

## UNIT 5

## TERRORISM

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### 5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we are going to review one of the world's challenging situations of today, namely, terrorism. We examine the general aspects of terrorism to have a better grasp of the meaning, history, causes, consequences and the ethical aspects of terrorism.

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the concept of terrorism, especially its definition and origin
- Comprehend the history of terrorism
- Identify the causes and consequences of terrorism, and
- Recognize the link between terrorism and social ethics.

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

We are living in a world that is intimidated by belligerent forces that cannot be entirely attributed to any one particular region or country, or any specific religious or ethnic identity. Terrorism builds a kind of psychological state of extreme fear, insecurity and anxiety, besides the physical damages it causes in terms of loss of life and material goods. A terrorist activity is able to cause massive impairment to an individual and the society at large due to its surprise and shock tactics. The target is selected at random to produce the maximum panic among the innocent people. The perceptible cruelty of the act adds to the elements of shock and fear. Terrorism seeks above all to create a sensation within the ranks of the enemy in the public opinion and abroad.

## **5.2 ORIGIN AND DEFINITION OF THE TERM 'TERRORISM'**

There are several opinions regarding the origin of terrorism. According to one theory, the term terrorism comes from the French word *terrorisme*, which is based on the Latin verb *terrere* (to cause to urinate), and which refers to a kind of violence or the threat of imminent violence. It is noted that the terrorism as a concept was first used by the British statesman Edmund Burke. He used it in the context of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. In those days, terror was understood to be a tool of dictatorship and as a symbol of power.

However, the word terrorism assumed a slightly different connotation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D. with the arrival of Immanuel Kant who wrote about it in 1798 to describe the destiny of humankind. He indicated terrorism as a kind of loss of trust and hope for a joint way out to the problems of life. It is also indicative of the frightening experience of extreme loneliness in one's struggles for liberation.

The term terrorism assumed a revolutionary meaning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it tried to identify both the perpetrators of violence and their victims or objectives. Any terrorist attack at that time was seen as a special sort of violent behavior against the state. It was an attack aimed at disturbing the general running of the society to achieve some political goals. Terrorism involved itself with a variety of violent means starting from arbitrary bombing, through politically motivated kidnappings, assassination, and destruction of property, both governmental and individual.

Nationalism and nationalistic interests were brought into the fray of terrorism in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Terrorism began to be symbolizing a kind of desire to rid a country of colonial powers through violent means. Nationalist terrorism implied the perception that there were no innocent non-combatants. Immediately after that the world wars brought about a distinctive meaning to terrorism. During this time terrorism came to be linked with the methodologies of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany. Since then, the terms terrorism and terrorist carry a strong negative undertone. These terms are often used as political labels to condemn violence or to rationalize the torture and even the execution of those who are labeled terrorists. But the so called terrorists and their supporters use terms such as separatists, freedom fighters, liberators, revolutionaries, militants, paramilitaries, guerrillas, rebels, jihadists, mujaheddin, and fedayeen etc.

Though we are living in the midst of terrorism and similar activities, it is difficult to define accurately the phenomenon of terrorism. However, it can be defined as an organized violence

against the State or individuals with some political and personal objectives. Again, it can be said that terrorism is the unlawful use or threat of violence against a person or property to further political or social objectives. It is sometimes used as a means to intimidate or coerce a government, individuals or groups to modify their behavior or policies.

The *Oxford Advanced Dictionary* defines terrorism as the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* describes terrorism as the systematic use of terror or unpredictable violence against governments, public or individuals, to attain a political objective. It can be broadly defined as violent behaviour designed to generate fear in the community or a substantial segment of it for political purpose. It is the use of violence on the part of non-governmental groups to achieve political ends. According to the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, terrorism is a method whereby an organized group or party seeks to achieve its vowed aims chiefly through the systematic use of violence.

The terrorists use various methods to cause panic and fear among people. Some of these methods include hostage taking, hijacking, political assassination, kidnapping, bombing, and explosions.

