

## The usual suspects

I wonder what exactly made the trademark so easily spotted? Were the bags made of jute? Sealed with jackfruit juice? Lined with Nilkhet Bangla book pages? Now I hear that bombs of medium intensity planted on bicycles are a Hull trademark? Really? It's an original and never-before-tried idea?

NAEEM MOHAIEMEN

"They let us cook rice-daal for them, let us raise their children, trust us with the keys to house-home-jewelry. And then they turn around and vote for people who call us terrorists and want to cut us into pieces and bury us inside the ground."

— Bangladeshi taxi driver in Delhi (author interview, 2005)

BOMB blast in Jaipur. Round up the usual suspects. Calling Abdul, Rahman, Rahim, Karim, Salim. All you "illegal" Bangladeshi immigrants within our borders. Report to the newest detention centers. It's not who you say you are, it's what we say you are.

Bangladesh has emerged as the all-purpose "Nondo Ghosh" (joto dosh) for Indian intelligence agencies. Attack on train station? Defused bombs? Bicycle bombs? Bag bombs? It must be the ultra-efficient, tentacle-spreading spectre of "terrorist organisations based in Bangladesh."

Within days, we are told that the

"modus operandi" of the Jaipur blasts is similar to the Uttar Pradesh court blasts (November 2007), Hyderabad Mecca Masjid blasts (May 2007) and Malegaon blast (2006). Every bomb blast is similar to the one before. They are all connected, except when they aren't. Working on these leads, police are raiding Bangladeshi localities at Galta Gate, Baghmana, Ramganj, Subhash Chowk, and Bhatta Basti in Jaipur. Very convenient.

I remember the old days of Indian media hysteria about "Pakistani" militants. Bullet riddled bodies (the dead don't talk) and Pakistani passports (always in their pockets!). But Pakistan has become more complex, with its role in the US axis of the willing. Plus, the public wants new, fresh faces.

Some time in the last few years, it has become easier and acceptable to bring out the Bangladeshi "militant cell" bogey. That there is Islamist politics inside Bangladesh is not in question.

But that they have the capacity or agenda to wage cross-border forays -- this still needs to be

proven. The proof always seems to come from shaky sources. The US has listed HuJI as a global-standard "terrorist organisation." And they have been so right, so many times before?

Of course, there are many Bangladeshi immigrants inside India. There will always be. The real question about Jaipur is -- who are these people in the "Bangali Para" -- what were they doing all this time? Working for middle class Indian families, of course.

Everyone in India knows exactly why these people are there -- to work. As household help, cleaners, sweepers, cooks, maids, taxi drivers, tailors, weavers, jewellery makers, construction workers. Keeping Shining Indian rolling along. Yesterday, they were your convenient and easy source of cheap labour. Why are they a problem today?

As India develops as a hyper-growth Asian tiger, with Bangladesh next door, immigration is inevitable. Until we become a medium growth country, we will be as a "Mexico" to India's "United

States." Bangladeshis, hungry for work, willing to work, with families to feed, will cross the borders.

Only after we economically develop (a Saarc zone of "co-prosperity") will immigration flows reverse, like the Indians who are now returning from America and Europe, looking for opportunities in India.

Immigrants are ubiquitous in the daily lives of modern cities. In a megapolis like New York, they are the ones who drive taxis, sell newspapers and coffee, clean restaurant tables, and work in kitchens. As performers of these roles, they are intimately present in the physical space, but absent from consciousness.

Only when they are detained do they become hyper-visible as "sleeper cells." The majority of detention cases since 9/11 are banal: a taxi driver gets stopped for running a red light, and a routine check of his immigration papers reveals that he is "out of status."

The case then gets accelerated if that person comes from one of the "suspect" countries. The desire to identify "traitors" within borders has a long lineage. In America ("the immigrant nation"), the last century saw detention of Italian immigrants after anarchist bomb attack in 1919, jailing of German-Americans during WWI, internment of

Japanese-Americans during WWII, execution of suspected Soviet spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, Joseph McCarthy's "Red Scare," the scapegoating of California Mexicans, and the rise of the border vigilante militia Minutemen.

