

Orchestrated Hatred: New Facet of Terror

Abstract

The present paper highlights some observations on the recent development of hate crimes and orchestrated hatred and violence directed at particular individuals, institutions or communities in the context of World's largest democracy – India. Meticulously planned violence and mob attacks have emerged as a recent phenomenon which poses as a threat to the Democratic structure of the nationalistic Discourse. The present paper traces a brief history of some popular hate crimes as reported in some popular reports as well as it explores the working of this manufactured violence, to whom it is aimed, and what is the purpose and the outcome of this violence. Its deadliest consequence is in the form of mob lynching which have emerged as a new face of terror. The paper poses certain questions to the civil society regarding these tailor made mob attacks.

Keywords: Violence, Hatred, Mob Lynching.

Introduction

Indian society is a pluralistic society where people of various faiths, languages, castes, creeds, religion and ethnicity live together. The last decade in the Indian scenario has witnessed several drastic changes in the cultural, economic and political matrix of the nation. The concept of terror and violence has changed tremendously.

The new facet of terror which has come into being is all the more cruel and dangerous as it has no fixed shape and no fixed pattern. It is one of the most volatile forms of terror, beyond the grasp of common man. It is the orchestrated violence that is articulated through mob violence and mob lynching. These hate crimes and lynching are not confined to any particular area or community as it has gained a monstrous dimensions. Masses today have become free and encouraged to vent out their grievances, frustrations and hatreds in public. Moreover it also due to the availability of tailor made mobs and crowds always at disposal of the some powerful vested interests. Lynching and mob violence today have become a common place occurrence. The tribes and communities often vulnerable for this kind of violence are often those living at the fringes of the society. They are the minorities and the subalterns including the Dalits, women, mentally deranged people and children. In the wake of the recent events of mob violence, the religious and ideological minorities are the most threatened ones. The national capital region of Delhi has a long and tremendous history of targeted and orchestrated hatecrimes. The most horrendous and bloodiest hate crimes date back to the partition massacres. It was followed by the targeted and meticulously planned attacks against the Sikhs during the massacres of 1984. Recently, these hate crimes are seen against the Muslim minority, the Christian minority and the North Eastern ethnic minority community. There is also a whole class of religious God-men who have to maintain a continuous supply of fanatic followers. Faith (blind faith) also plays an important factor in mobilizing mobs against the civil society when their faith stands questioned.

The question arises as to what are the causes of these targeted hate crimes. Harsh Mander in his article "Communal Violence, Lynching and Counterfeit peace" lists some of the reasons for these hate crimes as "as trivial as a seat in an unreserved train compartment, or allegations of cow smuggling or slaughter, or carrying, cooking or eating cow meat, or rumours of cattle theft or child kidnapping, or charges of sex work and drug trafficking" (Mander: 192). Another characteristic feature of these hate crimes and mob violence is the social apathy of the society around. It is often witnessed that the perpetrators of these crimes do not feel afraid of the public who has now become as mute spectators watching the spectacle of bloodshed.



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The digital media too has the targeted audience to which it caters. Social networking apps too circulate the fuel for this “orchestrated hate” crimes. In an article “The New India Normal: Mob Violence” that appeared in *Sabrang India* it has been discussed about this orchestrated hate. Often one can see fake videos getting viral and instigating the mobs against certain targeted groups. Even the spectacle of bloodshed is immediately recorded and uploaded on the social networking platforms. The onlookers or the mute audience prefers to keep themselves at a safe distance and record the spectacle of violence. Circulation of this spectacle of violence gives an immense sadistic pleasure to the onlookers who are apathetic to the pain and suffering of the most vulnerable ones.

Another important aspect of these targeted hate crimes is the role of the administration and the government. There is a set pattern of political response to these crimes. The government spokesmen always prefer to remain silent and dumb and never condemn these attacks publically and loudly. The perpetrators of these crimes are never caught, tried or punished because they do not have a face or a shape. It is because a mob has no dimension, no shape and no face. Even if the guilty are traced and tried, they are often let off at a later stage by getting a benefit of doubt. Harsh Mander is of the view that sometimes a minister openly comes up in the defense of the attackers thereby legitimizing the violence. The Police system is manipulated in such way by the top guns so that they act as helpless late comers at the scene of the attack.

