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Palghar and the Story of Selective Silence

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ABSTRACT

The present piece of work deals with the recent incident of brutal lynching in the Palghar district of Maharashtra and the voiceless government machinery, including media. Mob lynching is one of the most vicious evils from which the society has been encountering from the past many decades. The aim of this article is to unveil such loopholes and present a clear picture of some unanswered facets that struck to the mind, while confronting this issue. In order to carry out a deep analysis of the topic, various newspapers, articles and journals have been made as the sources of study.

Keywords – Palghar, Lynching, Media, Politics, Communal

I. INTRODUCTION

The Maharashtra Government has appointed Dattetrya Shinde as the new Supritendent of Police for Palghar District replacing Gaurav Singh, who was sent on forced leave,³ Police have arrested 160 people, including nine juveniles⁴, thirty-five cops of the Kasa police station have been suspended and a lot more things had happened in the State of Maharashtra which does not seem to be mundane while the whole nation is under lockdown. Unequivocally, there must be dreadful incident, which has shaken the state of Maharashtra as well as the whole nation. Putting it succinctly, India has faced another horrendous act of mobocracy amid COVID-19 crisis in Palghar District of Maharashtra. The whole barbaric act has been subject to so many questions, blame games and what not. Surprisingly, the ramifications of this monstrous act are even more abominable. Mob Lynching is an obnoxious slur on our legal system. The spate of incidents of mob lynching in India has moved to another stage as a reflex of paranoia.

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³ Dattatrya Shinde new SP of Palghar post lynching incident, Thane, May 23, 2020 17:12 IST <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/dattatrya-shinde-new-sp-of-palghar-post-lynching-incident/article31658727.ece>.

⁴ Sandhya Nair, Palghar lynching: More than 160 arrested, May 19, 2020, 19:00 IST <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/palghar-lynching-more-than-160-arrested/articleshow/75828916.cms>.

II. BACKDROP OF THE PALGARH LYNCHING CASE: WHEN, HOW AND WHY?

Apparently, there arises a question that when, why and how the Palgarh Lynching took place as this matter was not covered by the media even after two days and most of the questions were unanswered. Here is the recapitulation of when, how and why such atrocious act happened.

The case occurred in Gadchinchale village of Dhanau Taluka situated in the District of Palgarh, which is 140 kms North of Mumbai, Maharashtra on the night of April 16, 2020. The whole incident took place when two Ascetics or Sadhus, Mahant Kalpvruksha (70 years) and Sushilgiri Maharaj (35 years) along with their driver, hailed from Kandivali in Mumbai, decided to go to Surat to attend the funeral, known to be their last journey on this terrestrial terrain, by violating the lockdown rules. In order to prevent from being questioned, they opted for the back roads of Palghar District instead of using the Bombay-Gujarat Highway.

A similar sort of affair happened with a lady physician's car four days prior to the impugned lynching⁵. Over the past few weeks, the villagers had formed vigilant groups as there were rumors of child lifters rounds in that area to kidnap children for organ harvesting. As the ramification of it, the villagers were patrolling the highways and stopping them on the basis of mere suspicion. On their way to Surat, the car of two Sadhus were being stopped by a sentry of forest department and while they were having conversation with the Sentry, they were accosted by a vigilant group⁶ and beaten to death.

III. POLICE AND THE UNVEILED MYSTERY OF CONSPIRACY

The Reports shows that the whole incident happened in the presence of Police. When asked to police about the actions they have taken in order to cope up with the situation, they say they've gun shot in the air to disperse the mob, is that all the police is assumed to do in such circumstances, is Guards of Society is expected to masquerade. Later, when someone is gone off forever they act as the mute spectators.

In hard times like these, when the entire mankind is staggered under the crisis of prodigious magnitude owing to COVID-19 and fighting against the deadly virus. When authorities are emphasizing upon the significance of social distancing, the question arise why people around 200 were allowed to congregate violating Section 141, IPC and why police remained unbothered about the same even when it was legally authorized under Section 129 of CrPC to

⁵.Vageshwari Deswal, Mob lynching- A desecration of the 'Rule of Law', April 21, 2020, 3:10 PM IST <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/legally-speaking/mob-lynching-a-desecration-of-the-rule-of-law/>.

⁶.Zeeshan Shaikh, A Recap of what happened, April 24, 2020 7:01:10 am <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/palghar-mob-lynching-mahant-kalpavruksha-giri-6370528/>.

disperse 'Unlawful Assembly'. The discernible absenteeism of protective measures despite the turbulent snitch of that particular area wallop contented inertia on part of police and the biggest question which hits the mind of individual, how did a mob of 400-500 assemble in such a short time in an area with a population of 100-150 are separated by a sizeable distance between them? and two negative parallels that can be drawn upon 'was there a bigger conspiracy or it was a case of mistaken identity?'

