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from *The Other Side of Silence*

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from *The Other Side of Silence*

The political partition of India caused one of the great human convulsions of history. Never before or since have so many people exchanged their homes and countries so quickly. In the space of a few months, about twelve million people moved between the new, truncated India and the two wings, East and West, of the newly created Pakistan. By far, the largest proportion of these refugees—more than ten million of them—crossed the western border that divided the historic state of Punjab, Muslims travelling west to Pakistan, Hindus and Sikhs east to India. Slaughter sometimes accompanied and sometimes prompted these movements; many people died from malnutrition and contagious disease. Estimates of the dead vary from 200,000 (the contemporary British figure) to two million (a later Indian estimate), but that somewhere around a million people died is now widely accepted. As always, there was widespread sexual savagery: about 75,000 women are thought to have been abducted and raped by men of religions different from their own (and indeed, sometimes by men of their own religion). Thousands of families were divided, homes destroyed, crops left to rot, villages abandoned. Astonishingly, and despite many warnings, the new governments of India and Pakistan were unprepared for the convulsion: they had not anticipated that the fear and uncertainty created by the drawing of borders based on headcounts of religious identity—so many Hindus versus so many Muslims—would force people to flee to what they considered “safer” places, where they would be surrounded by their own kind. People travelled in buses, in cars, by train, but mostly on foot. Called *kafilas*, the great columns of people could stretch for dozens of miles. The longest of them, said to comprise nearly 400,000 refugees travelling east to India from western Punjab, took as many as eight days to pass any given spot on its route.

*From
Chapter One*

This is the generality of Partition: it exists publicly in history books. The particular is harder to discover; it exists privately in the stories told and retold inside so many households in India and Pakistan. I grew up with them: like many Punjabis of my generation, I am from a family of Partition refugees. Memories of Partition, the horror and brutality of the time, the harking back to an often mythical past in which Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs lived together in relative peace and harmony—these have formed the

staple of stories I have lived with. My mother and father come from Lahore, a city that is loved and sentimentalized by its inhabitants and that lies only twenty miles inside the Pakistan border. My mother tells of the dangerous journeys she twice made back there to bring her younger brothers and sister to India. My father remembers fleeing Lahore to the sound of guns and crackling fire. I would listen to these stories with my brothers and sister and barely take them in. We were middle-class Indians who had grown up in a period of relative calm and prosperity, when tolerance and “secularism” seemed to be winning the argument. These stories—of looting, arson, rape, murder—came out of a different time. They meant little to me.

Then, in October 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her security guards, both Sikhs. For days afterwards, Sikhs all over India were attacked in an orgy of violence and revenge. Many homes were destroyed, and thousands died. In the outlying suburbs of Delhi, more than three thousand were killed, often by being doused in kerosene and then set alight. They died horrible, macabre deaths. Black burn marks on the ground showed where their bodies had lain. The government—after Mrs. Gandhi’s death, headed by her son Rajiv—remained indifferent, but several citizens’ groups came together to provide relief, food, and shelter. I was among the hundreds of people who worked in these groups. Every day, while we were distributing food and blankets, compiling lists of the dead and missing, and helping with compensation claims, we listened to the stories of the people who had suffered. Often, older people who had come to Delhi as refugees in 1947 would tell us that they had been through a similar terror before. “We didn’t think it could happen to us in our own country,” they would say. “This is like Partition again.”

Here, across the River Jamuna, just a few miles from where I lived, ordinary and peaceable people had driven their neighbours from their homes and murdered them for no readily apparent reason except their belonging to a different religious community. The stories of Partition no longer seemed quite so remote: people from the same country, the same town, the same village could still be divided by the politics of their religious differences and, once divided, could do terrible things to each other. Two years later, working on a film about Partition for a British television channel, I began to collect stories from its survivors. Many of these accounts were horrific and of a kind that, when I was younger and heard them second or third hand, I had found hard to believe: women jumping into wells to drown themselves so as to avoid rape or forced religious conversion; fathers beheading their own sons and daughters so the children would avoid the same dishonourable fate. Now I was hearing them from witnesses whose bitterness, rage, and hatred—which, once uncovered, could be frightening—told me they were speaking the truth.

