



Better light a candle than curse the darkness

شکوہ ظلمت شب سے تو کہیں بجائیے کچھ کی کوئی شمع جلاتے جاتے

Kind words and forgiving of faults are better than charity, followed by injury. Allah is free of all wants, and He is Most-Forbearing (Quran, 2:236)

From the Editor:

We deeply regret the delay in bringing out this issue. There had been a major technical snag and we had lost most of our records in the computer system. But even before this crash took place I was feeling handicapped in the absence of original material worth publishing.

The article by Kaunain Shahidi could not have been more timely therefore.

At a time when I was losing faith in the capacity of 'written word' to move a fig, I came across with the article of Shuddhabrata Sengupta that occupies the right column of this issue. I wish Sengupta had written a smaller article because I could not edit away a word of it and hence all this space gone towards this single write-up. But I would recommend every Indian to read it and every writer to emulate these standards of commenting.

I would request the articulate members of Bihar Anjuman (and anyone else too) to write something for BaKhabar or at least suggest some write-ups like the one below by DOROTHY RABINOWIT, for taking editorial notice. At least in the realm of words let us try to displace the 'upper hand' of our detractors.

Best wishes,

And a happy New Year, from BaKhabar.

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The Debris of Terror: After Bombay in November 2008: (Shuddhabrata Sengupta)

Last week's terror attacks on Bombay/Mumbai, for which there can be no justification whatsoever, have targeted railway stations, restaurants, hospitals, places of worship, streets and hotels. These are the places in which people gather, where the anonymous flux of urban life finds refuge and sustenance on an everyday basis. By attacking such sites, the tactics of the recent terror attack (like all its predecessors) echo the tropes of conventional warfare as it developed in the twentieth century. These tactics valued the objective of the escalation of terror and panic amongst civilians higher than they viewed the neutralization of strictly military or strategic targets. In a war without end, (which is one way of looking at the twentieth century and its legacy) panic is the key weapon and the most important objective.

The history of the indiscriminate bombing of cities and inhabited tracts as acts of war in modern times (from Guernica in Spain to Dresden and London in the Second World War, to the bombing of Cambodia in the 70s and the attacks on Baghdad in the Iraq War, and subsequently on Lebanon) underscores the fact that the ultimate objective of contemporary military actions is not the destruction of military or state assets but the utter demoralization of the civilian population by deploying disproportionate and massive force against the softest of possible targets - unarmed, un-involved ordinary people. The terrorists, who caused mayhem in Bombay, and their mentors, wheresoever they may lie, are no less remarkable in their lethal cynicism than those who sanctioned the bombing of Baghdad in recent times. They were interested in hurting people more than they were in tilting at the windmills of power. If we accept the conjecture that the attacks were authored by Islamist organizations based in Pakistan (which by itself is not unlikely), then we also have to accept the irony that in their actions they have mirrored and echoed the tactics of the military leadership of the great powers they decry as their adversaries. Terrorists and war criminals are replicas of each other. The difference between them is only a matter of degree. The students have learnt well from their teachers. No redemptive, just, honorable or worthwhile politically transformational objectives can be met, or even invoked, by attacking a mass transit railway station, a restaurant, a hotel or a hospital. The holding of hostages in a centre of worship and comfort for travelers cannot and does not challenge any form of the state oppression anywhere.

The terrorists (I unhesitatingly call them 'terrorists', a word which I am normally reluctant to use, because their objective was nothing other than the terror itself) who undertook these operations did not deal a single blow to the edifice of oppression in this country, or in any other country. On the other hand, they strengthened it. By helping to unleash calls for war, by eliminating (unwittingly perhaps) those that have been investigating the links between fringe far right groups and home grown terror, by provoking once again the demand for stronger and more lethal legislation for preventive detention (in the form of a revived or resuscitated POTA), these terrorists have done statist and authoritarian politics in India its biggest favor. The sinister and lunatic fringe of far right politics of the Hindutva variety (which seems to have acted hand in glove with rogue elements within the security establishment) in particular, must be delighted to have been gifted this latest horror on a platter without having had to work hard for it >>

*To find a fault is easy,
to do better may be
difficult.*

*If your eyes are sweet you will like all the people of the world.
But if your tongue is sweet all the people of the world will like
you.*

Journalism Censured

(We reproduce below a write-up of DOROTHY RABINOWIT, a member of The Wall Street Journal's editorial board. Alongside this brilliant (we have to admit) write-up, the remarks of BaKhabar are ensconced within the brackets to set things right.)

If the Mumbai terror assault seemed exceptional, and shocking in its targets, it was clear from the Thanksgiving Day reports that we weren't going to be deprived of the familiar, either. Namely, ruminations, hints, charges of American culpability that regularly accompany catastrophes of this kind.

