

Have We Stopped Becoming Human?



Comments 1



Aiyushman Dutta 17 November 2008 12540 views

Assam is no stranger to terror but the recent serial bomb blasts that rocked the State were surely an exception. The entire administrative machinery of Assam came tumbling down, the social fabric was shattered and the already weak economy was badly jeopardized. Though analysts, political commentators and intellectuals have looked at the incident from various angles and coined a number of theories surrounding the same, I would like to term the entire episode, including the protests and demonstrations in the aftermath, as a manifestation of our own contradictory and corrupted selves.

Now why I say this is not difficult to comprehend. Right from the moment when powerful RDX-laden bombs went off at various locales of the city to this very moment – almost a fortnight since the entire episode took place – we have been displaying, through our actions, the sinister nature and working of the human mind. Since that fateful Thursday, I have met a number of people who say that they have been badly affected by the blasts. But unlike those people --- most of the people of our State, that is --- the blasts failed to have any such effect on me. The reader must be surprised but it is true that I was not moved by the blasts. However, some of the post-blasts incidents surely did, and the way it did is surprising in itself. I had anticipated an incident like the October 30 blasts for a long time now, but I surely never imagined the occurrence of

the incidents that happened in its aftermath.

Let me explain. At a time when the entire city was burning and Guwahatians were trying to grapple with the dramatic turn of events, why did a few of us have to take the mangled mortal remains of a few of the victims to the State Secretariat? When many of our brothers and sisters were struggling for one last breath of air, why did some of us have to damage the highly important fire fighting vehicles and ambulances, besides bringing the entire State to a halt by damaging important public property? After the blasts, why did we have to bring the entire State to a standstill for almost four days by calling bandhs, which were totally uncalled for? For what? Narrow electoral gains? Cheap popularity? A totally false sense of bravado? The people who called the bandhs had their own agenda, but being so-called respectful members of society, why did we have to obey those calls? For the fear of our lives or for the sake of enjoying four days in the comfort of our sofa sets in front of the television? Again if you really wanted to stage such an undemocratic protest, couldn't all the organizations have given a common bandh call?

It does not end here. After the blasts and the number of bandh calls, came the show of solidarity. Well, I am at a loss for all possible emotions whenever I think about my brothers and sisters showing their humane sides. There are no forms of expression left to depict my state of mind, and at times I even feel like kicking myself for having to watch such a major downslide of the basic human values from our midst. When I crossed the Ganeshguri flyover the evening after the blasts, I felt a strange sense of tranquillity as I watched Guwahatians -- the young and the old alike -- light candles and earthen lamps as a mark of respect for the victims. Then I received an sms urging me to come and donate my blood, followed by another requesting me to light candles in front of my house. I was happy thinking that we still have a bit of humanity left in

us. But that feeling again was very transient, like most other things in our modern lives.

As soon as I reached my office, the phone calls and text messages started coming in which hasn't stopped till this present moment. All of a sudden, hundreds of people have come out to hold peace marches, silent rallies and demonstrations. I would not have had read much into it if they had not insisted on the presence of us journalists and if these initiatives would not have had been sponsored ones. The blasts have indeed come as a blessing for the political and other organizations of our State. If you look at most of the demonstrations, you would find almost all the protestors carry placards where the largest space is reserved for the name of the political body or organization that the activists choose to represent, while the real reason for the initiative is relegated to an obscure corner. Organizations are still lighting candles in front of their offices, near important Road crossings and landmarks, below flyovers and the like. If we really wanted to express our solidarity for the victims, we would have had done better if we had contributed even a fraction of the total amount of money we spent on the candles, the total amount of which I am sure has run into a few crores, to those who are still fighting for their lives in the hospitals, those children who have lost their parents and those daily wage earners who have lost the use of their hands and limbs.

Painters have come out with their brushes, artists have come out with their canvases, musicians have come out with their violins and guitars, theatre workers have come out with their adaptations of Hamlet, and will continue to do so throughout the year provided some journalists of the local media, if not the national media, is present to take their photographs. Just yesterday I witnessed a sight below the Ganeshguri flyover which made me realize that we have indeed reached Judgement Day – from which there is no turning back now. Three groups of women

were sitting adjacent to each other and singing naams (prayers) in the very spot which bears the brunt of one of the most bloody and gruesome incident in modern human history, while each of them waited for journalists from the media houses to come and cover their mourning. Can it get any worse than this?

I know that politics has eaten into the vitals of the entire State. I know that technology and globalisation has created an atmosphere where only money has the power to make any difference. But have we become so inhuman that we fail to even acknowledge the basic code of conduct in human society? Have we stopped becoming human?

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