Twitter Thread by Hemani Bhandari



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Thread

"Main jab mar jaun to meri alag se pehchan likh dena,mere lahu se meri peshani pr Hindustan likh dena(After I die,write my identity differently,with blood,write India on my forehead)”- msg on wall in Brijpuri. It's faded.

A year on,we revisit where #DelhiRiots broke out.



Feb 2020 Vs Feb 2021

While the hustle and bustle of the area has returned in severely hit Shiv Vihar, some cracks in the walls, a black smoke patch on the door, a few burnt utensils and a pile of photographs remind the victims of the days and nights they lived in

“terror”.



Khushnaz’s daughter Alfiza was six days old on February 25 when the riots broke out near her house. She recalled pressing her palm against the infant’s mouth to prevent her voice from being heard as she cried.



Shawra Begum’s single-storey residence near Medina Masjid has still not been repaired. Looking at the broken and burnt taps of her washroom, Shawra said, “That time reminds me of death.”



Sitting inside his house near Auliya Masjid, Nizamuddin had tears in his eyes thinking about the time. Over 5,000 men were walking and running amok on the streets destroying everything and everyone, he said.



For Vineeta Kumar, 28, the most traumatic memory is the six days spent frantically looking for her 10-year-old daughter Radhika, who got lost in the middle of everyone scampering for cover when the houses were being burnt.



For Rajni, riots meant calling off son’s arranged wedding. He was to get married in mid-2020 but when riots broke out,mob looted wedding jewellery from their house. “We needed time to recover and postponed the wedding but girl’s family didn’t agree".
He got married this Feb 16.



The riots separated an old couple – Naresh Chand, 65, and Munni Devi, 63, – from their married son. His wife is too scared to come back to Shiv Vihar. They have also lost their livelihood, a small confectionery on the ground floor of their double-storey residence.



How is the relationship between the two communities now that a year has elapsed? “It’s not like the same as before”, was a unanimous response from both Hindus and Muslims.



Every person The Hindu spoke to claimed that they have not received any compensation for their losses. Moreover, they said they have little idea about the status of the FIRs they had filed.



Pictures by @ShivKumarPushp1
Link to story in today's @the_hindu https://t.co/B86hOCqMrY







(Clockwise from extreme left) Naresh Chand and his wife Munni Devi; Sabbo; Nizamuddin; a woman victim of north-east Delhi riots; a writing on the wall in Mustafabad; and children playing in a street in Shiv Vihar in the Capital. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Those who bore the brunt of the February 2020 violence in north-east Delhi are trying to get on with their lives. But while the hustle and bustle is back and time heals year-old wounds, some memories and fault lines are here to stay





A RIOT OF EMOTIONS

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

"*Main jab mar jaun to meri alag se pehchan likh dena... mere lahu se meri peshani par Hindustan likh dena* (After I die, write my identity differently... with my blood, write India on my forehead)", reads a message on a sidewall facing the main market in north-east Delhi's Brijpuri Road - one of the main areas where communal riots broke out in February last year following the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests.

The messages - No NRC, No NPR, Inquilab - have faded and at some places, been overwritten but they exist, like an aching memory which the victims of the riots wish to forget but say is impossible.

Last year, starting February 23, the shops were shut - most of them burnt and vandalised. People walking the roads were visibly traumatised. All that is gone. The hustle and bustle of the area has returned. It is as if nothing had happened, except some cracks in the walls, a black smoke patch on the door, a few burnt utensils and a pile of photographs remind the victims of the days and nights they lived in "terror".

Muted voices

Khushnaz's daughter Alfiza was six days old on February 25 when the riots broke out near her house. She recalled pressing her palm against the infant's mouth to prevent her voice from being heard as she cried. "All the women of our street were in our house that night and we could hear glass breaking and the sound of sticks and loud voices. I remember we had left our house at 4 a.m. - before sunrise. My newborn was in her inners and it was fairly cold at the time," she recalled. She came back home in mid-March. Initially, they would find it tough to walk on the streets or even inside their house.

