

SMILE REPORT



RELIEF & REHABILITATION WORK

BIHAR SHARIF, NALANDA | BIHAR



APRIL-JUNE
2023

Incidence Overview

The streets of Bihar Sharif, Nalanda once echoed with laughter, love, and the vibrancy of different cultures coming together in celebration. However, this year, despicably, the festive cheer transformed into an inferno of hate and bigotry as communal clashes tore apart the fabric of harmony that had been painstakingly woven over the years.

On March 31, 2023, driven by a sinister agenda of Hindu militant groups, the occasion of Ram Navami, aimed to celebrate the birth of Lord Rama, was marred by the heinous acts of violence and targeted aggression against the Muslim community.

As flames engulfed Muslims' homes and businesses, the aftermath brought upon them an overwhelming darkness. They found themselves grappling with the profound loss and trauma inflicted upon them by rioters who were mostly outsiders.

The sense of security Muslims once held in Bihar Sharif was brutally shattered. The violence not only targeted lives and businesses but also desecrated religious spaces.

Through tear-filled eyes, Muslims witnessed the destruction of their mosques, livelihoods, and religious sanctuaries. Yet, the wounds inflicted by violence run deeper than the physical scars.

Established in 1896, Madrasa Azizia, which is one of the oldest and well-maintained Madrasas in Bihar, was tragically burnt down by a fanatic Hindutva mob while they were celebrating Ram Navami on the streets.

This Madrasa was started by Bibi Sogra in memory of her late husband, Abdul Aziz. Shockingly, reports indicate that around 4,500 Islamic literature books from the Azizia library, which had a history spanning 110 years, were deliberately set on fire.

Disturbingly, the carnage of the Hindutva mob continued for five hours before the arrival of the police, according to local accounts. The role of police officials in preventing the violence has also been termed dubious as the area where violence started is only 300 metres away from Laheri Thana, and the way it was handled by the police creates a lot of questions.

Amongst the most affected locality was Gagandiwan, a muslim majority area where the Madrasa Azizia was burnt to ashes. In other nearby areas like Mirdad, Ekangarsarai, silaw etc where Muslims were in puny numbers, a lot of arson & loot was reported as well.

Despite a ban on DJs and brandishing of weapons, during the procession, large sound amplifiers mounted on trucks played communally charged songs and the lyrics echoed claims of constructing a Ram temple, and coercing Mullas (Muslims) into chanting 'Jai Shri Ram'.

Some songs even advocated violence, proclaiming, "Kill them or send them to Pakistan, but don't let them benefit from the nation's resources," according to witnesses interviewed by Miles2Smile.

Biharsharif is a town of about 400,000 people, situated on the Patna-Ranchi road some 50 miles away from Patna. It is also the headquarters of the Nalanda district. Biharsharif has 33 per cent Muslim population, comparatively larger than in any other district. The town also has considerable religious significance because of the holy shrines of Makhdum Sahib, a Muslim saint and the shrine of Mani Baba, a Hindu saint. The anniversaries of both saints are celebrated each-year with great fan-fare from all across the country.



According to a research conducted at Patna University, most of the people settled in Biharsharif are from the nearby villages who have migrated in search of better income opportunities. The town is thus fast expanding and has become a diverse hub for various socio-religious groups, including Hindu and Muslim communities, particularly from lower castes. Unfortunately, this demographic mix has heightened communal tensions, making Biharsharif a potential hotspot for conflict.

Relief & Rehabilitation

This report aims to provide an overview of the relief and rehabilitation measures undertaken by Miles2Smile. It will detail the emergency assistance provided to meet the immediate needs of the affected families, the medical support extended to address physical and psychological trauma, and the initiatives undertaken to restore livelihoods through vocational and entrepreneurship support.

Miles2Smile made two visits to the affected areas and spent around 3 days in each visit, talking to almost all the victims of Communal Violence. Further, in collaboration with the local team of volunteers, we created a list of around 30 families, comprising members who were detained on false charges, or the daily wagers who lost part of their livelihood. We arranged a month's ration amounting Rs 83,664 to some of them.

We did not stop just there. We knew that restoring lives meant more than just providing temporary relief. It required a commitment to rebuilding shattered dreams and empowering them to rise above the ashes.

Through Miles2Smile's heartfelt efforts, and overwhelming support of the community, we were able to collect 6.935 lakhs through fundraiser and ensure that victims of hate find solace and a path to a brighter future.

