

TERRORISM

and the



indian
media

An IPF Research Project

TERRORISM AND THE INDIAN MEDIA

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE APPROACH OF ENGLISH, HINDI AND
URDU NEWSPAPERS TOWARDS TERRORISM

Project coordinator and author

Prof Rakesh Sinha



India Policy Foundation
Hauz Khas, New Delhi

**Publisher: INDIA POLICY FOUNDATION,
D-51, First Floor, Hauz Khas,
New Delhi-110016**

Edition First, 2009

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Price : Rs. 80/- (Rupees Eighty)

Printer : Graphic World, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-2

Email : graphicworld@rediffmail.com

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FOREWORD

Terrorism is agitating the whole world as an acute problem. And Most importantly it has assumed an organized form. It has created a deadly network at international level by exploiting the I-T revolution. India has witnessed an exponential rise in the acts of terror in recent years.

The Terror attack in Mumbai in November 2008 has unveiled the horrendous face of terrorism. The whole world was seeing their barbarity through the electronic media. The event left the USA's 9/11 behind in several strategic aspects. This way by no means the first act of terror. India is facing the rising crescendo of terrorism for the last two decades. There are numerous aspects of terrorism. Terror acts are executed with specific objectives. While this undermines the communal amity within the country, it also hampers the economic growth. It creates an environment of uncertainty. Under such trying circumstance, the responsibility of the media increases many fold. Its role no longer remains limited to the media increases many fold. Its role no longer remains limited to reporting incidents. Media has to diagnose the mindset behind terrorism, present the stance of government and represent the reaction of common man to the phenomenon. These are the issues that promoted India Policy Foundation after 26/11 to do a study on the approach of the English, Hindi and Urdu newspapers on terrorism.

We have tried to understand their views on India state, society, law, police and intelligence, international cooperation, human rights

directly or otherwise vis-à-vis terrorism. The purpose of the comparative study is to find out their differences on indices like quality, ideation and priority.

Due to constraints of time and resources it has not been possible to include all the newspapers. But a study of this kind, I am sure, will be able to engage readers' interested in either terrorism or media or both. The Foundation, from time to time, will carry out discussions and surveys on issues of academic and contemporary interest.

DR. BAJRANG LAL GUPTA
CHAIRMAN, IPF

Introduction

The relation between terrorism and the media is being debated, more so in the West. Numerous questions are being raised in this regard. Are the terrorists using the media to spread their message? Conversely, do the media publicize terror incidents and terror messages and interview the terrorists, to boost their TRPs?

Both these questions, independent of each other, are not unjustified. These are based upon certain recognized values. The readers or viewers of terrorism are not merely those who could be its potential targets, but also those whom the terrorists want to attract in their folds. One of the clear objectives of Bin Laden and allied terrorist organisations in sending e-mail, video tapes and giving interviews is that they could establish themselves as 'legitimate representatives' for a 'proclaimed objective' in the world and amongst potential converts to their ideology.

The rapid growth of the media during the 20th century has fuelled a competition for news at a commercial level. The terrorists try to take advantage of this. It is also for this reason that they derive pleasure from the terror and despair their act generates, more than from the act itself. It is for this reason a few critics and politicians, including former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, view media as the 'oxygen of the terrorists.'¹

'How can the media avoid being exploited by the terrorists?' This theme has become the pivot of the debate on media and terrorism in the West. While some feel that censorship should be applied to terror news on media, many others view this censorship as completely unjustified.

Any restriction on the media is unethical, feels Paul Wilkinson.² Media should be left alone to report about terrorism, which is analogous to the principle of *Laissez Faire* in economics.

¹ Trends in Terrorisme (Kluwer, 2003) by Erwin Muller and Ramon Spaaij

² Terrorism versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response by Paul Wilkinson, Routledge, New York, New

The democratic governments of the West, fearing the ideological potency of terrorism, have often intervened in the editorial policy of the media. In the aftermath of 9/11, the US Deputy Secretary of States, Richard Armitage had requested the management of Voice of America not to telecast the interview of Taliban Chief Mullah Omar immediately. The request was accepted but under pressure from the journalists, it was telecast a few days later.

The American television channels were requested by the US administration not to telecast the interview of Osama bin Laden. Though the request was accepted, journalists opposed the move but ‘social pressure’ turned the appeal of the US administration into an order.³

The third example belongs to Russia where the state media prohibits the Chechen terrorists from broadcasting their messages.⁴ It is possible to have reservations against the action of such states. This is seen as unnecessary and suppression of democracy. Robin Gerrits feel that although media might provide the oxygen of publicity for the terrorist, but censorship would provide ‘narcotic of secrecy’, an even greater danger for democracy.⁵

But one of the positive aspects of this debate is that government, civil society, and newspapers are getting acquainted with the intention, mission and mindset of terrorism. Hence the media is applying its discretion and self-regulation to report about terrorism.

There are no two opinions that the respectability of terrorist organisations and its sympathizers have been marginalized in the society and newspapers. It is for this reason that the US and Britain had turned terror incidents on its soil to ‘exceptions’ and ‘accidents’. Europe has made strong and successful initiatives to prevent terror from being imported. It has not allowed the ‘home grown’ terrorism to flourish. It is for this reason that top terrorist organisations feel frustrated in Europe.

³ D.A. Graber (2003), “Terrorism, Censorship and the First Amendment: In Search of Policy Guidelines”, in: P. Norris, M.R. Just and M. Kern (2003), *Framing Terrorism: The New Media, the Government and the Public*, London, Routledge P.27-42

⁴ The story of Russians don’t see in Chechnya, F. Weir, *Christian Science Monitor*, Vol 91, Issue 231, October 26, 1999 P.1

⁵ R P JM Gerrits, “Terrorists’ Perspectives: Memoris”, in *Terrorism and the Media* by D.L. Paletz and A. Schimd, Sage, London, pp. 31-60

The 'search and destroy terrorism' in the US and Britain post-9/11 was never branded as anti-minority or Fascist.

Two researchers tried to find out in a survey if newspapers have some definite editorial policy against terrorism. Out of twenty, only five said their newspapers had no definite guidelines, where as rest of the fifteen said they had voluntarily framed clear guidelines on reporting about terrorism. Out of these fifteen, in turn, only three admitted to have put these guidelines in writing, whereas the remaining twelve said these were conveyed verbally.⁶

The situation of India with respect to terrorism is more complicated. Kashmir has become a laboratory of Jihad for the last two decades. Unfortunately, terrorism is flourishing due to troubled Indo-Pak bilateral relations, questions of human rights, and appeasement of radical elements in the valley. The Indian media perceived terrorism in Kashmir as product of extraordinary circumstances and special factors; and considered it as localized. The media never allowed the police, military and citizens battling terrorism to be ignored. If terrorism has weakened in Kashmir, one of its reasons is depletion in its local support. Thus one thing is clear; the imported terrorists can never succeed in their mission until they receive local support. Hence, terrorists try to play up religious and emotional issues. They try to instigate and traduce the co-religionists troubled by local and contemporary issues.

Hence, the responsibility of the media is to uncover the acts of terror and intentions of the terrorists. The manner and extent of the publishing and broadcasting the news related to terrorists should be best left to the discretion of the media. The media, after 9/11 or 26/11 in India, has kept into consideration the aspects that can adversely affect the national interests and social harmony.

Terrorism in India is no longer restricted to Kashmir. It is slowly spreading out to the other parts of the country, especially the metros. The security of industrial, scientific and military establishments, railway stations, luxury hotels, hospitals and religious places is becoming an issue of worry. But the most important question is whether terrorists are risking their lives to commit such hideous acts just to derive pleasure. The answer to this question can help us reach the roots of terrorism. Robert Anthony Pape is considered an authority on terrorism. His

⁶ Terrorism and the media, D.M. Paletz and A. Schimdt, Sage, London

conclusion was that 90 percent of suicide bombings since 1980 were for strategic rather than religious reasons. Their purpose is to force the democratic countries to remove their military presence from those areas that terrorists consider their homeland. But this conclusion does not appear fully convincing. Will the terrorists become complacent after the occupying soldiers are recalled? It must be understood that contemporary terrorism is acting according to an ideology. Terrorism by itself is nothing. Such violence is being committed to disrupt democracy and an open society under the influence of a particular ideology. Till this ideology is dispassionately debated, its solution will elude us.

The media can play an effective role in defeating terrorism by exploring the source of this ideology, the intellectual and material resources received by it, its power and extent of appeal.

India has twin challenges towards terror. One, it has to combat the extraneous terrorists. Secondly, it has to neutralize its relationship with domestic terrorists.

Terrorists want to turn India into a laboratory of terrorism. The ideologues and spokespersons of terrorism understand the relationship amongst secularism, internal security and vote bank politics. The more confusion and imbalance occur at the social, political and religious levels of the nation the more terrorism will get an opportunity to act its drama. Some intellectuals and a section of press debated the hanging of Afzal Guru, condemned to death in Parliament Attack case, under the guise of human rights. It is not unfair to question the law and order institutions within the ambit of democracy. But when the debate is turned into an opportunity to slam them as prejudiced and communal, its only purpose is to undermine their legitimacy and moral responsibility. The mainstream media can play an important role in countering such attempts.

The Indian media's view of terrorism has changed over time. Newspapers are going into the fundamentals of terrorism, by going to the basics of terror events, and uncovering the structure and creed of terrorist organisations. There are several aspects of terrorism. The foremost amongst them are role of the agencies and the process of police investigation. The media's role assumes greater sensitivity and responsibility on this question. How much importance should be attached to police's investigation and how should be questions raised by the

investigations assessed. Media has to grapple with such challenging questions.

The Indian media has visited upon by several incidents in 2008. This included the Batla House encounter, Mumbai terror attacks, and a statement given by Minority Affairs Minister A.R. Antulay casting suspicion on the killing of Mumbai ATS chief Hemant Karkare. The objective of the study was to find out what point of view different newspapers of English, Hindi and Urdu newspapers adopted on these issues. The character of English, Hindi and Urdu press has been divergent in India. They had been on loggerheads on certain issues right from the colonial era. The conflict of opinion amongst on important national and social issues surfaced on several occasions. For instance, English and Hindi press were at loggerheads on Ram Janmabhoomi movement issue. English and Hindi press have often been compared, but Urdu press has mostly remained outside the scanner. Should this be considered neglect or mistake is certainly another issue. But there is another aspect to it. Urdu newspapers have a committed readership. Once that readership had a broad social base but now it has shrunk. But slowly its readership has contracted to a particular religious community. Zafarul Islam⁷ wonders if any non-Muslim reads Urdu newspaper.⁸

Urdu is spoken in 17 states of the country and its newspapers have a geographically wide reach. Hence to become the community-specific journalism is a proof of contraction of Urdu. Such journalism, acting in the name of independence and impartiality, tend to assume unaccountable and communal character. Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan assails the Urdu newspapers by calling them sensational, spicy and one-sided.⁹

How impactful can such sensational news items be is worth examining. Khan believes that Urdu newspapers recreate the mindset of the Madrasa-produced Maulavis who have the leadership of Muslim

⁷ Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan is the publisher and editor of Milli Gazette published from Jamia Nagar, New Delhi. He is also the President of All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawara

⁸Community, Politics and Media, Yoginder Sikand in conversation with Zafarul Islam
http://www.twocircles.net/2008nov04/zafarul_islam_community_politics_and_media.html

⁹ ibid

communities.¹⁰ But whether it is Urdu newspapers or Muslim affairs periodicals, which includes *Milli Gazette*, published and edited by Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan little qualitative difference is noticeable in views.

With reference to the three episodes kept in the ambit of the study viz. Batla Encounter, Mumbai terror attacks of 26/11, and Antulay's statement the views expressed by **Milli Gazette** or **Radiance** (both English) are similar to Malayam publications **Madhyamam** (Jammatt-i-Islami Hind), *Thejas* (NDF) or **Chandrika** (Muslim League) published from Kerala. Like Urdu newspapers they considered the Batla House encounter as fake.¹¹ **Milli Gazette** has claimed the encounter to be fake.¹² *Communalism Combat* has done the same.¹³

If mainstream newspapers saw the 26/11 attacks on Mumbai as Jihadi mechanism, the Urdu newspapers tried to project it as conspiracy hatched by Jews, Mossad, CIA etc. Their views remain basically unchanged even after the Mumbai Police filed 10,000 plus page chargesheet in the attacks. What **Communalism Combat** said about the intelligence of Urdu newspapers is also noteworthy. Its editorial said the Urdu newspapers all are subscriber to conspiracy theory. Behind every terror attack, which includes 9/11, they see the hand of CIA and Jews.¹⁴

The difference amongst English, Hindi and Urdu newspapers comes out clearly in the study. For instance, most Urdu newspapers projected 26/11 attacks as a conspiracy to defame Muslims. Aziz Burney, the editor of **Roznama Rashtriya Sahara**, said 26/11 is a Mossad and CIA conspiracy as 9/11 was. Interestingly, the view of **Rashtriya Sahara** (Hindi), published by the same media house, was diametrically

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ *Radiance* (editor, Ejaz Ahmed Aslma), published from New Delhi declared the Batla House encounter as fake in its issues November 30-December 6, 2008; November 9-15, 2008; September 28 to October 4, 2008 declared the encounter as 'fake'. *Chandrika* (editor Ahmed Kutty) editorial December 25, 2008; *Thejas* (executive editor N.P. Chekkutty) and *Madhyaman* (editor, O. Abdurahman) editorial September 22, 2008 declared Batla House encounter as fake

¹² *Communalism Combat* also viewed similarly (vide October, November and December, 2008 issue and January 2009 issue)

¹³ *Typecasting Terror, Communalism Combat* (editor Teesta Setalvad and Javed Anand), October 2008

¹⁴ *Mindset and Free Press, ibid*

different from Urdu. Hyderabad-based **Siyasat** advised India not to view the incident through American eyes.¹⁵ By visit by American State Secretary Condoleezza Rice, the paper felt, would increase bitterness in Indo-Pak relationship.

Hyderabad-based **Ittedad** held India's refusal to conduct joint investigations with Pakistan on 26/11 as wrong. The mainstream newspapers, on the other hand, declared the Pakistani initiative as a charade. *Munsif* decreed that involving Israel in the investigations will be counterproductive because 'a section of India thinks that 26/11 is perpetrated by Israel'. **Siyasat** felt it is essential to strengthen the hands of Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari to combat terrorism. *Urdu Times* (Mumbai) also gave publicized 26/11 attacks as a 'Mossad CIA conspiracy'. **Inquilab**, a highly regarded Urdu daily, also found 26/11 suspicious. **Jadeed Markaz** saw a mystery behind Hemant Karkare mystery.

Some Urdu newspapers tried to link 26/11 Babri demolition, Gujarat riots and Malegaon episode. But a survey conducted amongst Muslim saw 94 percent of the respondents did not feel there was any relationship¹⁶.

The purpose of any debate should be constructive. This present study has the same intention. Sensational news repeated times and again do not become the truth, but do create confusion. The Urdu newspapers were able to captivate public attention by such news items on 26/11. Obviously, there circulation also increased. During 1919-21 the Urdu newspapers recorded a significant rise by publishing sensational news. The communal orientation that affected Urdu journalism during the British period did an irreparable harm to this sonorous language¹⁷. Litterateur Maithali Saran Gupt has mentioned several such newspapers. *Kohinoor* published from Lahore, *Awadh* from Lucknow, *Makhjan* and *Paisa* were supportive of British government and feudal lords¹⁸. But then

¹⁵ See editorial, *Siyasat*, December 3, 2008

¹⁶ Study of Indian Muslim Mind on 26/11, Global Terror, M. Hanif Lakkadwala, a survey by Trend Research and Analysis centre.

¹⁷ During 1919-20, there were 138 Urdu publications that increased to 175 during 1920-21. Vide, *The Rise and Growth of Hindi Journalism, 1826-1945*, Ram Ratan Bhatnagar, P.240

¹⁸ *Bharatiya Sanskriti and Hindi Pradesh Vol-II*, Kitabghar, New Delhi P.435-437

Urdu journalism was not a victim of one sidedness. *Payam-e-Azadi* (estd 1857), *Zamana* published from Kanpur and *Hindustan* were wrote dauntlessly in favour of independence. But today is the hour of trial for Urdu journalism. It has to rediscover that element in its heritage that can redeem it from its narrow worldview.

Media can play an effective and unifying role in preparing the state and society to combat terrorism. The mainstream media lived up to this role post-26/11. How one wish the same thing could have been said about the Urdu press. The book has three chapters divided into three parts. Each part analyses the role of English, Hindi and Urdu press with regard with the topic of the chapter. The fourth chapter deals with national view and concern of the media. In the end, some conclusions of the study have been underlined.

The research project was enriched by cooperation of various people, directly or indirectly. The members of the Trust encouraged the research and writing team without which this project could not have been completed. The research project took shape of a book under the incessant and cooperation of guidance and Dr. Bajrang Lal Gupta and Shri Dattatreya Hosable. Dr. Govind Sharma, Dr. Shashi Prakash Chaudhary, Shri Man Mohan Sharma, Shri Priyadarsi Dutta and Shri Rajeev Kumar made significant contribution in research and writing. I could not help mention several other journalists to whom the Foundation feels indebted. They are Smt. Suchitra Kulkarni, Shri Ashutosh Bhatngar, Shri Avadhesh Mishra, Shri Loknath, Shri Vinod Kumar Shukla, Shri Rana Amaresh Singh and Shri Syed Arshad Ali. Thanks are due to Shri Santosh Kumar for typing and administrative work, Shri Phule Raj for taking care of the staff, and Shaukat Ali for the typing work. We are also indebted to Nehru Memorial Museum Library, Teen Murti and libraries of a few publications for the purpose of research.

Lastly, there are no full stops in intellectual work. It is a flowing stream. And fluctuations are possible in its flow. The purpose of this project was to take forward a debate. Its criticism will also be considered an indicant of its success.

05/03/2009

Rakesh Sinha

CHAPTER – 1

BATLA HOUSE ENCOUNTER

September 19, 2008

“The fight against terrorism is a continuous process and the threat of extremism should be seen lightly. The human rights activists who criticize the actions of security agencies have, may be unwittingly, added to the confusion and the cause of anti-national elements from time to time.”

-Moloy Krishna Dhar, former Joint Director, IB
Frontline; October 11-24, 2008

“Doubting Thomases who perennially question established facts and events on mere suspicion, without a tinge of contrary evidence betray irrationality.”

Soli Sorabjee in ‘Encountering Conspiracy Theories’
The Indian Express; September 28, 2008

“The Policeman was killed and to say he was shot by his own kind, I think is a travesty”

“Whether it is Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bangalore or Mumbai, the chain that it (the probe) has produced has frightened us”

M.K. Narayanan, National Security Advisor
(Travesty to call Jamia Encounter fake: NSA)
The Statesman October 12, 2008

“So you say that policemen went there to shoot themselves?”

Chief Justice K G
Balakrishnan and Justice P Sathasivam
(The Times of India; December 9, 2008)

Chronology of the Events

- **September 13, 2008:** Five serial bombs rocked Delhi; three more bombs defused. Around 30 died; 90 were wounded¹⁹. Indian Mujahideen (IM) claimed responsibility through an e-mail traced to Mumbai.²⁰
- **September 14:** Delhi Police began hunt for suspected mastermind Abdus Subhan Qureshi alias Tauqeer, fugitive in Ahmedabad serial bomb blasts.²¹
- **September 15-16:** Delhi Police released sketches/photos of blasts suspects. Investigators found that bombs used in Hyderabad, Jaipur, Gujarat and Delhi serial blasts were identical.²²
- **September 18:** Mufti Abu Bashir, prime suspect in Ahmedabad serial blasts, brought to Delhi. He said that he knew about Delhi blasts but not their timings²³. Driven round Jamia Nagar for pin pointing location.
- **September 19 (10.30 am- 11.15 am approx):** Delhi Police Special Cell raid suspected terrorist hideout at L-18, Batla House colony of Jamia Nagar, South Delhi. Two wanted terrorists viz. Atif Amin and Mohammed Sajid were killed; Mohammed Saif was arrested; and two reportedly escaped. Protest in the locality. Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma was grievously injured by gunshot and hospitalized²⁴.

4 pm: Delhi Police Commissioner Y.S. Dadwal held a press conference; he announced that September 13 Delhi serial

¹⁹ *Bangalore, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Surat and now Delhi HELPLESS, The Times of India, September 14, 2008.*

²⁰ *Mumbai techie chief suspect: Agencies, The Times of India, September 14, 2008*

²¹ *Hunt begins all over again: same prime suspect, similar bombs, SIMI links, The Indian Express, September 15, 2008*

²² *Hyderabad, Jaipur, Gujarat and now Delhi, bombs used were identical-down to the last inch', The Indian Express, September 17, 2008*

²³ *I knew about Delhi blasts: Ahd suspect, The Times of India, September 19, 2008*

²⁴ *Two terrorists shot dead in Delhi, The Hindu, September 20, 2008; 'Blasts fallout: Bloody shootout in Delhi' The Statesman, September 20, 2008; Counter-terror, The Indian Express, September 20, 2008.*

blast case has been solved. Deceased Atif was claimed as its mastermind. Zeeshan Ahmed, an MBA and flat mate of Atif, arrested from office of *Headlines Today* in central Delhi, where he went to give a television interview.

7 pm: Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma passed away.

- **September 20:** Inspector Sharma cremated with full State honours. The occasion witnessed a large public turnout²⁵.
- **September 21:** Jamia students Zia-ur-Rehman and Mohammed Shakil arrested along with Sikkim Manipal University MBA student Shakir Nissar by Delhi Police in connection with the blast²⁶. They confessed their involvement in Ahmedabad blasts and said that Atif Amin had planned 20 blasts in New Delhi business hub of Nehru Place²⁷.
- **September 22-**A team of Delhi Police special cell and Intelligence Bureau took Mohammed Saif and Zeeshan Ahmed to Manipal, near Bangalore²⁸. Saif identified the place in Manipal where he was given a consignment of explosives²⁹. Jamia suspended Zia ur-Rehman and Mohammed Shakil³⁰. Leading Muslim groups said that their youth were being targeted by the police³¹.
- **September 23:** Jamia V-C Mushirul Hassan announced that the University would fund the legal defence of two of its arrested students³². The decision stirred controversy. Delhi Police and

²⁵ *Thousands bid adieu to Friday's shootout hero, The Times of India, September 21, 2008; 'Delhi sends off its martyred hero, The Pioneer, September 21, 2008.*

²⁶ *Cops jump varsity gun again, The Telegraph, September 22, 2008*

²⁷ *Atif had planned 20 blasts in Nehru Place, The Times of India, September 23, 2008*

²⁸ *Southern search for bomb source, The Telegraph, September 23, 2008;*

²⁹ *Saif identifies supply point in Manipal, The Hindu, December 23, 2008*

³⁰ *Jamia suspends blasts accused', The Statesman, September 23, 2008*

³¹ *Do not target our youths: Muslim body, The Indian Express, September 23, 2008*

³² *Jamia to give legal aid to 2 blast suspects, The Times of India, September 24, 2008*

ATS, UP Police, accompanied by Saqib Nisar, conducted raids in Azamgarh to collect information³³.

- **September 24:** Mumbai Police arrested five IM functionalities; claimed Mohammed Sadiq Israr Sheikh to be the kingpin³⁴.
- **September 25:** Five thousand students marched in Jamia demanding judicial probe of the encounter³⁵. Religious difference surfaced amongst students during closed door meeting³⁶.
- **September 29:** UP Police arrested Arif alias Abdul Kadir, a native of Sanjarpur, Azamgarh district. He reportedly confessed to planting bombs in Lucknow Court premises on November 23, 2007³⁷.
- **October 6:** Mumbai Police reported arrest of three technocrat IM members Mohammed Mansoor Asghar Peerbhoy, Mobin Kadir Shaikh and Asif Bashiruddin Shaikh from Pune³⁸.
- **October 14:** All India Muslims Organizations meeting convened by Ahmad Bukhari at New Delhi Jantar Mantar. The Imam said that the encounter was faked³⁹.
- **November 9:** Qayamuddin Kapadia, an alleged conspirator in Ahmedabad and Delhi blasts arrested in Bhopal by Madhya Pradesh ATS⁴⁰.
- **December 8:** The Supreme Court rejected a PIL submitted by an NGO Real Cause charging that the Batla encounter was fake⁴¹.
- **December 17:** Delhi Police submitted its first chargesheet in Delhi blast case in the Court of Metropolitan Magistrate. Gave

³³ Azamgarh: Delhi team conducts raid, *The Indian Express*; September 24, 2008; 'Swoop on UP terror cradle, *The Telegraph*, September 24, 2008

³⁴ With 5 arrests in Mumbai, cops claim IM terror ring cracked, *The Times of India*, September 25, 2008.

³⁵ Jamia V-C leads march, wants judicial probe into encounter', *The Times of India*; September 26, 2008

³⁶ Unity show against taint; *The Telegraph*, September 26, 2008

³⁷ IM man held for UP court blasts', *The Economic Times*, September 30, 2008

³⁸ Mumbai cops burst IM's wi-fi network, 20 held, *The Economic Times*, October 7, 2008

³⁹ Imam counters encounter story, *The Times of India*, September 27, 2008

⁴⁰ Ahd blasts plotter held in MP, *The Times of India*, November 11, 2008

⁴¹ PIL on Jamia Nagar shootout shot down, *The Times of India*, December 9, 2008

details of mobile phone conversations and pictures recovered from laptop and handsets of terrorists⁴².

- **December 18:** Delhi Police filed the second chargesheet⁴³.
- **January 13, 2009** – Delhi Police filed the third chargesheet concentrating on Barakhamba Road blast on September 13, 2008⁴⁴.
- **January 21, 2009** – IM explosives expert E.T. Zainuddin alias Abdul Sattar, on the run since 1998, held from Hyderabad by Kerala Police⁴⁵.
- **January 22** – The Government announced **Ashoka Chakra** to Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma⁴⁶. Central Forensic Science Laboratory gave its forensic report proving the encounter was genuine.
- **January 26** – Smt. Maya Sharma, widow of late Mohan Chand Sharma, received the award from the Hon'ble President on Republic Day. Those doubting the encounter should bring proof, she said.
- **January 29** – Uttar Pradesh Ulema Council organized a rally at New Delhi's Jantar Mantar demanding judicial enquiry into Batla House encounter. Around 2,500 Muslims from Azamgarh and Leftists participated. Students from Jamia, JNU and Delhi University also participated⁴⁷.
- **February 17-** Mumbai Police filed 1,809 page long chargesheet against 21 alleged IM members in MCOCA Court⁴⁸. A sizeable number of them belonged to Azamgarh⁴⁹.

⁴² *Delhi blasts could have been averted, The Times of India, December 18, 2008; 'Chargesheet against 5 IM suspects, The Statesman, December 18, 2008;*

⁴³ *Second chargesheet filed in the Delhi blasts, The Hindu, December 19, 2008*

⁴⁴ *13/9: Third Chargesheet filed, The Times of India, January 14, 2009*

⁴⁵ *Indian Mujahideen explosives expert held in Hyderabad', The Economic Times, January 22, 2009*

⁴⁶ *'In 11 Ashok Chakras, Jamia's Sharma and six Mumbai heroes, The Indian Express, January 23, 2009*

⁴⁷ *'We aren't terrorists', Hindustan Times, January 30, 2009; 'Azamgarh Muslims protest terror tag, slam Cong, The Indian Express, January 30, 2009.*

⁴⁸ *Indian Mujahideen wanted bases in Maharashtra, The Hindu, February 18, 2009; 'Chargesheet filed against 21 IM men, The Pioneer, February 18, 2009; 'Nailing the IM men', The Indian Express, February 19, 2009*

PART-I

BATLA HOUSE ENCOUNTER & ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

The Incident

On the morning of September 19, 2008 (Friday), a squad of Delhi Police's special cell raided House no. L-18 in Batla House colony of Jamia Nagar in New Delhi.⁵⁰



“The special cell squad reached the fourth floor of house no L-18, within the Batla House area of Jamia Nagar, following credible inputs about the presence of a person whose physical appearance tallied with that of a senior SIMI operative repeatedly mentioned by those held for the Ahmedabad blasts. A special cell team, helped by inputs from the Intelligence Bureau and Gujarat and Maharashtra

Police, ‘developed’ the information about the presence of suspects in the house near Khaliullah Mosque.”⁵¹

“Two suspected terrorists, including a key Indian Mujahideen functionary who played a major role in the Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and the recent Delhi serial blasts, were gunned down in an encounter...Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma, a highly decorated officer, who led the operation, was killed in the encounter.”⁵² Two terrorists were killed, one arrested and two escaped from Jamia Nagar hideout.

This incident, known as Batla House Encounter, or Jamia Nagar shootout became an issue of public discussion and debate. The immediate reaction came from the local residents of Jamia Nagar. A section of them gathered around the spot, and shouted slogans against the

⁴⁹ *Most IM men from Azamgarh, Rakhi Gaiwad, The Hindu, February 18, 2009*

⁵⁰ *Jamia Nagar, which takes its name from the Jamia Millia Islamia University, is a Muslim majority borough in south Delhi.*

⁵¹ *Shootout at Jamia Nagar, The Times of India, September 20, 2008.*

⁵² *2 Terrorists shot dead in Delhi, The Hindu: September 20, 2008*

establishment⁵³. Most of them were unconvinced about the authenticity of the encounter⁵⁴. The thread was picked by Jamia Millia Islamia University (whose affairs are often interwoven with that of Jamia Nagar). It was not difficult to see that the protest had a distinct religious flavour although the electronic media tried to sanitize it, like in the case of the IM e-mails.

The Times of India found the local Muslim response to Batla House encounter perturbing. *“It is worrying that there was resentment among some people in Jamia Nagar - a predominantly Muslim area - against shootout. Some of them even questioned the authenticity of the encounter. It is very unlikely that the police would have raided a crowded locality in daylight. Besides, an ace police officer was shot dead in the encounter.”*⁵⁵

The Indian Express maintained *“that the Jamia Nagar incident brings into sharp relief some truths national discussion has wanted to shy away from, and will help break the status quo. The locality, almost exclusively Muslim-populated, is gentrified. Urban professionals are the typical residents. And here is therefore demonstration of an extremely worrying and sad truth — that extremism is not a product of poor neighbourhoods that offer few opportunities for young men. Indeed, it can be said that terrorism’s domestic projects in India have been more or less led and executed by members of social classes who are hard to categorize as have-nots materially.”*⁵⁶ It advocated the need for ‘straight talk’ rather than counter-productive ‘fake political correctness’ in tackling terrorism.

Thus both these editorials expressed their anguish and anxieties over the way protests were organized by Jamia residents.

The Batla House incident became a rallying point for the Muslim organizations who viewed it as ‘fake encounter’; and ‘another attempt’ to ‘discredit the Muslims’. They went to the extent of claiming that Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma was actually shot dead by his own

⁵³ *Tension Prevails in Jamia Nagar after encounter*, *The Hindu*: September 20, 2008; *Jamia Nagar tense after encounte*, *The Statesman*; September 20, 2008

⁵⁴ *Jamia residents pose some queries*, *The Hindu*, September 21, 2008

⁵⁵ *On the Terror Trail*, editorial, *The Times of India*, September 22, 2008

⁵⁶ *Internal insecurity*, editorial, *The Indian Express*, September 20, 2008

colleagues rather than biting the bullets of the terror suspects. Religious leadership plays a pivotal role in guiding the Muslim community. Syed Ahmed Bukhari, Shahi Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid, claimed (after Friday Namaz on September 26) – “*Inspector Sharma was shot from behind by his own people and when he was taken to the hospital, the doctors were asked to remove his bullets and hand them over to the police to eliminate any evidence.*”⁵⁷

The Imam was using his imagination to make amends for the facts. **Hindustan Times** quoted an AIIMS report that the shots had been fired from a very close range. Doctors, who conducted post-mortem, felt that in all likelihood just two bullets had pierced through the body. The AIIMS post-mortem revealed that he had died of a heart attack as a result of excessive bleeding⁵⁸.

Only a microscopic minority amongst Muslims found the police action legitimate and Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma as martyr⁵⁹. But their feeble voice was drowned in a strident chorus of Muslim protests.

A story carried by **The Hindu** gave an insight into the networking of the IM. The report constituted a vital defence of police action at Batla House.

“Based on the phone records of the alleged Indian Mujahideen cadre held in Gujarat, the Intelligence Bureau concluded that Bashir was likely hidden in safe houses provided by Students Islamic Movement of India sympathizers in the Jamia Nagar and Okhla areas of south-east Delhi. Efforts to locate the safehouses, Delhi Police sources said, were initiated the previous weekend. However, these could be located only when Qasmi

⁵⁷ *Imam Counters encounter theory, The Times of India: September 27, 2008*

⁵⁸ *No bullets found in Inspector Sharma's body, Hindustan Times; September 24, 2008; 'Bullets pierced through Sharma's body, died of heart attack', The Pioneer, September 23, 2008. Also, www.expressindia.com/latest-news/autopsy-suggests-sharma-died-of-excessive-bleeding/363891/*

⁵⁹ *The Statesman, September 22, 2008, for instance, carried a photograph showing members of Akhil Bharatiya Muslim Yuva Atankawad Virodhi Samiti accompanied by pop star Daler Mehandi protesting against terrorism at Jantar Mantar. They held a photo of Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma, hailing him as martyr.*

was brought to New Delhi and driven around the Jamia Nagar area on Thursday night.'⁶⁰

The report implied that Batla House encounter was not arbitrary. A case against the Uttar Pradesh-based network was building up as facts trickled out during investigation of the Lucknow, Faizabad and Varanasi synchronized bombings in 2007.

The Batla House encounter generated two threads of contention. First, was the encounter genuine or fake? Were the killed suspected terrorists, guilty or innocent? Second, how was Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma killed? Was Inspector Sharma a heroic martyr or not?

On both these issues, the mainstream Indian media was seen taking a logical position. It certainly gave expression, wherever necessary, to doubts surrounding the Batla House encounter⁶¹. **The Mail Today**, for instance, carried a banner headline on front page 'Doubts about Police Version of shootout⁶²'. It also put pointed queries to Jt. Commissioner of Police about the loopholes in police version⁶³.

But the mainstream media never took the anarchist liberty of demonizing the police or the Indian State. This is because the encounter had not come out of the blue. It was preceded by serial blasts in Varanasi, Mumbai (2006), Uttar Pradesh, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Jaipur, Ahmedabad and Delhi. Arrests and investigations thereafter was extensively reported by the media over the years. The Batla House encounter assumed significance in mainstream media due to two reasons. First, the timely action taken by the police and sacrifice of Inspector Sharma; second, the Muslim leadership and Urdu media's effort to communalize the police action.

The Urdu media, however, remained in a state of denial and fed conspiracy theories about the encounter. At times, it came eerily close to identifying the Indian State with 'Hindu fascist' establishment. They

⁶⁰ *Killed Indian Mujahideen men provided terror backbone, The Hindu, September 20, 2008*

⁶¹ *A day after encounter, residents pose some queries, The Hindu; September 21, 2008;*

⁶² *Mail Today, September 21, 2008;*

⁶³ *Over to you Mr. Joint CP, Mail Today, September 21, 2008*

remained firm on their questions and also treated the killed terrorists as ‘innocent’ and MC Sharma as a victim of departmental conspiracy.

Hailing Sharma as Martyr

The English newspapers, almost without exception, carried reports of slain Inspector Sharma alongside the report of the encounter. While hailing him as a martyr in line of duty, they reported his profile of neutralizing 35 terrorists and 80 militants, being conferred seven gallantry medals including two President’s medals⁶⁴.



Inspector Mahesh Chand Sharma had martyr feathers in his cap. Bullets were his last battle.

Sharma was cremated with full State honours on September 20, 2008. The English media, which had hailed him as a brave martyr, paid glorious tributes to him in the following day’s edition.

The report in **The Hindu** about Sharma’s cremation was titled “A hero’s farewell for Inspector Shar”- “It (the body) was then taken to the crematorium amid shouting of slogans like ‘M.C. Sharma Amar Rahe’ and ‘Bharat Mata ki Jai’ by his colleagues and friends.... Inspector Sharma’s seniors said he was a brave police officer and used to lead all the operations from the front... A large number of people who did not know Inspector Sharma personally also attended his funeral to pay homage to the person who sacrificed his life for their safety.”⁶⁵

The Tribune quoted a police officer from special cell, “We will never be cowed down by the bunch of traitors. Inspector Sharma will inspire generation of police personnel and his name will go down in the annals of history.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Delhi Police mourns its brave heart, *The Times of India*, September 20, 2008; ‘A great loss: Manmohan’, *The Hindu*, September 20, 2008; ‘From son’s sickbed to bullet burst’, *The Telegraph*, September 20, 2008; He fell with guns blazing, *Mail Today*, September 20, 2008

⁶⁵ A hero’s farewell for Inspector Sharma, *The Hindu* September 21, 2008

⁶⁶ Sharma cremated with full honours, *The Tribune*; September 21, 2008

The Statesman of the same day titled the report somewhat similarly “*Hero’s farewell for slain inspector*”⁶⁷ **The Pioneer** headlined, “*Delhi sends off its martyred hero*”⁶⁸ **The Indian Express** chose to highlight the mournful pride of the mother of late Mohan Chand Sharma. “*I won’t cry any more*”, she was quoted as saying, “*he did not die in an accident or any disease. He is martyr, and if everyone is raising slogans for him, I will do the same.*”⁶⁹

The Indian Express paid homage to Inspector Sharma editorially: “*The funeral of Mohan Chand Sharma, the Delhi police officer killed in an encounter with the men accused of setting off bombs in Ahmedabad and Delhi, might well have marked a watershed moment in India’s history with its police force. There was visible outpouring of public emotion; ordinary people, not just police officers, turned out as a mark of respect to someone who all can agree dedicated his career, and gave his life, to stopping terrorism and militancy from impacting our lives. We have seen public mourning for military heroes, for political leaders; but never before has a policeman ignited similar sentiments.*”⁷⁰

Cautious, Never Dismissive

Encounters, unlike assassinations, are never well-planned. They happen at a short notice and generally take place haphazardly, especially if the terrain happens to be unfriendly. It entails many stories and suspicions. In a democratic system, it is necessary that people have the right to know about the facts, raise questions from the human rights angle about any activity of the Police. But the situation becomes complex when the investigative agencies and the institutions of state are accused of any premeditated bias and communalism and then doubts are raised on the authenticity of the encounter. Something similar happened with the Batla House encounter. The Jamia Nagar residents, Muslim bodies and human rights organizations tried to disprove the genuineness of the encounter by exploiting the missing links in the tale. However, the English media treaded a cautious line and published investigative reports but were never dismissive about police’s line of investigation.

