Mob Violence: Interrogating The Just Colour Of Unjust Justice.

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Abstract: In 2016, when Maharashtra took a ground-breaking step by criminalizing social boycotts based on caste, community, religion, or customs, the nation held its breath. Yet, despite legal strides, the shadow of mob violence looms large in our ostensibly advanced era. One might ponder, in a world where legal systems defend human rights globally, why does mob justice persist? This paper delves into this unsettling question, questioning the very essence of our Justice Delivery System. Amidst the backdrop of a world where every individual, regardless of background, is entitled to a fair trial, this study takes a critical look at the disconcerting phenomenon of mob violence. Our exploration finds its roots in the enigmatic landscapes of Manipur, a North-eastern state, unravelling the multifaceted layers of 'mob violence.' In this intellectual exploration, we challenge established norms and delve into the complexities of violence, justice, and the Rule of Law. In this ongoing research work, we dissect the very fabric of mob violence, unveiling the harsh realities that persist in our modern world.

Index terms: Mob violence, violence, justice, human rights, Rule of Law.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the age of information, where technology has propelled us into a new era of enlightenment, a haunting paradox lingers in the shadows of our progress: the persistence of mob violence. Despite the strides we've made in shaping just societies and upholding individual rights, the unsettling reality remains that communities across the globe are still plagued by the malevolent force of mob violence.

Picture this: a world where the principles of law and order should reign supreme, yet individuals are subjected to the volatile whims of the crowd. This dichotomy between our ideals of justice and the harsh actualities faced by many forms the heart of our inquiry. As we delve into the depths of this phenomenon, we are confronted with profound questions: What drives ordinary people to abandon reason and participate in acts of collective violence? How does mob justice coexist with legal systems purportedly designed to protect the

rights and dignity of every individual? This inquiry takes us on a journey into the heart of the enigma of mob violence, as we peel back its layers and confront the unsettling truths hidden beneath the surface.

Throughout history, societies have grappled with the phenomenon of mob violence, where groups of people act collectively outside the boundaries of established legal systems. Despite advancements in law and governance, this disturbing practice endures, challenging our notions of justice and order. From ancient civilizations to the contemporary world, mob violence has manifested in various forms, often driven by fear, prejudice, or social tensions. While legal systems aim to provide a framework for justice, the persistence of mob justice underscores the complexities of human behavior and societal dynamics.

Historically speaking, mob violence has roots in prejudice, conformity, and the primal instinct for collective action. Even in today's interconnected world, incidents of mob violence continue to make headlines, questioning the effectiveness of our legal mechanisms in curbing this social menace. Understanding the historical context of mob violence is crucial in addressing this issue. By delving into its origins and the societal factors that sustain it, we gain valuable insights into the challenges faced by modern communities. This exploration serves as a foundation for our examination of mob justice in Manipur, shedding light on its intricate layers and the urgent need for effective solutions.

Manipur: Brief History on Mob Violence

Nestled in the north-eastern part of India, Manipur boasts a rich history that intertwines with the diverse tapestry of its indigenous cultures. The state has witnessed the ebb and flow of kingdoms, the influence of Hinduism and later Vaishnavism, and the advent of British colonial rule in the 19th century. Manipur's history is characterized by a unique blend of traditions, folklore, and political shifts that have left an indelible mark on its social and cultural landscape.

Against this backdrop, Manipur has unfortunately experienced recurring episodes of mob violence, punctuating its historical narrative. One notable incident dates back to the 1993 communal riot[1] which broke out due to tensions between the Meitei (the dominant ethnic group of Manipur) and the Muslim communities of Manipur, culminated in a violent mob confrontation. The patterns of such occurrences often reveal underlying factors such as ethnic tensions, political unrest, or disputes over resources. The riot was sparked by a dispute over a piece of land and resulted in the deaths of several people.

