MOB FRENZY AND LYNCHING…#NOT IN MY NAME

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Abstract - We, the people have been witnessing remorseless, cold blooded series of mob lynching in the country. Such merciless display of gory bloodshed has now become a public spectacle and caught the media glare. People are lynched under the pretext of being 'beef eaters', 'child lifters', 'practitioners of witch craft', 'Romeos', 'anti-nationalists', 'blasphemous' and so on. A Facebook or memes post can also invite the ire of radical outfits and the law of the land goes for a toss. Marauding mobs or vigilantes chase helpless individuals and assign them to death. This could happen on the streets, in the trains, in pubs, in university hostels and more often in villages. Social networking sites show horrific visuals of blood-soaked bodies of human beings and twitteratis indulge in verbal spat over the issue. Some consider it to be grotesque and insensate while few others consider it a trivial issue blown out of proportion. Few leaders deny the occurrence of such incidents, call it media hype and even tend to compare the statistics of lynching in their reign with that of the previous one. The loquacious leaders blame the media for being selectively outrageous -You reported X why you chose to be silent when Y happened. Attempts are made to give communal colour to such incidents. In the cacophony of intellectual debates involving presstitutes, libtards, brash news anchors, radicals and so on, justice dodges. Almost all of them have differing opinions but no unanimous solution to remedy the hopeless situation. Perhaps, we are getting accustomed to the new language and pattern of violence. Are we vigilant enough to preserve the constitutional values and secular fabric of the country? We, the people are transmogrifying into We, the insane, mindless, morally corrupt mobs. It is really sad that the meat in the refrigerator is investigated more than the murder and so it's time for us to reflect and ponder. The paper focusses on the causes of mob frenzy, incidents of violence and the need for stringent laws that could bring the situation under control.

Keywords: Leaders, lynching, mob, vigilantes, violence.

I. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary.com describes lynching as putting to death of a person through mob action without recourse to the law– "an unlawful murder by an angry mob of people." Throughout history, dominant groups have used lynchings as controlling minorities.When people take the law into their own hands and decide to punish a suspected criminal-or merely a person who is challenging the status quo-the result can unfortunately be a lynching.Lynchings have most often involved hanging, especially during the period of racially motivated lynchings in the American South. Lynching is a modern form of tribalism, where enemies differentiated on the basis of caste, creed, colour, religion, ideology are bracketed for elimination. Unfortunately, mobs are taking over civic spaces in India. Lynching has become a normal trend. These macabre incidents take place on account of issues like cow slaughter, anti-nationalism, inter-faith marriage, blasphemy, witch craft practice and so on. Marauding mobs chase helpless individuals and assign them to death. This could happen on the streets, in the trains, in pubs, in university hostels and more often in villages. Social networking sites show horrific visuals of blood-soaked bodies of human beings and cyber propaganda warriors indulge in verbal spat over the issue.

The government denies having any role in it and squarely puts the blame on the opposition. The loquacious leaders refer to lynching as a political conspiracy- a smokescreen to escape responsibility. They even offer lip sympathy to the victim's family but all words ring hollow as there are no efforts to crack down on vigilante groups.The meat kept in the refrigerator of the victim is sent to the forensic laboratory for investigation and if it is found to be beef, then violence is supposedly justified. The government has a development agenda but development is not deprivation of human rights. Right to equality is being trampled upon by these grisly crimes under the rubric of cow protection or nationalism. In the current scenario, people are being violent so that they can assert their ideology and compel the vulnerable groups to respect the things and animals sacred to them. The holiness of cow must not replace the goodness of human life. Incidents of lynching have heightened the sense of vulnerability of those who do not revere the cow, who refuse to chant certain words and whose sense of patriotism has always been under scanner. It is really a sad state of affairs that the executors of violence are considered to be on the right side of law and those who are victimized are on the wrong side of law.