W.E.B. Dubois's question to African Americans, "How does it feel to be a problem?" is now redirected and made freshly relevant for a new population.

When the Hyderabad blasts happened, we heard that intel was tracking phone calls to Bangladesh. What happened to that trail? Did the investigation go somewhere? If not, what about the public perception created about "dangerous" Bangladeshis? A few years ago, there was another Bangla "terror cell" splashed across Indian media. Again the story died out. The similarities to US media are eerie.

After Jaipur, Pankaj Singh, a senior Rajasthan police officer told the press: "The modus operandi, the way the bombs were manufactured and concealed in bags, is very similar to the way HuJI (Bangladesh) operates." I wonder what exactly made the trademark so easily spotted? Were the bags made of jute? Sealed with jackfruit juice? Lined with Nilkhet Bangla book pages? Now I hear that bombs of medium intensity planted on bicycles are a Hull trademark?



I am a terrorist?!

Really? It's an original and never-before-tried idea? The Viet Cong were using bicycle bombs against Americans in public spaces as far back as 1965. But oh bother, that's only history.

A previously unknown Islamic

militant group, calling itself the Indian Mujahadeen, has actually claimed credit for the Jaipur bombing. But Indian intel still considers the Bangladeshis the prime suspect. Maybe I'm too sceptical. Maybe there is a HuJI link.

But doesn't it all seem a bit too convenient? Fitting too many agendas? And why now?

Naeem Mohaiemen worked on "Disappeared in America," an art project on post-9/11 security panic.

## Buddhism and its universal message

This attitude of an all-embracing love for creation began with Asoka's Dharma and paved the way for the humanitarian, an altruistic message given by the Buddha in the history of humanity. In fact, this should be the bedrock upon which it is possible to build up the edifice of Universal Religion. Buddhism tries to raise the standard of life of humanity by elevating the less privileged ones and bringing them on a par with those who are already developed.

SUKOMAL BARUA

THE sacred Buddha Purima is the full-moon day of Vesakha, when Goutama Buddha was born in the Lumbini Garden at the foot of the Himalayas, attained enlightenment under the Bo-tree at Gaya, and passed into Mahaparinibbana at Kushinara. This day is of great significance to the Buddhist world, and brings love, peace, happiness and purity.

The main teachings of the Buddha may be summed up in three words -- *Sila* (moral), *Samadhi* (concentration) and *Panna* (wisdom). He discovered the "four noble truths" -- there is suffering; there must be the origin of suffering; there must be the cessation of suffering; and the way for the cessation of suffering was the "noble eight-fold path."

The eight factors that constituted the path were right understanding, right purpose (aspiration), right speech, right conduct, right vocation, right effort, right alertness and right concentration. The concept of *Sila* is very broad. Unless a man's body, speech and mind are free from ebullition of feelings, and perfectly guarded and controlled, and until the purity of these actions is ensured, the attainment of *Sila* is impossible.

Buddha says: "Unless purity of thought, feeling and will is made certain, it is impossible to make any progress." Based on this splen-

did behaviour, the mind goes on developing and sheds itself of vestiges of impurities. Perfect concentration and advancement of mind so as to include the four noble or exalted states of love, compassion, rejoicing and equilibrium of the mind are then acquired.

Upon this concentration or *Samadhi*, the light of *Panna* begins to shine and he realises that behind the phenomena, which are subjected to birth, death, disease, defilements, impermanence, there exists the ineffable, never-changing and incomparable safety of Nirvana.

His rebirth is exhausted, his holy life has been properly lived, his duty done, and there is no further mundane existence for him. He attains what may be described as "unshakable emancipation of the mind." Thus Goutama gave to the world his compact plan of ethical and mental development and progress, and termed it as His *dhamma* or the law.