Terrorism has several objectives, such as, to advertise the movement or to give publicity to the ideology and strength of the movement; to mobilize mass support and urge sympathizers to greater militancy; to eliminate opponents and informers and thus remove obstacles to the growth of the movement; to demonstrate the inability of the government to support the people and maintain order; to destroy internal stability and create a feeling of fear and insecurity among the public; and to ensure the allegiance and obedience of the followers.

### **5.3 HISTORY OF TERRORISM**

Terrorism as it is today has a long historical evolution. It has evolved into the present form due to various factors and events. Another distinct form of dehumanization is seen in the thoughts of Frederick Nietzsche who classified people according to their intelligence and spoke of a master and slave morality. It is also a fact that there existed various other forms of dehumanization based on gender, colour, creed, false belief, employment, power, and myths etc.

This eventful history can go as far back as the recorded history of the world. The Old Testament section of the Bible advocates terror, murder, and all type of callous practices on rivals. The assassination of kings by enemies, and the brutal suppression of loyalists afterwards, has been an established pattern of political ascent since Julius Caesar (BC 44). The Zealots in Israel (100 AD) wrestled against the Roman occupation in numerous ways. If terrorism can be understood subtly as the process of dehumanization, it can be recalled that such a scenario existed in ancient Rome in the form of the man-beast fight. The Assassins in Iraq (1100 AD) fought the Christian Crusaders with suicide tactics. The Thuggees in India (1300 AD) kidnapped travellers for sacrifice to their Goddess of Terror, Kali. The Spanish Inquisition (1469-1600 AD) dealt with Heretics by systematized torture, and the whole medieval era was based on terrorizing countryside. The Luddites (1811-1816 AD) destroyed machinery and any symbol of modern technology. A Serb terrorist (1914 AD) started the World War I. Hitler's rise to power (1932) involved plans for genocide. Nations like Ireland, Cyprus, Algeria, Tunisia, and Israel probably would have never become republics if not for revolutionary terrorist activities. Based on the

above findings, the long and eventful history of terrorism can be further divided into the following periods:

**Terror in the Ancient World:** The terrorist movement in Palestine during 66-73 AD is considered to be the first terrorist movement in the recorded history. The earliest known organization that exhibited aspects of a modern terrorist organization was the Zealots, a group of Jewish nationalists, who put up resistance to Roman rule in Judaea. Known to the Romans as Sicarii, or dagger-men, they carried on an underground campaign to root out the Roman occupation forces, as well as some Jews they thought had collaborated with the Romans.

**Terror in the Middle Ages:** From the late 13<sup>th</sup> century to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, terror and barbarism were widely used in warfare and conflict. Until the rise of the modern nation state after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the sort of principal authority and organized society that terrorism attempts to influence barely existed. Moreover, terrorism as we now understand it was not possible until the invention of gunpowder and subsequent explosives and incendiaries. In the late middle ages, the concept of terrorism was introduced during the French Revolution. It is said that in order to establish law and order in the State, the Committee of Public Safety killed more than 17,000 people. These severe measures of the government came to be known as “The Reign of Terror.” The agents of the Committee of Public Safety and the National Convention that enforced the policies of “The Terror” were referred to as “Terrorists”. This is regarded as the origin of the word terrorism, though extra-legal activities such as killing prominent officials and aristocrats in gruesome spectacles started by the Parisian mobs long before the guillotine was first used.

**Terrorism in the Modern and Contemporary Era:** The terrorists have become more destructive in the backdrop of modern complexities. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some nationalists in small European countries wanted to break free from the rule of larger empires. Known as Anarchists, they found they could get what they wanted by committing acts of terror. Revolutionary groups working to overthrow the Russian rule and the Irish nationalist groups also understood this. So they adopted terrorism as a method in Western Europe, Russia, and the United States. They believed that the best way to effect revolutionary, political, and social change was to assassinate persons who are holding responsible positions. From 1865 a number of kings, presidents, and prime ministers were killed by the Anarchists.

If early terrorism targeted those in power, in the twentieth century, the terrorists have begun targeting the innocent civilians who have no link with the actual cause they are fighting for. In the twentieth century there were many instances of terrorism. The Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, the Sikh and Kashmiri militants in India, the PLA, the government of Libya, Taliban and Al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the Irish Republican Army were all involved in terrorist activities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today’s terrorists are techno-savvy. They are skilled in the use of chemical, biological, nuclear and conventional weapons and modern communication systems, which makes them more terrifying.

Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What is the meaning of the term 'terrorism'?

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2. How do you define the term 'terrorism'?

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3. Briefly describe the historical development of terrorism.

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#### 5.4 CAUSES OF TERRORISM

Terrorism has several causes which can be related to social, historical, cultural, religious, economic, and psychological aspects. The following could be seen as some of the causes of terrorism:

**The Reality of Persistent Disputes:** Terrorism has its breeding ground in conflicts. Reasons for conflicts, however, can vary widely. Basically, it is the differences in objectives and ideologies that show the way to conflict. Some of the historical examples to this effect are: dominance of territory or resources by various ethnic, linguistic, religious or cultural groups; aspiration for freedom from foreign regimes; imposition of a particular form of government, such as democracy, theocracy, oligarchy, or dictatorship; economic deprivation of a population; and real or perceived instances of injustices.

**Dearth of Reasonable Redressal Procedure:** The absence of a systematic and proper redressal system can cause continued terrorist activities. If such a system were to exist, people will have recourse to it and thus solve conflicting situations. When such systems are not available due to their nonexistence, sloth, corruption; or unaffordable cost, the socially and culturally wounded people will get tempted to seek solution by themselves. Terrorist activities thus can arise from a sense of denial of lawful right of a certain group of people, for which they have been demanding determinedly.

**Weakness of the Distressed People:** When there are violent discords coupled with the absence of a genuine redressal system, there could be attempts to find solutions to the problems by force. This could result in various kinds of organized violence like communal riots and war. However, violence takes an ugly form through terrorism when the distressed people realize their inability to

influence the dominator, due to their weakness. In such a situation, they are unable to face the oppressive forces face to face or in a direct manner. Therefore, they go underground and fight for their cause.

**Misguidance:** When children and youth are not brought up responsibly by their parents or guardians, there is a high risk for them to get involved with violent groups or militancy. There are vested interested groups who indoctrinate young minds to take up arms to right for their causes which are sometimes fabricated. Often, an ideology of hatred in the name of religion, ethnic loyalty or nationalism are injected into the minds of people. These youngsters are trained to cause destruction and are armed with deadly weapons. Their misguidance becomes complete when they are taught to regard the death and destruction of their enemies as a glorious achievement and their own possible death in the process as heroic martyrdom.

**Influence of the Mass Media:** Mass media are showing keen interest in terrorism and in the issues related to it. We find radio stations, television channels, newspapers, and Web pages often discussing this subject. These broadcasts reach a large portico of people in the world, especially those in the West and intensify the fear that the threat of terrorism generates. The terrorists make use of this effect of the media, thus turning them into an unwilling ally. The wide coverage given in the media motivates a terrorist organization to go ahead with their plans, since they know for sure that their action will be made known to the whole world and thus draw greater attention to the cause. Often, the live coverage of the terrorist activity helps the perpetrators of violence to get away from the site of the violence in an easy manner. In such cases, the mass media can become an unwilling ally of terrorism.

**Democratic State:** Though it is opined by researchers that democratic nations are generally less vulnerable to terrorism, however, they too are not free from terrorist activities. There is a complex relationship between terrorism and democracy. Though in one sense democracy diminishes the risk of terrorism by undercutting some of its reasons, in another sense it often contributes to its prevalence. The open nature of democratic societies makes them vulnerable to terrorism. In such societies, civil liberties are protected, and government control and constant surveillance of the people and their activities are kept to the minimum. Taking advantage of such restraints by the government, terrorists have stepped up their activities. Studies done on the relationship between liberal societies and terrorism suggest that concessions awarded to terrorists have increased the frequency of terrorist attacks. By contrast, repressive societies, where the government closely monitors citizens and restricts their speech and movement, have often provided more difficult environments for terrorists.

It should also be noted that in democratic societies the risk of terrorism is compounded if the law enforcement is slow or inefficient. In such democracies the aggrieved people, having lost faith in the ability of the legal system of the country to deliver justice, are seen to take law into their own hands, and if they are weak, they do it clandestinely.