II. LYNCHING: AN ANCIENT SPORT

It is to be remembered that mob frenzy is not of recent origin. History is replete with examples of mob violence. Few infamous incidents of mob violence have been discussed below:

1. The 1857 revolt: The immediate cause of the revolt was the use of Enfield rifles. The cartridges were wrapped in paper, which had been coated in grease which made the cartridges easier to load in

rifle barrels. Rumours began to spread that the grease used to make the cartridges was derived from pigs and cows, which would be highly offensive as cow was sacred to the Hindus and pig was a taboo for Muslims. Sepoys refused to use the new rifle cartridges. On May 10,1857 things became chaotic as mobs attacked British civilians, including women and children. Mutineers travelled the 40 miles to Delhi and soon the large city erupted in a violent revolt against the British. The British too retaliated. The dead bodies of Indian rebels were hung from trees for public spectacle, "It was a holocaust, one where millions disappeared. It was a necessary holocaust in the British view because they thought the only way to win was to destroy entire populations in towns and it was simple and brutal. Indians who stood in their way were killed. But its scale has been kept a secret."

2. The bloody legacy of Partition

In 1947, at the time of partition, human bodies became sites of lynching and collective violence, women and children being the worst victims. NisidHajari in "Midnight Furies" (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) his fast paced new narrative of Partition and its aftermath, writes, "Gangs of killers set whole villages aflame,hacking to death men and children and the aged while carrying off young women to be raped.Some British soldiers and journalists who had witnessed the Nazi death camps claimed Partition's brutalities were worse,pregnant women had their breasts cut off and babies hacked out of their bellies,infants were found literally roasted on spits."

3. The aftermath of Indira Gandhi's death

The survival of the 1984 anti-sikh riots that took place in the wake of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi`s assassination tell horrific tales of violence, robbery, rape and murder. One such incident that still records a high nine on the emotional Richter scale is narrated here: The day the mob arrived at Badshahpur in Gurgaon, Gurpreet'sneighbours hid him in their house, and from a window he watched the events unfold below. The mob of "at least one thousand" burnt down the gurdwara opposite his family's house, before turning its attention to the family. "They began calling out to them to come down, reassuring them that no harm would be done," Singh said, "My eldest brother went down, and the minute he got there, they gave a call to surround him, and burnt him alive."His other brother too was called down, and when he tried to flee, the mob allegedly caught him, beat him up and burnt him alive, some of the attackers even chopping off his fingers. "After that, they set fire to our house, which brought everyone outside, and they burnt them alive,"Gurpreet said.

The angry mobs carrying voters' lists celebrated public lynching and burning on the streets. The leitmotif of these events was "When a big tree falls, the earth shakes."

III. LYNCHING STORIES THAT TEAR OUR SENSIBILITIES

1.Mangalore pub attack

On 24 January 2009, a radical outfit attacked group of young women and men in a pub in Mangalore, claiming that the women were violating traditional Indian values. On 3 February 2009, the founding member of the outfit told The Indian Express, "Why should girls go to pubs? Are they going to serve their future husbands alcohol? Should they not be learning to make chapatis? Bars and pubs should be for men only."

2.Alwar

Pehlu Khan, a 55-year-old Khan was waylaid by a mob on April 1 when he was transporting cows for his small dairy farm, beaten up mercilessly, and he died of his wounds two days later.The death triggered national outrage.Police was not able to arrest any of the six men named by Khan in his dying declaration. However, those identified from a video of the assault that went viral were arrested.

3.Dadri Mohammad Akhlaq

In Dadri'sBishara village on September 28, a 50-year-old Mohammad Akhlaq was lynched and his son Danish (22) was brutally beaten up as punishment for allegedly eating beef on Eid and 'storing it' for later consumption. A riot-like situation gripped the sleepy village, a little over 40 km from the bustling sub-city of Noida, near Delhi, on September 29, when their relatives were barred from participating in the funeral procession.

4.Delhi, Kanhaiya Kumar

In February, 2016 the JNUSU President Kanhaiya Kumar, arrested on sedition charges, was beaten up by lawyers while he was being produces at Patiala House Court.

5.Una, Gujarat

Seven members of a Dalit family were allegedly beaten up by a group of cow vigilantes for skinning a dead cow in Una town of GirSomnath district of Gujarat. After beating them up, the attackers reportedly took four of them to Una town and paraded them, floggred them publicly all the way to the police station.As the police arrived ,the attackers fled in their vehicle.

6.Ballabhgarh, Hafiz Junaid

On their way back in a Mathura-bound train, Junaid was stabbed to death by a group of men after an argument over seats turned ugly. The men allegedly mocked the boys, tugged at their beards and accused them of being beef eaters. This was before they threw the boys out of the train at Asaoti station, where the 15-year-old bled to death on his brother Hashim`s lap.

