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# JAMMU 1947: TALES OF BLOODSHED

*November 5 is observed as the anniversary of large scale violence against Muslims in Jammu. In 1947, the region turned into a river of blood whose tributaries ran through eastern districts – Jammu...*

**Khalid Bashir Ahmad**

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November 5 is observed as the anniversary of large scale violence against Muslims in Jammu. In 1947, the region turned into a river of blood whose tributaries ran through eastern districts – Jammu, Kathua, Udhampur, Reasi and Chenahni jagir – of the undivided Province where Muslims faced organized violence, killed in tens of thousands between August and November.

In many cases, villages were cleared of Muslim element in the population, families wiped out and an unspecified number of women abducted and raped. Several hundred thousand people were forced to migrate to Pakistan as destitute. The demography of Jammu was changed. All this happened under the watchful eye of the ruler and with the support and participation of his administration, significantly the State Army. Interestingly, this widespread human slaughter has remained the least talked about in the sub-continental narratives on the Partition.

Sixty-seven years is a long period to heal wounds but the painful and chilling memories still haunt survivors and eyewitnesses of the carnages, of which there were many in the Province. They are not able to forget what they had gone through or seen unfolding before their eyes. During my study on the subject I happened to speak to several such unfortunate victims who narrated horrible tales of slaughter and torment.

Ninety-eight year old, soft spoken former Registrar of Kashmir University, Prof.



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to assemble at the Police Lines for taking them to Pakistan as their lives were "in danger at Jammu".

On November 5, about 60 lorries overloaded with Muslim families were taken out of the Police Lines under armed escort towards the border town of Suchetgarh. Instead of driving on the road to Suchetgarh, the convoy was diverted towards Samba and waylaid by armed gangs joined by the personnel of the State Army. The passengers were pulled out of the lorries and killed in cold blood. Next day, the act was repeated. There were more people in the lorries than the previous day. The survivors were only few including an injured Prof. Bhat. With moist eyes, he still remembers that horrible massacre in which his little daughter was killed by a bullet in his lap.

The town of Reasi was another scene of savagery. Although Muslims were in majority both in the tehsil and district of Reasi but they had no answer to an organized and officially abetted violence. On November 4, an armed gang of about 500 men arrived in the town and attacked its Muslim population. Mehmood Ahmad Khan, now in his seventies, was a small child of 6-7 years. At such a tender age, he went through unspeakable ordeal, including the murder of his parents and siblings. His is one of the umpteen heart rending stories of the carnage.

On December 1, 2011, I met Prof. Abdul Aziz Bhat at his residence at Bhathandi, Jammu and, on January 18, 2012, Mehmood Ahmad Khan, at the old house of Khwaja Abdur Rauf at Reasi to get a sense of what had happened during those fateful days in Jammu. The two gentlemen revisited the awful times although it was very hard for them to recount the ordeal.

For the interest of readers, I reproduce, verbatim, their account:

**'It was literally a qayamat on us'**

**Prof. Abdul Aziz Bhat**

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terror and panic in the atmosphere and Muslims were afraid of venturing out of their homes. There had been incidents of killing of Muslims outside Jammu city and many people who had survived these attacks had poured into the city. One morning in our home at Talab Khatikan, when we woke up there was this word making rounds that Muslims of Jammu city were asked to assemble in the Police Lines so that they could be taken to some safe place. Announcement to this effect was being made by the Government.

Some people who went out to know what was being announced were not allowed to return. We were about to have the morning tea when one of the persons returned and asked to pack up immediately and proceed to the Police Lines. There was panic. We collected few things and left for the Police Lines where a large number of Muslims – men, women and children, young and old – had assembled, unaware of where they were being taken to. When this question was asked to those who were assembling people there, they replied that it was unsafe for them to remain in the city and they were being escorted to a safe place. They did not identify this 'safe place' but it was understood that they were talking about Sialkot. People were huddled in vehicles. While the older people and women got accommodated inside the buses, the young climbed the roof tops of the vehicles.

On the second day, when our turn to leave the Police Lines came, I had my wife and two little daughters (aged two and a half years and six months) with me. Due to my wife's efforts, I got some space inside the vehicle. Soon after the vehicle crossed the Tawi Bridge, it was turned to the left on the Samba road instead of proceeding straight to Sialkot. Those who were familiar with the road asked why the vehicle was being driven towards Samba and not Sialkot. There was hue and cry in the vehicle. Those who were shepherding us said there was some problem on that side and so this route was being taken to transport us to the safe place. When the vehicles covered some distance, there were gangs of armed people waiting on the road who stopped the vehicles and asked people to come down. We heard gunshots and were gripped by panic.