Soon enough, there was Deepak Chopra, healer, New Age philosopher and digestion guru, advocate of aromatherapy and regular enemas, holding forth on CNN on the meaning of the attacks *(All this cocktail was so palatable as long as the legendary American do-gooder was able to sway to the local tunes)*

How the ebullient Dr. Chopra had come to be chosen as an authority on terror remains something of a mystery *(By the same token as you, Miss or Miz Dorothy)* though the answer may have something to do with his emergence in the recent presidential campaign as a thinker of advanced political views. Also commending him, perhaps, is his well known capacity to cut through all sorts of complexities to make matters simple. No one can fail to grasp the wisdom of a man who has informed us that "If you have happy thoughts, then you make happy molecules." *(From which end?)*

In his CNN interview, he was no less clear. What happened in Mumbai, he told the interviewer, was a product of the U.S. war on terrorism, that "our policies, our foreign policies" had alienated the Muslim population, that we had "gone after the wrong people" and inflamed moderates. And "that inflammation then gets organized and appears as this disaster in Bombay." *(As if US A can be wrong too!)*

All this was a bit too much, evidently, for CNN interviewer Jonathan Mann, who interrupted to note that there were other things going on - - matters like the ongoing bitter Pakistan-India struggle over Kashmir -- which had caused so much terror and so much violence. "That's not Washington's fault," he pointed out. *(By the way what are the British connection with Kashmir and the US connection with British? Far-fetched isn't it?)*

Given an argument, the guest, ever a conciliator *(a gentleman of the free world that he was)*, agreed: The Mumbai catastrophe was not Washington's fault, it was everybody's fault. Which didn't prevent >>

While the agents of the attack in Bombay may have been genuinely motivated by their own twisted understanding of Islam, they have demonstrated that they have no hesitation in putting millions of Indian Muslims in harms way by exposing them to the risk of a long drawn out spiral of retaliation. We need to underscore that they killed 40 innocent, unarmed Muslims (roughly 20 % of the current total casualty figures of 179) while they unleashed their brutal force on Bombay. The terrorists who authored their deaths cannot by any stretch of imagination be seen as partisans or friends of Islam. They are the enemy of us all, and especially of those amongst us who happen to be Muslims, for they jeopardize the safety and security of all Muslims in India by unleashing yet another wave of suspicion and prejudice against ordinary Muslims. Any effort to rationalize their actions by reference to real or perceived injustices to Muslims in India, is patronizing at best, and insensitive at worst.

It is therefore neither surprising nor remarkable that several Muslim organizations and individuals in India have unanimously condemned the terror attacks and terrorism in general. The actions of the terrorists (their purported statements as aired on India TV notwithstanding) constitute an insult to anyone who is interested in seriously addressing the discrimination faced by minorities in India.

What is particularly reprehensible about the terrorist's actions is their choice to target and kill unarmed Jewish travelers, a rabbi and his wife. This choice was not accidental; these people were targeted because of their religious affiliation and their ethnic origins. The anti-Semitic edge of contemporary Islamic Fundamentalism has nothing whatsoever to do with any opposition to the oppressive policies and practices of the state of Israel towards Palestinians. Targeting Jews (who may or may not be Israeli) or individuals who happen to be Israeli in a house of Jewish worship in Mumbai for the actions of the State of Israel is not unlike attacking Caribbean Hindus and Hindu Indians at a Hindu temple in Trinidad for real or imagined misdemeanors of the Republic of India. It would be similar to attacking ordinary Indian, Pakistani or Somali Muslims and Iraqis in retribution for the offences committed by the erstwhile Ba'athist government of Iraq on Kurds. The Israeli government treats Palestinians in occupied Palestine a shade better than Saddam Hussain's Iraq treated Kurds. (Settlements in Gaza and the West Bank, though they have no doubt borne the brunt of Israeli state terror, have not to my knowledge been gassed by chemical weapons). Islamic fundamentalist anti-Semitism is as much an abomination as Hindu, Christian or Jewish Fundamentalism or Secular Islamophobia anywhere in the world.

One of the theories doing the rounds of the underbelly of blogs and mailing lists is that of 'Mossad-CIA' involvement in the attacks on Bombay. While I have no doubt at all about the fact that organizations such as the Mossad and the CIA are murderous and unscrupulous in terms of their day to day operational existence and that they have an active and corrosive agenda in South Asia, I find the theory of their involvement in the Bombay terror attacks as far fetched as the assumption that the Indian Ocean Tsunami was a result of a Mossad-RAW conspiracy to test secret undersea weapons. Such theories, which are closely related to the '9/11 was a Mossad job' kind of wild conjecture, are a species of denial, and are often propagated by credulous commentators and politicians, particularly in the Muslim world (and their non-Muslim sympathizers), with a view to maintaining the myth of the eternally victimized and wronged Muslim. Such unsubstantiated conjectures and allegations do not help Muslims in any way. On the contrary their whimsical non-seriousness perpetuates the conditions that undermine responsible non-xenophobic Muslim>>

Always be a little kinder than necessary.

*I wish to follow the Straight Path?
Holy Prophet replied, "Do good to others for Allah's sake".*

Dr. Chopra from returning soon to his central theme -- the grave offense posed to Muslims by the United States' war on terror, a point accompanied by consistent emphatic reminders that Muslims are the world's fastest growing population -- 25% of the globe's inhabitants -- and that the U.S. had better heed that fact. In Dr. Chopra's moral universe, numbers are apparently central. It's tempting to imagine his view of offenses against a much smaller sliver of the world's inhabitants -- not so offensive, perhaps? (Such as the Aborigines or the Kiwis. Red Indians of course were a bigger sliver and deserved to be counted at par)

Two subsequent interviews with Larry King brought much of the same -- a litany of suggestions about the role the U.S. had played in fueling assaults by Muslim terrorists, reminders of the numbers of Muslims in the world and their grievances. A faithful adherent of the root-causes theory of crime -- mass murder (with hand held weapon in a CQB mode, silly fellow. Dint' he know about the stealth bombers and surgical or almost medical strikes), in the case at hand -- Dr. Chopra pointed out, quite unnecessarily, that most of the terrorism in the world came from Muslims. It was mandatory, then, to address their grievances -- "humiliation," "poverty," "lack of education." The U.S., he recommended, should undertake a Marshall Plan for Muslims.