7.Srinagar, Mohammad AyubPandith:
On Shab-i-Qadr (Night of Value) Deputy Superintendent of Police Mohammad AyubPandith was deputed for access control duty at Jamia Masjid – the Grand Mosque in the heart of downtown Srinagar and a stronghold of separatist leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq. Shortly after midnight, a mob chanting slogans in favour of Zakir Musa, former commander of HizbulMujahideen and now proponent of an Islamic Caliphate, lynched the DSP to death. He was stripped, tortured and his corpse dragged several hundred metres and dumped in a corner.

IV. WHO IS TO BE BLAMED?

1.Technology
Incidents of lynching can be linked to technology. Cell phones are used to spread rumours about cow slaughter. A new form of primitive propaganda is manufactured to forge a collective majoritarian identity. The gruesome scenes of violence are captured through cameras and made viral. Such scientific techniques provoke and inflame the passions of the mass audience. The public exhibition of retribution and punishment is the primary message of such violence.

2.Local vigilante groups or lynchers
Religiously charged mobs have become active in dispensing vigilante justice. They are running amok throughout the country. They see themselves as moral vigilantes protecting the sacred order and the state should take steps to remove their idiosyncracies. They assert their muscle power through intimidation and throw caution to the wind. They perpetrate mob violence on vulnerable individuals with implied exemption from punishment. They can barge into the homes and check the meat in the refrigerator, attack places of worship of the minorities, protest outside educational campuses and brand people as 'anti-national'.

3.Administrative machinery
Human beings are dehumanized in the process of lynching.The administrative machinery is a dumb spectator to the new pattern of violence so lynching takes place with an easy absence of guilt. There have been instances where nine men were mercilessly beaten to death by rampaging mobs in Jharkhand even in the presence of police forces. Administrative machinery is a complicit spectator of the spectacle through design or default.

4.Media
Lynching is an unfortunate malady. There are news channels that have become kangaroo courts with half a dozen panelist and the brash news anchor becomes judge and executioner. These anchors present different conspiracy theories related to mob violence. Consequently, some channels blame the victim while some blame the vigilantes leaving the viewers perplexed. There are some channels that feel such incidents are not newsworthy enough to be aired during prime time slots. On the other hand, the loquacious leaders blame the media for being selectively outrageous- You reported X why you chose to be silent when Y happened. A murder is a murder and cannot be justified. Attempts are made to give communal colour to such incidents. In the cacophony of intellectual debates involving presstitutes, libtards, brash news anchors, radicals and so on, justice dodges. Almost all the six panelists in six boxes have differing opinions but no unanimous solution to remedy the hopeless situation. Perhaps, we are getting accustomed to the new language and pattern of violence.

5.Meme transmission of primal values
According to Richard Dawkins, the meme is a piece of thought transferable from person to person by imitation. Like computer viruses, memes can jump from mind to mind. Memes containing religious and cultural superiority have been cut and pasted into millions of young minds. Consequently, more than ever before, today's youngsters bask in the glory of their religious superiority and engage in moral policing.

6. Law
Lynching has been a frequent occurrence. There is silence too from the courts. Law has taken a backseat. Mobs are taking law in their hands functioning both as judges and executioners, deciding who, when, where and how to kill. Religious sentiments have replaced the rule of law. The nation's sheep is sacrificed in the name of protecting the cow at the altar of Lady Justice.

V. MOB LYNCHING AND THE INDIAN LAW

"Unless the court strives in every possible way to assure that the constitution, the law, applies fairly to all citizens, the Court cannot be said to have fulfilled its custodial responsibility."
-Hamid Ansari

Lynching is a heinous crime, it is violation of human rights but no data is available with National Crime Records Bureau. The National Human Rights Commission also has not released any data so far.Incidents of lynching are generally reported under IPC section 302 for murder, IPC 307 for attempt to murder, IPC 324 for causing hurt, IPC 147 for rioting and so on. The seriousness and heinousness of this crime should be thoroughly investigated.The criminal law is not enough in preventing the cases of lynching as the hate element of it is not addressed. An amendment could be passed similar to the one passed in acid attack. Before 2013, acid attack was registered under IPC sections for grievous hurt but these were found inadequate to deal with the physical and mental

trauma of the victim, cost for treatment and the conspiracy in executing the act. The Criminal law (Amendment) Act 2013 introduced 326 A and 326 B specifically for tackling the violence through acid attack, by prescribing a minimum punishment of 10 and 5 years of imprisonment, respectively.