By actively engaging with the community and instilling confidence among the victims, we were able to successfully restore their businesses and show that hate does not triumph over hope.

“Time may move forward, but the aftermath of **violence** is an eternal ghost, haunting its **victims** with memories that refuse to fade

SMILE STORIES



Stitching Hope Again

The communal flames devoured everything that Jamil and his son had built together.

During the Ram Navami Violence on March 31, 2023, in Bihar Sharif, the tailoring shop of Jamil was looted & burnt. When we met Jamil, a skilled tailor, his eyes were filled with tears, mirroring the deep sorrow he carried within. With a heavy heart, he shared his anguish about the loss of his tailoring shop, a place where he had dedicated years of hard work to provide for his family.

The timing of the tragedy was especially cruel, as the approaching Eid meant a surge in demand for his craftsmanship, which was now lost in the charred remains of his once-thriving business. Hearing his ordeal, we were stunned by the depths to which humanity could sink.

On that ill-fated Friday evening, as the sun began its descent, a raging mob descended upon Jamil's humble tailoring shop. Mercilessly, the mob looted everything in sight and set fire to the rest. The flames leaped hungrily from corner to corner, consuming everything which included his 3 sewing machines, an interlocking machine, a wooden counter, and the neatly organised rows of colourful fabrics adorning the walls.



Soon, the acrid smell of burning fabric began to mingle with the scent of charred wood intensifying Jamil's desperation. As the smoke cleared, a sombre silence settled over Jamil's face.

Jamil ran the shop along with his son Irfan. Both the father son duo were appalled witnessing the ruins of their livelihood. The loss of his tailoring shop meant not only the loss of his livelihood but also the loss of income for several months.

Being the sole provider for his large family, Jamil found himself grappling with the daunting challenge of putting a square meal on the table in the absence of any income.

Determined to help Jamil in restoring his business and bringing back his lost smile, Miles2Smile initiated a collective effort. We launched a fundraiser for all the victims of the Bihar Sharif Communal Violence and sent **Rs 1.5 lakhs** to restore Jamil's business.

Armed with the financial means to rebuild, Jamil wasted no time in restarting his business. He wisely utilised the funds to invest in new sewing machines, fabrics, and other necessary equipment to get the shop running once again.

Irfan, filled with determination, rolled up his sleeves once again and vowed to work hard. Overwhelmed with gratitude, tears of both sorrow and joy streamed down their faces, as they sat behind new tailoring machines to stitch new life afresh.



**RESTORING
LIVELIHOOD**

Restoring Livelihood

Jamaluddin's life turned upside down on the peaceful Friday afternoon. His vegetable business, which he had been running for years to support his family, was vandalised and burnt down by Hindu Militants during the Ram Navami Shobha Yatra in Bihar Sharif, Nalanda.

This is not an isolated incident but part of a distressing pattern of violence targeting Muslims during the Hindu festivals. From March 31 to April 1, 2023, several districts including Rohtas, Nalanda, Bhagalpur, Gaya, and Muzaffarpur were engulfed in turmoil. Perpetrators, chanting "Jai Shri Ram," hurled petrol bombs at Muslim shops, fueling an atmosphere of absolute anarchy.

During the violence, Jamaluddin reported a significant loss which included his five carts but the true origins of the violence remain shrouded in ambiguity. According to state police, the chaos ensued following a heated exchange between Hindu and Muslim youth, a day prior on March 30, in Sasaram, a city six hours away from Bihar Sharif. Locals say that announcements urging Hindus to keep their shops closed on Friday circulated, allegedly, as the Bajrang Dal, a Hindu nationalist militant group, had obtained permission from the district administration to organise the Shobha Yatra on March 31, a day after Ram Navami.

An estimated crowd of 50,000 joined the procession despite the permission being granted for a maximum of 5000 people. Allegations suggest that this time the sloganeering of Hindu Precisionists was highly provocative, abusive, objectionable, and targeted at the appearance and faith of Muslims.

"Go to Pakistan," "Babar's children's graves will be dug in India," and "Your end is certain now, " were the derogatory chants renting the air in Bihar Sharif. The aftermath of the violent incident left Jamaluddin and his family devastated. Dejected, he was wailing at the loss. It's difficult to comprehend a person's mental state after such a tragic loss.

