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Mob Violence: A Threat to Society

Lavanya Goinka
Student, Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies, Delhi

Abstract: ***Mob lynching is one of the social evils faced by our society. Commonly termed as the extrajudicial killing by an angry mob on alleged transgressor instances of mob lynching can be found in every society all over the world. It includes lynching of suspicious convicts. There have been numerous lynching concerning cow vigilante violence in India since 2014. Another spate of mob-related violence and killings are known as the Indian Whatsapp lynchings following the spread of fake news, primarily relating to child-abduction and organ harvesting.***

There is a wide list of causes of the inhuman practice of mob lynching which is social, political and technological causes. One of the most important causes is crowd psychology. Crowd psychology talks about how a person is affected by the people around him. In an attempt to curb this violence many states of our country have taken different measures like that of Rajasthan which has also introduced an anti-cow slaughter bill in the state to bring relief to meat traders from cow vigilantes. Also, social media platforms are being continuously monitored to prevent any abetment in the practice. it is necessary to evaluate the measures taken by other countries to prevent mob violence and the successful implantation in our country as well.

This research paper is an attempt to have an in-depth analysis of the issue of mob violence. It explores the different forms of lynching being practised all over the world. It includes the age-old practice of witchcraft in our country. It is an attempt to analyze the possible causes of mob lynching and psychological causes in depth.

It also talks about the possible repercussions that will be faced by a person on being a part of such an inhuman practice. It also includes what all methods were adopted by other countries to prevent people from lynching someone.

I. INTRODUCTION

Lynching is the illegal killing of a person in the hands of an angry mob acting in the pretext to serve justice by punishing an accused or a convict[1]. Often the horrendous act of mob lynching is justified on the basis that both the capital punishment and mob lynching acts as a deterrent to potential offenders. Even though lynching has been made a crime by the government, lynchers have rarely been convicted. Most of the time the lynchers get away from prosecution as identification of the offenders becomes difficult in a mob. There is a wide list of causes of the inhuman practice of mob lynching which is social, political, technological and psychological. Lynching gained its viciousness against blacks who tried to escape from slavery and whites who went against the idea of slavery. Instances of lynching can be found in every society. Regularly the victim was either pulled out of his home or from a prison cell, lynched and then the body was hung in the open. Although the idea of lynching may seem absurd to Indian culture there is enough evidence to prove that lynching is being practised in our country for ages. Starting from the practice of age-old witch-hunting to the lynching of Dalits and Muslims by the cow vigilantes and rumour based lynching.

A. Mob Lynching

Mob lynching is the extrajudicial killing by a group of an alleged transgressor. Each society had its extrajudicial disciplines including murder. There have been a various lynching in connection to dairy animals vigilante brutality in India since 2014, for the most part including crowds lynching Indian Muslims and Dalits. Some remarkable instances of such assaults incorporate the 2015 Dadri horde lynching, the 2016 Jharkhand horde lynching, 2017 Alwar horde lynching. and the Tabrez Ansari lynching. Crowd lynching was accounted for the third time in Alwar in July 2018, when a gathering of dairy animals vigilantes killed a multi-year old Muslim man named Rakbar Khan.

B. Witch Hunting As A Form Of Mob Lynching

Indian societies have a plethora of evidence to show that prejudices in our country are old age and deep-rooted. This is practised on women, people of lower caste etc. The problem can be solved by sensitizing people of the backward region where such superstitions are prevalent and also by strictly implementing laws against them

[1] Margaret Vandiver, lethal punishment: lynching and execution in the south

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This is an attempt to analyze how witch-hunting was used as a tool to initiate violence against women
Belief in 'dains/churails/bongas have been prevalent among the Adivasi cosmology and moral economy for ages.
It is believed that the practice of witchcraft leads to enmity among relatives, quarrel among wife and son.[2]
With the entrance of British to the scene, they sought to outlaw persecution of Witches which was considered barbaric. Wilson attempted to construct a hospital. The purpose was to liquidate the conviction which is present that witchcraft, Need to be dissolved, with such a practice being prevalent in India old widows continue to live in the fear of being lynched
Why were women considered as the patsy to the practices of mob lynching?[3]

1) Witches in all the traditions have been women, the assumption is made that the role that women assume in the society that is of traditional healers, midwives, cult leaders etc are in contradiction with the image of the women set by the society which is of a helpless scapegoat.
2) Women being in more vulnerable positions than men in all social, political and religious matters are often labelled as witches

The study of accusations of black magic against women takes up horrific proportions of abuse

C. Witchcraft Being Used As A Medium To Incite Violence Against Women

1) Women in Indian history were and they continue to be subdued by the social evil of patriarchy.
2) Our culture has set several behavioural norms for the women and anyone acting beyond them was termed as a betrayer or the bad influence on the rest. So the society has termed old widows and the ones who get pregnant outside marriage as witches so that they can be hunted down.
3) Witchcraft was also used as a tool for the persecution of the widows so that they cannot claim right in the property of her husband, quarrelsome women are often set as the target.