Nowhere in this citation of the root causes of Muslim terrorism was there any mention of Islamic fundamentalism -- the religious fanaticism that has sent fevered mobs rioting, burning and killing over alleged slights to the Quran or the prophet (and thus belittling the hard-earned rights to communicate libel and defamation and blasphemy against 'the other' fellow). Not to mention the countless others enlisted to blow themselves and others up in the name of God (In keeping with the high concept of equality, they could have at least given a chance to the Satan also, to blow up others and never themselves). Nor did we hear, in these media meditations, any particular expression of sorrow from the New Delhi-born Dr. Chopra for the anguish of Mumbai's victims: a striking lack, no doubt unintentional (despite prodding by the interviewer?), but not surprising, either. (The idiots don't even follow the prescription and try to seek good on their own) For advocates of the root-causes theory of crime, the central story is, ever, the sorrows and grievances of the perpetrators. For those prone to the belief that most eruptions of evil in the world can be traced to American influence and power there is only one subject of consequence. (Forgetting the enormity of the US ability to make friends and influence people and make some money also on the sly, if sufficiently unnoticed).>>

points of view from being taken seriously.

Having said all this (which I believe is necessary to say), it is equally important to address several other serious issues that have raised their ugly heads in the aftermath of the attack on Bombay. The aftermath of the terrible recent events in Bombay contains a great deal of debris. A spell of terror destroys so much, so quickly. A lot gets damaged by violence. Lives are shattered, walls and roofs collapse, entire neighborhoods get devastated. Cities, sometimes the populations of countries, find what gets called their 'spirit' broken. But one thing stays intact, and on occasion even finds new strength. This one thing is a sense of wounded innocence, and the search for easy fixes and answers. There can be nothing more dangerous at present than this deadly combination of injured innocence and glib macho loose talk. I would like to spend some time looking at the sources and consequences of two specific kinds of loose talk which I will address in turn.

1. War Mongering: The Indian state is an injured and innocent party, and an attack like this gives India the right to conduct a military campaign, even war, against Pakistan to finish once and for all, the scourge of terrorism. As the botoxed visage of Simi Garewal screamed on 'We the People' broadcast on NDTV two evenings ago 'Carpet Bomb those parts of Pakistan...'

2. Islamophobia : We can understand everything about the motives and drives of the terrorists by pointing to their 'Muslim' identity. A variant of this is - 'The Quran sanctions violence against unbelievers, and that is all that we need to know in order to understand the roots of the attacks in Bombay'. This kind of sentiment is burgeoning on the internet, where it feeds the testosterone overdrive of a certain kind of overzealous netizen who sees the tragedy that has befallen Bombay as an opportunity to put out a sick and prejudiced agenda.

It should not come as a surprise that often, the two come linked. The idiotic and jejune militarist fantasies of the hard Hindutva right are a public secret. However, there are also many card carrying secular nationalist 'war mongers' who see the times we are living through as an opportunity to exhibit how much more 'patriotic' they can be than their communal peers. Of course, these attitudes have their exact mirrors in Pakistan. And a peculiar mirroring is currently underway between Indian and Pakistani news channels, with news anchors such as the hysterical Arnab Goswami (Times Now TV) in India and his counterparts in Pakistan indulging in a perverse and dangerous game of jingoistic one-upmanship. Even retired senior officers of the armed forces who are sought out for comment and analysis in television studios and politicians of parties such as the BJP (neither of whom are necessarily known as models of moderation) are acting with greater restraint than sections of the electronic media. They (the BJP politicians) are at least at present not rushing to talk of war (how could they, they have an election to contest in a few months time, and an Indo-Pak military standoff that could work to the advantage of the incumbent UPA government could really upset their best calculations). The retired soldiers by and large, speak wisely of avoiding military options as far as is possible. It is only the few news anchors who have let their place in the spotlights go to their heads, (and their adolescent online clones) who are consistently maintaining the shrillness of war-talk. Those speaking of war or punitive military strikes base their arguments on the 'enough is enough' theory, that time has now come to deal Pakistan a hard blow as a punitive action against letting its territory being used against India. This line of reasoning assumes that India is cast as the eternal victim and can never be seen as the aggressor. >>

*A friend is a person
you gift yourself.*

*Happiness is not something you have in your
hands; it is something you can carry in your heart.*

Accustomed as we are by now to this view of the U.S., it's impossible not to marvel at its varied guises -- its capacity to emerge even in journalism ostensibly concerning the absurd beliefs about the 9/11 attacks held by so many Muslims. It's conventional wisdom in the region -- according to a New York Times dispatch from Cairo, Egypt, last fall by Michael Slackman -- that the U.S. and Israel had to have been involved in the planning, if not the actual execution of the assaults. No news there. Neither was the information that there was virtually universal belief in the area that Jews, tipped off, didn't go to work at the World Trade Center that day. *(When did we face this injured innocence first? But what is the truth? Any list with the identities of the Jews who died? Why not give the Muslim theorists a frontal blow by dispelling this hogwash statistically. Any news on this?)* Or that the U.S. had organized the plot in order to attack Arab Muslims and gain access to their oil.