His discovery of the law of causation and the law of *karma* is the triumph of Goutama's genius. Goutama's teachings exercised profound influence on the social, moral, political, intellectual, religious and aesthetic sides of human life.

Politically, the Buddha favoured representative institutions, and His *Sangha*, or monastic order, is an example of the democratic way in which affairs of the monks were managed. It was called the "*Sangha*

of the four quarters." Every qualified member had to take part in all the meetings of the *Sangha*, a question was raised and discussed, and decided by majority of votes.

He also encouraged republics, and seems never to have relished the idea that a big kingdom should be formed at the expense of smaller and less powerful federations.

Socially, He wanted to reconstruct the society of his times differently. He first gave a rude shock to the Brahmanical doctrine, declaring that the division of the society into four castes was illogical and against the natural integrity of humanity. He said that the *Brahman* or the *Vaisya* or the *Kshatriya* or the *Sudra* is to be determined by the worth or *kamma* and not by the birth. His *Sangha* was an ideal example of a classless society, where the *Brahman* as well as the pariah found a good place for self-expression and development. His declaration in this respect was a great advance in those times. In fact, He brought about a social revolution.

Morally, Buddha's doctrine of equality of man paved way for moral basis of life as the only criteria of success or duty. His scheme of ethics was a death knell to the life of ritualism, dogmatism, and mere external purity. He emphasised the fact that purity from within was the main thing to be achieved.

Immoral acts were condemned. Social grandees were given the

same status as courtesans like Ambapali. He could convert a highway robber like Angulimala without a weapon. His doctrine is summed up as "Not doing evil, attainment of good, and purification of the mind." His religion was neither metaphysical nor speculative, but based upon psychology and ethics. Starting with the mind of man, He analysed the various mental processes and divided them into various *Dhammas*, or states of consciousness, and showed how to develop the mind so as to include good thoughts.

In the *Kutadanta Sutta* of the *Dighanikaya* He proves the inefficacy of animal sacrifice and its great inconvenience to a poor population and the great national loss it entailed upon all. Goutama, thus, brought out prominently the necessity of showing compassion to the animal world.

His loving-kindness extended to the whole creation. In His *Metta Sutta*, He says a loving consciousness should be developed in respect of all beings, creation's infinitely smallest animalcule and those that await birth.

Intellectually, He always disapproved speculative views in philosophy. In His own days the subjects that were discussed were concerning the first cause, the world and its finite or infinite character, life and soul, whether a man exists, or does not exist, or both exists and does not exist.

In the *Brahmajala Sutta* are described 62 heresies or speculative views about the soul. The Buddha had tried to prove that they were questions which would not lead to the edification of man. In the *Sutta Nipata* He had given views of sectarians and shown their love for mastery over others.

The Buddha's contribution to the ideal of an Universal Religion

may be summarised as follows:

1. The Buddha has taught that the universe evolved, not created, and it functions according to law, not according to the capricious will of any God.

2. The truths upon which Buddha's teachings are founded are natural. They have been taught in successive *Kalpas*, or world periods, by certain enlightened beings called Buddhas (Enlightened Ones).

3. The Buddha looked upon all men as equal, regarding the caste system as a form of social snobbery, with the result that all religions that followed the Buddha also emphasised the equality of all men. All men could in this very life attain the ineffable state of Nirvana by the complete destruction of craving and all the defilements of the mind.

4. The Buddha taught His followers to show the same tolerance, forbearance, and brotherly love to all men, without distinction, and an unswerving kindness towards animals.

5. The message of the Buddha is to lead a perfectly moral life. His teaching to monks and householders emphasise nothing but the urgent necessity of understanding the law of the Buddha and knowing the real nature of the world.

6. Even the doctrine of dependent origination lays stress on what is humanly possible, that is, in order to get rid of evil or to acquire heaven one does not require any other power outside one's self.