Jamaluddin and his sons made a meagre income by selling vegetables and fruits near the Murarpur Mosque Compound. The carts that they relied on to transport and sell their produce were reduced to charred remnants, along with all their vegetables worth thousands of rupees.

As Jamaluddin stood among the ruins, tears streamed down his face.

Their vegetable business, which had been their only source of income, was completely destroyed. Jamaluddin was devastated not knowing from where he would feed his family. When Miles2Smile visited the violence-affected area, he met us and recounted his harrowing experiences.

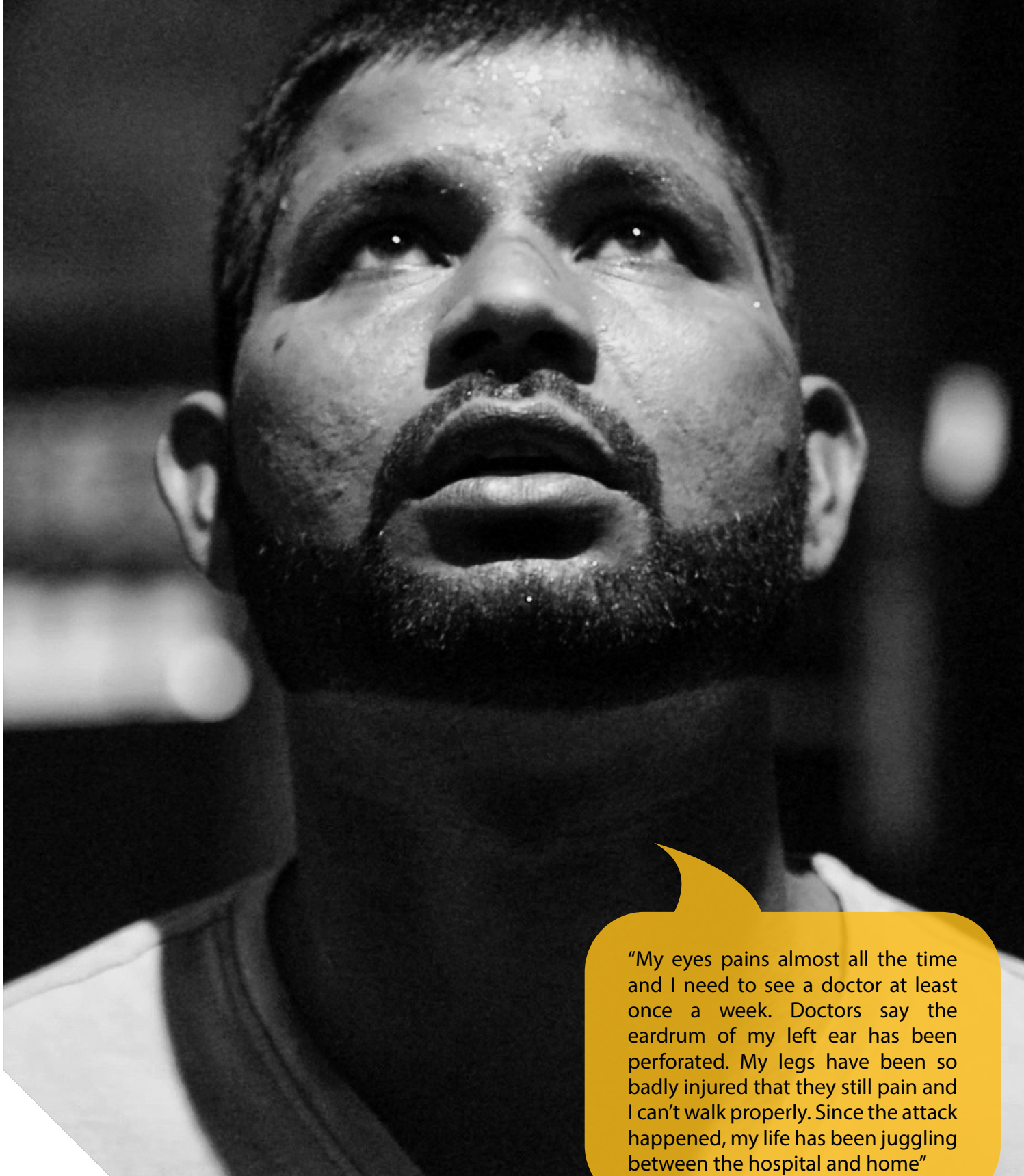


Seeing his situation, Miles2Miles responded quickly and was able to successfully transfer **Rs 1.5 lakhs** within a week from the fundraiser. The financial support breathed life back into his shattered business.