The noteworthy point here was the writer's conclusion that the U.S. itself was to blame for the power of these beliefs. "It is easy for Americans to dismiss such thinking as bizarre," Mr. Slackman allowed. But that would miss the point that the persistence of these ideas represents the "first failure in the fight against terrorism." A U.S. failure? Nowhere in the extended list of root causes here was there any mention of the fanaticism and sheer mindless gullibility that is the prerequisite for the holding of such beliefs *(The superstitious lot who think that by dying in the way of their struggle, they would get to heaven. Ha, ha.)*

Its very ordinariness speaks volumes about this report. A piece written with evident serenity, the perversity of its conclusions notwithstanding, it's one emblem among many of the adversarial view of the nation that is today entrenched in the culture. So unworthy is the U.S. -- an attitude solidly established in our media culture long before the war on terror -- that only it can be held responsible for the deranged fantasies cherished in large quarters of the Arab world. So natural does it feel, now, to hold such views that their expression has become second nature *(and the Wall Street Journal has to tolerate all this and much more!!)*.

Which is how it happens also that the U.S. is linked to the bloodletting in Mumbai, with scarcely anyone batting an eye, and Larry King -- awash perhaps, in happy molecules -- thanking guest Dr. Chopra for his extraordinary enlightenment *(Happy integration of the world economies notwithstanding!!)*.

All India Patriotic Forum,

organized a public meeting to express their outrage at the attack on Mumbai and to express their condolence at the death of the brave commandos and citizens who lost their lives in the carnage. The meeting was organized in Jogeshwari and was attended by hundreds of people including school children, religious leaders and humanitarian activists and people of Mumbai. The program started with all religious leaders- Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist and Christian offering prayers to those who sacrificed their lives in the Mumbai terror attacks. It had various speakers including religious leaders, police officials, civil rights activists and local politicians who spoke about various possibilities behind the motive for this attack.

If this is so, then (following this line of thinking) there is no reason why India too should not have been carpet bombed for allowing the use of its territory and resources for acts of terror against its neighbors. The memory of news anchors may be as brief as the punchy headlines of breaking news, but even a cursory examination of recent history would show that the Indian state and elements within India have sinned as much as they have been sinned against.

In May 1984, for instance, the LTTE (at that time housed, armed, funded and nourished by the Indian state led by Indira Gandhi) conducted a brutal slaughter of around one hundred and twenty unarmed and peaceful Buddhist pilgrims in and around one of Sri Lanka's holiest Buddhist shrines in Anuradhapura. The Anuradhapura Massacre caused great anguish and outrage in Sri Lanka at that time, and if we accept the principles that prompt our 'studio-warriors' and 'online dharmayoddhas' to call for the carpet-bombings of parts of Pakistan then we have to admit that it was unfortunate that Sri Lanka did not carpet bomb Delhi and Chennai.

Perhaps as the comparatively militarily weaker neighbor of mighty India, it may have found itself reluctant to imagine, let alone carry out such a bizarre threat. Clearly, the nuclear fuelled fantasies of militarist Indians brook no such reasons for reticence. I wonder whether it is amnesia and the lack of a moral-ethical sense that underwrites Indian militarism or is it the intoxication of arrogant militarism that induces this dystopic inability to either remember one's own state's history of complicity in terror or to behave ethically and reasonably in times of crisis. Further, should a professional investigation into the devastating attack on the Samjhauta Express train to Pakistan reveal that the perpetrators of the attack were Hindu radicals assisted by rogue elements within the military intelligence apparatus in India, would Pakistan then be justified in 'carpet bombing' Pune, Indore, Jammu and other places linked to the cluster of organizations and individuals around outfits such as 'Abhinav Bharat'?

A military adventure into Pakistani held territory by Indian forces at this current juncture can be nothing short of a disaster, it risks taking South Asia and the world to the precipice of a nuclear conflict. It has been pointed out by some idiots on television that the United States is apparently safer today for having sent troops to fight into Afghanistan and Iraq. The truth is, the United States has made the world and Americans a great deal more unsafe, and a great deal more vulnerable to terrorism, by the conduct of its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The incidence of terrorism worldwide has increased due to its intervention, and even the attacks on Bombay can in a sense be seen as ricocheting off the mess in Iraq and Afghanistan. The deliberate targeting of British and American individuals by the terrorists in Bombay last week demonstrates how unsafe it is to be seen carrying an American passport today. If India is to be pulled headlong into conflict with Pakistan as a result of the fall out of the attacks on Bombay, the world will automatically and immediately become a far more unsafe place. There will be more, not less terrorism for us all to deal with.

The only way for us to defeat terrorism in South Asia is for ordinary Indians and Pakistanis to join hands across the Indo-Pak divide to say that they will no longer tolerate the nurturing of terror, hate and division in their societies through the covert and overt acts of rogue elements in both their governments (which have a vested interest in the continuity of conflict) and powerful non-state actors in both societies. Neither POTA, nor military misadventures, nor harder borders can defeat terrorism. A suicide bomber can only be disarmed by the narrowing of the political and cultural space for hatred >>

Sorry ... I am very busy

(Kaunain Shahidi.)

Recently when I was talking to one of my friends from Bihar about Bihar Anjuman activities and the magazine, I asked him if he could write something for Bakhbar. Oh.. I am very busy, sorry. I do not have time. This is what his prompt response was and it's not uncommon. We will find many around us with that mind set. I do not know how genuine such remarks are, but it sounds as if we are the people of another planet.

