

COMMUNAL VIOLENCE TO COMMUNAL TERRORISM: THE HORRENDOUS METAMORPHOSIS AS PORTRAYED IN BLACK FRIDAY: THE TRUE STORY OF BOMBAY BOMB BLASTS BY S. HUSSAIN ZAIDI

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Abstract- Ethnic clashes have been common to the Indian subcontinent since the partition of India in 1947. The Hindu-Muslim riots during the partition of India are one of the most gruesome tragedies of World History. With the rise of the Hindu fundamentalist forces, ethnic riots have erupted time and again at different places in the Nation. The recent decades have witnessed a horrifying metamorphosis of communal violence into communal terrorism. The serial bomb blasts in Bombay (now renamed as Mumbai) on the 12th of March 1993 is the turning point in the form of communal violence; a really horrendous metamorphosis. This paper is an attempt to explore the religious terrorism as witnessed by the whole world when Bombay was targeted by meticulously planned serial bomb blasts under the camouflage of religion.

Key words- Hindu-Muslim riots, World History, communal terrorism, serial bomb blasts, communal violence, religion.

Introduction

The Mumbai blasts of July, 2006, attracted wide publicity all over the world for two reasons. Firstly it showed once again the vulnerability of Mumbai as a city to jihadi terrorism. Since the Mumbai blasts of March, 1993, which was the first instance of mass casualty terrorism on the ground in India, jihadi terrorists have been repeatedly carrying out terrorist strikes in that city [1].

During December 1992 and January 1993, large scale riots occurred in Bombay following the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya. The first phase was mainly a Muslim backlash that occurred in the week following 6th December 1992, whereas the next phase was mainly a Hindu backlash targeted at the Muslims occurred during 6th to 20th January 1993. This was followed by the first large scale terrorist attack on Mumbai with horrifying aftermath.

This serial bomb attack on the 12th of March 1993 changed the face of violence that was known to many Indians. These attacks were masterminded by Tiger Memon and were organized and executed with full-fledged support from Dawood Ibrahim, the don of D-Company. This attack was carried out as retaliation to the widespread damage to Muslim owned businesses and the large number of Muslim casualties. The non-fiction novel *Black Friday: The True Story of Bombay Bomb Blasts* by S. Hussain Zaidi is a journey through the world of terror ensued in the camouflage of religion. This book is a deep and factual analysis of the 1993 Bombay bomb blasts. S. Hussain Zaidi has done painstaking and in-depth research to truthfully portray the whole episode. The fact that the seventeenth Friday of *Ramzaan* was

chosen for the execution of this ghastly task proves beyond doubt that the perpetrators of terror had lured the young minds in the name of religion. Religion has powerful emotional appeal and hence it is easy to exploit clouding real interests [2].

There has not been a single year in post –independence period which has been free from communal violence, though the number of incidents may vary [2].

The last decade and the start of the new millennium has been the worst era in this matter right from the beginning of the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992, Communalism got a new dimension and started playing a great role in the Indian terrorism setting [2].

This novel is an attempt to lay threadbare the conspiracy that was behind the biggest terrorist attack in Indian History. The book demystifies the shroud of doubt built around and by the characters of terrorist, the corrupt police officers who abetted the crime, the more committed ones who would break encroach the law in course of investigations, the innocent Muslims who were dragged into this heinous crime in the name of religion and *jihad*.

This novel is a reconstruction of the Bombay Serial blasts and as mentioned by the author in the author's note is based on police records, government records, and confessional statements of the accused, CBI dossiers or the newspaper reports of those times. According to the author most of the story has been culled from the case presented by the prosecution in the trial as the prime sources of information are the charge sheets in the case filed by the police and the statements of the

accused. The veracity of the novel as an important social document needs to be appreciated.

According to S. Hussain Zaidi this book is not a product of imagination. Where conversations have been recreated, I have tried to do this with reasonable verisimilitude given the situations and characters involved. The cinematic adaptation of the novel into the film *Black Friday* by Anurag Kashyap in 2004, almost a decade later was the reliving of the horror that was faced by the Bombayites on the 12th March 1993. The film won the Grand Jury Prize at the Indian Film festival at Los Angeles and was nominated the Best Film (*Golden Leopard*) at the Locarno International Film festival.

According to Matt Zoller Seitz of the New York Times it is described as "epic and raw, and cut out from the same bloody cloth as Salvador and Munich.

Kirk Honeycutt of Hollywood Reporter compares the film's "journalistic inquiry into cataclysmic social and political events" to that of Gillo Pontecorvo's classic *The Battle of Algiers*. He remarks that the film is without any lurid sensationalism and is objective.