⁶⁷ *The Statesman, September 21, 2008*

⁶⁸ *The Pioneer, September 21, 2008*

⁶⁹ *I will not cry for my son. He is a martyr, The Indian Express, September 21, 2008*

⁷⁰ *Ways of Tribute, The Indian Express, September 22, 2008. Also, ‘Vigil Pays’, The Tribune, September 22, 2008*

An editorial of **The Statesman** took a sober view, “Without in any way making light of the police action, and the bravery of Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma who died leading from the front, the real evaluation of the encounter must await what flows from the interrogation of the man ‘taken alive’. Not the spin the cops are now giving the media. It is astounding that within hours of the encounter, complete dossiers were released of the men neutralized; their track record, their capabilities, links with various outfits not been kept under surveillance earlier, and before they set about shedding innocent blood and achieving terrorism’s sole purpose – public panic.”⁷¹

This is a cautious approach not iconoclasm against a law and order enforcing agency. Conflicting voices did emerge from terror investigations. **The Indian Express** attributed this to ‘over sharing’ of information with media in this 24x7 news era. The paper emphasized on the need to streamline investigations. An editorial of **The Indian Express** said, “Certainly, given the preliminary, amorphous stage that the investigations are at, it is only natural for different forces to chase up on different leads as they piece together a coherent picture... Ideally, intelligence-gathering efforts across the country should function like a single, perfectly working nervous system where information from various points is transmitted to a single brain. The much-discussed federal investigative agency might indeed act like such a hub, pooling disparate sources of information and coordinating all the sleuth work.”⁷²

Fake Encounter Theory Unconvincing

A report in **The Telegraph** observed, “A big plus for the police in Jamia Nagar is the arrest of Mohammed Saif. This does not fall into the recent pattern of counter-terrorist operations in which suspects are almost always killed.”⁷³

The report further said, “the killing of Mohan Chand Sharma is evidence that there were killers in the flat L-18 Batla House who were ready and

⁷¹ *Capital shootout, The Statesman; September 21, 2008. Also, ‘Day after: You name it, the cops knew it’, The Telegraph, September 22, 2008.*

⁷² *Terror Noise, The Indian Express, September 24, 2008. Also, Top ex-cops unravel mystery of multiple masterminds, The Times of India, September 27, 2008*

⁷³ *Made for Camera operations show chinks; Arrest bright spots amid goof up - loss of life, The Telegraph, September 21, 2008*

waiting. Sharma, despite his experience, and probably because of the worry that hung over him because his son was in hospital with dengue, was without a bullet-proof vest.”⁷⁴

A **Daily News & Analysis** (DNA) editorial found the shootout having ‘all hallmarks of a genuine police operation.’⁷⁵ This is because the encounter lasted for 40 minutes and never before had a policeman died in an encounter.

These were indeed rational and vital arguments in favour of the genuineness of the encounter. Generally, fake encounters are mopped up quickly. They have zero police fatality whereas all alleged criminals are eliminated. It is unconvincing that a fake encounter, that lasted for three quarter of an hour, resulted in the death of top Delhi Police encounter specialist and arrest of a terror suspect from the spot.

On December 8, the Supreme Court dismissed a PIL filed by an NGO Real Cause accusing that the Batla House encounter was fake. A Bench comprising Chief Justice K G Balakrishnan and Justice P Sathasivam asked the petitioner, “So you say that policemen went there to shoot themselves?”⁷⁶ **The Times of India** perceived this as the Supreme Court doing “justice to Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma who laid down his life in the Batla House encounter in Delhi.”⁷⁷

Spilling the Terror Beans

Interrogation of Saif and Zeeshan revealed that they were involved in blasts in Varanasi on March 7, 2006 and in Gorakhpur in November 2007⁷⁸. In the Varanasi blasts, Atif and Saif planted bombs in market

⁷⁴ *ibid*

⁷⁵ *The Terror trail*, DNA, September 22, 2008

⁷⁶ *PIL on Jamia Nagar shootout shot down*, *The Times of India*, December 9, 2008

⁷⁷ *ibid*

⁷⁸ *Arrested ultras, behind Varanasi, Gorakhpur blasts*, *The Statesman*; September 22, 2008

place, Junaid at the Railway Station while Shadab placed bombs at the temple with the help of one person who could not be identified till then⁷⁹.

The Times of India reported, “*In his interrogation report, Mohammed Saif, arrested for Delhi serial blasts said that Mujahideen planned an attack on Nehru Place during winter.*”⁸⁰

Within days of the Batla House operation, Mumbai police arrested five IM cadre including a kingpin⁸¹. **The Tribune** cheered this achievement in an editorial “*arrest of five of its cadres, including a kingpin — enormously satisfying. With this, the police have not only prevented another attack — possibly in Mumbai — but have also solved the mystery of a few previous attacks. Last week, the Delhi Police had a major breakthrough in the investigation of the serial blasts in the Capital when it killed two alleged terrorists in an encounter. More important, the police could arrest one of the terrorists during the “encounter”. His interrogation has given the police a clear idea of how the whole terrorist operation was carried out — bringing bombs from Udupi in Karnataka by Mangla Express etc.*”⁸²

Over the following ten days, Mumbai Police arrested a total of 20 suspected Indian Mujahideen. **The Economic Times** report said, “*Ten IM activists, who had planted bombs in Ahmedabad and Surat, are also amongst the arrested. They had carried the explosives from Karnataka to Pune and then to Surat and Ahmedabad.*”⁸³ Its most astonishing catch was Mohammed Mansoor Peerbhoy, a Yahoo executive drawing a plum salary of Rs. 19 lakh per year. He used to send terror mails to media houses about the Mumbai and New Delhi blasts, and was caught with his laptop⁸⁴. The Mumbai Police crime branch also gave an interesting information. “*The terrorists had originally scheduled the September 13*

⁷⁹ *ibid*

⁸⁰ Saif ‘*Recounts*’ his terror trail, *The Times of India*; September 26, 2008. Also, *Terrorists planned 20 blasts in Delhi, DNA*, September 22, 2008

⁸¹ *Five in net, behind every major attack: Police, The Indian Express*, September 25, 2008

⁸² *Fight to Finish, The Tribune*; September 26, 2008

⁸³ *Mumbai cops bust IM’s wi-fi network, 20 held, The Economic Times*, October 7, 2008

⁸⁴ *ibid*

*Delhi blasts for September 11, the anniversary of the World Trade Centre attack, but explosives did not reach to them on time.*⁸⁵

Discouraging Conspiracy Theories

Not many were aware of the ‘conspiracy theory’ cooked up in the Urdu press. But a few surely tried to discourage them in the English press. In his fortnightly Sunday column ‘Soli Loquies’ in **The Indian Express**, former Solicitor General of India, Soli Sorabjee took a potshot at the ‘*doubting Thomases*’ who ‘*without a tinge of contrary evidence betray irrationality*’. “A classic case of a closed mind, Sorabjee wrote in his article ‘Encountering Conspiracy Theories’, *is the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who solemnly declares that the Holocaust never occurred and it is a myth despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. And there are some who believe that the horrific attack on the Twin Towers, 9/11 was a diabolic American plan to topple Saddam and a pretext to invade Iraq. Closer home is the perturbing mindset in a section of the Muslim community in Jamia that Inspector Mohan Chandra Sharma’s heroic death in pursuit of terrorists and the killing of the two alleged Indian Mujahideen terrorists was a fake police encounter. They resolutely refuse to take into account the incriminating material recovered, which may demolish their fake encounter theory and their glorification of the slain duo as martyrs.*”⁸⁶

The Hindu carried a belated piece re-constructing the Batla shootout. The report by Praveen Swami upheld Sharma’s martyrdom as genuine.

"It takes little to see that Sharma’s team made several tactical errors. However, as anyone who has actually faced hostile fire will testify, combat tends not to be orderly. In the United States or Europe, a Batla House-style operation would have been carried out by a highly trained assault unit equipped with state-of-the-art surveillance equipment. Given their resources and training, Sharma and his men did as well as could be expected.

⁸⁵ *IM planned 9/11 anniversary blast in Delhi, The Economic Times, October 10, 2008*

⁸⁶ *Encountering Conspiracy Theories, The Indian Express; September 28, 2008*

Judging by Sharma's injuries, as recorded by doctors at the Holy Family Hospital in New Friend's Colony and later re-examined at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences' Trauma Centre, he was fired at from two directions. One bullet hit him in the left shoulder and exited through the left upper arm; the other hit the right side of the abdomen, exiting through the hip. The investigators believe that the abdomen wound was inflicted with Amin's weapon and the shoulder hit, by Mohammad Sajid.

Much has been made of a newspaper photograph which shows that Sharma's shirt was not covered in blood, with some charging that it demonstrates he was shot in the back. Forensic experts, however, note that bleeding from firearms injuries takes place through exit wounds — not, as in bad pop films, at the point of entry. In the photograph, signs of a bullet having ripped through Sharma's shirt are evident on his visible shoulder; so, too, is evidence of the profuse bleeding from the back...⁸⁷

Allegations against the encounter, feels the report, told more about its critics than the event itself. Poor reporting and confusion, mostly by journalists who have not followed the IM story, were factors responsible for this. But Muslim 'religious right wing' contributed to this confusion by myth-making, which have passed largely unchallenged.

Clinching Interview with Batla Boys

India Today's October 13, 2008 issue was a revelation for anybody having iota of doubt about the Batla episode. It ran a cover story '**Inside the mind of bombers**' providing an exclusive interview with Zia-ur-Rehman, Saquib Nisar and Mohammed Shakil. Mihir Srivastava, the principal correspondent, **India Today**, met with the three convicted Batla boys, and 'came back shaken by the banality of their evil'⁸⁸.

When Mihir Srivastava asked Zia-ur-Rehman (24) 'You planted the bombs?' the answer was affirmative. He again answered in the

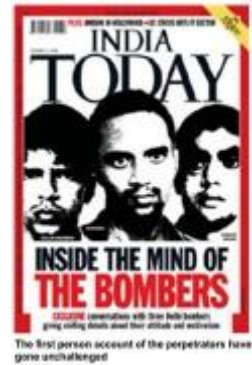
⁸⁷ *Behind the Batla Shootout by Praveen Swami, The Hindu; October 10, 2008. Taken from the web edition*
<http://www.hindu.com/2008/10/10/stories/2008101053621100.htm>

⁸⁸ *From the editor in chief, Arun Poorie, India Today, October 13, 2008*

affirmative when asked if he would have gone to plant the bombs at Nehru Place as per plan if he wasn't arrested. Zia showed little remorse.

'Whatever knowledge I have about Islam' Zia said, 'and what I understand about how things work in this world, I have no regrets about what I did'. 'This is jihad for Allah, only the privileged get to do it'. When Srivastava asked him if he would plant a bomb in the same market where his mother was buying vegetables he replied after a silence. 'If Allah wants, I will do so. **Meri valida ko jannat naseeb hogi** (my mother will get a place in paradise)⁸⁹.

Saqib Nisar attributed the 'privileged few get to wage Jihad for Allah' theory to slain Atif. He came across as a cheated, rather than hardened, Jihadi. It was Atif who instilled fascination for Jihad in Nisar. There was a special book about Jihad, recommended by Atif, which had a deep impact on Nisar. It was titled *Maidan Pukarte Hai* (Battlefield beckons), about the struggle of Afghanistan's Muslims against the Soviet occupation in 1980s. The book said Allah always helped a true Jihadi. Nisar insisted on narrating an episode from this book about an unarmed Jihadi who was surrounded by Russian tanks in the middle of a desert in Afghanistan. In a desperate bid to save his life, the Jihadi threw a fistful of sand he picked up from the ground at the tanks. The sand became a powerful explosive and ripped the Russian tanks apart. Nisar said that Atif had graphically described to him the explosion of the bomb he had planted in Varanasi's Sankat Mochan temple. Nisar said that he was part of an entourage of 12 sent to plant bombs in Ahmedabad. Also he was the one of the bomb planters in Delhi on September 13. But Atif's cold shouldering Nisar after the blast disillusioned him.



Mohammed Shakeel (26) came across as the most dedicated Jihadi. 'I experience in me an awakening after I committed my life to Allah. Now

⁸⁹ *Inside the mind of the bombers, Mihir Srivastava, India Today, October 13, 2008*

nothing scares me, life and death are same'. Shakeel said he was one of the persons sent to plant bombs in Ahmedabad⁹⁰.

India Today thus brought forth a 'confession' of the implicated three. It not merely proved that Delhi Police's Batla case was built on true grounds, but that *Jihad qitl fee saif fee sybil Allah* (Jihad, killing in the name of Allah) has taken siege of some young Indian Muslims. These confessions, despite their little legal value, were quite illustrative⁹¹.

If the mainstream media found the police action at Batla House justified, it was not without reason. They had been tracking the story of ISI modules and Indian *Jihadi* cells for years now. Their inboxes were bristling with IM e-mails that came after every blast.

Scroll Charged with Terror

On December 17, Delhi Police filed its first chargesheet in the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Kaweri Baweja. The police claimed that Delhi blasts could have been averted if the phone conversations they had intercepted between IM functionaries were decoded in time⁹². The report said, *'Interrogation of the five accused revealed that Atif was also involved in various blasts across the country since 2005. These include the ones at Sankat Mochan Temple, Gadowlia, Varanasi railway station, Gorakhpur, UP courts, Jaipur and Ahmedabad. The police said they have seized a laptop of Atif which had a lot of jihadi songs, literature by Osama Bin Laden and video clippings. Data was also extracted from a mobile handset and memory card of his mobile phone. Video clippings of explosive materials, vehicles and sites of blasts in Ahmedabad blasts were also taken as evidence. Atif's mobile phone was sent to Samsung for unlocking the code and the data retrieved had video clippings of*

⁹⁰ *ibid*

⁹¹ Arundhati Roy called it a 'tortured confession' at a meeting in Batla House ('Arundhati calls India Today story 'torture confession', by Sandeep Unnithan, India Today web edition, October 12, 2008). But to the best of our knowledge it has not been legally challenged. India Today reran excerpts from it in its January 5, 2009 issue).

⁹² Delhi blasts could have been averted, *The Times of India*, December 18, 2008.

*Children Park, India Gate, a dustbin (later identified as one of the bins used for the GK blast) and Gujarat blasts*⁹³.

The Indian Express reported, *‘the Special Cell on Wednesday named three wings of the Indian Mujahideen that were responsible for the attacks across the country — Sahabuddin Brigade (for strikes in South), Mohammad Gaznavi Brigade (for strikes in North) and Shaheed-Al-Zarkavi Brigade (for strikes on VVIPs)’*.

While members of the first group were arrested by the Mumbai Police, Atif Ameen, who was killed in the Jamia Nagar encounter, headed the Gaznavi group. The Shaheed-Al-Zarkavi is reported to be the fidayeen group, members of which are still at large. The 76-page chargesheet, a copy of which is with The Indian Express, also mentioned that after the Uttar Pradesh Court blasts, the IM set up a “media group” too⁹⁴.

The second and third chargesheets were filed on December 18, 2008 and January 13, 2009.

On January 21, 2009, the Kerala Police arrested the top notch explosive expert of IM, on the run since 1998. A report in **The Economic Times** said, *‘Dealing a body blow to the Indian Mujahideen’s (IM) terror operations that extend from UP to Kerala, the Kerala police have nabbed E T Zainudeen alias Abdul Sattar, a topnotch IM leader and the source of explosives used in attacks at both Bangalore and Surat*⁹⁵. The report further stated that *‘Sattar, a native of Kondotty in Malappuram district of Kerala had been absconding since 1998 and was wanted in a case relating to a plot to assassinate former chief minister E.K. Nayanar. He also figured prominently in the wanted list of Gujarat, Delhi, Maharashtra and Karnataka police, for his alleged role in the blasts in those states*⁹⁶.

⁹³ *IM had four wings for terror operations, The Times of India, December 18, 2008*

⁹⁴ *IM had 3 groups for targeting north, south and VIPs, The Indian Express, December 18, 2008*

⁹⁵ *‘Indian Mujahideen explosives expert held in Hyderabad, The Economic Times, January 21, 2009*

⁹⁶ *Ibid*

This was indeed a further vindication of Delhi Police's action at Batla House. Death of a top cop or arrest of a live criminal is 'tell-tale' evidence of a genuine police encounter. But its real test is continuation of investigations and legal follow up. Fake encounters, for obvious reasons, put a full stop to investigations and legal follow up. But Batla House encounter far from closing the investigations actually accelerated the process. In a well coordinated effort, police from different states like Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala made several arrests. All these states are under different Governments. Their arrests and investigations help put most pieces of the IM jigsaw puzzle in place. The bugle was sounded by Gujarat Police after Ahmedabad serial blasts on July 26, 2008. Post-Batla House, it is now being brought to its logical conclusion.

Ashok Chakra to Sharma

On January 22, 2009, the Government of India decided to confer Ashok Chakra posthumously on Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma for his conspicuous act of courage⁹⁷. Ashok Chakra is the highest peacetime gallantry award for men in uniform. **Hindustan Times** felt that the Ashok Chakra has put all controversies on Sharma's death to rest⁹⁸. It hailed all posthumous Ashok Chakra winners on Republic Day as 'terror martyrs'⁹⁹.

Another event vindicated Sharma as a genuine martyr – the day the Government announced the Ashok Chakra. **Hindustan Times** reported, 'After four months of the encounter at Batla House in Jamia Nagar, police sources claim that CFSL (CBI) has submitted its forensic report to the crime branch. And that report shows the encounter was not stage-managed¹⁰⁰'. 'Results of the "dermal nitrate" test conducted on both Sharma and Mohammed Sajid, who died in the encounter, proved that

⁹⁷ In 11 Ashok Chakra, Jamia's Sharma and six Mumbai heroes, *The Indian Express*, January 23, 2009

⁹⁸ Ashok Chakra lays all controversies to rest, *Hindustan Times*, January 25, 2009

⁹⁹ 11 terror martyrs to be conferred Ashok Chakra at R-Day parade, *Hindustan Times*, January 26, 2008

¹⁰⁰ Batla shootout: Police point to CFSL 'clean chit', *Hindustan Times*, January 23, 2009

*they opened firing during the encounter. This report establishes the fact that the IM members were armed and they opened fire on the raiding police team lead by Sharma*¹⁰¹. The bodies of the suspected terrorists, Mohammad Sajid and Atif Bashir, had residual gunpowder on the hands which indicated they were also firing; bullets found in cops' bullet-proof jackets were from weapons seized from L-18 Batla House; shells recovered were of bullets fired from weapons seized from L-18; there were no close quarter injuries on the bodies of suspected terrorists¹⁰².

Smt. Maya Sharma gave expression to her agony at doubts raised about her late husband's death. *'Before leveling any allegation about an encounter in which a police officer has been killed, the political leaders should come out with ample proof. They don't understand what the families of the martyrs go through after such statements*¹⁰³.

The citation presented to Delhi Police Inspector M C Sharma's widow along with the Ashok Chakra clearly established that the officer was injured in the *'first burst of fire from the terrorist'*. The citation hailed the *'supreme sacrifice'* and *'exceptional gallantry'* of Inspector Sharma and put to rest all doubts regarding the sequence of events on September 19 at Batla house¹⁰⁴.

Ulema Council Rally at Jantar Mantar

About 2000 Muslim from Azamgarh under the auspices of Ulema Council (of Azamgarh) reached Delhi by a train hired for Rupees 13 lakhs¹⁰⁵, renamed as 'Ulema Express'. They demonstrated at Parliament Street near Jantar Mantar seeking judicial enquiry into the Batla House

101 *There was cross firing at Batla House, Hindustan Times, January 23, 2009*

102 *Batla shootout: Police point to CFSL 'clean chit', Times of India, January 23, 2009. See also, 'He died fighting', Mail Today, January 23, 2009*

103 *Give proof before raising doubts, says Inspector Sharma's wife, The Hindu, January 25, 2008*

104 *On Raj path, 10 widows and a mother stand for brave hearts, The Economics Times, January 27, 2008*

105 *Azamgarh's power trip, Hindustan Times; January 31, 2009*

encounter, and removal of terror tag attached to Azamgarh¹⁰⁶. Several Left leaders like Brinda Karat, Atul Anjan, etc., also addressed¹⁰⁷ the gathering. But there was little participation from local Muslims. Tahir Rashidi, a member of Ulema Council, said ‘*Sajid and Atif (killed in the Batla House encounter) were martyred by the police. In spite of repeated demands for a judicial probe or a CBI inquiry, nothing was done. And to top it all off, Inspector M C Sharma (killed in the shootout) was awarded the Ashok Chakra. It should be taken back and a proper inquiry held*¹⁰⁸’. It is a clear indicator of the difference in perception of the Muslim lobby and rest of the country.

The Indian Express, observed in its editorial, ‘*The demand for a judicial probe into what happened in Batla House ignores that we should trust the courts to ferret out the truth of the encounter — but is also beside the point. Those protesting want to lift the supposed stigma that attaches to their young men: they can aid that not by attacking the supposed reasons for that stigma but the actual misunderstandings that may have caused it*¹⁰⁹’.

A **Hindustan Times** front pager on December 31 observed that the rabble-rousing clerics are using Batla House shootout to shape political careers. ‘*It is an unfolding attempt to profitably covert rabble rousing populism into politics: Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, Muslim clerics of Azamgarh, an alleged nursery of terror some 800 km southeast of New Delhi, are raising new emotions and money over 2008 shootout, an emotive issue for the town’s two lakh residents*¹¹⁰’.

On January 30, the alleged IM activist Mohammed Saif was produced in a local Court in Lucknow after being brought from Delhi.

106 The links of Indian Mujahideen activists are connected to Azamgarh. These include Atif Ameen, Mohd Sajid, Sadiq Sheikh, Zeeshan Ahmed, Saquib Nisar, Shakeel Ahmad, Mohd Saif, Abu Hakim, Tariq Qasmi, Abu Bashir, Abu Bashir and Mohd Sadiq and Mohd Sarwar- Azamgar rises against terror tag, *Mail Today*; January 30, 2009

107 ‘Azamgarh rises against terror tag’, *Mail Today*, January 30, 2009

108 Azamgarh Muslims protest terror tag’, *slam Congress, The Indian Express*; January 30, 2009

109 Train Day, *The Indian Express*, January 30, 2009

110 Azamgarh’s power trip, *Hindustan Times*, January 31, 2009

Several newspapers reported that Saif had confessed to his and his dead friend Atif Ameen's complicity in the Varanasi blasts of 2006¹¹¹.

On February 17, 2009, the Mumbai Police filed a 1,809 page chargesheet against 21 alleged members of IM and charged them for waging a war against the nation. The charges included sending terror e-mails from unsecure Wi-Fi connections in Mumbai – before the Ahmedabad and Delhi blasts. The chargesheet said that prosecution would examine 159 witnesses to build its case¹¹². A sizeable number of the accused were from Azamgarh¹¹³.

Batla House, far from being an event in vacuum, actually helped blow the lid off a larger IM conspiracy of waging war against the state of India. The mainstream media's trust in Delhi Police's line of investigation was thus not misplaced. One hopes it would be vindicated by the Court of law.

111 Batla House accused admits link to Varansi blast: Cops, Indian Express, January 31, 2009, 'Varanasi serial blast accused produced in the court', The Hindu, January 31, 2009.

112 21 Indian Mujahideen men charged with war on nation, The Times of India, December 18, 2009

113 Most IM men from Azamgarh' Rakhi Gaikwad, The Hindu, February 18, 2009

PART-II

BATLA HOUSE ENCOUNTER & HINDI NEWSPAPERS

The Hindi newspapers vociferously reported Batla House encounter and took more strident view than their English counterpart. They have consistently and firmly rejected the communal approach by a certain section of people who decried police action and alleged that the encounter was a fake. It was also not swayed by the cry of a few human rights activists who demanded judicial enquiry of the incident. The Hindi media remained supportive to the police action against the home grown *Jihadis*. They saluted the bravery and commitment of late Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma and described his death as martyrdom. **Nai Dunia** (Hindi daily) even announced a reward of Rs. 5 lakhs as a mark of admiration and respect to the martyr Mohan Chand Sharma's family¹¹⁴.

There was an element of emotion in their reporting. Every language has its inbuilt culture, being a product of the history of its speakers, and reflective of its ethos across centuries. Hindi's nationalism, active or latent, was visible while writing about the Batla House incident. Here is a selective study:

Amar Ujala supported the police action at Batla House by saying the Government was left with no other alternative. It wrote, "*It is true that encounter is not the final solution. But when the battle is to save the country, it becomes necessary.*" The paper perceived that the encounter indicated a revision of the Government's stand on terror. "*India is not as weak as terrorists had presumed it to be. There must at least be some reason that this country has been able to preserve its civilization and culture for millennia. Patience has its limit.*"¹¹⁵

The effort to communalize the Batla issue by certain section of the society by decrying it as police atrocities on Muslims was rebutted by the paper. It forthrightly wrote that '*Religious considerations should not*

¹¹⁴ *Nai dunia ko dhanyawad aur buddhijivio se ek bat (Thanks to Nai Dunia and a word to the intellectuals), a letter to the editor, by Sandeep Kumar Dubey, Nai Dunia, 13 October, 2008.*

¹¹⁵ *Aatank se Muthbedh, Amar Ujala (An encounter with Terror), September 20, 2008*

come in its way. When terrorists attack they don't see their victims' religion'. Thus describing terrorism as a malignant tumour, the editorial advised, '*The malignant tumour of terrorism had to be surgically removed if the country has to be saved*'¹¹⁶.

However, **Amar Ujala** was critical of the failure of the intelligence and the political leadership in combating the menace. It wrote, "*When terrorists were striking at will at Jaipur, Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Delhi, the Government seemed to be non-existent in India. They would attack, move forward, innocent people would be killed, the Government would declare compensation and they would announce about the next city on their target, through e-mail. They would challenge, 'stop us if you can'. Truly, our Government and our intelligence agencies are failing to act against them.*"¹¹⁷

Dainik Jagran took the local supporters of slain terrorists in Jamia Nagar to task. That explains why the paper charged that they were able to hide themselves in such localities. It showed a degree of anger against all those who raised unfounded allegations against the police force. It said that "*The way a section of the local residents opposed the operation of Delhi Police, and even went to the extent of calling it a fake, provided the answer to questions as to why terrorists were able to get shelter in such localities. If the encounter was fake, then did Mohan Chand Sharma fall to the bullets shot from the heaven? It is amply clear that the Muslim leadership still has miles to go before they can make anti-terrorism campaign effective.*"¹¹⁸

Rashtriya Sahara in its editorial rated the Jamia encounter as a major relief for the Delhi Police which had been dogged by criticism since the Delhi serial blasts of September 13 and it complimented police force for its 'alertness and attentiveness'.¹¹⁹

In another editorial, taking cue from the Batla encounter, **Rashtriya Sahara** severely criticized the Government for its indecisiveness to frame a stricter law to combat terrorism. It wrote that the vagueness and

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Dilli dindahade (In Broad day light of Delhi). Editorial, Dainik Jagaran, September 20, 2008*

¹¹⁹ *Muthabedh se Ummid (Hope from the Encounter), Editorial Rashtriya Sahara, September 20, 2008*

inconsistency at Government level over strengthening the legal provisions in combating against terrorism is uncalled for. It further said that, “*After the report of Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) recommending a stronger law, the message has gone to the country that the Government would bring a law stricter than POTA. But neither the Government is sending a clear signal nor the Congress party is making its own decisive position clear. This in fact does not convey the right message across the country. His claim¹²⁰ that, despite the Commission’s assessment, the Government found the present laws sufficient and they would be amended if necessary, practically rejected the call for a new law against terrorism. If, according to the Government, the present anti-terror laws are stricter than in Britain and America, why then are experts recommending stronger laws? Actually, in view of the increasing threats of terrorism, a special stricter law is necessary.*”¹²¹

Thus **Rashtriya Sahara** felt that special stricter laws are a call of the hour in view of the escalating threat of terrorism. It explained the rationale behind its advice, “*No doubt, terrorism cannot be fought by laws alone. But it has to bring the terrorists and their facilitators in the grip of law. Fear of law will surely have some influence. Secondly, it would send a message of the Government’s resolve to fight terror, which would boost the sagging public morale.*”¹²²

Jansatta endorsed the action of Delhi police in Batla House. It felt that “*there was perhaps little alternative for police other than shooting back,*” considering the way the panicky terrorists open fired on the police, who had raided the house on basis of secret intelligence. The editorial rated the arrest of a live accomplice as a major success for Delhi Police.¹²³

¹²⁰ Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi, I&B Minister who spoke about the Government’s view on this point.

¹²¹ Asamanjas Todiye (shred this incoherence) ,Editorial, Rashtriya Sahara, September 20, 2008

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Atank Ka Muqabla’(countering terrorism),Editorial, Jansatta, September 22, 2008, jansatta made a lead story on the first page of the paper on Batla encounter, ‘Police se Muthbheda me do Atankawadi made gaye’ by Narendra Bhandar and Priyaranjan. The sub heading of the news report described Mohan Chand Sharma as a martyr (‘ ek policekarmi shaheed’) September 20, 2008.

Hindi press also emphasized the need of people to play a pro-active role in containing terrorism. **Amar Ujala** said the war on terror has to be won with cooperation of the people.¹²⁴ **Dainik Jagran**, in its editorial, candidly illustrated some facts concerning Jamia Nagar, where the encounter took place. It wrote, “*The police encounter with terrorists in Jamia Nagar area has again exposed the scary reality of Delhi. The reality is, it asserted, that some parts of the national capital have become safe havens for the terrorists. From here terrorists could merrily carry out their anti-national agenda without any danger of being noticed by the neighbours. The names of Jamia Nagar, Zakir Nagar and Chaparwali Gali are appearing foremost amongst such places. Here terrorists by posing students entrench their positions, and are successful in concealing their identity despite mingling with local people. The topography of these colonies is not favourable for a handful of police personnel to conduct operations. Ashfaq Ahmed, the prime accused in Red Fort shootout, stayed in this area when he first came to Delhi. And in the Friday encounter two terrorists had been killed here.*”¹²⁵

It further wrote that eradicating terrorism is not the responsibility of police alone. Citizenry will have to share its burden. The editorial said that citizenry will have to cooperate with the law enforcing agencies in eradicating terrorism. The local resident welfare associations can help by keeping a track of newcomers in the locality.¹²⁶

Hailing Mohan Chand Sharma’s Martyrdom

The Hindi newspapers, describing Inspector Mohan Chandra Sharma as a martyr, paid glorious tributes to him. **Dainik Bhaskar** reported that the heroic personnel of Delhi Police was cremated with full State honours. Apart from a large public, Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha L K Advani, Home Minister Shivraj Patil and Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit reached Nigambodh Ghat to bid last farewell to the brave soldier¹²⁷.

¹²⁴ *Aatank se Muthbedh, (An encounter with Terrorism), Amar Ujala, September 20, 2008*

¹²⁵ *Sabki Jimmedari (everyone’s responsibility), Editorial, Dainik Jagran, September 21, 2008*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Mohan Chand Sharma Panchtatva mein baleen, Dainik Bhaskar, September 21, 2008*

Jansatta captured the mood of the occasion that can be best reproduced in its own words, “*People were continually sloganeering ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’ (Victory to Mother India) ‘Mohan Chandra Sharma ki Jai’ (Long Live Mohan Chand Sharma).* The entire Delhi Police headquarter was emptied of its staff during the last rites. It proved that Inspector Sharma not only executed his missions with courage but was also equally popular with the entire Police department. Outside, there were banners with message scribed on them ‘**Jab tak Suraj chand rahega, Mohan Chand Sharma tera naam rahega**’ (Mohan Chand Sharma your name shall endure as long as the sun and moon last).”¹²⁸

Jansatta featured another poignant but inspiring tale about Mohan Chand Sharma's funeral. It reported how late Inspector Sharma's father Narottam Sharma took a mournful pride in his son's martyrdom. “*After lighting the pyre of his only son, Inspector Sharma's father Narottam Sharma said only a word or two against the system. His son's martyrdom would succeed, he said, when the arrested terrorists are convicted and campaign against terrorism is invigorated.*” He said, in a choked voice, that he was proud of his daring son. He had fully discharged his duties, and demonstrated that that his life had little worth before the security of his countrymen.¹²⁹

Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma was also hailed as a martyr by the citizenry and homage were paid to him in public functions. Hindi newspapers covered these outpouring of the common masses better than English press. **Jansatta** extensively covered such functions organized in Delhi.¹³⁰ Townships vied with cities to pay their tributes to Sharma. **Amar Ujala** too reported such functions organized in Uttar Pradesh. One

¹²⁸ *Rajkiya Samma ke saath dee gayee, shaheed Mohan Chand Sharma ko antim bidayi, (Martyr Mohanchand Sharma was given farewell with State Honour), Jansatta, September 21, 2008, It also reported Uttarakhand Chief Minister General Bhuvan Chandra Khanduri's statement that entire country including Uttarakhand would be proud of Inspector Sharma's bravery. The Uttarakhand Chief Minister, the paper reported, announced an exploitation-gratia payment of Rupees Five lakh to the family of Inspector Sharma who originally hailed from Uttarakhand.*

¹²⁹ *Pita ki duaa, zaya na jaye bête ki shahdat)(Father wishes that Son's martyrdom is noy wasted), by Pratibha Shukl, Jansatta, September 21, 2008*

¹³⁰ *Shaheed Police Officer Sharma ko Shraddhanjali (A tribute to the martyred Police officer Sharma) , Jansatta, September 23, 2008; Shaheed Sharma ko Shraddhanjali, Jansatta, September 24, 2008*

such function was organized by *Shaheed Mangal Pandey Smarak Samiti* in Balia (eastern UP).¹³¹ All shops in Shahdara, Agra observed complete closure on September 20, and effigies of terrorists were burnt.¹³²

¹³¹ *Mohan Chand ki Shahadat par garv(Pride on Mohan chand's martyrdom), Amar Ujala, September 21, 2008*

¹³² *Sharma ki Shahadat par bandh raha Sahadara (Sahadra remained closed on Sharma's martyrdom), Amar Ujala, September 21, 2008*

PART-III

**BATLA HOUSE ENCOUNTER &
URDU NEWSPAPERS**

After examining all aspects of the Batla House encounter, the mainstream media considered it a major success for the Delhi Police. The media gave space to the questions about the encounter, demonstrations and angry statements against it, but gave no leeway for the political and communal motives behind them to develop. The mainstream media accepted, by presenting facts unearthed by the police and arguments against it, that the encounter had become unavoidable for the Delhi Police.

Encounters have been questioned even in the past. There is nothing unnatural about it either. In a democratic society, it is imperative that police action should have social accountability, and should reflect human rights concerns. But the situation becomes critical when police, investigative agencies and the state are accused of being prejudicial and communal while questioning the encounter. Batla House encounter suffered such a fate. There was an attempt to convert it into a focal point of Muslim politics. The religion of the terrorist became more important than the terrorist himself. The police and investigative agencies were accused of bias. The Urdu newspapers trained their guns on mainstream media when it refused to aid any such effort. Urdu newspapers gave wide publicity to doubts on the encounter expressed by a few leaders like Arjun Singh, Amar Singh and Deve Gowda.

It is interesting to note that the campaign to muddle the investigations with absurd questions and fanciful tales is continuing till date. The questions raised on the first day (September 20, 2008) and reasons given, are still being replayed after five months (February 2009). Within the space of these five months, many new facts came to light, and it has been established that the terrorists' links ran from Azamgarh to Batla House. But Urdu newspapers treated these facts as expression of prejudice by the police and investigative agencies against the Muslims.

In a 1,809-page long chargesheet filed by the MCOCA Court by the Mumbai Police, most of the IM accused are educated Muslim youths from Azamgarh. But the stand of the Urdu press did not change even

after that. They continued to declare the police, Home Ministry and the Indian State as anti-Muslim directly or otherwise. It is most surprising that all this anti-state, anti-secular writing continued without any impediment. Urdu papers were seen competing against each other to devote maximum columns to Batla House.

What is most surprising is that the two slain terrorists are still being described in the Urdu press as ‘*Masoom*’, ‘*Nirdosh*’ and ‘*Bekasur*’ (innocent, blameless and not guilty). The martyrdom of Inspector Mohan Chandra Sharma is, on the other hand, being questioned. The mainstream media has given him the honour he deserves. The country considered his sacrifice, dutifulness and service as exemplary. The mainstream newspapers articulated the public sentiment in favour of martyr Inspector Sharma. The Indian State honoured him with the ‘Ashok Chakra’ on Republic Day, 2009. But the attitude of the Urdu newspapers was not merely different but entirely opposite. They did not only shrink away from terming him a martyr, but also presented fictitious tales about his death. While some described it as a result of inter-departmental clash, others said it was a bid to save the chair of Home Minister Shivraj Patil.

Encounters are generally never planned. They are executed on basis of secret intelligence. And when an encounter occurs in a lonely place during odd hours, one may question the propriety of the police. However, when encounters are held in congested localities, the chances of it being called a fake are drastically reduced. Hence in the context of the Batla House encounter, it is imperative to understand the geographical, political and religious profile of Jamia Nagar.

The centre of the Capital’s Muslim politics shifted to Jamia Nagar from the precincts of Jama Masjid nearly a decade earlier. The Muslim intellectuals of this locality has the girt of influencing the Muslim politics of northern India and other Indian states. Jamia Millia Islamia is also becoming a part of this process. Being a ‘sensitive’ area, even the impartial and courageous act of police in this area, remains in the compass of suspicion.

Jamia Nagar area in South Delhi is ‘as sauve as any other middle class neighbourhood in the Indian capital¹³³’. It includes localities like Zakir Nagar, Batla House, Joga Bai, Gaffar Manzil, Nur Nagar, Okhla

¹³³ *Jamia Nagar: Very Muslim, very cosmopolitan, Daily News & Analysis, September 24, 2008*

village, Abul Fazal Enclave and Shaheen Bagh. But Jamia Nagar residents' deep connection to religion is also visible in the number of mosques and the regular worshippers frequenting them¹³⁴. Over the last decade, Jamia has evolved as a centre of Muslim intellectualism and politics.

*“More than two dozen Muslim outfits have established themselves in this neighbourhood taking upon them the responsibility to lead and organize the religious and social life of the community. They include organizations like the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat and Jamaat-e-Islami. None of these organizations is known for promoting social reform or education. Most of the time they are competing with each other in crying wolf and pressing the need to fight against imagined threats to the Muslim religion and identity.”*¹³⁵

Apart from these, some smaller Muslim organizations also have presence here like Ahle Hadith, Tablighi Jamat and Tabimi Jamaat Ulema, etc.

The Institute of Objective Studies, which conducts research and seminars on Muslims issues, also has its headquarters here. Several Urdu and major Muslim periodicals are also published from here. Amongst these are Milli Gazette (English fortnightly), Muslim Indian (English monthly), Radiance Viewsweekly, Khatun-e-Mashriq (Women of the East, Urdu), Dawat, Muslim Outlook, Jadid, In Dino, Siyasi Aghaz, Kaumi Aghaz, etc. The famous Jamia Millia Islamia is situated in Jamia Nagar. Hence, naturally, it has offices of several student bodies. While Jamia Millia Islamia contributed in making Jamia Nagar a hub of Muslim politics, these extraneous factors also influenced the character of the University. The local Muslim elites and intellectuals have a significant impact on the student and teachers politics of the University.

In view of the above facts, it would not be wrong to say that the centre of Muslim politics has shifted from Jama Masjid to Jamia Nagar. Here mosques of different sects of Islam like Deoband, Bareilvi, Ahle Haidh, etc., are present. Anything pertaining to Muslim interests, either nationally or internationally, elicits definite response from this locality. This locality is sensitive from religious, political and communal angle. In

¹³⁴ *ibid*

¹³⁵ *Look who hijacked Jamia Nagar, Arif Mohammed Khan, The Indian Express, October 1, 2008*

1990, a well coordinated physical attack was launched here on former Union Minister Arif Mohammed Khan when he was returning from the burial of Prof. Mushirul Haq, killed in a terrorist attack in Kashmir¹³⁶.