Over the years, these conflicts have led to a breakdown in the rule of law and the emergence of vigilante groups that take the law into their own hands. In recent years, the situation has been further exacerbated by the rise of separatist movements and ongoing tensions between the central government and various ethnic groups in the region. Despite the efforts of the government and law enforcement agencies to combat mob violence, it remains a persistent problem in Manipur. Although there is no official records[2], there have been hundreds of cases of mob violence in recent years, with many resulting in serious injury or death. The victims of mob violence are often accused of criminal activity, such as theft or drug trafficking, and are punished without due process of law.

Mob violence has been a persistent problem in the Indian state of Manipur for many decades. This form of vigilantism, in which individuals take the law into their own hands and punish suspected criminals without due process of law, has had a profound impact on the local community and has been a source of concern for the government and law enforcement agencies.

Impact on Society:

The ramifications of historical mob violence extend far beyond isolated incidents, shaping the very fabric of Manipuri society. These episodes have left an enduring imprint on community dynamics, fostering a climate of mistrust and fear. The ripple effects are evident in the strained relationships among various communities, impacting the cohesiveness that once characterized Manipuri society.

In delving deeper into the intricate tapestry of mob violence in Manipur, it is essential to decipher the motivations that propel individuals to participate in such collective actions. To shed light on these complex dynamics, we turn our attention to a quantitative analysis encapsulated in the table 1 below. This table is a result of a questionnaire which was conducted as part of the data collection process of this ongoing research work. The sampling technique used for this questionnaire was purposive sampling. The questionnaire was handed out to 70 individuals who belonged to the local community with background on law. The table delineates the prevalent factors influencing individuals' participation in mob violence, providing a snapshot of the motivations that permeate Manipuri society.

[1]There are conflicting accounts of what started the violence, one account says Hindu separatists tried to buy arms from a Muslim arms smuggler and were rebuffed. Another account says that the Hindu rebels were trying to extort from a Muslim village who resisted and killed one of the rebel. The violence started on 3 May 1993 and continued well into 5 May. Bus containing Muslims passengers were set on fire and clashes took places between Pangal and Meitei. An estimated 90 to 130 people were killed.

[2]There is no official record of mob violence in Manipur. Much of the available records are in the form of related crimes which had escalated into mob violence. Moreover, mob violence has been a persistent problem in Manipur for many decades. Despite the efforts of the government and law enforcement agencies to combat this form of vigilantism, it remains a significant concern for the local community.

Table: 1. Motivations for Participating in Mob Violence in Manipur.

List of factors	Prevalence (in %)	Total (out of 70)
Social attachment	54.5	38
Disregarding law/authority	9.1	6
Benefits of engaging in mob violence	27.3	19
Peer pressure	72.7	51
One's own intuition	27.3	19
Seeking revenge	72.7	51

The table presents factors motivating people to take part in mob violence in Manipur. The data was collected through a questionnaire survey, and the total sample size is 70.

The most prevalent factor is peer pressure, with 72.7% of respondents indicating it as a motivation for engaging in mob violence. Seeking revenge is also a significant motivation, with 72.7% of respondents indicating it as a factor.

Social attachment and peer pressure are closely related factors, with 54.5% and 72.7% of respondents, respectively, indicating them as motivators for mob violence.

Approximately one-quarter of respondents indicated that benefits of engaging in mob violence or one's own intuition were motivating factors. Disregarding law or authority was the least prevalent factor, with only 9.1% of respondents indicating it as a motivation for engaging in mob violence.

Overall, the table suggests that social dynamics, such as peer pressure and social attachment, play a significant role in motivating people to engage in mob violence in Manipur. Revenge is also a common motivation, while tangible benefits of engaging in mob violence are less prevalent.

Moreover, historical mob violence has deeply influenced the perception of justice among the populace. As communities grapple with the legacies of past violence, notions of retribution and extrajudicial actions can become ingrained in the collective psyche. The scars left by historical incidents continue to shape the social consciousness, affecting how individuals perceive justice and seek recourse in the face of perceived injustices.

