

From the Editor's Desk

Terror: Tracing the roots

War against terrorism is the new buzzword the world over. Scholars are busy churning out their hypotheses on the phenomenon of terror. In all this, there is a positive movement away from dismissing it as 'meaningless violence' towards unearthing the casualties that precipitate a situation that breeds terrorism. Terrorism is thus seen as a response rather than as a supremely defiant act executed in isolation. Globalisation of the phenomenon of terror has threatened to alter the complacent frontiers of the so-called 'modern nation-state system' that had started since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The states as legitimate monopolisers of violence are now becoming increasingly aware of the monstrous forces they breed through their unjust handling of socio-economic issues and democracies are seeking a way out of their pronounced emphasis on majoritarianisms. Terror has stirred the world to its depths.

The issue of co-relation between Islam and Terror has invited many studies in recent days. The itch to brand Islam as the most intolerant and aggressive of all religions has characterised the efforts of many scholars in the west even when they would suggest that Osamas do not project the true image of Islam. They are in fact obsessed with the Osama version of Islam and choose to lend it a spurious sense of legitimacy, inadvertently quite, to an interpretation that goes against the basic tenets of Islam. Many Islamic scholars have countered such formulations and tried to bring to the fore the elements that have added to the lasting appeal of Islam over the centuries. It is not the sword of the mighty obsessed with the zeal of converting the kafirs (infidels) but the love and compassion of the mystics, pirs and sufi-saints that spread the message of Islam around the world. To connect Islam with Osamite terror is like holding God, the supreme creator, responsible for the misanthropes that have stalked the earth ever since the dawn of human civilization. Then the phenomenon of terrorism is not limited to Islamic societies alone. Almost all societies have their own versions of terrorism. The ideological cross between nation-state and democracy has given rise to assertion of the minorities—who have turned restive after being turned down by the majoritarian systems—on the one hand and the savage display of the might of the state on the other. States have failed. The guerrilla warfare of the yester-years has come of age. It has gone international. And now people genuinely concerned with the rise of violence have turned their attention to the real causes of terrorism—the socio-psychological ones that create the conditions for violence. Very much like the act of suicide leading Durkheim to his famous study on *Suicide*, scholars are trying to fathom into the phenomenon of 'suicide terrorists' whose mindset is much more important than the fact that they were lured in by assured tickets to heaven as Atta's diaries would suggest.

The socio-political and economic conditions, the structural injustices that nurture the rebel mindset and the growing visibility of the unjust economic operations in the wake of unthinking and uncritical globalisation etc, - all could add up to create the setting for the birth of the terrorist of the new millennium. His religious affiliation is just one of the many factors that goads him into the network of terror. Even the people like Osama who establish the networks are also guided by their own prejudiced perceptions that they are pitted against injustice and there is a supremely just and legitimate endeavour and the factor of religion comes in to lend it further meaning. The antidote to terrorism lies thus in the systematic aberrations that perpetuate injustice, that adds to individual sense of frustration and brings out the beast in him.