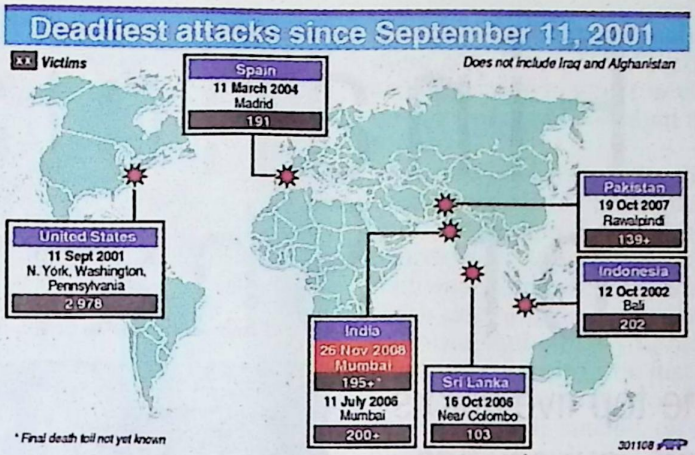
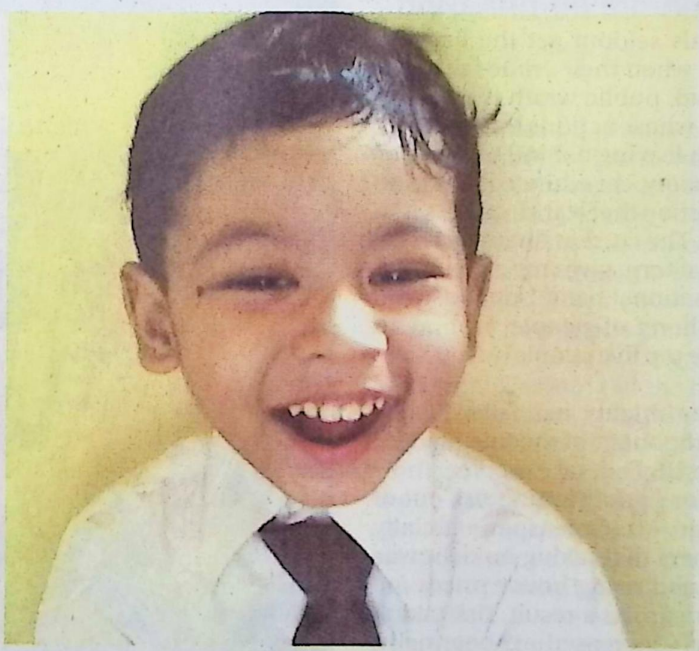
All you have to do is switch your television on or pick up a paper and you are bombarded with stories of knife crime where one teenager has stabbed and killed another teenager, of children dying from physical abuse at the hands of their carers, car bombs blowing up civilians --- the list is endless. I even read about a 19-year-old man in Florida who committed suicide live on the internet while hundreds of web surfers watched. Not only did they watch, but they taunted him and offered encouragement until he finally took his own life. We truly live in a sick and twisted world.

Last week I watched the news with a growing sense of dismay and horror as the events in Mumbai unfolded in front of my eyes. Part of me wanted to switch off and try and pretend nothing was happening but that was as futile as my initial prayer that this time the terrorists would not be Muslim. How many times in the last few years have we been witness to terror attacks across the globe by 'Islamist extremists' that have left us shocked and outraged. I for one am beginning to lose count. We could shout from the rooftops that Islam does not condone terrorist acts nor is the killing of innocent people justified anywhere in its teachings, but nobody would be listening. These days the general consensus is that Islam and terrorism go hand in hand. The sad truth is that each time we have a 9/11 in the USA or a 21/7 in London, there is a backlash against Muslims around the world. As we all know violence only begets violence and we find ourselves in a vicious circle, which is hard to break.



Maybe having children has turned me into a far more cautious person than I might otherwise have been but my spider senses tingle at every corner and I perceive danger where I am sure none lurks.



Ever time I think about the two hundred or so faceless and nameless victims massacred in the Mumbai terrorist attacks it occurs to me that they were people just like you and me going about their daily lives unaware that their hopes and dreams were to be cut short by a group of people they had never met nor caused any harm to. Having a cup off coffee at the Taj Mahal Hotel, spending the night at the Oberoi Trident, meeting family or friends at CST railway station or just being a patient at the Cama and GT hospital --- call it fate, kismet, chance or sheer bad luck, they were all in the wrong place at the wrong time. Who could have foreseen the outcome of their decision? Whether we realise it or not, there is always a domino effect resulting from acts of terrorism and violence. Its legacy is far reaching and the tragedy does not just end with the victims but the burden of grief that their families and friends will have to bear for the rest of their lives.

Every week I find it harder and harder to find a story for my daughter to present to her class so whenever I come across an article such as the one telling us that archaeologists in Egypt claim they have unearthed an ancient pyramid that is believed to be more than 4,000 years old or a new park having been created in the African country of Cameroon to try to protect a critically endangered species of gorilla--- I can only sigh with some relief. Like most parents I want to shield my children from the harsh reality that exists just outside my front door for as long as I can. However I think I may be fighting a losing battle...