

# Conquerors and conquered

The dust has not even settled down on the outrageous scam of torture of the Iraqi inmates of the Abu Gharib prison by their American jailers, that the British soldiers in Iraq have been caught indulging in similar abuses with impunity. While a few snapshots showing them torturing their Iraqi captives have surfaced, increasing evidence is now coming to the fore of several prisoners in their custody having also died in suspicious circumstances. Whatever explanations their commanders in Iraq and back home come up with, the myth propagated by some sections of the British elite that their soldiers were a "civilised" lot and different from their gung-ho American counterparts now lies buried in the graveyard. Both are arguably the chips of the same block. And this has set the thinking people to fret about the reasons. And there goes an argument that this is indicative of a culture of acceptance of this kind of behaviour in the British military forces as well. Of course, it is. But is this all? No. The malaise runs far deeper. And the thinking lot cannot be unaware of it. Yet, shockingly, even they are shy of speaking out.

Arguably, this uncivilised conduct of the invading armies in Iraq is intimately related to its occupation by them. Not irrelevantly, a clutch of Danish soldiers is also currently facing similar charges of the Iraqi prisoners' abuse. In the medieval ages, the conquerors would take it as their divine right to torment and torture the vanquished. They would slay the conquered on the streets, hang them on the poles, hoist their babies alive on the lances, rape their women, and plunder their homes. In the modern times, only the dresses, ways and means have changed, but not the conqueror mentality. The conquerors wipe out whole blocks of cities with bombs, rockets and missiles, and kill the innocent people in droves in one lethal sweep after the other. And yet they feel no qualms or remorse, simply because they take the vanquished as a mean lot whom they can treat the way they like for being their conquerors. It is this conqueror mentality that is at work in the Iraqi captives' torture and humiliation. And despite all the contrivances of the political bosses of the occupation armies to paint themselves as the Iraqis' liberators, this mentality of their subordinate soldiery remains unchanged. They had tasked this soldiery to invade and conquer Iraq. And after their task's completion, these soldiers feel and behave like conquerors.

There is no evidence either if their political leaderships and senior commands have done anything to subdue their impulses on this score. One even doesn't know how much of brutalities have these soldiers inflicted on the Iraqis so far. And it remains uncertain if at all their savagery's full scale will ever come to light. It is the media that brings this horrifying aspect to the public view. But there is virtually no independent reporting on occupied Iraq. The western media are largely embedded with the occupation armies and have become part of their savagery by not telling the truth to the world. The Arab networks have been thrown out of the country. The full story of the Iraqis tortured and humiliated by their conquerors might remain untold. But the stray scams that burst out to the public view are a telltale.