**Globalization:** It can be said that globalization, though not a direct cause of terrorism, it can often contribute to the menace of terrorism. The situation brought about by the linkage, even fusion, around the world of communications and financial systems has contributed to the promotion of global terrorism. Again, new communications such as the Internet and satellite phones have

made it possible for the extremist terrorist and political organizations to build large organizational networks, exchange information, and combine resources.

**Psychological Factors:** Many psychologists believe that the key to understand terrorism lies in understanding people. According to this perspective, terrorism is purely the result of psychological forces, not a well-thought-out strategy aimed at achieving rational, strategic ends. Therefore, psychologists emphasize the study of the mind of the terrorists. Accordingly, various attempts have been made to gain knowledge of the hidden psychic dynamism which incites a person to perform such acts without any qualm of conscience. There is another psychological view which says that the terrorists are normal individuals, who due to their deep emotional need and a high order of motivation on the grounds of nationalism or religious sentiment forces him to take up the path of violence. Another reason for taking up terrorism could be due to the desire to overcome loneliness. They claim that many terrorists are people who have been rejected in some fashion by society and tend to be loners. Since it is in human nature to be part of a group, an alienated loner is naturally drawn towards any group that will accept him, give him a sense of mission, and provide him the ways and means of accomplishing it, along with monetary gains too.

## **5.5 CONSEQUENCES OF TERRORISM**

The causes of the growing terrorism in a State are many. Mostly the terrorists are motivated by religious and political consideration, but there are also economic factors.

**Environmental Consequences:** Terrorist activities can paralyze the entire cosmos with its vulnerable activities. It can be said that every terrorist attack is a way of demeaning the entire universe. The cosmos, which is the habitat of life, is dishonored into a place of death and doom. The very fact that a human being is a cosmic reality, he/she is automatically dehumanized in the wake of every terrorist activity. Anything that is done against the cosmic *rta* is going to affect all the living and non-living beings of the universe. Sowing the seeds of disorder, disharmony and discontent has turned to be the work of a number of psychosomatics.

**Political Consequences:** Terrorism builds up both direct and indirect pressure on the government to weaken it physically and psychologically. The function of terror can also be to discourage the people from cooperating with or giving information to the government. The deepest anxiety amongst ordinary people arises when they fear a collapse of law and order. Terrorism works towards a collapse of the social order and terrorists exploit this situation by trying to project them as a better alternative. In this state of fear and anxiety the essential services may not function properly. Terrorism grew out of political anarchy.

Terror incorporates two facets: first, a state of fear or anxiety within an individual or a group and second, the tool that induces the state of fear. Thus, terror involves the threat or use of symbolic violent acts aimed at influencing political behavior. Following World War II, political terrorism reemerged on the international scene. During the 1960s, political terrorism appeared to have entered into another phase. Perhaps the two most significant qualitative changes were: first, its transnational character and second, its emergence as a self-sufficient strategy, namely, operating independently of the larger political arena.

Political terrorism occurs as the result of a conscious decision by ideologically inspired groups to strike back at what their members may perceive as unjust within a given society or polity. The answers to contemporary political terrorism, therefore, would have to be found within this larger social, economic, political, and psychological context.

**Economic Consequences:** Terrorism aims at maximizing economic impact in the world at large. The destruction of the twin-towers on that Tuesday of 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2001 has caused much confusion and disarray in the global economic scenario. Since each act of terrorism is designed in such a way as to have an impact on the larger audience, its reverberations and after effects are largely seen in the economic area. Nations and government machineries are forced to equip themselves with latest technologies to combat the network of terrorism. All those involve the bifurcation of national funds which could be made use of other purposes. Terrorism, in other words, deteriorates the economy of a nation. The economy of a nation does not include its financial conditions alone. It deals with all forms of wealth such as human resource, natural resource, intellectual power, aesthetic power, creative power, money-power and so on. Therefore, economic consequences of terrorism affect all forms of wealth without which human life would be impossible.

