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TWENTY22-INDIA ON THE MOVE

"LONG YEARS AGO WE MADE A TRYST WITH DESTINY, AND NOW THE TIME COMES WHEN WE SHALL REDEEM OUR PLEDGE, NOT WHOLLY OR IN FULL MEASURE, BUT VERY SUBSTANTIALLY. AT THE STROKE OF THE MIDNIGHT HOUR, WHEN THE WORLD SLEEPS, INDIA WILL AWAKE TO LIFE AND FREEDOM. A MOMENT COMES, WHICH COMES BUT RARELY IN HISTORY, WHEN WE STEP OUT FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW, WHEN AN AGE ENDS, AND WHEN THE SOUL OF A NATION, LONG SUPPRESSED, FINDS UTTERANCE."-PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

4.1.09

Heroes of Nariman House



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TWENTY22

Twenty22 stands for the year 2022 when India will be 75 years old. The story of a young and energetic nation on the move, having her foundation in an ancient civilisation. From a glorious past to a glorious future. Our



This article by Sudheendra Kulkarni is truly heart warming...

I spent the last 10 days of December in Mumbai, and participated in two events associated with the terror attacks of 26/11. The first was on December 21, when the Taj Mahal Hotel reopened its tower wing. The solemnity of the ceremony was made more memorable by Ratan Tata's defiant words: "The enemies of India may have hurt us, but they will never knock us down." The longest applause, of course, was reserved for the hotel employees who showed exemplary courage and dedication to duty even when death stared them in their faces. They were led by general manager Karanbir Kang, whose name has already joined the many legends of the Taj. He was busy saving guests on the ground floor, even as his own wife and two children were trapped in fire—and later found dead—in their top-floor room.

Another place, many more legends. On December 26, I attended a commemorative function near Nariman House, also in Colaba. The world watched a never-seen-before commando operation here against Pakistani terrorists, who had stormed a Jewish prayer centre, killing six inmates, one commando, Gajendra Singh, and four locals in the vicinity. Two images will remain etched in the minds of TV viewers: National Security Guard's black-cat commandos being abseiled from a helicopter on the terrace of Nariman House; and hundreds of local residents shouting 'Vande Mataram' and 'Bharat Mata ki jai' on the morning of November 29, as they bade a heartfelt goodbye to the commandos after they successfully completed the operation.

flag's Orange colour symbolizes courage and sacrifice, White stands for peace and truth, Green is for faith and chivalry and Blue represents the color of the sky and the ocean. The central motif is a Chakra, or Buddhist spinning wheel. The 24 spokes of the wheel correspond with the 24 hours of the day, implying that there is life in movement and death in stagnation.

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A Scrog (Scrapbook-Blog) chronicling the magic of the present moment as the Wind of Change sweeps across INDIA, BHARAT, HINDUSTAN-The World's Largest Democracy. The Making of India which hopefully will have heartwarming stories of growth and development... on the lines of Chicken Soup for the Soul...err Rasam for the Hindustani Aatma. Jai Hind.

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But how many people know that this is where local Muslims rescued Hindu families in neighbouring buildings; where Shiv Sena activists saved Christian families and gave protection to a nearby mosque and a madarassa; where a Parsi baker—his bakery, located bang opposite Nariman House, still carries scores of bullet marks from the terrorists' AK-47s— distributed bread to hungry neighbours; and where a Christian do-gooder carried the bullet-ridden body of a Hindu girl on his shoulders, reached her to the hospital and a month later, on Christmas, played Santa to her in the hospital ward?

The function near Nariman House was organised by Vijay Surve, head of the Shiv Sena's Colaba branch. He and his 'boys' evacuated hundreds of residents of the nearby buildings before NSG commandos arrived—10 hours after the attack. Since the commandos from Delhi had no knowledge of the narrow lanes of this highly congested part of Colaba, Shiv Sainiks assisted them in every possible way. The Sena has the image of being an anti-Muslim organisation. But this stereotype was broken by what I saw at the function and, later, by conducting three days of extensive interviews in the neighbourhood. Surve proudly showed me the letter he received from the NSG, in which the commander who led the operation has expressed "deepest gratitude" to the locals for their help.

On 26/12, Surve honoured all those who performed commendable acts of bravery during the 60-hour-long siege of Nariman House, the most difficult of all the operations mounted by security forces in Mumbai. One person, Felix Ambrose, received a particularly long ovation. Felix lives near Nariman House and works at a small phone-and-internet shop next to Leopold Restaurant, where terrorists killed over a dozen people, before storming the Taj. He was lucky to survive. But that night he made eight trips to the hospital carrying wounded persons lying on the road. The first was Anamika Gupta, who, when I met her in the hospital, said to me, "I am alive only

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because of my brother Felix.” Surve reserved a special hug for a popular Muslim boy: Hanif Shaikh. Amid deafening applause from the crowd, he said: “I have no words to describe Hanif’s bravery. On the second day we learnt that there were still some families holed up in Merchant House, which adjoins Nariman House. Hanif immediately climbed the separation wall, took a deep jump, entered that building and helped four Sindhi and Gujarati families to safely sneak away. He could have been easily seen, and shot, by the terrorists. I told him to take a commando with him, but he said he would go alone. What can I say? Hanif had himself become a commando!” Surve then yelled into the mike, “Hanif, tujh par hamein fakr hai. Aur Pakistan waalon, yahan aakar dekho. Yahi hai Hindustan. Yahi hai Mumbai. Yahi hai Colaba. Yahan Hindu, Musalman, Sikh, Isayi aur Parsi sab ek hain, and sab terrorism ke khilaaf ekjut hokar lad rahe hain.” (Hanif, we are proud of you. And you Pakistanis, come here and see. This is India. This is Mumbai. This is Colaba. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Parsis are all one here and all are united in the struggle against terrorism.) Among the people attending the function, I was surprised to meet Maulana Mohammed Niyaz of the nearby Colaba Masjid. He also runs Darul Uloom Hanfia Razvia, a madrasa that has 175 students. “What brings you to this meeting organised by the Shiv Sena?” He replied unflappably: “We share the grief of all the people who have gathered here. We are all Indians, irrespective of our religions. I pray to Allah that He does hifazat of Hindustan. Anyone who looks at Hindustan with an evil eye, even if it is Pakistan, has to have that eye taken out.” I met him later in his masjid to continue the conversation. “Those were terrible days for us,” he said. “We were afraid that some extremists might harm Muslims, who are only 10 per cent of Colaba’s population. But Vijaybhai, whom I know for many years, assured me on the first night that he would ensure the safety of the mosque and the madrasa. He not only kept his word,

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but also sent food to the inmates for three days. On the third day, Shiv Sainiks helped us shift the madrasa students to a safe place. I later wrote a letter of thanks to Vijaybhai. In these matters, I don't see party labels. If someone has done good work, it must be appreciated. If all parties just shun their petty politics and serve the nation, India will become a superpower." Humbling voices of ordinary people who showed extraordinary courage and patriotism in a time of crisis. Who can terrorise or defeat India so long as we have common citizens with such heroic qualities?



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