II. CAUSES OF MOB LYNCHING

A. "The Silence of the Lawman is More Harmful than the Violence of the Laymen".

Prejudices in society manifest and hinders the consolidation of society. These prejudices then get wide attention through a technological medium. On social media everybody's an author in himself in such an unregulated environment it becomes easy for people to share their views hence a misogynist or a bigot or a racist presiding in any other part of the country can collaborate with the idea and to the already spreading hatred. The strategic silence of the state and the ineffective law and order machinery further gives legitimacy to mob lynching

B. Social Causes

It includes the prejudice prevailing based on caste, religion, etc, differences in beliefs, rise in the no of cow vigilante, illiteracy, unemployment, failure of the state to impart digital education and failure to provide security and dignified life to the poor

C. Technological Causes

'A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting its shoes on'.
No data regulation, increase in the no of fake news and rumours

D. Political Causes

The political mobilization of fringe groups the strategic silence over politicization of lynching

E. Crowd Psychology as a Cause

Guy de Maupassant, who had become ill as he rose to fortune and fame. On witnessing a newlywed couple walking out of the church and onlookers raising themselves on tiptoe to see, he felt the urge to follow the same. He experienced a mysterious and irresistible force he later wrote in his diary about how these diverse people come together as one because of the sole fact of them being assembled with a new manner of thinking in common, which is the unanalysable resultant of the average of the individual opinion.[4]

[2] Witch-Hunts, Adivasis, and the Uprising in Chotanagpur Author(s): Shashank Sinha Source: Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 42, No. 19 (May 12-18, 2007), pp. 1672-1676 Published by Economic and Political Weekly
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III. WHAT IS CROWD PSYCHOLOGY?

Crowd psychology is the broad study of how individual behaviour is impacted when large crowds group together. This field of social science has progressed from the early examination of negative social groupings to the study of crowds in more socially proactive or emergency-type of environments. Earlier examinations failed to attribute the more positive social impacts that groups can have on an individual's behaviour, and there is much more work to be done in this intriguing area of study.[5]

What is that which impacts the lynch crowd psychologically that without fearing any repercussions they act violently here are some of the reasons for it :

A. Suggestion and Imitation

Every individual member of the group is influenced by the actions of others in the group for example: When people see others running without even ascertaining the cause they start running. If one student starts throwing a chair in the room and at once all members of the crowd start breaking the tables, chairs and other valuables in the office of the principal being guided by the principle of suggestion and imitation. Similarly, in a lynch crowd when people see others beating or punishing a human they tend to provide support without thinking about the possibility of the person being innocent.

B. Mental Homogeneity

Irrespective of the social, educational and economic background, the members of an active crowd portray similar feelings, thoughts and action. This uniformity in behaviour irrespective of the difference in I.Q., education, and occupation led LeBon to coin the concept of 'group mind'. LeBon said that the individual in a crowd loses his originality, his personality and acts like a machine.

C. Diminished Sense of Responsibility

In an action crowd situation, the sense of responsibility decreases than when one is alone or in a group. you must have observed that individuals behave most irresponsibly whenever there is a communal riot or a law and order problem as they tend to assume that in case of any problem in future the responsibility will be divided among all of the

D. Sense of Anonymity

Every member feels that it is the group as a whole who will face the repercussions of the crime thus committed. If any problem arises in the future, everybody will be subjected to it. This feeling decreases the sense of responsibility. Each person feels secure and thinks that he will not be identified, punished or penalized because so many people are showing similar behaviour. keeping in mind that generally, every person is unaware of the identity of each other hence identification would be difficult and the sense of responsibility is loosened. So they are not afraid to act irrationally.