MASUKA – Manav Suraksha Kanoon – the silver lining in the dark cloud:

MASUKA is a civil society initiated draft law under the leadership of lawyers and activists such as Sanjay Hegde, Prakash Ambedkar, TehseenPoonawalla and Shehla Rashid. It proposes a law against mob lynching which includes defining the terms of 'mob' and 'lynching', calls for making it a non-bailable offence and life imprisonment for convicts, a time bound judicial enquiry and compensation to families of victim.

VI. #NOT IN MY NAME CAMPAIGN

"If we do not have the right to speak freely we will turn into a society that suffers from intellectual malnutrition, a nation of fools."
-Arundhati Roy

"A culture of silence has yielded to protests."

Mob lynching has triggered widespread protests across the country, with people taking to the streets under the common banner, 'Not in My Name'.The message is quite clear- We need to distance ourselves from the barbarism that has been unleashed on our own people. This form of protest also speaks about our skepticism in government. People are rising up against a kind of ideological viciousness and an assault on our collective IQ that will rip us apart.

In an open letter to the Prime Minister the armed veterans have expressed their distress. They said that they stand with the 'Not in my campaign' and that the Armed Forces stand for 'Unity in Diversity'. They added that the current situation in the country is that of fear, intimidation, hate and suspicion. "What is happening in our country today strikes at all the Armed Forces and indeed our Constitution, stand for. We are witness to unprecedented attacks on society at large by the relentless vigilantism of self -appointed protectors of Hinduism. We condemn the clampdowns on free speech by attacks on media outlets, civil society groups, universities, journalists and scholars, through a campaign of branding them anti-national and unleashing violence against them while the State looks away. We can no longer look away. We would be doing a disservice to our country if we do not stand up and speak for the liberal and secular values that our Constitution espouses. Dissent is not treason, in fact, it is the essence of democracy." The letter has been signed by 114 veterans of the Armed Forces comprising of the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force. The increasing reports on mob lynching and the activism around it in the form of #Not In My Name protests led the Prime Minister to break his silence on the issue. He reprimanded those advocating violence in the name of cow protection by saying that, 'Killing people in the name of Gau Bhakti (Cow worship) is not acceptable. This is not something Mahatma Gandhi would approve.'

VII. #NOT IN MY NAME: ONLINE SURVEY

The researcher prepared a questionnaire, conducted an online survey and got feedback from 31 respondents. The findings are as follows:

1) 51.6% of the respondents consider human more sacred or holier. 22.6% refused to comment whereas 16.1%consider cow holier.
2) 58.1% of the respondents feel that women and children need more protection whereas 38.7% opinethat cow, women and children, minorities and Dalits-all of them need protection.
3) 87.1% are aware of lynching or incidents of mob violence taking place in our country.
4) 61.3% feel that people who died of lynching were innocent, target of hate attacks. 35.5% feel that some were innocent and some were guilty.
5) 54.8% respondents feel that political conspiracy, religious fanaticism, inefficient government machinery- all these could be the reasons for increase in mob violence.
6) 54.8% respondents say: "It seems as if the cow is saying killing over food /spreading hatred /elections # Not in my name."

CONCLUSION

"Political corrections is Fascism pretending to be manners."
-George Carlin

There have been several atrocities on vulnerable groups. Public lynching has become a trend. The government says it has no role in it. Of course, it has a responsibility. So far no vigilante group or radical outfit has been declared guilty of the crime. If law enforcers are reluctant to save people from mobs, there is failure of administrative machinery.

Lynching has eroded the right to life. People are beaten up and paraded, women are stripped and assaulted. These horrendous murders are only a symptom of a deeper malaise. Is our conscience dead or are our commiserations chilled due to the political ambience? Mob violence cannot be justified at all. Media continues to have debates on the issue. Loquacious leaders blame the media for being selectively outrageous -You reported X why you chose to be silent when Y happened. Can lynching be a topic for debate? It is an occasion for justice and reassurance. It's time for us to ponder and reflect - Are we vigilant in protecting the basic principles of our Constitution and preserving the secular fabric of

our country? Merely maintaining statistical records cannot be the response to these ghastly events.

