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Jammu Massacre: When the armed RSS men had a field day



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Before they could take out regular rallies in post-‘Lalkar’ swayed region reverberating with ‘Har Har Modi’ chants, the RSS men had long drawn out daggers on Jammu streets. In that bloodcurdling fall of 1947, the Sangh convoys became the part of the predatory that consumed around 2.3 lakh Jammu Muslims.

In the twilight of his life, Ved Bhasin would hardly talk about the 1947 Jammu carnage that *haunted* him throughout his life. But one question would often force him to speak, ‘*Were the 1947 riots spontaneous?*’ The ace editor would take a calculative pause before answering, ‘Those were organized and planned by the rulers with the support of the RSS and other organizations.’

During one such public talk on 1947 Massacre at Jammu University in June 2003, Bhasin left an audience of nearly 150 men and women of town speechless. The resounding silence inferred that there’s much more to the

heart-wrenching stories that he shared.

‘I am an eyewitness to what happened in Jammu,’ the *Kashmir Times* founding editor would often say. ‘When Jammu city was placed under curfew, Muslims were not allowed to come out of their houses, Hindus were moving freely. And convoys of RSS men would start from Prem Nath Dogra’s House, the Praja Parishad chief, in Kacchi Chawni. They were armed; some Sikh refugees who had come also joined them. They were moving from lane to lane massacring people.’



Prem Nath Dogra

Later when Bhasin was called by Jammu governor, Chet Ram Chopra, he was stunned to learn how the Dogra

administration was giving training to Hindu youth in Jammu's RSS camps.



'I told my colleagues about it,' says Bhasin, quoted by a Jammu-based journalist Zafar Choudhary in his book *Kashmir Conflict and Muslims of Jammu*. 'Balraj Puri said, *ok, let's send one boy*. We sent one boy to RSS camp, who saw how RSS men were using .303 rifles.' Later the same RSS men, Bhasin says, massacred Muslims on way to Pakistan.

'RSS people, some Sikhs, some soldiers were already waiting. The people were then dragged out of these buses and massacred. Very few of them escaped,' he reported.

Jammu became the carnage city soon after the Mountbatten Plan was announced, making the Hindu Sabha and RSS to incite communal passions. Tension increased with a large number of Hindus and Sikhs migrating to the State from Punjab and NWFP and even from areas now part of Pakistan.

In an interview with *Reuters*, the former Prime

Minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Khan, accuses the RSS of orchestrating the violence with the Maharaja.



'After the massacre of Moslems in East Punjab and the Punjab states,' Khan tells his interviewer, 'the forces of annihilation turned to Jammu and Kashmir... Towards the end of September the Indian National Army and the RSS shifted their headquarters from Amritsar to Jammu. They were provided modern weapons by the state authorities. They set about the formal business in Jammu and Poonch of repeating the horrible drama they had enacted in East Punjab.'

**At the end of
the pogrom,
the death toll
in the killing
fields of
Jammu
according to
Horace
Alexander's
article in *The
Spectator* (on**

16 January 1948) was 2,00,000.



“Mountbatten was in control in Delhi and had news of the genocide of Muslims in Jammu filtered out of the media,” Saeed Naqvi writes in his book *Being the Other: The Muslim in India*. “Sadly, there has been precious little discussion in India about this horrible phase of history.”

With the support of RSS, Maharaja Hari Singh’s involvement in the massacre was evident from a letter Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Vallabhbhai Patel on 17 April 1949 (quoted in *Frontline* magazine):

‘In this (intelligence) report, among other things, a reference was made to a growing Hindu agitation in Jammu province for what is called a zonal plebiscite.

This idea is based on the belief that a plebiscite for the whole of Kashmir is bound to be lost and, therefore, let us save Jammu at least. You will perhaps remember that some proposal of this kind was put forward by the Maharaja some months back.