The police entered this sensitive area with due caution. When the police reached here at the time of Batla House encounter they were not unfamiliar to these factors. But they never thought that killing of two terrorists and arrest of one would be turned into a communal campaign. The tone and tenor of Urdu newspapers in their reporting, analysis and articles were completely different from those of mainstream newspapers. It has been sometimes analyzed on the level of Hindu–Muslim conflict and politics by keeping away from issues like secularism, terrorism and internal security. The analysis of this incident in various Urdu newspapers and magazines is actually a study in their worldview.

Urdu Times (Mumbai) in its September 23, 2008 editorial declared the encounter as fake on the ground that Inspector Sharma was not wearing a bullet proof jacket. *“Police personnel do not observe negligence when coming to fight any dangerous gang, but why did Inspector Sharma not wear a bullet proof jacket? It is clear that Sharma was sure there would be no fire from inside the house. Why was he so sure? Did he know there was no terrorist inside the flat? Did any high official prevent Mohan Chand Sharma from wearing a bullet proof jacket?”*¹³⁷ Here the two killed terrorists have been referred as ‘boys’. *“Police say that the two killed youth were involved in the activities of IM. They have carried out explosions around the country.”* But the family of the slain duo claims, *“These two boys were in Delhi, and never went out of Delhi. Can the police furnish an account of their travels with evidence?”*¹³⁸

The paper also carried the decision of the Jamia Millia Islamia Vice Chancellor to extend legal aid to the arrested suspects of Jamia Millia Islamia as the main news on its front page. Its title was – *“Girafstarshuda Zia aur Shakeel ke taluk se Vice Chancellor Mushirul Hassan ka Elan”* (Vice Chancellor Mushirul Hassan’s declaration in support of arrested Zia and Shakeel) and *“Dahasatgardi ke mobina ko Jamia ki kanooni imadad”* (The terror accused get legal aid from Jamia Millia). An

¹³⁶ *Ibid*

¹³⁷ *Jamia Nagar Encounter se uthte sawalat (Questions rising from Jamia Nagar encounter), editorial, Urdu Times, September 23, 2008*

¹³⁸ *Ibid*

obituary of four columns appeared below, “*Atif beqasoor tha, is par lage dagh Allah khud dhoyega*” (Atif was innocent; Allah will wash the blame put on him).

Urdu Times on September 27 prominently published the demands for judicial enquiry into the Batla House encounter.¹³⁹ On editorial page, the newspaper published an article by Syed Ali. He accused the Police of bias.¹⁴⁰

The issue had two other mention worthy news “*Musalman Id ke roz bazuon par syah patti bandhe*” (Muslims should wear black bands on their arms on Eid) and “*Okhla encounter mamle ki CBI se janch karwayi jaye*” (The Okhla encounter should be probed by the CBI).¹⁴¹

Daily **Sahafat**, on September 27, published four lengthy news items on the subject along with an editorial¹⁴². **Sahafat**, in its editorial wrote in praise of Vice Chancellor Mushirul Hassan, “*Notwithstanding that in the past several accusations have been made against the Vice Chancellor of*

¹³⁹ *Kendriya Griha Mantri aur IB chief ki barkhastagi ki mang par Jantar Mantar par Muslim sangathano ka dharna*” (The agitation of Muslim organisations at Jantar Mantar for resignation of Union Home Minister and IB chief), *Urdu Times* September 27, 2008. The newspaper had published a few other lead articles “*Sajid ke sir mein goliyan point blank mare jane ki spasta praman (clear evidence of two bullets shot into Sajid’s head point blank)*”, “*Jamia Millia ke chatron ko kanooni madad uchit- Arjun Singh*” (Legal help to Jamia students justified- Arjun Singh), “*Fact finding team ne Dilli encounter mein garbari batai*” (Fact finding team tells something amiss in Delhi encounter), ‘*police karyavahi ke paanch din bad bhi ilake mein tanav*’ (Tension in the area even after five days of police action).

¹⁴⁰ *Dadhi topi walon ke sketch ki riyayat barkarar* (The practice of issuing sketch of people with beard and cap continues)

¹⁴¹ *Dadhi topi walon ke sketch ki riyayat barkara* by Syed Ali. In the same page of this issue *Urdu Times* September 27 another news item from Muzzafnagar “*Musalmanon ki giraftari na kabile bardast*” (The arrests of Muslims unacceptable) has been published. The page 5 of this issue had another item “*Security agencion ne musalmanon ka jeena haram kar diya hai*” (Security agencies have made the life of Muslims difficult).

¹⁴² *Jamia Nagar mutbedh, NHCR ka Dilli Police to notice* (Jamia nagar encounter;NHRC’s notice to Delhi Police). This was three column reports on front page. Advocate Prashant Bhushan’s comment is published on four column- “*Batla House mein Police Kahani banawati*” (The police version of events at Batla House fictitious)

Jamia Millia Islamia, but now he has served the interests of Muslim community by assuring legal aid to the said terrorist students. Not only this, he also participated in demonstration at Jantar Mantar against the fake encounter. This is commendable.”¹⁴³

Urdu Times on September 28 carried four write-ups on the Batla House encounter. All four, however, had a similar conclusion that the encounter was fake and the martyrdom of Mohan Chand Sharma was questioned. Their conclusions were drawn from rumours and imagination. The issue of terrorism was ignored and the communal question occupied the foreground. Shakeel Rashid wrote in his article, “*Inspector Sharma’s death has now become extremely mysterious. People are not ready to believe that Inspector Sharma was killed by bullets of two Muslim youth.*” The writer’s entire argument was confined to the bullet proof jacket. He raised the question but did not allow the suspense to end. “*why Inspector Sharma was not wearing a bullet proof jacket? This question has been raised several times. And you can have several answers to this question. First, Inspector Sharma did not want the terrorists inside get alerted by seeing his bullet proof jacket. Another answer is that Inspector Sharma’s son was admitted in the hospital for (treatment of) dengue, and he was worried and concerned, and for this reason he reached the spot without a bullet-proof jacket. It can be clearly understood that Inspector Sharma was not leading the operations at Batla House. He was only invited there.*”

This article of **Urdu Times**, by quoting Shahi Imam and Prashant Bhushan, tried to convince the readers that departmental feud resulted in Inspector Sharma’s death. “*The Shahi Imam has clearly said that Inspector Sharma’s death was caused by police’s bullets. Inspector Sharma had close relationship with another encounter specialist of Delhi Police, Rajbir Singh. Advocate Prashant Bhushan*¹⁴⁴ *has expressed doubts that it was due to a departmental feud and enmity between the two that had resulted in the killing of Inspector Sharma.*”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ *Mushirul Hassan ki nirbhikta (Mushirul Hassan’s audacity), Safahat, September 27, 2008*

¹⁴⁴ *A committee led by Prashant Bhushan had issued a report on the subject on September 21, within two days of the encounter, where he expressed doubt over the genuineness of the encounter.*

¹⁴⁵ *Mohammed Sajid aur Mohammed Atif ki katl karne wali police ne kya apne saathi officer ko mar diya? Inspector Sharma ka katil kaun? Batla House*

Termining the two slain terror suspects as innocent, the columnist also wrote, “As complicated as the mystery of Inspector Sharma gets, the mystery over the death of Mohammed Atif and Mohammed Sajid is getting solved. The two did not die in any encounter. They were shot from close range. Eye witnesses said that two boys were dragged out from the fourth floor of the building to the ground floor. And when it became known that Inspector Sharma has been wounded the two were shot dead, their bodies were dragged and put inside their house. The Police which projected the murder of Mohammed Atif and Mohammed Sajid as an encounter were uttering falsehoods. Actually, the mastermind is one who is executing explosions around the country to malign and incriminate Muslims. The police do not want to arrest him and neither does the Government.”¹⁴⁶

In another article of the day in **Urdu Times**, Suhel Anjum declared that Delhi Police is unreliable and certified that the suspected terrorists were actually students. “For the first time links from Delhi to Azamgarh and Azamgarh to Dubai are being connected. Even now it is being investigated whether said terrorists have any connection with Dawood or not...Nobody is ready to believe the tall claims Delhi Police is making after this said encounter. The local residents of Batla House said that the youths killed by police were not involved in any unfair practice.”¹⁴⁷

In the third article of the day, Yusuf Shaheed said that he lived only 150 meters away from where the incident took place. But it is surprising that he got information about the incident from people who said that the two had been killed. “People claimed they had neither heard the sound of bullets shot by the police nor the sound of the bullets shot from inside the flat.”¹⁴⁸ This article also argued against keeping faith on police investigation and its reports. The article accused the mainstream media for believing in the police version of the event.

ke chand sulagte sawal? (Did the Police who murdered Mohammed Sajid and Mohammed Atif kill their own officer? Who is the murderer of Inspector Sharma? Few questions from Batla haouse), Urdu Times, September 28, 2008

¹⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁷ *Batla House shootout kitna haqeeqat, kitna afsana (Batla House shootout, how much real; how much fictional) by Suhel Anjum, Urdu Times, September 28, 2008*

¹⁴⁸ *Jamia Nagar encounter- media circus, by Yusuf Saheed, Urdu Times, September 28, 2008*

The fourth write up in this series was by *Masoom Muradabadi*. The article accused that “*Delhi Police killed two innocent students with bullets.*” “*After this said encounter Delhi police arrested Mohammed Shakeel, a B.A. IInd year and Zia-ur-Rehman, B.A. final year student. Apart from them, the police had also arrested Saquib Nisar, who was preparing for his MBA examinations as a private student.*”¹⁴⁹ The writer felt this is a part of a campaign going on in the entire country.¹⁵⁰

Urdu Times, on September 29, published an article by Rizwan Ahmed on this very theme. Ahmed wrote – “*Not only Indian Muslims but also Islam and Muslim institutions are being maligned.*”¹⁵¹ The article, like the previous ones, declared Batla House encounter a fake¹⁵².

The writer asked why an innocent boy like Sajid was shot 12 times on his temple. “*Is it not a violation of human rights?*” The writer gave precedence to those questions that have lost their importance in the age of terrorism¹⁵³. The article hailed the decision of Prof Mushirul Hassan to extend them legal aid.

In its editorial comment, **Urdu Times**, on September 29, had expressed the Batla House encounter as a ‘Muslim issue’ and also targeted the police and intelligence agencies. It further mentioned that “*there were blasts in Jaipur, Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Delhi. The blame for these gruesome acts was put on IM and then a campaign was launched to eliminate and arrest the cadres of IM. Mufti Abu Bashar is the mastermind of Ahmedabad blasts, Mohammed Sajid is the*

¹⁴⁹ *Hindustani Musalman dahashatgardi ke nargale mein (Indian Muslims in trap of terrorism)*, *Urdu Times*, September 28, 2008

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* “*When the three were presented in the court they were given Arabic scarf to hide their faces, which is generally worn by Muslim Ulema.*” The article felt that campaign going on in the country to link Muslims with terror and making them suspicious should end immediately. “*If the Muslim youths are pushed into the quicksand of terrorism as a part of a conspiracy, then this is dangerous for the whole country not only for the Muslims.*”

¹⁵¹ *Na tadapne ki Izaajat hai, aur na fariyad ki (Neither there is liberty to groan nor to appeal)* by Rizwan Ahmed, *Urdu Times*, September 29, 2008

¹⁵² *Ibid.* “*The time and place chosen for the encounter is unfortunate on all counts.*”

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* “*Suspected terrorists were arrested by the police and their faces were hid in religious headgear, which means to associate everything with Islam and Muslims. In one way the entire administration is acting on behest of the Sangh Parivar*”, *Urdu Times*, September 29, 2008

mastermind of Delhi blasts and another mastermind of Delhi blast is Riyaz Batkhal. If Delhi police has captured so many masterminds then why did the Delhi blasts take place?” it questioned and added that “This secret conspiracy is only to entrap the Muslims. The persons whom police have arrested are very poor and do not have enough to eat at home, and hence could not approach the court. Muslim leaders and Muslim organizations are not strong enough to help them.”¹⁵⁴

“The Delhi police encounter has been exposed. By shooting at the heads of the students the Delhi Police flaunted the fact that they have killed the masterminds of IM. But this encounter has now become a bone in the throat of the officers who conspired this encounter. It is for this reason that encounter specialist Inspector Mohan Chandra Sharma was eliminated on their behest, and propaganda was carried out that the Inspector had been killed by the hooligans of Indian Mujahideen.”

Jadid Markaz, a daily published from Lucknow in its September 29 issue, like the **Urdu Times**, also declared the Batla House encounter to be false¹⁵⁵. It gave a new story angle that the two innocent boys were dragged to the ground from fourth floor by the police and then they were shot on their head and later a false story of encounter was fabricated. This newspaper again suggested a mystery that there was no encounter in Flat No. L-18.¹⁵⁶ What it said further was not only ludicrous but also a violation of ethics. *“After the Delhi bomb blasts, the pressure on Delhi Police had increased and encounter specialist Mohan Chand Sharma who had been transferred from the special cell was told verbally that he should not seek relieve and do something with help of his informers so that the honour of Delhi Police and Home Minister Shivraj Patil could be retained. The informer of Mohan Chand Sharma lived at Jamia Nagar and whose in-laws lived in Azamgarh. Sharma solicited help from this son-in-law of Azamgarh. The informer reported to Sharma that there were only four or five students staying in Flat No. L-18. They, like other Muslims, discussed the atrocities being committed on Muslims. Those*

¹⁵⁴ *Sabhi mastermind police hirasat mein to akhir dhamake kaun karwa raha hai (If all masterminds are in police custody, then who is doing the blasts?), Urdu Times, September 29, 2008*

¹⁵⁵ *Jamia Nagar ki hakiqat (The truth about Jamia Nagar encounter), Jadid Markaz, Lucknow, Weekly September 29, 2008*

¹⁵⁶ *Farzi Muthbhed (Fake encounter), Jaded Markaz, Lucknow, Weekly October 5, 2008*

boys could be arrested and taken into custody. This would decrease the political and public storm raised over the Delhi bomb blasts and would calm down within a couple of months. This informer told Inspector Sharma that those boys had no weapons. So he took some weapons with him to show them as being recovered from the house. Since Inspector Sharma was convinced that these boys were neither terrorist nor did they possess any weapons so he ventured to arrest them without wearing any bullet proof jacket.”

The writer has given a description as if he were an eye witness to the encounter. “Mohan Chand Sharma arrived at door of the flat along with his team. Inspector Sharma shouted from outside, ‘Atif open the door, else I shall break it open and shoot you.’ As soon as Atif opened the door, Inspector Sharma and his colleagues held of him by the hair and dragged him from the fourth floor to the second floor. By this time Sajid was able to rid himself from police’s grip and started to grapple with the cops. Sharma shouted and asked them to ‘shoot the rascal’, and the cops fired from behind. Instead of Atif, Inspector Sharma received the three bullets. A special cell cop was shocked into silence. The other said ‘the boss has been shot’. At this they felt unnerved and shot several rounds from point blank into Sajid and Atif.”¹⁵⁷

Nai Dunia (Urdu) also questioned the authenticity of the Batla House encounter. On Page numbers it published a news item titled “Innocents in the shadow of terror.” The news item described the encounter as false and charged that the Government is eliminating innocent boys under the garb of anti-terror campaign within directions from Sangh Parivar. It published a special report in which it sought to discredit the encounter through the statements of Jamia Nagar residents. “Prof Faiyaz Ahmed of Jamia Millia Islamia called this encounter utterly fake and Hassan Sajid, a member of local welfare association Nayawe Haq also agreed with him. They said that the suspected terrorists did not open fire at the police team. Mohammed Azim, a resident of I-block Jamia Nagar, said that those whom police claimed to have shot in encounter were actually killed while they were sleeping.

¹⁵⁷ Jadid Markaz, Lucknow, Weekly September 29, 2008. It wrote further that “Sub Inspector Dharmendra and his colleague took Inspector Sharma to the hospital. The other members of the team dragged the bodies of Atif and Sajid to the fourth floor of L-18. Then they fired at the door of the flat and also fired indiscriminately from the roof.”

This was so because there was not enough space on the fourth floor of L-18 that would allow cross firing. Chowdhary Rafi Ullah, a Supreme Court advocate, said police often target those who have no connection whatsoever with terrorist activities and even shoot down those who are arrested so that the blame for past explosions could be attached to them. The correspondent reported that the students of Jamia Millia Islamia found this a well-planned conspiracy to malign Jamia and Jamia Nagar."¹⁵⁸

Urdu newspaper **Dawat** also ran a campaign to prove that this was a fake encounter. Dawat in its October 1 issue said that local residents did not believe for a minute that the two boys Atif and Sajid were killed by the police in an encounter. The debate that is taking place amongst Muslim intelligentsia and law-abiding people of the country has thrown up certain questions that expose the claims of the police on the encounter. It has made an issue out of the fact that Inspector Sharma was not wearing a bullet proof jacket. This is proof that ATS policemen ran no risk from the so-called terrorists¹⁵⁹.

This paper told a novel story to the readers. *"Six school students who lived in the neighbouring flat at Batla House had mysteriously disappeared before the encounter. So that they would not be hurt during the encounter. It has also been told that those who have been encountered were tortured earlier at some other place. Neither the neighbours nor the local residents confirm the police statement that there was crossfire. All of them say that it was one-way firing from the police side."* Another reason advanced in favour of the encounter being fake was that the BJP considered the police action as correct. *"What makes the issue more suspicious is the opposition BJP's open support of the policemen."* Training guns on the media it said, *"the media's presence at the time of the encounter and its one-sided reporting also makes the matter more suspicious."*¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ *Operation Batla House – Kya kehte hai Dehshat mein jeenewale log (Operation Batla House - what do people living under terror say), Naya Duniya (Urdu), September 29, 2008*

¹⁵⁹ *Delhi ke encounter par yeh sawal uthaye jaa rahe hain (The questions being raised about the Delhi encounter) Dawat October 1, 2008*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid, Dawat raised 17 questions to prove that the encounter was fake. These questions were related to the BJP support for the encounter, the role of the media and the absence of a bullet proof jacket.*

Dawat, in its October 1 issue, published a write-up on the front page that reads something like this. *“The anger amongst law abiding and peace loving citizens, generated by the fake encounter on September 19 in capital’s Muslim dominated region of Batla House, shows no sign of abatement. The attitude of the police over this illegal, nay atrocious event is highly shameful.”* The mainstream media have again come under fire. *“The police insisting on its false version of events and the overt partiality of the media, all these factors are heightening the anguish and grief of citizens and Muslims...”*¹⁶¹

This article also commented upon the controversy stirred by Jamia V-C Mushirul Hassan over giving legal aid to the students. *“A section of the media has profound unhappiness over this decision. The annoyance of largest Opposition party BJP is understandable. But the media howling over the issue and stirring a storm surpasses understanding. An English newspaper went to the extent of saying the Jamia V-C squandering the hard earned money of the public to defend terrorists.”*¹⁶²

Dawat, on Page 3 of its October 1 issue, published a five-column news item about the petition presented to the Prime Minister by a motley of hurriedly formed Coordination of Indian Muslim and so-called Human Rights protection groups like PUCL, PUDR, Jan Hastakhsep Campaign against Fascist Designs, Jamia Teacher solidarity group.¹⁶³

Nai Dunia (Urdu), in its October 6 issue, again published a double page special report on the Batla House encounter. The report claimed, on

¹⁶¹ *Insaaf Pasand aur bazmeer (chaitanyasheel) shahariyo ko aage aana chahiye (Law abiding people and the intelligentsia should come forward) Dawat October 1, 2008. It further said that the attitude of the Government, the opposition, the Government machinery and media is such that the whole Muslim community has been put in the dock. The way Muslim youth are being arrested and their career spoilt, it seems as if there is a huge conspiracy to do so.*

¹⁶² *Dawat has expressed satisfaction on the way the Vice Chancellor of Jamia Millia refused to succumb to the pressure of the media and the opposition parties and also refused to give any explanation for the same. In fact he reiterated his statement the following day at a press conference and also led a protest rally. His actions boosted the morale of many people.*

¹⁶³ *Batla House encounter ki uchchastariya jaach aur belag enquiry ki mang (Demand for an impartial and high level enquiry into the batala House encounter), Dawat, October 01, 2008.*

expected lines, that the encounter was utterly phony. “*The post-mortem report after the encounter has raised certain questions that have proven the police to be false. First the police raised a hue and cry over two terrorists fleeing Batla. Again they claimed there was indiscriminate firing from inside as soon as they knocked at L-18. But post-mortem and eye witness reports prove that police shot Atif and Sajid after dragging them from fourth floor. Inspector Sharma was hit by three bullets from the behind, which could not be recovered. This raises several questions. Whose bullets killed the Inspector? If he was killed by bullets of terrorists then where are those bullets? If the encounter had taken place face-to-face then why was he hit in the back? How did Atif and Sajid receive internal injuries? If the terrorists had an AK-47 in their room, why was it not used? If the encounter was taking place face-to-face then why was Sajid hit by four bullets on his head? If the police had come for an encounter why it did not bring an ambulance? Who made Inspector Sharma walk down from the fourth floor even after he had sustained four bullet injuries?*”¹⁶⁴

Later in the text, the report claimed that the Jamia Nagar encounter has become a blemish more for the police than the locality. The report has tried to prove the encounter a part of an electoral strategy. “*The result of Congress’ pressure on Delhi Police to reach to the (guilty of) Delhi blasts and Indian Mujahideen in order to be two paces ahead (of its rivals) in the Delhi assembly elections is in front of us. This encounter was a desperate bid to save the face of a failed minister. The path chosen by the Congress can benefit only the BJP in this electoral battle...Now the Muslims are realizing that Congress leadership is targeting the Muslims under UPA Government’s campaign against terror.*”

Nai Dunia (Urdu) published a four-column opinion by the editor of the newspaper, who is also a top functionary of the Bahujan Samaj Party. Shahid Siddiqui suspected that “*the USA and Israel were involved in the escalating acts of terrorism in India.*”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ *Begunah Muslim naujawano ki giraftari - Manmohan Sarkar ki khal bachane ka khel (Arrest of innocent Muslim youth- a ploy to save the skin of Manmohan Government), Nai Dunia (Urdu), October 6, 2008*

¹⁶⁵ *Yah Hindustani Musalmanon ke saath antar-rashtriya sajis hai - tamam encounteron ki supreme court se janch karwayi jaye (This is an international conspiracy against Indian Muslims; all encounters should be examined by the Supreme Court), NAyi Dunia, October 06. 2008.*

Nai Dunia (Urdu), in its October 13 issue, published a report “*Lahu pukarega astin ka*” (Blood in the hand shall bear witness) wherein it claimed that the police version of events is a pack of lies.

Mushkurahat-e-Hind, published from New Delhi, carried a front page report in its October 15 issue where Editor Dr. Afaq Praveen has said that “*Jamia Nagar is such a fertile land that Delhi Police sows here the seeds of terrorists and reaps them when necessary.*” Questioning the authenticity of the Batla House encounter Dr. Praveen further wrote, “*What Delhi Police staged was only a drama.*”¹⁶⁶

Dawat, on October 16, published a special issue on terrorism and role of Government agencies. The issue carried an interview of Engineer Mohammed Salim¹⁶⁷ wherein he claimed that “*there is hand of Israeli spy agency Mossad and American secret service CIA.*”¹⁶⁸ In the same issue it published a five column article on page 3, in which it said that “*media are acting as informer, agent and spokesman of police.*”¹⁶⁹

This issue of Dawat also carried a statement by N.D. Pancholi who accused the media of being partial: “*Media indulges in partiality while reporting about terrorists...this is an undeclared entente between the*

¹⁶⁶ *Jamia Nagar encounter, sahame awam aur dandanate wardiposh (Jamia Nagar encounter, frightened public and trigger happy uniformed men), Nai Dunia (Urdu), October 6, 2008*

¹⁶⁷ *Chief of Jamaat-e-Islami, Rajasthan*

¹⁶⁸ *Desh antar-rashtriya saazish ka sikar ho raha hai (The country is falling victim to international conspiracy), Dawat, October 16, 2008. “The way a large section of media is telling lies over Batla House encounter, common people are able to figure out that the report of newspapers and channels are not correct”. The issue has also carried an article by Ajit Sahi, special correspondent of Tehelka, “claims of Government, intelligence agencies, and police are baseless”. It also carried an article by Harsh Mander, former IAS officer, who said that a section of Congress is trying hard to prove Muslims as criminals. The article said that ruling Congress party is targeting innocent Muslims in the name of counter terrorism. He further wrote that “This time the Home Minister was under extreme pressure. That’s why the fake encounter took place at Batla. The writer has also blamed the media for acting with partiality”.*

¹⁶⁹ *Batla House encounter ki jaach ki mutalibe ki tehrik jaari (The demand for an enquiry into the Batla House encounter continues) Dawat October 16, 2008.*

investigative agencies and media.”¹⁷⁰ In this issue Anil Chamaria also blamed media as a fabricator of news.¹⁷¹

Dawat, in its October 22 issue, carried a write up on its front page blaming that ‘the entire police action is meant to malign the Muslims’. The writer even tried to prove the police as the greatest enemy of Muslims. “*This is a fact that today Muslims in the country run the greatest risk from the police. It is most worrying for the Muslims that their highly qualified youth, working in top notch companies, are picked up and put behind bars.*”¹⁷² The piece further accused that, “*Five innocent Muslims have been arrested in Mumbai as top functionaries of Indian Mujahideen. The police send clear message that they are not protectors rather they are the enemies of Muslims.*”

Another front page article in **Dawat**, October 22, accused – “*Whether it is Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, or Home Minister Shivraj Patil or National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan they are all maligning the Muslims by declaring them as terrorists.*”¹⁷³

Dawat, on October 25, published a front page story expressing wonder, “*Whenever a judicial inquiry is demanded into the Batla House case, it is argued that the morale of the police would be hit*”. The write-up further criticized M.K. Narayanan’s statement that “*Batla House encounter was real and there is no necessity of ordering a judicial probe*”. The write-up claimed that “*This statement of Narayanan has put a question mark on his entire career and about the mindset with which he had worked as an official and then as chief of CBI. Who gave him the*

¹⁷⁰ *Insaaf ke bagair qaeam aman ki koshish besuda hogi (Efforts for peace will be useless without justice), N D Pancholi . In the same issue, the Samajwadi party MP has written an article titled “Agencia Hindu – Muslalmano ke darmiyan duriyan paida kar rahi hai”. (The agencies are creating differences between Hindus and Muslims), Dawat October 16, 2008*

¹⁷¹ *Media aur Sarkari agenciyo ka mustarka amal mulk ke liye nuksandeh hai. (The same stand of Media and the Government agencies is harmful for the nation), Dawat October 16, 2008.*

¹⁷² *Riyasato ki khaki vardi ka yah amal ka tareeka kya kehta hai, (What the functioning of Police like this says), Dawat October 22, 2008*

¹⁷³ *Adalati jaach se inkaar, adliya par adam ittimaad ka ijhaar hai. (Refusal of a judicial enquiry shows distrust of the Judiciary) Dawat October 22, 2008. On page 3 of the same issue, there was a 5 column article titled “encounter ki enquiry shararat hai toh iska virodh kya hai”(if an enquiry of the encounter is a mischief then what is its opposition)*

authority to declare the Batla House incident as genuine or fake? If the encounter was genuine what is the hitch in getting it investigated.”¹⁷⁴

The October 25 issue of **Dawat** also discussed about the encounter in its editorial. The editor charged that the Government did not constitute any inquiry into the event because “*the Central and state Government, police, investigative agencies, do not have the answers to questions raised about the encounter. They are stubborn in their attitude – “accept our views that this was an anti-terror operation”*”. The editorial further claimed that the state agencies were unnecessarily harassing Muslims. “*Instead of answering several important questions people are being harassed. The arrest of young men has not stopped and the calls made from this locality (Jamia) are being monitored...*”¹⁷⁵

The article, keeping political decorum at bay, tried to prove Central Government’s decision of not ordering an enquiry as wrong. It asked further, “*If the Government is sure that the encounter was not fake but genuine and it has evidence of the same, then why it is wary of ordering an inquiry*”. **Dawat**, in the same issue, also attacked BJP, RSS and charged them for all the problems the country is facing today.¹⁷⁶

Roznama Rashtriya Sahara (Urdu) also expended great efforts to prove that the Batla House encounter was a fake. It carried out a month long campaign in which it tried to establish the hand of Hindu extremists in the encounter as well as in the other terrorist activities taking place around the country. The paper questioned the validity of the encounter soon after it happened. The editor of the paper, Aziz Burney, published more than one hundred special editorials on the subject from other periodicals like **Musalman-e-Hind, Mazi, Haal and Mustaqbil** on the front page of **Roznama Rashtriya Sahara**. This was indeed a novel kind

¹⁷⁴ *Kya Insaaf ka Mutaliba se police ka morale girta hai? (Does the morale of the police force sag if asked for jsudicial probe), Dawaat, October 25, 2008*

¹⁷⁵ *Janch se gurez kyon? (Why this inhibition from enquiry), editorial, Dawaat, October 25, 2008*

¹⁷⁶ *On Page 3 Dawat carried a five column news- “Dusron ko gaddar kahne wale kya khud mulk ke wafadar hain?” (Are those who accuse others of treason themselves faithful to the nation?). The subtitle of this news item was “Batla House ke mobina encounter ne bomb dhamakon aur dahashatgardi ke khel ko benaqab kar diya hai, iski pardafasi kamyab nahin ho sakti” (The Batla House encounter has unmasked the game of bomb blast and terrorist, its exposure is not possible), October 20, 2008*

of journalism! These reproduced editorials were bristling in criticism of the Government, the Congress party and the Police and Intelligence agencies. The paper accused the media of being biased in the favour of the Hindus.

In its September 22 issue it published a three-column news, based on the statement of Asif Mohammed Khan, the former Councilor of Okhla. It accused therein that the police were carrying out indiscriminate raids and arrests in the locality. Asif Mohammed Khan accused the police of fabricating the stories¹⁷⁷. On Page 3 of the same paper a statement by Maulana Syed Arshad Madani, President of Jamaat-e-Ulema-e-Hind, claimed that the Home Ministry of the UPA Government was ineffective.¹⁷⁸

In the same issue **Roznama Rashtriya Sahara** – Urdu also published a letter from Left parties and Muslim organizations that described the Batla House encounter as fake. It questioned, “*Why did the alleged mastermind wanted to get his police verification done a week after the Ahmedabad blasts and a month prior to Delhi blasts?*” They raised the doubts as to how the two alleged terrorists managed to flee from the four-storied L-18 Batla House building when the police had surrounded it from all sides? They also raised the question “*Why did Mohan Chand Sharma, a seasoned encounter specialist, go on this mission without a bullet proof jacket?*” They also charged that if the police claim that one AK-47 and a pistol were recovered from L-18 then by which weapon Inspector Sharma was killed?¹⁷⁹

Roznama Rashtriya Sahara (Urdu), on September 27 published a news item quoting HRD Minister Arjun Singh “*Jamia Ke tulba ko kanooni madad kaumi mufad mein*” (Legal aid to students of Jamia in

¹⁷⁷ “*Dilli police par Okhla ke awam ko haras aur paresan karne ka ilzam*” (Delhi Police accused of harassing and pestering residents of Okhla), *Roznama Rashtriya Sahara*, September 22, 2008

¹⁷⁸ *Maulana Arshad Madani ka Jamia Nagar bayan: gair janib tahakikat ka motliba* (Maulana Arshad Madani’s statement on Jamia Nagar: Impartial enquiry demanded), *Roznama Rashtriya Sahara*, September 22, 2008

¹⁷⁹ *Jamia nagar encounter par Delhi police ko notice* (Notice to Delhi Police on Jamia Nagar encounter). The signatories to this letter include well known left wing actor Shabana Azmi, Munish Sethi of the Forum for Democratic Initiative, Arshad Alam of the Jamia Millia Islamia and the General Secretary of the JNU Students Union Pallavi Deka. *Rashtriya Sahara* September 27, 2008

national interest). Photos of Arjun Singh and Jamia V-C Mushirul Hassan appeared with the news. The headline of another news item published in the issue was– “*Dahashatgardi Musalman nahin, Hukumat hain - Ahmed Bukhari*” (Government, not Muslims are the terrorist – Ahmed Bukhari).

Editor Aziz Burney wrote a special editorial in its September 27 issue, where he asked “*If the police recovered the weapon after extensive search then from which weapon did the alleged terrorists fired the bullets that hit Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma.*”¹⁸⁰

This issue carried another four-column news item based on the speech of Maulana Syed Bukhari. In this speech the Maulana claimed that the Batla House encounter was false and some conspirators were creating anti-Muslim sentiments in the entire country. He said, “*The Jamia Nagar encounter is false and in its shadow an anti-Muslim sentiment is being built up across the country. The hand of friendship that India has extended towards Israel is based on enmity towards Islam. Today the situation is such that Israeli Mossad and our I.B. (Intelligence Bureau) are working together to harm Muslims at every step.*”¹⁸¹

Another news item in this issue was based on the statement of Mufti Mohammed Mukkram Ahmed, Imam of Delhi’s Fatehpuri mosque. By terming the encounter as fake, the Imam called for a judicial enquiry. He also complained that top leaders of the country were silent over the issue.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ *Hathiyar talasi mein baramad huye to golian kaise chali (How the bullets were fired when the weapons were recovered in search?), Aziz Burney, Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, September 27, 2008*

¹⁸¹ *Jamia Nagar jaise wakyat ke liye, hukumat ki galat policiyan jimmedar (Wrong policies of the Government responsible for incidents like Jamia Nagar encounter), Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, September 27, 2008*

¹⁸² *Sarkarda leaderon ki khamosi afsosnak (The silence of top leaders unfortunate), Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, September 27, 2008. Another news item in this issue was published from Calcutta. “Yeh Kaisi Id? Hum Muslim hain, dahashatgard hai, hame mar dalo, hume khatm karo” (What kind of Id is this? We are Muslims, we are terrorists, kill us, extirpate us). The issue has also carried a statement by former J&K chief minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed who alleged that Muslims are being rounded up around the country in fake charges. He said that country can’t afford to fill up its prisons with young and educated*

This issue also published seven-column news about the demonstration at Delhi's Jantar Mantar. Apart from this report, six other news items connected with the demonstration were published under different headings.

Roznama Rashtriya Sahara (Urdu), in its September 28 issue, published a statement by Anees Durrani, Secretary, and Minority Department of the Congress party. Durrani called for a judicial enquiry into the encounter. In this issue the statements of different Muslims bodies who accused the mainstream media of ignoring the protests at Jantar Mantar was also published.¹⁸³

The issue carried news item where several Muslim leaders dubbed the Batla House encounter as false and called for a judicial inquiry¹⁸⁴. Another news item in the issue quoted Bahujan Samaj Party MP Akbar Ahmed 'Dumpy' who dubbed the encounter as false and promised to raise the issue in the Parliament.

In its September 29 issue **Roznama Rashtriya Sahara** (Urdu) published six different news items all of which concluded that the Batla House encounter was false. In the editorial column, the editor accused the police of 'target cleansing' the Muslims. The writer went on to define the fundamentals of the encounter in his own way. He wrote that "*In India the Government uses the term 'encounter' when the police kill a suspect illegally.*" He further wrote that in the Indian Police Academy and the CBI 'Police encounter' is taught as a special subject. Mumbai Police already have a bad reputation in this matter. He further claimed that "*the police received special training to shoot down people in custody and to fabricate encounters.*" In this manner the author claimed that Indian Police is given authorized training to kill innocents.¹⁸⁵

Muslims in the name of fighting terror, Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, September 27, 2008

¹⁸³ *Batla House encounter ki judicial inquiry ka mutalba" (Demand for judicial inquiry of Batla House encounter), Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, September 28, 2009*

¹⁸⁴ *Talim yapta Mussalmanon ko nishana banane par izhar-e-afsos (Expression of anguish at the arrest of students)*

¹⁸⁵ *Aakhir Encounter kya hai? (After all what is encounter?), Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, September 29, 2008. The editorial reads, "Delhi Police, on lines of Mumbai Police, raised a squad of encounter specialists after the Government declaring war on terror. These encounter specialists were specially*

Real Cause in its November 1 issue published a write-up by Zamir Ahmed Nadwi wherein he called the encounter a fake.¹⁸⁶

Mushkurahat-e-Hind, in its November 1 issue published a write up by Mohammed Israel. *“Our police force imparts special training for encounters. Then they create a record of killing human beings. Most of these encounters are false.”*¹⁸⁷ The writer expressed his unhappiness that political parties were trying to benefit from encounters.

The editorial said, *“The Government today views every Muslim dominated region as a sanctuary of terrorists and every Muslim is seen as a collaborator with anti-national elements. This is a dangerous situation indeed”*. The editorial linked the controversy stirred by Batla House with the Delhi legislative assembly elections due (then) in November 2008. *“The Jamia Nagar encounter has taken a political turn. In this election season everybody is a sympathizer of Muslims, because they need the Muslim vote.”*¹⁸⁸

The Urdu newspapers highlighted the statement of HRD Minister Arjun Singh who said that the Batla House encounter should be investigated. Anil Chamariya in his article in **Roznama Rashtriya Sahara (Urdu)** on January 23 supported those asking for an investigation into Batla House encounter. He appealed to Arjun Singh to put pressure on the Government to institute an enquiry into the encounter. He felt it would help citizens live a more assured life.¹⁸⁹

In the same issue Wasih Ahmed Nomani wrote that *“a 58-page chargesheet on the Batla House encounter has been filed in the Tees Hazari Court. Now it is imperative that the witnesses are properly questioned and a sound debate is held in the court. The chargesheet alleges that Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma was shot dead by two*

trained to eliminate arrested people, any how, before they could be produced in the court of law.”

¹⁸⁶ *Batla House encounter ne Hindu dahashatgardi ko benaqab kiya hai (Batla House encounter has unmasked Hindu terrorism). Real cause, November 01, 2008*

¹⁸⁷ *Encounter se aage jahan aur bhi hain (There is a lot beyond encounters), Mushkurahat-e-Hind, November 1, 2008*

¹⁸⁸ *Jamia Nagar par mini Pakistan ki siyasat (Mini Pakistan politics on Jamia Nagar), editorial, Mushkurahat-e-Hind, November 1, 2008*

¹⁸⁹ *Batla House se nahin bacha ja sakta (You can't evade the Batla House), by Anil Chamariya Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, January 23, 2009*

terrorists who fled from Batla House. The truth is that the chargesheet filed in the court is flawed with contradictions. There are 15 points which prove that Inspector Sharma was not killed by any terrorists' bullet but by his own men. For this it is necessary that police is implicated in the case. Only then the innocent will get justice.”¹⁹⁰

Another article of this issue dismissed the Batla House encounter and said that, “Now a minister of the Government, which till recently was not prepared to constitute an inquiry into the encounter, has advocated a court of inquiry. It seems that the Government is ready to institute an inquiry with an eye on the Muslim votes in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The inquiry should be ordered immediately; else justice will elude Batla House.”¹⁹¹

Dawat, in its January 25 edition, said that “The demand for an investigation into the Batla House is being made from day one from many sections of the society, especially the Muslims. The Muslims of the locality are not prepared to accept this encounter as true. They have petitioned everyone, from Chief Minister Shiela Dixit to Sonia Gandhi and the Prime Minister for ordering an investigation. The issue has been reactivated after the statement of Union Minister Arjun Singh. Arjun Singh, however, is not the first minister to recommend an enquiry. Even before this, Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs E. Ahmed and Union Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar along with Samajwadi Party and Janata Dal (Secular) leaders have made such demands.” It further wrote, “One does not know what compulsions the Government is under, and under whose influence it is, that it refuses to order an inquiry. It seems that former Home Minister Shivraj Patil was not the only obstructor in this regard, but the BJP and the Police were also opposing it, and Prime Minister was supporting this group.” This newspaper further appealed to all secular and sincere people of the country, especially the Muslims, to launch a campaign to unmask such people in the Government.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ *Masoomon ki begunahi samne aani chahiye*” (The innocents must be acquitted), *ibid*.