Deindividualization[6]

It refers to the process of losing self-awareness. A person in a group tends to behave differently than that he would do individually, for example, A person is not likely to yell or sing the way he does in a concert if he is the only person to do so. It makes certain behaviour acceptable to the individual when it happens collectively. In the book influence: The Psychology of Persuasion[7] how the acts of people around us influence our behaviour whether it is about, how to eat at a dinner party or how fast a person should drive. In an experiment conducted by Dr Robert on environmental theft in which he removed a signboard which had a warning displayed about how one should conserve the heritage and not steal wood and the signboard also displayed how many cases of theft have been reported to date. As a result of which there was a significant fall in the cases of theft because earlier people thought that stealing of wood was normal as there was already a large number of cases being reported.

IV. SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF MOB LYNCHING

A. Recapturing the Faith of People in the Judicial System

It is often believed that in the past criminals have escaped conviction due to the inefficiency and delay in the judicial machinery. Lynching was seen as a way out to achieve what judicial method could not. Hence there is a dire need to recapture the faith of the people in the judicial system. Courts for speedy trial of the cases should be set up (so that people don't try to take law into their own hands to punish the alleged transgressor)

[5] https://www.bestvalueschools.com/faq/what-is-crowd-psychology/ (last visited on 14/03/2020)
[6] http://source.southuniversity.edu/examining-the-mob-mentality-31395.aspx (last visited on 30/03/2020
[7] Dr Robert B. Cialdini, The Psychology of Persuasion

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In cases such as witch-hunting, the practice of witchcraft should be made punishable offence and strict actions should be taken against the one practising it so that rather than punishing the accused themselves people resort to punishing them legally.

B. Legal Measures

Mob lynching is a crime against the state. Even if the victim is guilty of the crime he/she is being accused of, the lynching of such a person means trying to obstruct the path of justice.

Every person has a right to go through a free and fair trial but lynching of the person denies him the right to various other legal punishments which can be used for someone being part of a lynch crowd ie under IPC

{Unlawful assembly, criminal conspiracy, murder, attempt to murder, voluntarily causing hurt)

C. What Can Be Done To Overcome The Illegal Use Of Social Media

1) *Platform in Itself Needs to Evolve:* Like other social media platforms, there is a need for the set up of some community guidelines following any post which violates them and needs to shut down. According to a technology expert, Nikhil Pahwa's message should be tagged with the original number so it becomes easy for the identification of the wrongdoer.
2) *Awareness Among the Masses:* The fact that the majority of rural people are illiterate and they tend to believe and spread fake news further, awareness rallies and workshops can be held in these areas to educate people about the lethal consequences of spreading fake news.

V. ANCIENT METHODS OR LAWS USED ACROSS THE WORLD TO PREVENT THE INSTANCES OF LYNCHING

A. Witchcraft act 1735

The witchcraft in 1735 was made a criminal offence and punished a person who claimed that any other person possessed magical power or practices witchcraft. This regulation also abolished the search and execution of witches. This was to refrain the people from practising lynching in the name of superstition. The penalty set out through the act was 12-month imprisonment. It accordingly marks the give up the point of the Witch trials inside the Early Modern duration for Great Britain and the start of the "modern-day felony records of witchcraft", repealing the sooner Witchcraft Acts which have been in the beginning primarily based on an intolerance closer to practitioners of magic but became mired in contested Christian doctrine and superstitious witch-phobia.

VI. CONCLUSION

Mob Lynching is that criminal behaviour done by the horde of individuals who turn forceful and slaughter a person on the presumption that he is a criminal and held him liable with no lawful preliminary. For example, there is no presence of good crime and terrible crime, correspondingly there is no presence of good mob lynching and awful mob lynching. The group is of general discernment that if the legal executive and police organization can't give them equity, they should claim it without anyone else even the individual has submitted the minor offence, for example, burglary. This plainly shows individuals in the nation have lost their trust in law and order.

According to our recommendation, rather than presenting different sub-areas in the exposed demonstrations of the nation, this national offence ought to be managed in the current segments, and the present organization should concentrate more on resuscitating the lost trust and confidence of the individuals on this legal executive and police framework. Besides Whatsapp, other social platforms ought to be under the supervision normally, with the goal that such phoney messages and video can be halted from being circled at such a tremendous social stage. Examination of such cases ought to be managed without politicization of the issues, which will be increasingly useful.

While the quantity of common uproars announced has decreased, mutual violence is growing its impression through mob lynching. Disregarding the rules of the Supreme Court, which radiate from its affirmation of this terrible wrongdoing, to manage this dehumanizing threat, the quantity of mob lynching announced has expanded.