IV. DOUBLE-FACED MAINSTREAM MEDIA

Media is often considered as the fourth pillar of democracy and thus, is placed at the par with Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. But, biasness and camouflage journalism has been deep rooted at the very core of mainstream media. The misunderstood left sentiments that prevail in the minds of modern journalists have made them to oppose the majority and often term them as "fascist". The manner in which the mainstream media reports on cases of mob lynching tells us a lot about its worldview and its corrupted morality. The impugned lynching has not been left untouched with this sin. There are some far left propagandists which selectively emphasize on the religious identity of the victim depending on the victim's faith. The headlines like, "suspected of being thieves, three men beaten to death"⁷ with contrast to "Muslim man dies four days after mob beats him up, forces him to chant *Jai Shri Ram*"⁸ and "3 lynched by villagers in Palghar on suspicion of kidney theft"⁹ with contrast to "Muslim man brutally thrashed on suspicion of spreading coronavirus"¹⁰, speaks volume of this.

It is widely known that the mainstream media is heavily invested in creating a false perception among minorities that they are under attack from 'fascist' Hindus with active cooperation from the State machinery. However, reality is far different from that and when law and order is compromised; Hindus and Muslims suffer in equal measure regardless of their religious identity.

V. THE TONGUE-TIED POLITICS

Now the question comes, why are Indian politicians silent over this havoc? Ministers including CM of Maharashtra and Central Government are so hesitant to talk about this over

⁷. Scroll Staff, Mob Lynching, Apr 17, 2020 · 05:01 pm <https://scroll.in/latest/959490/maharashtra-suspected-of-being-thieves-three-men-beaten-to-death-by-mob-in-palghar>.

⁸. Scroll Staff, Attacks on Minorities, Jun 23, 2019, 03:48 pm <https://scroll.in/latest/928071/jharkhand-muslim-man-dies-of-injuries-allegedly-sustained-in-mob-attack-in-seraikela-kharsawan>.

⁹. Sudhir Suryawanshi, 3 lynched by villagers in Maharashtra's Palghar on suspicion of kidney theft, 17th April 2020 02:41 PM <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/apr/17/three-lynched-by-villagers-in-maharashtra-palghar-on-suspicion-of-kidney-theft-2131412.html>.

¹⁰. Gayathri Mani, Muslim man brutally thrashed on suspicion of spreading coronavirus, 09th April 2020 05:21 PM <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/apr/09/muslim-man-brutally-thrashed-on-suspicion-of-spreading-coronavirus-2127927.html>.

public platform. Rather, they are involved in the blame politics. Some claim this incident as a communal attack while some want to shape it as a political controversy. But, no one wants to furnish a precise reason that what should be the reason of such negligence on the part of government and administration that amid national lockdown when section 144 orders was already in effect, how can a mob this large assemble based on mere suspicion of the so-called theft? Where were the police patrols? For total of three whole days the chief Minister of Maharashtra sat silent on the matter. And even when he finally spoke, he furthered the misreporting done by media, taunted citizens by labelling citizens outrage against the brutal killings as an attempt to communalise or politicise the matter. Isn't this even a tad bit suspicious? How can the CM claim that an outrage of citizens is an attempt to communalise or politicize the matter? These are some of the untouched spheres of this incident which the Maharashtra government is hiding so far. However, it is to be understood that these politicians are our law makers to whom we make as the face of our voice and as such impart our most truth and support to them. Despite this, they don't bother to cost our lives and sentiments for their sake. But, when this country is under a constant war against COVID 19, blame politics should be replaced with responsible government and leaders both at state and central institutions should pay equal emphasis over these matters as well along with the crisis due to pandemic.

VI. CONCLUSION

From such critical analysis, it can be strenuously articulated that Palghar Mob lynching is one of the most draconian incident that we Indians have encountered so far, not because of the extent and degree of brutality shown in the videos on social media but due to the selective silence that surrounds it. From Police to Central Government, all accountable machinery has been very hesitant to show its concern and views over this ugly picture of governmental negligence. Crimes like mob lynching are more prone due to the rumours and because, the government is all focussed on the preventive measures to stop spread of pandemic, which triggers such disasters. It is to be therefore noted, that weak law enforcement and poor public accountability is the reason all behind this. Why do people attempt to punish any immoral act through mob violence, this is because of the lame machinery which often miscarriages justice. As such, all organs of government and media should work sincerely towards such causes, so that no innocent be killed to satisfy the thirst of public justice.
