


Before reading any further, please wash your hands with a generous amount of soap.



Blood stains can be very stubborn.

Thursday, November 27, 2008, 10:30 AM. Barely 12 hours after heavily armed murderers stormed into our city like ruthless cancer cells in a hurry, the writer of this piece saw a very disturbing sight. Dressed in shorts and a tee shirt, a gentleman from a prestigious apartment complex in the city was taking his morning walk. He spotted his friend across the park and waved out. "Official holiday today," he bellowed, smiling. And as if nothing had happened, he continued strolling while innocent citizens were being mercilessly massacred, about eight kilometres away.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is the real spirit of Mumbai. We have become callous. We have become cold. We have grown indifferent and apathetic. Nothing touches us anymore. Nothing rankles us. Nothing bothers us. And that makes us guilty of yet another tragedy. Yet again.

Yes, our hands are stained. Stained with the blood of the 183 people who fell to bullets at CST, The Taj, The Oberoi Trident, Nariman House, Cama Hospital and Cafe Leopold. Stained with the blood of all those innocent people who were slain while we were watching TV. Stained with the blood of Moshe's parents, who was orphaned two hours before his second birthday. And no amount of soap is going to help wash away this guilt.

Think about it. Our city has been struck by disasters with stunning regularity. Bombs, guns, grenades, RDX, we've seen it all. Ever since 1993, we have consistently seen people losing their arms, their limbs, their loved ones. And what did we do about it? Probably discussed it animatedly for a couple of days, and

moved on. Beyond a certain point, we didn't complain, we didn't protest, we didn't demand change. We returned to the streets, putting the past behind us. And then, like sitting ducks, we waited patiently. Till we were struck again.

Let us, as Mumbaikars, accept our guilt. And let us, please, change. Let's not bounce back this time with our characteristic spirit. Let's not stop at cursing our politicians. Let's remember, we put them there in the first place. And the next time, let's be very, very careful about who we choose. Let us discard some of the values we were taught as children: Let's not forgive, let's not forget. Let's not be tolerant. Let's not be patient. Let's not let our wounds heal. Let them, instead, serve as a constant reminder about what happened under our very noses. Let us use every media available to demand our basic human right: Life. Let us protest. Against the outdated weaponry our police department is saddled with. Let us protest against the inefficient bullet-proof jackets our police chiefs had to don before facing sophisticated automatic machine guns. Let's wake up. Let's never doze off again. Let us, please, not be children who watch indifferently while our mother gets raped and ravaged, time and again.

A few metres away from Cafe Leopold, there's another cafe that goes by the name of Mondegar. On its walls, you will see a famous cartoonist's version of Mumbai. It's calm, it's serene, it's peaceful. It is loving, it is lovable. That Mumbai knows neither bullets, nor grenades, nor terrorists. That is the Mumbai we grew up in. That is our Mumbai. Let's not rest till that Mumbai is delivered back to us.