This is conceivable attributable to the instrumental utilization of the lynching to practice control, exhibit control and minimize the Muslims, Adivasis and Dalits.

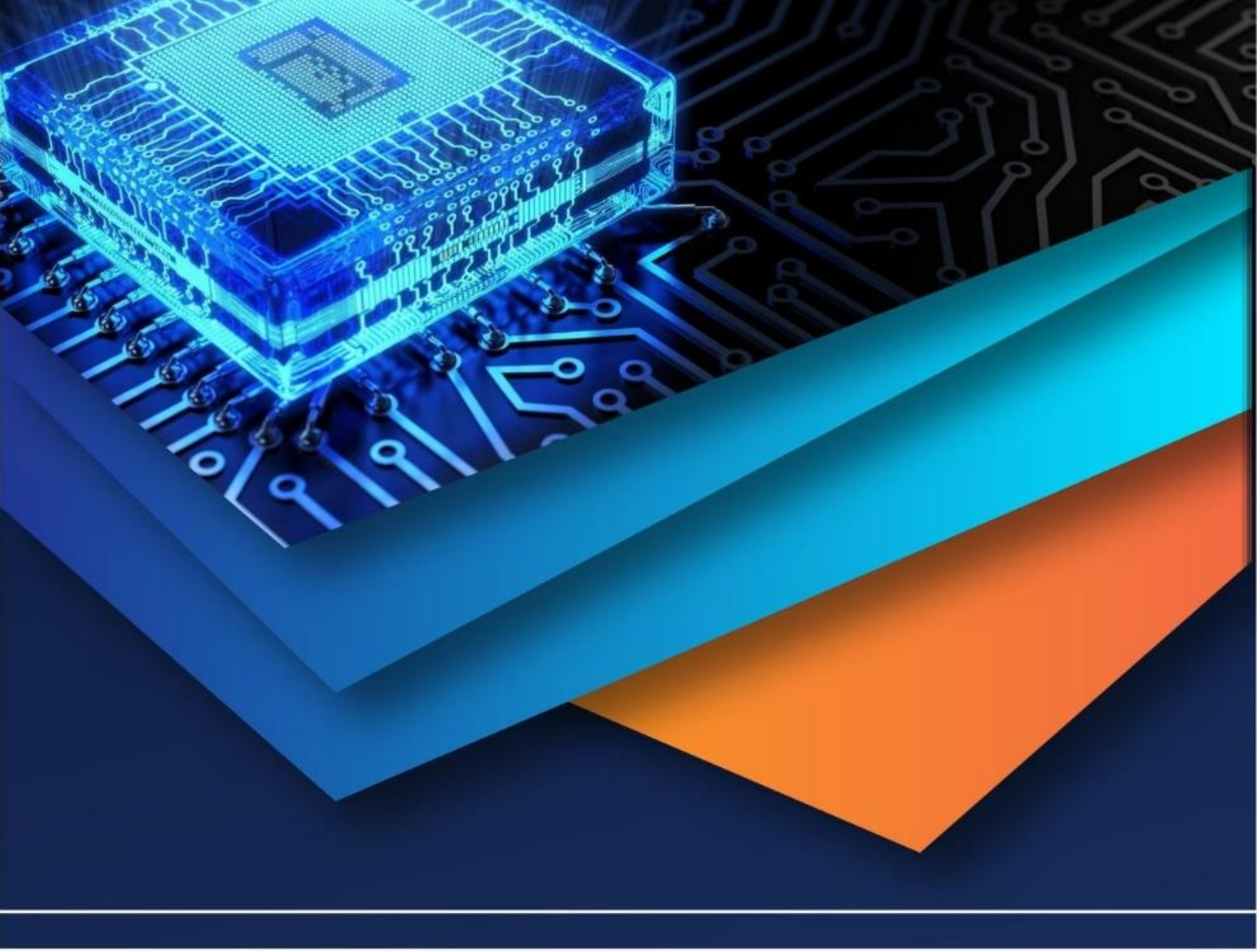
The outcome is a general public which is broken along lines of religion, loathe filled, spiralling into ceaseless violence, rebellion and sullen aggregate which is utter horror to a majority rule government. Even though the political scene of India is quickly changing with segregating enactments and obstruction, mob lynching has been a reality to manage.

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