Their stories affected me deeply. Nothing as cruel and bloody had happened in my own family so far as I knew, but I began to realize that Partition

was not, even in my family, a closed chapter of history—that its simple, brutal political geography infused and divided us still. The divisions were there in everyday life, as were their contradictions: how many times have I heard my parents, my grandmother speak with affection and longing of their Muslim friends in Lahore, and how many times with irrational prejudice about “those Muslims”; how many times had I heard my mother speak, with a sense of betrayal, about her brother who had married a Muslim...It took 1984 to make me understand how ever present Partition was in our lives too, to recognize that it could not be so easily put away inside the covers of history books. I could no longer pretend that this was a history that belonged to another time, to someone else.

*From
Chapter Four
Part I*

Hidden Histories

I cannot now pinpoint exactly when I became aware of the histories of women. I say “became aware” because the process was a sort of cumulative one in which stories began to seep into my consciousness until one day when it became clear that there was something I should be actively seeking.

Even as I say this, it sounds strange to me. As a feminist, I have been only too aware, sometimes painfully so, of the need to fold back several layers of history (or of what we see as fact) before one can begin to arrive at a different, more complex “truth.” Why then, I have often asked myself, should the “discovery” of women have come as such a surprise? But it did. Perhaps it was because the initial assumption I brought to my search was a simple one: the history of Partition, as I knew it, made no mention of women. As a woman and as a feminist, I would set out to “find” women in Partition, and once I did, I would attempt to make them visible. That would, in a sense, “complete” an incomplete picture.

There are, of course, no complete pictures. This I know now: everyone who makes one draws it afresh. Each time, retrospectively, the picture changes: who you are, where you come from, who you’re talking to, when you talk, where you talk, what you listen to, what people choose to tell you—all of these affect the picture you draw.

I realized, for example, that if it had been difficult for [a man] to talk about his story, how much more difficult it must have been for women to do so. To whom would they have spoken? Who would have listened? I realized too that something I had not taken into account was that, in order to be able to “hear” women’s voices, I had to pose different questions, to talk in different situations, and to be prepared to do that most important of things, to listen: to their speech, their silences, the half-said things, the nuances. The men seldom spoke about women. Women almost never spoke about themselves; indeed, they denied they had anything “worthwhile” to say, a stance that was often corroborated by their men. Or, quite often, they simply weren’t there to speak to. And what right did I, a stranger, an outsider, have to go around digging into their lives, forcing them to look back to a

time that was perhaps better forgotten? Especially when I knew that the histories I wanted to know about were ones of violence, rape, murder.

For a while, then, I held back from speaking to women: there were so many layers of silence encoded into these histories, I told myself, that perhaps I could make my exploration by looking elsewhere—surely I would still be uncovering some of the silences. I turned therefore to some of the very “documents” that I had so often found wanting. Newspaper accounts, a memoir, and other sources helped me to piece together a story: a story of love and of hate, a story of four lives and two nations, a story that brought me back to the histories of women—the story of Zainab and Buta Singh.

Zainab was said to have been abducted as a young Muslim girl while her family was on the move to Pakistan in a *kafila*. No one knows who her abductors were or how many hands she passed through, but eventually she was sold to a Jat from Amritsar district, Buta Singh. Like many men who either abducted women themselves or bought them, Buta Singh performed the “chaddar” ceremony and “married” Zainab. The story goes that, in time, the two came to love each other. They had a family: two young girls. Several years after Partition, a search party on the lookout for abducted women traced Zainab to Amritsar, where she was living with Buta Singh. It was suspected that Buta Singh’s brother—or his nephews—had informed the search party of Zainab’s whereabouts. Apparently, their concern was that Buta Singh’s children would deprive them of the family property, that their share would be reduced. Like many women who were thus “rescued,” Zainab had no choice in the matter. She was forced to leave. Newspaper reports describe the scene as a poignant one: the entire village had assembled to see her off. She came slowly out of her house, carrying her child and clutching a small bundle of clothes. Her belongings were stowed in a jeep, and as she boarded it, she turned to Buta Singh and, pointing to her elder daughter, is reported to have said, “Take care of this girl, and don’t worry. I’ll be back soon.”