Being busy is good but question is can we afford to be very busy? I feel it's important to know the effective management of ourselves, we must know how to manage our time and energy and prioritize the daily activities accordingly, failing to do so, we will always have excuses like... oh I am very busy... sorry. I do not have time!

I was thinking about the subject and thought of writing about Time Management for Bakhbar. What would I do to get a few more hours in a day? How much more could be accomplished and enjoy at work and at home? What about being able to spend more time with family, friends and hobbies? And What about getting some time to read and write something? I realized that Time goes on whether we manage it or not, the issue is not only about time management, but the real issue is how effectively we can manage our energy and emotions to get the required work done. The important issue is managing us in relation to the limited time.

Other myth about Time Management is doing something quicker, well I have learnt that doing the wrong thing quicker can get us nowhere faster, the beauty of the concept is doing more of the right things first and first things right in our life each day in both work and personal life situations.

Here are some Time Tips, which I have learnt during the process and would like to share with the readers of Bakhbar.

- Continually look at ways of freeing up your time.
- Examine your old habits and search for ways to change or eliminate them.
- Keep a diary with you to jot down the things you have to do or notes to yourself.
- Plan your day each morning or the night before and set priorities for yourself.
- Maintain and develop a list of specific things to be done each day, set your priorities and the get the most important ones done as soon in the day as you can.
- Evaluate your progress at the end of the day briefly.
- Have confidence in yourself and in your judgement of priorities and stick to them.
- Catch yourself when you are involved in unproductive projects and stop yourself.
- Think on paper when possible-it makes it easier to review and revise.
- Be sure and set deadlines for yourself whenever possible.
- Delegate responsibilities whenever possible.

I think at individual level, we all can manage our energies and resources with little change in our mind- set. Willingly we can certainly become good time managers or at least we can try to do so.

I have learnt that, Good time management can help us in many ways including reducing stress, improving sleep, improving our attitude, improving our stamina and can improve our health and personal productivity in general. Lets hope we don't use the statement ' Sorry..I am very busy' more frequently.

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within society to levels of utter insignificance.

For this to occur, we all need to shed the cocoons of the assumptions of our own innocence. The sooner we do so, the sooner we realize that culpability in terror in South Asia is not a one way street with all signs pointing only in the direction of Pakistan, the better it will be for peace in our time. The automatic assumption of our own innocence, especially at times when we perceive ourselves to be the victims, is something we cannot afford. Whatever little illusory comfort it may give us in the short run, it will rebound to haunt us with unforgiving intensity.

If we are serious about putting an end to the seemingly endless spiral of retributive violence behind us we have to exercise the hard and necessary choice of leaving the discourse of 'martyrs', 'victims', 'villains' and 'heroes' behind us. The media and especially the electronic media have a special role to play in this regard. They have much introspection to do. It will not do to have jingoist anchors and commentators protect their diminishing intelligence and rising moral culpability in stoking the flames of war themselves with the fig leaf of 'national psyche' and 'popular sentiment'. It is they who fashion the chimera of 'popular sentiment' with their spin doctoring, and it is unacceptable to see people refuse to take responsibility for the very serious consequences of this dangerous spin.

Finally, I come to the question of whether there is anything specifically 'Islamic' about acts of terrorism such as we have witnessed in Bombay last week. Under normal circumstances, such ridiculous questions would not need any attention. Unfortunately, these are not normal circumstances, and it is at times such as these, that otherwise marginal irresponsibly articulated opinions get a disproportionate velocity due to the way in which they circulate, particularly on the internet and then leak out into the grit of innuendo, insinuation, half-informed speculation and rumor in daily conversation. One particularly pernicious communication that has been doing the rounds of chain mails, and has already begun cropping up in blog posts and discussion lists is the familiar litany of - "There are suras (chapters) in the Quran that justify the slaughter of unbelievers and what the terrorists were doing was only fulfilling the commands of their faith". This kind of response asks us to assume two things,

One, that the source of the motivation for the terrorists actions was predominantly scriptural (this bases itself somewhat on the scripture laden rhetoric and vocabulary of the so-called 'Indian Mujahideen' terror emails that accompanied previous attacks this year). Secondly, that if as a believing Muslim you do not follow Quranic injunctions to unleash violence, you are at best an insincere or inconsistent Muslim, and the only true Muslim is the one who kills unbelievers to earn his place in heaven.

The first reduces the speechless complexity of terrorist actions to a few pithy and selectively quoted phrases. The second is an insult to the lives, actions and convictions of the absolute majority of believing Muslims. Both betray a singular and profound ignorance of Islam, of the concept of jihad within Islam and an unwillingness to engage with Islamic belief and the history of Islamic societies.

This (completely erroneous) view of all Muslims as mindless 'holy warriors' takes the injunctions to do with the term 'jihad' (which translates, not as 'holy war' as is commonly thought, but as 'struggle') as referring solely to acts of violence. It needs to be stated here, once again, as has been stated many times before, in many different contexts, that 'jihad' within the theological context >>



KQ

The Knowledge Quotient

(Najmul Hoda, Sr Lecturer, NIILM CMS, MBA, Pune University)

For a B-school graduate, the awareness of happenings in the corporate world across the continents is of utmost significance. This helps them in taking informed decisions at various levels that they are serving.

The most generic way of accumulating knowledge of the existing happenings, since time immemorial, is through reading newspapers. Under the banner of The Knowledge Quotient you would get an opportunity to recapitulate the happenings in the past week.

