

FEATURE

Jammu Massacre: The saint who became a shrine — Part II



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Posted on November 10, 2018











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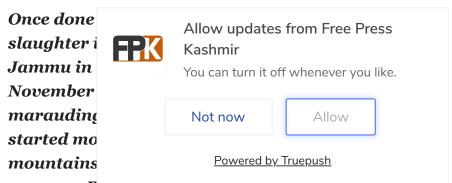
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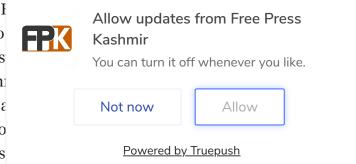


carnage. But the Kut
campaign was shielded
by a saint, who
eventually fell when
plotters and executors
came together in the
Jammu Massacre's most
dramatic encounter.

As another kill plot unfolded, the rioters regrouped and began moving towards the mountains where Peer Fateh Shah was seen as a "spiritual shield" for the sizeable native and migrant Muslims.

At his abode, the meditative saint would predict the terrible times ahead. His prophecies made him a doomsayer, yet his spiritual seat at Budhan village of Reasi's Gool Gulabgarh Tehsil had become a crowded place. It held the anxious Muslim devotes together, like a flock of scared sheep, oblivious of their fate.

Soon as Budhan turned unsafe, Muslims began abandoning their hearth and home. Peer I his family to where they s Moulana Ah son, Syed Ha wanted to co his father's s





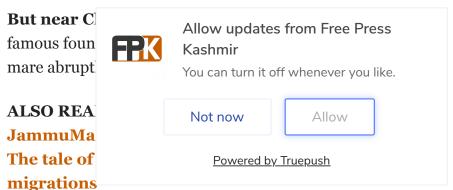


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"Once he learned about his son's *change of heart*, the saint sent his disciple to push him back," says Abdul Majeed Bhat, the fact-finder of the event—maintaining an astute storyteller's stance while narrating one of the unknown accounts of modern history's most brutal and neglected ethnic cleansing, the Jammu Massacre.

"After receiving a cautionary word, the son left for Pakistan, with tears rolling down his cheeks. He had realised the possible fate of his father."

The saint shortly left Budhan village, riding on his mare — Neeli.



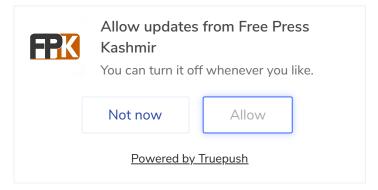


"Despite being commanded by the saint, the mare stood her ground," Bhat says, recalling the event as explained by a survivor accompanying the saint. "Even as he gave her reins to one of his disciples, the mare didn't budge."

Neeli's reluctance had more to it — perhaps the sign of the soon-to-be-dawned dark hour.

Then, Peer Fateh asked his disciple, 'Let her take her own course.'

With that, the saint's mare started moving back to Budhan — then, hardly housing any Muslim.





Refugees from West Punjab, Pakistan arriving in India.

Years later, all this unknown and intriguing narrative would be resurrected, following Bhat's travel, which led him to come across some surviving *Sufis*, who were with the saint during his final hours.

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The moment the mare took the saint back to Budhan village, she stopped on the road, leading to Gool.

"Neeli maghrib ki jaanib moun karke kadhi hogaye (The saint's mare stopped towards west)," Bhat was told by one of the saint's disciples.

In the fascinating world of spirituality—known for mystic powers and extra-sensory

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Peer Fateh Shan took a long tour around the area on the back of his mare, before dismounting and directing his disciples to call the villagers and his own family back to Budhan.

The spot where Neeli had halted was to become the saint's next stopover.

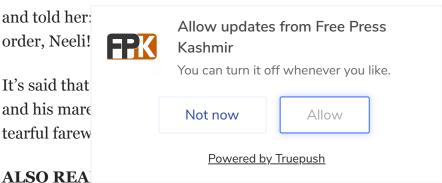
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In a nearby abandoned house of his disciple Ghulam Qadir Gojar, the saint decided to stay. He soon called his another disciple Abdul Wahab Turkan and asked him to take Neeli for grazing in the neighbouring village.

