

## **APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION** by Amit Mehra, 6 December, 2008, Mumbai, India.

I wanted to write this soon after the terror attacks but there was so much already being said, written and done that I wanted to take a step back and get down to expressing myself after I had processed all I had seen & heard and munched on my own thoughts for a bit before unleashing them on others. This is always a good idea but I am seldom non-impulsive.

While putting a lid on our defunct politicians was long due and well deserved, we must not forget to plug some other gaping holes – Administration, intelligence, security agencies, police and even citizens – we all have a role to play if we want our nation to collectively put more value to our lives.

However, the story of this rot started much before the stink caught our noses. At a time when we handed over the rule of our country to a chosen few and went our ways to hunt for our next meal. As our appetite became bigger, so did our meals and we kept moving away from the centre that Governed us all till the day came when our own appetites became so big that to satisfy it the meal we ate slipped us in a long slumber. The slumber from which, perhaps we are yet to wake up, but yes, some of us have been in the very least a bit shaken up.

This coma like slumber has been so long and so deep that we had no idea when the sheep turned into wolves who took away our food, our homes, our security and most importantly our freedom. The servants became the masters. Now they tell us how to live, where to live and who to live with. They don't police our country; they police our morals, our religion and our actions and to an extent even our thoughts.

So who made them so powerful? We did. When? Remember the time when we left our separate ways to hunt for our ever increasing appetites? Well...that's when we took our eyes off these guys we left behind to run our country. The problem was, they didn't want to run the country...they wanted to rule it, much like the greedy kings of pre-British India who once had a free run of their kingdoms without any accountability.

Today – whatever they say goes. You can scream all you want cry all day long and even sack or thrash few of them around but they will still be around. Very much in power, very much our rulers, our masters, who will again start telling us how to live our life, Ofcourse after few days of a break.

The fact is that there are no easy choices. It is like say the telecom service in India – you have 3-4 players in every city– all of whom charge the same rates, provide the same pathetic service and they are not even sorry about it. Why? Well because they know that what goes around comes around. So you will jump from one network to another till you land up right back in their lap and before you know it, your will to jump again would have died.

So you would keep cursing the network but not even bother to change it. Because the previous jumping around dawned on you the fact that they are all the same. It doesn't matter; you will land up losing your money and your sleep. The only difference will be that you will be writing the cheque in a different name.

Congress, BJP, CPI, CPM, SP, BSP and whatever other abbreviated breeds exists, they all laugh at our huffing & puffing because it really doesn't matter where we go, all doors lead right back to them. This was always the case but now it is more open, more in your face. No more coy, shy – we are different, we are opponents, blah blah. These days, they all loot their individual kingdoms in the day; meet in the new privilege club known as NEWS Channel talk show set and they hook up later for drinks to make merry and laugh like hyenas recollecting the new innovative ways in which they fooled us again.

So, how do we fight this menace? Very simple – use their weaknesses instead of focusing only on our strengths. They survive because they have vote banks. Become a vote bank. For decades, they have fueled their surge to power from these vote banks based on religion, caste, creed, class and morals.

What if we were to make a vote bank based on education or professionalism or human rights or so many other issues that should be the reason to slot us into a large enough group that can be called a vote bank. This Ofcourse will have to be done at the grass root level because as far as they win 90% of the parliament seats from non metro regions, whatever change we want will come from this section of our political class.

Next, we have to drastically reduce our tolerance level. We can not and should not allow any one person to become so powerful that he or she is beyond the realm of reality that we exist in. Till we continue to walk or drive on the roads with pot holes, buy flats next to open drainage & leaking roofs, live with unscheduled power cuts and move our face away, plug our ears, shut our eyes, every time we see someone in trouble with the authorities – till we continue to be tolerant, we will continue to suffer.

Tolerance is an amazing quality but I think we have displayed it excessively for the last 60 odd years towards people and systems that rule us and now the time has come to try something else. Demands, deliverables, executions and monitoring are some of the words that come to mind. Let's explore these concepts for few years. I am sure there will be time in the future when we can be tolerant again but as of now that cup is full.

Last but not the least – we need to introspect, engage and get involved. Let's stop playing Frankenstein and create monsters that we can't control and then sit around and repent when they run amuck. Let's tune off, shut up and nip all misleading, misdirected and manipulative politics right in the bud. Because what may seem like a harmless pet that will serve you will soon become your predator and you, his dinner.

Let's curb our appetite, so that we don't have to go so far and wide to satisfy it that we can't keep an eye on the ball. We must grow, have ambitions, aspirations and make money and buy wonderful things and see the world but none of these at the cost of slipping back in that slumber that brought us thus far.

***We must never have any appetite for destruction.***