7. The Buddha has laid greatest stress on the law of *Karma* that governs the whole world. The doctrine of *Karma* has taken the place of God in Buddhism. Nobody can destroy his *Karma*. Though the earlier religions and teachers had spoken of *Karma* they had not emphasised it to such an extent,

and they introduced the doctrine of grace that could, many a time, countermand the decrees of *Karma*. The Buddha made every individual responsible for his fate, and the architect of his fortune.

8. The Buddha eschewed dogmas and theories, and also belief in authority and God. In the case of the latter he held an agnostic position, neither denying nor admitting the existence of God.

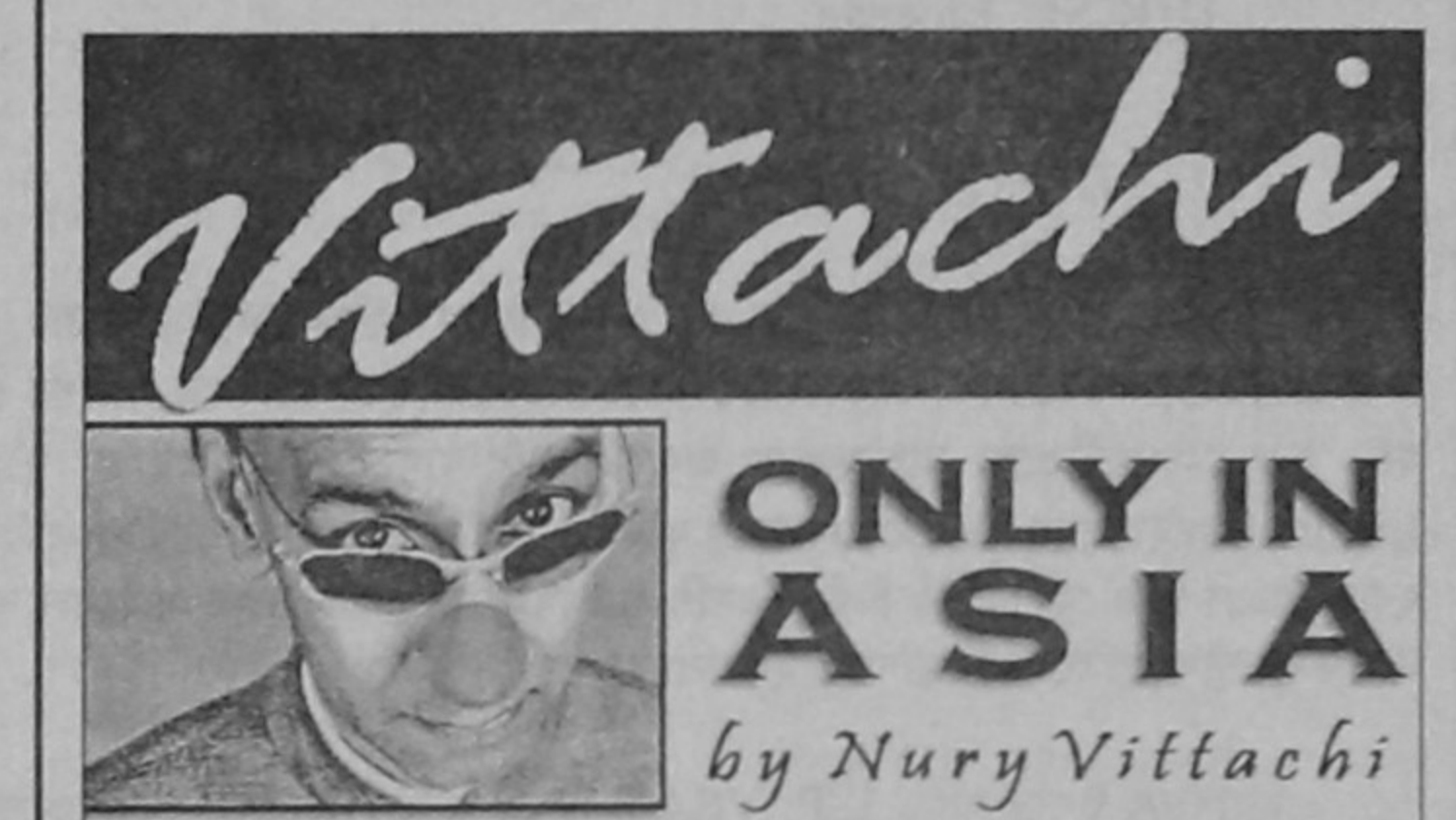
9. Buddha's doctrine of love and piety was not confined only to human beings; it was extended even to the animal world and to superhuman or semi-divine beings as well.

