

CUT THE ROOT

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Terrorism, the very word terrifies everyone. The word might sound very simple for people sitting in the luxury of their air-conditioner and the comfort of their couch, watching terrorist attacks in their television sets. But the word scares the life out of many who live without knowing if they will live tomorrow.

A life of poverty, unemployment or illiteracy can be faced with a challenging perspective and with hard work may perhaps also be overcome. What happens when the basic quality required for living goes away? What happens when the greatest problem creeps in? What happens if the demon called FEAR creeps in? A life without security of living is comparable to hell. There is no religious hell as such, it is only this life in which fear and insecurity rules, real hell can be visualized. The reason for this - Terrorism. Terrorism has taken a new meaning in the wake of attacks that are taking place almost every day around the world. Has there been a day in the past few years without a terrorist uprising, an attack or civilian causality?

Mankind has been facing many problems right through, since evolution but this has been the greatest problem and can never be solved if it goes on like this. This is not a crisis of resources but the greatest humanitarian crisis. The problem has been found out but where is the solution? Is there a solution? Or is it doomsday??

Mankind has always tried to solve problems as they come but when was the last time we looked into the root cause of terrorism. While it is easy to condemn terrorist acts, it seems also fair to ask ourselves why terrorists choose the path they do? When was the last time we listened to a terrorist? This essay is by no means a justification to terrorism, which all right thinking people should condemn and rightly so, but is an attempt to look into the minds of the terrorists and understand the underlying reason to enable one in finding a solution to the growing menace. It should be clearly understood that if the leaves are cut they grow better, if the branches are cut they grow stronger, and if the stem is cut it grows in full bloom. We should cut the root of terrorism, and the only way to do that is to see the world in the eyes of a terrorist.

The terrorist is a mad heretic who blows up people and also kills himself. But what has pushed him to the extent of giving his life for a cause. The cause might be noble or unjust, but is there a cause in the first case that has forced him to such an extreme step? Man is always pushed to extremes of violence and terrorism only after being subjected to suppression.

Out of this suppression three types of people arise. One kind gets wisdom and perseverance out of this torture and fights for his rights. The other is a victim, who, either dies or remains a victim by subjecting himself to slow poison everyday. The third is the terrorist, a man whose expressionism has gone to the extent of expressing himself as an explosive. A man whose rights have been stolen away from him and who has also been deprived of his basic amenities.

A deep scrutiny into almost 80% of the world's terrorist organizations show that the respective Governments, have had a DIRECT role to play in feeding them. Because even the first kind, the wise man, who fights for his rights, is subjected to suppression again and either he is killed by terrorist organizations funded by the Government or he dies of old age fighting for his living, all through his life. Poor man he had never lived, he had a dream of living but he only fought and that fight had become his life. Now the problem is this fighter becomes a hero for people who understand that justice cannot be obtained by right means. They resort to short cuts, create panic and unrest and resort to the tool called terrorism.

No terrorist is born. Be it in any part of the world, no child is born with an AK-47 in his hand or a cyanide pill on his neck. It is only when he wakes up to the harsh reality of the way he has to grow up that makes him a terrorist. All the terrorist organizations must definitely have a humane background. They were born just as all of us were and parents like us also brought them up. But what happens if his property is taken away, if warmongers kill his parents, if his dearest one is raped before his eyes. He has nothing to live for. At that moment, he dies, only to be reborn in a new avatar, branded as a terrorist.

Moreover, this moment is not an instant in time but is a process, which prolongs over a period of months, years and maybe much longer, where he evolves into the final species, called a terrorist. It is this process that either makes him a revolutionary fighting for his rights with controlled violence or a villainous madman who kills innocent people for getting the attention of the Government.

Let us consider a few cases of terrorism worldwide. Of late, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have gained much significance with their failure to comply with the ongoing negotiations. They have acted brutally on almost all occasions but let's take a look at their origin. Sri Lanka had gained independence 50 years back, but was there a problem all these 50 years? the answer is NO!

Of all the 50 years since independence the first 25 years had sown the seeds of hatred and only the crops were being harvested from 1983, when the first major terrorist attack was made in Colombo, led by a terrorist called Velupillai Prabhakaran. Way back in the 1800's the British wanted cheap, skilled labor for their tea plantations in Sri Lanka and took lots of people from Tamil Nadu which was the nearest place from Sri Lanka. Workers from the Nilgiris and southern parts of Tamil Nadu flocked to this new place and as time progressed were getting identified more with the Lankan region. There is one more group of Tamilians who have been in Lanka right since the Cholan period and they have been a part of mainstream Lanka ever since the dynasties flourished there.