Not surprisingly, property figured in Zainab’s recovery as well. Her parents had been killed, but the family had received grants of land in Lyallpur as compensation for property they had left behind in Indian Punjab. Zainab and her sister had received their father’s share, and an uncle had been allotted the adjoining piece. Rumour had it that it was he who had been the moving spirit behind Zainab’s rescue: he was keen the land remain in his family, and he wanted that Zainab, when found, should marry his son, which would then ensure the property would remain with them. The son had no interest in marrying Zainab, and as the story is told, he was reluctant in part because she had lived for many years with a Sikh. Discussion on this issue went on in the family for some time, and Buta Singh occasionally received snippets of news from neighbours and others who kept him informed.

Meanwhile, Buta Singh pleaded his case wherever possible—but to no avail. He tried to go to Pakistan, but this was difficult. One day he received

a letter from Pakistan—ostensibly from one of Zainab’s neighbours, although no one quite knows—which asked him to go there as soon as possible. Zainab’s family, it seemed, was pressing her to marry. Buta Singh sold off his land and put together some money, but he had not bargained for the difficulties of travel between the two countries. He needed a passport and a visa, for which he travelled to Delhi. Here, he first took the step of converting to Islam, thinking perhaps that it would be easier to get to Pakistan as a Muslim. Buta Singh thus became Jamil Ahmed.

And he applied for a passport and a nationality: Pakistani. If that was what would get him to Zainab, that was what he would do. But acquiring a new country, especially in a situation of the kind that obtained at the time, was not easy. The High Commission of Pakistan accepted Buta Singh’s application for Pakistani nationality and fed it into the machinery. The question was not a simple one of changing nationality—if such questions can ever be simple. The two countries were virtually at war; deep-rooted suspicion of each other’s motives was the order of the day; people could no longer move freely across borders. How then could the appeal of a man who says he’s in love with the nationality of the “enemy” be accepted at face value? After many months, the application was rejected. (Interestingly, according to newspaper accounts of the same period, a high-profile actress, Meena, wished to become a Pakistani citizen and applied for citizenship; this was immediately granted, and her “defection” made much of in the press.)

Buta Singh did not, however, give up easily. He applied for a short-term visa, and because people in the Pakistan High Commission were familiar with him by then, he was granted it. Now Buta Singh, alias Jamil Ahmed, made his way to Pakistan—and arrived to find that Zainab had already been married to her cousin. This could well have been the end of the world for him, but by a strange quirk of circumstance, he was given another chance to fight for her. In his rush to find out about her, he had forgotten to report his arrival to the police. (To this day, Indians and Pakistanis are required to report their arrival within twenty-four hours of crossing the border.) For this oversight, Buta Singh had to appear before a magistrate, and apparently he told the magistrate that he had been so distracted by Zainab’s situation that he had neglected to report his arrival. The magistrate then ordered Zainab to be produced before the court, and she was asked to give a statement. It was at this point that all Buta Singh’s hopes were dashed. Closely guarded by a ring of relatives, Zainab rejected him, saying, “I am a married woman. Now I have nothing to do with this man. He can take his second child, whom I brought from his house...”