Buddhism is a progressive religion, and in its passage it has travelled from intellectual analysis and the ideal of the *arahant* to the building up of emotionalism on the universal level, which paved the way for the ideal of the *Bodhisatta*.

The *Bodhisatta* vowed that he would forgo his claim to Nirvana as long as there was a single person suffering in this world. This attitude of an all-embracing love for creation began with Asoka's *Dharma* and paved the way for the humanitarian, an altruistic message given by the Buddha in the history of humanity. In fact, this should be the bedrock upon which it is possible to build up the edifice of Universal Religion. Buddhism tries to raise the standard of life of humanity by elevating the less privileged ones and bringing them on a par with those who are already developed.

This harmonisation of the human race and its elevation to the highest level is the crux of Buddha's teachings. *Sabbe Satta Sukhita Hontu* -- May all beings be happy. May peace prevail on earth.

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## Earth scientists greet the people of Mars

SCIENTISTS are sending a DVD to Mars. It is due to arrive on the surface of the Red Planet on May 25th, which is next Sunday.

Now hang on a minute, I hear you ask. What if Martians don't have a DVD player? What if they are still using video tapes? What if they haven't progressed past Super 8 movie reels?

Well, scientists have taken that into account. The DVD is made of tough stuff that will make it playable for at least 500 years, which they reckon should be enough time even for the most primitive form of life, such as a single-cell bacterium or an American Idol judge, to build a DVD player.

Now I know you think I am making this up, but I'm not. They really have sent a DVD 680 million kilometres to Mars. Scientists spent months making the disk, which opens with a greeting to Martians. "Let me introduce myself to you," it says. "I am Peter Smith, the Principal Investigator of the Phoenix mission funded by Nasa. My father, Hugh Smith, was born in 1902, an era when there was no radio or recorded music or television."

I'm not exactly sure why it starts with this statement, but I suspect Mr. Smith believes the sympathetic Martians will immediately use some form of intergalactic Paypal to help with his funding challenges.

Mr. Smith then admits that Martians might not be able to understand the disk. "We will have no common language," he says, in the language that they cannot understand. This reminds me of the safety card you get on airlines, which says, "If you cannot read this, notify the flight attendant."

The latest space probes have reported that Mars is basically a large, icy plain, with virtually no signs of intelligent life. No, wait, that's Canada.

But Mars sounds pretty much the same as Canada, only with better nightlife. Anyway, the DVD will arrive on the Red Planet at the weekend. I suspect pirate copies will be on sale in most Asian cities by Friday night.

Also on the disk is the radio version of HG Wells' *War of the Worlds*, a story in which Martians try to take over the planet Earth, but are defeated. I can only deduce that this has been cleverly included to stop them trying to do the same thing again. "Curses!" the Martians will say. "Apparently we tried to invade them before but we failed."

There are also messages from dead humans. There is an interview with my old friend, the late Arthur C. Clarke, filmed at his home in Sri Lanka. And there's a message from the late science writer Carl Sagan. He recorded it at his New York house, a beautiful home in Itasca, New York, famed for its 200-foot (60 metre) waterfall. Mr. Sagan greets the Martians and says: "Maybe you can hear in the background, a 200-foot tall waterfall, which is probably, I would guess, a rarity on Mars."

Mr. Sagan is on pretty safe ground making such a claim, as there is no water on Mars. One wonders what he was going through his mind when he chose to make this statement. "If people on earth are green with jealousy about my 200-foot waterfall, what about those poor schmucks on Mars, who don't even have running water?"

