Looking into Lynchings

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- The country is witnessing a series of incidents of lynching and targeted mob violence against vulnerable groups.
\n
- The causes behind and the threats it impose calls for bringing in an anti-lynching law.
\n

\n\n

How does it affect the vulnerable?

\n\n

\n
- Violence against those looking overtly Muslim is a noted phenomenon.
\n
- 86% of those killed in lynching incidents in 2017 were Muslims.
\n
- An overwhelming majority of these attacks are bovine related.
\n
- Nevertheless, there are other reasons for anti-minority attacks too.
\n
- Hate violence has also happened around festivals such as Ram Navami provocations over azaan and namaz.
\n
- The victims in cases of lynching are almost entirely from poor families.
\n

\n\n

Why is the recent trend worrying?

\n\n

\n
- **Small scale** - South Asia has a long history of communal violence.
\n
- But these were primarily big episodes of mass violence.

\n
- However, this has now given way to a smaller-scale of conflict, targeted at individuals.
\n
- **Rumours** - Most of the attacks are based on rumours on cow slaughter or smuggling.
\n
- The rumours circulating on social media often take shape as communal stereotypes.
\n
- **Support** - The perpetrators are emboldened by the political prioritisation of a crackdown on cow slaughter.
\n
- Moreover, vigilante violence against individuals is being endorsed by state inaction.
\n
- It is possibly an attempt to avoid public scrutiny that accompanies mass violence.
\n
- **Communalism** - The rising trend is also related to the intensification of communal polarisation.
\n
- There is an increasing instrumentalisation of prejudice for political ends.
\n
- Eventually, these have acquired a certain degree of legitimacy in the public mind.
\n
- Popular anger, outrage and violence have become normal phenomena.
\n
- **Threat** - Each event of violence has hardened the community boundaries.
\n
- It has widened the divide between Hindus and Muslims.
\n
- Unless checked, it can cause irreversible harm to the social fabric of the Indian society.
\n
- It also impacts the political processes, especially electoral processes and the rule of law.
\n

\n\n

What are the legal shortfalls?

\n\n

\n
- Prevention and punishment of the perpetrators of mass violence and/or lynchings is weak.
\n
- The police often stand by, careful not to interfere with the actions of the majority community.
\n
- Both mobs and police have regularly treated victims of cow vigilantism as suspects.
\n
- The law enforcement agencies act mostly against the victims themselves.
\n
- They book them for violating cow protection laws, which act as a legitimate cover.
\n
- As hate crimes grow, the sense of impunity also keeps growing.
\n
- Lack of justice for victims further reinforces the vicious cycle of impunity.
\n

\n\n

What is the way forward?

\n\n

\n
- Supreme Court, earlier, directed all State governments to take measures to prevent vigilantism in the name of cow protection.
\n
- However, public lynching or vigilante violence has not subsided.
\n
- Preventing further atrocities requires respect for the rule of law and legal institutions.
\n
- Strong prosecutions and expeditious punishments are essential.
\n
- The recurring incidents of lynching are a call to enact an anti-lynching law.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n\n

\n