Those who were traveling on rooftops jumped down and ran for safety. The armed gangs were shooting them down. Women were dispossessed of their jewellery. I had

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had happened. Masooda did not cry or make a movement.

There was a canal where surviving hapless women had assembled and taken shelter in the water. My wife was one among them. As she saw me she came forward and took the child from me. She noticed that Masooda was dead and her intestines had come out of her tiny body. The innocent little girl had been martyred. The bullet severing my left hand thumb had pierced her body and the poor child, without a moan or cry, had died on the spot. Holding my daughter to my chest and dying with pain, I had been walking towards the canal unaware that I was actually not carrying Masooda but her dead body. This was literally a qayamat (hell breaking loose) on us. There was no burial of the dead. We slipped the tiny corpse into the waters of the canal. That was how my eldest child got her funeral.

There was mayhem all around. People either fell to the bullets or ran for cover. I have no idea as to how many people were killed but scores of them were killed. I remember Prof. Umar Din who taught Persian at the Prince of Wales College, Jammu as one among the martyrs.

As we were waiting for our turn to die, some army personnel appeared on the scene and had the firing by the rioters stopped. The survivors were told to board vehicles. Some men were washing blood stains from these vehicles. We also boarded a vehicle and were informed that we will be taken back to the city. The evening had set in. After the vehicle crossed the Tawi Bridge, we were told that the injured would be taken to hospital but minutes later they informed us that there was no space in the hospital and the vehicle again turned back. We were taken to an open field near Gandhi Nagar where survivors of similar attacks were assembled.

At about 2 A.M. in the night we were dumped there. For about 5 to 6 days we were in this camp knowing nothing about what was in store for us. There were other ill-fated people like us who had met with similar tragedy a day earlier when the first convoy of Muslims was driven out of the city with the promise of taking them to Pakistan. Our caravan that left Jammu Police Lines on the second day had no inkling of what had befallen on them a day earlier.

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...a vehicle. I insisted that my wife be also allowed to leave with me but they refused. However, as I declined to leave without her, she was also allowed to accompany me. I was taken to army hospital at Satwari where I met an injured soldier, Naseeb Singh, who was my class fellow at Bhaderwah. He facilitated dressing of my wound and return of my wife to her parental house at Talab Khatikan. Then I was taken to Government Hospital for treatment where one of my acquaintances, Dr. Janki Nath, nursed my wound for few days. From here, I shifted to the house of my in-laws.

Asking Muslims to assemble in the Police Lines for taking them to a safe place was in fact a ploy. The Hindu rioters were afraid of invading the Muslim congested area of the city. There were some brave young Muslims whose presence in the area would deter attackers from taking such a step. It is very likely that such elements in league with members of the State administration worked out and implemented this plan of massacre of Muslims of Jammu city.

### 'The corpses were littered everywhere'

#### Mehmood Ahmad Khan

I do not remember the date but the time was 3 P.M. I was running fever and was in bed. Mother came and asked me to get up as there was firing going on outside. Rioters had looted Ahmad Shah Kalla's shop and stolen ghee etc. They put our house on fire and we took shelter in Ahmad Shah Kalla's house. It was a huge three-storied house and many Muslims took refuge there. The rioters started firing at Ahmad Shah Kalla's house. There was scare. As the night fell a shell was fired from a toap (cannon) on the house from the adjacent hill for which it had been fitted there earlier. The house developed cracks but did not collapse. Lest the house collapse, people inside the house came out and took shelter in Mian Nizamuddin, the Wazir Raja of Poonch's house.

The Muslims were besieged by rioters and the massacre started. They caught hold of people and killed them in cold blood. My father, Ghulam Nabi, was also killed. The corpses were littered everywhere. Some Muslims had come to Reasi from other

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We stayed in the house for two days. The rioters searched houses, pulled out survivors including women and children, saying that they will be taken to Pakistan.

They looted jewelry and other things and raised slogans of Gov Mata Ki Jai and Hindustan Zindabad. The survivors were assembled in the premises of the court. There were one or two thousand of them, mostly children and women. Then the massacre took place. People were killed in large numbers. The survivors were kept in the court premises for three days upon which it was said that they would be taken to Pakistan and were taken out. I was also among them. My brother, Muhammad Maqbool, aged 10-12 years was snatched from his mother and killed.

We were taken through Rajbagh to the banks of the Chenab River at Dera. We had started at 4 P.M. and reached there in the night. Some women hid themselves behind bushes. Some were killed and some were raped. The rioters were drunk. Some women along with their children jumped into the river. We were a family of 11 members. We had three sisters. My father and brother were killed in Reasi. My elder brother Abdur Rashid, a Patwari, was also killed. My mother, Saja, along with her son of one year also drowned in the river while trying to save her daughters. Five of our family members were killed.