When an act of lynching takes place the government machinery must swing into action. Investigation must be carried out at lightning speed.

Unfortunately, all such cases are lost in government files that are biting dust. Deliberate inaction on the part of law enforcers will turn our society into a Fascist one. Society turning Fascist is precarious We are not a nation that celebrates genocide, we are a people who mourn an innocent's murder. We should never hesitate to condemn such savagery.

When Mahatma Gandhi went on a five-day fast and called off the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922, it was to protest the outbreak of violence in ChauriChaura that saw 22policemen burnt to death by the Satyagrahis.Gandhiji didn't approve of this. This is what he said at the trial,

"It is impossible for me to dissociate myself from the diabolical crimes of Chaurichaura or the mad outrages of Bombay. I know that my people have sometimes gone mad. I am deeply sorry for it and I am, therefore, here to submit not to a light penalty but to the highest penalty. I do not ask for mercy."

This is the legacy of protest we have inherited. Let's imitate the Mahatma. Let's not substitute it with mere statistical records, mere lip sympathy. Let's condemn it outrightly. India has forever been tormented by divisive politics and zealotry. Let's unite and speak up. Let's not sacrifice the nation's sheep in the name of cow protection.

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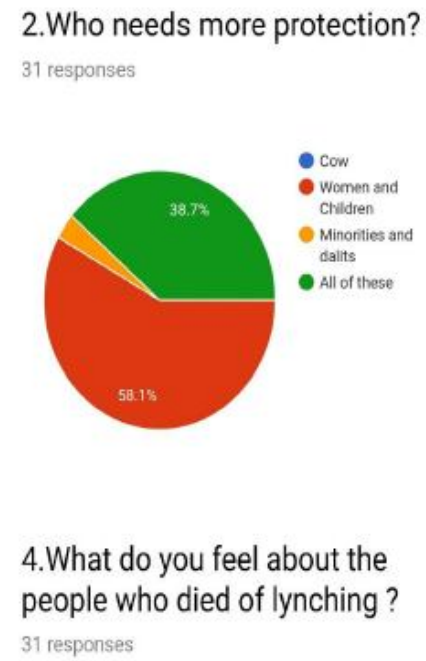
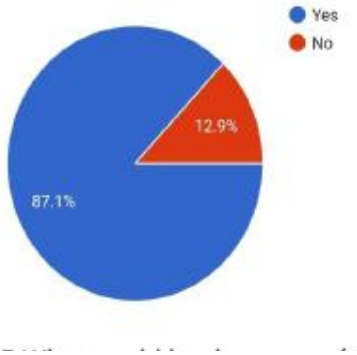
APPENDIX





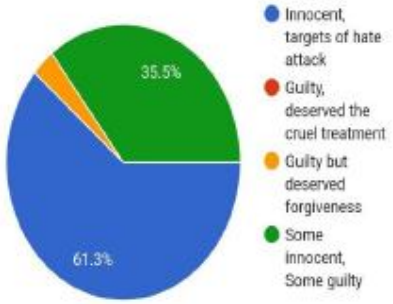
3.Are you aware of lynching or incidents of mob violence that are taking place in our country ?

31 responses



4.What do you feel about the people who died of lynching ?

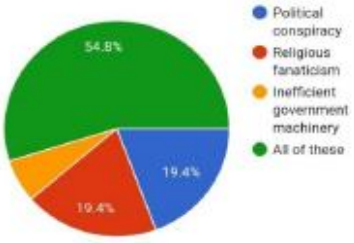
31 responses



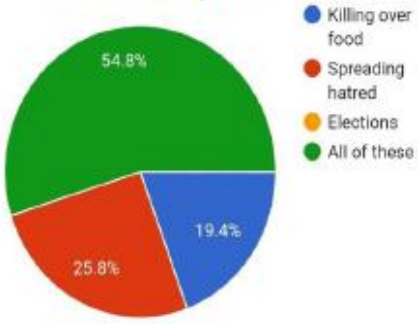
31 responses

5.What could be the reason(s) for increase in mob violence?

31 responses



6.It seems as if the cow is saying .....# Not in my name.



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