The next day Buta Singh put himself under a train and committed suicide. A suicide note in his pocket asked that he be buried in Zainab’s village. This wish, however, was to remain unfulfilled. It is said that when Buta Singh’s body was brought to Lahore for an autopsy, large crowds gathered outside; some people wept; a filmmaker announced he would

make a film based on the story. Later, a police party took Buta Singh's body to Zainab's village but was stopped from burying it there by people of her community. They did not want a permanent reminder of this incident, and Buta Singh, or Jamil Ahmed, was taken back to Lahore and buried there.

In death Buta Singh became a hero. The subject of a legend, fittingly situated in the land of other star-crossed lovers: Heer and Ranjha, Sohni and Mahiwal. Zainab, meanwhile, continued to live, her silence surrounding her. Unable to grieve and to mourn her lover and, in all likelihood, unable to talk. She was one among thousands of such women.

Zainab and Buta Singh's story stayed with me: it was a moving story, but more, I kept returning to it out of a nagging, persistent sense of dissatisfaction. As it was told, this was the story of a hero and a "victim." We learnt something about the hero: his impulsive nature, his honesty and steadfastness, his willingness to give up everything for the woman he loved, the strength of his love. But nothing about the victim. Try as I might, I could not recover *her* voice. What had Zainab felt? Had she really cared for Buta Singh, or was she indifferent to both the men in her life? How had the experience of abduction, almost certainly of rape, marked her? It was said that Zainab and Buta Singh were happy, that they were even in love. Yet the man had actually bought her, purchased her like chattel: how then could she have loved him? I realized I had to go back to talking. If any women were still alive, this was perhaps the one way in which I could learn about their experiences, their feelings.

The decision wasn't an easy one. There is a point at which research becomes an end in itself. The human subject you are researching becomes simply a provider of information, the "informant," devoid of feelings of her own, but important for your work. I did not want to be in this kind of violative—and exploitative—position. I decided that I would impose my own silences on this search. I knew by now that the history of Partition was a history of deep violation—physical and mental—for women. I would then talk to only those who wanted to talk about it. And I would continue to explore other sources to help me recover the histories of women. Providentially—or so it seemed at the time, for I realize now that once there is an involvement in something, you begin to take notice of related things—the next step offered itself.

A Tradition of Martyrdom

The violence that women faced in the aftermath of Partition is shrouded in many layers of silence. If in historical accounts we hear little about the rape and abduction of women, what we do know about violence in general relates only to men of the "other" community. There is seldom, if ever, any acknowledgment (except perhaps in fiction) that Hindu and Sikh women could have become the targets of Hindu and Sikh men. Yet in the upheaval and the disruption of everyday life, Hindu

*From
Chapter Five
Part II*

men could hardly have become miraculously innocent. One of the myths that survivors increasingly—and tenaciously—hold on to is how communities and families stayed together in this time of crisis: how then can they admit to such disruption from the inside, and by their own members?

It was in 1986 that I first came across stories of family and community violence. At the time, I had no idea of its scale, and only gradually did I learn exactly how widespread it had been. Mangal Singh was one of the first people I spoke to when I began to collect stories about Partition. In Amritsar Bazaar where he lived, Mangal Singh was considered something of a legend. The last surviving brother of three, he had made his way over to Amritsar in August 1947 with nothing but the “three clothes on my back.” Once over the border, Mangal Singh occupied a piece of vacant land left behind by Muslims who had moved to Pakistan. “My heart was heavy,” he said, “and this space was open, large, empty. I thought, Let me stay here, this emptiness is good for me, this emptiness and clear space.” Here, he set up home and began the painful process of scratching together a living and starting again. With small amounts of money borrowed from relatives and friends—he told me, “If you needed a few hundreds or even thousands of rupees for anything, you were able to get them because people helped out”—he started a shop that sold fans and electrical spare parts. In time, he married and started a family. When I met him, he was in his seventies, a grandfather surrounded by a large, extended family. His sons ran the business while he spent most of his time with his grandchildren.