¹⁹¹ *Batla House Jaach ki mutaliba, Suhel Anjum Rashtriya Sahara* (Urdu) January 23, 2009

¹⁹² *Rojnama Rashtriya Sahara* also published on page 3 a 5 column article titled “Batla House mobina encounter ki ala satah jaach kab hogi?” (When will

The Muslims of Azamgarh organized a demonstration in Delhi on January 29 over the Batla House encounter. The Urdu papers gave wide publicity to this. **Roznama Rashtriya Sahara** (Urdu) published front page news of this demonstration¹⁹³. It published the speeches with communal overtones prominently. Quoting Dr. Asad Rais the newspaper said that “*the people of Azamgarh have not forgotten the murder of the Atif and Sajid. We will not rest until their murderers are brought to justice*”. Maulana Faisal Ahmed Qasmi described Mohan Chand Sharma as a murderer. Qasmi said that “*by decorating him with the Ashok Chakra the Government has added an insult to the injury*” Maulana Arshad Farooq, defending Atif and Sajid as innocent, said “*their bodies were crying for justice and their murder would not go in vain.*”

Sahafat, January 30, also gave prominence to this news¹⁹⁴. This newspaper carried news items on the demonstration whose essence was that the demonstrations were against anti-Muslim policies.¹⁹⁵

Mashriq, January 30, with reference to the demonstration said that the encounter was a fake. Here also the death of Mohan Chand Sharma was questioned, and the fiery speeches on the occasion were given prominence.¹⁹⁶ Amir Rashidi, the convener of Uttar Pradesh Ulema Council, by condemning the Government decision to award Ashok Chakra to Mohan Chand Sharma said that Muslims have lost their faith in the Government.¹⁹⁷ Another news item in the newspaper warned that if

there be an indepth enquiry of the alleged Batla House encounter?), January 23, 2008

¹⁹³ *The article had an inflammatory title “Jantar Mantar par munnakat itijaaji jalasa me Ulema wa Danishwaro ka hukumat ko sakht intbaha (Meeting at Jantar Mantar; Strong warning to the administration). Leftist leaders and teachers from Jamia Millia participated in this meeting.*

¹⁹⁴ *Intakhab aate hi ulema bhi hue sargarm; Ulema Council ka siyasi partiyo se talak. (The arrival of elections has also made the Muslim religious leaders active. The Ulema council disassociates itself from mainstream parties) Sahafat January 30, 2009*

¹⁹⁵ *Muslim dushman policiyo ke khilaf zabardast mujhhida. (Strong opposition to anti-Muslim policies). Ibid*

¹⁹⁶ *Batla House encounter ki jaach ke liye hazaron ulema ka jantar mantar par mujhida. (Thousands of ulema gather at Jantar Mantar to protest the Batla House encounter), Mashriq January 30, 2009*

¹⁹⁷ *According to the newspaper the Ulema Council president Maulana Nizamuddin Ilahi, the President of the Muslim Political Council Dr Taslim*

the Government, police and security agencies do not amend their anti-Muslim policies Muslims will no longer join the army.¹⁹⁸

Hamara Samaj, January 30 issue carried a front page article about the demonstrations titled “*Do not arrest innocent Muslims*”. The article was sub-titled “*United campaign of Muslims against illegal encounters of Muslim youth and state persecution of Muslims*”. The headline fully described the contents of the article. **Hindustan Express** also published this news on its front page.¹⁹⁹

Nai Dunia (Urdu) weekly, in its issue of February 2, published an article criticizing the conferring of the Ashok Chakra on late Inspector Sharma. The newspaper not only dubbed the encounter a fake but also made uncalled for comments against the personality and professionalism of Inspector Sharma. It said that Inspector Sharma was a victim of professional rivalry. But by awarding him the Ashok Chakra the Government has confirmed that the Batla House encounter was genuine. The newspaper has further questioned – “*What was the connotation of awarding the Ashok Chakra before the enquiry was instituted? What is the point in awarding the Ashok Chakra to a person who is looked upon with suspicion by all law abiding citizens and whose role has always remained suspect? In reality, the Manmohan Government has been held hostage by the forces of Hindutva and is deceiving the people of the country.*”²⁰⁰

Roznama Rashtriya Sahara (Urdu), February 2, in an editorial on the demonstration used uncivil language for martyr Mohan Chand Sharma. “*This official in his career had killed 55 people, including the*

Rehmani, The President of the Central Jamiaat Ulema Maulana Fazal Kasimi, Abdul Tahib Khilji of the MILI Council, Dr Zafar Islam Khan of the Muslim Majlis Mushrawat, Dr Kasim Rasul Ilyas of the Jamaat-e-Islami have asked for a judicial enquiry into the Batla House encounter and the immediate release of the innocent youth arrested from Azamgarh.

¹⁹⁸ *Dehshatgardi ke naam par musalmano ko pareshan kiye jane ke khilaaf muhim.” (Campaign against the persecution of Muslims under the guise of terrorism), Mashriq, January 30, 2009*

¹⁹⁹ *Bekasur musalmano ke giraftari ke khilaaf ittejaaz. (Objection against the arrest of innocent Muslims), Hindustan Express, January 30, 2009*

²⁰⁰ *Batla House ke zakhmo par Manmohan sarkar ka namak. The Manmohan Government has sprinkled salt on the wounds of Batla House. Nai Dunia (Weekly) February 2, 2009*

two Kashmiri youth in Ansal Plaza Parking area, which was exposed by the 'famous' Doctor Hari Kisan. But the BJP Government of the day had suppressed the matter entirely." The article continues, "The Muslims living in India cannot digest that this encounter was genuine. Why were all the citizens of India asking for an investigation into the encounter? There had been encounters in the past, but why did not Muslims protest then? Why was the Government insensitive to the demands of an inquiry from all quarters? Instead the Government had put a stamp of legitimacy to the encounter by awarding Inspector Sharma the Ashok Chakra posthumously." The editorial has complained, "People of Azamgarh deeply mourn the death of its two youths and regret the saffron mindset attempt to brand their town as the cradle of terror. People are aggrieved the way this is being followed as a part of a conspiracy."²⁰¹

Safahat, February 2, published an article that said tens of thousands of people were expected at the demonstration. Referring to fiery speeches on the occasion it had quoted from an address, "If we (Muslims) are not allowed to live in peace, we will jeopardize the peace in country."²⁰²

Dawat, February 4, published an editorial on the subject. It says that "Under pressure from the central Government, opposition Bharatiya Janata Party and the police, Lt. Governor Tejinder Khannass has decided against holding an inquiry into the alleged Batla House encounter. Was it because that the two slain youths Atif and Sajid were Muslims? The Central Government on January 26 had presaged the decision of Lt. Governor Tejinder Khanna, when it outraged Muslim sentiments by awarding Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma the Ashok Chakra. Lt. Gov Tejinder Khanna simply added insult to injury."²⁰³

²⁰¹ Azamgarh Ki ulema express (The Ulema Express of Azamgarh), Editorial, Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, February 2, 2009

²⁰² Musalmaano ka mujhhira aur wazir dakhla ki yakeendahini, Sahafat, February 2, 2009

²⁰³ "Batla House encounter ki haqiqat shayad hi ab samne aaye." (The truth about the Batla House encounter may never be revealed) Dawat February 4, 2009

CHAPTER – 2

THE MUMBAI ATTACKS

26/11

"The aim of Bombay terrorists was to continue the global jihad on Indian soil. That's why they sought out American and British passport holders and that's why Israeli and Jews were among the principal targets of the violence....These were not angry students making homemade bombs. These were world-class terrorists. That should tell us that India is now part of global terrorist battleground. If the international Jihadi network decides to treat us on par with Israel, England and America and other countries that are seen as enemies of its twisted version of Islam, then the Bombay attacks may only be a beginning. Worse may follow".

Vir Sanghvi in *The Longest Day*,
Hindustan Times
November 28, 2008

"There are moments in the history of a country when unity is more than a patriotic duty. India stands precisely at that crossroads. The gateway to India lies through the debris of Mumbai and the corpses that lie there.

On the War front (editorial),
The Telegraph
November 29, 2008

"This is a threat to the very idea of India, the very soul of India that we know, that we love – secular, plural, tolerant and open society. I have no doubt that ultimately the idea of India will triumph"

-P. Chidambaram, Home Minister
December 1, 2008

"This time it is different. Forget Batla House, forget Malegaon, or Godhra or Ayodhya. Set aside the normal incivilities about minority community or Hindu terrorism. This is war. This is not a problem of the government or of a political party. It is an attack on the Indian state. It is an attack on all political parties, secular and communal, Left and Right, on fundamentalists of all faiths and of no faith....This is India's own 9/11.

-Lord Meghnad Desai in *Fire This Time*
The Indian Express
November 28, 2008

TIMELINE OF THE MUMBAI ATTACKS

NOVEMBER 26, 2008 ²⁰⁴

9.15 pm: A group of young men (number uncertain) wearing backpacks arrive in a boat at Cuffe Parade fishermen's colony, according to eyewitness accounts. Another dinghy docks at Sasoan Docks, also a landing point for fishermen. The men move out in groups and strike first at Leopold Cafe, firing at random. Minutes later, two or three men hurl a grenade at a petrol pump near Nariman House: the facade of the petrol pump is destroyed. At **9.30 p.m.** three men force their way into Nariman House.

9.30 pm: Two terrorists enter the waiting hall of the Chhatrapati Shivaji. Terminus railway station and shoot at passengers. They hurl grenades between platforms 12 and 15.

9.30 pm: About 10 men enter the new wing of Taj Palace Hotel and open fire in the lobby.

9.35 pm: An unknown number of gunmen enter Oberoi Trident and open fire indiscriminately. At least 20 people, mostly foreigners, are taken hostage.

9.55 pm: Bomb explodes in a taxi in Vile Parle: three pre killed.

November 27, 2008. ²⁰⁵

00.30 am: Anti- Terrorism squad Chief Hemant Karkare, ACP Ashok Kamte and encounter specialist Vijay Salaskar were shot dead outside the Cama Hospital.

6:35 am: Army takes charge; NSG commandos arrive at Taj

3: 00 am: NSG stormed into Oberoi Trident hotel

3:25 pm, 6:00 pm and 6:45 pm: Several hostages, including foreigners, are taken out.

²⁰⁴ "60 hours of Terror in Mumbai" Frontline, Vol. 25 :: No. 25, Dec 06 - 19, 2008

²⁰⁵ ibid

November 28, 2008

Fighting Continues for the Whole day on all the three battlefronts.²⁰⁶ At **3.30 pm**, The NSG begins the final assault at Nariman House. The militants returned fire fiercely, exploding grenades from the lower floors to the top floor where the NSG had landed.

9:00 pm: NSG chief J K Dutt arrives at Nariman house and termed it a “unique operation”. At **9:45 pm** Five hostages, including the Rabbi and his wife, were found dead at the Nariman house.²⁰⁷

November 29, 2008

8.30 am: The operation was finally over. At **9:00 am** Dutt announced that ‘the combing operation’ is over. He said that “We tried to capture the terrorists alive. But the kind of resistance they showed offered us no choice but to kill them,”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ The siege and the rescue, Indian express, December 05, 2008

²⁰⁷ Ibid

²⁰⁸ ibid

PART- I

MUMBAI ATTACKS & ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

For 60 hours between November 26 (2100 hrs) and November 29 (0830 hrs)²⁰⁹, 2008 Mumbai was brutalized by a 70 mm spectacle of terror. Combining simultaneous targeting of multiple locations, blasts, indiscriminate firing at public places, siege of high profile locations, killing foreigners selectively and tactics of guerilla war- the episode took terrorism to a new level. Government of India



figures say 165 persons (civilians and security personnel) were killed whereas 304 were injured. Civilian deaths included 26 foreigners from various nationalities.²¹⁰ It has been claimed that the terrorist carried ammunitions enough to kill 5,000 people²¹¹. It was for the first time that foreigners, especially American, British and Israelis have deliberately been targeted by the terrorist²¹². 26/11 has already drawn comparisons with 9/11, but strategically it has gone a step ahead²¹³. Indian media described it *ab initio* an act of war²¹⁴. It was an example of how a bunch of religio-ideological terrorists with an avowed objective could subvert the nation and shame its might. Mumbai attacks have become a watershed in the annals of contemporary terrorism. Western security experts fear '26/11' would become a model for future attacks in the

²⁰⁹ Terrorist Takeover by Anupama Katakam, Frontline, Decemeber 06-19, 2008

²¹⁰ Vide Dossier presented to Pakistan on January 5, 2009

²¹¹ 'Prompt action saved lives', Daily News & Analysis, December 1, 2008. Rakesh Maira, Jt. Commissioner of Police (Crime) said terrorists had enough explosives and weapons to take 5,000 lives but timely police action at CST saved many lives.

²¹² Foreign nationals in terror crosshairs, The Times of India, November 28, 2008

²¹³ Beyond 9/11, The Times of India, November 30, 2008.

²¹⁴ War on Mumbai, The Telegraph, November 27, 2008; It's War of Mumbai, November 27, 2008; Bloodbath in Mumbai, DNA, November 27, 2008; Mumbai under siege, The Statesman, November 28, 2008

West.²¹⁵ The act has vindicated worst fears in international security circuit about terrorists using the sea.²¹⁶ 26/11 has captivated world opinion like no other terrorist incident in India before.

With passage of time, many things were unravelled by investigations. It has come to light now that the masterminds of 26/11 had plotted at least 20 attacks across the country. Western experts, who mined the data stored in the computer of top Lashkar terrorist Zrar Shah, found that Shah and fellow Lashkar Jihad Zaki-ur-Rahman Lakhvi had drawn elaborate plans to carry out commando-like strikes against scores of Indian targets.²¹⁷

With the benefit of electronic, print and web media those grueling 60 hours siege at Taj Hotel, Oberoi-Trident and Nariman House left a deep impact on India. It was not merely the gruesomeness of the attack that influenced public mind; it was also the heroism of National Security Guards (NSG), Marine Commandos (MARCOS) that inspired nation's latent 'courage under fire'. It created a sense of emotional bonding among people, perhaps last seen during the Kargil War in 1999. A former Indian cricket captain wrote in a Bengali daily that NSG commandos can be role models, and he realized how crucial could their role was in those critical hours²¹⁸.

Terror attack as War

Mainstream Indian Media perceived the Mumbai attacks as a 'War against India'. **The Telegraph** described it as 'War on Mumbai'²¹⁹. **The**

²¹⁵ Mumbai like attack can happen in US: Bush aide, The Times of India, January 9, 2009

²¹⁶ India's fears of terror-via-sea real: US, The Times of India, August 25, 2007. It reports about US Pacific Command Chief, Admiral Timothy J. Keating who said in New Delhi that the terrorists might use the sea to spread mayhem. Then Home Minister Shivraj Patil had said exactly two year before the attack that Lashkar-e-Tayyeiba operatives could use sea route to infiltrate Pakistani mujahideen into India to target atomic power plants, oil plants, defence communications and IT sector in coastal regions (Patil sounds Lashkar terror alert, The Tribune, November 23, 2006)

²¹⁷ 26/11 planners had 20 targets across India, The Times of India, February 21, 2009

²¹⁸ Oraon hote pare role model (They too can be role models) by Sourav Ganguly, Aaj Kaal, December 14, 2008

²¹⁹ War on Mumbai, The Telegraph, November 27, 2008

Times of India headline said ‘It’s War on Mumbai’²²⁰. **The Statesman** wrote ‘Mumbai under siege’²²¹. **Daily News and Analysis (DNA)** headlined ‘Bloodbath in Mumbai’²²². **Mail Today** said ‘Mumbai Terrorized’²²³. The newspapers carried banner headlines on front page to convey the gravity of the situation.

The Pioneer described it as a war waged against the nation, and to be overwhelmed by terror would be to concede defeat to *Jihadis*. “*Marking a sharp departure from previous Jihadi attacks on Mumbai... this time the attackers did not remain in hiding: They wanted the world to see them; they were prepared to die*”²²⁴. The newspaper described it as ‘fidayin’ (suicidal) attack in its very first report²²⁵.

If the newspaper described it as a *fidayin* attack by the *Jihadis*, it was not unreasonable. Deccan Mujahideen, a previously unknown group, claiming responsibility through an e-mail, set the tone for it being a Jihadi attack²²⁶. The mail spoke of liberating ‘Muslim lands’ like Hyderabad and Kashmir from Hindus²²⁷.

Media was familiar with the phenomenon, having received several such e-mails from Indian Mujahideen over the serial blasts. But it did not recognize little known Deccan Mujahideen. It was prompt to detect the distinct signature of Lashkar-e-Taiyyeba in the e-mail²²⁸. Media also perceived the attack as handiwork of Lashkar-e-Taiyyeba, based on

²²⁰ It’s War on Mumbai, November 27, 2008

²²¹ Mumbai under siege, The Statesman, November 28, 2008

²²² Bloodbath in Mumbai, DNA, November 27, 2008

²²³ Mumbai Terrorized, Mail Today, November 27, 2008

²²⁴ This is war waged against the nation, The Pioneer, November 28, 2009

²²⁵ Mumbai Ravaged; Fidayeen attacks paralyse city, Oberoi main targets; 78 die, 200 hurt; many taken hostage, Pioneer, November 27, 2008

²²⁶ Deccan Mujahideen claims responsibility, DNA, November 27, 2008. Also, Terror takes over Mumbai, The Statesman, November 27, 2008.

²²⁷ Deccan Mujahideen e-mail bears Lashkar’s stamp, The Times of India, November 28, 2008. Two persons, claiming allegiance to Deccan Mujahideen, called up a Hindi channel to say the attacks were against ‘excesses’ and ‘atrocities’ against Indian Muslims (On Phone, terrorists pretended to be from Hyderabad, The Times of India, November 28, 2008)

²²⁸ Deccan Mujahideen terror email bears Lashkar’s stamp, The Times of India, November 28, 2008

reports of Maharashtra police investigators²²⁹. **Hindustan Times** wrote “it bore all the hallmarks of Lashkar-e-Taibebba, inspired by Al-Qaeda”²³⁰. Even the purported denial of Lashkar was discredited by **The Hindu** on the ground that the claimant viz. one Srinagar-based Abdullah Ghaznavi has never been heard of by journalist circuit in Srinagar who often receive telephone calls from the Lashkar.²³¹

Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), on November 18, 2008, had intercepted a sat phone conversation of Muzammil, the head of India’s Lashkar operations, saying cargo was on its way. RAW had passed the information on to NSC, Navy and Coast Guard on November 18.²³²

Ironically, Pakistan, trying to extricate itself from the terror charges, acknowledged it was a *Jihadi* attack. Abdullah Hussain Haroon, Pakistan’s permanent representative to the U.N said, 26/11 could be an act of homegrown terrorists. He appealed to the Mullahs from India to ‘*cooperate in promoting a fatwa against suicide bombings and other forms of violence in both countries*’²³³.

While the Urdu press might be going to town proclaiming 26/11 as a conspiracy of CIA, Mossad of Israel and Hindutva forces, a sworn Islamist enemy of Israel actually suspected it a Jihadi attack. Lebanon-based Hezbollah blamed the Mumbai terror attack on the Sunni fundamentalist group Takfiris. **The Times of India** reported the statement of Sayyid Nawwaf al-Musawi, the international relations head of Hezbollah. “*Takfiris are ultra-fundamentalist Sunnis who view the non-Muslim Sunnis as a battleground and all non-Muslim world as a battleground and all non-Muslims as infidels.*”²³⁴

²²⁹ Three Lashkar fidayeen captured, The Hindu, November 28, 2008, Also see, LeT did it: arrested gunman, The Times of India, November 28, 2008.

²³⁰ Lashkar is the prime suspect, Hindustan Times, November 28, 2008. The report said the attack is similar to attacks on Akshardham temple on September 24, 2002, on Ayodhya makeshift temple complex on July 5, 2005 and RSS headquarters in Nagpur on June 2, 2006

²³¹ Lashkar denial, The Hindu, November 28, 2008

²³² Intelligence Lapse or Navy’s failure to act?, The Times of India, December 1, 2008

²³³ After Mumbai, Pakistan wants Indian Mullahs to issue fatwas against suicide bombings, The Hindu, December 17, 2008

²³⁴ Hezbollah blames sunni group for Mumbai attacks, The Times of India, December 7, 2008

The Times of India was referring to Jihad when it asserted that the real problem lies with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. It observed that the violent campaign of extremists in these countries against liberal, democratic values and *‘their commitment to the establishment of an altered world order, based on their exclusionary religious belief’* not only destabilizes the region but also puts the entire world at grievous risk. India offers itself as an immediate and symbolically potent target²³⁵.

A Global Jihad

But the media felt it was no longer an India-specific strike by the *Jihadis*. This is because terrorists had deliberately chosen sites like luxury hotels and a Jewish religious centre that had global implications.

Hindustan Times recognized *‘Mumbai terror strikes fit neatly into paradigm of Jihad international’*²³⁶. To establish its point it cited the precedents like suicide attacks on Marriot Hotel in Islamabad (Sept. 2008) and Serena Hotel in Kabul (Jan 2008) where westerners were the real target of terrorists²³⁷.



‘Mumbai attack was attack on world’, **The Indian Express** crisply headlined a report that claimed that five Israelis, three Germans, one each from Japan, Canada and Australia and two unknown have been killed²³⁸.

There was indeed method in the madness of terrorists. A ‘conscious decision seems to have been made to focus on American, British and Israeli nationals’²³⁹. Several survivors said attackers sought out American and British citizens in particular²⁴⁰. **The Hindu**, based on AFF-PTI

²³⁵ Make the case (editorial), *The Times of India*, December 1, 2008

²³⁶ The age of suicide fighters, *Hindustan Times*, November 28, 2008

²³⁷ The age of suicide fighters, *Hindustan Times*, November 28, 2008

²³⁸ Mumbai attack was attack on world, *The Indian Express*, November 29, 2008. The final body count of foreigners were 26 as stated in the dossier.

²³⁹ Foreign nationals in terror crosshairs, *The Times of India*, November 28, 2008

²⁴⁰ Room-to-room battles at hotels and Jewish centre; Target India’s guests, *The Telegraph*, November 28, 2008

inputs, recounted the story of an escapee Alex Chamberlain, who said terrorists in Oberoi-Trident sought out for British and American nationals.²⁴¹ However, a Turkish couple Seyfi & Meltem Muezzinoglu was released by the terrorists at Oberoi Hotel on identifying themselves as Muslims²⁴².

This was a potent hint that terrorists were Islamists trying to target Anglo-Americans as part of their anti-Western Jihad. **Hindustan Time** wrote a caveat on global Jihad. *“It is time to understand that fearsome global Jihad has come to India. A colonial era police force of hawaldars and sahibs cannot stop it. It is time to stop our endless debates, our waffling, our love of governing by committee and proposal, and create an ultramodern, professional force to tackle ultramodern, professional terrorism”*²⁴³

Being Anti-Jewish or Anti-Israeli is common denominator of Islamist groups. Colaba’s Nariman House (renamed Chabad House in 2006), targeted by terrorists, served as Mumbai headquarters of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish sect Chabad-Lubavitch²⁴⁴. Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his wife Rivka were amongst hostages and brutally tortured to death. **The Times of India** opined that the terrorists had targeted Jews in Nariman House since it was difficult to target that community in the US and Israel because of tough security measures²⁴⁵. The report said that ‘for Islamic terrorist movement, this is a prize assault operation’²⁴⁶. This was vindicated when Israeli defence ministry declared Nariman House massacre as “an enemy action” against the state of Israel²⁴⁷.

²⁴¹ Tense minutes and hours, The Hindu, November 28, 2008

²⁴² Turkish couple let off by terrorists for being Muslims, The Times of India, November 28, 2008

²⁴³ Hindustan Times (November 28, 2008)

²⁴⁴ In Nariman House, Jewish sect targeted, The Times of India, November 28, 2008

²⁴⁵ Jewish connection made Nariman prime target, The Times of India, November 28, 2008

²⁴⁶ ibid

²⁴⁷ Nariman attack aimed at us: Israel, The Times of India, December 2, 2008. Being declared ‘dead in enemy action’ would mean families of those killed would receive same compensation and benefits as those who are killed in terror attacks in Israel.

The Hindu quoted, in two separate despatches, British intelligence saying it an Al-Qaeda attack and Russian secret service saying it as Laskhar-e-Taiyyeba attack, with fighters trained by Al-Qaeda²⁴⁸.

Rudrangshu Mukherjee affirmed in **The Telegraph** that it was a global war. *“If anything has made the world one place — and a smaller one — it is actually terrorism. The borders and boundaries of nation-states have begun to blur not because of the laws of the market, but because of globalized terror. A US citizen can no longer feel safe in Mumbai, just as an Indian is unsafe in any major Western city. Anyone can be a target anywhere. This is the unpredictability embedded in a terror mechanism that is mobile and global”*²⁴⁹.

Identifying security and intelligence lapses

The Telegraph was expressing a truism when it said that saving of India could not be left to the armed forces alone, and the political class would have to wake up to the danger and bring about a change in their attitude and even their system²⁵⁰. The mainstream media did not see giving greatest coverage to the 26/11 as the end of their duty. As the storm blew over it resorted to cool contemplation about plugging the holes in security and intelligence apparatus that made Mumbai vulnerable to 26/11 attacks.

The issue of maritime and coastal security figure high in intelligence and security discourses nowadays²⁵¹. Media took to task the government for neglecting the coastal security. Mumbai-based **DNA** in its very first report said that terror brigade had come to Mumbai via sea²⁵². Within a

²⁴⁸ 'U.K. intelligence suspects Al-Qaeda hand' & 'Our advice ignored: Russia', *The Hindu*, November 28, 2008

²⁴⁹ In Dubious Battle- The threat of terrorism is global, it must be countered globally, *The Telegraph*; November 30, 2008. Rudrangshu Mukherjee is a historian and holds senior editorial position in *The Telegraph*. He is in charge of the edit page.

²⁵⁰ On the War front, *The Telegraph*, November 29, 2008

²⁵¹ Terror on High Seas by Aditya Bakshi, Manas Publications, New Delhi, 2004

²⁵² Terror came via Sea, *DNA*, November 27, 2008. 'Terror came to the city via sea route on the Wednesday night. A white speed boat named MV Alfa, disgorged at least a dozen of terrorists at the Gateway dock. They were armed

day it became evident that terrorists had ‘used the sea route to reach Mumbai from Karachi’²⁵³. This was made possible by recovery of a Porbander-based trawler, Kuber, abandoned five nautical miles away from the Mumbai shoreline. The trawler intercepted on November 27 was found with a GPS map of south Mumbai and satellite phone²⁵⁴. The headless body of its owner Amarsinh Solanki was found aboard, whereas a second decapitated body, with hands tied behind was recovered off Nhava Seva coast²⁵⁵. **The Indian Express** that followed the story over three days on front page suggested Lashkar-e-Taiyyeba maritime operation²⁵⁶.

The Statesman said that attacks have exposed the vulnerability of India’s 7.516-km long coastline, whereby terrorists could ‘create a Kargil like situation along India’s coastline to harbour terror modules in the 1,200-odd barren islands and attack over 200 sensitive strategic installations spread across the country’²⁵⁷. The newspaper cited that nearly 70 percent of illegal arms and ammunitions are routed through the sea, and during the Mumbai serial blasts in 1993, weapons and explosives were brought via sea route²⁵⁸. **The Statesman** thus rued that precious little had been done about coastal security during ‘fifteen lethargic years’ between 1993 and 2008²⁵⁹.

The Indian Express reminded that Defence Minister A.K. Anthony had referred to the possibility of sea-borne attack some six times. The minister had informed the Parliament in March, 2007 about ‘terrorists of

with AK-47 assault rifles, hand grenades and other explosives...Their intention was clear- target foreign nationals in Mumbai’s most prominent luxury hotels. Within a few hours after it docked, Custom officials seized MV Alfa from the gateway dock and seized a huge cache of arms and ammunition’. Also, see- It’s War on Mumbai, The Times of India, November 27, 2008

²⁵³ Lashkar came via sea from Karachi, used Gujarat boat to reach Mumbai, The Indian Express, November 28, 2008

²⁵⁴ Hijacked ship with sat phone seized, The Times of India, November 28, 2008

²⁵⁵ Ruthless planning of hijack: Two headless bodies found, one on boat, another on sea, The Indian Express, November 29, 2008

²⁵⁶ Lashkar came via sea from Karachi, used Gujarat boat to reach Mumbai, The Indian Express, November 28, 2008

²⁵⁷ All at Sea, The Statesman, November 28, 2008

²⁵⁸ Ibid

²⁵⁹ Insecure shores (editorial), The Statesman, November 30, 2008

various *tanzeems* being imparted training and likelihood of them infiltrating through sea-routes²⁶⁰. **Mail Today** carried full page news that why porous coastlines are a cause of worry and said the attacks could have been averted if a vigil was tightened²⁶¹.

The Sunday Indian Express showed ‘how a group of terrorists exploited the porous sea route and trumped three layers of coastal and maritime security to infiltrate into Mumbai and execute one of the deadliest terror attack the country has seen in recent times’²⁶².

India Today claimed that Mumbai police ignored warning about seaborne terrorism given nearly two years ago. *“The input, a copy of which is with INDIA TODAY, said that the ISI and Pakistan Navy is training terrorists for seaborne infiltration. Approximately 500 to 600 terrorists had been trained to infiltrate, disguised as fishermen. The warning elaborates 12 to 18 months training divided into three phases: swimming lessons, handling large boats, laying mines on coasts and planting explosives under bridges and ships. In the last phase, they are taught sea navigation- using GPS, reading the wind, waves, tides and currents, rescue operations, surveillance and concealing explosives”*²⁶³.

India Today revealed that in the past four years, the Gujarat government had sent numerous reminders to the Centre about comprehensive coastal security plan drawn up to secure its 1600 km long coastline. But each time the Home Ministry stonewalled them, the last one being in November 21, precisely five days before the attacks²⁶⁴.

The media continually hammering on a lax coastal security apparently brought results. **The Hindu** reported that Kerala government is equipping 66 police stations to for coastal security in collaboration

²⁶⁰ Antony warned six times of sea attack, The Indian Express, November 29, 2008

²⁶¹ Porous coastline a cause for worry, Mail Today, November 29, 2008.

²⁶² Terror Waves by Manu Pubby and Vikram Rautela, The Indian Express, November 30, 2008

²⁶³ Fidayeen from the sea, India Today; December 8

²⁶⁴ Drowned in Indecision by Uday Mahurkar, India Today, December 15, 2008

with fishermen against possible terrorist incursions²⁶⁵. **The Hindu** also reported on front-page how Defence Ministry has placed emergency purchase orders to bring entire coastline²⁶⁶.

The media claimed that 26/11 could have been prevented if timely warnings were heeded. **Mail Today**, while the firefighting was still in progress in Mumbai, claimed that Mumbai Police had clear intelligence of an imminent terrorist attack on Mumbai. It said Fahim Ahmed Ansari, a LeT operative, currently lodged in Rampur Jail had clearly revealed the plan to Special Task Force of U.P. Police and Mumbai Police which had interrogated him in February-end 2008²⁶⁷. **The Indian Express** pursued the story when UP's Anti-Terrorist Squad moved an application before the Rampur session court requesting permission to collect a certified copy of documents submitted in the Fahim Ansari case²⁶⁸.

DNA claimed that Mumbai Police had ignored at last three different warnings about the attack in recent times. It had received three different and specific inputs in past three months, the last one being as late as November 18, in addition to a steady stream of information over the years that the Arabian Sea was being used by the terrorists, especially LeT, for smuggling arms and ammunitions into mainland India²⁶⁹.

The Mumbai Police had not merely received intelligence, but apparently passed it on to at least one affected party. **DNA** claimed that the management of the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel was clearly told by the Mumbai police in various alerts that "*armed men would barge into the hotel, spraying bullets and planting explosives.*" The management and security staff was told that the terrorists are likely to come through the sea route, and would enter the hotel from the back entrance, which is what exactly happened. Even if half of the Police's suggestions had been

²⁶⁵ Kerala government to intensify coastal security, *The Hindu*, December 20, 2008

²⁶⁶ Rader cover for entire coastline, *The Hindu*, December 21, 2008

²⁶⁷ UP cops forewarned Mumbai Police of attack by Piyush Srivastava, *Mail Today*, November 28, 2008

²⁶⁸ Fahim had forewarned about Mumbai attacks, but no one listened, *The Indian Express*, December 6, 2008

²⁶⁹ Specific Intel warnings were ignored by Jassy Joseph, *DNA*, November 30, 2008

implemented, the report claimed, the attack could possibly have been averted²⁷⁰.

The Indian Express reported that Mumbai sea alert came on November 19. Reportedly, a week before the attack, one of the intelligence agencies had circulated “top secret” information on basis of an intercept that an attack had been planned from the sea on Mumbai. It even mentioned the “possibility” of an Indian fishing trawler being used. Although the input was sent to National Security Council Secretariat and Joint Intelligence Council, as well as shared with Navy and Coast Guard, its seriousness and authenticity somehow got lost in transit²⁷¹.

The Times of India reported a game of accusation and denial between the RAW and Navy over communicating a terror intercept in time. The report said that Intelligence Bureau had in September told National Security Council that Taj hotel could be a terror target. On November 12, another IB advisory warned of terrorists planning to come through sea²⁷².

However, the media perceived the guilt of commission to be always greater than the guilt of omission. It never allowed the analysis of security and intelligence lapses to blur its vision of the war on terror. Dysfunctional intelligence and inept security are akin to poor immunity but not the disease itself. A diagnostic media thus kept its focus on Pakistan. One Pakistan link was certainly in the hands of Police viz. Mohamed Ajmal Amir Kasab.

The Kasab story



Mohammed Ajmal Amir Kasab is world's first *fidayin* attacker arrested.

Ajmal Amir Kasab, the sole surviving 26/11 terrorist, is apparently the first *fidayin* attacker in the world captured alive. The credit goes to Late Tukaram G. Omble, an Assistant Sub In

Warning, by Purnima Swaminathan, DNA, December

6, 2

alert came Nov 19, The Indian Express, November

30,

intelligence lapse or Navy's failure to act? The Times of India,

December 1, 2008

spector of Mumbai Police, who died in the process of capturing him.²⁷³ Kasab's photo of walking through CST with a gun became a fixture on national media

Mail Today carried on front page a picture of Ajmal Amir Kasab (identified as Mohammed Amir Kasab in the paper) with banner headline –“He shot down Karkare and he is from Pakistan”. Kasab is captioned as trained killer of Lashkar-e-Taiyyeba.²⁷⁴

The Hindu broke the story of Kasab (calls him Mohammed Ajmal Air Iman) based on ‘interviews of key investigative officers and interrogation reports’. Therein it informs that the group of ten had spent months training in marine combat and navigational in Pakistan before sailing for Mumbai. The report informs that Lashkar military commander Zaki-ur-Rahman had showed them the detailed maps of Mumbai and films of the targets.²⁷⁵ **The Hindu**'s report also tells that throughout the fighting, the Lashkar headquarters remained in touch with the group, calling on their phones through VOIP (voice-over-internet services).

More than a week later, Kasab's entire confession became available in the media. **The Telegraph** and **The Indian Express** reproduced it after putting together his admissions²⁷⁶. The story of his indoctrination, training, companions, and preparation for mission in Pakistan, sailing for Mumbai and the assault now came out in coherent details.

Media's attention was pinned on Ajmal Amir Kasab's story as it developed on both sides of the Wagha. Ajmal's statement, according to Police, rendered into Hindi, gave a graphic description of his journey into world of *Jihad* and passage to India. The statement is part of the voluminous dossier handed over by India to Pakistan.

²⁷³ The cop who knew no fear, by Nikhil S. Dixit, DNA, December 1, 2008

²⁷⁴ He Shot down Karkare and he is from Pakistan, Mail Today, November 30, 2008

²⁷⁵ Mumbai massacre story unfolds in terrorists interrogation, The Hindu, December 2, 2008

²⁷⁶ ‘We were told to open fire at rush hour, kidnap people & take them to the roof’, The Telegraph, December 11, 2008; The Confessions of Ajmal Ameer Kasab, The Indian Express, December 14, 2008

The newspapers on December 13 broke the story that a rustic person in Faridkot, Pakistani Punjab, has acknowledged Kasab as his son on seeing his picture in the Pakistani media. The Pakistani daily *Dawn* has been able to trace him. **The Indian Express** and **The Telegraph** reported the story with credit to Dawn.²⁷⁷ Keeping a step ahead **The Hindu** reported that Pakistan's Geo News Television has confirmed the report of Dawn.²⁷⁸

Pakistan again released a report claiming Kasab's name was not in its database of citizens. **The Tribune** punctured this claim by saying "*What is being left unsaid is that the database covers only 60 million of the country's population of nearly 160 million. The way his Faridkot village has been made out of bounds for every outsider is clinching evidence in itself.*"²⁷⁹

Kasab had already written a letter in Urdu to Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi. **The Times of India** reported it on front page. Excerpts from the letter, reproduced, reads "*What may be worse for Islamabad is Kasab's confession in Urdu in his letter: "Mein sabse bada gunehgar hoon, kitne bekassor logon ki jaan li hain, Khuda mujhe maaf karein (I am the biggest sinner, I have killed so many innocent people, may God forgive me)". With filial devotion, he added, "sabse bara gunehgar to mere maa-baap ka hoon... unke dil ko thes pahuchaya hain (my biggest crime is against my parents... I have given them immense pain)*"²⁸⁰.

The account, in its inset, refers to Geo TV report. According to it Ajmal had told his mother that his fate was now in Allah's hands. '*The report is yet another blow to Islamabad's claim that the Mumbai perpetrators were not Pakistani as residents recounted events that tally with details Kasab confessed to Maharashtra ATS officer*'²⁸¹. If Pakistan finally

²⁷⁷ 'I accept the truth, this is my son Ajmal', *The Indian Express*, December 13, 2008; 'Truth, this is my son Ajmal' *The Telegraph*, December 13, 2008

²⁷⁸ Ajmal is a Pakistani: *Geo TV*, *The Hindu*, December 13, 2008

²⁷⁹ Abandoned by Pakistan (editorial), *The Tribune*, December 27, 2008

²⁸⁰ Kasab in his own words: I am a Pakistan terrorist by S.Ahmed Ali, *Times of India*, December 14, 2008

²⁸¹ He met his mother three months ago, *The Times of India*, December 14, 2008

acknowledged Kasab to its citizen, after denying and feigning ignorance, the media could claim much credit.

