

A day of terror



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Mr. Barua had left his home to buy fish for the afternoon; Harilal, a rickshaw puller, was looking forward to his day's wage; Mrs. Malati was busy shopping for the day's errand ...unfortunately, they and many others never got back home. They became unsung martyrs in the bomb blasts that charred Guwahati, Assam, on 30 October 2008. An irrevocable carnage ripped the whole of Assam, killing over 70 people and injuring 400.

Sitting at home in Delhi, an irrepressible anger filled up in me, as I helplessly watched visuals of charred and mangled bodies, injured and shell shocked people lying all around, sprawling pools of blood; dismembered body parts and angry people fulminating against the failure of the state machinery. Thick smoke prevailed over the city. Metallic skeletons of cars, scooters, etc. lay scattered everywhere. My city, my home, my people, my identity, all were burning up in wistful flames. And experts have warned that it is just a prelude, a more deadly strike of terror is yet to follow.

The northeast has been a bed fellow with terror and violence for a long time. The Centre's apathy and the lack of political commitment by the political leaders have further worsened the situation. Should I really care who the mastermind behind the gruesome mathematics of these bomb blasts is- the banned outfit ULFA or Bagladesh's jihadi outfit Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islam (HuJI)? Or what their demands are? The fact of the matter is that carnage took place, killing innocent people, disrupting and scarring the lives of many, for ever. And no matter how much we try, we won't be able to restore what is lost.

I remember before the Thursday's event, a bomb blast was a common place event. Besides grabbing a few lines in the daily local media, no body really neither felt nor cared (except for the ones affected by it). We had happily developed a sense of immunity against it. My area — Ganeshguri Chariali in the Guwahati city- where I grew up, has witnessed several bomb blasts in the last decade. Whenever we heard a loud noise or our house receives an earthquake-like tremor, our reaction is *'must be another bomb blast in the market or nearby.'* That's all. We had accepted it as a part and parcel of our life. But it is to be like that no more. Ironically, it took 13 bomb blasts to shake us up from our state of disillusionment, indifference and contemplation. It also, strangely, united us into an unknown and unspoken solidarity, as people, irrespective of religion or community, rushed to help each other. They thronged the streets in protests against the failure of the administration. They lit candle lights in memory of those who lost their near and dear ones. They held peace protests condemning terrorism *'Terrorism down, down'*. This wave is not just limited to different parts of Assam but has even crossed boundaries and reached New Delhi. Thanking the good samaritans, Mr. Nazir Hussain, a petty shop owner, and a survivor of the bomb blast said, *'I was lying in a pool of blood and had sustained severe injuries on my leg. Some bystanders brought me and others to the hospital. I am alive because of their prompt actions.'* I am glad that this time round, people have come out of their cocoon and have understood that if anybody can stop this gruesome vortex of terror, it is us.

Post the blasts, politicians, belonging to various hues and parties, were seen battling each other in winning political brownies for themselves. A few site visits and all they could come up with was that the ruling party has been inefficient and has failed in gearing up its act. Even a child could have come with that analysis; we don't need the frame makers to tell us that. What we want are answers, action points, discussions in the parliament and strategies to thwart the menace of terror. Those sitting at the corridors of power and helm of affairs, please don't politicise the issue, please don't pass lofty statements such as 'this is a politics of hate'. For once, let your conscience come forth and for just this once, do not prioritise your individual interest over the collective welfare of the people. Feel for the ones who have lost their family, the injured whose futures may have lost spark and those who have nothing left to look forward to.

Chronology of terror in the North Eastern region:

October 1 2008- Tripura (Agartala): 74 people injured in five explosions

October 21 2008- Imphal (Manipur): 17 killed in a powerful blast near Manipur Police Commando Complex

October 30 2008 - Assam: 13 blasts

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