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## Victim of terrorism - the common man



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Recently I had the privilege to hear Mr. Ajit Sahi, the Editor-at-large of Tehelka, speak on the 'Myth Of Terrorist Organisations - SIMI fictions'.

His painstakingly collected and carefully analyzed information speaks of scores of innocent Indian Muslims languishing in the countries' prisons on false police accusations. He feels that it is a premeditated government (read Hindu) campaign to implicate and harass Muslim youth and demonise the Muslim community - all in the name of curbing terrorist activities. His findings indicate that in not a single case has it so far been conclusive that SIMI (Students' Islamic Movement of India) activists were involved in terrorist offences. Police have killed scores of innocent persons during the

last several years, wrongly branding them as terrorists, whereas the the real culprits remain untouched. All this has helped to reinforce hatred against the Muslims who no longer feel safe in the country.

However they need not despair, as they are not alone in their fear and mistrust. It is the common, hapless person on the street who is being hounded by the powers-that-be irrespective of her/his caste, creed or religion. How else do we explain the thrashing of the UPites and Biharis in Mumbai by the Shiv Sena and the Nav Nirman Sena in the name of purging Maharashtrian territory, (thus usurping the right of an Indian citizen to work in any part of the country), unleashing a wave of violence and hatred amongst members of the same religion.

Or the vandalism by the saffron brigade during a recent painting exhibition of artist Manjit Singh in New Delhi. They not only smashed his paintings but manhandled him too, as they thought his works of art to be against Hindu culture.

Or the barbaric burning to death of Rajni Majhi - a twenty year old Hindu girl in Orissa - whose only fault was that she was living in an orphanage run by Christian missionaries.

Or the police firings on the poor farmers who dared to protest against the acquisition of their farmlands at ridiculously low prices by the Government in the name of economic development.

Whether it is the heinous bomb blasts, or attacks on a particular minority community/ caste, or illegal coercion of farmers; the perpetrator is always the more powerful and the victim is the helpless poor. The new world order seems to have fuelled our brutal passion to tread upon the down trodden and to oppress the weak. It could be the State/executive against the minorities; the economically powerful industrialists against the poor farmers; the police excesses on the innocents. Everywhere it is the same blatant signature tune that I am racially/socially/economically superior to you.

A few months ago the son of my sister's domestic help was rounded by the police on a false complaint of theft, with no evidence whatsoever. When she approached a senior police officer, the charges against him were withdrawn,

but his poor mother had to shell out a thousand rupees for his release. On top of it a police constable pestered him to name someone else for some other uncommitted crime, just to add numbers to the police record list. Even after his release, the boy and his mother are living in constant fear of the police. This is just one of the several cases which must be happening every day and we seem to have become immune to these indignities as long as they do not affect us directly.

Isn't the police terrorizing the common public with impunity and getting away with it?

Aren't the Bajrang Dal/ Shivsainiks/ political parties terrorizing the law abiding citizens and zealous missionaries and social activists( like Binayak Sen) for their narrow parochial gains?

Isn't the State machinery terrorizing us by usurping the fundamental rights of the common person by forcibly taking away his/her land and siphoning off funds earmarked for flood/ drought/ riot victims?

Isn't our army, deemed to be the custodians of law and order in troubled areas, violating the dignity of women and committing excesses against human rights?

How often have seen traffic rules being broken with impunity and no action taken against the culprits; cases of road rage resulting in deaths; women being subjugated and treated like dirt ( that is if they are allowed to be born) for bringing insufficient dowry/ not producing a male child / daring to exercise their choices.

All these are acts of terrorism unleashed on the weak and powerless by the strong and mighty. It is not just the Muslims, but about anyone and everyone without a political/ economic clout who are living in constant fear of the unbridled and brute force of the executive/ police/ judiciary. It is rare to find an influential person becoming a victim of any act of terrorism.

It is time for the oppressed to stand up in solidarity against all forms of terrorism, irrespective of their faith and affiliations.

The stupid (wo)man on the street ,who has been dumped by all, must stand up in non violent resistance and abide by the truth, (just like the farmers of Jharkhand and villages adjoining New Delhi).

We may be grateful to have survived bomb attacks but our spirit is dying and needs to be resurrected.

## **Shobha Shukla**

*The author teaches Physics at India's Loreto Convent and has been writing extensively in English and Hindi media. She serves as Editor of Citizen News Service (CNS).*



**[editor](#)**

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