Focus on Pakistan

On November 27, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said that the attacks have ‘external linkages’. Choosing to be more explicit he said, ‘*We will take up strongly with our neighbours that the use of their territory for launching attacks on us will not be tolerated*’²⁸². **The Times of India** by asking ‘*Pak pushing hardened Jihadis?*’ specifically doubted the ISI. With operation Black Tornado still on to flush out the terrorists, the newspaper presciently termed the attack ‘clearly the handiwork of *Jihadis* from across the border’. The report said, ‘*whenever Pakistani agencies have thought of delivering a massive strike against India, they have tended to use Lashkar and Jaish operative. This has been the case in the Parliament attack case, the Ayodhya terror episode, attacks on the outskirts of Jammu, and the Mumbai suburban train bombings*’²⁸³. The report argued that Pakistan project to foster ‘home grown’ terror was intended to create an impression that ‘India’s internal conditions were responsible for terrorism, not the cross border traffic.’²⁸⁴ But when Indian Mujahideen’s local base has been crippled by police arrests, Pakistan took recourse to its tried and tested Jihadi allies like Lashkar-e-Taiyyeba.²⁸⁵

The day, the report appeared, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee asserted ‘preliminary prima facie evidences, indicates elements in Pakistan are involved.’²⁸⁶ An irked Pakistan called this Jingoism. **The Pioneer** said, ‘*the sheer magnitude, sophistication, planning and determination of the Mumbai attack clearly bear the imprint of Pakistan’s ISI along with traces of the highly sophisticated*

²⁸² Every perpetrator of terror will pay heavy price: PM, The Indian Express, November 28, 2008

²⁸³ Pak pushing hardened Jihadis? The Times of India, November 28, 2008

²⁸⁴ Ibid

²⁸⁵ Ibid

²⁸⁶ Pak responsible, says Pranab, The Pioneer, November 29, 2008. See also, Pakistan has gone back on promise to check terror, Pranab, The Times of India, November 29, 2008

*modus operandi of the Al Qaeda*²⁸⁷. **The Tribune** said that Pakistan government cannot get away by claiming that it had no knowledge of the terrorist operating from its territory. After all the terrorists had come from Pakistan on a ship by violating all international laws that govern territorial waters.²⁸⁸

The Indian Express published a report on mobile phone conversation between terrorists and their mastermind in Karachi as intercepted by intelligence agencies in Taj Mahal Hotel and Nariman House. The record of at least 11 such conversation showed that they were in touch with same person 'Amir' in Karachi. The report piquantly titled '*Hotel jala do, public bhagegi, tum escape kar lena, Karachi told Taj terrorist on phone*' ('set the hotel on fire, guests will flee, you escape in the melee') was self-explanatory of terror²⁸⁹.

The Indian Express, pointed to direct and incriminating linkages with Pakistan. It said that most of the grenades used in Mumbai have their source in Pakistan and some of them are from the Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) in Wah city in north of Pakistan's Punjab province- also the source of grenades and explosives used in 1993 Mumbai serial blasts²⁹⁰. *Similar grenades were found to have been used or seized from terrorists involved in the 1993 Mumbai serial bomb blasts, the 2001 Parliament attack and on the three militants gunned down while trying to attack the RSS headquarters in Nagpur in June 2006.*²⁹¹

The Hindu reported that internet phone accounts used by terrorists were paid for in Pakistan. An unidentified individual using false identification papers routed \$290 to the VOIP service Vox Phone through a Karachi office of the money-transfer giant Western Union²⁹².

²⁸⁷ Pak responsible, says Pranab, by Shobori The Pioneer, November 29, 2008

²⁸⁸ Attack on India- Pakistan is wholly to blame, The Tribune, November 29, 2009

²⁸⁹ Hotel jala do, public bhagegi, tum escape kar lena, Karachi told Taj terrorist on phone', The Indian Express, November 30, 2008

²⁹⁰ Parliament, Mumbai: grenades of same make, The Indian Express, December 3, 2008

²⁹¹ ibid

²⁹² Mumbai terror cash trail leads all the way to Karachi, The Hindu, December 10, 2008

Similarly the Deccan Mujahideen terror e-mail, apparently generated over Hindi language voice-recognition software, was sent from a Lahore-based server.²⁹³

On January 5, 2009 India placed before Pakistan a dossier of incriminating material over Mumbai attack²⁹⁴. The same was also presented to the US, the UK, Israel and other countries who citizens had died in the attack.

The media was fascinated with novelist Salman Rushdie's catchphrase 'All terror roads lead to Pakistan'²⁹⁵. Rushdie had said it during a panel discussion in New York on December 18. *The Hindu* in its report said, "*Terming Pakistan as the centre of world terrorism, noted author Salman Rushdie has said the fact that terrorist organisations are all based in that country. Mr. Rushdie slammed Pakistan for its "cynical denial" that the terrorists involved in Mumbai strikes were not its nationals*"²⁹⁶. Rushdie subsequently exhorted the end of western aid to Pakistan²⁹⁷. Around the same time there was a consorted legislative response to terror that got debated in the media.

²⁹³ ibid

²⁹⁴ Diplomatic offensive, India gives Pak proof, The Times of India, January 6, 2009. The dossier contained confession of Kasab, details of his family in Pak's Okhara dist, LeT's training camps, attackers' journey to Mumbai, identities of 9 dead attackers, GPS reading of Karachi-Mumbai route taken from the device recovered from landing raft, Satphone details of LeT handlers in Pak who were guiding attackers, intercepts of VOIP calls on US-based service providers, Callphonix, between attackers and LeT commanders Zarar Shah, Muzammil, Abu Al Qafa and Abu Hamza Pak email ID used by Zarar Shah to open deccanmujahideen@yahoo.com account through which he owned up attacks.

²⁹⁵ Pak centre of World Terrorism, The Times of India, December 19, 2008. Rushdie's real quote was, "All the roads of world terrorism led to Pakistan that has got velvet treatment with zero result".

²⁹⁶ 'All terror roads lead to Pakistan, says Rushdie', The Hindu, December 19, 2008

²⁹⁷ Mumbai attack 'act of war', stop Western aid to Pak: Rushdie, Hindustan Times, January 4, 2008; Stop Aid to Pak, Rushdie tells Britain, The Times of India, January 4, 2009

Tougher Anti-terror Law

The Parliament showed unanimity in condemning the Mumbai terror attacks. Members in both houses expressed their anger over the heinous outrage²⁹⁸. It found expression through a legislative response. On December 16, the Union government introduced National Investigative Agency Bill 2008 and Unlawful Action Prevention (Amendment) Bill 2008 in Parliament two days after these had been cleared by the cabinet²⁹⁹. On December 17, the bills were passed by Lok Sabha after six hours of debate.³⁰⁰

The Times of India, in its editorial, tried to strike a balance between stronger arm of law and freedom of citizens, in troubled times. *“The proposed provisions in UAPA are part of a war strategy. They may scar the liberal face of this democratic country. But do we have a choice considering the unconventional nature of the enemy and the extraordinary circumstances in which the war is being waged?”*³⁰¹ The editorial hoped it would not be a permanent fixture and subject to periodic, ideally annual, review.

The Pioneer found it insufficient and remained sceptic of government's resolve to fight terror. It did not believe that UAPA, which had been amended once in 2004-05, will be properly used to fight terrorism. *“Ultimately, what matters is not the law but the Government's political determination, something which is alien to the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues.”*³⁰²

The Hindu was more concerned about its misuse than uselessness. *‘Harsh laws can do little to deter the kind of people, for example, who perpetrated the recent horror in Mumbai; at the same time, they are prone to considerable misuse in the hands of the state.’*³⁰³ It suggested

²⁹⁸ Parliament condemns Mumbai terror attacks with one voice, *The Hindu*, December 12, 2008. Also, LS unity gives way to political one-upmanship in Rajya Sabha, *The Indian Express*, December 12, 2008

²⁹⁹ Bills on anti-terror law, NIA introduced, *The Hindu*, December 17, 2008

³⁰⁰ Lok Sabha passes anti terror bill, *The Hindu*, December 18, 2008

³⁰¹ Act, with caution (editorial), *The Times of India*, December 18, 2008

³⁰² Getting its Act together (editorial), *The Pioneer*, December 18, 2008

³⁰³ Two steps backward (editorial), *The Times of India*, December 19, 2008

measures like beefing up intelligence and investigative apparatus and the police force.

The Tribune welcomed National Investigative Agency soon as the bills were cleared by the Cabinet and made little fuss over the UAP (Amendment) Bill. The newspaper wondered why it took a terrorist assault in Mumbai for the Union Cabinet to set an NIA, which was overdue. *“It is only the Centre that can play a leadership role and take adequate measures to combat terror and protect the country. The NIA will have its own cadre, including prosecutors and cases of terrorism will be tried in special fast track courts.”*³⁰⁴

The Telegraph found the UAP (Amendment) Bill was flawed with ‘fear and haste’. *“The giving of extraordinary powers to the police is invariably a double-edged sword in a democracy. While circumstances often justify the creation of these special powers for the police, the powers are always open to abuse”*³⁰⁵.

The Statesman expressed its reservation by describing it as a political tight ropewalk. The state polices will resent NIA encroaching on their authority. The Parliament was attacked, it said, despite POTA and Mumbai despite MCOCA. *“The challenge for Chidambaram is to inspire nationwide police reform, liberate the men in khaki from political misuse and end their self-induced alienation from the public”*³⁰⁶.

Media overlooks local link

The media had no doubt played a constructive role by its coverage, criticisms and pursuit of leads. But it left a lot to be desired in a particular sector namely the issue of unearthing local links. The magnitude of the attack, the terrorists’ familiarity with the city, knowledge of its sensitive spots indicates that this could not have been possible without local support. This, however, is an opinion not a certainty. Media, consciously or otherwise, appears to have missed it.

On February 17, 2008 L.K. Advani, leader of the Opposition, demanded a probe into the local support in Mumbai attacks. *“The attack has not been thoroughly investigated and Mumbai Police giving a*

³⁰⁴ More power for Centre (editorial), The Tribune, December 17, 2008

³⁰⁵ Arms and Agent (editorial), The Telegraph, December 18, 2008

³⁰⁶ Tightrope walk (editorial), The Statesman, December 19, 2008

certificate that no local hand was involved is shameful.....Such an attack cannot be planned without local help and we still demand that the probing agencies should investigate this also."³⁰⁷

On February 25, 2009, the Crime Branch of Mumbai Police filed 11,280 page chargesheet in MCOCA court in 26/11³⁰⁸. It named Kasab and two Indian nationals as main accused, whereas 35 Pakistanis were wanted accused. The two arrested Indians viz. Fahim Ansari and Shahbuddin Ansari were the local links.

All newspapers on February 26, 2009 published the news on the front page. It was notably **The Pioneer** that emphasized that the chargesheet proved local links³⁰⁹. **The Hindu** highlighted 35 Lashkar operatives from Pakistan named in the chargesheet³¹⁰. **The Times of India** emphasized on terrorists of 26/11 keeping in touch over one Colonel R. Sadatullah referred to as 'Maj-Gen Sahab'³¹¹. **The Indian Express** also highlighted on the state-of-the-art communication technology used by Lashkar-e-Tayyeiba to keep in touch with the terrorists of 26/11³¹². **The Statesman** called it a chargehsheet against Kasab³¹³.

It belatedly came to light in media that '*investigations revealed the role of Bangladeshis associated with the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami and the Indian Mujahideen providing logistic and ground support to the Lashkar-e-Taiyyeba module*'³¹⁴.

³⁰⁷ 26/11, L K Advani alleges local help, The Statesman, February 18, 2009. Also, People will see hand behind inflation, The Economic Times, February 18, 2009

³⁰⁸ 35 Lashkar men from Pakistan in charge sheet, The Hindu, February 26, 2009

³⁰⁹ 26/11 chargesheet proves local support, The Pioneer, February 26, 2009

³¹⁰ 35 Lashkar men from Pakistan in charge sheet, The Hindu, February 26, 2009

³¹¹ 26/11 calls traced to Pak colonel, The Times of India, February 26, 2006

³¹² Tech trail in 26/11: GPS had 50 Karachi spots, Pak phones and payment in Italy, The Indian Express, February 26, 2009

³¹³ Charges filed against Kasab, The Statesman, February 26, 2009

³¹⁴ Local support for 26/11, The Pioneer, February 25, 2009

PART-II

MUMBAI ATTACKS & HINDI NEWSPAPERS

The core concern of reporting, analysis and editorials in Hindi newspapers on Mumbai terror attacks was national interest. The attack was perceived as an assault on nation's identity and integrity. The Mumbai attack was perceived in the background of terrorist acts across the country in the last one and a half decade. The Hindi newspapers, by targeting the anti-Indian terrorist organizations and ISI, advocated a stronger line of action by the Indian state. It tried to mould in positive direction the anti-terrorist popular sentiments built up post-Mumbai. The Hindi newspapers criticized the role of police and intelligence agencies, but never allowed it to get better of the campaign against terror. Additionally, it rejected any attempt to link Mumbai events with internal political situation.



ATS Chief Hemant Markare tried to lead from the front. But the battle was beyond ATS.

There was little significant difference in the approach of the English and Hindi press when it came to 26/11. The editorial comments in Hindi newspapers were incisive and suggest their concern for safeguarding the nation from forces detrimental to democracy, freedom and secularism on one hand and India's unity and integrity on the other. All of them presented facts and devoted space to generate public opinion for a strong state capable of responding to terrorism with an iron fist. Most refused to play to the gallery and displayed their maturity and proffered a pragmatic approach to handling the crisis.

It was crystal clear to the Hindi newspapers that the attacks had originated in Pakistan and was inspired by the Jihadi ideology. Hard hitting editorials in the Hindustan, Aaj, Dainik Jagaran convincingly stated that Pakistan was unequivocally the perpetrator of this heinous incident.

Hindustan wrote *“Now there is no doubt that the Mumbai attacks are linked to anti-India terror elements in Pakistan. This can also be*

understood from the feeble reactions from Pakistan, contrary to past tradition, against Indian allegations..."³¹⁵

AAJ described the attacks as the "worst ever terrorist attack" and mentioned that "*the way the financial capital of India, Mumbai, was attacked on Wednesday night was the first of its kind of attack in India. The suicide attackers struck such important sites to horrify the whole world*"³¹⁶. The newspaper found the attacks to be a handiwork of an organization of the caliber of Al-Qaida³¹⁷. It also nailed the lies of the Pakistani Government made to the international community about its fight against terror.

AAJ also declared Pakistan as an untrustworthy neighbor and called for formulating a policy to eliminate the root of terror. It wrote "*The reality is that the terrorist infrastructure is still intact in Pakistan. Its proof lies in the fact that from Karachi to Muzaffarabad, hundreds of terror camps are still operational, from where youth are being trained before being sent across the border. The Pakistani intelligence agency was involved in the blast outside Indian Embassy in Kabul in 2008. Pakistan has denied its involvement even after the Afghan President Hamid Karzai provided all proofs. Under international pressure, Pakistan agreed to investigate the case but later retracted. Pakistan is a country that can never be trusted and it is time we shaped our policies keeping this hard reality in mind. Let us not forget that hundreds of innocent people have been killed in India in the last five years. It is necessary that instead of taking Pakistan at face value, a policy needs to be formulated to check Pakistan, the real source of terror.*"³¹⁸

Dainik Jagaran attacked Pakistani leadership and appealed to the Indian state to take appropriate action against the rogue country. It wrote "...*after killing the ruthless marauders who came from Pakistan it is now*

³¹⁵ "Dabaw mein Pakistan" (Pakistan under pressure), Hindustan Editorial, November 30, 2008

³¹⁶ "Bhishantam aatanki hamla" (Worst ever terrorist attack), Editorial, November 28, 2008.

³¹⁷ Op cit, *Though an organization named Deccan Mujahideen has taken responsibility for this attack but it seems that this is a deed of an organization of the caliber of Al Qaida.*

³¹⁸ "Udarta nahi, sakhti jaruri (Toughness, not liberality, called for), Editorial, Aaj, November 30, 2008

*the responsibility of the Indian Government to take on the Pakistani leadership... ”*³¹⁹

Rajasthan Patrika felt the need to perceive attack on Mumbai in the context of global terrorism. “Since terrorism was a global problem, it needed to be seen in a global perspective.” It was also unambiguous in stating that the war against terror should move beyond politics and also called the citizens to be vigilant against any terrorist attempts. It wrote that “*It is quite clear that Pakistan is training the terrorists. Such things go on in PoK. Then why are we silent? Why are we evading hard decisions? The entire country is keeping a close look as to what the Centre does about Pakistan. But the Centre is only concerned about vote bank politics,*”³²⁰

Hindi Papers also highlighted the failure of security agencies in preventing the Mumbai attacks.

Amar Ujala while calling for a united fight against terrorism It criticized the ill preparedness of the security agencies and also the political blame game which gives the terror agents a chance to execute their evil designs. So it appealed for a united response by the political class along with everyone in the country. As it found that despite of the prior warnings of the attacks, it could not be stopped because of inner political bickering.

It wrote that - “*Last year itself they had (the terrorists) declared a war against India when they attacked the court campuses in three cities of Uttar Pradesh. But we ignored the warnings. So, while they continued their killings we continued to get killed. There haven’t been so many terror incidents ever in the history as in the last one year... the confidence of the terrorists had increased after every successive incident; while we have been inclined to go in a phase of denial until the next incident. This time they came from Karachi in a boat, then boarded a ferry (dinghy) snatched a police-jeep and entered two of the biggest hotels of the country. They made the railway station, hospital, and even cinema halls their targets. They killed the officers of ATS which is considered among the best in the country. They fired on the common people, including the foreign tourists, businessmen and politicians. More*

³¹⁹ *Avishvasniya Pakistan* (Untrustworthy Pakistan), editorial, November 30, 2008

³²⁰ “*Jeeno to do*” (Let us live), Editorial, December 1, 2009

*than hundred people were killed and around three hundred people injured. Yet our politicians say that this will not have any impact on our image*³²¹. ”...

Similar viewpoints were expressed in an article by Kiran Bedi where she had said that “...*Terrorists are fighting war not against uniformed services, but citizenry. They are taking the lives of innocent citizens. This is a blow to our pride, dignity, status and economy. The war against America and Britain is being fought on our soil... Common people will have to wake up now*”³²².

Nai Dunia (Hindi) in an editorial criticized the security failure and asked whether all those who are responsible for the security lapses should be penalized. In this editorial it also mentioned the earlier intelligence inputs that were available with the security establishments yet it was ignored. It argued that there is not one rather many culprits who deserves to be punished. “*Though one culprit has been punished by making him to resign(Shivraj Patil) but there are, infact, more culprits...Are they eligible for any relaxation? And if they are given relaxation then will the country be secured, will the faith of people be restored?*”³²³

While the bravery of our security forces was never in doubt, there was a sense of apprehension that the various arms of the security apparatus could not work to their fullest capability and that there were obvious chinks in the armour. The lack of coordination and the apparent absence of resources have also been highlighted by various editorials. The fact that even though intelligence sources had perceived a threat from the sea, it was not taken cognizance of. The fear that the terrorists might have received help from within India has also been voiced. The porous border is another issue of concern. Another issue that the editorials took up was of the people losing patience with the lacklustre response of the Indian government to the intermittent Pakistani terrorist attacks on Indian soil.

Dainik Jagran while praising the heroism of NSG and Police in rescuing Mumbai was critical of the security arrangements in the

³²¹ *Milkar lare*, (Lets fight together), Editorial, November 28, 2008

³²² “*Ab janata ko jagana hi hoga*”(The citizenry will have to wake up now), Kiran Bedi, IPS, Rashtriya Sahara (Hindi),November 30, 2008

³²³ “*Doshi aur bhi hai*” (there are other culprits as well), Nai Dunia, December 03, 2008

country. It advocated stern action against those responsible for the security lapses. It wrote that “*The Union Home Minister had warned umpteen times about the threat of a terrorist attack from the sea. Did it all fall on deaf ears? If the shoreline of Gujarat were put under proper surveillance, such a catastrophic attack might have been prevented. It is obligatory, after the national humiliation in Mumbai, that those whose omissions proved so costly are held accountable for their lapses. Since there was prior warning, the omission is unpardonable*”.

The paper further expressed concern that “*It is disheartening that after our land borders have been infiltrated, our maritime frontiers too are no longer appearing unassailable. This is at a time, when several coastal states are clamouring to the government for increasing the security of coasts. Instead of paying heed to this legitimate demand, the government is making hollow promises. If India, cannot make its frontiers impregnable, merely talking about fighting terror has little meaning. The country’s intelligence agencies also need to be rapped on the knuckles as they have shown their complete ineptitude once again. It appears that our internal security is plagued with faults*”³²⁴

An article in **Rashtriya Sahara (Hindi)** pressed further the need of better security while pointing out the local help the terrorist might have got in their mission. It wrote that “*If internal security is spruced up, intelligence agency is fortified, then terrorists will think a hundred times before coming. It must also be investigated why terrorists are sheltered in India? Terrorist cannot attain their ends without the help of local people. When armed terrorists can come by the sea route and enter The Taj and The Oberoi, It is time to think*”³²⁵.

The **Hindustan** also took seriously the failure of the Indian security agencies in maintaining coordination “... *Two things come to light after the Mumbai incident. First, those who were involved in the Mumbai attacks had good and accurate coordination in their organization from Karachi to Jalalabad and from Mumbai to Bangladesh. Second, the*

³²⁴ “*Rashtraghati laparwahi*”(A lethal negligence), Dainik Jagran, November 29, 2008

³²⁵“*Desh ke liye chunauti bani Mumbai ki jang*”(Battle in Mumbai, a challenge to the country), Prasoon Joshi, Rashtriya Sahara (Hindi), November 29, 2008

*unwieldy structure that we have created in our country to prevent such incidents actually prevented coordination among themselves... ”.*³²⁶

Amar Ujala strongly criticized the lax response from Pakistan and dissuaded the government from harbouring illusions that Pakistan would cooperate in the investigation of 26/11 attacks. In the light of audacity and violence of the Pak-sponsored terrorists in Mumbai, we should send Islamabad some hard messages.

It wrote that *“With the benefit of hindsight it is hard to believe that Islamabad will cooperate this time. There is no doubt that Pakistan seems to be under great pressure at present ...America and Israel are angry over the killing of their citizens in Mumbai.... Also, the two persons, who are at the center of power in Islamabad, are not as politically mature as Musharraf, Nawaj Sharif or late. Benazir Bhutto... yet it will be presumptuous to imagine that Islamabad will yield to Indian pressure this time... ”*³²⁷

The same newspaper, two days later, pleaded a security policy. It wrote *“...The manner in which the citizens across country are expressing their outrage, a review of the nation’s security policy becomes necessary...This time, the manner in which our intelligence agencies, Navy and state governments’ are accusing each other clearly shows that we have no security policy in place. There is an extreme deficiency in coordination. Our cops are condemned to respond to AK-47s with their lathis or .303 rifles. It takes nine long hours for the National Security Guards to reach the affected spot. It is thus imperative that our leaders abandon the mindset of pre-British era princely potentates and formulate permanent policies for the security of the nation ”*³²⁸

When Pakistan declared that the Mumbai attacks were executed by non-state actors, **Amar Ujala** strongly condemned this argument of Pakistan and opined that it is well known that Pakistan is the hotspot of all terrorist activities.

³²⁶ Bekhabar khufia tantra,(Intelligence agencies caught unawares), editorial, November 30, 2008

³²⁷ *“Fir Wahi Dhulmulan ”* (Again the same vacillation), Amar Ujala, editorial, December 3, 2008,

³²⁸ *“ Nayi suraksha niti chahiye”*(Needed, a new security policy), Editorial, Amar Ujala, December 5, 2008

It wrote that “Pakistan is really adept in hoodwinking others. It can declare its citizens as ‘stateless actors’; it can abduct parents of Kasab, fearing they might spill the beans, by sending its intelligence agents to Faridkot; and its President can propagate a rumour that he had been threatened of an attack by the foreign minister of India. And now Pakistan, beset with international pressure, is pretending that it has destroyed the training camps of Lashkar-e-Taiyyeba.....Pakistan is afraid to lay its hands on LeT and Jaish-e-Mohammed leaders like Hafez Mohammed Sayyid and Maulana Masood Azhar. Actually, by such charades, it is biding time and deceiving its master America under the pretext of helping of India to nab real culprits³²⁹”.

This newspaper also welcomed India’s move to Security Council **Amar Ujala** considered the proof of Pakistan’s involvement in 26/11 attacks as “irrefutable “ *It wrote that “Our government, in view of irrefutable proofs of Pakistani involvement in 26/11 attacks and international pressure on that country, have done the right thing by approaching the United Nations’ Security Council. Otherwise, we have refrained till date, from complaining about Pakistan in Security Council. Actually we were always paranoid that taking such step would give mileage to Kashmir problem, whereas we wanted to avoid its internationalization. But it’s unreasonable to maintain silence on Pakistan’s nefarious deeds on that count alone”*³³⁰ .

The newspaper made a reference the difference in the response to 9/11 by the USA and 26/11 by India. An editorial said “... *only a sprinkling of people opposed the Patriots’ Act promulgated in the aftermath of 9/11. Whenever an act is formulated, it is natural to have some demerits along with advantages. But in India, everyone considers himself privileged. TADA and POTA were formulated to combat terrorism but they were opposed tooth and nail. It is not as if the opposition was unjustified – there was a possibility of the government misusing its provisions. There is no reason why the government should not take the opposition into*

³²⁹ “Pakistan Ka dhakosala”(The charade of Pakistan) Editorial, December 9, 2008

³³⁰ In “Now, in Security Council’s court”, editorial, Amar Ujala December 11, 2008,

*confidence while formulating such laws. Terrorism should not be linked with vote-bank politics."*³³¹

Hindi newspapers welcomed the united response by the members of Parliament. **Dainik Jagran** wrote that *"It was welcome to hear the Members of Parliament speak in one voice against terrorism. ...it is hard to remember the last time our leaders had united to irrespective of their party interests..."* It further noted that *"...it is necessary that whatever the political parties have said in the Parliament must match their resolve. It is necessary that every organ of the government improves its style of working. It is also necessary that political parties agree on the issues of internal-security. They will have to understand that some issues are beyond the realm of politics"*³³²

Later, commenting on Pakistan's continuous denial of responsibility over its own citizen's involvement in the Mumbai carnage **Dainik Jagran** said that *"India should be forewarned about the intentions of Pakistan by the manner in which the latter is vacillating acting against the terrorist infrastructure on its soil. Pakistan has rejected outright the evidences connected to Mumbai attack, presented to it by the United States of America and Britain...In view of Pakistan's underhand approach, it becomes imperative that India acts tough, and also convinces the United Nations Security Council to discharge its obligation against Pakistan's willful promotion of terror..."*³³³

Finally, Pakistan's partial acceptance that the Mumbai attackers had conspired from their territory was welcomed by the Hindi newspapers. They did so with a note of caution that India need not feel content.

Nai Dunia (Hindi) wrote that *"Finally... Pakistan has accepted that the perpetrators had conspired on its territory. Pakistan has somersaulted several times before. It mocked the incontrovertible proof given by India, calling them information, not evidence...India can neither reject this positive development, nor sit back in contentment. Pakistan's internal problems are so acute, that its Prime Minister and*

³³¹ *"Hum ek sao paanch(We are hundred and five)"*, editorial, Amar Ujala, December 12, 2008

³³² In *"Ek swar mein Sansad"* (Parliament in unison), editorial, Dainik Jagran, December 12, 2008

³³³ *"Defiant Pakistan"*, Editorial, December 30, 2008

President don't converge on statements. A country fully dependent on foreign aid, and its economy devastated by recession, and terrorists are trying to run the show from behind the scene may take any unpredictable path towards suicide”³³⁴.

Dainik Bhaskar wrote that “...Pakistan, by accepting that the 26/11 Mumbai attacks were plotted on a part of its territory has demonstrated prudence. India and the world community can take comfort from the fact that, for the first time, their efforts are showing results. ..It has become characteristic of Pakistan to deny its involvement in such incidents. Mandarins in Pakistan don't blinks while negating the truth even as images of Pak terror camps have appeared on television screens worldwide...India's grievances would be redressed to an extent if the investigations are continued honestly and taken to their logical conclusions”³³⁵

Jansatta too welcomed this move of Pakistan and added that “It is expected that Pakistan would take its action to its logical conclusion, which means, apart from going to the roots of Mumbai attack, it advances towards dismantling the entire terror infrastructure on its soil. This would be in the interest of Pakistan, because terrorism has become a threat to its unity, stability and democracy. Secondly, this would bolster its trustworthiness and stature in eyes of the world.”³³⁶

Pakistan along with the acceptance of guilt has also put some questions to India. **Hindustan** wrote that “It may be possible Pakistan has raised questions to escape domestic criticism. There are many questions which India can easily answer. But India's longtime question

³³⁴ PAK NE KABOOLA APRADH, (Pakistan owns up its guilt)Nai dunia (Hindi) Delhi, February 14, 2008

³³⁵ “HAZAR INKAAR KE BAAD, EK SWIKAR, (A thousand denials later, an acknowledgement; If terrorism were to be eliminated, Pakistan's FIR spells a modicum gain) Dainik Bhaskar, February 13, 2009

³³⁶ “Durust Ayad” (Definite in coming) Jansatta, February 14, 2008. It wrote that “For the first time Pakistan has adopted an affirmative stand in Mumbai attack case. After a month of refutations and lackadaisical approach it has acknowledged that 26/11 attacks were partly plotted on its soils, and the attackers were its citizens”

of ending terrorism is of India itself and we need its answer at any condition”³³⁷.

³³⁷ “Jawab mein saval” (A question in the answer), Hindustan, editorial, February 16,2009

PART- III

MUMBAI ATTACKS & URDU NEWSPAPERS

The entire world was astounded at the *Jihadi* attack on Mumbai. The entire country saw live on television the havoc wreaked by the *Jihadis*. The *Jihadis* made no attempt to conceal their identity nor had any doubts about their mission. There was little scope for doubting their identity. The serially produced evidences immediately after the attack have reconfirmed that 26/11 attacks were scripted in Pakistan. Terrorists who were Pakistani citizens and trained by military and mullah were sent in India to perpetuate terror. Indian state has been fully aware of the gravity of this event and such daring trend. Hence Pakistan was aptly warned at both diplomatic and political levels. Even the military option was not ruled out by the Indian leadership. Pakistan shrewdly tried to revert the allegation on India that the incident was in the aftermath of the internal (communal) politics of India, but in vain. Moreover, the severity of the wound on the nation exhorted even those intellectuals who had been traditionally sympathetic to Pakistan to preach and warn it rather pleading for dialogue and bilateral relationship.

However, Urdu newspapers turned the incident on its head. There is limit to freedom of expression which any individual or even the media enjoy in democracy. To that extent these newspapers always tried to abuse the freedom of expression surpassing all ethical limits enjoyed by it. The India Urdu newspaper pontificated that Israeli spy agency Mossad and US secret service CIA were involved in the attack. The gist is that most Urdu newspapers tried to expunge the role of Pakistan's ISI, Lashkar-e-Taibiyeba and Indian Mujahideen for the attack. For this they gladly chose an amazing argument that Pakistan is itself a victim of terror; thus it is highly unlikely that its secret service ISI would do anything harm to upset India. These newspapers have absolved the terrorists' of the charge of killing Mumbai ATS chief Hemant Karkare. Interestingly one more fact which emerged in post 26/11 was that majority of Indian Urdu press, Pakistani media and the Chinese press have shown congruency in their views and language. Can it be mere coincidence?

The Communist Party of China, in its mouthpiece 'People's Daily' carried an editorial on November 28, 2008 saying that 'Hindu terrorists' were involved in the Mumbai terror attack but the Government of India was still accusing Pakistan.

It was not unnatural for the Pakistani newspapers like Jang, Nation, Star, etc. to accuse India to protect Pakistan. Pakistani newspapers, by accusing Israel and Mossad behind the attacks, have declared the attack was a part of worldwide campaign to defame Islam. That is why the language and content of India's Urdu papers create consternation.

Roznama Rashtriya Sahara (Urdu) Editor Aziz Burney published a series of hundred of writings on India-Pakistan relationship and Islamic terrorism etc. There he claimed that the lone arrested Pakistani terrorist Ajmal Amir Kasab's statement appeared unconvincing. Burney has also written many interesting tales. Amongst them is a 'revelation' that terrorists had not come via sea.³³⁸ How Burney can say this is difficult to guess, but why Burney is saying this is easy to understand. Nobody in civil society wants a war, but when India was suffering attacks upon its security and sovereignty, Urdu newspapers continued to advise India not to take any strong step that might provoke a war between the two countries. Moreover, **Roznama Rashtriya Sahara** went to the extent of accusing that the Mossad, CIA, USA, Israel and 'Hindu terrorists' were behind the attacks. The headline of an article on 26/11, read that the attack on Mumbai was the handiwork of CIA.³³⁹

In another article published by it also decried the action of the security forces, "it seems that the action of security forces in Mumbai was directionless."³⁴⁰ The repeated allegation of Mossad or the CIA involvement without providing any evidence to justify their allegation was motivated to digress the attention from the real culprits. The newspaper holds that, "our allegation has now turned into a conviction

³³⁸ Aziz Burney, *Bhartiya Musalman...Atit, Vartaman aur Bhawishya*, Kishit 100, January 5, 2009, *Roznama Rashtriya Sahara*, special issue.

³³⁹ *Mumbai par hamala CIA ki karastani hai (The attack on Mumbai is a handiwork of CIA)*, Ibid.

³⁴⁰ *Nariman House me hamale ki hakiakat (Truth about attack on Nariman House)* ibid.

that Mossad (an Israeli intelligence agency) was involved in this whole conspiracy.”³⁴¹

Moreover, Geo TV of Pakistan, investigated facts which almost established that Kasab, involved in 26/11, is a Pakistan citizen. **Rozaama Rashtriya Sahara** has prominently published news which refuted Geo TV.³⁴² Whatever this paper was writing was infectious for the Urdu press. Urdu newspapers published from Delhi, Lucknow, Bangalore, Mumbai or Hyderabad have used almost similar content, language and perspective on 26/11.

Siyasat, on October 28, wrote, “*First it must be ascertained that who the real attackers were and with whom they are affiliated? And what was their purpose? The most dangerous aspect is that three top officers of Mumbai ATS have been eliminated in this attack. The targeting of Hemant Karkare, especially, is no ordinary act and could not be seen merely as a terrorist attack but betrays a conspiracy that must be unearthed*”. The paper has skillfully blurred the bloodletting terrorists of Mumbai and linked Karkare’s death with his investigations into Malegaon blasts. The editorial further said, “*The Malegaon bomb blast has changed the prevalent assumption of bomb blasts in India and through this the investigations into other blasts were given a new dimension. And at this critical juncture, is it merely a coincidence that three officers, connected with the (investigation of) bomb blasts are eliminated. Did the terrorist know that three officers were going to come forward in event of the attack? This is such an aspect whose complete and impartial investigation but be presented before the entire country*”³⁴³.

Urdu Times launched a campaign in this regard. The paper, in its November 28 issue, published a four column write up by Amresh Mishra who alleged that the 26/11 attack was a ‘combined operation of RSS, Mossad and Chota Rajan gang’ and they have killed the three police officers who were involved in the investigation of Malegaon attack and

³⁴¹ Amresh Mishra, *Mumbai Aatanki hamalo me Mossad ka Hath*.

³⁴² *Kasab ke snadarva me Geo TV report Galat*, published as a box item, *ibid*.

³⁴³ ‘Mumbai Hamla- Jimmebar kaun?’ (Mumabi attacks, who’s responsible), *Siyasat*, November 28, 2008

Hindu terrorists. This write up by Amresh Mishra was published by many other Urdu newspapers³⁴⁴.

Urdu Times, November 28, wrote in its editorial-“The spectacle of local terrorism that began yesterday not merely bears the stamp of Mossad but also proves that Mossad’s Indian associate Sangh Parivar has gone mad. The sole purpose of this attack is to stall the exposure of Sangh terrorists. Merciless killing of five top officers is its greatest proof. An expert on terrorism in India and manipulation of terrorist agencies say that the theory of Deccan Mujahideen that was floated by news channel is it’s another proof”

According to the newspaper “At the time when ATS was about to tap the big fishes of Mossad on the basis of data mined from the laptops of Swami Dayanand and Colonel Purohit, first attack was staged and a mobile call was made in name of Deccan Mujahideen to mislead the entire country and hurl Mumbai in blaze of communal riots. The call about which it is being said that it was Deccanese (Hyderabadi) who was actually from a Kashmiri. It is not difficult to take such work from a Kashmiri refugee at his present state”³⁴⁵.

Urdu Times (Mumbai), November 7, published another write up. Its author Farooq Ansari has claimed that Government and security agencies have always deliberately implicated Muslims in acts of terrorism³⁴⁶.

³⁴⁴ Rehnuma-e-Mulk (Leaders of the country) by Amresh Mishra, Siyasat. Papers like Azad Hind, Sahafat, Dawat has also prominently reproduced this piece.

³⁴⁵ “*Dahsatgardi ka naya kaufnak chehra*’ (The new dangerous face of terrorism), Urdu Times, November 28, 2008; Previously too Urdu Times used the syndrome the Indian state and Muslims in its writings. In its issue of November 1, 200 it warned the state “ Muslims will occupy prisons of the country if the innocents were not delivered justice.’ It published an article by Bushara AAbadi “*Mutthi bhar Insaf*”, October 31, 2008. It exempted Pakistan from terrorist activities in India. Urdu times published an article by syed Ali “*Hindu dashahat gardo ka chehara*”; Urdu Times published an article by Syed Ali on November 12, 2008 “*hindu dashahatgardo ka chehara*,. The author alleged that the israelii agency Mossad has been influencing indian intelligence since 1967.

³⁴⁶ “*Asman ka thuka, inke muh par hi gira*’ (Spit into skies, it fell into their mouth), Urdu Times, November 7, 2008

Dawat (mouthpiece of Jamaat-e-Islami), November 28, published a story on its front page alleging that the police and investigative agencies are implicating false charges against Muslims.³⁴⁷

Urdu Times (Mumbai), on November 30 issue, published a front page editorial. The editorial has tried to establish that Jews are behind the terror attacks on Mumbai. According to this editorial there were nine Jews in Nariman House when the attack took place. It further asked that, “out of them, if five were killed by the terrorists, where did the rest go?”³⁴⁸

The newspaper established an analogy between the death of Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma, and Karkare and his associates. The editor of the newspaper weaved a conspiracy theory, which he said, “Police officers like Hemant Karkare and Ashok Kamte etc are killed in the same manner as Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma was in Batla House”. Then he has targeted the intelligence agencies of the country. “Corruption is rampant in the Indian intelligence agencies, so whenever a terrorist incident takes place, name of a trans-border organisation is played up to evade responsibility”.

Urdu Times (Mumbai), looking suspiciously at American FBI and Israeli Mossad, said - “Those people are being called to solve the Mumbai terrorist attack who themselves have not been able to solve the murder of Robert Kennedy”. The piece reiterating the direct involvement of CIA and Mossad in 26/11 further wrote, “How can those who are involved in the attack furnish proof of their own incrimination?”³⁴⁹.

