

The Terror of Colombia

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THE famous psychologist Carl Jung once made a trenchant remark that "there is nothing to be afraid of in this Universe except man". Nothing can be farther from the truth. Everyday, we see, hear and read about terror - dons ensconced in safe and remote hideouts masterminding terror strikes that massacre hundreds of innocents. As an exasperated world watches helplessly, leaders grapple hopelessly trying to resolve an intractable problem. No answers are also forthcoming as to how and why our so called civilized world is spawning such deranged freaks known as "Terrorists". In this article I shall introduce readers to a different kind of terrorist, known as **the terror of Colombia** .

The terror of Colombia is **Burundanga** (pronounced as Boo - roon - dahn - gah). Readers will be in for a shocked surprise to know that this does not refer to any gun toting terrorist but to a plant ! Yes, just a plant ! Burundanga's active ingredient Scopolamine, is found in a plant from the Nightshade family, known as **Borrachera (Drunken binge)** which grows in the Andes mountains. Scopolamine is mixed with other drugs like tranquilisers and this chemical cocktail is known as Burundanga. It is a tasteless and odourless powder and sends those who consume it into a Voodoo like trance. Criminals sprinkle the soluble powder into the food or drink of a victim, then waits for the person to turn into a disoriented Zombie - awake and talkative but powerless to resist orders. Criminals then instruct their victims to make bank withdrawals, hand over their car keys and valuables, deliver narcotics, or even help empty their own apartments of expensive articles. What's more, under the effect of Burundanga, victims suffer temporary amnesia. The hard drive in their brain goes blank until the drug wears off. A lot of times, the victim cannot even remember what the criminal looks like. Hence it is difficult to arrest anyone.

Burundanga - bearing criminals lurk around airports, bus terminals and bars or go door to door canvassing pretending to be salesmen, persuading housewives to take whiffs of products containing the powder and the gaseous mixture. Women frequenting bars slip Burundanga into drinks of unsuspecting men and deprive them off their valuables. It is also used to lure young woman who are then abused sexually. When they are found days later they have no memory of what happened to them.

Sometimes victims are used as mules to carry Cocaine. A well known Colombian diplomat disappeared from a function, only to reappear in Chile under arrest for Cocaine smuggling ! Medical tests showed that he had been under the influence of Burundanga. The effect of Burundanga is that the victim is unable to resist and is highly vulnerable to suggestion. It can be called Chemical Hypnotism. From the moment Burundanga is given, the victim remembers absolutely nothing.

The active ingredient in Burundanga is Scopolamine which is used as a presurgical drug for the purpose of impairing memory of surgical trauma. It provides an initial knockout effect, before the anaesthesia proper is administered, and has the benefit of preventing long term memory formation. At one time Scopolamine was given to women during childbirth.

Mengele of Nazi fame experimented with Scopolamine as a truth serum. The victim under this drug and with an experienced operator will tell the truth to any question asked. The victim may have no memory of the event or may remember the event as a dream. Memories of events, while on this drug, may come into consciousness. This drug is used by security forces to make people forget other events.

Burundanga is a very serious problem in Colombia, almost to the extent of being an epidemic. About half of the country's total emergency admissions for poison are Burundanga victims. In Colombia nobody is safe from this drug. Among victims are a Governor, prominent lawyers, and entire families doped by their maids. Many victims never go to the authorities. Some realize that they don't know who slipped them the drug. Others feel embarrassed over what happened. Some Colombians have turned the Burundanga epidemic to their advantage. Philandering husbands sometimes wander into hospitals for tests after spending days with girlfriends, eager for a valid excuse to explain their absence !

That a plant should cause so much of travail for an entire nation is nothing new for we Indians. Remember what happened to the Yadava race ? As narrated in the Mausala Parva of Mahabharatha, the Eraka grass became the cause of destruction of the Yadavas.

Whenever I read reports of Biscuit bandits on our Railways I am tempted to think that some enterprising gangsters might have smuggled Burundanga into our country. This Zombie powder has immense mischief potential. I hope the Government will take the initiative to enlighten our enforcement agencies about these kind of unheard drugs. The Narcotics Dictionary of our enforcement agencies is very small - Ganja, Heroin, Cocaine. But there are a whole lot of synthetic stuff and unheard of chemical cocktails capable of making anyone into a Zombie or even a whole nation plunging into crisis as Colombia is experiencing.

(The views expressed are personal of the Author)