To start with, it is proposed to start an online test on every Tuesday 3 – 3:30 pm. Multiple choice questions would be prepared from Economic Times (Tuesday to Monday excluding the editions of Saturday and Sunday) and the Business section of The Times of India (Saturdays and Sundays). The pattern would remain intact till any change is decided later.

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It is proposed to further the activities of this section in one or all of the following ways.

- a) Analysis of the articles (from which questions were prepared) by interested members be published in the form of a monthly newsletter under the title "The Knowledge Quotient"
- b) A glossary of the important events in compiled form every month that would form a knowledge bank.

We solicit your suggestions and feedback.

The test is held on www.wps.co.in, a Website developed by Mr Naim Ahmad B.Tech, MS USA. This is not just a quiz where you score a right or lose points. This would help you change your personality. That's what we sincerely foresee. This would be a platform where you would hone all the skills required to be a successful manager. You would read, comprehend, assimilate, discuss, assert your views and conciliate. We firmly believe that as a beginner and in tight schedules there is nothing better than a business newspaper for B-school students. It covers everything a manager is expected to know from various specializations. Above all, you would be a part of a community that would force you to move up the ladder in your career. Wishing you all the best. Happy testing.
Mail: najmulhoda19@gmail.com.

Notice

A "Condolence meet on Mumbai Carnage" is being organized by NRI Muslims in association with the All India Patriotic Forum (AIPF) on 28.12.2008 at 3 pm in the Auditorium of India Islamic Cultural Center, Lodi Road, New Delhi. The Condolence will be followed by a Convention on "Terrorism Fascism and the

of Islam is of two kinds, and that only one of these refers to the conduct of armed struggle. The greater and more commendable jihad is that which involves a personal struggle with one's own baser and unethical propensities, which every believing Muslim is asked to conduct as a spiritual cleansing process. The 'lesser jihad' concerns specifically defensive military acts conducted against aggressors as a last resort, when all else fails. The Quran is replete with statements such as 'to you your religion and to me mine', or 'there can be no compulsion in religion'. When the adherents of other religions are specifically mentioned by name (Jews, Christians and Sabeans) it is said -

"Believers, Jews, Christians and Sabeans (the followers of St. John the Baptist or Hazrat Yahya) - whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does what is right - shall be rewarded by their Lord, they have nothing to fear or to regret". (Sura Baqarah - The Cow - 2:62)

Jews are invoked as 'the children of Israel (Bani Israil) and in the Quran, Allah only asks of them that they remain true to their faith. There is not a trace of anti-Semitism in the Quran. When certain Jews are spoken of negatively, the statements echo the admonitions of the Jewish scriptures by saying that 'those amongst the people of the book who were of little faith' were worthy of God's disfavor. Clearly, this indicates that 'those amongst the people of the book who were NOT of little faith' are to be favored, and in fact Allah is heard saying in the Quran -

"O Children of Israel, remember the favors I have bestowed upon you, keep to your covenant, and I will keep to mine". (Sura Baqarah - The Cow - 2:40)

It is important to keep this in mind specifically with regard to the special targeting of unarmed Jews by the terrorists in Bombay. Their acts, in this specific instance stand in direct contradiction to the spirit of the Quran. While there are anti-Semitic traces in the Ahadis (the reported traditions of the prophet that were accumulated and collated over the centuries), there is no unanimity or consensus amongst believing Muslims about the authenticity of different 'isnads' (lines of transmission) attached to different Ahadis. Therefore, in instances of ambiguity, as with regard to the attitude to Jews and those of other faiths, it is only the unquestioned authority of the Quran that can be seen as acting as the final arbiter and guide. From this standpoint alone, the anti-Semitic edge of the terrorists actions in Bombay last week can be justifiably condemned as anathema by all believing Muslims.

Generally speaking, the quote that is most commonly hurled by Islamophobes is "Kill them wherever you find them, drive them out of the places from which they drove you" (Sura Baqarah - The Cow - 2:190-191). This verse was given to the prophet Mohammad before the advent of a major battle when all attempts at arriving at peaceful negotiations had been exhausted, and when the Prophet and his fledgling community in Medina were in danger of being exterminated by invasive aggression. The injunctions are specific; they apply only to retaliation against armed bodies of men who have acted as aggressors. What is omitted when these verses are hurled, either by Islamophobes, or by Islamists, is that they follow immediately from the injunction that says -

"Fight for the sake of Allah those that fight against you, but do not attack them first. Allah does not love the aggressor" (Sura Baqarah - The Cow - 2:190-191). It is also followed by the equally specific injunction "but if they mend their ways, know >>

*People don't plan to fail.
They just fail to plan.*

*'Either write something worth reading or do
something worth writing.' Benjamin Franklin.*

Changing Global Scenario and Islamic Response

(M.K.A. Siddiqui – A renowned Anthropologist of Kolkata)

Change is inherent in human society. It is also in response to a number of external factors. Change is more rapid today than it was in the past. Beside other factors, the pace of scientific and technological advancement has got a lot to do with change in human life, in human thinking and in human actions. Constant redefinition of human relationship is also an important manifestation of this change regionally and on global scale.