A baseless rumour was first invented then it has been repeated by the Urdu press and likeminded journalists, religious and political leadership

³⁴⁷ *Aakhir Adalaton mein Musalmanon par dahshatgardi ke arop kyon sabit nahin hote?* (Why the terror charges on Muslims are never established in the court), *Dawat*, November 28, 2008

³⁴⁸ “Yeh Sangh Parivar-Mossad ki mushtarka dahsatgardi hai” (This is a joint terror operations by Sangh Parivar and Mossad), *Urdu Times*, November 30, 2008

³⁴⁹ “Hindustani intelligence agencion mein bhrastachar vyapak hai, aur isi liye jab bhi atankwad ki koi ghatna hoti hai to jimmebari se bachne ke liye, seema par kisi atankwadi sanghatan ka nam uchala jata hai (Corruption is rampant in the Indian intelligence agencies, so whenever a terrorist incident takes place, name of a trans-border organisation is played up to evade responsibility), *Urdu Times*, November 30, 2008

to convince the Muslim world that 26/11 conspiracy was hatched by the Hindus!

Urdu Times quoted an interview of journalist M Badud Sajid given to an Egyptian Television channel, where he maintained that “the head of Anti Terrorist Squad has been queried by the ‘Hindu terrorist’ who were unmasked by Karkare.”³⁵⁰

Moreover, Urdu press made an issue of failure of Indian intelligence in order to prove the India’s campaign against terrorism as ill placed and arbitrary. Mainstream newspapers also brought this failure but they carried on with the responsibility which did not hamper the campaign against terrorism. They were sensitive towards the priority of the time. The same was not true for the Urdu newspapers.

Mashrik wrote in its editorial on December 3 that abomination of the people towards the rulers and the officials of the intelligence agencies who could not thwart terrorist attack on Mumbai was no less than they have against the terrorists.³⁵¹

Dawat in a special article unearthed another interesting reason for the attack and linked it with the future outcome of the Assembly elections in five states, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Mizoram. Stating that the terrorists’ attacks occurred when the Assembly elections in four states were approaching it further wrote that as far as terrorists were concerned whatever was said about their profile, i.e., their name and citizenship, by the state officials, their picture clearly visualised red strings tied on their wrist which are also tied by the majority community in the country.³⁵² There is no ambiguity about things which the newspaper wanted to communicate the world. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lost Delhi Assembly elections which led the Urdu papers to forget their earlier mysterious indication on Mumbai terror. Once the result is out Urdu papers complimented the Delhi voters not to

³⁵⁰ *Mulk ke Hifajat ke liye Musalman Jan laga denge* , Urdu Times, December 2, 2008

³⁵¹ Jab Mumbai Jag Uthi (When Mumbai rose up), Mashrik, December 3, 2009, the newspaper in the same edition tried to fix the responsibility for the attack on Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of Gujarat, see *Mumbai dashahatgardo ki Yalagar, Narendra Modi par Shako shubwat*, Urdu Times, December 3, 2008

³⁵² *Mumbai me ek dashanhagrdi karwai ek gahari sajis malum hoti hai* (The act of terrorism in Mumbai appears a conspiracy) , Dawat , December 4, 2008

be swayed by BJP's 'emotional blackmailing' on terrorism. Zafar Agha, a leading columnist, wrote in **Sahafat**, that voters used wisdom by rejecting the BJP and choosing the Congress.³⁵³

Dawat viewed on its issue of December 4 that such a magnitude of attack could not be managed by any small group (perhaps indicating Islamic *Jihadi* organisations or the ISI) but such a kind of attack could only be possible with the involvement of Mossad and CIA.³⁵⁴

The logic given by Urdu newspapers is worth examining. They tried to prove the victims of the terror as the possible criminals or conspirators. **Dawat** wrote, "Mumbai's Nariman Point inhabits mostly Jews that is why it was targeted so that the world could be led to believe that Muslims were only behind this catastrophe. The American and British tourists too were killed so that U.S. and Britain also held the Muslim community responsible for it. If this was indeed done by of Muslim community then what did *Millat Islam* get out of it!"³⁵⁵ One wonders who has the audacity to answer this question raised by **Daawat**.

Hamaara Samaj in its edition dated December 4 has expressed great anguish by stating that Israel's intelligence agency 'Mossad' was carrying out a well planned programme to defame Islam and Muslim community all over the world. This newspaper also suspects that "Mossad and the Hindu fundamentalists are behind all the terrorist attacks taking place in India."³⁵⁶

Zadid Markaj made a scintillating 'disclosure'. Its Mumbai correspondent reported, "Some inside workers at Taj hotel had a nexus with terrorists and were behind those attacks. In fact, these terrorists' supporters were already stationed to facilitate this operation skilfully."³⁵⁷

Dainik Azad Hind was of many Urdu newspapers and journals which published a list of 44 Muslims who were the victims of the terrorist

³⁵³ *Hindu Nahi bahe BJP ki jaybati laharo Me (Hindus don't flow in sentimental tides of BJP)*, Zafar Agha, Sahafat, December 12, 2008.

³⁵⁴ *Khabar par Nazar (An eye on the news) Dawat*, December 4, 2008

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ *Hindustan ke Maujudat halat Bhayanak Mustakabil ke gajamaj (Present condition of India portend dangerous future)*, *Hamara Samaj*, December 4, 2008

³⁵⁷ *Hamale Ke Pichhe Kaun ?(who is behind the attack?)*, *Zadid Markaj*, December 5, 2008

attacks. The newspaper stated that America had masterminded these attacks which were carried out by Pakistani terrorist organizations. Its editorial comments cautioned the Government of India not to get into any kind of provocation that could lead to a war like situation.³⁵⁸

Masharik has prominently published a statement made by Jamait-e-Ulema's Hind's president, Maulana Arshad Madani who claimed that the Mumbai terror attacks were made to divert the attention of the people from the current political matter related to the arrests of Sadhavi along with some ex-Army officials as well as some serving Army officers accused in the Malegaon Bomb explosion. He has reiterated the view that some international organizations are behind these attacks and Muslim community is unnecessarily being dragged into it."³⁵⁹ The same newspaper has published another statement made on December 6 by Kolkatta's Tipu Sultan mosque's Imam, Maulana Noor-ul-Rahman Barkati, who alleged that Hindu terrorists are behind the Mumbai attacks and it has been engineered so as to ensure the victory of Fascist organisations in the coming elections."³⁶⁰

The newspaper has some suggestions to the Indian Government, i.e., not to blame Islamic *Jihadi* organisations before the probe was completed. In its editorial it wrote that an accusation should be made after careful investigations, Further it stated that, "Whenever any terrorist attack takes place in this country, security agencies, in order to save their skin, always put the blame on Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-Mohammad. This is going on for a long time."³⁶¹

Urdu newspapers went ahead by blaming the demolition of the disputed structure in Ayodhya as a reason for terrorism in India. Many of them

³⁵⁸ *Mumbai hamale ke Mahokin me Musalman (Amongst those dead in Mumbai, are Muslim)* , Dainik Azad Hind, December 5, 2008

³⁵⁹ *Mumbai dashahatgardi Hindu Firakparasto ki sajish ka Natija* , (Mumbai attack was a result of conspiracy hatched by Hindu fundamentalist forces), Masharik, December 6, 2008

³⁶⁰ *Mumbai dashahatgardi me Hindu Intapasando ka haath hai-Barakati*, (Hindu terrorists are behind Mumbai attacks) its subheading was, *Isi bahane fascist takate chunav jeetna chahati hai* (Fascists want to win elections taking advantage of it). Masharik, December 6, 2008

³⁶¹ *Teen din jisane dunia ko hila diya*, (Three days which stunned the world), editorial, Masharik, December 6,2008

published an article written by Dr. Mallick Rashid Faizal. In this also ISI and Mossad's nexus has been pointed out behind Mumbai attacks. The article said, "*Mossad had earlier also tried to unsettle the governments. Recently, it failed in toppling the Turk government.*" In the article India has been accused for blaming Pakistan for all its failures. "*The security system of India had weakened when Hindu activists had managed to destroy Babri Masjid. After that only the orgy of violence started and this ignited a spate of terrorist attacks and with it began the blame game in India, it said.*"³⁶².

Urdu Times' in its article dated December 5 has firmly emphasized that Muslim organisations were not at all involved in the Mumbai attacks. It said, "In the last few years whatever terrorists attacks have taken place, the security agencies and the government simply put the blame on Pakistan and its organizations and do nothing about it. If Al-Qaida and Lashkar-e Taiba are behind this then why are they silent on this? Why haven't they taken the responsibility? Are they afraid of the Indian government? Now the government must refrain from blaming Pakistan on every pretext."³⁶³

There are non-stop accusations against the Indian intelligence and security forces by the Urdu press. **Zadid Markaj** in its 6 December edition article targeted RAW, Navy and others. It also demanded 'strict action' against the senior officers to the extent of their dismissal for Mumbai attack. It had in fact pointed towards the suspension of the senior officers when it was difficult to rule out war between India and Pakistan. In this, the National Security Advisor M.K.Narayanan, Director, Intelligence Bureau chief P C. Haldar and RAW chief Ashok Chaturvedi, Indian Navy Chief Suresh Mehta and other senior officers of Mumbai Police were named.³⁶⁴

The newspaper has expressed satisfaction over the removal of Central Home Minister Shivraj Patil and Maharashtra's chief minister Vilas Rao Deshmukh and further pointed out that it was done at the behest

³⁶² *Kya hakikat Kya Afasana ? (What's the truth, what's the reality)*, Urdu Times , Masharik, Sahafat, Khabrdar, Zadid, December 5, 2008

³⁶³ *Musalman Dashahatgard Nahi Hai (Muslims are not terrorists)* Syed Bisharat Shikoh Urdu Times , December 5, 2008.

³⁶⁴ *Mumbai dashahatgardana Hamale ko Bksha na jai (The terror attack in Mumbai should not be pardoned)*, *Zadid Markaj*, December 6, 2008

of Congress general secretary, Rahul Gandhi and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi.³⁶⁵

The Muslim leadership took an anarchic method to interpret the 26/11. They remained unfettered and unchecked. And they were given full space in Urdu papers. **Inquilab Urdu Times** published a news item based on a press conference which it alleged that “Hindu terrorists and Pakistan terrorists joined hands to get Karkare killed.”³⁶⁶

Nai Dunia (Urdu) editor Shahid Siddiqui in an article has shown more concern towards Pakistan’s internal politics than terrorism in India. Previously the Urdu paper linked the 26/11 with the Assembly elections. **Nai Dunia** went ahead linking it with both Assembly and Lok Sabha’s elections in 2008.

It said, “*The Mumbai attack has come as a blessing in disguise for BJP as it struck Mumbai just four days before the elections were to take place.*” This article also stated, “*Congress Government would try to cover its failure and irresponsible action by confronting with Pakistan. This would again enable them to beef up security on Indian borders. Since Lok Sabha elections are to take place in the coming six months and therefore Congress Government in order to outwit BJP used the terrorist attack as a ploy to act against Pakistan. This will in fact work in favour of Pakistani military and anti-democratic forces. General Musharraf wanted to seize Pakistan once again and in the wake of a war like situation with India he would be successful in his mission. Moreover, the lobby that produces American weapons and the Jewish lobby wants that a war be declared in Asia. This has the approval of President Bush too. In case a war breaks out between India and Pakistan it would be a boon for America.*”³⁶⁷ Moreover, it tries to convince the readers that the 26/11 was motivated to designs to halt the growing indo-Pak relationship.

³⁶⁵ Ibid. the paper published a report on December 5, 2008 based on the statement of Syed Afad, President of All India Muslim Forum, in which Hindu organizations were targeted. He accused that the government agencies under the pressure of Hindu organizations unleashing atrocities on Muslims.

³⁶⁶ Press conference by Amin Solkar, President of Indian Union Muslim League, Mumbai, Inquilab & Urdu Times, December 6, 2008

³⁶⁷ *Dashahat ke Pichhe siyasat –Kya Mumbai ka hamala bhajapa ki Jit ki Buniyad ban jae* (The politics behind the terror- Can Mumbai attacks be the foundation for BJP’s victory), Nai Dunia (Urdu), weekly, December 7, 2008

Nisheman and **'Rahmaan-e-Mulk** are also of the similar view that "Israel's intelligence agency Mossad, Hindu fundamentalists and their supporters are enjoying high positions in the government that have been fanning terrorism in India."³⁶⁸

Daawat' carried an article on December 7 that accused Home Minister Shivraj Patil of being anti-Muslim. It said, "*Ever since Shivraj Patil had become the Home Minister there had been a spate of bomb explosions and terrorism has been increased in the country. It will not be improper to say that the label put on Pakistan for being its terrorists' activities during his regime was certainly the contribution of his ministry. Besides, many statements given by him are a proof of the fact that apart from being the chief of the UPA Government he had been working for someone else. He accused infighting Muslim groups to be responsible for the bomb explosions that occurred in the mosques, graveyards etc. That is why everyone seemed to be of the view that he was also involved in putting the blame on Muslims alone for any act of terrorism.*"³⁶⁹

Urdu papers continued to use Malegaon blast to divert attention of terrorism originating from Pakistan. In the December 8 issue **Munsif** published an article, linking the 26/11 with the Malegaon investigation.³⁷⁰ On the occasion of a meeting of Free Press Editor Federation the editor of **'Siyasat'** Zaheer -ud-din Ali Khan has alleged, "There is a nexus between America's CIA and Pakistan's ISI and Israel's Mossad and they have a hand in the Mumbai attacks."³⁷¹

Another article in the **Munsif**, on December 10, that targeted the intelligence agencies. "*Government and intelligence agencies have been wrongly accusing Muslims in the name of terrorism.*"³⁷²

Many Urdu newspapers published an article written by Rashid Ansari where the author accused Hindu organisations for the Mumbai attacks. It stressed that, "*This attack needs to be criticized severely for it has not*

³⁶⁸ Dashatgardi ke Pichhe Kaun?(who is behind terrorism?) Nisheman (Banglore), Rahanum-e- Mulk(Aurangabad), December 7, 2008

³⁶⁹ Wazir Dakhala Ki Tabdili (Changeover the Interior Affairs Minister), Dawat, December 7,2008

³⁷⁰ Mukhasar Aras me Hemant karakare ka Nakhile Karnama, (Hemant Karkare's unforgettable act) Munshif, December 8,2008 p.5

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Musalmano par Kahar (Retribution upon Muslims), Aziz Qareshi, Munshif, December 10, 2008

only been the doings of Lashkar-e-Taiyyeba and ISI but in this many strong Hindu organizations and the enemies of India and Pakistan are involved who do not want that the two countries should ever become friends.” Mossad and ISI were as usually blamed for 26/11.

And it further stated, *“The aim of terrorism would be defaming Islam and Muslim. For, neither Britain nor the USA and its follower Israel would want a friendly tie between India and Pakistan .That is why they are creating terrorism in India. Readers would recall that after the attacks made inside the local trains in Mumbai, the talks between India and Pakistan had ceased. The same thing is going to happen now.”* ³⁷³

Urdu papers have no answer to the questions which they have raised by suspecting the statement of lone arrested Pakistani terrorist Kasab, who is now under Mumbai police.

Munsif published an article by **Munsif** published an article which quoted one Mujahid Ali Khan stating that Pakistan is not involved in the Mumbai attacks. The author has also endorsed the view of a Punjab University student Burara Munir who claimed that this was done by Hindu terrorists who are trying to divert the attention of people from combined terrorism towards Pakistan.³⁷⁴ What is surprising about the revelation is that this Indian writer uses an Urdu newspaper to give a clean chit to Pakistan.

Burara Munir (who has been quoted) affirmed by saying that the Indian Government had earlier put the blame of this beastly attack on South Mujahideen then Pakistan was dragged into it and now it is Jamaat-ul-Daawa. The writer strongly emphasized that Jamaat-ul-Daawa just didn't believe in terrorism or armed struggle and their only concern was with the spread of Islam.

She regretted that Pakistan was being continuously suspected for terrorism. She added, *“What is incomprehensible is that if Lashkar is behind the Mumbai attacks then what are they going to achieve out of it. Rather, according to Lashkar, this attack has only damaged their objective. If the perpetrators were indeed Pakistani origin then the question is: who has masterminded this attack?”*

³⁷³ Mumbai Par Hamla ek bahu-udashiya sajis (Attack on Mumbai a multi-pronged conspiracy), Rashid Ansari, Azad Hind , December 12, 2008

³⁷⁴ *Kaun Masuk hai?* (Who is the culprit) by 'Busharawadi', Munsif , 15 December,2008

She also tried to link terrorism with the Kashmir problem by suggesting, “*The reason behind escalating terrorism in Pakistan is the intervention of Kashmir and America. If Kashmir has not benefited out of it then perhaps, America could be behind it.*” Moreover, the article pleaded the case of Pakistani authorities who kept reiterating that post 26/11 they want to improve relationships. She further opined that since Pakistan was interested in improving ties with India, there seemed no convincing reason for its involvement in the attack.³⁷⁵

Siyasat too has given suggestion to the Indian Government that America should not be allowed to interfere in India-Pakistan imbroglio. This newspaper condemned the investigations on Mumbai terrorism, initiated by America and Britain and described it as only foreign intervention.³⁷⁶

Daawat too showed its concern of tension generated in the post 26/11. In its editorial comment the paper fully endorsed that India should not take any harsh action that is going to increase tension between the two countries.

This newspaper went ahead objecting at the formation of the new federal intelligence agency to curb the menace of terrorism with which it suspected that it would target Muslims people in the country.³⁷⁷

Siyasat focused on issues of Indo-Pak relationship, new terror law and agency as well as the lawyers’ refusal to plead case for Kasab the lone arrested Pakistani terrorist. The paper criticised the lawyers’ decision not to provide legal aid to Kasab.³⁷⁸ Like other Urdu papers **Siyasat** too in its article dated December 18, condemned the formation of the new Federal Investigative Agency to curb terrorism and observed that till now the present laws were being used against minorities. After the formation of this federal investigation agency what was the guarantee that it would not be misused. Most of the politicians and the lawmakers have adopted a prejudiced notion that only minorities are capable of crime and terrorism and this is why the minorities alone become their target. The

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ *America ko Mudakhalat ka Mauka nahi diya jae* (America should not be given opportunity to intervene), Siasat, December 15, 2008

³⁷⁷ *Bharat Danish Mandi se kam le* (India should act with prudence), Dawat, December 16, 2008

³⁷⁸ *Dashahatgardi aur kanoon ka saj* (Terrorism and legal professionals), Siyasat, December 17, 2008

government should take steps towards putting an end to this tendency, it said.³⁷⁹

Siyasat in its editorial dated December 18 suggested both the Governments of India and Pakistan to avoid any war-like situation. The paper said, '*Both the countries should understand that war is not the solution to any problem. Three wars have taken place so far, but none of these was able to resolve the issues. In such a case, considering any military option or a war would only be deemed an irresponsible behaviour.*'³⁸⁰

Siyasat, in its December 20 editorial underscored the fears expressed by the Left parties which claimed that these laws would possibly be misused by states security agencies and police force. The paper further added that simply by making a new law there will be no end of terrorism. Investigating agencies have been making minorities the victims of terrorism. Andhra Pradesh is an example of this. Here, the Government has accepted that those arrested in the Mecca mosque bomb explosion were innocent. It also suggested that if there is a new law then it becomes responsibility of the Central government to ensure that that law is not misused. The paper preached that in today's times the minorities have lost faith in the investigation agencies and police and if this new law is misused then whatever little faith they have in justice too would have come to an end.³⁸¹

Dainik Munsif published an article on December 21 of a prominent Muslim commentator who reiterated that Hindu fundamentalists were involved in Mumbai attacks.³⁸²

Munsif published another article by Sayyed Ahmad Nadvi. The author emphasized that Pakistan was being unnecessarily dragged into Mumbai terror attack. He asked to ponder the questions raised by the different

³⁷⁹ *Kaumi Tahkikati Agency (National Investigative Agency)*, Siyasat, December 18, 2008

³⁸⁰ *Pakistan sanjidgi Akhtiyar Kare (Pakistan should adopt seriousness)*, Siyasat, December 18, 2008

³⁸¹ *Mukhalat dahshatgardi Kanoon (Oppose Anti-terror Law)*, Siyasat, December 20, 2008

³⁸² N.Jamal Ansari, *Mumbai Hamalo ka gairanib darana tiya jaroori*, (Impartial enquiry of Mumbai attack is must), dainik Munshif, December 21, 2008

unbiased journalists and described Burney, the editor of the **Rozanama Rashtriya Sahara**, as an unbiased journalist who was one of the first editors to raise mysterious questions on 26/11. He further quoted him stating, how was it possible that only 10 young persons, irrespective of how well trained they were, could continuously indulge in firing for full sixty hours! Then he also said that no individual, even the owner of the hotel, could be expected to be aware of every nook and corner, nor was it possible that a huge building could be brought under full control just by a few persons and was it not strange that the siege at the Taj remained for the next three days. So the obvious question is how were the terrorists so well prepared and well informed about the hotel floor-plan and keep hostages in such a large number, while all big hotels have security checking at three different levels.

The question arises how terrorists from outside the country became so familiar with every nook and corner of the hotel and succeeded in taking out weapons and inflicted casualties in such a large numbers.³⁸³

Urdu newspapers completely ignored the mainstream newspapers. Journalism is based on facts, references, investigative reports and analyses; and not simply an image of rumours and imaginations. Newspapers have freedom to raise questions and bring unnoticed facts before the people and the government. But they should not be a bundle of prejudices, rumours, lies, and communal feelings.

The Urdu papers have ignored the facts, references investigative reports and analyses which appeared in the mainstream newspapers. The mainstream media wrote each and every fact and expressed their opinion about the report provided by the state only after careful scrutiny. But the Urdu newspapers negated the information provided by the state. They brought the legitimacy of the probing agencies, terror laws and even the government of the day itself under the ambit of suspicion. They continued antagonising with views expressed by the world community about 26/11. Western countries followed the pathway of active support and coordination in probe. Mainstream newspapers considered it worthwhile but the Urdu newspapers considered it as intrusion in the internal affairs of India and held USA, Britain and Israel responsible for

³⁸³ Mumbai Wakyat par safio ko sawalat kyo najaranda kiye a rehe hain? (Why journalists are overlooking questions raised by Mumbai episode) Munsif , December 21, 2008

Mumbai terror attack. The defence created for the Pakistani ISI by Urdu press left even the Pakistani counterpart miles behind. The GEO TV of Pakistan exposed those facts about 26/11 which were concealed by Pakistan but Indian Urdu press ceaselessly harped upon those statement in which Mossad, CIA and Hindu organisations were blamed for the attack. It kept enumerating baseless stories to their readers. These newspapers work for creating mistrust against the Indian state. Most importantly they try to demolish the national consensus on terrorism. They tried to analyse the whole incident through communal blinkers.

CHAPTER – 3

ANTULAY EPISODE

"This is a kind of conspiracy theory that can be heard in tea stalls across India any day of the year. But a minister or anyone holding constitutional office has greater responsibilities than to peddle pedestrian wares".

*Politicians must get their facts right
The Asian Age (editorial), December 23, 2008*

"Even as the Bharatiya Janata Party is asking this question, Pakistani news websites have picked up Antulay's statements saying he has only "taken a leaf from Pakistani TV commentators". Current affairs website Pakistan News said on Thursday: "Antulay seemed to have borrowed a leaf from Pakistani TV hosts who have claimed that the Mumbai attacks were the handiwork of Hindu Zionists."

*-MR ANTULAY WHY ARE YOU HELPING PAK?
Mail Today, December 19, 2008*

"Abdul Rehman Antulay has shamed the majority of India's Muslims who believe in the voice of reason and sanity...Antulay has no right to speak on the behalf of the entire Muslim community."

*Firoz Bakht Ahmed in Communal Attack
(Hindustan Times- December 23, 2008)*

Chronology of events

- **December 17, 2008-** A.R. Antulay makes his controversial statement to the media outside Gate no. 12 of Parliament. He casts doubts whether Hemant Karkare was killed by the same terrorists who attacked Mumbai on 26/11 **hinting** towards the involvement of Hindu extremists³⁸⁴.

Uproar in the Lok **Sabha**: BJP and Shiv Sena MPs demand his resignation/dismissal. Congress refuses to defend him; D.P. Yadav of RJD comes to his aid. Antulay clarifies he had not questioned the authenticity of terrorist attack³⁸⁵.
- **December 18-** Widely reported in the print media. The opposition demands immediate sacking of Antulay. Congress scrambles for explanation. Antulay offers to resign but not recant. Both the government and Congress should feel proud of his comments, says Antulay³⁸⁶. External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee says the government would make a statement on December 19 or “before the House adjourns on December 23”³⁸⁷.
- **December 19-** Pakistan press uses Antulay’s statement to discredit India’s version of terrorist attacks. Antulay receives ‘a hero’s welcome and is virtually mobbed by Muslim leaders after a *Namaz* at the Parliament street mosque’³⁸⁸.
- **December 20-** Congress General Secretary Digvijay Singh defends Antulay’s statement at Congress sabbhawna rally in Azamgarh³⁸⁹.

³⁸⁴ Antulay self-goal: sees a Malegaon mystery in Karkare Mumbai murder, *The Indian Express*, December 18, 2008

³⁸⁵ Oppn guns for Antulay after remark on Karkare’s death, *The Times of India*, December 18, 2008

³⁸⁶ Both govt and Congress should feel proud of my comments, says Antulay, *DNA*, December 19, 2008

³⁸⁷ Opp for Antulay ouster, *The Statesman*, December 19, 2008

³⁸⁸ Congress doesn’t know what to do with him, *Mail Today*, December 20, 2008

³⁸⁹ Digvijay defends cornered Antulay, *Mail Today*, December 21, 2008. Congress in hail-Antulay mode, *The Pioneer*, December 21, 2008

- **December 21-** Antulay derives support from some sections of the Left³⁹⁰.
- **December 22-** Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha adjourned four times each over Antulay³⁹¹. The Minority Affairs minister remains unfazed.
- **December 23-** Home Minister P. Chidambaram delivers his statement in Lok Sabha setting to rest all speculations about Karkare's killing. The statement contains details of the events on that night available from Maharashtra government and Mumbai police³⁹². Antulay says he is satisfied³⁹³.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh says 'to err is human'³⁹⁴. Antulay survives in his position. BJP said it will not allow the issue to die down³⁹⁵.

³⁹⁰ *Left backing for Antulay, The Times of India, December 22, 2008*

³⁹¹ *BJP makes hay with Antulay fodder, Mail Today, December 23, 2008*

³⁹² *No truth in different versions circulated on Karkare's movement, The Hindu; December 24, 2008*

³⁹³ *Antulay falls in line, Cong breathes easy, The Telegraph, December 24, 2008*

³⁹⁴ *Antulay: PM says to err is human, The Statesman, December 24, 2008*

³⁹⁵ *BJP to step up pressure on Antulay issue, The Hindu, December 24, 2008*

PART- I

THE ANTULAY EPISODE & ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

Abdul Rehman Antulay, Union Minister for Minority Affairs, kicked off a controversy on December 17, 2008 while interacting with the media outside Gate No.12 of Parliament. He said there could be a mystery behind the killing of ATS Chief Hemant Karkare, Addl. Commissioner Ashok Kamte and Inspector Vijay Salaskar on Mumbai's fateful terror night of 26/11.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Antulay said, “Somebody who knew both the ends sent him (Karkare) in the wrong direction otherwise why should he have gone to Cama Hospital? He should have gone to Taj, Oberoi, or Nariman House. He went to such a place where there was nothing compared to these three places. He went to the Cama Hospital on the basis of a phone call. Who is that person who made the phone call? This should be probed... “Karkare found that there are non-Muslims involved in acts of terrorism...Any person going to the roots of terror has always been a target...Superficially speaking they (the terrorists) had no reason to kill Karkare. Whether he was a victim of terrorism or terrorism plus something, I do not know. I can't say who killed him, I leave it to you. But you **must** remember what all was said against the poor man. He was an upright officer. I know a bandh call was given against him before he was killed. He said that CBI should be asked to find out “who was responsible for sending him (Karkare) in the wrong direction...somebody wanted him to be killed. Why all three (ATS Chief Hemant Karkare, Additional Commissioner Ashok Kamte and encounter specialist Vijay Salaskar) went together is beyond my comprehension”³⁹⁶.

Thus, more than fortnight since the sequence of 26/11 had been publicized, Antulay suddenly refused to buy at face value the fact that terrorists had gunned down Karkare. The statement of ATS Sub

³⁹⁶ Antulay self-goal: sees a Malegaon mystery in Karkare Mumbai murder, *The Indian Express*; December 18, 2008.

Inspector Arun Jadhav, the sole surviving witness of the gun-battle that killed **the trio**, had appeared in the media within days of 26/11. “*We were driving slowly ahead when we spotted a red car. Even as we were 100 meters **away** from the car, there was sudden firing from the left side through the trees. We were caught unawares and Karkare, Salaskar and Kamte died on the spot. Kamte was firing with his AK-47 even as he succumbed,*” recalled Jadhav³⁹⁷.

Nor was it unknown that terrorists had besieged Cama and Albless Hospital building. ACP Sadanand Date as well as two guards viz. - Kailash Ghegadamal and Chandrakant Tike - were injured in that attack. A report in **The Hindu** said, “*The sixth floor of the Cama and Albless Hospital building, down the road from the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST), is pockmarked... After unleashing mayhem at the CST, terrorists Mohammad Ajmal Amir Iman and Mohammad Ismail reached the hospital through the rear gate beyond 10 p.m, taking the overbridge at the station. First, they shot dead security guard Began Ugde and moved into the main six-storey building firing at another guard, Bhanu Narkar... the staff gathered the patients and locked themselves in the wards and rooms. They switched off the lights*”³⁹⁸.

Kiran Tare, DNA correspondent, was present at CST when Karkare arrived there. His report, which appeared on front page of DNA on November 28, makes the situation clear. “*I reached CST around 10.50 pm on Wednesday to cover the attack that had taken place there. Karkare arrived with minutes dressed in a white shirt and grey trousers. He immediately took charge of the situation and asked his assistant to bring him a bulletproof jacket and helmet. Asking reporters to keep safe distance, the 54-year-old anti-terror expert entered the station premises. Half an hour later, we heard three loud sounds in quick succession and rushed in that direction. We soon realized that the gunshots were coming from the Cama and Albless Hospitals near BMC headquarters. Policemen stopped us in front of Metro cinema. After a tense hour of wait-and-watch, more than 10 gunshots **were heard** from the hospital again. It was clear that a gun battle was on between the police and the terrorists. At this point, we learnt that Kakare and additional*

³⁹⁷ ‘They threw Salaskar, Kamte and Karkare’s bodies from the vehicle’, *The Indian Express*, November 30, 2008. Also, see - 3 rode to death in the same car, *DNA*, November 28, 2008

³⁹⁸ *Cama Staff rose to the Occasion, The Hindu*, December 3, 2008

*commissioner of police Ashok Kamte and encounter specialist Vijay Salaskar had taken on the terrorists holed up in the hospital. At 12.40 am, we saw a police van with a yellow beacon drive out of the hospital. To our horror, we realized that terrorists had commandeered the van and were using it to escape. One of them was firing indiscriminately at the crowd outside Metro. As we dived to the ground to save ourselves, I glimpsed a terrorist's hands clamped around a gun. I looked around and saw a person shot in the neck. The terrorists sped toward Marine Lines. Five minutes later, another police van took off in pursuit*³⁹⁹.

The Accounts of Arun Jadhav, Kiran Tare and Dr. Santosh Patil, the Resident Medical Officer at Cama Hospital, have never been contested but only bolstered by the confession of Mohammed Ajmal Amir Kasab. Kasab, the only 26/11 terrorist captured alive, had told interrogators that Cama Hospital and Metro Cinema were not amongst their original targets. **The Times of India** report said, *'The duo opened fire at platform No 13 of CST station, which caters to outstation trains, around 9.45 pm. Then, they walked towards the concourse of the local train station. By then, the commuters had dispersed. Afraid that they would be spotted and shot, they exited the station from the foot over bridge on the Northern end, walked past the Times of India building and went towards Cama Hospital. According to Kasab, this was not in the plan. At Cama Hospital, they encountered a police team led by additional commissioner Sadanand Date. When cornered, they lobbed grenades, injuring Date and two constables, and fled towards Rang Bhavan, where they killed five more policemen, including ATS chief Hemant Karkare*⁴⁰⁰.

Kasab, subsequently, clarified that it was not he but his companion Abu Ismail who killed Karkare. *"Ismail saw three cops sitting in the second vehicle and opened fire. All three officers were killed inside the vehicles. Ismail dragged their bodies out..."*⁴⁰¹.

*

These facts were well within the reach of Antulay, **a Union Cabinet Minister and former Chief Minister of Maharashtra.** He could have

³⁹⁹ *Don't worry, I'm here, said ATS chief Karkare, DNA, November 28, 2008*

⁴⁰⁰ *'We wanted to hit CST at peak hour', The Times of India, December 2, 2008*

⁴⁰¹ *Ismail killed cops: Kasab, The Statesman, December 13, 2008*

contacted Maharashtra government, Mumbai Police or even the local media. He could have ascertained these facts from newspapers being accessible on World Wide Web before giving a public exposure to his unfounded doubts. Little wonder if Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan dismissed the possibility of ordering a probe into the killing of ATS chief Karkare.⁴⁰² Maharashtra Home Minister Jayant Patil said that the state government was fully convinced that Karkare was killed in brush firing by terrorists⁴⁰³. Incidentally, Antulay's own party, Congress is in power in Maharashtra

The Mumbai Police was similarly outraged. Several top officers involved in the counter-terror operations said there was 'nothing fishy' and there was no question of an internal conspiracy. A report in **The Indian Express** bylined to Sagnik Chowdhury reads, "*These comments are not even worth talking about. There was absolutely nothing fishy involved and it is madness to even suggest that such a thing might have transpired,*" said one of the top IPS officer... "*As a Joint Commissioner of Police, he was in a position to take on-the-spot decision on his own. Nobody was directing his movements,*" he added⁴⁰⁴.

The Times of India on November 19 recaptured the events leading to the death of Karkare, enough to disprove Antulay's secret apprehensions.⁴⁰⁵ But Antulay, who did not do his homework before, refused to make up even now. Instead he claimed that both party and the government should be proud of his comments⁴⁰⁶. The UPA government, despite rumblings inside it, continued to give Antulay a long rope. While business of both the Houses suffered due to frequent impasse in the Parliament on the Antulay issue, the Home Minister did not come out with his statement before December 23, the last day of the winter session. Thus, the piquant 'Antulay episode' stretched on for a week between December 17 and 23.

⁴⁰² No probe ordered into Karkare death, *The Statesman*, November 19, 2008

⁴⁰³ "Karakate was killed in brush firing by terrorists', *The Hindu*, December 19, 2008

⁴⁰⁴ Nothing fishy about Karkare's death, *The Indian Express*; December 18, 2008

⁴⁰⁵ 26/11 events give lie to Antulay theory, *The Times of India*, December 19, 2008

⁴⁰⁶ Antulay scripts Cong dilemma, *The Times of India*, December 20, 2008

The Congress saw the inanity of Antulay's statement *ab initio*, and perhaps the implication of playing his tune. The party, to quote its spokesman Abhishek Manu Singhvi, did not 'accept the inference and the innuendo that underline the statement (of Antulay)..... agree with bringing this case (Karkare's killing) under a cloud'⁴⁰⁷. Yet Antulay's unfounded remarks did not completely isolate him from the flag-bearers of democracy. MPs like Ejaz Ali of JD (U) in the Rajya Sabha and Devendra Prasad Yadav of RJD in Lok Sabha endorsed Antulay⁴⁰⁸. Congress general secretary Digvijay Singh – at a rally in Azamgarh - opined that there was nothing wrong about Antulay's apprehensions⁴⁰⁹. Antulay also derived support from sections of the Left⁴¹⁰. Antulay also received support from Muslim opinion makers like Jamiat-e-Islami-Hind president Jalal Umri; All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat (AIMMM) president Zafarul Islam Khan; and Mohammed Adeb, independent member of Rajya Sabha from UP⁴¹¹. "Minority Affairs Minister A R Antulay might have deeply embarrassed his own party but the throng of faithful that welcomed him at a mosque near Parliament where he went to offer afternoon prayers reflected a groundswell of support in his community," reported **The Times of India**⁴¹². The amount of rapturous support Antulay received from his co-religionists was better reflected in the Urdu media.

The English media, on the other hand, absolutely refused to suffer 'Antulay's antics' (a phrase often used to dub Antulay's statement). Dissenting voices from Muslims often get accommodated in the English media under deceptive titles like 'minority report'. But in the aftermath of Mumbai attacks, media was not humoured by Antulay's exercise of free speech. Media, then engaged in establishing the role of Pakistan in 26/11, viewed his statement as potentially treasonous. Its editorial, reports and articles were a

⁴⁰⁷ Antulay seeks probe into Karkare's Killing, *The Times of India*, December 18, 2008

⁴⁰⁸ Antulay theory finds RS backers, *The Times of India*, December 19, 2008

⁴⁰⁹ Digvijay defends cornered Antulay, *Mail Today*, December 21, 2008. Congress in hail-Antulay mode, *The Pioneer*, December 21, 2008

⁴¹⁰ Left backing for Antulay, *The Times of India*, December 22, 2008

⁴¹¹ Antulay's theory finds many takers, *The Times of India*, December 20, 2008

⁴¹² *Ibid.* See also- Congress doesn't know what to do with him, *Mail Today*, December 20, 2008

stringing rebuke and rebuttal to Antulay. The media went the whole hog in demanding the dismissal of an ‘irresponsible Antulay’.

The Pioneer was particularly irked by Antulay’s assertion “**superficially speaking they [the terrorists] had no reason to kill Karkare**’. It editorially replied, “*By asserting that the terrorists had ‘no reason to kill Karkare’, Mr. Antulay has insinuated that the Pakistani fidayeen who held Mumbai-and the nation- to ransom had “no reason” to kill innocent civilians and NSG commandos either. So who killed the civilians and the security personnel? And who let loose a reign of terror in Mumbai for 62 hours? If Mr. Antulay is to be taken seriously, they could be anybody else but Pakistani terrorists - his own hunch, **though** not stated specifically, is that Hindus are to be blame for the carnage! **We must** feel upset that Pakistan has refused to admit that Pakistani citizens are involved in the bloodbath? Should we be surprised that within hours of Mr. Antulay showing his true face and displaying his Islamist mindset Pakistan has upped the ante...Mr. Antulay is neither a political greenhorn nor a junior Minister; he is fully aware of the implications of what he has said and left unstated*”⁴¹³. The paper termed Antulay an Islamist.

‘Minister of Conspiracy theories’

The English media had already touched **upon** the issue that some elements in Pakistan, Urdu press in India and some Muslim periodicals etc have gone to the outrageous and irrational extent of calling 26/11 a CIA, Mossad and Hindu-Zionist conspiracy to distract attention from Malegaon killings (killing 165 people to distract attention from death of six persons!). **The Times of India** had already reported how a Pak TV channel reported 26/11 was **handiwork** of 'Hindu Zionists'⁴¹⁴. **India Today**, December 29 issue, had a special feature by Farzand Ahmed. It gave a glimpse about the Pakistani press concocting weird stories about India fabricating 26/11⁴¹⁵. Wary about **the** conspiracy theories, media was determined not **to** give any quarter to Antulay.

