

Ex Bajarangi Mutalik has been saying for some time now that Karnataka is a hub of terrorists. A few months ago when I heard him in a tv interview I stopped just short of concluding that he was totally out of his wits. How could a person speak as insanely as that, I thought. This was one more reason to foment communal trouble – I decided.

Mutalik has never been known for lauding patriotism in Muslims or for taking up the cause of minorities in India. He has always spewed venom against anyone who has been tolerant of the `Muslim intolerance`. In short Mutalik can easily be considered as anti-Muslim in particular and anti minority in general.

Let us cut to the recent scene. Starting off with a bike theft the police in Karnataka have uncovered a big terrorist network, with roots in Pakistan and tentacles spread all over Karnataka. Though the extent of the network may have been exaggerated, the threat cannot be dismissed. We now get to watch a smiling terrorist on tv whom we are even afraid of calling a terrorist lest, the puritan media pounce on us. So the suspected terrorist who can never be proclaimed a terrorist till he bombs our buildings and our peace, sits there in the media glare talking about how his organization is trying to recruit men to make life hell for us.

For people of Karnataka terrorism was a distant issue, to be heard about only in states like J&K, Uttar Pradesh and occasionally in some other parts of the country. Even when the IISc incident took place, Kannadigas did not worry much. The attack was more like an aberration and the faith of the people in the power of the police remained intact. The police did not let the people down, but what about our politicians?

Look at the politicians, in the aftermath of the discovery of this big terror net. Has anyone heard even one neta making at least a statement? Is terror an issue only for the police to deal with? Don't these khadi clad leaders of the people know that once Karnataka is attacked the face and the mind of the state would change forever?

The State that took pride in being secular from time immemorial, is in the danger of becoming a communal state, in the wake of the recent revelations. Secularism and religion become secondary to a person who is in a hurry to save his own life and property. Security is the reason why human beings grouped as a society, formed social systems and even governments. A man can go to any extent to ensure his security. One can even go to the extent of changing his beliefs, and secularism would become the last attraction for a person in the wake of a terrorism in Karnataka.

Look at Yeddyurappa and the whole BJP circus. With a Katta Subbramanya Naidu spearheading the so called Muslim appeasement in the BJP, even a natural and expected reaction from the BJP is missing. Congress is more quiet than ever, for the fear of offending Muslims. If speaking against terrorism is understood as speaking against Muslims then Congressmen themselves are telling the whole world that there is no difference between terrorists and Muslims. With Deve Gowda, the leader who called the outlawed SIMI the innocent child of the Muslim society, at the help of the party, JDS certainly would prefer to turn a blind eye.

Do our politicians realize that, more the terrorist threat, more the polarization of the society? The recent reports of terror groups and Muslim youth taking to terrorism may be overly exaggerated, but what if it is true? If Islamic terrorism is such a

sensitive issue then why does not anyone deal with it even sensibly?. The terrorists or terrorism sympathizers may be few and far between and may actually not be such a threat after all, but by considering even such a harmless info about them as insignificant, aren't we sending a message to terrorist organizations that we won't look hard for them? Maybe the real number of actual terrorists is very few in Karnataka, but don't we know, that even if those few chose to attack innocent people that itself would be sufficient for a backlash against Muslims?

Jaffer Sharif who organized a protest march against Saddam's hanging, has in fact whispered quietly a few times that he does not approve of his community's youth turning to terrorism. But, is the Muslim leader incapable of organizing a protest march uniting all Muslims against Muslim terrorists? Is terrorism an issue only for the pro Hindu organizations and media to take up? Why are Muslims being portrayed as sympathetic to terrorism, and why are even the Muslim leaders averse to speaking about terrorism? Is there not one political leader to educate the people that Islamic terrorism does not represent the Muslim society and that ordinary Muslims are not in favour of terrorism at all ? Have we not learnt lessons already that it is always the innocent people who pay the price for the follies of a few?

There are hundreds of issues facing the Muslim society today, from poverty, backwardness, to illiteracy. At a time when some hard working Muslim youth have made serious leaps into the mainstream by finding respectable jobs in the new economy, the mischief of a few misled youth is making the life difficult for all the law abiding honourable citizens of the community. Is there not one person even among Muslims to speak about the injustice being done to Muslims by a few fellow Muslims in the name of Islamic terrorism ?

Nobody need educate anyone about the scourge of terrorism all the over the world. We have seen images of terror, enough, that we do not need anyone to sensitize us about our attitude towards terrorists. Muslims are not waiting to be given the alms of love and trust of the majority community. The unfortunate thing is that there is nobody who speaks for the patriotic and secular Muslims who are so large in number and so much part of our society. Today, there are more people defending suspected terrorists, standing by condemned anti-nationals and expressing solidarity with the cause of extremists. In the process the people who are losing out are the innocent Muslims who never had anything to do with terrorism in the first place.

Why do we expect an ordinary Muslim to speak against terrorism as if it is he who fostered terrorism to begin with? It is for the self proclaimed defenders of the people and leaders of communities to see the danger such disclosures of terror nets can cause to the society. In a world where people burn ten buses in retaliation for one bus causing an accident resulting in a death, what should one imagine if there is in fact a terrorist attack in the State in the future? Will anyone defending terrorism today or speaking for the innocence of the suspected terrorists even have a place to hide?

The common people first allow the thinkers, leaders and opinion makers to speak for them and when all of them fail to represent their sentiments then the mass takes the law into its own hands. The Muslim society that is quiet today along with its leaders will be easily and conveniently accused of being sympathetic to such evil forces and all hell may break loose and what will happen in the end?

In the absence of leaders who fail to read the message in time, people like Mutalik will become heroes. Because, it would be someone like Mutalik who may have spoken the truth first, according to the agitated masses. It may be Mutalik who saw things in black and white when others saw nothing. It may be true that Mutalik may have suspected terrorism before anyone else. We in the process would have failed to see that Mutalik also had seen the whole Muslim society as terrorists. And then, what would happen? Another Narendra Modi would be born in Karnataka.

Muslims need not prove their patriotism and love for the country to anyone, but at the same time Muslims cannot also sit quietly when an atmosphere of mistrust is slowly building up waiting to unleash a catastrophe.