Societies experiencing greater scientific and technological advancement are prone to greater and more rapid change than others. There is no doubt that scientific and technological advancement has brought about great improvement almost revolutionizing the quality of life. But at the same time it has a disrupting or dislocating effect on the established social order or social norms, many customs and manners and above all the systems of belief and practices as also the web of human relationship in a limited and wider sphere. Social change does not keep pace with the rapidly changing external environment and the demands of change bring about disruption in the social system of a people.

Thus the preservation of the ideological system and the traditional social order, in the wake of the emergent patterns resulting from modern developments such as industrialization, urbanization, population explosion and scientific discoveries militating against the belief system, assumes a serious problem. Many ideological systems succumb to the demands of change and find it impossible to resolve the problems arising out of the development and far from remaining logically valid fail to sustain themselves in any measure. They take shelter behind the ill defined terms of 'modernity' and 'secularism', largely because their traditional ideological systems fail them. Most often the traditional ideological systems fail to provide guidance to technological developments and canalize its course to a direction towards human welfare weaning it away from the path of destruction.

The vitality of an ideological system depends upon its capability to resolve the problems arising from modern developments within its own framework and without compromising or undermining its basic principles, i.e. the system is fully attuned to changing situations and modernity.

Let us for example take the case of the problem of population explosion. Faced with the problem, the Japanese Buddhists went for abortion on an unprecedented scale without giving any regard to their rational beliefs or moral constraints grossly undermining their faith. The Catholics also found it impossible to solve the problem of limitation of birth within the framework of their ideological system which does not provide any solution of the problem. This is true of all the contemporary ideological systems which have to discard the true mantle of their ideology to solve this problem. Islam alone comes out with an effective solution of the problem without undermining the standard of morality set by the creed.

The Quranic injunctions provide the solution in clear and unmistakable terms very much within the framework of the religious-cultural system it stands for, without compromising any of its basic principles.

The problems arising from industrialization and class conflict, urbanization and its related problem of slums and urban poor can be similarly solved within the framework >>

that Allah is forgiving and merciful. But if they mend their ways, fight none other than the evil-doers." (Sura Baqarah - The Cow - 2:190-191).

So, we have repeated caveats, repeated qualifications - 'do not be the aggressor', 'fight only if they fight you', 'cease armed action if they see reason' that immediately surround the quote that is so often pulled out at times like this like a tired rabbit from a magicians hat. And yet, the sleight of hand continues.

By what stretch of imagination can a chef's assistant in a hotel, or a rabbi's wife, or passengers trying to get to second class railway carriages or children who live on the street, ordinary Muslims, or police officers trying to investigate the terrorist outrages purportedly undertaken by radicals who happen to be Hindus with a view to intimidating ordinary Muslims be seen as 'aggressors' against Islam? By which Quranic injunction can we justify acts of aggression against such individuals?

Once again, by their concrete actions, the terrorists have demonstrated not their fidelity, but their sharp deviance from the letter and spirit of the Quran. Those motivated and prejudiced slanderers who circulate the insinuations about the 'Islamic' provenance of the terrorist actions are actually just as much guilty of spreading a mistaken understanding of Islam as the terrorists themselves. In fact, objectively, once again, Islamophobes and Islamists are not adversaries, but allies.

The lineage of the terrorists who attacked Bombay is better traced to those vicious acts of twentieth and twenty-first century terror which feature self styled protagonists of all the faiths and ideologies that mark our modern world. They are to be found as much amongst the New Age-Buddhist-Hindu hybrid of Aum Shirin Kyo, the Branch Davidians, the Balinese Hindu vigilantes who slaughtered 40,000 unarmed Indonesian Communists and their suspected sympathizers in 1965, the ultra-left and far-right radicals of West Germany, Japan and Italy in the seventies As such, they, like the Indian Maoists and Salwa Judum and the ingredients of the alphabet soup of insurgent and counter-insurgent outfits operating through the length and breadth of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Burma are the objective agent-provocateurs of reactionary, authoritarian, statist politics. Terrorism, whatever else it may be, is in the end, the mightiest secret weapon in the arsenal of the state to beat and badger a terrified population into meek submission by creating a situation where the surrender and abdication of civil rights is seen as a normalized and natural response to a mounting crisis. Even a brief history of the limited genre of terrorist actions such as 'hotel bombings and attacks' reveals a rainbow hued ecumenical pantheon of contemporary terror. The attacks on the Taj and the Obeori Trident (which constituted the spectacular telegenic apex of the Bombay attacks) need to be seen as successors to the Marriott Hotel bombing in Islamabad, Pakistan of only a few months ago, the bombings of the Radisson SAS, Grand Hyatt and Days Inn Hotels in Amman, Jordan in 2005, the bombing of the Grand Hotel in Brighton, UK by the Provisional IRA in 1984, the bombing of the Hilton Hotel in Sydney, Australia by suspected Ananda Marg radicals in 1978 and last, but certainly not the least, the King David Hotel Bombing in Jerusalem, (then Palestine) in 1946 carried out by Irgun, a terrorist organization wedded to the Zionist ideal of a Jewish state in Palestine.

If hotel massacres were something like cricket scores, then we could say that the Bombay attacks have finally surpassed the hitherto all time high 'score' of the King David Hotel Massacre of 1946. The Irgun, a terrorist outfit espousing an ostensibly 'Jewish' and supposedly 'Zionist' cause had held till date the record of maximum casualties >>

of Islamic ethics with relative ease and durability.