## **5.6 TERRORISM AND SOCIAL ETHICS**

Terrorism has turned out over the years to be a method of dehumanizing the entire spectrum of human beings. The principles of the terrorists are rooted in destruction and dehumanization. Consequently, they take control of the ethical supervision of a society and fabricate the citizens of a substandard conscience and a splintered morality. Terror is not merely a rational phenomenon. It envelops people, body, mind, and spirit. It leaves people paralyzed by anxiety and fear.

Terrorism in all its forms is always wrong. Terrorism violates human rights, including the basic right to be treated as a moral person. Art. 3 of the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states, among other things, that everyone has the right to life. The importance of our acknowledging such a universal human right is evident: the protection of human life is the sine qua non of the individual's capacity to realize anything and everything – any and all values – a human being is capable of realizing in relation to himself or herself and others.

Terrorism as a phenomenon does raise a few ethical questions for our study and reflection. The growing hate campaigns against groups, regions and countries affect the normal morale of the society. Terrorism can thus be a threat to the civilization of the world. For, behaving ethically is a part of being civilized. The terrorists, however, are devoid of any love and benevolence and are disinterested in truth of life. They do not like to cultivate any art, literature and music. They prefer darkness of nights to the light of the day. They like their hiding places more than one loves one's home. They often kidnap children for claiming ransom. They have no qualms of conscience to make married women suddenly widows even after a few hours of marriage.

In the ancient time, there was more respect for the human life. Whenever there was any war or battle, it used to be the rule that you had to take precautions not to injure innocents. In any battle that took place, it was the custom that the people should be protected from the effects of the

battles. Very often people were cleared from the battle area prior to the commencement of war. But unfortunately in today's world, human life has become worthless. The terror attacks are mostly carried out in places where the people gather in huge numbers such as places of worship, market places, transport stations etc.

Broadly speaking, a distinction can be made between two major traditions within the ethical thought: absolutist theories, which give prominence to moral duties which are obligatory in nature, and utilitarian suppositions, which hold the view that behaviour is right if it maximizes the happiness or welfare of the majority. The former points out the fact that we should uphold those rules which would maximize the general welfare if everyone followed them, even though they may not seem to do so in a particular instance; while the latter gives the possibility of maximizing the general welfare at the expense of minorities.

Universal pacifists are morally opposed to all kinds of violence, not just to killing. Many universal pacifists derive their views from the Christian Gospels. Certainly the most interesting and defective pacifist of the twentieth century was Mahatma Gandhi. He developed his doctrine of non-violence which proved to be very effective in the Indian freedom struggle which he led from the forefront. As world citizens, everyone should be encouraged to follow the example of Mahatma Gandhi who had a philosophy of life blended with the jewels of truth and non-violence. He led a bloodless struggle for the freedom of a nation, and of love, peace and everlasting joy in the hearts of millions of humans. *Sarvodaya* (welfare of all) was his secret. He believed in the culture of inter-human and intra-human relationship and love was the powerful weapon he used. Inter-human relationship is built upon the principles of love and respect and it exists between or among the humans. Intra-human relationship is also based on love and respect but it exists within the humans alone. It is centred on the principle of sacredness of one's own life and that of the other. That is to say, intra-human relationship never permits one to become a suicide-bomber, which causes destruction to oneself and one's own fellow humans. Likewise, intra-human relationship paves the way for a person to respect the other as a person and not as a thing or means for one's end. Gandhi believed in truth and love.

Terrorist groups must establish and follow ethical codes which should govern the conduct of their struggle. Insofar as possible, these standards should follow international laws governing warfare. The orbit of terrorism should not be allowed to violate humanization process of the individuals.

### Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What are the causes of terrorism?

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2. Briefly describe the consequences of terrorism.

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3. How do you understand terrorism in the context of ethics?  
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### 5.7 LET US SUM UP

Terrorism is the biggest threat to the security of the world at the present scenario. It begets a sense of repugnance and disgust deep in the people's mind. It can destroy world peace with its indiscriminate attacks. Terrorism does not observe any code of conduct concerning the value of life. They dedicate themselves to the destruction of the innocent people. As members of the world community we need to work toward a set of ethical standards in the wake of the growing menace of terrorism in the world today.

