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Q19

Mob violence is emerging as a serious law and order problem in India. By giving suitable examples, analyze the causes and consequences of such violence.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · GS III · 15 marks · Indian Economy

Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

Core demand of the question

- Define mob violence as a law-and-order problem
- Analyse causes with Indian examples
- Analyse consequences for rights, economy, and the State

Revision summary

Mob violence is extra-legal crowd punishment and a direct law-and-order failure.

Causes include rumour, religious and caste honour, political protection, and thin policing, amplified by messaging apps.

Examples range from 1984 and 2002 riots to **Muzaffarnagar 2013** and cow-vigilante lynchings such as **Dadri 2015**.

Consequences are loss of life and equality, economic shutdown, and a State that looks optional.

Deterrence is swift cases against the crowd and its patrons, plus rumour control, not a speech after the funeral.

Introduction

Mob violence is harm done by a **crowd that has slipped the law: lynching, riot, arson, and public beating. It is a law-and-order** problem because the State's first job is a **monopoly on legitimate force**. When a video crowd punishes a rumour, that monopoly is on loan to whoever shouts loudest. India has old riot patterns and a new **instant-message** pattern. Both are examples the question asks for.

Body

Causes

- **Rumour and identity:** caste honour, religious insult, and **cow-protection** vigilantism have driven lynchings (for example **Dadri 2015**, later **Alwar-Pehlu Khan 2017**, and similar cattle-transport attacks). The trigger is often a **forwarded clip**, not a verified crime.
- **Political polarisation** and a sense that the crowd will be **protected** if it matches the local majority; weak, delayed First Information Reports teach that lesson.
- **Communal riot systems:** **Muzaffarnagar 2013**, older **Gujarat 2002** and **Delhi 1984** anti-Sikh killings - organised mobs, not spontaneous strangers, with rumours as fuel.

- **Caste atrocity as public spectacle:** **Khairlanji (2006)** and other Dalit lynchings show honour and land, not only "sudden anger".
- **Witch-hunting** and kangaroo justice in parts of Jharkhand, Odisha, and the North-East: the mob as a substitute court.
- **Economic panic:** run on a shop, attack on migrant workers (**Assam** and Gujarat-type "outsider" violence), or a crash in a commodity blamed on a community.
- **Policing gaps:** understaffed rural posts, poor **forensic and cyber** skill against **WhatsApp rumours**, and crowd-control that arrives after the filming is done.
- **Unemployment and young men** with time; a mob is cheap to assemble where jobs are not.
- **Cinema and livestream** reward: status for the person who hits on camera.

Consequences

- **Right to life and equality** (**Articles 14 and 21**) fails in public; minorities, Dalits, migrants, and women in moral-policing crowds are the usual bodies.
- **Rule of law:** if the mob is faster than the court, private revenge becomes normal; **due process** dies.
- **Law and order spiral:** retaliatory riots, curfew, and a police force that then uses **excessive force** or, conversely, stands by - both destroy trust.
- **Economy:** bandhs, burned trucks, closed mandis, and tourism and investment flight from a "riot-prone" district. Migrant labour leaves, which hits construction and services.
- **Social:** ghettoisation, school dropout after a riot, and a generation taught that identity is a weapon.
- **Federal and international:** army flag marches, damaged India's rights reputation, and a thicker **hate-speech** load on the next election.
- **Policing morale:** officers who register cases against a powerful mob face transfer; officers who collude teach the next mob.

What the examples jointly show

- 1984 and 2002 show **State failure or worse** when the crowd is politically useful.
- Dadri and cattle-lynching cases show **everyday** law-and-order collapse on a highway, not only a once-a-decade riot.
- **Muzaffarnagar** shows rumour plus election timing.
- Without **fast arrest, video-based prosecution, rumour-rebuttal cells, and political cost for patrons**, examples will only multiply.

Flow diagram

Rumour identity politics -> Mob violence
 Weak police delayed FIR -> Mob violence
 Mob violence -> Death rights ghetto
 Mob violence -> Bandh migrants investment
 Fast arrest cyber rumour cell -> Restore State monopoly

Conclusion

Mob violence is the crowd taking the court's place. Causes are rumour, identity, caste, politics, and a slow police. Consequences are dead citizens, a broken monopoly of force, ghettos, and a poorer, more fearful local economy. Dadri-type lynchings and riot years such as 1984, 2002, and **Muzaffarnagar 2013** are not separate genres: they are the same failure at different scales.

Facts & figures

Dadri 2015

Lynching in Uttar Pradesh over a cow-slaughter rumour; a widely cited marker of contemporary mob violence.

Muzaffarnagar 2013

Communal riots in western Uttar Pradesh showing rumour, polarisation, and large displacement.

Articles 14 and 21

Equality and life with due process; the constitutional goods a mob denies in the street.

WhatsApp rumours

Forwarded clips that have triggered assaults on strangers, including migrants and alleged kidnappers, in several States.

Khairlanji 2006

Caste atrocity in Maharashtra in which a Dalit family was publicly murdered - mob violence as caste enforcement.

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