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The worst sting of violence is not necessarily in the violence itself, but in the long months and years afterwards, as the unresolved suffering of its victims is gradually forgotten about”

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"My eyes pains almost all the time and I need to see a doctor at least once a week. Doctors say the eardrum of my left ear has been perforated. My legs have been so badly injured that they still pain and I can't walk properly. Since the attack happened, my life has been juggling between the hospital and home"

Imteyaz get a new lease on life

On Friday, March 31, unfortunately, the Ramanavami, a religious festival, known for celebrating the birth of Lord Rama, was cynically exploited by Bajrang dal, as a cover for spreading hatred and targeting the Muslim community in Bihar sharif town, the headquarters of the Nalanda district.

Bajrang Dal members seized this opportunity to desecrate Muslims' places of worship and unleash violence, creating an atmosphere of fear and hatred.

In the aftermath, the Muslim community as a whole suffered. Businesses were destroyed, livelihoods were shattered, and trust among neighbours was eroded.

One such victim of the Bihar Sharif carnage was **Imteyaz**. It was March 31, Friday evening when Imteyaz, a kind-hearted man known for his infectious smile, ventured forth on his daily routine of transporting passengers on his toto (e-rickshaw). Little did he know that this serene evening would become a day etched in his memory forever.

As he manoeuvred his toto (e-rickshaw) through the crowded marketplace to reach the sabzi-mandi area that evening, he was swooped upon by 10-15 assailants, part of a larger crowd marching the town with weapons fueled by a blind rage and hatred.

Imteyaz found himself at the receiving end of violence, with his body battered and bruised, and his e-rickshaw getting damaged beyond repair. Even the battery of his e-rickshaw was stolen by the attacking mob, told Imteyaz.

In that moment, his thoughts turned to his beloved children, Ayat and Rehan, for whom he toiled tirelessly day and night.

Imteyaz chose to quit studies and help his father. He was married seven-years ago to Najma Khatoon. Being illiterate, riding a rickshaw was all he could do in his life to earn for his family. Now, that too was snatched by the rioters.

The world around him seemed crumbling, since he had been bedridden due to his injuries. His wife started working as a house help to earn for his treatment and two children. "But the income was hardly sufficient to sustain the family. Proper treatment felt like an impossible dream," said Imteyaz.

It was Miles2Smile foundation that took notice of my appalling condition and extended a generous financial help of Rs 1.5 lakh, immediately in my bank account.

With the financial assistance, I was finally able to afford the necessary treatment at a hospital, for my wounds beyond what would have been possible at home. I also invested in a new battery for my rickshaw, and resumed my work, moving past the painful tragedy.

Meanwhile, the fear continues to haunt Imteyaz as the memories of that fateful day refuse to fade away.





Taslim had been selling chicken from a small wooden kiosk for the last 3-years in Gagan Diwan area — a Muslim neighbourhood on the Southern end of Bihar's Sasaram city.

Friday, March 31, started like any other business day for Taslim, unaware of the impending tragedy that would befall him.

When an armed Hindu mob from the Ram Navami Rally fueled by their prejudice and blinded by their anger gathered near his kiosk, they viciously flipped his kiosk, spewing abuse and hatred without any provocation or reason.

The police, mere bystanders to the rampage, offered no protection. Taslim watched helplessly as his livelihood was destroyed before his eyes, his money box looted, and his counter fully damaged.

Amidst the rampage, Taslim anyhow managed to escape the clutches of the mob. But his losses were profound. He had not only lost all his livestock but also his means of earning a living. Days turned into weeks, and his family struggled to put food on the table, their lives consumed by uncertainty and despair. Miles2Smile assisted Tasleem with Rs 30,000 to rebuild his shop and get the business running again.



Iqbal

Muhammad Iqbal

The story of Muhammad Iqbal from Gagan Diwan is a similar tragedy that echoes the experiences of many others caught in the carnage.

It was March 31, 2023, a day that started with peaceful celebrations of Ram Navami, a Hindu Festival, in the town of Bihar Sharif.