Shawra Begum's single-storey residence near Medina Masjid has still not been repaired. Looking at the broken and burnt taps of her washroom, Shawra said, "That time reminds me of death."

Basso, 78, was on the second floor of her residence in Shiv Vihar when the events were unfolding. Owing to her old age, her blood pressure shot up and she fainted that afternoon. "I am only scared for my children. I have lived my life but I hope they live peacefully."

Haunting memories

Sitting inside his house near Auliya Masjid, Nizamuddin had tears in his eyes thinking about the time. Over 5,000 men were walking and running amok on the streets destroying everything and everyone, he said. "We got so scared that we returned home only after a month from our village."

For Vineeta Kumar, 28, the most traumatic memory is the six days spent frantically looking for her 10-year-old daughter Radhika, who got lost in the middle of everyone scampering for cover when the houses were being burnt. "I looked for her everywhere for six days, shared her pictures on WhatsApp and even told the police but they didn't help. Finally, a few boys known to my husband spotted my daughter in Loni at the house of a young girl who had found her and taken her to safety," she recalled, adding that the e-rickshaw her husband bought two months before the riots was burnt by the mob.

Pooja's house was looted, she said, and along with her family, she was on the move for four-five days out of fear. "We still have cracks in the walls of our house," she said, pointing at the wall. Hindus have been primarily blamed for initiating the riots, said Pooja, but she insisted that the residents of the area were not involved. "Outsiders had come."

Riots, for Rajni Devi, 45, meant calling off her son's arranged wedding. He was due to get married in mid-2020 but when the riots broke out, the mob looted the wedding jewellery from their house. "We needed time to recover and postponed the wedding but the girl's family didn't agree. We had to call it off," she said. Her house is now all decked up. The son got married on February 16 to another girl.

The riots separated an old couple - Naresh Chand, 65, and Munni Devi, 63, - from their married son. His wife is too scared to come back to Shiv Vihar. They have also lost their livelihood, a small confectionery on the ground floor of their double-storey residence.

"Property rates have also gone down here. We get ₹2,000 a month as rent and old-age pension. If we had the money, we could have reopened our shop. Our son and daughter-in-law have also left. They don't want to move back here because they are scared," Mr. Naresh said.

Ms. Munni remembered how they waited by their stairs for over an hour to be rescued as their house was set ablaze. They were finally saved but the house was burnt and looted.

Fractured ties

How is the relationship between the two communities now that a year has elapsed? "It's not like the same as before", was a unanimous response from both Hindus and Muslims.

Mr. Nizamuddin explained that he has excellent relations with his immediate Hindu neighbours but is hesitant to be a part of any events of Hindus in the area. He avoids crowds as he doesn't feel comfortable any more. "Both sides have their own fears. There are some anti-social elements on both sides, ready to turn the slightest issue into a communal one," he said.

Pooja believes the wounds have healed, now that a year has passed. "Now, there is no ill feeling any more but the interaction has lessened a lot," she said, adding that they have forgotten everything and now there's hardly any chatter at home about it.

Towards the end of February last year, the idgah in Mustafabad had opened its doors to thousands of people looking for shelter. Now it lies empty. And those residing nearby are happy. "It's better that it stays empty rather than being full of people taking shelter here. Women used to come to my house to use the toilet and bathroom and warm milk for their children. We helped people then but may Allah never show us that time again," said Shamim, 75, a resident of Mustafabad.

Every person *The Hindu* spoke to claimed that they have not received any compensation for their losses. Moreover, they said they have little idea about the status of the FIRs they had filed.

Delhi riots 2020

Number of First Information Reports Registered
755

Number of people arrested
1,818

Number of people killed
53

Number of people injured
581

Idgah.

Which had become a relief camp for thousands of riot victims Vs what it looks like now.