The Times of India in an editorial wrote: “*Antulay told the media - when his fellow MPs were debating in Parliament how to win the war on*

⁴¹³ *Islamist Antulay, The Pioneer; December 19, 2008*

⁴¹⁴ *Believe it or not, Pak TV channel says 26/11 work of Hindu Zionists, The Times of India, December 2, 2008*

⁴¹⁵ *Window on Pak: Peace in pieces, India Today, December 29 issue, 2008*

terror - that there could be a conspiracy behind the killing of Karkare. His point was the murder of the police officer could have been pre-planned. Did parties who wanted to derail the Malegaon blasts investigation that exposed a Hindutva organisation silence Karkare? Now, Antulay hasn't said anything original. He has simply parroted a conspiracy theory that appeared in the Web world immediately after the terror strikes in Mumbai.

The conspiracy theory got blown over when details of the attack were made public. Ajmal Amir Kasab, one of the two Pakistani terrorists who gunned down Karkare, has given details of their murderous run in the city on November 26 nights to the police. Only sections of the Pakistani establishment seem interested in pursuing the thesis that "Hindu Zionists" launched the Mumbai terror attack. This is eerily similar to the view that 9/11 was a Zionist conspiracy, and not an attack by al-Qaeda. Antulay has now given credence to this line and has discredited the efforts of the government and large sections of the international community, who have so far refused to be distracted by the conspiracy theories⁴¹⁶.

A comment page (or edit page) article in *Hindustan Times* by Sujata Anandan was piquantly titled '**Minister of conspiracy theories**'. '*It (Cama Hospital) could not have harboured Marathi-speaking RSS man waiting for the terrorists to point them in direction of Karkare and as a former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Antulay should have known better than to give credence to the unsubstantiated allegations of a bunch of grossly misguided individuals who see in every terror act in India, the hand of George Bush, the Mossad and the Bajrang Dal*'⁴¹⁷.

Another editorial in **The Times of India** observed, "Unfortunately, this diversity of views is not an indication of a healthy democratic culture. It is a plain reflection of the cynicism that pervades Indian politics. Antulay and (Digvijay) Singh are representatives of a political practice that thrives in a climate of intrigue. To read a Hindutva conspiracy in the murder of Hemant Karkare, the police officer, who was investigating the Malegaon blasts, is a cynical attempt to exploit fears about Hindutva groups, particularly among Muslims. The government and the Congress party, perhaps, do not want to discipline Antulay for

⁴¹⁶ He Must Go *The Times of India*, December 19, 2008

⁴¹⁷ Minister of conspiracy theories, *Hindustan Times*, December 19, 2008

*fear of alienating this section of voters. The Left also should be wary of even remotely echoing the Antulay line that has muddled the war on terror under the pretext of raising questions about a possible role of Hindutva extremists in the Mumbai attack. It is patronage politics at its worst and inexcusable even in normal times. Take care, CPM.*⁴¹⁸

The Hindu in an editorial, observed, “In part as a consequence of the needless twist given to this straightforward story, Pakistan today refuses to accept that the Mumbai terror attack originated on its soil. It further argued that, for the Muslim community, Mr. Karkare was a hero for his role in the Malegaon probe. The editorial says that, “As a Minister, Mr. Antulay had a responsibility to advocate calm and reason. Regrettably, he did the opposite.”⁴¹⁹

Minister as conspirer also engaged the attention of **The Asian Age**. An editorial noted, “When broad Muslim opinion in the country was taking on a hostile tone against the Mumbai attack, going to the extent of denying burial in local Muslim graveyards to the dead Pakistani terrorists, two sets on the fringe were singing another tune and impressing no one in particular. The fool and the extremist were seeking unsuccessfully to press the point that the outrage had been the handiwork of unknown elements, probably extremist Hindus, since Pakistan was too backward to be able to mount an assault requiring such precision. Mr Antulay’s argument, which made its way to Parliament after being first expressed to a television station, is a variant of the eccentric position”⁴²⁰. The editorial wondered how a ‘British-trained barrister’ could make such preposterous statement.

Barrister as Pakistan’s attorney

The media was prompt to point out that Antulay was obliquely arguing Pakistan’s case. Acceding to his ill-advised, if not also ill-intended, doubt would burn a hole in the case being built up against Pakistan. A report in **The Economic Times** was titillating titled “Meet Kasab’s Attorney, A R Antulay”. The report reads, “His take on the murder of ATS chief in cold blood was close to endorsing the spurious theory doing rounds in the Pakistani establishment and its media. The

⁴¹⁸ Cut the loose talk, *The Times of India*, December 23, 2008

⁴¹⁹ Height of Irresponsibility, *The Hindu*; December 23, 2008

⁴²⁰ Blunderbuss Antulay, *The Asian Age*; December 19, 2008

*Pakistani media has been maintaining that Karkare was killed by Hindu outfits angry with his Malegaon investigations*⁴²¹.

Mail Today reported the episode on front page with a banner headline: Mr. Antulay why are you helping Pak? The bluntly titled report in the inside double pages was titled *Antulay Plays into Pak hands*⁴²². It published an illuminating graphic, with legends, reproducing the ‘final moments of Hemant Karkare’. Needless to say it debunks Antulay’s doubts.

Pankaj Vohra, political editor, *Hindustan Times*, in his Between Us column, wrote, “*By raking up a conspiracy theory regarding the death of Hemant Karkare, Mumbai ATS chief, Minority Affairs Minister Abdul Rehman Antulay may have expressed the feelings of many members of his community. Several Muslim MPs and ex-MPs feel that what Antulay has said reflects the Muslim psyche post-Gujarat, post-Batla House and post-Malegaon investigations. However, at the same time, the minister who made his statement, after due consideration, has given a handle to elements in Pakistan to carry forward the false propaganda that the Mumbai attacks were not the handiwork of Islamists, but others within India*”⁴²³.

Antulay’s statement, as anticipated by the media, immediately gave Pakistan a handle. **The Times of India**, monitored the Pakistan press to report, “*The Nation’s editorial urged India to investigate possibility of local groups being involved in the 26/11 attacks.*”*The truth behind the carnage is not established beyond any doubt since Indians continue to refuse to share the evidence with Pakistan. Although the death of ATS chief Hemant Karkare had earlier raised eyebrows, the Indian Minority Affairs Minister’s remark that he was a ‘victim of terrorism plus something’ has caused uproar. If New Delhi were really serious about getting at the root of these attacks, it would do well to investigate them*⁴²⁴.

⁴²¹ *Meet Kasab’s Attorney, A R Antulay, The Economic Times, December 18, 2008*

⁴²² *Antulay Plays into Pak hands, Mail Today December 19, 2008*

⁴²³ *Antulay bowls full toss, Pakistan scores by Pankaj Vohra, Hindustan Times; December 22, 2008*

⁴²⁴ *Support for Antulay building up in Pakistan, The Times of India, December 20, 2008*

An editorial in **The Statesman** found the comments of Antulay ‘extremely ill-advised’. “*Mr. Antulay would have been better advised to take up whatever misgivings he may have had with Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram or National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan rather than make a public statement that on the face of it does not seem to have any great substance. It will not take a rocket scientist to figure out the kind of statements and insinuations made by Mr. Antulay can and probably will be used in Pakistan to discredit the evidence piled up by New Delhi that points out clearly to Islamabad’s complicity in the Mumbai attack and go slow on the demands for the extradition of known terrorists to India*”⁴²⁵.

The Muslim veto

While it is true that his statement earned Antulay a roaring cheer from his co-religionists, he had a significant number of detractors in the community as well. They, however, found little space in the sabre-rattling Urdu media bristling with conspiracy theories. It was to the credit of English media that they were highlighted.

“*I am amazed*” wondered M.J. Akbar, “*at the sheer gall of both the spinners in Pakistan and Antulays in India. They seem to forget that there is a Pakistani canary sitting in an Indian jail, singing out the plans, preparations and objectives. Nine dead men and their masters are being exposed by the tenth man, the man who did not die*”⁴²⁶. Akbar was referring, of course, to Ajmal Amir Kasab.

Many, including M.J. Akbar, felt Antulay was impelled by the ‘lure of Muslim votes’ while making such a statement. That also explained why his party Congress avoided initiating any disciplinary proceedings against him. However, not all Muslims were on Antulay’s side. Congress MP from Murshidabad Abdul Mannan Hossain said, “*Karkare died to a terrorist’s bullet. When the world opinion is united against terror, it’s not appropriate to raise this kind of demand at this time..... Congress MPs G Nizamuddin, Abu Hasem Khan Choudhary, and Anwar Hussain*

⁴²⁵ Foot in mouth, *The Statesman*; December 21, 2008

⁴²⁶ Antulay is the Simi Garewal of Indian Politics, *The Times of India*, December 21, 2008.

said that Karkare fell to terrorist' bullets, party MPs Furkhan Ansari and Aaron Rashid J.M. agreed with Antulay's observations⁴²⁷.

Muslims for Secular Democracy (MSD) found Antulay's remarks "highly irresponsible and outrageous". DNA quoted their view: "*The world is convinced on the basis of evidences provided by the Indian government that the terrorists responsible for 26/11 came from Pakistan and belonged to Lashkar-e-Tayiba, a statement signed by Javed Akhtar, Sajid Rashid and Javed Anand of MSD, said. 'That is why there is a demand from governments all over the world that the Pakistan government acts firmly and swiftly against Pakistan-based perpetrators of terror. Not surprisingly, the Pakistan government is dragging its feet claiming it has yet to be shown incontrovertible evidence'*⁴²⁸". Antulay owed, MSD statement said, an apology to the Mumbai police, to all citizens of India and to Indian Muslims, in particular

Firoz Bakht Ahmed feared Antulay's ill-informed views could get misconstrued as that of most of his co-religionists. In an article in **Hindustan Times** he wrote, "*The self-appointed messiah of Muslims has shown to what level he can stoop to. An overwhelming majority of Muslims find his utterances, suggesting that the terrorists who attacked India on November 26 may not have killed Hemant Karkare, Ashok Kamte and Vijay Salaskar of the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad, ludicrous. To suggest that Karkare was killed by those under the scanner for the Malegaon blasts is finding motive, not evidence'*⁴²⁹.

Violation of the Constitution

In the 'Antulay episode', the media was seen discharging a responsibility that many legislators had overlooked. Several editorials recommended the dismissal of Antulay on the ground of violating collective responsibility. The principle of collective responsibility of the council of ministers is codified in Art 75 (3) of the Constitution. It says,

⁴²⁷ Party lines blur and House splits on Antulay, *The Indian Express*; December 24, 2008

⁴²⁸ Muslim forum demands Antulay's resignation, *DNA*, December 19, 2008. See also- Remark outrageous, *The Hindu*, December 19, 2008.

⁴²⁹ Communal Attack by Firoz Bakht Ahmed, *Hindustan Times*, December 23, 2008

“The Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the House of the People”⁴³⁰.

The Congress had been avoiding taking action against him by calling Antulay’s views as “personal”⁴³¹. But was it living up to its constitutional obligations. **The Telegraph** argued that it was not enough on the Congress’ part to call Antulay’s views as personal and not that of the party. “*The party is falling into the very trap it should show itself to be dismantling. It is debating whether accepting Mr Antulay’s resignation — an offer from the minister that still remains in limbo — would send a “wrong” signal to the minority voters. On the other hand, holding on to him would alienate a large segment of “opinion makers”. This see-sawing between choices based on electoral calculations is exactly the sort of narrowness that the public resents. If three ministers have already been dismissed for showing lack of accountability or a lack of responsibility, the same principle should apply in Mr Antulay’s case*”⁴³².

An editorial in **The Times of India** was subtitled, “Antulay has forsaken the principle of collective responsibility”. An excerpt reads, “*In effect, Antulay has said that he doesn’t trust the police investigations that have been endorsed by the government. As a member of the Union cabinet he is as responsible as the prime minister for the views of the government and is expected to reflect them in public. Antulay — who has been in public life for over four decades and served as chief minister of Maharashtra — should know this. If he felt that Karkare’s murder called for a separate investigation, he should have raised it at appropriate platforms, in this case at the cabinet. And, if he was unconvinced by the government’s explanation, he should have resigned*”⁴³³.

⁴³⁰ Dr. Durga Das Basu explains, “The ‘collective responsibility’ has two meanings: the first that all the members of a government are unanimous in support of its policies and exhibit that unanimity on public occasions although while formulating the policies, they might have differed in the cabinet meeting; the second that the Ministers, who had an opportunity to speak for or against policies in the Cabinet are thereby personally and morally responsible for their success and failure” (**Introduction to the Constitution of India, Dr. Durga Das Basu, Pp.189-90**)

⁴³¹ Antulay’s option: Apology or Axe, *The Economic Times*, December 23, 2008

⁴³² *In the Same Boat*, *The Telegraph* December 22, 2008

⁴³³ *He must go*, *The Times of India*, December 19, 2008

An editorial in **The Tribune** was also subtitled ‘Minister violated collective responsibility’. The editorial, which came at the end of the Winter Session, **reads**, “*If at all he had any doubt, he as a minister was entitled to ask for details from his colleagues. In no case should he have discussed the matter in public, particularly when Pakistan was feeling the heat as, for the first time, it had to virtually admit that the attack was the handiwork of its own people. Willy-nilly Mr Antulay was playing into the hands of the propagandists in Pakistan*”⁴³⁴.

The impasse over Antulay had left **the** Lok Sabha with little time to debate some important bills scheduled for the winter session. Thus the Lok Sabha, on the penultimate day of session (December 22) had to ride roughshod over conventions by passing eight bills in 17 minutes without debate or discussion⁴³⁵.

Thus **The Tribune** editorial noted, “*Much of the wastage of Parliament’s precious time could have been avoided if the government had taken timely action. By virtue of the position they hold, ministers enjoy enormous power. But it also curtails their freedom in the sense that as members of the Cabinet, they have a collective responsibility towards the nation. It is a pity that a seasoned minister like Mr Antulay did not realise this when he put his foot in his mouth. He could have chosen another issue for doing so*”⁴³⁶.

An editorial in **The Economic Times** argued that political class is undermining institutions through politicalization of terror. “*The fallout of Union minister for minority affairs A R Antulay’s remarks on the killing of ATS chief Hemant Karkare displays the worst of the Indian political class’ habitual politicisation of terror as well as the propensity to communalise situations... Faced with the collective task of fighting terrorism, more so since it also entails dealing with Pakistan, such politicking on security matters can only spell failure*”⁴³⁷.

⁴³⁴ *Antics of Antulay, The Tribune, December 24, 2008*

⁴³⁵ *Amid din, LS passes 8 bills in 17 minutes, The Times of India, December 24, 2008. Also, Bills passed without debate amid din over Antulay, The Economic Times, December 23, 2008*

⁴³⁶ *Antics of Antulay, The Tribune, December 24, 2008*

⁴³⁷ *Antulay’s Antics, The Economic Times, December 23, 2008*

On December 23, curtains fell over the issue along with the winter session. Home Minister P. Chidambaram made a statement in the Parliament that set to rest all speculation about conspiracy behind Karkare's killing. On December 24, **The Hindu** published the entire text of the *statement of Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram on the circumstances leading to the death of Hemant Karkare*⁴³⁸. *What was Antulay's reaction? "On his part, Mr. Antulay said his doubts were now cleared since Mr. Chidambaram's statement had come after a probe he had sought"*⁴³⁹.

Actually there was no formal 'probe'. The Home Minister said (in the beginning of his statement) that he had 'ascertained the facts from the Government of Maharashtra'. Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan had categorically dismissed a possibility of ordering a probe into the killing of Hemant Karkare on the first day itself⁴⁴⁰. Maharashtra Home Minister Jayant Patil had said the state government was fully convinced that Karkare was killed in brush firing by terrorists⁴⁴¹.

But Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's clincher "to err is human" formed the staple headline on Antulay issue in most newspapers on December 24. He urged that the issue should be allowed to rest, which meant Antulay was not losing his job. In benign spirit, most newspapers accepted the matter as closed as urged by the PM⁴⁴².

The New Indian Express, Chennai refused to put the pen down on the issue. In the Christmas Day editorial it wrote, "*The minor storm created by A R Antulay's unwise efforts to detect a local conspiracy in the deaths of ATS chief Hemant Karkare and two other senior police officials on 26/11 may have blown over, but not without leaving a bad*

⁴³⁸ No truth in different versions circulated on Karkare's movement, *The Hindu*; December 24, 2008. The entire text also printed as 'Questions about circumstances in which Hemant Karkare was killed are wrong and deeply regrettable', *The Hindu*, December 24, 2008

⁴³⁹ 'No conspiracy in the killing of ATS officers', *The Hindu*; December 24, 2008. See also - Govt rejects conspiracy theory on Karkare killing; Antulay does U-turn, *The Times of India*, December 24, 2008

⁴⁴⁰ No probe ordered into Karkare death, *The Statesman*, December 19, 2008

⁴⁴¹ "Karakate was killed in brush firing by terrorists", *The Hindu*, December 19, 2008

⁴⁴² Antulay issue must be allowed to rest, *The Hindu*, December 24, 2008



taste in the mouth. That the Minister for Minority Affairs had to beat an ignominious retreat from his earlier unsubstantiated claims after the government described his insinuations as “wrong” and “regrettable” is evidence enough that he had acted in an extremely irresponsible manner. His injudicious act was all the more reprehensible in the context of the sharp downturn in India-Pakistan relations following the mayhem caused in Mumbai by the jihadis from across the border. Little wonder that Pakistan lost no opportunity to seize upon Antulay’s comments to try and undermine India’s arguments against it⁴⁴³.

The English press remained uniformly critical of Antulay’s statement. It discharged the nationalist and rationalist responsibility our secular political leadership was seen shunning from. Only BJP and Shiv Sena remained in the forefront of demanding the dismissal of Antulay. While the newspapers let the Antulay antics sleep after Prime Minister’s request, they nevertheless reported about those not ready to take it lying down. **The Statesman** reported that BJP would continue with its “oust Antulay” campaign even outside the Parliament notwithstanding the Home Minister P.Chidambaram’s statement in the Lok Sabha⁴⁴⁴.

⁴⁴³ *Antulay’s deplorable Antics, The New Indian Express; December 25, 2008*

⁴⁴⁴ *BJP to keep Antulay issue alive, The Statesman, December 24, 2008. Also see BJP to step up pressure on Antulay, The Hindu, December 24, 2008*

PART-II

THE ANTULAY EPISODE & HINDI NEWSPAPERS

Across the spectrum of Hindi newspapers, we noticed a sense of outrage at Antulay's baseless comments. The newspapers took critical view of Antulay in their editorials. It seems that **either Antulay** did not follow the media that had related the circumstances leading to Karkare's death within 48 hours of 26/11 or he remained deliberately ignorant to the facts. Nor did he follow Kasab's confession that confirmed it. But Hindi media, like its English counterpart, clearly followed Antulay episode. They realized Antulay's comments were capable of jeopardizing India's case against Pakistan over 26/11, and spoiling India's reputation on world stage. They were often critical **to the Government for not stopping and bringing him** on the right track. They castigated Antulay in their scathing editorials, without forfeiting their commitment to rationality and grasp over facts. They condemned Antulay's statement as irresponsible, baseless, dangerous, subversive, imbalanced and loudmouth etc, which reflected the quantum of anger in their minds.

Rashtriya Sahara denounced Antulay as irresponsible and his statement reprehensible under any circumstances. The newspaper found it hard to imagine that a minister could make such reckless comments on an issue as serious as terrorism.

*“Actually, Antulay, by saying so, is preparing the path for mockery of an officer, who according to him was a brave, dutiful and honest. **The ATS has escaped the blame that is now attaching to other departments in the aftermath of Mumbai attacks. This is because Karkare is dead. Had he been alive, he would have been at the receiving end of the***

public ire. It was quite possible that people would have hit the streets demanding his resignation. It is because the ATS has failed completely to combat the ten terrorists, that they were able to wreak such a major havoc⁴⁴⁵.

Hindustan felt the statement has come at a wrong time, in wrong place, from a wrong person and in a wrong manner. ‘*Antulay is a senior and seasoned politician. He knows his protocols and obligations well. It’s possible there were some doubts in Antulay’s mind about the death of ATS chief or some people might have expressed their doubts to him. But he chose a wrong place and wrong time to raise those doubts*’. Even if Antulay had, the editorial said, some valid evidence for his doubts, there were indeed other suitable occasions to raise them. Pakistan, the editorial feared, could exploit the statement of the minister to blunt India’s mounting diplomatic pressure on Pakistan for acknowledging that terrorists were Pakistanis. ‘*Yet despite everything Antulay’s statement could have been reasonable had he given any prima facie evidence in support of it. The way he burst out suddenly proved that he said these either to gain cheap popularity or settle score with some persons. Perhaps he was a bit discontented about his position in the state politics. But through his rumour mongering at difficult time, no welfare would have achieved for the minorities, whose welfare he has been ministering*⁴⁴⁶.

Jansatta found Antulay’s comments as baseless. Its editorial viewed Antulay’s reservations as cracks development in the unity that the Parliament had displayed over Mumbai attack sometimes back. Antulay has put his party in tight spot by committing something unbecoming of his post. The editorial felt that if Congress is in a dilemma and speaking with forked tongues it is only because the issue has assumed a communal colour. Apart from some Ulemas coming in support of Antulay, there were also some voices in Antulay’s favour within the UPA. “***But does the Muslims society think like its Ulema and its politicians? By refusing to bury the killed terrorists in local Muslim cemetery and wearing black bands the common Muslims have made it evident what***

⁴⁴⁵ Gairjimmedar Antulay,(irresponsible Antulay) Rashtriya Sahara, December 19, 2008

⁴⁴⁶ Antulay ki fislan(Antulay’s aberration), Hindustan, December 19, 2008

they think. It's a clear indication that the Muslim society is in need of a new leadership"⁴⁴⁷.

Dainik Jagran found Antulay's comments utterly offensive. "The damage that the Union Minority Affairs Minister A.R. Antulay has done to the nation defies examples. His statement that there could be a conspiracy behind the killing of ATS chief Hemant Karkare is a kind of kowtowing to Pakistan". The editorial wondered how the bug of suspicion entered into his brain. "The mental bankruptcy that Antulay has demonstrated matches only of those misled minds in Pakistan who are trying to prove that hands of Hindus and Jews were behind Mumbai and adopting every tactics. How could Antulay be differentiated from those people?" The editorial expressed surprise as how Antulay was still gracing the ministerial post?⁴⁴⁸

Dainik Jagran, in another editorial, blasted the subversive politicking of parliamentarians who have supported Antulay. 'The unanimity that a few members of Parliament have demonstrated with Antulay, who tried to downgrade his government, instigating the Muslim community, and demoralizing the security forces deliberately, makes nation's head bow in shame'. The editorial termed this as dangerous 'Pakistanization' of Indian politics. The editorial also castigated the Union Government. "If it (Congress) were conscious of its accountability to the nation then not only would it have taken strong measure against Antulay, but ordered an intensive enquiry as to who spread this rumour that there could be a conspiracy behind the killing of Karkare'. The Government, felt the editorial, should outface Antulay and his racketeers, else all that has been done till date to combat Pak-sponsored terrorism will go waste. 'It will be suicidal to sit quiet when the danger of India's trustworthiness suffered in international community has increased by Antulay's misconduct'⁴⁴⁹.

Nai Dunia had published only one hard hitting article on the subject. The article finds Antulay's statement as a dangerous rerun of minority politics witnessed in pre-partition India. "There is no dispute regarding the evidences against Pakistan. It has been established **that** Mumbai was

⁴⁴⁷ Betuke Sawal(Baseless question), Jansatta, December 22, 2008

⁴⁴⁸ Aghatkari Antulay Dangerous Antulay), Dainik Jagran, December 19, 2008

⁴⁴⁹ Rashtraghathi Rajnit(anti-national Politics)i, Dainik Jagran, December 23, 2008

attacked under a meticulous plan. It was a conspiracy to hurl the country in a fire of terror, anarchy and communalism. Pakistan's role has exposed before the international forum on the issue of terror. Today it does not have a single advocate. But is it merely a coincidence that on the same day Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari raised questions over proofs given by India, Antulay hinted towards the hand of some other powers else?. What else did Pakistan ask for?

“Congress leaders have tried to evade the issue by calling it a ‘personal opinion’. Could there be a greater travesty of the constitutional process? Antulay is not merely a political leader, he is a Union Minister as well. His department is also remarkable - Minority Affairs. This department was created by the UPA government. The partition of the country resulted from the culmination of this minority-majority mindset”⁴⁵⁰.

Navbharat Times felt that the way Antulay has placed his government in a tight spot could not end in any **other climax than his resignation**. But there was certainly a rider. *“The other side of the coin is that it would not be as easy for the government to accept his resignation as it might appear in the first sight. For a diplomatically besieged Pakistan, Antulay’s statement has given a prospect to assert that India could ill-afford to blame Pakistan without conducting an enquiry when its own minister has reservations about the incident. It would not stop short of giving the issue a spin at religion-based platforms like Organization of Islamic Countries⁴⁵¹ to project how India had dismissed its Minority Affairs Minister for questioning government stand”*. The editorial felt that if Antulay or any other politician tried to fudge any part of terrorist attack, by conjuring BJP and Shiv Sena’s opposition to Karkare, he is wittingly or unwittingly becomes a part of Pakistan’s diplomatic propaganda that even people of Pakistan are not able to digest in its present shape⁴⁵². Using a pun upon his name the editorial was titled ‘*Antule Bol*’ (Imbalanced Talk).

Amar Ujala attributed the cynicism that pervades in Indian politics to politicians like Antulay. *‘When the entire country is seriously*

⁴⁵⁰ *Pakistan ko aur kya chahiye(What else could Pakistan ask for? By Rakesh Sinha, Nai Dunia, December 22, 2008*

⁴⁵¹ *Actually, Organization of the Islamic Conference (estd 1971) headquartered at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia*

⁴⁵² *Antule Bol (imbalanced talk)l, Navbharat Times, December 20, 2008*

pondering to combat terrorism, Parliament is involved in framing new laws, **how reasonable it is** to raise a question whose sole purpose is to confuse the **investigation** process and somehow exploit it **for political advantage?**'. The editorial rued that ministers and Members of Parliament have belied the dignity that attaches to their posts. 'How many leaders understand their duties and discharge it. Only handful Members attend the annual ceremony to pay homage to the security staff died defending the Parliament against terrorist attack'. Now, the editorial said, people are no longer ready to be used as vote banks. The candidate of the party, whose top leader had made absurd ingratiating talks at Batla House, forfeited his deposit in the elections. People want to see concrete work; the days of lip-service are over⁴⁵³.

Nai Duniya took a rather soft stand vis-à-vis other Hindi newspapers. Its editorial came out on Christmas day after the controversy had been put to rest. It accepted the observations of the Home Minister that questions about Karkare's death are 'wrong and regrettable', The Prime Minister's comments 'to err is human' and **Antulay** being satisfied with the Home Minister's speech, on its face value. 'Indeed an Union Minister should not have told what Antulay told outside the Parliament, because the best place to express such suspicion is cabinet meeting not the Parliament. When the entire country is conversant with the facts regarding Karkare's death, it should have been clearer to a minister'⁴⁵⁴.



⁴⁵³ *Netayon ka Badbolapan(loud mouth leaders), Amar Ujala, December 19, 2008.*

⁴⁵⁴ *Vivad par viram(debate set to rest), Nai Duniya, December 25, 2008*

PART-III

THE ANTULAY EPISODE & URDU NEWSPAPERS

The mainstream newspapers perceived the questions raised on the Mumbai attacks by Antulay with much consternation from the very first day. They critically analysed all aspects of Antulay's statement. In fact, the pressure of the Opposition parties and media was more effective on Antulay than that of the pressure of the UPA Government. Antulay was not suddenly raising questions over the Mumbai attacks. He was only providing legitimacy to the prejudiced campaign by the Urdu newspapers.⁴⁵⁵ He appeared to have forgotten that he was a Minister of Minority Affairs in the Central Government and his statement was unwarranted at this juncture. He negated the ideals of collective responsibility without any hesitation. The mainstream newspapers examined various aspects of these issues and forced Antulay and the Government to follow their conclusions. However, most of the Urdu newspapers sang Antulay's glory and created an '*Antulaynama*'. They contextually described his statement and gave him accolades for his 'bravery'. They confirmed to their readers that whatever they had written till now had been true. This role of the Urdu newspapers was certainly an impediment in the efforts of Indian state against terrorism. Urdu newspapers had displayed a narrow vision **which puts** question mark on their veracity.

Abdul Rahman Antulay made himself spokesperson of the Urdu newspapers by his statement. Probably it was for this reason that the Urdu newspapers, in opposition to the mainstream newspapers, congratulated him for showing 'courage'.

Inqilaab wrote on December 18, 2008 issue that "Antulay's question on Karkare's death raises a controversy". The headline of **Rojnama Rashtriya Sahara** described its nature. "Was he a victim of bullets of terrorists or someone else's?" The lead story of **Hindustan Samachar** was "*ATS chief Ka qaatil, 'bhagwa brigade' to nahi? (Is the Bhagwa brigade murderer of ATS chief?)*" It wrote that the minister's statement had set off tremors - "zalzala" in the House. While the whole world was

⁴⁵⁵ *Urdu Times, December 19, 2008*

watching Pakistan's hand in the Mumbai attacks but **Dainik Sahafat** was yet anxious to know, "*Hemant Karkare ke katl ke piche kaun hai? Simapaar ke atankwadi ya andar ke hi awsarwadi?* (Who is behind Hemant Karkare's death, Terrorists from across the border or opportunists within?)"⁴⁵⁶ **Siyasat** published Antulay's statement on its front page for two consecutive days.⁴⁵⁷

Rojnama Rashtriya Sahara led a campaign to prove the Mumbai terrorist attack as an anti-Muslim conspiracy and to establish Antulay's statement as true. The title in this newspaper on December 18 was "*Karkare ki katl ki story par Antulay ne prashna chinha lagaya? Wah dahshatgardo ki goli ka shikar hue ya kisi aur ki, Ghatana ki jaanch ke maang par sansad me hungama* (Antulay puts a question mark over the murder of Karkare. Was he a victim of bullets of terrorists or someone else's? The demand of enquiry into the incident raised uproar in Parliament)" This newspaper also published a special editorial on its first page.⁴⁵⁸ Along with this it also gave **some interesting titles of** articles, like, "*Hemant Karkare Ke Baad ATS. (ATS after Hemant Karkare)*"⁴⁵⁹ *Malegaon Dhamake Ki Jaanch aur Mumbai Aatankwadi Hamlo Ka Kya Koi Sambandh Hai? Hame Sach Ka Pata Lagana Hoga* (Is there any relation between the Malegaon attacks probe and the Mumbai terrorists attacks? **We have to search for the truth**)⁴⁶⁰ "*Shahido Ke Ristedar Nyay Maang Rahe Hai. Wwah Samajhte Hai Ki Jo Dikh Raha Hai Uske Parde Mein Sachai Kuch Aur Bhi Hai* (The relatives of Martyrs are demanding justice. They think there is a different truth behind the veil)"⁴⁶¹ "*Mumbai Par Aatankwadi Hamla Ya Kriya Ki pratikriya, 'Kriya' Karkare Ki Jaanch Aur 'Pratikriya' Karkare Ki Maut (Terrorist attack on the Mumbai or reaction of the action, Action; Karkare's probe and Reaction; Karkare's death)*"⁴⁶² "*Kisi Bhi Nirnay Se Pahle Hamari Sarkar*

⁴⁵⁶ "From the urdu press, Indian express, december 20, 2008)

⁴⁵⁷ "Loksabha me Karkare Ke Bare me Antulay Ke Bayan Ki Fir Goonj, Parliament Ki Karyawahi Me Hangama, Pradhanmantri Se Spastiwan manga, ishtife Ke liye BJP Ki Maang"

⁴⁵⁸ "26/11 Ka Sach Abdul Rahman Antulay Ne Uahi Kaha Jo Hamne Likha" (Abdul Rahman Antulay told the same truth of 26/11 which we wrote)

⁴⁵⁹ November 28, 2008

⁴⁶⁰ November 29, 2008

⁴⁶¹ December 03, 2008

⁴⁶² December 04, 2008

Yah To Soche Vishvashniya Kaun, Atankwadi 'Kasab' Ya Shahid Karkare (Before taking any decision the Government should think who is more reliable, Terrorist 'Kasab' or martyr 'Karkare')⁴⁶³ ”*Kaun Hai Mastermind In Atankwadi Hamlo Ka? Kya Sochte Hai Aap!, Vichar Kare Aur Bataye* (Who is the mastermind of these attacks? What do you think? Think and say)⁴⁶⁴ “ ‘Kasab’ Nav Se Utara, Paani Aur Keechar Se Gujra, Station Pahuncha, Lekin Na Keechar Juton Par Aur Na Bhigne Ke Nishan Paaint Par (‘Kasab’ got out of boat, walked through water and mud, reached station, but no mud on his shoes and no sign of wetness on his trousers)⁴⁶⁵ “*Mumbai Par Hamla Karne Wale Atankwadi Pakistani! Magar Kya Unka Koi Sahyogi Bhartiya Bhi?* (The Mumbai attackers are Pakistani but is there any Indian collaborator)⁴⁶⁶

The publication of such news and articles did the job of increasing the Hindu-Muslim divide on 26/11 and the immediate benefactor of this was the Urdu newspapers. It generated a different kind of discussion among the readers of Urdu newspapers which was the negation of the discussions of the mainstream. In result, *‘these newspapers became very popular among its readers and circulation also increased rapidly’*.⁴⁶⁷

Urdu Times, in its December 18 issue, wrote that such police officers should have been near Taj or Oberoi. Why did they go to a deserted street? Displeased Opposition questioned the Prime Minister. Congress replied that this is Antulay’s personal issue. Tremor in Parliament over Antulay’s statement.⁴⁶⁸

The Urdu newspapers, in contrast to the mainstream newspapers from across the country, sang the glory of Antulay and tried to establish him as a responsible politician and the leader of Muslims.

⁴⁶³ December 05, 2008

⁴⁶⁴ December 09, 2008

⁴⁶⁵ December 14, 2008

⁴⁶⁶ December 15, 2008

⁴⁶⁷ “ Urdu Akhbaro me Antulay prasang(Antulay episode in the urdu newspapers), December 23, 2008, http://www.bbc.co.uk/hindi/regionalnews/story/2008/12/08/223_urdupress_cons_piracy.shtml.

⁴⁶⁸ “**Hemant Karkare Ka Katl Mushtaba, Azad Jaanch Jaruri**” (Hemant’s Karkar’s murder doubtful; Free investigation necessary), December, 18, 2008, Urdu Times. This four column news has been published by this newspaper by a special correspondent in the Mumbai dateline.

Urdu Times in its special editorial on December 19 termed the uproar over Antulay as 'Fascism'. "*The uproar against Antulay is nothing other than fascism*". It further wrote that "*the storm that has been raised over Antulay's statement is the proof that Antulay has been associated with the Congress' secularist nationalism. Be it the martyrdom of Babari mosque or the killing of Muslims in Gujarat, Antulay never allowed his loyalty for Congress to degenerate. Then what did he say in the Parliament on December 17 that made the Maharashtrian Opposition leader Shri Ram Das Kadam to demand from the Government to take action against Antulay under 'MCOCA'.*" ..."*After all what is the fault of Antulay?*" Such questions of these newspapers highlight their mentality. "*He has neither advocated for terrorism nor given clean chit to Pakistan and also he did not say anything that would have given his political opponents a chance to question him.*"⁴⁶⁹

Antulay's statement was not the result of any sudden gust of emotion; rather it was inspired by the conspiracy theories that have been written by the Urdu newspapers all over the country. **Urdu Times** highlighted this fact in its editorial and wrote that "*In Urdu Times we have asked similar questions even earlier. After all why he sat in other vehicle instead of using his own bullet proof vehicle? When Karkare had got a Z-plus security cover, then where were his armed bodyguards at the time of attacks? And what were they doing? When additional police commissioner of Mumbai South, Sada Nanda Datte was injured in the attacks in Cama Street then who ordered these senior officers of ATS to go there? The postmortem report of these officers was not given to the newspapers because it would have made known the bullets which took their lives?*"⁴⁷⁰

Further this editorial declared the Central as well as Maharashtra Government as the main conspirators. "*The Maharashtra Government has declined to convene a probe into the death of Hemant Karkare and other police officers in the same way in which the Central Government had declined a probe into the Batla House encounter.*" Not only this, the editor brought the whole issue to Antulay's Muslim identity. It wrote,

⁴⁶⁹ "*Tajiya Khabar*" (news analysis), *Urdu Times*, December 19, 2008

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid*

“Whether the reason of the storm in the tea-cup is that Antulay is Abdul Rahman? Is it a crime being a Muslim?”

Newspaper **Munshif** also tried to prove Antulay as a responsible leader. In its editorial on December 19, 2008 it wrote that *“Antulay is counted as one of the strong, old and wise leaders of the Congress. He has been in the central cabinet even before. He has also been the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He was appointed on many top posts in the Congress Party. Above all he is transparent Muslim leader of the Congress Party who opens his mouth on any issue only after much thinking.”* After proving Antulay as a responsible leader this newspaper further tried to justify his **doubts** by writing that *“In Parliament he raised the issue of the Maharashtra ATS chief late Hemant Karkare. It is indeed a matter to be paid attention as to why three senior officials like Karkare, Kamte and Salaskar sat in a single vehicle? Did he go to Cama Hospital himself or was he sent there by someone else? There is also news that bullets, which were fired on Karkare, were not shot by Pakistani terrorists but someone else. Antulay’s purpose is that during the investigations into the Mumbai attacks this should also be considered as to how three senior officers were killed. He also said in the Parliament that ‘no matter whatever the eye see yet many things remain to be seen’. This newspaper has further written by condemning the reaction of Opposition on Antulay’s statement that. “This demand of his (Antulay) is neither unconstitutional nor against the national interest. The manner in which BJP has created storm in Parliament over Antulay’s statement shows that the party has closed all the gates of its mind while thinking about Mumbai. This time every people of India are distraught because of the Mumbai incident, but BJP is enjoying expressing its objections on Antulay’s statement on this occasion”.*⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷¹ “Antulay ka bayan” (Statement of Antulay)

Munshif while continuing its campaign against BJP published seven column lead news, from Lucknow unknown dateline on December 21, 2008. The title was “Advani Desh me dahsatgardi Ke bani, Rath Yatra ke dwaran nafrat ki aag bharkai, Majhab Ke naam par BJP ne Mulk Ko baat diya, Antulay ke bayan me Apatijanak Kya hai (Dig Vijay Singh)” same day, ‘Munsif’ published a statement of an old Congress leader Colonel Sudheer Sawant, released by UNI. Title was “Karkare, Kamte Aur Salaskar Ko Pistol Se Goli Mari thi”. Though the Pakistani terrorist Ajmal Kasab has claimed that these three officers were killed by his colleague Abu Ismail by AK-47 the question is after all why Sawant said this sensational lie?