But the peace did not last long. As the evening drew in, an unauthorised parade began to gather. Men clad in saffron, the signature colour of Hindutva brand, filled the streets brandishing swords and sticks.

Amidst the chaos, Muhammad Iqbal, 35, recalled how a group of about 150 individuals from the mob defiantly planted saffron flags on the minarets of the mosque compound, accompanied by chants of “Jai Shri Ram” (Hail Lord Ram).

It was only after they started to desecrate the mosque that Muslims got angry and clashes broke out reaching a breakpoint where dozens of Muslim-owned shops were set alight.

“Most of the people living in this area are Muslims,” told Iqbal. “This was not a religious rally but an attack on us [Muslims]. We were observing Ramadan, a sacred month of fasting and Ibadat (God’s remembrance). The occasion further intensified the pain and inflicted a sense of humiliation upon the Muslim community, says Iqbal with a heavy heart.

Iqbal, a loving father of two young sons and a teenage daughter, owned a cycle-repairing shop in the Gagan Diwan area near the graveyard.

He pleaded with folded hands to spare his shop, but the mob did not relent. They came with petrol bombs.. “One of them hurled it towards my shop. In an instant, it exploded, engulfing everything in flames. I ran for my life. I dialled the ‘100’ line, they kept saying they were coming but did not show up,” Iqbal recounts the day with terror etched in his voice.

On a good business day, Iqbal’s shop earned him a paltry sum of Rs 500. Even a day’s loss of business was harsh for Iqbal.

With two children in school, he had his eyes on a bleak future, when Miles2Smile met Iqbal during the Bihar Sharif relief and rehabilitation work. The foundation assisted Iqbal with Rs 30,000 for restoring his business. Using the money, he has re-stocked his equipment.

“Now things are slightly getting better since Miles2Smile visited our shop”, says Iqbal jovially.



Najmul Afrin

Najmul Afrin, a hardworking man in his early forties, ran a humble tea-stall in the bustling Gagan Diwan area near the graveyard. He had spent years serving both his local customers and passersby, with steaming cups of tea that provided a momentary respite from the daily grind.

On that fateful Friday afternoon of March 31, as chaos gripped the town, Najmul stood at a distance, perplexed and deeply concerned about the unfolding situation. However, his worst fears were soon realised when the mob's actions took a malevolent turn. The mob, consisting of men adorned in saffron attire, brandished swords and sticks, ready to unleash an unprovoked attack unlike anything Najmul had ever witnessed in his lifetime.

In the midst of the rampage, almost all of Najmul's utensils were stolen. He frantically called the police, but to no avail. Outnumbered and fearing for their lives, the Muslims in the Gagan Diwan market area had no choice but to flee, leaving their businesses unprotected.

Najmul, too, had to abandon his stall. He did not want to risk his life. The next day, when he arrived at the shop, his unit was set on fire. The flames burnt so intensely that it consumed his humble establishment, reducing it to ashes.

With police absent for about two hours, the marauders clearly had all the time they needed. Najmul's plastic drum and a gas-cylinder was stolen by the attackers.

"Hamein Sadak par la kar khara kar diya hai (They have left us on the road)" Najmul bursted into tears. Anywhere you'd turn in this market, among the lanes where Muslims worked, there was a gutted or looted enterprise.



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While the official records blamed the violence on mysterious “outsiders,” a local resident revealed the truth. “It was an inside job,” the man confided. “jan-pehchan ke hi log the.”

“I even offered tea for free to my Hindu friends.” What did I do wrong to deserve this ? asked Najmul. Others too insisted that they did nothing to provoke, which only shows how hard it is for them to process the fact that they were primarily targeted for who they were, irrespective of what they did or did not do.

Living in a joint family of eight, Najmul shared his home with his old parents. The loss of even one day's income was too heavy upon him.

Dejected at the loss, he was engrossed in his miseries, when Miles2Smile took notice of his situation. We sent him a generous sum of **Rs 50,000** to kickstart his business and, soon, the aroma of fresh tea and the sound of clinking cups returned to Najmul's shop.



Ejazul Khan

Seldom before in his life had 50-year-old Ejazul felt so frightened than when he resisted three youths, part of a mob of rioters, storming into his shop and kicking their way through the counter trying to steal his money-box. But the 50-year-old, who owned a small-gumti shop in Gagandiwan area near the graveyard didn't lose his nerve and fought back with temerity forcing them to flee empty-handed.