*It seems to me that this kind
of propaganda is very
harmful, indeed, for us.*

*Whatever may happen in the
future, I do not think Jammu
province is running away
from us.*

*If we want Jammu province
by itself and are prepared to
make a present of the rest of
the State to Pakistan, I have
no doubt we could clinch the
issue in a few days.*

*The prize we are fighting for
is the valley of Kashmir.'*

Hari Singh

This propaganda for a zonal
plebiscite was going on in
Jammu, Delhi and elsewhere,
and was carried on by the
Jammu Praja Parishad, a
Sangh-affiliated outfit, Naqvi
writes.



Meanwhile, Nehru continued:

‘Our intelligence officer reported that this Praja Parishad is financed by the Maharaja. Further, that the large sums collected for the Dharmarth Fund, which are controlled by the Maharaja, are being spent in propaganda for him.’



But the larger ground for the massacre was created with the start of the Shudhi Movement of 1924, says ZG Mohammad, a year before Keshav Baliram Hedgewar founded Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

Under Maharaja Pratap Singh’s patronage, the movement led by Swami Sharvanad was aimed at converting those who had become Muslims, the noted columnist says.

**“But the so-called
purification movement
faced
resistance
when
Chowdhary
Ghulam**

Abbas and his comrades formed the Young Men's Muslim Association," says ZG Mohammad.



“Abbas and his associates brought in Muslim clerics from other parts of British India to counter the Shudhi Movement. They held a seminar on 16th February 1924 against it. In that gathering, Jamiat-e-Ulema-Hind's Ahmed Sayed and Anjuman-e-Tableeg-e-Islam's Maulana Ghulam DevNarang were present. The duo held various gatherings in parts of Jammu against the Swami's movement.”

Sardar Gowhar Rehman, Allah Rakha Sagar and Mistry Mohammad Yaqoob—the famous trio who would later join Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah led Muslim Conference—were part of the association.

So basically, ZGM says, the Kashmir movement was started in Jammu and later

picked up by the Reading
Room Party in the Valley.



Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas.

It was during that period that a 17- point memorandum was given to the then Viceroy of India by Saifddin Shawl, Mirwaiz Mohammad Yousuf Shah and Ghulam Mohammad Ashai regarding the issue. Then Sheikh Abdullah was still pursuing his studies at Aligarh Muslim University.

“They wanted to start the Shudhi Movement in the Valley, too,” ZGM says. “But they faced a tough resistance, despite opening an office in the Arya Samaj School near Iqbal Park in Srinagar. Their rally already faced a counter-rally in Srinagar.”

After that, the movement had been largely curbed—before it

received official patronage
once again in the fall of 1947.



**“After failing
to convert
Muslims, the
alternative
was to
change the
demography,”
ZGM
continues.**

“Even a veteran journalist Ved Bhasin had recorded how the then Prime Minister Mehr Chand Mahajan wanted to change the demography of the region. People were brought in from other parts of India mostly Punjab, and then rest is history.”

At that historic juncture, the snub by the emergency ruler like Sheikh Abdullah escalated the Jammu Muslims’ woes.

In his book, *Yaad-e-rafta*, Krishan Dev Sethi, General Secretary of the Democratic Conference Jammu and Kashmir, writes about his interaction with Abdullah.

‘Sheikh Sahab, people are migrating and this is not good,’ Sethi quotes an anecdote in his book.



To which, the Jammu delegation got a shocking response from Abdullah, *‘Muslims of Jammu have never accepted me as their leader, why should I intervene?’*

This indifference went on to embolden the armed RSS men in Jammu.

“But the RSS had already planned the Jammu massacre, well before 1947,” says Zareef A. Zareef, a poet-historian.

“Muslims were quite aware how arms were being distributed among Sangh and its affiliates in Jammu. It was only on the advice of Mohammad Ali Jinnah that they stayed quiet. Even Qudrat Ullah Shahab had told Jinnah that arms were being stockpiled and distributed among people here by the RSS and its affiliates.”

Then in a matter of days, Zareef says, the Muslims were told that they would be escorted to Pakistan and were instead massacred.

“Around 2.3 lakh Muslims were killed,” he says.

“Properties of Muslims were either destroyed or occupied. Even today, a lot of Waqf property is under occupation.”



But even more horrible nightmare of that blood-curdling fall remains about the **plight of Muslim women...**

(To be continued)

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