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Mass Movement Against Terror



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Apart from voting to elect governments expecting them to deliver and to reject them if failed common people can hardly do anything else. They cannot enforce implementation. Of course they can do protest marches, demonstrations, sit-in hunger strikes and all that. If properly supported and guided these are effective as was the non-violent Indian freedom movement and many others in different parts of the world. They can also light candles and hold prayers meetings and all-religion gatherings when their hearts are laden with frustrations.

But when common people are fed up and angry they are capable of revolutions, again, if properly supported and guided. Pages of world history give enough proofs of that which everybody would accept except perhaps

Pakistan.

We had seen tremendous public anger in Guwahati after 30/10 when people wanted to destroy the government and the politicians. Unfortunately this anger was not given media attention, guidance and leadership. And it had to peter out as had been the case during the last four or five years in Assam when the sporadic public anger against terrorism was not channelized into a movement.

Post 26/11 the Mumbai public outburst is history. This was the breaking point for the 'spirited' *Mumbaikars*. What had been termed as 'spirit' all these years was actually their 'helplessness' as they had to get back to normal life to earn the daily bread. The myth was finally destroyed as thousands of them poured into the streets shouting slogans, demonstrating, protesting and freely expressing their loathing for the politicians. They demanded security of the VIPs removed to be given to common citizens. Maybe it was just Mumbai; maybe it was the high profile targets and the three day long siege; maybe it was the worst terror strike to hit India and maybe it was the breaking point. Whatever it may be, the media came overboard vociferating for the public. Everybody—poor or rich, of whatever religion or languages—joined in. Would anybody ever forget how the crowds cheered the victorious NSG personnel and how they honored and prayed for the martyred police officers and security jawans? They also lighted candles and after more than a month they are still doing it. The anger became a movement and it started getting astounding results.

Union Home Minister had to go, State Home Minister had to go and State Chief Minister too had to go paving for the fall of government. The Indian government never showed such dead earnest before to mobilize international support to pressurize Pakistan and the process still continues. For the first time in Indian parliamentary history all political parties came together on December 11, 2008 to fight terror jointly. With all round support setting up of a federal investigative agency and promulgating stringent anti-terror laws were finalized and four major cities got the nods for separate NSG units. In Maharashtra, the new government decided to modernize the police forces allotting more than a thousand crores of rupees; to set up an elite and sophisticated security agency to be called Force One; to strengthen intelligence coordination; to have coordinated patrolling of the coasts and the

air routes and to start the process of reducing VIP security. Such things do not happen normally; you need a movement to pave for it.

Is Assam waiting for such a breaking point to start anew? Well, sometimes breaking points do break people irreparably. Nobody should wait for it to happen. Taking cue from the Guwahati anger and the Mumbai movement we thought this was the right time to discuss the possibility of a global mass movement against terror as many countries of the globe continue to suffer from terror. So we started a discussion at www.assamnet.org the results of which showed how complex is the global scenario with cross-nationalities, cross-policies, cross-religious-linguistic bias, and oppressive tactics in counter terrorism operations leading to unjustified wars and with murky perceptions about myriad events where you can hardly form a cohesive platform to lead from. People living in different parts of the globe would naturally follow localized notions and this combined with nuclear lifestyles take us a long way away from the masses of India and Assam.

So we have to concentrate on India and more particularly on Assam. The people of Assam do have the anger and the simmering impatience with the state of things. The Mumbai outburst has become a movement as it was given the support, guidance and the leadership. It has also been spreading in many major towns of India and this is the time catch on.

Strong public opinions with the strongest mass base can either force or help governments to realize the priorities. From time immemorial rulers class and ruled class had been cohabiting. Ruler class has to protect the ruled. And the citizens are not doing anything wrong asking for protection and security. And the challenge is not at all an easy one. Terror with some kind loyalties relating to region or religion or language is passé. Now terror is highly techno-savvy, ruthless and professional aiming always at causing maximum damage in terms of lives of innocents and high profile targets. Terror has also become a recruiter for poor, disillusioned and vulnerable youths of a multi national character.

Are the people of Assam are ready for a mass movement against terror? Do we have an environment to generate all the support and the leadership necessary for that? Irrespective of our caste, religion, language, profession or

any identifying factor we all must consider this before it is too late.



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