

Cry My Beloved City

How can one find words to express the horrible, horrible attack by terrorists on Mumbai from the night of November 26, 2008 to the early morning of Saturday the 29th! Twenty young men, who seemed to have lost all sense of humanity, descended on the City by sea and sprayed death randomly on babes, young and old, of all faiths and all nationalities. Can anybody, anywhere justify such brutality? "O judgement, thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason!"

As we sit in stunned silence and contemplate the carnage, the attack not only on a vibrant city but also on the nation, and indeed the whole world, one wonders what kind of perversity gripped the minds of hearts of those who went on an indescribable rampage.

We must not only sympathise with all our sisters and brothers who were martyred by ruthless demons in human form but we must also see to it that these terrible acts do not occur again.

No doubt it is the agonising duty of Governments all over the world to act unitedly in order to deter and conquer this hydra-headed monster of terrorism. Borders of every nature – land, sea and air – have to be made more secure. Agencies of every type – civil and military – have to be geared up. However, more than this, it is the members of civil society that must face as one man this tremendous challenge to all the values we hold dear. No caste, colour or creed, should be raised as obstacles. Politicisation of terrorism gas to be dumped into the dustbin 'One for all and all for one' must be our determined motto.

What should our response be (we who work in grassroot organisations for peace, justice and love amongst all peoples, especially the very poor.)? First and foremost we have to set our own personal houses in order. Change begins with me. I have to cast out all animosity. I have to forgive. Next I must build bridges with all my near and dear ones. It is only then that we can bring our immediate communities together. It is only AFTER this that we can turn to our NGO work to work out strategies for reconciliation. One of the most powerful of tools is through education: formal, informal or non-formal.

Conscientisation is **the** process. This involves making the target groups aware of the causes and structures of injustice, perceived or real and giving these groups the means and wherewithal to overcome. Group dynamics, role-plays, conflict resolution, understanding the other and value upbringing can go a long way to solving in no small manner the scourge of today that, hopefully, can be banished tomorrow and for all time.

Let us, as organisations that work for real people-centred development, take up the cudgels to bring about a world of hope and promise where all can work in solidarity for progress in peace.

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