Many people had urged me to talk to Mangal Singh, and I was curious about him. His legendary status in his neighbourhood came from the fact that, at Partition, he and his two brothers were said to have killed the women and children of their family—seventeen of them—before setting off across the border. I found this story difficult to believe: how could you kill your own children, your own family? And why would you? At first Mangal Singh was reluctant to speak to me: “What is the use of raking all this up again?” he asked. But then, after talking to his family, he changed his mind. They had, apparently, urged him to speak. They felt he had carried this particular burden for too long. I asked him about the family that was gone. He described them thus: “We were people of substance. In those days people had a lot of children—so we had many women and they had many children... There were children, there were girls... nephews and others. What a wonderful family it was, whole and happy.”

Why, then, had he and his brothers thought it fit to kill them? Mangal Singh refused to accept that the seventeen women and children had been killed. Instead, he used the word “martyred”:

After leaving home we had to cross the surrounding boundary of water. And we were many family members, several women and children who would not have been able to cross the water, to survive the flight. So we killed—they became martyrs—seventeen of our family members, seventeen lives... Our

hearts were heavy with grief for them, grief and sorrow, their grief, our own grief. So we travelled, laden with sorrow, not a paisa to call our own, not a bite of food to eat...but we had to leave. Had we not done so, we would have been killed, the times were such...

But why kill the women and children? I asked him. Did they not deserve a chance to live? Could they not have got away? He insisted that the women and children had “offered” themselves up for death because death was preferable to what would almost certainly have happened: conversion and rape. But could they really have offered themselves? Did they not feel any fear? I asked him. Angrily, he said,

Fear? Let me tell you one thing. You know this race of Sikhs? There’s no fear in them, no fear in the face of adversity. Those people [the ones who had been killed] had no fear. They came down the stairs into the big courtyard of our house that day, and they all sat down and they said, You can make martyrs of—we are willing to become martyrs, and they did. Small children too...what was there to fear? *The real fear was one of dishonour. If they had been caught by the Muslims, our honour, their honour would have been sacrificed, lost. It’s a question of one’s honour...if you have pride you do not fear.* [My italics.]

But who had the pride, and who the fear? This is a question Mangal Singh was unwilling to address. If accounts such as his were to be believed, the greatest danger that families, and indeed entire communities, perceived was the loss of honour through conversion to the other religion. Violence could be countered, but conversion was somehow seen as different. In many ways, their concern was not unfounded: mass and forcible conversions had taken place on both sides. Among the Sikhs particularly, the men felt they could protect themselves, but they were convinced that the women would be unable to do so. Their logic was that men could fight, die if necessary, escape by using their wits and their strength, but the women had no such strength at hand. They were therefore particularly vulnerable to conversion. Moreover, women could be raped, impregnated with the seed of the other religion, and in this way, not only would they be rendered impure individually, but through them, the entire community could be polluted, for they would give birth to “impure” children. While the men could save themselves, it was imperative that the women—and through them, the entire race—be “saved” by the men.

A few years after I had spoken to Mangal Singh, I began to look at newspaper reports on Partition, searching for similar accounts of family violence. On 15 April 1947, *The Statesman*, an English daily newspaper, had carried the following story:

The story of 90 women of the little village of Thoa Khalsa, Rawalpindi district...who drowned themselves by jumping into a well during the recent disturbances has stirred the imagination of the people of the Punjab. They revived

the Rajput tradition of self-immolation when their menfolk were no longer able to defend them. They also followed Mr Gandhi's advice to Indian women that in certain circumstances, even suicide was morally preferable to submission.

About a month ago, a communal army armed with sticks, Tommy guns and hand grenades, surrounded the village. The villagers defended themselves as best they could...but in the end they had to raise the white flag. Negotiations followed. A sum of Rs 10,000 was demanded...it was promptly paid. The intruders gave solemn assurances that they would not come back.

