

OSAMAJI, AFZAL GURUJI AND AJMAL KASABJI

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Osama bin Laden was shot dead by the American armed forces in Abbotabad, a town in the NWFP in Pakistan. Abbotabad is located in the foothills of the Sarvan Hills and just as Rawalpindi/ Islamabad are linked to the hill station of Murree, Abbotabad is linked with the beautiful hill station called Nathiagali. Abbotabad is about forty miles away from Islamabad and is a picturesque little town. It is also the home of the Pakistan Military Academy, the Baluch Regimental Centre and the Frontier Force Regimental Centre. Obviously this is a high security zone and if Osama bin Laden could reside there it could only be with the connivance of the Pakistani authorities. Because one does not allow the head of a terrorist organisation to be anywhere near a high security zone it is obvious that the Pakistanis did not consider Osama to be a terrorist.

Osama bin Laden founded Al Qaeda, an organisation which was responsible for over 3000 deaths in the 11th September, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. This organisation has spread terror, so-called Jihad and violence against innocents throughout the world. It kidnapped David Pearl, an American journalist in Pakistan and murdered him most brutally in front of the television camera. This organisation has given birth to the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan and the Lashkar-e-Toyeba in Pakistan, whose main objective is terrorist strikes against India. The elimination of its leader had been welcomed throughout the world, except by Shri Digvijay Singh, General Secretary of the Congress Party. Shri Digvijay Singh conferred the honorific of 'ji' on Osama bin Laden while condemning the burial at sea. For a person who deserves no sympathy one wonders why Shri Digvijay Singh suddenly felt such grief for him that he could both address him as Osamaji and obliquely criticise Americans for acting against him and then consigning his body to the deep. My question is does Shri Digvijay Singh address Sadhvi Pragya, who is an accused in the Malegaon and other blast cases, as Pragya ji? In case she is sentenced to death and executed will Shri Digvijay Singh hold a press conference and make suggestions on how Pragya ji's body is to be disposed of?

Going by the record I presume Shri Digvijay Singh will confer the honorific of 'ji' on Afzal Guru and Ajmal Kasab also. Poor Afzal Guruji is languishing in jail under sentence of death for the very minor offence of planning an attack on Parliament which took the lives of nine police officers and whose success in butchering the Members of Parliament and destroying our democracy was thwarted only by the bravery of the policemen guarding Parliament House. On the analogy of section 309, IPC which makes attempted suicide an offence but successful suicide not an offence, one presumes that the unsuccessful attack on Parliament is an offence, whereas a successful attempt might not be an offence. Will Shri Digvijay Singh come to the rescue of Afzal Guruji for the very minor crime of attempting to destroy our Parliament?

Now we come to the case of Ajml Kasab. There is a famous story of a Quaker, member of the Society of Friends which believes in non-violence and abjuring of violence. A Quaker found that a thief had entered his house at about midnight. Loading his shotgun he came down to where the burglar was beginning his operations. He told the burglar. "Friend, I wouldst not do the harm, but thou standest where I am about to shoot". What was the offence of Ajmal Kasabji and his Pakistani compatriots? All they did was to come to Bombay and at different locations open fire with live ammunition. If about 300 innocents died it is not the fault of the terrorist. If the victims had not come in the path of the bullets they would have been safe. Therefore, they should have avoided going to the locations where terrorists were

in action. If innocent people died it is their fault because had they been elsewhere they would be safe. Obviously poor Ajmal Kasabji is not to blame.

I am sure that in pleading Ajmal Kasabji's case Shri Digvijay Singh would find the above arguments both feasible and justified. What does Shri Digvijay Singh want? I presume his demand would be that the innocent Ajmal Kasabji be released, compensated for the years he spent in an Indian jail and then given a choice of remaining behind in India as a guest of this nation, which would give him both a house and a pension. The second option would be to allow him to go back to Pakistan and for this purpose a special plane could be put at his disposal.

It is obvious that Shri Digvijay Singh is making all these noises because the UP elections are round the corner. Does he seriously think that sympathy for Osama bin Laden will bring the Congress the overwhelming majority of Muslim votes? My youngest brother was in Srinagar the day after Osama bin Laden was killed and he freely walked around the bazaar at Lal Chowk. Life was normal, eighty-five percent of the Kashmiris were busy participating in the local government elections and there was absolutely no effect of Osama's death. The Indian Muslim understands his own problems, recognises those who can help him and is perfectly happy to live in a democratic society. He votes according to the party and the candidate who is likely to best promote the welfare of the constituency, which also includes welfare of Muslims. He does not vote as a Muslim but as a responsible citizen of free India. When will people like Shri Digvijay Singh stop making sectarian appeals and taking up issues which divide communities rather than unite them? I always considered Shri Digvijay Singh to be a sagacious politician and statesman. He is still probably sagacious, though in a very perverted kind of way, but his statements have left me scalded and angry.