Under the British administration there wasn't any innate discrimination between the variety of people as all of them fought for their freedom including the plantation Tamilians. But just after independence the sense of having the workers in their land irritated the native Sinhalese, and they also forgot that

those Tamils had fought for the independence of the land, embracing Lanka as their new homeland. This discrimination started in the 60`s.

The tea plantation workers were treated worse than animals by some of the Sinhalese. This in no way means that the Sinhalese are narrow minded, as things like that can never be generalized. But the seed of hatred sown by a few have become a creeper, which has engulfed a majority of Sri Lankans. The property of the Tamils was confiscated without reason, families killed with false accusations and they were made scapegoats for the wealthy Sinhalese. Tamil women were raped mercilessly just for being a plantation worker.

The present younger generation of the plantation Tamilians have grown up in a cemetery. A cemetery where the remains of their families, friends and relatives is buried. How can the world expect a young child to sleep in peace when he has no guarantee that his mother would live to feed him tomorrow? Would the child have a family to talk about, if there is no guarantee of life? Death due to old age when "men become frail and legs like stumps", is acceptable, but the very fact that discrimination has wiped out almost a generation of Tamilians have forced them to take up arms and struggle for their rights. Facts and figures point out that it was started as a peaceful protest but further suppression had forced them to take up arms in 1983 and the whole of Sri Lanka has remained like a cemetery ever since. Sri Lanka has always been an island paradise, almost a vision of heaven on earth but feelings of hatred, and discrimination have made it into a hell.

Mass repatriation has been taking place ever since but when they come back to India, they aren't given their due privileges either. They do get good treatment, but even now when there is a crisis of managing our own people, how is it possible to give all the people coming here, their due share? Tamil Nadu has always remained their homeland but even then they are branded as "refugees". Being a refugee in their own land is not something that would make them happy. The word refugee should be removed or replaced by the word "repatriate" considering all the mass repatriates. Of late things have been better for the repatriates as more and more facilities have made life possible for them.

In such situations of suppression, the wisdom happens but that wisdom is blinded by the emotion called revenge. They belonged to India, their original home but have lived there for more than a century thereby making it their new home. But where can they live now? In Sri Lanka they are either terrorists or victims? Where is prosperity, where is peace of mind? And now the problem is terrorist infiltration. Tamil Nadu, the garden of peace can never be the homeland or a training ground to promote anti-social activities.

The means adopted by the Liberation Tigers is very much questionable and blowing up public property and political leaders cannot be encouraged, at any cost. But let's take a look at what they are fighting for? They are asking for a country inside Lanka simply because the Government, ever since the discrimination, had failed to treat the plantation workers equally. If they had been given all the same

privileges of a Sri Lankan citizen, would they be fighting for a new nation called Eelam? Would they be asking for separate administrative divisions? Would they be asking for autonomy? The problem had been created and now solutions are being discussed when it has assumed monstrous proportions. The Tamils are now in a mindset, where there is absolutely no trust in the Government. The only solution that can arise is from the ongoing peace process and as a sincere citizen of this world, and as a detached observer, I only hope to see Sri Lanka as a heaven once again, a paradise where there is prosperity and peace forever.

Same has been the case with the Islamic terrorist organizations. Ever since an independent Jewish nation called Israel was carved out of the predominantly Islamic Middle East in the late 1940's, there has been bloodshed. The Moslems and the Christians have had problems over this region ever since King Solomon left this place, long ago during the Biblical times. There have been Crusades in which Christians united to wage war against the Moslems. What happens if in such a situation a Jewish nation is carved out of the Islamic region of Palestine? It is true indeed, that the region had been the home of Jews and the Moslems, but it was a place where they once co-existed. The Jews went to their synagogues and the Moslems to their mosques, but when a Jewish political division was made out of a Islamic majority area, the problem started. The British and the Americans had played ugly politics at the end of the Second World War and are harvesting it now in the form of terrorist attacks in the western world, the height of which was the World Trade Center attack.

Is it fair to take away your home and give it to another giving the reason that it is theirs, when the people concerned have co-existed for centuries? Furthermore, protests have led to applying brute force for mass suppression. The tricky American diplomacy had led to the formation of Hamas, which is killing innocent civilians almost every week. It is very true that the means adopted to fight for their rights has been bad, but will the authorities concerned accept a peaceful protest? Wouldn't that be suppressed? Out of this suppression arises a much stronger movement - and that, in this case, has been Hamas. The agitations have led most of the Middle East with a hatred wave against the Americans and whatever that is happening is what was expected. Isn't it time the Moslems and the Jews should co-exist? Isn't it time they sort out their problems by themselves without resorting to terrorism.

