamour — stink — incessant movement — interblended poverty and riches rubbing shoulders — noisy self-interest side by side with introspective revery, where stray priests nodded in among the traders, — many-peopled India surged in miniature between the four hot walls and through the passage to the overflowing street; changeable and unexplainable, in ever-moving flux, but more conservative in spite of it than the very rocks she rests on — India who is sister to Aholibah and mother of all fascination.

In that room with the long window, low-growled, the one thin thread of clear-sighted unselfishness was reeling out to very slight approval. Mahommed Gunga paced the floor and kicked his toes against the walls, as he turned at either end, until his spurs jingled, and looked with blazing dark-brown eyes from one man to the other.

"What good ever came of listening to priests?" he asked. "All priests are alike — ours, and theirs, and padre-sahibs! They all

preach peace and goad the lust that breeds war and massacre! Does a priest serve any but himself? Since when? There will come this rising that the priests speak of—yes! Of a truth, there will, for the priests will see to it! There is a padre-sahib here in Howrah now for the Hindoo priests to whet their hate on. You saw the woman ride past here a half-hour gone? There is a pile of tinder ready here, and any fool of a priest can make a spark! There will be a rising, and a big one!"

"There will! Of a truth, there will!" Alwa, his cousin, crossed one leg above the other with a clink of spurs and scabbard. He had no objection to betraying interest, but declined for the present to betray his hand.

"There will be a blood-letting that will do no harm to us Rajputs!" said another man, whose eyes gleamed from the darkest corner; he, too, clanked his scabbard as though the sound were an obligato to his thoughts. "Sit still and say nothing is my advice; we will be all ready to help ourselves when the hour comes!"

"It is this way," said Mahommed Gunga, standing straddle-legged to face all five of them, with his back to the window. He stroked his black beard upward with one hand and fingered with the other at his sabre-hilt. "Without aid when the hour does come, the English will be smashed—worn down—starved out—surrounded—stamped out—annihilated—so!" He stamped with his heel descriptively on the hard earth floor. "And then, what?"

"Then, the plunder!" said Alwa, showing a double row of wonderful white teeth. The other four grinned like his reflections. "Ay, there will be plunder—for the priests! And we Rajputs will have new masters over us! Now, as things are, we have honorable men. They are fools, for any man is a fool who will not see and understand the signs. But they are honest. They ride straight! They look us straight between the eyes, and speak truth, and fear nobody! Will the Hindoo priests, who will rule India afterward, be thus? Nay! Here is one sword for the British when the hour comes!"

"I have yet to see a Hindoo priest rule me or plunder me!" said Alwa with a grin.