The novel as well as the film both were widely appreciated and brought the experience of the terror and also the ensuing pain of the innocent sufferers to the world. The release of the film was delayed by almost two years. The film was released on 9th February 2007 in India after the accused had been charged with TADA (Terrorists and Disruptive Activities Act)

The Metamorphosis: Communal Violence to Communal Terrorism

Ten explosions rocked Bombay that day, taking place with almost metronomic precision at short intervals. Between 1.28 and 3.35 p.m. bombs had gone across Bombay, the first time any city in the world was subject to serial blasts [7].

Communal violence has been a phenomenon integral to the Indian life and psyche since the partition of India in 1947. The years after the *Babri Masjid* demolition witnessed a ghastly transition in the very nature of communal violence prevalent in India i.e. a transition from communal violence to communal terrorism.

According to Dr Jaishankar, *Babri Masjid* demolition can be termed as the fulcrum of the wheel that turned communal violence in India into communal terrorism [2].

Before going into the analysis of the novel it is important to understand what makes an act of communal violence different from an act of communal terrorism

According to Paul Pillar (1999) as quoted in by Jaishankar in his essay, a former deputy chief of the CIA's Counterterrorist Center, argues that there are four key elements of terrorism:

- 1. It is premeditated-planned in advance, rather than an impulsive act of rage.*
- 2. It is political- not criminal, like the violence that groups such as the mafia use to get money, but designed to change the existing political order.*
- 3. It is aimed at civilians- not at military targets or combat-ready troops.*

4. It is carried out by sub national groups- not by the army of a country.

It is found that the communal riots and bomb blasts that occurred in post Babri Masjid has all the elements of terrorism what Paul Pillar (1999) has envisaged [2].

The blurring line between organized crime by the underworld dons, the religious fundamentalism and a strong feeling to take revenge can be seen behind such organized terrorism especially in the case of Mumbai.

The case of Dawood Ibrahim, India's godfather of criminal gangs from Bangkok to Dubai, demonstrates the blurring line between crime and terror around the globe.

In his early years, Ibrahim's gang, D-Company, pursued the standard crime-syndicate practices of extortion, smuggling, and contract killings.

In 1993, D-Company was transformed into a terrorist organization when it carried out the "Black Friday" Mumbai bombings, an attack that killed more than 257 people and injured an estimated 713. Later D- Company developed ties to al Qaeda and the Kashmiri terrorist group, Lashkar-e-Taiyiba(Let) while its leaders were exiled in Pakistan[6].

After the Mumbai serial bomb blasts on March 12, 1993, in which around 300 people lost their lives, India presented Pakistan a list of four criminals suspected to have masterminded the bloody strike. The list included Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar, the mafia don accused of spearheading the operation. Tiger Memon, Ayub Memon and Chhota Shakeel were the others. All the four live in Karachi, Pakistan, in five-star luxury and carry out criminal activities, such as kidnapping, murder and extortion in India [5].

The serial Bomb blasts at Mumbai witnessed the large scale use of highly lethal explosives and arms against the masses.

Explosive experts suspected that the bomb blasts in Bombay in March 1993 were used by a mixture of two different kinds of plastique: RDX, a coal tar compound and a Czech explosive called PENT. What West Asian terrorists have mixed the two to create the world's deadliest plastique: SEMTEXT? SEMTEXT has been used by the IRA and was probably used in the Bombay blasts in March 1993 and perhaps in the explosion used in the World Trade Center Building in New York [3].

This paper attempts to understand this horrendous metamorphosis and an attempt to probe the answers to certain basic questions like- Is it ethical to conduct such crimes in the name of religion? Why the innocents have been the target of such attacks? What role do Religious fundamentalism and the power politics play in destabilizing the Indian democracy? Why have terrorists been repeatedly attacking Mumbai since March, 1993?

Mumbai is India's New York and Chicago (of the 1920s and the 1930s) rolled into one. It is the economic capital of India. Many foreign multinationals have their corporate headquarters in Mumbai. It contributes more to the Indian exchequer than any other city. It is also the mafia capital of India. Many mafia groups of South Asia have their active presence in Mumbai. One finds the nexus between terrorism and organized crime most vividly

demonstrated in Mumbai. Mumbai is India's economic nerve-centre. If it decays, India decays [1].

The Portrayal of Communal Terrorism in Black Friday: The True Story of Bombay Bomb Blasts.