The fight against terrorism can be effective only if governments cooperate more closely especially through the exchange of relevant information concerning the prevention and combating of terrorism, identification, arrest and prosecution or extradition of terrorists. People should be educated for international thinking. Peace education should be encouraged in all the educational institutions.

Every human being and society should respond positively to the tragic situations arising from terrorist activities, so that our collective human involvement would enhance the prospects for a better tomorrow. All such agencies need to function under a moral framework, so that everyone involved would respond morally to the evils committed in a manner that is strictly human in character.

### 5.8 KEY WORDS

**Psychosomatics:** Psychosomatics relates to a disorder having physical symptoms but originating from mental or emotional causes.

**Fascism:** Fascism is a political ideology that stands for radical and authoritarian nationalism. The fascists advocate the creation of a single-party state. They forbid and suppress openness and opposition to the fascist state.

**Nazism:** Nazism is the totalitarian ideology and practices of the Nazi Party or National Socialist German Workers' Party under Adolf Hitler. It is a form of fascism.

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## 5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Check Your Progress I

1. The term 'terrorism' comes from the French word *terrorisme*, which is based on the Latin verb *terrere* (to cause to urinate), and which refers to a kind of violence or the threat of imminent violence. Immanuel Kant referred to terrorism as a kind of loss of trust and hope for a joint way out of the problems of life. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it assumed revolutionary meaning in as much as it tried to identify the perpetrators of violence and their victims or objectives. It was an attack aimed at disturbing the general running of the society to achieve some political goals.

2. *The Oxford Advanced Dictionary* defines terrorism as the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims to force a government to act. *The Encyclopedia Britannica* describes terrorism as the systematic use of terror or unpredictable violence against governments, public or individuals, to attain a political objective. *The Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* defines terrorism as a method whereby an organized group or party seeks to achieve its vowed aims chiefly through the systematic use of violence.

3. The history of terrorism can be traced back as to very time when history began to be recorded. In the ancient world we see the first terrorist movement led by the Zealots, a group of Jewish nationalists, who put up resistance to Roman rule in Judea. In the middle ages, beginning from 13<sup>th</sup> century to 17<sup>th</sup> century we get to see especially during the French Revolution. Terrorism in the modern and contemporary era we see several revolutionary groups popping up all across Europe, Russia and United States. The main means that are being used are assassinations and bombings.

### Check Your Progress II

1. The causes of terrorism can be several. Ideological and Objective differences can lead to conflict, which if not resolved amicably can lead to terrorism. If there is no system by which there is no systematic and proper redressal, then it could lead to terrorist activities. Violent discords together with the absence of a genuine redressal system, attempts could be made to find solutions by force. Militants and other extremist groups could indoctrinate the minds of people, especially that of young people making them vulnerable to terrorist activities. Mass Media with their wide and in-depth and sometimes live coverage of the terrorist activities can become an unwilling ally of terrorists. Contrasting democratic and repressive societies it has been noticed that in democratic societies there is an increased frequency of terrorist activity. Terrorists have also been greatly helped by globalization the reason being the availability of financial systems and sophisticated communication system. Terrorists are basically lonely people who have been rejected at some time or the other. So they undertake this form of violence to have a sense of mission and provide them with the ways and means of accomplishing it, along with monetary gains.

2. Some of consequences of terrorism are: a) Environmental – In the wake of a terrorist attack or activity the personhood of the person is dehumanized; b) Political – This happens when there is a conscious decision by ideologically inspired groups to strike back at what their members may perceive as unjust within a given society or polity; and c) Economic – Terrorism without any doubt deteriorates the economy of a nation. Here economy includes human resource, natural resource, intellectual power, aesthetic power, creative power, money power, etc.

3. In the context of ethics, terrorism can be surely said to be a threat to the civilization of the world. Terrorists just do not care about human life. Within the ethical thought one can say that there are two major traditions, one that of absolutist theories and utilitarian suppositions. Both have its drawbacks. In this scenario one needs to follow the example of *Savodaya* (welfare of all) of Gandhiji. Intra-human relationships and intra-human culture must be promoted.