At Budhan, the grass was no longer green.

But the mare—apparently sensing the imminent peril refused to leave the saint. It was then the saint intervened





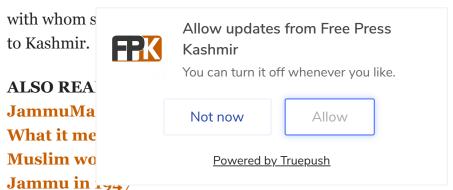
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JammuMassacre@70: When the armed RSS men had a field day

In between, Peer Fateh Shah's family members rejoined him at Budhan and soon, a swarm of rioters came, and surrounded the saint's shelter.

"With prayers on his lips, he held a whip in one hand and a torch in another," says Bhat, narrating his research, which has now taken a shape of a paperback. "As one rioter forced his entry inside the home for loot and kill, the saint whipped his neck. He died instantly. His gang outside soon got mobilised and stormed the home with swords and guns."

As bullets and swords rained, the saint's woman family member ran through a backdoor and climbed a tree —from where she helplessly watched the carnage. She would later join her brother,





The saint kept fighting back, until a bullet hit his right shoulder and a sword pierced his neck.

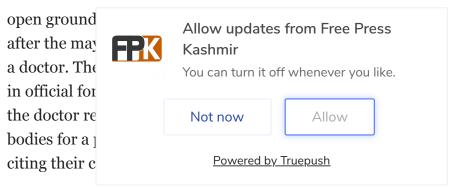
"The saint soon fell down—reciting the *Kalima*—after a Sten-gun burst hit his belly and chest," Bhat says. "He finally achieved what he had predicted—his martyrdom."

His four family members—including his wife Naseem
Begum, his daughter Zeenab
Begum, her son—along with
his five disciples, including
Sufi Buland Khan, Sufi Abdul
Subhan, and others were also
slaughtered.

The saint's daughter Shah Begum Ferooza and her son Ashiq Ali managed to run, only to recreate the rattling details of the carnage later.

"The killers soon left with their accomplice's body and looted wealth," Bhat says.

Later those dead bodies would be assembled in an





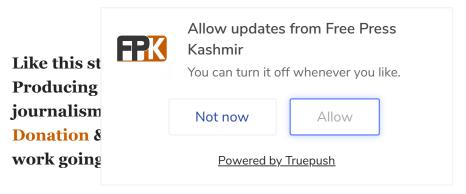
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They were finally handed over to the locals, who held a discussion on their final resting place. When no consensus was reached, all the bodies were buried at a spot—where the saint's mare had stopped upon taking him back to Budhan. It was an uncanny event—especially for the saint's disciples, who soon turned his grave as his shrine.

Today, the saint's final resting place is visited by thousands of devotees every year. But while Peer Fateh Shah became an *immortal* after his martyrdom, his killers met such a grisly end that it became the Jammu Massacre's most horrible aftermath...

To be continued...





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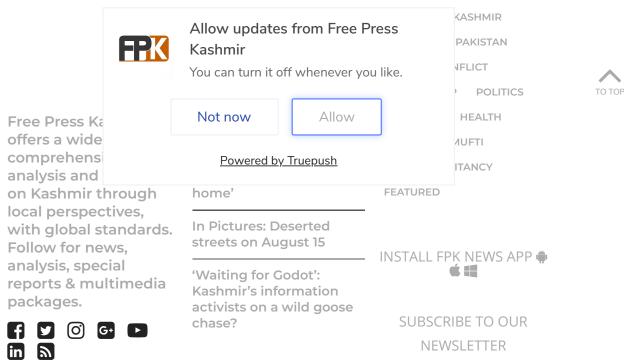
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