The Indian North East has also been greatly affected by terrorist uprisings. The reason given is that the Government had cheated them by not granting them their due privileges that were promised when they accepted to be a part of India, after independence. They have received some privileges and it has been true in many cases that they are underdeveloped. So it is time the Government makes the North East as competent as the other parts of India considering the rich resources it has.

There are one more breed of terrorists who are only destructive and their deadly means can never be justified. The Government's goodness measures have led to their formation. Nobody can be blamed for that except for some mean minded men who try to make use of unemployed youth to fight for their selfish means.

Even they have reasons for their revolt but the extents of damage they have caused make them remain

banned forever, and talks would only promote more extremist acts. Be it the Tamilar Vidhulai Padai or be it the Pakistan funded terrorist camps across the Kashmiri border or the Ranbir Sena of Bihar. The youth of Kashmir had been greatly misled by some vested interests, to fight against their own nation. But ultimately it has been a case where it doesn't benefit them, but the people who use them as scapegoats largely get benefited.

As far as Ranbir Sena is concerned, they had once been rich, tyrannical zamindars, who have amassed wealth during the British period but they are fighting, not for their rights, but for the reason that their share had not been rightly allotted to them. True, there could have been discrepancies but killing poor peasants, can never be justified. As far the Tamilar Vidhulai Padai is concerned, they are only trying to gain the attention of the Indian Government by trying to blow up railway tracks and transformers, in order to separate Tamil Nadu from India. Most of the secessionist movements have not had a good background. The people rarely favour them. They either do it for not willing to be a part of the Government or for selfish means of making themselves the Government.

At the end of it, we can only conclude that terrorism is not the right way to revolt. Terrorism cannot be given legitimacy. Cases can be taken up and be discussed whether the protest is for a right cause or not. But the Governments should realize that once discrimination starts then problem starts. If something is given to one section of people and denied to another section then dissatisfaction starts and sooner or later it snowballs into terrorism. The Governments should also try to understand that people do not want to give their lives for nothing, but they have only been pushed to such extremism. At the same time it is the duty of every citizen to understand the pros and cons of any measures taken up by the Government. To know this, knowledge is necessary and for this education is necessary. Right education and right knowledge is necessary to differentiate constructive intentions from that of destructive ones. This essay is not meant to highlight that the terrorist organizations are noble, but is meant for three sections of people.

One, the terrorists should realize that the means adopted are unfair and leads only to destruction. The terrorists make an attack, the Government replies to it, and they counter attack and this goes on and on. Matters should be resolved by talks and discussions. When the outfits come to talk, it is the responsibility of the Government to treat them like people waiting for justice and not as an opportunity to trick them. If that happens, then the case worsens. The people who are willing to give their lives for their cause should be willing to give their lives to work and make a world of peace.

Second, the governments should realize that in some way or the other they have been responsible for the uprising of such terrorism. Once the discrimination and hatred starts then it leads to a chain of events, which ultimately lead to terrorism. The measures taken by the Government in providing proper governance should be impartial and just. Such a Government can never be responsible for dissatisfied people and if in such cases there are terrorist uprisings, then they can be crushed. But until then the sorting out of problems should be done in a honest and transparent way so that the problems are solved and no newer problems are created.

At last every single man and woman living in this world should realize that it is only feelings of hatred towards each other that have lead to extremism. We should all understand that no one is higher or lower but all of us should co-exist peacefully. If a plantation worker would have been given his due respect and love as a brother or a sister, by any Sri Lankan, would he be fighting for his nation now? Isn't it time that we all realize that in a way, we have all been responsible for what is happening in this world. The only solution is promotion of universal serenity and fraternity. When all of us feel equal before the governance, even the Government cannot be partial, as the people themselves would fight for their rights in a peaceful manner.

No one can fight against darkness, as there is nothing called darkness. It is only the absence of light. Darkness is a non-existential thing, to fight against darkness we don't need a sword or a rifle but we only need a matchstick. Similarly terrorism is not the problem, there is no terrorism in the first place. It is only hatred towards fellow beings that leads to discrimination, suppression and violence. Instead of fighting against this non-existent hatred we should light up the lamp of love. Rather than fighting against non-existential problems, we should promote love towards fellow beings. This is not a philosophical answer but a simple practical answer, we should not fight against the leaves, we should only cut the root. Then there would be no problem to fight against. Clear knowledge and Love for humanity is the answer for terrorism.

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