Sorry I do not believe in JFO S



## Dear senator Obama ...

The challenge you will face in the next few months is stark. Do you want to remain vague? You might win -- but you might find that, in winning, you have a "victory of personality" with no real policy consequences. Or do you want to provide specifics? If so, your victory could be a clarion call from the American people to Congress to join

NEWT GINGRICH

YOUR campaign has been brilliant. It has given you more support and more momentum than most analysts expected a year ago. Keeping things simple and vague has worked so far, and it might work all the way to the White House. "Change you can believe in" is a great all-purpose slogan. It allows every person to fill in his or her own interpretation of what it means. In some ways, it's reminiscent of Jimmy Carter's 1976 promise to run "a government as good as the American people."

The challenge you will face in the next few months is stark. Do you want to remain vague? You might win -- but you might find

that, in winning, you have a "victory of personality" with no real policy consequences. Or do you want to provide specifics? If so, your victory could be a clarion call from the American people to Congress to join you in achieving your goals.

I participated in two successful "change" campaigns: the Reagan revolution of 1980 and the "Contract With America" in 1994. Both were built around a limited number of powerful, specific proposals.

As a freshman congressman in 1980, working in coordination with the Reagan presidential campaign, we selected five popular themes we knew would help our candidates get elected and create momentum

for President Reagan's bold agenda. The clarity of these five positions (the two most important were a three-year, 30 percent tax cut and strengthening the military) helped our candidates in the closing weeks of the campaign.

We won the presidency, six seats in the Senate, 33 in the House -- and joined with a minority of Democrats to pass the key measures into law.

In 1994, House Republicans had been in the minority for 40 years. We needed to do something dramatic. So instead of a traditional platform of vague commitments ("We believe in ..."), we offered a clear program of specifics ("In the first 100 days, we will ...").

We also enjoyed the advantage of positive historical trends. Already, there was an emerging consensus in favour of welfare reform, tax cuts, a stronger military and a balanced federal budget. Every item in the "Contract With America" had support from the vast majority of Americans.

Can you find five big changes that are substantive, popular -- and can rally Democrats from the House and Senate to join you on the Capitol steps in September or October? If you cannot, you should question if you'll be able to deliver on your "change" slogan.

Your campaign advisers may not care about that. Their instinct will be to win the election and leave the difficulties of governing up to you. But if you want to be a genuine historic agent of change "we can believe in," then you have to look beyond Election Day.

President Carter never understood this. When his vague campaign of "trust me" and "a government as good as the American

people" came to Washington, it ran into a Democratic Congress that didn't trust him and that wanted a government that was good for the Congress.

Carter, like many outsiders who become president (including the current White House resident), greatly underestimated the institutional strengths of the Congress. Many state legislatures meet very rarely. Georgia was like that when Carter was governor, and the Texas legislature only meets every other year.

This gave Governor Bush a considerable misunderstanding of the depth of institutional trouble he would face in Washington. By contrast, Congress is a permanent institution with a 225-year history of challenging the president. Carter learned even before his Inauguration that Speaker Tip O'Neill was happy to stand up to a newly elected president.

President George H. W. Bush painfully learned that his "read my lips, no new taxes" pledge was a

target for the Democrats rather than a problem for them. Hillary Clinton learned as First Lady that she could cut a healthcare deal with Republicans Bob Dole and John Chafee, but she could not get several key Democrats to go along.

Her plans foundered on the unwillingness of House Democrats to give up their core values for a presidential "win."

One final caveat: after four years as Speaker, the one lesson I learned is that the problem with being specific and real is that you become specific and real. Your opposition has new ammo -- or, if you pick good enough changes, the Republicans might even decide to deliver on them in September, and the president might be willing to sign them. Then you will have delivered change, but probably not in the manner you had intended.

Gingrich is former speaker of the House and the author of *Days of Infamy*. ©Newsweek International. All rights reserved. Reprinted with arrangement.