The novel begins with the portrayal of the pulse of life in Bombay on a regular Friday. The fact that Bombay is the economic capital of India has been portrayed enigmatically by the writer. The usual bell at the BSE signifying the lunch was replaced by the loud bang of explosion at 1:28 p.m. which transformed the very place into a devastation of desecrated dead bodies, soaked in blood and clouded in the smoke of dust.

The force of explosion carried right up to the tenth floor, where the windowpanes were shattered, mild tremors were felt up to a radius of 3000 metres, and the sound carried the busy hum of the traffic up to the Victoria terminus (VT) [7].

This was not just the devastation of life but also the devastation of the dreams and hopes of the different migrants who had come to Bombay. Many of the stall holders outside the BSE and other such locations were killed in the blast.

Raju, an upma vendor from Mandya in Karnataka; Ashok, Singh and Kamla Singh from UP who had a lassi stall; Guddu Paav-bhaji Wala, who was abt hit with the stockbrokers; all migrants who had come to Bombay with hopes and dreams died in the blast [7].

The subsequent blasts at different important locations within a short span put the whole nation under a wave of terror.

The second bomb blast occurred at 2:15p.m. at one of the most congested areas of Bombay the wholesale market for grain and spice, at Narsi Natha street in Katha Bazaar, near Masjid Bunder. The bombs were implanted in two cars parked side by side. The third car bomb exploded at the Air – India building just a kilometer away from the High Court. The Bank of Oman branch on the ground floor of the building was completely destroyed. The fourth bomb exploded at 2:30 p.m at Lucky Petrol pump near the Sena Bhavan, the headquarters of the Shiv Sena.

This was the only blast site where fire quickly followed the explosion, and the Mohammed Ali building next to the petrol pump was virtually brought down [7].

At 2:55 p.m. a bomb seemed to go off in a crowded double-decker BEST bus outside the Regional passport Office (RPO) at Worli. It was so powerful that the five-ton bus was lifted into the air, and the upper deck blown into the hutment colony of Nehru Nagar [7].

The scenes of the devastation send a spine-chilling wave of terror across the nation. The most gruesome, horrifying scenes were witnessed by the nearly dead or the fortunately alive.

The sights were gruesome. A paanwala's head was severed from its torso and deposited on the counter in front of him. The body of Neogi, the manager of the Bata shop, was found sandwiched between two walls that collapsed on each other [7].

The eventually deadliest of the blasts, killing 113 and injuring 227 occurred at Satyam Theatre at 3:00p.m. The blasts at Dadar and Worli could lead to large scale communal violence which was averted by the prudence and meticulous efficiency of Police Commissioner (CP) Amarjeet Singh Samra. To prevent this horrifying prospect communicated to the Police control room to instruct each and every policeman to come out on the roads.

Samra firmly believed that the sight of men in uniform not only instilled confidence in public, but also prevented hooliganism [7].

Rokade was informed that there had been a blast in Zaveri Bazaar, the gold market, the days sixth blast, and the fourth in his jurisdiction A taxi had blown up at the junction of Shaikh Memon Street and Mirza Street, at the southern end of the gold market, at 3.05 p.m., shattering the windows of buildings in the area and destroying nearby vehicles. [7].

The DCP (traffic) Rakesh Maria along with Chief Minister Sharad Pawar realized that the mood of the public was slowly changing from panic to anger and outside the Sena Bhawan the situation could go out of control any time.

The crowds at the Sena Bhawan had already started anti-Muslim sloganeering. Maria, taking advantage of his six feet two inches, walked up to the leader of the mob and looked down at him. 'No, it's got nothing to do with religious groups, this is part of a bigger conspiracy,' [7].

Another loud bang was heard at 3:13 p.m. at the Plaza Cinema that had been associated with the legendary film star V. Shantaram and it was reduced to rubble. The seventh blast occurred at 3:20 p.m. at hotel Sea Rock in Bandra. Two subsequent blasts occurred at Juhu Centaur at 3:25p.m. and at Airport Centaur at 3:35 p.m. Hand grenades were thrown at Sahar Airport at 3:30p.m. *The spells of rioting witnessed by Bombay, from 6 to 12 December 1992, and from 7 to 16 January 1993, were an outcome of the demolition of the Babri Mosque by the BJP activists. According to the Srikrishna Commission Report, commissioned by the government, 900 people died (575 Muslims, 257 Hindus) and 2,036 people (1,105 Muslims, 893 Hindus) were injured in these riots. The sufferings of the Muslims had sent a wave of resentment and anger across the globe. The news of pain and suffering of the Muslims was reaching Dawood Ibrahim in Bombay.*

From Dubai, Dawood systematically built his empire in Bombay. He gathered together local gangsters- Bhai Thakur of Vasi, Chhota Rajan of Tilak Nagar I (northeast Bombay), Kim Bahadur Thapa of Bhandup, Sharad Shetty of Jogesgwar, Khalid Pehlawam and Chhota Shakeel- and organized them into a flourishing syndicate smuggling gold, silver, electronic goods and textiles [7].