The basic Islamic principles of the unity of God equidistance of the Creator from all his human creations, the human relationship based on equality, its rationality, logicity, balance and temperance, its insistence on achievement and not ascription, as a criterion of honorability, its system of distributive justice, its unique code of interaction with others, provide solutions of the emergent problems effectively, provided they are given a chance to operate.

A lamentable lag on the part of the vast bulk of the Muslims in gaining awareness of the uniqueness of the cultural heritage in interpreting it in liberal terms, and applying these to their life, on account of their insignificant intellectual and economic achievement, is responsible for many evils that have crept in their society. These are not altogether absent from the socio religious and theological literature, but needs being focused and elucidated in comparative terms, to make a sense of pride in our children, and also to draw the attention of the world towards this. Mail: ioscal@cal3.vsnl.net.in

Essence of Eid-al-Adha

(Mike Ghouse, a renowned commentator of US)

The tradition of Eid-al-Adha is well-known. But the essence of it lies in establishing the correlation of love with sacrifice. God wanted to test Abraham's faith, love and devotion. One of Abraham's main trials was to face the command of God to kill his only son. Upon hearing this command, he prepared to submit to God's will. When he was all prepared to do it, God revealed to him that his "sacrifice" had already been fulfilled. He had shown that his love for his Lord superseded all others that he would lay down his own life or the lives of those dear to him in order to submit to God. Thus the tradition of symbolic sacrifice began, where one would sacrifice a lamb to continue the tradition of Abraham.

Why sacrifice? God does not need one to sacrifice; it has nothing to do with atoning sins or using the blood to wash ourselves from sin. According to Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage) 22:37 - **[But bear in mind:] never does their flesh reach God, and neither their blood: it is only your God-consciousness that reaches Him.** The act symbolizes our willingness to give up things that are of benefit to us or close to our hearts, in order to follow God's commands. It also symbolizes our willingness to give up some of our own bounties, in order to strengthen ties of friendship and help those who are in need. The meat from the sacrifice of Eid-al-Adha is given away in three ways; self, relatives and the poor. It is significantly meaningful in countries where people are under nourished.

The symbolism is in the attitude - a willingness to make sacrifices in our lives in order to stay on the right Path. God's ultimate will. God does not want anything more from us than asking us to be just and truthful. Mail: MikeGhouse@gmail.com

for this outrage - 93 dead. The Bombay attacks, apparently authored by militant Islamists, have gone higher. Those who identify terrorism with Islam today would find themselves faced with the uncomfortable fact that as far as the lethality of attacks go, the bar was raised early, and high, by self-styled 'Jewish freedom fighters' who counted amongst their ranks the then future prime minister of the state of Israel, Menahem Begin. The Islamists have once again proved how imitative they are of the militant far-right edge of Zionism. Again, the students have learnt well from their historical teachers.

Begin (who is somewhat of an icon amongst many current islamophobic zealots of the 'war against terror' for the hard line that he took in Lebanon against the PLO and its Lebanese allies and against violent as well as non-violent forms of Palestinian resistance) is himself reported to have said while referring to the period in which the King David Hotel Massacre took place - "We actually provided the example of what the urban guerrilla is, we created the method of the urban guerrilla." - see - 'By Blood and Fire: The Attack on Jerusalem's King David Hotel' by Thurston Clarke, Hutchinson, 1981

To extrapolate from the spectacular successes of self styled 'Jewish' terrorism in Palestine under the British Mandate in the 1930s and 40s to a generalized theory of 'Jewish' Terrorism would have been as prejudiced and short sighted then (and many efforts were made in this direction) as the current efforts to give current global terror a 'Muslim' face are today. In fact the ancestors and first cousins of today's Islamophobic zealots are yesterday's and today's anti-Semitic rabble rousers. Sometimes, at the outer edges and wild fringes of the global far right, they still do meet. The irony in the fact that here, they often find themselves in the convivial company of self styled 'Hindu', 'Christian', 'Neo-Nazi' and even 'Jewish' radicals, (whose agendas merge and diverge like the courses of unpredictable rivers) is inescapable.

The 'Jewish' bombers who took down the King David Hotel in 1946 entered it carrying milk cans laden with explosives in the guise of 'Muslim Arab' milkmen. Reports of the earlier round of Malegaon and Nanded blasts featured instances of the possibility of 'Hindu' radicals donning fake beards and 'Muslim' guises to plant bombs. Reports of the recent Bombay attacks suggest that the 'Muslims' who entered the Taj and the Trident hotels wore red threads around their wrists and had smeared their foreheads with 'tilaks' in order to appear as 'Hindus'. What this 'tragedy of errors' suggests that as far as terrorists are concerned, identity is a masquerade. Jews and Hindus cross-dress as Muslims, Muslims appear in Hindu drag. In killing and dying, they cross the line and embrace the identity of the very other that they ostensibly hate. It is only we, the witnesses and the vicarious spectators of this masquerade, the rag-pickers in the debris of their actions, who obsess about the 'reality' of their identities. By doing this we follow what is scripted for our bit parts in this charade to the hilt. When the curtain calls come, we, the chorus, the extras, are all lined up behind the principal actors, taking a bow. They were their costumes; we are naked in our (in) credulity.

This profound ambiguity, if nothing else, should prompt us to be moderate and reasonable in our responses to the spectacle of terror. To buy into its proffered illusion of certainty is perhaps one of the greatest signs of submission that we can offer to those who have nothing other than terror to give us. (This text was first posted on The Reader-List and on Kafila.org on 3rd December, 2008)