“The men were carrying swords, and rods. Their only intent was to loot,” says Ejazul who, despite using his full-force, couldn't save himself from the day -light robbery.

The items stolen included all shop's items on sale, as well as his money-box containing Rs 5000 in cash. After looting everything, they also set the shop on fire.

The carnage in Bihar Sharif reportedly began with the desecration of Muslim religious sites by groups associated with Hindutva organisation e.g. Bajrang Dal, accompanied by communal chants and loud DJ parades carried out in front of mosques and throughout the Muslim neighbourhoods. In the carnage, one person was reportedly killed, several others were injured, besides almost every shop in the Muslim quarter was looted and set on fire, resulting in extensive damage to Muslims.

Ejazul too lost his hard-earned pennies, along with his small gumti shop, which he cannot afford to rebuild. All that remains now is despair, and a multitude of questions lingering in his head. “How will I feed my family? What will happen next?” Ejazul asked himself, sitting on the curb of a bench, lost in his thoughts. He has one elder daughter and a younger son who is yet to find employment. His wife, Naushaba, works as a househelp to save for the daughter's marriage.

With the support received from Miles2Smile, Ejazul managed to purchase a fruit cart and a stock of seasonal fruits, utilising the sum of **Rs 30,000** provided. Life has once again found a way to flourish as he prepares his cart in tranquil hours each morning and sets out in an anticipation of generating good sales everyday.



Shakil Deshnavi

It was around 3 pm, when the city exploded in violence. According to Shakil, the Ram Navami rally had departed the area, when a car from Paharpura (a Hindu locality in Bihar Sharif) laden with bricks and stones returned to the town and Shakil Ahmad, known to his dear ones as Deshnavi caught himself at the crosshairs of a stone-showering incident.

The brandishing of arms, vituperative slogans, desecration of mosques, and abuse were all designed to cow down Muslims. That day, seemingly isolated incidents fell within a pattern, to wreak havoc upon Muslims in the town.

Days ago, local BJP MLA, driven by a venomous agenda, played his part in fanning the flames with his impassioned speeches aimed squarely at the Muslim community. His words ***“Har Ghar ko Ayodhya Banayenge” (We’ll turn every home into Ayodhya), “Ye to bas jhanki hai, asli khel abhi baki hai” (This is just a prelude; the real game is yet to unfold),*** spread like wildfire in the town through whatsapp forwards, infecting the hearts of the people, and igniting a communal fervour.

Amidst the bedlam, a frenzied mob descended upon Shakil and he got gravely injured. Blood started to pour out of his head. He along with seven others, including the city sadr were assigned a member of the peace committee by the district magistrate himself. Despite this, he became an unwitting target of the Hindutva mob. Miles2Smile visited Shakil Deshanvi to hear his ordeal, and gave him a sum of **Rs 40,000** for his medical treatments.

RELIEF & REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE DATA SHEET

Bihar Sharif, Nalanda, Bihar

S. No.	Name	Damage Description	Assistance Given (Rs.)
1	Najmul	Tea Shop	50,000
2	Naushaba w/o Ejazul Khan	Gumti shop	30,000
3	Imteyaz	Injuries, Rickshaw Damage	1,00,000
4	Jamaluddin	5 wooden carts burnt	1,50,000
5	Jamil	Tailor Shop burnt	1,50,000
6	Shakil Deshnavi	Head Injuries	40,000
7	Taslim (Chunnu)	Chicken Shop Damaged	30,000
8	Pappu	Cycle Shop burnt	30,000
	Distributed Ration		83,664
	Travelling & Other expenses		29,864
		Total	6,93,528

Total amount raised: Rs 6, 93,500

Total amount received: Rs 6,82,404

Total expense: 6,93,500

Remaining balance: (-11,096)

1

Smile Project



432

Smile Hours



2764

Miles Covered



70

Smiles Restored





ABOUT ORGANISATION

Miles2Smile was established three years back as a not-for-profit organization, based in Delhi. The organization works primarily in relief activities and brings smiles to the faces of victims looming over penury and distress. Livelihood creation, healthcare and educational empowerment are also some core areas of work by the organization. In the past two years, the organization has made commendable service in delivering solace to the people languishing in the heap of despair. The organization is on an assiduous mission to revive happiness to the people ripped after communal tensions.



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