The history of these hate crimes suggest that communal intolerance and religious fundamentalism are the breeding ground for these hate crimes. All hate crimes first need a systematic nurturing of hatred against a particular minority community which is followed by proper planning of crime logistics in advance. This nurturing and fuelling of hatred is based on creating hate encouraging images, “othering” of minorities and rumours. For instance the hate crimes against the Sikhs following the assassination of Indira Gandhi presented all the Sikhs as hateful and obnoxious as well as criminals. What followed was a bloody massacre of the large number of Sikh population.

Mob lynching is a young offspring of communal violence and rioting. In it, a whirlwind of targeted hate is aimed at a particular minority, in a particular area, killing lives, livelihoods, and destroying certain identities. The attackers come in the form of a mob, attack and walk away fearlessly. The incident gets reported in the media and gets forgotten from the memory because unlike the communal violence its magnitude is much smaller. Today, the country is witnessing these sporadic incidents of hate crime and lynching at a very rapid rate. These lynching and mob attacks often have some ideological agenda and a hidden message for the targeted community that leaves a political, social and psychological impact on them. The attackers want it to be recognized, recorded and circulated so as to create an atmosphere of fear and terror.

Sometimes, the victim is paraded and his mutilated body is displayed as a trophy so as to propagate certain fanatic ideology. According to Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “They make sure the information is circulating, intended as a warning, as a signal and controlling device for social behavior expected of minorities”. It is because, “the actors seem to know that for all intents and purposes, nothing will happen to them, and they know they are implicitly meeting approvals from higher-ups” (Subrahmanyam). David Livingstone Smith of New England University in his book *Less Than Human: Why We Dehumanize, Enslave, and Exterminate Others*, talks about “people who commit religiously-motivated acts of violence often see themselves as greater than ordinary human beings, and this creates a kind of distance between them that allows violence to take place”. Smith calls lynching videos as trophies. According to him, “videos made by the attackers are trophies – similar to the body parts taken at lynchings...” (Smith). In this type of atmosphere, the religious minorities in India feel threatened and unsafe. Not only religious minorities, but there are some occupational minorities dealing with the trade of skinning dead animals and the sale and purchase of cattle. These communities feel vulnerable as any minute spark of orchestrated hatred and rumour can cost them their life.

Mob lynching is again different from rioting in terms of the people involved in it. A riot often erupts between two communities or the warring parties whereas in mob lynching there is no possibility of direct face to face encounter. There is an absence of a duel of the attacker and the victim. Moreover, riots often involve communal violence, gang rapes, arson of public buildings and large scale enterprises, massive looting and plundering of national wealth. But the common thing between the two is the targeted hate and propagated veneration of ill will towards the others. Looking through the prism of history, behind every hate crime is the stereotyping of the identities, pushing them beyond the margins and labeling them as society’s “others”. During the Nellie massacre, the Bengali Muslims were “othered” out as infiltrators or “outsiders” which led to their brutal slaughter. The 1984 anti-Sikh riots again spurred from the “othering” of Sikhs in the national capital which is a home to world’s largest diversity. The creation and propagation of certain ideology of hate in the form of sense making stories fan the fire. The repercussions of the famous “Rath Yatra” projected certain communities as destroyers of sacred shrines and was fuelled by the killings of some students of the dominant community in Bhagalpur (1989). Again in 1992-93, the same ideology of mobilizing this orchestrated violence was used as a fuel to indulge in large scale killings in Bombay. The 2002 Gujarat riots also bear testimony to the propagation of hate ideology. In Orissa’s Kandhamal in 2008, again there were rumours against a religious minority of converting people. According to data available with the *India Today*, a 52 year old Muslim man and his son were thrashed and pulled out from their house for storing meat in their refrigerator. He was thrashed till death. The question