The promise was broken the next day. They returned to demand more money and in the process hacked to death 40 of the defenders. Heavily outnumbered, they were unable to resist the onslaught. Their women held a hurried meeting and concluded that all was lost but their honour. Ninety women jumped into the small well. Only three were saved: there was not enough water in the well to drown them all.

The story referred to incidents of communal violence in Punjab that had actually begun some months before Partition, in March 1947. Early in this month, a number of Sikh villages in Rawalpindi district were attacked over a period of nine days (6 to 13 March, although in some places sporadic attacks continued up to 15 March). The attacks themselves were said to be in retaliation for Hindu attacks on Muslims in Bihar; also, the Sikh political leader, Tara Singh, is said to have made provocative statements in Lahore to which Muslim political leaders had reacted. It is futile to speculate whose was the primary responsibility: the reality is that once it became clear that Partition would take place, both communities, Muslim and Hindu, started to attack each other. In Rawalpindi district, in the villages of Thamali, Thoa Khalsa, Mator, Nara, and many others, the attacks ended on 13 March, when the army moved in and rescued what survivors were left. In many villages the entire population was wiped out; in others, there were a few survivors.

A small community of survivors from these villages lives in Jangpura and Bhogal, two middle-class areas in Delhi. It was from them that I learnt a little more about the "mass suicide" in Thoa Khalsa described above. Because they could lay claim to this history, survivors from Thoa Khalsa—and this is true even today—seemed to have a high standing in the Rawalpindi community. People spoke of them—as they had done of Mangal Singh—in tones of awe and respect. Conversely, the two brothers from a neighbouring village who had lost their sisters to abductors were spoken of as if they were the ones who were somehow at fault. Clearly the women's "sacrifice" had elevated their families, and their communities, to a higher plane. The first person from whom we heard the story of Thoa Khalsa was Basant Kaur, a tall, upright woman in her seventies. According to her, she was one of the women who had jumped into the well; because it was too full, she did not drown. I reproduce below a long excerpt from her interview.

Basant Kaur

"I keep telling them these stories..."

My name is Basant Kaur. My husband's name was Sant Raja Singh. We came away from our houses on March 12, and on the 13th we stayed out, in the village. At first, we tried to show our strength, and then we realized that this would not work, so we joined the morcha to go away. We left our home in Thoa Khalsa on the 12th. For three or four days we were trapped inside our houses, we couldn't get out, though we used to move across the roofs of houses and that way we could get out a bit. One of our people had a gun, we used that, and two or three of their people died. I lost a brother-in-law. He died from a bullet they fired. It hit him and he died. So we kept the gun handy. Then there were fires all around, raging fires, and we were no match for them. I had a jeth, my older brother-in-law, he had a son, he kept asking give me afim [opium], mix it in water and I will take it. My jeth killed his mother, his sister, his wife, his daughter, and his uncle. My daughter was also killed. We went into the morcha inside the village, we all left our houses and collected together in the centre of the village, inside the sardaran di haveli, where there was also a well. It was Lajjawanti's house. The sardar, her husband, had died some-time ago, but his wife and other women of the house were there. Some children also. They all came out. Then we all talked and said we don't want to become Musalmaan, we would rather die. So everyone was given a bit of afim, they were told, you keep this with you...I went upstairs, and when I came down there was my husband, my jeth's son, my jethani, her daughters, my jeth, my grandsons, three granddaughters. They were all killed so that they would not fall into the hands of Musalmaans. One girl from our village, she had gone off with the Musalmaans. She was quite beautiful, and everyone got worried that if one has gone, they will take all our girls away...so it was then that they decided to kill the girls. My jeth, his name is Harbans Singh, he killed his wife, his daughter, his son...he was small, only eight days old. Then my sister-in-law was killed, her son and her daughter, and then on the 14th of March we came to Jhelum. The vehicles came and took us, and we stayed there for about a month and then we came to Delhi.