II. GRASSROOT ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

In the diverse terrain of Manipur, grassroots organizations namely, the Meira Paibi organizations[3] and the local club authorities[4] play a vital role in addressing social issues, promoting justice, and responding to the challenges posed by mob violence. These community-driven entities, deeply connected to the areas they serve, reflect the pragmatic efforts of Manipuri individuals working towards a fair and cohesive society.

Role in Mitigating Mob Violence:

Grassroots organizations in Manipur play a pivotal role in mitigating the scourge of mob violence through targeted initiatives and unwavering commitment. These organizations are present in every locality of Manipur and forms part and parcel of the community. Whether through community-led awareness campaigns, workshops on conflict resolution, or direct intervention in potential flashpoints, these organizations actively strive to disrupt the cycle of violence.

To gauge the effectiveness of grassroots organizations in addressing mob violence, we turn our attention to Table 2 (based on the same mode of data collection which has been discussed earlier for table 1) which examines the accessibility of local club authorities in addressing instances of collective violence. The data offers a nuanced perspective on the extent to which communities find local organizations accessible in times of potential conflict.

Table: 2. Accessibility of Local Club Authority in Addressing Mob Violence.

Level of accessibility	Prevalence (in %)	Total
Highly	54.5	39
Very highly	0	0
Low	27.3	19
Very low	0	0
I don't approach	9.1	6
Need to approach never arose	9.1	6

Subtotal = 70

[3]Meira Paibi, translated as "torchbearers," is a prominent women's vigilante group in Manipur known for its active role in social issues, justice, and countering violence. Their tireless efforts contribute significantly to the resilience and determination of Manipuri individuals in forging a path toward a more just and cohesive society.

[4]Local club authorities are community-based organizations that play significant roles in addressing local concerns and conflicts. It consists mainly of the local youths of a particular locality in Manipur.

The table represents the accessibility of the local club authority according to the respondents. It shows that 54.5% of the respondents perceive the accessibility of the local club authority as highly accessible, while 27.3% perceive it as low in accessibility. Meanwhile, 9.1% of the respondents did not approach the local club authority, and another 9.1% indicated that they did not have the need to approach them.

In the context of addressing mob violence, the accessibility of the local club authority is crucial. The higher the accessibility, the more likely the local community will approach them to resolve issues before they escalate into mob violence. Therefore, this table suggests that there is a significant proportion of the respondents who perceive the local club authority as highly accessible, which could contribute to their effectiveness in addressing mob violence. However, it is also notable that some respondents perceive the local club authority as low in accessibility, which could hinder their ability to address mob violence effectively.

Despite facing inherent challenges, such as limited resources and navigating complex socio-political landscapes, grassroots organizations have made remarkable strides. Success stories abound, with instances where timely interventions have diffused tensions, preventing potential mob violence. These organizations act as intermediaries, fostering a sense of accountability and responsibility within communities, and demonstrating that a proactive approach can serve as a formidable deterrent to collective violence.

III. LAW AND JUSTICE DELIVERY SYSTEM IN MANIPUR

Embedded within the intricate fabric of Manipur is a legal framework designed to uphold justice, maintain order, and address societal issues, including the menace of mob violence. Recent legal developments or changes further underscore the commitment to addressing the challenges posed by mob violence. For instance, the Manipur Protection from Mob Violence Bill, 2018 was unanimously passed in the state assembly, which is indicative of a proactive approach to adapt the legal system to the evolving dynamics of collective violence. The bill recommends a rigorous life imprisonment term if the crime results in the death of a victim.

Challenges and Limitations:

Despite the resilience of the legal framework, the justice delivery system in Manipur faces a myriad of challenges and limitations. Chief among these is the persistent issue of delays in legal proceedings. Overburdened courts and a backlog of cases contribute to prolonged waiting periods, eroding the efficacy of justice and potentially fostering frustration within communities.

