

BEYOND THE SHOCK

A M Jamsheed Bahsa

The Mumbai terror attack has no doubt shocked the nation. It was an attack on Mumbai, an attack on India. It is a matter of concern for all. But the community that has to be concerned most is that of the Muslims of India, because those who came and attacked the financial capital on the fateful day of 26/11 were bearing Muslim names and had come from the so-called Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

It is a different thing that the Muslims would disown them as practising Muslims, for they were sporting guns and ammunition and above all they were wining and dining, and who knows, womanising, something not expected from hard-core religious elements. To a common man they were just Muslim mercenaries on a mission to cause maximum damage as per the directions of their mentors sitting across the border. They did exactly that and vanished from this world, a fate they deserved most. Then what next? Pakistanis may try to put a brave face but they cannot deny that these evil men were their countrymen, born, brought up and trained by a terrorist organisation in their country for this day.

The Indian Muslims, particularly the Urdu Press should behave responsibly. It is no time for a blame game. It is no time for concoction of a theory of conspiracy alleging complicity of the saffron brigade. It may be best left to the investigating agencies to unravel the real players behind this sordid drama. The whole of India and every Indian is angry. Not for the loss of life and destruction caused alone, but for the attitude of the politicians and helplessness of the government of the day. The people's ire would be shown elsewhere in the next ballot, but the mood is one of action, a firm action, a decisive message that should go across the borders and the steps that should be taken to secure the nation and insulate it from future attacks. Yesterday it was through land, today it was through sea and who knows tomorrow it may be through air. All these vulnerable places have to be protected and secured for no incursions into the land should be allowed from any side. These steps are vital for the future of this country. The prime concern of the citizen today is how safe and secure citizens are. This is the general feeling and mood of the countrymen.

Like this writer, many such Indian Muslims are equally angry and frustrated and unable to understand why disaster after disaster is staring at them all the time. What's wrong with the muslim community and why are they in such a position of feeling like strangers and alien in their own land. They have been living here for centuries and also after they were ditched by the greatest villain of the century, Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Company, who partitioned India in the name of two-nation theory. Don't the Muslims of today feel angry at them for they were responsible for the present state of affairs? They left Indian muslims, and still they are not leaving them alone to deal with their problems. Muslims should come out in open and tell the people of Pakistan or any element fighting in the name of Islam to keep off from Indian muslims' problems and mind their own business.

Govt of India did the right thing in issuing a demarche, a strongly worded message to Pakistan, to do something tangible to wipe out the remnants of terror outfits from their soil and hand over all those listed wanted criminals that are enjoying the hospitality of the Pakistani people at the cost of Indians. President Zardari, came on his knees virtually pleading with India to spare Pakistan and not to punish her as retaliation for the act of a few disgruntled elements. The same voice of concern and anguish came from Premier Gilani and his Foreign Minister recently touring India. Mere words would not do, Mr Zardari and Company, must show it in action and deeds alone would gain confidence of the people of India.

Indians demand firm action in one voice and would not tolerate any more attacks on them. Muslims of India are solidly behind the Government and the people of this great country. It is said wise men do not do desperate things in desperate times. It would be wise for Indians to act with restraint. This is the call from across the globe as like India the enemy across the borders too is armed with nuclear arsenals. Any emotive action at this stage would not be acceptable to the world at large either. The world is not prepared to go through a nuclear holocaust. It calls for sober thinking and actions. Pakistan was told in strongest terms that it should act and cooperate with India to solve the terror plot besides curbing the activities of the terror groups that are freely moving in the country. The same sentiments were echoed by US Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice, who was in New Delhi for a while to offer American support.

It is incumbent on the Muslim intelligentsia and the Urdu Press in particular that they do not inflame passions in any way. Instead, they should send a clear-cut message to all the Muslims that India is their country, where they have to live and die. They are Indians and Muslims and there is no distinction between these two. Their prosperity and well being lie here and nowhere else. If they have any problems or grievances, it is for them to try to resolve them in a democratic manner. No one from outside need interference. The Muslims of India constitute the biggest Muslim population of the world after Indonesia. Though they are leaderless for the time being, they are resilient enough to sort out their own problems without outside interference as they have been doing in the last 61 years.

The Muslim Press whether it is Urdu Press or any other vernacular managed by Muslims, has a duty of guiding its people in this hour of crisis. Muslims are at a crossroads with no guide in sight. The educated Muslim class should rise up to spread the message of love, compassion and brotherhood. The bullet of the insane terrorists did not distinguish between Muslims and others. Among those who got killed were a fair number of innocent Muslims too, over 40 at the last count among the 179 dead according to the latest official figures. It was a pathetic description when a bearded Muslim was narrating the ghastly incident at a TV programme, "We, the People" telecast by 24x7 News channel, how six of his family members were brutally killed on the spot while he was away to fetch a water bottle. His voice was choking, eyes welled up with tears, unable to describe how he would live along with the orphans. This tugged at the hearts of one and all participating in the debate. The silence in the hall was eerie and mood sombre. Those who were watching too could not control their emotions. One

could immediately feel as if their own family members were killed there. Imagine how the family of 195 people who were killed would be feeling at the loss of their near and dear ones.

Mumbai's cosmopolitan spirit is springing back to normalcy, with business as usual. But the incident has left a deep scar on the psyche of the people.

NO PLACE TO HIDE

Aijaz Zaka Syed adds :

Watching the terror nightmare unfold in Mumbai over the past three days on TV, my children have repeatedly asked me : "Who are these terrorists and why are they doing this?" And every time I wished I could offer them a convincing answer. I was clueless why these people had taken over Mumbai and were targeting people who had nothing to do with them. I was also ashamed to tell them that the terrorists were Muslims and came from a country that was created in the name of Islam.

At work, while my colleagues went about covering the madness in Mumbai and laying out pages with the images of the Taj Hotel with its Islamic arches and domes go up in smoke, I find it hard to look at them in the eye.

This happens all the time. Every time innocents are targeted in the name of Islam around the world, one can't face one's non-Muslim friends and colleagues. A distraught friend who has devoted her life to speaking and fighting on behalf of Arabs and Muslims wrote: "I've had it with the Arabs and Muslims and Islamic militancy. Forgive me but I am throwing in the towel." I couldn't write back to her. She grew up in Mumbai and is upset. She went on to say : "The Muslims and Islam have a problem and only they can solve it. If they do not, the whole world will turn against them."

If this is how most loyal friends feel, imagine the sentiments and reactions of the rest of the world. Can one blame the world if it's turning against Muslims?

The Darul Uloom Deoband in India, one of the oldest and most respected centres of learning in the Muslim world, issued a fatwa against terrorism at a large gathering of Islamic scholars in June. Last month, nearly 5,000 scholars backed the edict at a huge congregation in Hyderabad. The Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), and Saudi Arabia have, of late, been vehement in condemning these repulsive acts of violence targeting innocents. But clearly, their people need to do more to be heard. □□□

[Source : <http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage>]