

## Can never forget their faces: witnesses

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**Mumbai** : The blessings of Hazrat Sayyed Shah Baba Dargah near Metro Cinema, which he had visited before he was attacked by gunman Abu Ismail Khan on 26/11, might have saved his life. It was government employee Harishchandra Shrivardhankar deposing before the special sessions court on Thursday.

Shrivardhankar, who could not speak for 22 days because of the attack on him, said he can never forget the face of his attacker. Shrivardhankar survived a brutal attack by Khan while trying to hide inside Cama Hospital. He suffered two cuts on his throat and a bullet shot in his back.

Deposing before Judge M L Tahaliyani, Shrivardhankar said, "I was carrying a bag which had niyaz (food) and gulaab (rose) brought from the dargah when the terrorist Abu Ismail Khan confronted me at Cama Hospital. The blessings saved me."

A regular at the dargah, Shrivardhankar said, "Since it was an auspicious day, I visited the dargah. Around 10.30 pm, while returning to CST station, I discovered that terrorist had attacked it. I decided to hide on the top floor of the hospital. While rushing to the fifth floor I was confronted by Khan."

Shrivardhankar also told the court that Khan used foul language and abused him saying, "You bloody Indians need to die." In return Shrivardhan also abused him. Realising that Khan would not leave him alive he kicked him and in the scuffle suffered injuries which are still visible.

The other witness who escaped death miraculously was Raosaheb Phunde, a former Indian Army official, who now works as security guard at the Cama Hospital. Phunde was caught by Kasab. However, he was locked up in a toilet and luckily escaped death.

Phunde identified Kasab in court saying "Sir till I die I won't forget his (Kasab) face. I even see him in my dreams." Another witness examined by the prosecution was Sandeep Vaghela, a resident of the slum near Cama Hospital.

### **Notes from The courtroom**

#### **Hygiene in court**

Judge M L Tahaliyani, who is particular about cleanliness, told his staff to use gloves while handling the articles being displayed in court. When the staff said they did not have gloves, he commented, "We Indians are immune to all kinds of unhygienic things, our systems are strong."

#### **Man in the middle**

As soon as Shrivardhankar stepped in the dock the court reminded Kasab's lawyer Abbas Kazmi that it was because of this witness that he was here. Kazmi was appointed after Anjali Waghmare was sacked as she was also representing Shrivardhankar in HC.