Gaps in enforcement also pose significant challenges. The effectiveness of legal measures is contingent on robust enforcement mechanisms, yet constraints such as resource limitations, inadequate training, and logistical hurdles impede the timely and comprehensive implementation of legal mandates.

Identifying potential areas for improvement is crucial for fortifying the justice delivery system. Streamlining legal procedures, bolstering enforcement capabilities, and fostering collaboration between legal authorities and grassroots organizations could contribute to a more responsive and effective legal framework in addressing mob violence.

To establish the limitations of the justice delivery system, let us turn our attention to Table 3 (based on the same mode of data collection explained for table 1) which gauges the effectiveness of the law in dealing with mob violence through respondent ratings, we find a quantitative reflection of community perceptions.

Table: 3. Effectiveness of the Law in Dealing with Mob Violence: Respondent Ratings.

Question	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D	Option E	Total
	Satisfactory	Impressive	Highly impressive	Dissatisfactory	Highly dissatisfactory	
According to you, how effective is the law when dealing with mob violence?	14 (20)	0	0	49 (70)	7 (10)	70

- **Satisfactory (20%):** A modest percentage of respondents find the law's effectiveness in dealing with mob violence to be satisfactory.
- **Dissatisfactory (70%):** However, a significant majority expresses dissatisfaction, indicating a prevalent perception that the current legal framework falls short in effectively addressing instances of mob violence.
- **Highly Dissatisfactory (10%):** A notable portion rates the effectiveness as highly dissatisfactory, underscoring the urgency for improvements in the legal approach to mob violence.

This data echoes the sentiments of Manipuri communities, emphasizing the need for reforms to enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of the legal system in dealing with mob violence. Bridging the gap between community expectations and the perceived effectiveness of the law is essential for fostering trust and fortifying the justice delivery system.

IV. PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF LAW AND ITS ACCESSIBILITY

In the kaleidoscope of Manipuri society, perceptions of justice form a crucial lens through which individuals view and engage with the formal legal systems. Exploring how the general public in Manipur perceives the concept of justice unveils nuanced attitudes that shape their interactions with the legal framework. Prevailing views may range from faith in the efficacy of the legal system to skepticism born out of historical injustices or unresolved grievances.

Understanding these attitudes is essential for comprehending the dynamics of justice-seeking behavior. Do individuals perceive the legal system as a fair and impartial arbiter? Or are there prevailing sentiments that favour alternative forms of justice? Delving into these perceptions provides insights into the cultural and social factors influencing the acceptance or rejection of formal legal mechanisms.

Accessibility Challenges:

Investigating the accessibility challenges faced by individuals seeking justice through formal legal channels uncovers a spectrum of barriers that may impede their engagement. Geographical constraints, particularly in remote areas, may hinder physical access to legal institutions. Financial constraints pose another significant hurdle, potentially limiting the ability of marginalized communities to pursue legal recourse.

Moreover, the lack of awareness about legal rights and processes may contribute to a significant accessibility gap. In the absence of legal literacy initiatives, individuals may remain unaware of the avenues available to them within the formal legal system. These challenges compound, creating a landscape where the accessibility of justice becomes a privilege rather than a universally accessible right.

Turning our attention to Table 4 (based on the same mode of data collection explained earlier for table 1) which explores perceptions of the accessibility of legal services in Manipur through respondent responses, we gain insights into community perspectives on this crucial issue.

Table: 4. Accessibility of Legal Services in Manipur.

Question	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D	Total
	Yes	No	Maybe	Not sure	
Do you feel that legal services are accessible to all individuals in Manipur?	10 (14.4)	42 (60)	14 (20)	4 (5.7)	70
Do you think economic status affects accessibility to legal services in Manipur?	48 (68.6)	0	20 (28.6)	2 (2.9)	70
Do you think that there are adequate resources available for legal services to reach all areas of Manipur?	15 (21.4)	0	40 (57.1)	15 (21.4)	70

The table reveals:

- **Yes (14.4%):** A modest percentage of respondents express confidence in the accessibility of legal services to all individuals in Manipur.

