

Communal Holocaust in India after Partition 1947 ,course-203,Category-II

Bipan Chandra points out that “Partition and vilence which accompanied it led to nearly six million refugees pouring into having lost their all”. On Direct Action day August 16, 1946 in Calcutta the violence had begun and it spread to the Bengal countryside resulting into large number of deaths. From there it moved on to Bihar, then on to the United Province and finally to the province of Punjab, where the scale of the violence and the extent of the killing exceeded even the horrors that had preceded it.

In the beginning of August 1947, riots were broken out all over the Punjab and situation worsened as the date of transfer of power drew nearer. The Pakistan Government subsequently brought a number of brochures to prove that mainly the Sikhs were responsible for these riots. It was argued that in order to carve out their state, the Sikhs had plans to kill Muslims in organised manners. Nehru sent a telegram to Liaquat Ali Khan on August 9, 1947, expressing his anxiety at the rapidly deteriorating situation in West Punjab.

August 15 was strongly celebrated in the Punjab, during the afternoon a Sikh mob paraded a number of Muslim women naked through streets of Amritsar, raped them and then hacked some of them to pieces with *Kirpans* and burnt the other alive...”

At Lahore on September 25, a Muslim mob of several thousand strong, attacked a Sikh-Hindu refugees train at Kamoke, about 25 miles west of Lahore killing 340 Sikhs and Hindus and wounding 250. About 1000 abducted women were recovered from Sheikhpura district by military evacuation. On October 1st, a convoy of Lorries from Lakki to Bannu were attacked. Attack on Muslim columns, 9 miles west of Amritsar and a Hindu and Sikh refugee camp at Tandianwala (Lyallpur) were the main incidents reported by the military spokesman. Nearly 115 refugees had been killed, 45 wounded in the attack at Tandianwala.

On 1st week of October, an attack was made on a Muslim foot convoy in Ferozepur. Casualties were 500 and 1000. The Government of Punjab by its telegram dated October 23, 1947, conveyed their anxiety to Government of India at the increasing number of reports of Muslim passengers being thrown out of trains on Bina-Katni and Jhansi-Itarsi railway lines. According to Hodson, in four days (22-23 September), 2700 Muslims and 600 non-Muslims were killed or injured in railway trains alone.

The worst sufferers of partition were women. The attacks on the women were made on two levels: firstly, women as an embodiment of the community honour and secondly, their bodies as the site of community reproduction. The modus operandi included gang rapes, stripping, parading naked women through the town, branding the breasts and genitalia with slogans like *Pakistan Zindabad* or *Hindustan Zindabad*, amputating the breasts, knifing open the womb and killing the foetuses. The rape especially was used as a weapon not just to humiliate the ‘other’, but also to sow one’s own seed in the enemy womb. Thus each community acknowledged the role of women as the bearers of future generation. Those women who were impregnated with the ‘bad seed’ were at timed forced to undergo abortion to maintain the purity of the

community. Many women were abducted, they were mercilessly treated with inhuman activities i.e. either raped or forcibly married.

According to Mosley, in the nine months between August 1947 and the spring of the following year, over 600,000 Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were killed. Ian Stephens believes that 500,000 persons died in the 1947 holocaust. This death toll is comparable with the official tally of commonwealth deaths (in World War II), civilian as well as military, between September 1939 and August 1945 of about 5,40,000. Sumit Sarkar quoting Penderal Moon gives the approximate figures 1,80,000 of which 60,000 in the West and 1,20,000 in the East. By March 1948, 60,00,000 Muslims and 45,00,000 Hindus became refugees. So the partition created complex problems for the people. The people were butchered mercilessly on a massive scale. The women were soft targets physically and psychologically. Sexually assaulted women were acceptable to none.