



**Pramod Saini**

**Mr. Pramod Saini is a senior journalist with 15 years' experience. He wrote articles, reports and features for many Hindi newspapers including *Punjab Kesari, Jansatta, Rashtriya Sahara, Rajasthan Patrika, Blitz*, etc as a freelance writer. Presently, he is Senior Correspondent with *Organiser Weekly*. He is also Secretary of Delhi Journalist Association and NUJ(I) School of Journalism.**

# Time to design a Code for terror reporting

The immature coverage of terrorist attacks by a section of Indian media, especially the electronic media, has raised the question that the media is playing into the hands of terrorists, who calculatedly use it as a tool to further their motives. Therefore, it is time for us mediapersons to go for a self-regulation in the form of a Code, as we have for juvenile crimes or rape cases.

The irresponsibly a section of Indian media, specially the electronic media, has been covering terrorist strikes or bomb explosions in different parts of the country, make one believe that we are knowingly or unknowingly playing into the hands of terrorists. After every terrorist strike, whether small or big, the widely we show up the destruction, dead bodies and panic caused by the attack, basically serves the purpose of terrorists only, as their prime objective behind all such strikes is to create more panic among people and frighten the ruling establishment.

I have been watching this attitude of a section of the media for more than one decade—from Kargil war to the latest bomb explosion outside Delhi High Court on September 7. During Indian Airlines plane hijacking in 1999 and 26/11 Mumbai attack in 2008 also the media crossed its limits and proved to be a powerful tool into the hands of terrorists. It was witnessed during the Malegaon, Bangalore, Ayodhya, Varanasi, Parliament House attacks also. The same hysteria, the same wild speculations and allegations, the same 'set-piece' human interest

stories. The same perverse tendency to intrude into others' horrifying experiences and to beam them out in pitiless detail for the rest of the nation to experience by proxy. Complete dramatic music, stock audio clips of gunshots and explosions and screams of agony. Worst of all, the same utter insensitivity to others' grief, anxiety and suffering.

I remember an incident of 26/11 terrorist attack in Mumbai. Barkha Dutt of NDTV 24/7 was interviewing a man who was waiting for news of his family members trapped inside the Taj. She asked the man: "As you wait here, outside the Taj, even as you hear the sound of gunfire and explosions from inside the hotel, tell us what thoughts are going through your head?" Beaming live pictures of commandos entering the Nariman House a reporter of the same NDTV 24/7 said, "We have been told that local cable operators have stopped beaming any news channels in this area. They've been requested to do so by the police and NSG, as the terrorists inside can otherwise know exactly what's going on outside..." (yet NDTV 24/7 continues to beam its live pictures!! As do most other news channels.) NDTV 24/7 was not alone. A reporter from CNN-IBN outside the Oberoi, was talking to a man who lost his two children in the attack. He asked: "Are you angry with the terrorists for killing your children?"

Pained over the irresponsible coverage of the attack by a section of the electronic media, the then Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Suresh Mehta, said at a press conference that