Sahafat on December 21, published a special article by Jafar Aaga on its front page, where it targeted the mainstream newspapers, television channels of the country. He wrote that “After all what is the crime of Antulay? Only this that the murder of Karkare and his two colleagues who were investigating the Malegaon bomb blasts should be probed? Is it a crime to ask for a probe into the murder of Karkare and his colleagues? All hell will break on Antulay. Televisions and newspaper cried that Antulay should immediately resign. **Times of India** declared Antulay an agent of Pakistani secret agency ISI and then BJP demanded that he should be immediately thrown out of the ministry”. He asks, “After all **why all this noise?** Why is there a suspicion on Antulay’s patriotism?” And again the writer praised Antulay in the context of nation. “Abdul Rahman Antulay is not a name of any normal personality. He had been the chief minister of India's richest state Maharashtra some 30-35 years ago. He is the only Hindustani Muslim politician who got this honour. Even at that time under the leadership of late Ram Nath Goenka, the Sangh lobby forced him to resign under charges of corruption. Antulay fought the case for 18 long years **against the charges**. At last he was acquitted by the Apex Court of the country - the Supreme Court of India. **Even during that period no one claimed that he was a "Gaddar", not patriot.** Also he had won Lok Sabha elections not once but 3-4 times and for at least two times he had been a Minister in the Central Government. Will a person become an enemy of the nation overnight because a few TV channels and BJP are blaming that he has helped Pakistan by asking an enquiry into the death of Karkare? Antulay was always a patriot and even now he is a patriot. In fact, the question is not whether he should stay in the government or not rather the question is: **Why should not there be a probe of the death of Karkare and his two colleagues?**” **Jafar Aaga further writes** that Abdul Rahman is attached to the name of Antulay which shows that he is a Muslim. “If the resignation of Antulay is accepted then this will be an infamous (Badnuma) stain on Indian secularism.”⁴⁷²

Rojnama Rashtriya Sahara in its editorial on December 22 wrote that "the only fault of Antulay was that he was using the democratic right of thinking with an open mind instead of believing in the police story

⁴⁷² Antulay ka bayan chor ki dadhi me Tinka kyon bana? (why Antulay’s statement became a hole in the bucket), *Sahafat*, December 21, 2008.

with closed eyes. If his statement was giving a mortal assault to a particular ideology then no one had the right to question his patriotism"⁴⁷³

Hindustan Express on December 22 published a letter of president of All India Minority Front Badar –Ul – Islam. In his letter the writer had said "*Late Karkare has become immortal by giving his life whereas I understand that Antulay has become the greatest Gazi even while remaining alive. He performed the role of a minister of minority affairs with complete honesty, courage and without any greed for power. For this he deserves to be thanked by not only the Millat – but also of hundred of Hindustani of the country. He has saved the dignity of Abdul Rahman (lafje Abdual Rahman). There are many prominent Muslims in the government whose loyalty is to sell the nation and to give pleasures to their master. The fresh example of this is the president of Delhi Minority Commission Kamal Faruqqi, who, yesterday, opposed the statement of Antulay*"⁴⁷⁴

Dawat in its editorial on December 25 wrote that "When Antulay raised this question it seemed that he was standing alone and everyone was attacking him, even his party left him alone." It further said that there are two allegations against **Antulay. First** is that he saw this issue from a communal angle; Second is that by giving this statement he has weakened India's position and has given a good weapon to Pakistan. Now it can be said that foreign elements are not involved in attacks rather it is the act of some Indian mischievous element."⁴⁷⁵ The editorial has declared that both these allegations are baseless and has considered Antulay as the protector of Muslim interests.

⁴⁷³ "Digvijay Singh ki Vajahat", Rozanama Rashtriya sahara, December 22, 2008

⁴⁷⁴ " Abdul rahman Ko Millat ka sat Salam.", Hindustan Express , December 22, 2008

⁴⁷⁵ "Isme Burai kya hai" (what is wrong in this), Dawat, December 25, 2008

Dawat also published another article on it front page on December 25 2008 " Musalmano ko Mujrimo ke katghare me khara karne ka yah amal kab tak"(Till when will this practise of bringing Muslims to the bar will continue)

Urdu weekly **Nayi Dunia** on its December 29, 2008 issue wrote that “*This truth came on his mouth that what is known about the death of ATS Chief Hemant Karkare is not correct. He was pointing out that there must be some connection behind the investigations of Malegaon blasts and the murder of Karkare. This is the question which has been asked from the very first day and it will be asked until a satisfactory answer is provided. Antulay questioned that there is someone who had misdirected Karkare and sent him towards the Cama hospital where he was killed. The issue would have been certainly different, had he gone towards Taj, Oberoi or Nariman House*”. This editorial has also criticised leaders of Samazwadi Party for expressing disagreement with Antulay. “*It is beyond limits that the same Amar Singh, who is now dearest to Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi, who was himself questioning the martyrdom of Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma in the Batala House encounter before the Assembly elections, is now speaking against Antulay for making the martyrdom of Karkare controversial. He started giving suggestion that he should not raise such questions. If Shiv Sena leader Geete had asked, as to why Antulay was speaking like this when the whole country is speaking in a single tone against terrorism, then it would have been reasonable. But it is indeed saddening that many Congress members are saying that Antulay has given a weapon to Pakistan. Does everyone wants that instead of attacking roots of terrorism a battle ground is prepared for war, to put a veil of Pakistan on Hindu terrorism and cut any one's fingers if he points towards it*”⁴⁷⁶

Moses in the house of Pharaoh

Nayi Dunia in another editorial called Antulay ‘Moses in the house of Pharaoh’ and also tried to prove him a responsible leader. It wrote that “*There is little doubt that Antulay has shown extraordinary courage. He has presented an example of saying truth. If the matter of heart came to mouth then let it come. Antulay has strengthened his prestige in the view of the world by not retreating from his statement. It is a test of Manmohan Singh Government to prove its honesty. A Moses is born in the house of every Pharaoh. Congress-led UPA Government at the Centre has become hostage to the fundamentalists. **The Congress was unaware that there was a Moses among them who had destroyed all their magical illusions.** Antulay's truth has put them in an awkward*

⁴⁷⁶ “*Antulay Ka Gunah Kya hai*” (what is the crime of Antulay), *Nai Dunia*, December 29, 2008

position, which they cannot easily escape. If you are really concerned that Antulay has given a weapon to Pakistan, that it can now question the authenticity of Hindustan then the way to counter it is to speed up the probe against Hindu terrorists. Then the blame that India keeps in dark Hindu Terrorism, will itself become ineffective, otherwise you cannot stop the voice of the world”.

Urdu newspapers severely criticised the Congress Party for distancing itself from the statement of other Congress members. **Alami Sahara** in its editorial on December 27 wrote that “*If Antulay has expressed some suspicions in the death of Karkare and others then it is neither **unconstitutional** nor illegal*”. This newspaper could not digest the Congress Party’s stand of not supporting Antulay. It further wrote that “*In the light of Antulay’s statement why Congress Party doesn’t want an investigation into the murder of Karkare? Why is it distancing herself from this statement? Congress must understand that the attempt of hiding facts, for ending terrorism, is neither in the interest of the Country nor in the interest of Congress. **The party** should also understand that if the country really wants to fight against terror then it is of utmost importance that a transparency is maintained in the issue concerning terrorism and the absence of transparency is harmful from all perspectives.*”⁴⁷⁷

Support to Antulay

Antulay received support for his statement from many Muslim organisations and Muslim leaders from across the country. In a programme ‘face the nation’ on CNN-IBN, former president of All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat Syed Shahbuddin while supporting Antulay said that “*Therefore in my opinion, Antulay has done a great service to the country. He has restored the hope of the Muslim community*”. Shahbuddin rejected all theories that this move was to appease the minority voters⁴⁷⁸. The president of All India Muslim Majlis-

⁴⁷⁷ “*Jaanch Par aitraj Kyon*” (*Why is the objection on the enquiry*), *Alami Sahara*, December 27, 2008

⁴⁷⁸ “*Antulay’s remarks push Muslims into a corner*”, December 23, 2008, <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/antulays-remarks-push-muslims-into-a-corner/81144-3-single.html>

e-Mushawarat, Zafar-ul-Islam Khan also said that that the *criticism of Antulay is misplaced*.⁴⁷⁹ Maulana Abdul Hameed Nomani, general secretary, Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind has also demanded proper investigation into Karkare's death as the circumstances in which he was killed are still not very clear. All India Muslim Personal Law Board member Dr Syed Qasim Rasool Ilyas said that mystery of Karkare's death should be removed... There is no denying the fact that his death is very much related to the Malegaon probe and thus his death should be properly investigated".⁴⁸⁰ Maulana Amir Jallauddin of Jamaite-Islami has blamed the Government of white washing these serious issues. He said Antulay was not wrong rather the criticism of Antulay is wrong.⁴⁸¹

Antulay's statement brought the Muslim leaders, both outside and inside the Parliament, on one **platform**. This dangerous polarisation on communal lines was a matter of bliss for the Urdu newspapers.

Munshif in its December 19 issue "Muslim Parliamentarians and Muslim organisations have given full support to Antulay" further wrote that " More importantly when there was an uproar in the Parliament over Antulay's statement, Minister of State for Home Shakeel Ahmed did not hesitate in voicing Antulay's demand. BSP MP Illiyas Ahmed said in the Parliament that those who attacked Cama were speaking in Marathi and these people shot bullets on Karkare. Samajwadi Party MP Rashid Mashood, like Antulay, also saw the hands of Hindu terrorists in the death of Karkare. Rajya Sabha MP Mohammad Adeeb also spoke on the same pitch as Antulay and blamed the Hindu terrorists for death of the police officer. He said that it was not accurate for the Government to blame Pakistan on this issue. President of the Nationalist Socialist Party, Chowdhary Jiya-UI-Islam has asserted that whatever Antulay had said is not wrong."⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁹ "His words finds echo in Muslim fears" *Indian express*, December 20, 2008

⁴⁸⁰ *Who killed Karkare: Muslim leaders support Antulay's views*, December 17, 2008,

http://www.twocircles.net/2008dec17/who_killed_karkare_muslim_leaders_support_antulay_s_views.html

⁴⁸¹ "Antulay ko Muslim arkaan Parliament Aur Tanjimo Ki Purjor himayat". *Munshif*, December 19 *Munshif*

⁴⁸² *Ibid*

On its front page titled – ‘*Abdul Rahman Ke Hausle Buland*’, the **Hindustan Express** of December 21 issue, carried statements of various Muslims organisations that supported Antulay.

Urdu Times on December 22 published on its front page a news titled “*Antulay Ke Bayan Aur Karkare Ke Sahadat Par Parliament Me Jabarsdasth Hungama.*” On its editorial page of December 23, the paper also published an article by Dr. Rizwan Ahmed - “*Bhari Bajam Me Raaj Ki Baat Kah Di.*” (*Disclosed the secret in the full house*)

In this article, while supporting the statement of Antulay, it has also claimed that Pakistan’s hand is not involved in Mumbai terror attacks. It has tried to prove that Antulay is a responsible leader.

Jadid Markaj on December 21, 2008 published a news item on its front page “*Abdul Rahman Antulay Par Pseudo Desbhakto Ke Hamle*” (Attack of pseudo patriots on Antulay), which it demanded that the issue Antulay raised should be properly investigated.

Dawat in an article published on December 22 issue claimed 90 per cent of people in the country are in agreement with Antulay that hands of Hindu extremists are behind these murders.⁴⁸³

Hamara Samaj also published the news in **Antulay’s support on front page on its December 22 issue**⁴⁸⁴, which reads “*Main Allah Ke Alawa Kisi Se Nahi Darta (Antulay)*”(I don’t fear anyone other than Allah: Antulay)⁴⁸⁵

Jadid Markaj in its main story on December 28 wrote that “*The questions which Antulay did raise are rising in the minds of people of whole country. “The questions raised by Antulay have appeared in the minds of all people of the country... Despite all that Advani and Co.*

⁴⁸³ Page three, Dawat, December 22, 2008

⁴⁸⁴ In this issue it published a news in which the Rampur district president of Jamiyat Ulema, Maulana Aslam Jamaat Hashmi has supported Antulay's statement.

⁴⁸⁵ In this news a statement of former president of Delhi committee Abdul Salim Salmani, had claimed that Congress should over Antulays demand.)

*plans to brand Antulay a traitor, accomplice of Pakistan and defamer of the nation. Congress not only appears to be a mute spectator but whitewashes the case. If this not inviting fascist forces what else can be?*⁴⁸⁶ The editor Hisam Siddqui said in this news that "just two days before the Mumbai terror attacks by Pakistani terrorists Hemant Karkare had received death threats. Antulay or anyone in the country didn't say that Karkare and colleagues were killed by the bullet of someone else instead of the bullets of Pakistani terrorists". On Antulay's retreat from his position the editor wrote that "*Antulay might be satisfied with the statement of P Chidambaram because of any pressure but the people of the country will never be.*"⁴⁸⁷

Urdu Newspapers also publicised the proposal of resignation of Antulay and termed it as his greatness, sacrifice and the true guard of the nation. **Hindustan Express** in its December 20 issue gave the headline of this news as "*Antulay Ne Gaddi Chorhe Ki Peshkas Kar Di Hai, 'Hukumat Ya Congress Party Yeh Saaf-Saaf Kahe Mujhe Bajarat Ke Ohde Par Nahi Rahna Chahiye. Istifa To Apni Jeb Me Lekar Ghumta Hu ATS Ki Chief Ka Maut Kisi Saajish Ki Hissa Thi, Iss Motifa Par Mai Jindagai Ki Akhari Saans Tak Kayam Rahunga: Antulay.* Antulay has offered to resign. He said, "The Government or the Congress should clearly say whether I should stay on the post of Minister or not. I keep my resignation in my pocket. The death of ATS chief was the result of a conspiracy. I will stand by my statement till my last breath."⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁶ "*Antulay Ka Mutmayeen (Santosh) Hona Kafi Nahi.*" (Satisfaction of Antulay is not enough)

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁸⁸ *In this issue it also published news from Deoband "Abdul Rahman Antulay Ko Ahle Deoband Ki Mubarkabad" It has been claimed that many leaders of Deoband has congratulated Antulay for saying the right thing.*

A three column news on its main page was also published. "Antulay Ke Bayan Par Bhagwa Brigade Ka Aevan Me Hungama." "Shivsena Aur BJP Kabina Se Vajir Maroof Ki Barkhastagi Par Vajida Brasarikdar Istaf Par Khamosh".(Bhagwa Brigades uproar over statement of Antulay in the Parliament, ruling party silent on the demand of resignation from cabinet of Antulay by BJP and Shiv Sena).

Mashrik also carried this news on its December 20 issue that "Antulay Mustafi Hindu Ugravidio Ki Shandar Vijay; Kya Mulk Me Hindu Dahsatgardo Ki Hukumat Hai? Sonia Aur Manmohan Se Mulk Ke Saikaro Secularvadio Aur Musalmano Ka Sawal?" (Ceremonial victory of Hindu extremists on Antulay; is there the rule of Hindu terrorists on the Country; Questions to Sonia and Manmohan from the well-wishers, secularists and Muslims of the country.)

Rojnama Rashtriya Sahara also published this news on its front page "Sirf Upar Waale Se Darta Hun; Antulay "Kaumi Taftisi Agency Par Bhi Sawalia Nishan Lagaya". In its December 23 issue the Urdu media did not give any logical contribution to the debate that originated in the mainstream media over Antulay's statement. Instead it gave all its concentration on blaming Hindu organisations.

Mashrik in its December 20 editorial considered a probe by saying that "The death of such brave officer is very regrettable. All the doubts, if any, must be cleared by an investigation. Why Sangh Parivaar is worrying on this demand?"⁴⁸⁹

Hamara Samaj in its editorial on the uproar caused in Parliament over Antulay's statement blamed that "There is much weight in the questions which Abdul Rahman Antulay had raised in the Parliament over the death of Hemant Karkare and his colleagues. That is why the Hindutva forces don't want their deeds to be exposed. They know this very well that if this happens then many secrets will be known which is dangerous for them."⁴⁹⁰

Nayi Dunia published a two page long article in its December 28 issue. It said that killings of three officers of the Mumbai ATS are an incident which will always keep all the people of India worried. The questions that they were killed by the same two terrorists who were seen by the whole world on television or there is some other theory? This will always raise its head. Many questions like this are originating out of the

⁴⁸⁹ "Karkare ki Katl ki jaanch Kyon Jaruri hai" (Why a probe into death of Karkare is necessary), *Mashrik*, December 22, 2008

⁴⁹⁰ " Parliament me hungama" (Uproar in the Parliament), editorial, *December 23, 2008*.

background of this killing. Otherwise there is no reason for people to unnecessarily raise doubts.⁴⁹¹

On December 29 this newspaper said in an article that “the thing that was in the heart of Abdul Rahman Antulay, Minister of Minority Affairs in the Manmohan Singh Government, has come out of his mouth. **He would have never thought that if he talks about the death of Hemant Karkare**, chief of Maharashtra ATS a result of a conspiracy, then earthquake will erupt in the politics of the country. The group of fundamentalists would unite against him in this manner on the issue. Moreover, the secular media and the Government will also target him... They started blaming that Antulay is speaking in favor of Pakistan. They blamed that Antulay has disregarded his martyrdom with his question and the kind of noise they created has no parallel in the history of Parliament⁴⁹². “*Antulay did question the dirty face which BJP was trying to hide in the name of nationalism and which was disclosed by Karkare. But this is surprising as to why this bitter truth of Antulay didn't augur well with the Congress? Why Manmohan Singh got anxious? Why did Sonia Gandhi become angry?*”⁴⁹³

Later on, the Urdu newspapers aggressively campaigned for action on Antulay's questions. In an article published in **Sahafat**, the writer Zafar Naqvi alleged that “Even today innumerable Muslims have been put behind bars under TADA and POTA though they have not done any crime. The police arrest the Muslim youth after any terror incident without any proper investigation. But after many years if a justice seeking and honest officer like Karkare disclosed the face of real culprits then the country gets to know who the real terrorists are. In this background, If Antulay had asked for a probe into murder of Karkare by becoming spokesperson of Muslims then what is wrong in it? Who would have spoken if he had remained silent? If the Congress made

⁴⁹¹ “**Hemant Karkare Ka Katil Kaun? Ab Hindu Dahshatgardi Par Parda Kaun Uthayega?**”(*Who is the killer of Hemant Karkare? Now who will disclose the Hindu terrorism.*), *Nayi Duniya Urdu*, Denember 28, 2008. In another editorial on this date *Nayi Dunia* blamed the police, Media and the Sangh Parivaar for the death of Karkare. In “ *Hindu Atankwadi se ab parda kaun uthayega(Who will now unveil the Hindu terrorist)*”

⁴⁹² “ *Antulay ka karva sach (the bitter truth of Antulay)*”, *Nayi Dunia*, December 29, 2008

⁴⁹³ *ibid*

Antulay a minister by assuming him to be the representative of Muslims then why the party is feeling uncomfortable when he expressed the feeling of Muslims"⁴⁹⁴

Urdu Times in its editorial on December 28, while reasserting the possibility of a conspiracy asked that there should be an enquiry to this issue. It wrote that "Though Home Minister P Chidambaram has said in the Parliament that Hemant Karkare and his colleagues Ashok Kamte and Vijay Salaskar were victims of bullets of terrorists yet there is something because of which a group of citizens are hesitant to accept this statement of P Chidambaram. The reason is that Chidambaram has said the same things as the Mumbai police report and because of that, the faith of Muslims on the Police has now vanished. They now hesitate from accepting any report of the Mumbai police and their role **has** always been anti-Muslim."⁴⁹⁵

When Antulay had to retreat from his statement in the Lok Sabha for continuing as a minister, the Urdu newspapers did not give much importance to this. With the exception of a few, most of the Urdu newspapers either ignored this statement or passed some bitter remarks which were evident from their headlines.⁴⁹⁶

Not only this, these newspapers did not stop their conspiratorial reporting even after Antulay had expressed that he was satisfied with the Governments version of the story.

Alami Sahara published an article by Sahil Anjum on January 3, 2009 in which writer claimed that "Though the Central Government has

⁴⁹⁴ "Antulay Sach Kyon Bole" (*Why Antulay spoke truth*), *Sahafat*, December 21, 2008

⁴⁹⁵ *Jaruri hai in sawalo ke jabaw*" (*The answers of these questions are necessary*), *Urdu times*, December 28, 2008

⁴⁹⁶ *Hamara Samaj*, on December 28, didn't give much space to this statement of Antulay and published it as a single column news.

Hindustan Express, on December 24, gave the headline as "Aur ab Abdul Rahman Antulay Badal Gaya hai?".(And now Abdul Rahman has changed). Headline of Mumbai based *Hindustan (Urdu)* on December 24 was " Aakhir Antulay par Kya Dawab hai?"(Afterall what is the pressure on Antulay) Headline of this news in *Urdu times* on December 25 "Antulay ne rang badala" (Antulay changed his colour).

presented its clarifications on the death of Mumbai ATS Chief Hemant Karkare because of the noisy opposition by BJP and other parties, and even Minority Affairs Minister Abdual Rahman Antulay, who had raised this issue, had expressed his satisfaction, yet the question that who were behind the killing of Karkare and his colleagues is still unanswered. Anjum has written further that “The truth is that though the Government has closed this chapter yet this issue is still alive. The questions, which Antulay had raised, are still seeking answers and in the near future, they will have to be replied.”⁴⁹⁷

Rahnuma-e-Mulk also published an editorial on January 07, 2009 which reasserted that “this issue cannot be closed by merely considering it to be closed.”⁴⁹⁸

Urdu newspapers also did not give any importance to the voices of some liberal Muslims. They simply neglected them.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ "Karkare Ki shadat par Utha tufan".(*Storm raised on the martyrdom of Karkare*), *Alami Sahara*, January 03, 2009

⁴⁹⁸ “ Kavit Karkare ke sawalat jabaw chahate hai”(*the questions of Kavita Karkare are seeking answers*), *Rahnuma-e-Mulk*, January 7, 2009

⁴⁹⁹ *Chief information commissioner Wazahat Habibullah, former vicechancellor of AMU Sayeed Hamid, Theator director and Padma shree awardee Aamir raja hussain, Film star Aamir Khan, Javed Akhtar and many people declared Antulay’s statement to be immoral, illogical and opportunist.*

Chapter 4

MEDIA AND THE NATIONAL CONCERN

The role of print media on terrorism has increased its magnitude due to several factors. It is no longer confined to reporting on acts of terrorism and their analyses. Till recently, terrorism was limited to isolated acts of terror and was seen as law and order problem. Hence, media's entire focus was on the police and intelligence agencies and the functioning of the Home Ministry. The issues that concerned it were competence of the police, alacrity of intelligence agencies and efficiency of the Home Ministry. Following this course, the media used to capture, in different manner, the police investigation vis-à-vis the impressions of those affected by terrorism and also those incensed by the investigations. Often in this process media used to get mired in controversy. It was accused of defending the terrorists, creating confusion in the investigations, and putting police in a defensive position on the issue of human rights. On the contrary, it had also suffered the blame of toeing the police's line of investigation, toadying to establishment or maligning any particular community and organization. The role of media on terrorism depended on several factors. The primary amongst them was the personal understanding of the newspaper reporter and editor. What became important in writing a report is the newspaper's understanding of the ground reality and ability to estimate the impact of the incident. Technical factors like the reliability of its 'source', and comprehending the intention behind those people who are decrying police action and raising questions over the police's action. Police versus human rights were also important. Whether the reaction against the police stemmed from any pettiness or preconceived notion also became important. Any imbalance in this could have become an arsenal in the hand of pro-establishment or anti-establishment forces. The mainstream Indian media gradually realized the potential of the ideological dimension of terrorism and it led to redefine its role in this regard.

The Batla Encounter took place on July 19, 2008 in a crowded locality. There is a university nearby. Several Urdu and Muslim newspapers and periodicals are published from there. The area is a hub

of Muslim politics and intellectuals. When two suspected terrorists were killed in a gun battle, and one police officer Mohan Chand Sharma also died, the local reaction against the encounter assumed a communal and political colour. Jamia Milia Islamia University Vice-Chancellor Mushirul Hassan and its students had openly come out in support of the suspected terrorists killed and three others arrested. The Jamia Nagar people were opposing it from the beginning. Newspapers had the challenge before them that how they perceive the police action and agitation against it. The thoughtfulness of the reporter and the editorial of the newspaper was the key. Almost all mainstream newspapers - English, Hindi and regional language - with some technical questions and doubts believed in the official version of the encounter. The police action had several questions that media wanted clarification on. For instance, why Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma did not wear a bullet proof jacket at the encounter site? The media either introspected or asked the police to get its answers. The answers ranged from it Inspector Sharma wanted to avoid raising suspicions in the terrorists, or his bleak psychological condition after having left his ailing son behind at a nursing home. Media found out answers to many such puzzling questions over the span of time that followed. Over the last five months, several facts regarding the Batla House encounter have come to light. A string of arrests have been done by the police in different states like Delhi, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala etc. There are enough admissible evidences that the suspected terrorists who killed and those arrested were involved in a nation-wide terror racket. But Urdu newspapers steadfastly projected the encounter as 'fake', and described the slain or arrested as 'innocent', 'guiltless' and 'innocent students' etc. Not merely this, they portrayed the entire police force as 'communal' and 'anti-Muslim'. The Batla House incident was taken out of the ambit of law and order and turned into a secular-communal debate. It made non-wearing of bullet proof jacket as the key issue rather than following development in investigations. It jumped upon the sporadic remarks of a few political leaders claiming the Batla House encounter a fake. It gave disproportionate space to demonstrations against the Batla house encounter. An editor of a prominent Urdu newspaper, belonging to a large media house, did something unheard of in the history of journalism. Day after day, he reproduced on front page of the newspaper what other known or little known Urdu newspapers had to say against the Batla encounter. It was clearly a case of pamphleteering. The Hindi newspaper, belonging to the same media group, was objectively reported the

developments in line of mainstream media. Incidentally, the same difference in approach was visible over Mumbai attack and Antulay's statement as well.

The mainstream newspapers gave space to dissent and difference but did not accept them. Hence, the Urdu newspapers accused the mainstream papers of being slavish to the establishment. The mainstream media paid tributes to the heroism, dutifulness and patriotism of Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma. They unhesitatingly referred him as martyr. But the Urdu media, instead of acknowledging his martyrdom (to them the slain duo Atif and Sajid were martyrs), questioned his death on basis of imaginary stories. Their pet story is that Inspector Sharma fell to the bullets of his own colleagues due to intra-departmental feud. Flights of fancy took another shape when it was accused that the Batla House incident was a conspiracy hatched to save the tottering position of Home Minister Shivraj Patil post-Delhi blasts. The failure of Home Minister Shivraj Patil was a theme in mainstream newspaper as well. But they never allowed themselves to be entangled in such atrocious imaginations.

The mainstream newspapers did not try to stop of the communal politics and propaganda over the Batla encounter. It was necessary to have a novel approach to penetrate into the mindset and ideological background of the home grown terror of Indian Mujahideen.

Even before the controversy over the Batla House encounter settled properly, the Mumbai terror attacks on November 26 overtook it. The attackers were Jihadi, ideologically indoctrinated with venomous hatred against India. The terrorists experimented with a new military strategy in global Jihad. The entire world was stirred and shaken. The mainstream newspapers condemned the attack, which it recognized to be part of global *Jihad*. Their belief was backed up by factual inputs coming by days. The most eloquent proof was Ajmal Amir Kasab, world's first *fidayin* attacker arrested alive. The patronizing role of Paksitan was clear as a star blazing overhead. It has now been fairly established to details of intercepted telephone conversation over VOIP, the location of the server from which Deccan Mujahideen email was sent etc. Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* and private television channel *Geo TV* helped in unmasking Pakistan's role in the mission.

The Urdu newspapers in India condemned the attack. But, strangely enough, they perceived the hand of American C.I.A, Israeli Mossad, and Hindutva forces behind this attack. Most of them, by keeping the death of ATS chief Karkare, raised certain criminally mischievous question that meant demolishing India's point of view vis-à-vis Pakistan. To call

this as merely misdirected use of faculty of imagination would be wrong. The Urdu press has deliberately done so to change the direction of national discourse on terrorism and remained unmindful of its impact on society and politics. The Mumbai police has filed a chargesheet of 11,289 pages in MCOCA court. In the chargesheet the lone arrested terrorist Kasab, 35 Pakistan-based Lashkar men and names of two local suspects were mentioned. Pakistan has already accepted Kasab to its citizen. However, Urdu newspapers did not express any regret or change their stand on the issue.

When investigations into Mumbai assault were throwing up unsavoury facts of Pakistani involvement, and it was under intense Indian and international pressure, Minority Affairs Minister A.R. Antulay threatened to puncture the balloon with an ill-informed statement. Antulay's dubious statement casted doubts over Mumbai ATS chief Hemant Karkare death by 26/11 terrorists, and implicitly linked it with Malegaon blast investigations, kicked off a controversy. The 'Antulay episode' had several dimensions, which the mainstream media had touched upon. First, his doubt actually told more about his misinformation than the event and he refused to make amends. Secondly, he had violated the principle of 'Collective Responsibility' of the Indian Constitution. Third his statement came at a time when the international diplomatic opinion was in favour of India against Pakistan. The mainstream newspapers touched upon all these issues in their analysis on Antulay episode. But Urdu newspapers, forfeiting their journalist regard for factuality, supported Antulay. They praised Antulay for his courageous 'plain speaking'. They brazenly saw it as a Hindu-Muslim issue.

It is not unnatural for newspapers to have divergence of point of view. But for newspapers of any particular language to become representative of certain religion or ideology is dangerous for both democracy and secularism. The opinions shaped by these newspapers amongst its readers will apparently have adverse effect on national unity and social harmony.

The challenge before the media has vastly increased post 26/11. Terrorism is not an act, but an ideology. It is an obligation for the media to study the scope, extent, and cause of origination of this ideology also its possible impact on indices of modern civilization like nation, nationalism, inter-communal harmony, democracy and international order. It is necessary to have a balanced view, moderation in language, and patience in evaluation. It is also important that terrorism is not

allowed to flourish in the shade of human rights and secularism. The media will no longer have to keep just its social commitment and national context scenario in mind while covering terrorism. It cannot afford to lose focus on global scenario. The mainstream media had displayed a commendable sense of maturity on the three issues of the Batla House, Mumbai terror and Antulay statement. How one wishes, the same thing could be said about the Urdu media.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Some conclusions have been drawn on the basis of a comparative study of the English, Hindi and Urdu press in India.

- There has been a change in the perspective of Media on terrorism. Before 26/11, the Indian media refused to link the terrorist attempts and incidents in India with the Global Jihad. And its reaction towards terrorist incidents outside the country had been like a spectator and narrator. It had perceived the terrorism in India more as a law and order problem. In their report and analysis of terror in India, domestic factors were counted as more important in the growth of terrorism; some of the factors that they believed important included the backwardness of Muslims, the demolition of the disputed structure in Ayodhya, the riots in Gujarat, etc. Moreover, the media also blamed the fundamentalist elements in Pakistan for promoting terrorism to disturb the Indo-Pak relationship. 26/11 made a radical transformation in the attitude of the Indian media. They realised that terrorism in India was not an isolated event or as a result of some domestic factors which led to communal feuds, but that terrorism was an ideology and the terrorist attacks in India were part of the mission of Global Jihad. They also realised that it was an ideology against modernity and a secular and democratic life and a great threat to the free world.
- The English and Hindi press emphasised the need for soliciting the cooperation of the world community as well as their intelligence agencies to curb terrorist outfits and their ideologues. Thus the investigation carried out by the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the British intelligence on terrorism in India was not considered as an intervention in the internal matter of the country. The Indian media joined the campaign against Jihad by exposing the terrorist camps and organisations and also their political patrons. It led Indian media to criticise the Pakistani political

establishment, its military, the intelligence set-up and the mullahs. Earlier the English media had always pleaded for a better bilateral relationship with Pakistan and a close people-to-people relationship to deter terrorism. But after 26/11 the media made a radical departure from their earlier position. The use of a military option against the Pakistan was largely advocated by the media. Because of this stand, they also had to face the allegation from their Pakistani counterparts for ‘war mongering.’ However, the media remained unperturbed by these allegations.

- Both Hindi and English newspapers took a nationalistic perspective while reporting about and analysing terrorism. They discouraged party politics which sought to push terrorism into the domain of one-upmanship. After 26/11, one also witnessed the media playing a role in vilifying politicians for their thoughtless and intemperate statements with reference to terrorism. The political system was greatly influenced by critical media reporting and public opinion generated by it. The media contributed to and even hastened certain important political changes in the leadership. For instance, the resignation of the then Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil, Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and the Home Minister of Maharashtra R R Patil were certainly under the influence of the media’s strong criticism of their functioning and statements. However, there is another side of the coin too. The media itself came into criticism for excessive anti-politician tirade.
- Previously the Hindi media was considered reflecting more accurately the grassroots feelings and the opinion of the common people in the street. On the question of Ramjanmabhoomi agitation the Hindi media was accused of ‘irresponsible and emotional reporting’. The English media often faced the criticism for over its utter rationality in dealing with sensitive issues. They faced the counter allegation of remaining oblivious to the feelings of the common people. However, both English and Hindi media have taken an almost identical approach

towards terrorism. The reporting, analysis and editorials of the English media have been incisive and full of insights and suggestions, reflecting the opinions and feelings of the common man and embodying the feeling of patriotism. However, at one juncture, the English media invited criticism for ‘irresponsible reporting’ and even for communal reporting. The criticism came for an unexpected article, ie, a report published by Delhi Union of Journalist (DUJ) on the Batla House encounter. However, the English media ignored such criticisms. The commonality of perception of the Hindi and the English press on terrorism helped to generate public sentiment.

- Another transformation in the media’s understanding of the nature of the Indian state has been very remarkable. There has been a protracted debate in India on the question of a tougher law to curb terrorism. The media by and large opposed such a demand. The English media in particular considered such demands as unworthy and against the spirit of democracy as well as a threat on human rights. The Repealing of Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was welcomed by the majority of the mainstream media. The UPA Government reinforced the fact that the existing laws and agencies were sufficient to handle terrorists and terrorism. However, 26/11 turned the table upside down. The media came forward to plea for a tougher law and also a federal agency to deal with terrorism. The government’s overture towards such a law was largely welcomed by both the English and Hindi press. Some of them cautioned the government that they should not undermine the democratic rights of the people while framing the law. But the media by and large fairly welcomed the new law and federal agency to curb terrorism. This shows a paradigm shift from a soft state to a hard state as influenced by the press.
- Some people used the pretext of secularism, human rights, minority rights and the threat of Hindu majoritarianism to divert the debate and investigation on terrorism. The police and probing

agency had a tough time to detain, arrest and prosecute people. They faced the opposition of a section of intelligentsia who used to get a disproportionately large amount of space in the media and particularly in the English press. The Sachar Committee's allegation against the police and investigating agencies for their communal, biased approach towards the minorities legitimized such allegations and the media also reinforced such views. However, the shift in understanding was visible during the Batla House encounter when the media did not allow the ideologues of the minority rights to use its space and hamper the police investigation. The wild allegations leveled against the police, the Indian state and the protests against the encounter definitely got the adequate space in both the Hindi and the English press but unlike the past they did not get any endorsement from the media. The demonstrations of the residents of Azamgarh, mostly Muslims, against the Batla House encounter found full coverage both in English and Hindi press but that did not change media's own position on the Batla House encounter. The media refused to buy the conspiracy theories of the demonstrators which included the teachers and students of Jamia Milia Islamia University and the Left party leaders that Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma was a victim of a departmental feud or that he was made the scapegoat to save the position of the then Home Minister Shivraj Patil. It endorsed the genuineness of the encounter and saluted Inspector Sharma for his ultimate sacrifice. It was also a great relief for the police and intelligence bureau which has been decried by a section of intelligentsia as harbouring a bias and a revengeful attitude toward the Muslim community. The media's balanced and objective assessment may have helped to bring the debate on secularism and minority rights and the role of the police in a proper perspective. When A R Antulay, the Union Minority Affairs Minister suspected the hands of non Muslims in killing the ATS officers during 26/11 he might not have expected media's strong resentment and to an extent contempt for him on coming out with such imaginary

allegations. The media took a unified stand on the issue and the Government was pushed to take a defensive stand.

- The Hindi and English press published investigative reports on the intelligence failure and the inefficiency of police forces but it did not question the legitimacy of these agencies and the Indian State.
- The study gives a different picture as far as the Urdu press is concerned. There are many popular Urdu dailies and weeklies published from different parts of the country, like **Inquilab** and **Urdu Times** (Mumbai), **Siasat** and **Munshif** (Hydrabad), **Nai Dunia** (Urdu weekly,Delhi), **Dawat** (Delhi) **Hind Samachar** (Kolkata), **Roznama Rashtriya Sahara** (Delhi). There are at least five Urdu papers which are being published from Hyderabad. Their readership is naturally confined to the Urdu speaking people. It is not something uncommon. The regional and language press have their own role and they are considered more effective in their regions in comparison to the national dailies. Thus the Urdu papers have their own constituency of readers. The Urdu media too severely condemned the 26/11 incident.
- The Urdu media, however, presented a different picture and interpretation of the 26/11 incident. They desisted from linking it with the Global Jihad. Contrary to that, many of them considered it as a conspiracy of the USA, Israel and their intelligence agencies, CIA and Mossad for conspiring the terror attack on Mumbai to defame Islam. Surprisingly many of them went to the extent of directly or indirectly targeting Hindu organisations for being hand-in glove with the Mossad to organise such attacks.
- The majority of the Urdu press tried to establish a link between the Mumbai terror attack and the Malegaon investigation without providing any logic for letting their imagination run riot. The only thing which it used to propagate its conspiracy theory was the death of ATS chief Hemant Karkare. These papers used

propagandist methods by repeating such allegations in their editorials, reports, articles the press statements of religious and political leaders who subscribed to this theory.

- The Urdu papers ignored the facts which emerged during the process of investigation made by the Indian intelligence agencies after 26/11.
- Some of them also showed their disbelief on the confession of the only terrorist captured alive after 26/11 Kasab. Many of them even criticised the Indian government for blaming Pakistan after every act of terrorism in the country.
- Most of them opposed the American, British and Israeli interest in the investigations of 26/11 and they considered it an intervention in the internal matter of the country.
- Many Urdu papers and their columnists castigated the mainstream media for war mongering and creating an anti-Pakistan hysteria.
- While analysing the case of terrorism in the country the Urdu press used issues like the demolition of the disputed structure in Ayodhya, atrocities on minorities, poverty and unemployment of Muslims and alleged discrimination against them, the Gujarat riots etc. to prove their point and confuse their readers.
- The Urdu papers also opposed the framing of the tougher law to curb terrorism and communicated their readers that such law will be misused against minorities.
- The Urdu papers cautioned the Indian state not to act in a manner that would lead to a deterioration of the Indo-Pak relationship and lead to another war.
- The Urdu papers decried the Batla House encounter as fake and certified the killed and arrested terrorists as ‘innocent’, and ‘students’. Most of them also refused to honour the sacrifice of Inspector Sharma as a martyr.
- Union Minister Antulay’s statement on the 26/11 which was a vindication of the conspiracy theory of Urdu papers was blown out of proportion and this was utilised by them as an opportunity

to link the 26/11 with domestic politics of the country. Unfortunately their pro-active role in this regard became an embarrassment for the country. In brief, it not only ignored the findings of the investigation but also continue to negate the mainstream media.