arises that how come these operators of hate crimes get the courage for entering into the houses of their victims and checking the things stored in it. Another case that was reported by *India Today* was of The Dimapur lynching where a very large gathering turned into a mob and stormed into the Dimapur Central Jail and killed an alleged rapist which was later found out to be framed into a false case. It was actually a case of communal hatred as the victim belonged to the minority community. Another young man belonging to religious minority was accused of cow smuggling and heckled to death in Chatra. It was later found out that the victim was on way to sell his oxen at the cattle market. Very recently a 55 year old Pehlu Khan, of Alwar was targeted in broad daylight by the commuters of hate crime. He was ferrying the cattle belonging to his dairy farm and accused of smuggling cattle. He too was dragged and beaten till death. In Haryana too, a 17 year old young boy was dragged, beaten and thrown out of moving train by a mob belonging to dominant community. The deceased, as reported by his brother was deliberately targeted for supporting a skull cap. The spark over the seat reservation was deliberately turned into a targeted hate crime on the basis of the physical appearance of the victim. The arbitrators of lynching and hate crime do not even spare women and the mentally challenged people. Just on the basis of mere suspicion some women were attacked at various places as they were thought to be child kidnappers. It is because the mob considers it as its duty to cultivate the civil society.

According to Roshni Sengupta, in her essay "How do I Explain Rise in Mob Lynching in India to the West?" says "How can I possibly capture in its entirety the explanation to why Akhlaq was lynched for keeping meat in his refrigerator to a group of students, who receive this piece of information with a smirk, unable to fathom this seeming distaste for meat? What could provide an answer to why a young Muslim man (Junaid) was harassed for sporting a beard and eventually stabbed to death in a train? Is it feasible to rationally narrate the story of the brutal lynching of a meat trader in Uttar Pradesh without eliciting bewildered eye rolls from students?"

Any dissident from the mainstream is threatened publically with the help of chest thumping images of hate and rage, circulated through media and social networking platforms. This deliberate othering of certain communities is crafted and maneuvered into a question of national importance where, in some cases the mob is unknowingly involved into the discourse of nationalism. Looking at an incident that occurred at UP's Hapur, the mob was composed of boys as young as fourteen. At this tender age, how can they decide between the wrong and the right? Passions are flared with speeches of hatred so that there is an involuntary formation of mob. Such type of mobs are tailor made mobs.

There is a development of an army of moral vigilantes who operate at various levels in society. These moral vigilantes are groomed and maintained by certain ideological agendas for the fulfillment of vested interests. In the name of preserving culture

and tradition, they carry out their devious designs. Apart from the cow vigilantes there is a new brand of moral policing who are known by the name of *love jihad*. They take upon their shoulders, the responsibility of preserving culture by not allowing young girls and boys to sit in parks and public places. These so called moral vigilantes form a mob and attack their targets.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam, an eminent historian at UCLA, in an interview talks about this mob lynching as hate crimes of a very different order. He says, "Firstly, they are apparently decentralized. Earlier, organized acts of mass violence were repetitive in character and there was a pattern." According to him they were generally planned near public events or festivities but now they have been decentralized and organized into small groups and are disbursed everywhere.

In today's World of digital media and CCTV cameras, everything is captured on record but still the mob goes unaccounted and the victims are denied justice. A paltry sum of compensation accounts for the life of an individual. But going through the ground reality it leaves one wondering as to the threatened status of World's largest democracy, where the mob has proved that Democracy is a "government of the people" as it is the mob, who on the behalf of the government, law, police, and the judiciary first traces the wrong doers, then pronounces the verdict on the spot.

Aim of the Study

The present paper aims to highlight some recent developments in the Indian pluralistic society which is the world's one of largest democracy, in the form of orchestrated hate crimes. The paper aims to trace a brief history of hate crimes, the working of the psyche behind the hate crimes, its targeted audience and the narrative behind the hate crimes.

Conclusion

The paper thus analyzed mob lynching as anew face of terror in recent times. It is an offspring of orchestrated violence that works on the "othering" of communities. Going through the history of lynching and hate crimes in India, it is inferred that there is a circulation of sense making stories of an alternate reality deliberately projected to articulate hatred against the targeted "others". Therefore, it is the role of the intelligentsia of a nation to undermine and question the role of crafted and fundamentalist ideologies into spreading hatred and violence. It is the need of the hour to question the "normalcy" of these hate crimes which often get assimilated into the national discourse of democracy. There is a strong need to express solidarity with the targeted groups composed of religion, caste and ethnicity based minorities, the sexual minorities, downtrodden, marginalized, immigrants, refugees who never find a safe niche in the dominant discourse of a nation.

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