- **No (60%):** However, a significant majority indicates skepticism, suggesting that a substantial portion of the community believes that legal services are not universally accessible.

- **Maybe (20%):** A notable percentage remains uncertain, highlighting the complexity of the issue and the nuances surrounding perceptions of accessibility.

- **Not Sure (5.7%):** A small portion of respondents express uncertainty about the accessibility of legal services.

Additionally, when asked about the impact of economic status on accessibility, a majority (68.6%) believes it affects access to legal services. Furthermore, a significant portion (57.1%) questions the adequacy of resources available to reach all areas of Manipur.

This data underscores the multifaceted nature of accessibility challenges, encompassing geographic, financial, and awareness-related barriers. Bridging these gaps is imperative for ensuring that justice is not a privilege but a universally accessible right for all individuals in Manipur.

Impact on Mob Violence Dynamics:

The correlation between public perceptions of law and the persistence of mob violence unveils a complex interplay between cultural attitudes and collective behavior. If public perceptions align with a lack of trust in formal legal mechanisms, communities may be more inclined to resort to extrajudicial actions as a means of seeking justice. Alternatively, if the legal system is perceived as inaccessible or ineffective, individuals may view collective violence as a more expedient or responsive avenue for addressing grievances.

Understanding this dynamic is pivotal for crafting interventions that bridge the gap between public expectations and the formal legal system. How do perceptions contribute to or detract from the effectiveness of legal mechanisms in curbing mob violence? By addressing the root causes of negative perceptions and enhancing the accessibility of justice, Manipur can pave the way for a more harmonious and equitable society.

V. CONCLUSION

The persistence of mob violence is evident as we trace its historical echoes, observe its interactions with grassroots initiatives, navigate the contours of the legal system, and consider the varied perceptions of justice held by the people. As we conclude this exploration, several key takeaways emerge, offering insights into the complexities of mob violence and suggesting avenues for transformative change.

Interconnected Histories: Manipur's history, marred by instances of collective violence, serves as a poignant reminder of the indelible impact such events leave on the societal fabric. Unravelling these historical threads illuminates patterns and triggers that continue to reverberate through time, informing the contemporary challenges posed by mob violence.

Empowerment through Grassroots Initiatives: Grassroots organizations stand as resilient guardians, actively countering the shadows of collective violence. Their initiatives not only mitigate immediate threats but also empower communities with the tools to resist the allure of mob justice.

Legal Frameworks and Their Limitations: Manipur's legal framework, designed to be a bastion of justice, faces hurdles in its pursuit of eradicating mob violence. Delays, enforcement gaps, and accessibility challenges underscore the need for continual reform and innovation within the justice delivery system. Recognizing these limitations is the first step toward fortifying the legal mechanisms against the tide of collective violence.

Navigating Perceptions for Lasting Change: The intricate layer between public perceptions and mob violence dynamics highlights the need for a paradigm shift. By addressing accessibility challenges and fostering positive perceptions of the legal system, Manipur can redefine the narrative surrounding justice. Transforming negative perceptions into catalysts for change is essential for dismantling the cyclical nature of collective violence.

The Call for Holistic Solutions: In the face of these challenges, Manipur stands at a crossroads—a juncture where historical wisdom, grassroots resilience, legal fortitude, and public perceptions converge. Holistic solutions must emerge, driven by collaborative efforts that transcend disciplinary boundaries. Bridging gaps between historical consciousness, community empowerment, legal efficacy, and perceptions of justice is imperative for a future where the shadows of mob violence diminish.

As Manipur endeavours to script a new narrative, let it be one where justice is not only meted out within courtrooms but also embedded in the collective consciousness. A future where the vibrancy of Manipuri

society transcends the echoes of violence, fostering a legacy of resilience, understanding, and justice for generations to come.

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