In the morning while we were on the river bank the rioters came and said 'we will take you to Pakistan.' They collected some logs, tied them together and made a platform. They said you will be taken in turns. My sister, Sardar Begum, told them to kill us or take us together. They made my two sisters and two children of one of my sisters sit on the logs and pushed them into the river. Mother jumped into the river to save them and was drowned along with her son, Yunis.

Only two of us were left – I and one of my sisters. We started for Reasi, sobbing. A man saw us and asked where we were going. We told him that we are going to Reasi. He said: you will be killed there. He was Hindu and took us to his house and kept us there for two days, hidden from everyone. A band of rioters came and told him that he was sheltering Muslims and asked him to hand us over to them otherwise, they threatened his house will be burnt down. He handed me over to them but did not



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know where he floated along the current when the log broke into pieces and five to six men brandishing swords and guns brought us out of the water. The old lady died there and I was taken by a man to his house in Jeeri village where I stayed for about a week.

A band of Hindus came there and asked him to hand over the Muslim boy he was sheltering in his house. He handed me over to them. They had also brought a Muslim lady and her daughter from somewhere. The three of us were again taken to the river bank. They made us sit there for about three hours. God knows what were they up to? A young man appeared there and rebuked them for killing women and children. He told them that they were not doing right and caught hold of my arm and took me away. The two ladies were left behind. The young man who took me with him was in the army and his name was Makhan.

Makhan took me to his home in Khairian where I stayed for about 10-15 days. I was not treated well there and given insufficient food. Then a Brahmin named Birbal took me from there and I was with him for about two years shepherding his goats. He converted me to Hinduism and rechristened me as Gulabo. A function was held to convert me at the hands of a Pandit during which fire was lit, verses were recited and havan performed. I also started spotting choti (tuff of hair) and was told if somebody asked my name, I should not tell my real name but the assumed name of Gulabo.

The place where I would take goats for grazing was known as Peel Baruta. A few Hindu boys would also bring their goats for grazing there. We would play together. One day a hakeem of Reasi, Pandit Durga Dutt, came there from somewhere and sat under a big Bad tree to take some rest. I recognized him and hid myself behind the trees. The boys told him that Gulabo says that you belong to his place in Reasi and they took me to him. He recognized me and caressed my head and tears came out of his eyes. I also started weeping. The boys consoled both of us. He asked me to accompany him back to Reasi. I told him that I had brought goats to graze upon which he told me to take them back and return quickly. Those days boats would ferry people across the river at specific time in the morning at 3 P.M. As I took long to return, the hakeem told the boys that he had to go and would come back next

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house came and saved me from further harassment.

The hakeem had returned to Reasi and told Haji Akbar about me insisting him to get me back. He sent a man, a butcher by profession, in my search. He reached Khairian and told Birbal that the boy was theirs and he would take him back. Birbal let me go. I was scared of going with a butcher lest he might try his knife on me. I started weeping but was consoled and eventually accompanied him. He brought me to Reasi where there were no Muslims left except a handful of them. My choti was shaved. Haji Akbar mostly remained outside Reasi. I stayed with Haji Samad Shah. I was living there like a destitute, not getting enough to wear and eat. Haji Samad Shah sent me to Jammu for dispatching me to Pakistan.

At Ustad Mohalla, Haji Ahmad Din worked as a tailor at the shop of Master Shareef ud Din. He did not let me go to Pakistan. One day I went to the residence of Master Shareef ud Din and requested him to let me stay with him. He obliged and had me also medically treated. I stayed with him for one year. Then my uncle, Sikander Khan, who was a dyer at Reasi, came and took me back to Reasi. When I reached the age of 19, I joined police which I served for 8 years before proceeding on leave to never return. It so happened that in 1965 some guerillas from Pakistan had sneaked into Mahore sector and we, ten policemen, were sent there to fight them. Our men deserted us, leaving behind four of the boys including myself. We hid ourselves in a bunker and returned to Arnas the next day. After this humiliation I proceeded on leave and did not report back on duty.

Once a person from Jammu went to Pakistan and visited Pasodi Mohalla in Sialkot where one of my sisters also lived. When she came to know that someone from Jammu had come there, she went to him and enquired about me. He told her that before 1947 he lived in Reasi upon which she asked him if he knew Haji Akbar. The man replied in affirmative and she gave a letter for him enquiring about me. It was 1981-82. As it turned out, my two sisters and two nieces who had been pushed into the river on a plank at Dera had safely crossed the Chenab and reached Pakistan. I sent a letter to my sister and thus correspondence between us started. Then I visited her in 1983 and saw her after about four decades. I stayed there for about three to four months and then returned.



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we recognized each other and had tea together. I also visited the house of Shroff but he had passed away.

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