

## TERRORISM ON THE ROADS – I

I am convinced that India reveals herself on her roads for all to see. She bares her soul and all of herself.

Let us digress a bit and define the word "Majority". A majority is a large and dominant group of people who share a belief system, share a set of norms of behaviour and an implicit set of practices. A person who belongs to a majority feels secure inside it, and is fairly certain of what to expect. If any member pulls nasty surprises on the group, he or she is quickly "disciplined". A minority on the other hand does not share the beliefs and norms, however, has a different set of beliefs and behaviour that are consistent and predictable. Most groups though share some over arching human values regarding respect for self and others, violence etc.

Now, let us get back to our roads. All of us belong to minorities, often a minority of one. At no time can one be sure that the stream of vehicles that one is part of, will all behave consistently. Nor will any of them uphold a respect for life, their own or others! Take the line that forms in front of traffic lights. It is impossible to predict who might decide to suddenly veer over to the right or left and scramble to the head of the line just before the lights change! More strangely, the one bus or car or motorcycle or three-wheeler that does not "make it" will realise one of two things. Firstly, that the lights are not changing for this line but the one in front and unless they get back in line, the bus bearing down on them in great rage might simply decide not to brake or change course! This vehicle driver will then become very irritated with the ones in line and start intimidating them to squeeze in. Secondly, the driver of the vehicle realises that the "law abiding" line is moving ahead. This driver feels affronted and must use the protruding front end of his / her vehicle to disrupt the line and get in.

Woe unto you if you happen to be the "law abiding" one whose car is hit by the hustler. The hustler (could even be the fashionable lady that went by) will quickly get out of the vehicle and let go volley of choice words. If one is not cowed down immediately the chances are that a policeman will come by, ask the line to stop (he knows how to manage them) wave the offender on (probably salute them)! If this does not happen, the irate drivers of the blocked traffic will get you! You & I not only stick to rules, we don't know how to aggress upon others and establish our rights. It showed up in our driving to start with!

This then is the state we as a nation are quickly moving to. No shared beliefs, norms or practices, no rules. The ones who make it in business or politics are the ones who don't follow rules but break them with impunity (and, I guess, with a liberal dose of green back lubrication). You think you are part of a large group or community with some shared values and lo and behold, a few will break ranks, put up a flag and claim special privileges; possible occupy the nearest mosque or Church or temple and shoot randomly. Some of them will get cabinet positions if they play their part with enough aggro. In an anarchy, there are only minorities and even these are transitory groupings of expedience and convenience!

## TERRORISM ON THE ROADS – II

The other day my colleague came to work very disturbed. We sat down over a cup of coffee and he told me what was bothering him.

"A few days ago" he said "I was driving home on my mobike when a car in front of me crashed into a moped. The woman riding it fell down with a thump. A pedestrian rushed to help her. The car sped off. I was so angry. I chased the car. Two others joined me. A couple of kilometers down the line, we saw a police jeep, we explained the situation to the policeman. They joined the chase and soon stopped the car. One of the policeman in the jeep got into the car. We drove back to the accident spot, and, now things get interesting", he said with a wry grin. "We get the driver out, argue, and shout at him. "Can't you atleast have the courtesy to stop and help the woman you have injured? Don't you have close relatives and friends who might be in the same plight? If educated people like you don't respect human beings let alone the law, how can you feel secure?" and so on we berated him. The woman on the moped was not badly hurt. The medical cost of cleaning and bandaging the wound was Rs. 50/-. The driver claimed he had no money! The policeman was by now playing a pacifist role, refused to book a case saying, "It is a problem for you saar, you must come and give evidence". I gave up, paid up the Rs. 50/- since I felt bad. The story does not end here. This morning I saw the same policeman. He asked me for a lift. On the vehicle we started talking "you don't care to ensure any discipline. You even let the guy off and worse, make me pay for the poor woman". "Saar" the policeman replied. "people like you are rare, mostly we can only be passive spectators who knows if that guy is related to a local MLA. But saar, how could he pay Rs. 50/-, he already "motivated" us with Rs. 200/- we cleaned him out!!"

On the table in front of us were the headlines on the morning papers about George Fernandes and Bangaru Laxman being "rehabilitated"!!! By the time we finished our discussion, both of us were more than a bit afraid. The time to feel righteously angry is long gone