This gang came to be known as the D-Company. The Muslim community in Bombay had a special regard for Dawood Bhai who received their grievances even through rudimentarily addressed letters posted from Bombay. Tiger Memon another notorious gangster from Bombay whose property and business suffered severe

losses decided to avenge the brutalities by the Hindus by sitting in the wave of terror.

Tiger spoke up. 'Bombay is the pride of India, its financial nerve centre. It is also the place where the Muslims suffered the most during the riots. Why not display our might and power there? Any attack on Bombay will have international repercussions. The government will be shaken. The world leaders would be shocked [7].

The securing of the arms and armaments and the transporting of these armaments that included AK 56 rifles and 80 tonnes of deadly explosive RDX was done with meticulous organization of the D-Company and the Tiger Memon Syndicate. It is indeed very painful to note that corruption in different branches of the Customs also facilitated the ghastly episode devastation.

Between 29 January and 3 February, Tiger's landing agents had contacted various customs officials and police personnel in Srivardhan and Mhasla, and arranged for their cooperation in the landings. [7].

Tiger indicted several youngsters whom he trusted for this task as they could be easily brainwashed and lured into this plan in the name of religion. Javed Chikna, Salim Shaikh, Bashir Khan, Parvez Kelawla, Nasir Dhakla, Badshah Khan were a few to name.

'Friday, 12 March, is the seventeenth day of Ramzaan. It will be the day when the holy prophet fought the first battle of Junge-Badr against the heathens of Mecca and forced them to retreat. The auspicious day will help us achieve success.' Tiger paused for effect, looking around the room. His listeners seemed spellbound [7].

The major arrests of Asgar Muqadam, Badshah Khan and the likes by the dedicated officers like A.S. Samra, Nand Kumar Chougale and the commendable role of Rakesh Maria led to major breakthroughs in the case. The earlier doubts that the terrorist organizations like the Al Qaeda of the LeT (Lashkar e Taiyyaba) were ruled out. The arrests of film star Sanjay Dutt with Samir Hingora and Hanif Kadawala exposed the links of the nexus between filmstars and the people of the underworld. After the filing of the application by the Bombay Police at the TADA Court, 43 people were detained by the Bombay Police under TADA. The case was handed over to the Special Task Force of the CBI that was headed by Subhash Chandra Jha on 9 November 1993.

Justice H. H. Kantharia and Justice Vishnu Sahai, the judges of the divisional bench of the High Court passed an order that the trial would be begun at the Bombay Central Jail premises at Arthur Road and be concluding as quickly as possible [7]. Ujjawal Nikam the prosecutor came under sharp criticism for not making the list of witnesses available to the defense lawyers. Lawyer Niteen Pradhans involvement with the case changed it fundamentally to be viewed not as a case of terrorism but as separate cases of Dighi landing, Sanjay Dutt's alleged purchase of AK-56, the conspiracy of the blasts in Dubai, Bombay and Pakistan, the actual Blasts, the

two seizures of ammunitions and RDX from Nagla Bunder and Mumbra, and other such seizures.

Conclusion

Conclusively it can be said that this phase of communal strife was the marking of the horrendous metamorphosis of the communal violence that had been an integral phenomenon of the Indian State since the partition in August 1947, to Communal Terrorism. Since then Bombay has witnessed major terrorist attacks. Those like Badshah Khan who executed the plans of Tiger Memon are still disillusioned and ajar with pain, and their hands and their souls living under heavy burden of heinous crime of murdering the innocent. The major culprits of the case Tiger Memon and Dawood Ibrahim are still eluding the clutches of the law. It took four years of painstaking research by S. Hussain Zaidi to explore and recreate the whole episode with utmost authenticity. *Black Friday: The True Story of Bombay Bomb Blasts* has enigmatically portrayed the Communal Terrorism that has spread its tentacles on the very Indian soil and also the lack of adequate infrastructure in India to tackle this problem of mammoth proportion.

Terrorist events live on in our memories. In the mind's eye, we see airplanes striking the Twin Towers, Bombs detonating trains and buses, automobiles exploding in the midst of crowds, hostages tortured and beheaded. Given jihadism, we see young men and women killing themselves in the act of killing others, and all in the name of the sacred [8].

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