In Delhi there were four of my brothers, they read about this—the camp—in the papers and they came and found us. Then, gradually, over a period of time the children grew up and became older and things sorted themselves out. My parents were from Thamali. Hardly anyone survived from there. You know that family of Gurmeet's, they had two sisters, the Musalmaans took them away. Whether they died or were taken away, but they, their bodies were never found...Someone died this way, someone that, someone died here and someone there, and no one got to know. My parents were burnt alive.

That whole area was like jungle, it was village area. One of my brothers survived and came away, one sister. They too were helped by a Musalmaan,

there were some good ones, and they helped them—he hid them away in his house—and then put them into the vehicles that came, the military ones. The vehicles went to Mator and other places. In Mator, Shah Nawaz made sure no harm came to them. People from Nara managed to get away, but on the way they were all killed. Then my brothers read the papers and got to know. My husband, he killed his daughter, his niece, his sister, and a grandson. He killed them with a kirpan. My jeth's son killed his mother, his wife, his daughter, and a grandson and granddaughter, all with a pistol. And then, my jeth, he doused himself with kerosene and jumped into a fire.

Many girls were killed. Then Mata Lajjawanti, she had a well near her house, in a sort of garden. Then all of us jumped into that, some hundred...eighty-four...girls and boys. All of us. Even boys, not only children, but grown-up boys. I also went in, I took my two children, and then we jumped in—I had some jewellery on me, things in my ears, on my wrists, and I had fourteen rupees on me. I took all that and threw it into the well, and then I jumped in, but...it's like when you put goyas, rotis into a tandoor, and if it is too full, the ones near the top, they don't cook, they have to be taken out. So the well filled up, and we could not drown...the children survived. Later, Nehru went to see the well, and the English then closed it up, the well that was full of bodies. The Pathans took out those people who were at the top of the well—those who died, died, and those who were alive, they pulled out. Then they went away—and what was left of our village was saved, except for that one girl who went away.

I was frightened. Of course, I was, but there was also...we were also frightened that we would be taken away by the Musalmaans. In our village, already, in the well that was inside the village, girls had jumped in. In the middle of the night they had jumped in. This happened where the morcha was. The hundred...eighty-four women who jumped in they were just outside, some two hundred yards away from Lajjawanti's house. In the morcha, the crowd had collected in Lajjawanti's house. She was some seventy, seventy-five years old. A tall, strapping woman. She did a lot of seva of all the women, she herself jumped into the well. Many people were killed in the morcha, and the Musalmaans climbed on top to kill the others, and then many came and tried to kill people with guns, one of them put a gun to my jeth's chest and...and we began to jump in. The others had died earlier, and we were in the morcha, the well was some distance away from Lajjawanti's house, in a garden. My nanan and her daughter, they were both lying there...close by there was a ladle, I mixed afim in it, and gave it to them, and she put it in her mouth...she died, and I think the village dogs must have eaten her. We had no time to perform any last rites. An hour or so later, the trucks came...just an hour.

She did path, and said don't throw me away, let me have this afim, she took God's name and then she died. We had afim because my jeth's son used to eat it, and had it with him and he got more and gave it to everyone.

My jeth's son, his daughter-in-law and his daughter, they died in Jhelum later, when we were going to the Dinia camp, on March 15 or so. The camp was close to the Jhelum. Four days we fought, and we remained strong, then around the 12th we got into the morcha, on the 13th our people were killed, and then the trucks came in the evening and took us to Rawat, a village.

They brought us there [to the well]. From there...you know there was no place...nothing to eat, some people were eating close by, but where could I give the children anything from...I had barely a few paise...my elder son had a *duvanni* [two annas] with him, we thought we could use that...my brother's children were also hungry...but then they said the *duvanni* was *khoti*, damaged, unusable...[*weeping*] such difficulties... nothing to eat...we had to fill their stomachs...today they would have been *ranis*...so many of them, *jethanis*, children...I was the youngest...now I sit at home and my children are out working and I keep telling them these stories...they are stories after all...and you tell them and tell them until you lose consciousness...