

COMMENT

## Security, India, Israel...

THE blasts in Bangalore and Ahmedabad have once again generated a largely futile debate about the internal security scenario in India. Political parties now fling charges of incompetence and ineffectiveness at each other. Calls to revive draconian laws such as POTA are growing louder. Very few voices dare suggest that beyond questions of administration and policing lie larger issues of politics. And beyond the arena of politics are issues of whether Indians are any longer capable of living together in peace as civilised people. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has always advocated special laws in order to tackle terrorist acts, a demand that loses its legitimacy at the very threshold of its ideological stand on minorities, and more so its recent record in a state like Gujarat. Administrative and police reforms make sense only when they go hand in hand with political and electoral reforms. Generating hysteria about the state of India's internal security often is a way for arguing that India becomes a surveillance state, more or less on the lines of Israel, a country that the Sangh Parivar greatly admires. Neurosis of the kind that Israel harbours leads to mindlessness of a high order.

In Israel itself, the suffocating preoccupation with security is alarming for someone who still manages to live in relative freedom, where one does not have to go through innumerable checks of identity and person to enter a university or a restaurant. The surveillance and security mechanism in that country is today independent of the democratic process and feeds on systematic brutalisation of everyone alike who refuses to participate in the Zionist nationalist vision. One has to go not too far from Jerusalem to see what the Israeli state has done in the name of security and demography to the many villages scattered in South Hebron. In this instance, the Israeli state has actually legitimised the Jewish settlers in Palestinian territories to oppress and dehumanise an entire population, the more malignant version of Indian *Salwa Judum*. Of course, none of this helps in the long run. There is nothing one can do to prevent a suicide bomber from carrying out an attack and every bit of the oppressive security mechanism comes tumbling down with every such instance of gratuitous violence. The residual effect of this endless preoccupation with guns, closecircuit cameras, X-ray machines and identity cards is the creation of a Humpty Dumpty state and society, utterly vulnerable and beyond repair. Once such a state is created, the silent and disapproving majority goes into sullen silence and seldom questions the ways in which a democratic state argues in the name of saving human lives and protecting its citizens. This silence is the victory of the state as well as the terrorist. Caught between the two are ordinary human lives, insecure and vulnerable, and ready at all times to surrender liberties in the name of preserving the fundamental unit of existence, life itself. But the saffron brigade has not learnt anything from history. They are determined to create the Israeli security syndrome in the Indian context. □□□

[Contributed]