**Murder most foul**

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When you want to determine the level of civilisation in a society, one of the best yardsticks to measure it is the behaviour of its mobs.

Consider the behaviour of Pakistan’s mobs. It was well displayed in the barbaric killing of the Sri Lankan factory manager in Sialkot. It was such a gruesome crime that one is lost for words. We have had many such gruesome incidents in the past either by a mob or by an individual. An awful, barbaric crime committed by an individual was the killing of Noor Muqaddam by a young man suffering from a surfeit of ego. Useless men regard themselves as so attractive to women that they cannot bear rejection.

In Noor’s case, the man was a certain non-entity called Zahir Jaffer who locked her up in his house and then gradually killed her over two days. The servants and the guards knew what was going on but failed to help the poor girl. It transpires that this man’s parents allegedly also had a very good idea that Noor was being held captive in their house but did nothing. The boy’s family from both his mother and father’s side are well known business people so he must have felt privileged that he could be bailed out as the well-heeled usually are in the Third World. Shame on the parents who should also be held accountable for advertent or inadvertent complicity. Zahir Jaffer was not a mob but symbolises the sickness in our society.

I am appalled by the murder of Priyantha Kumara, the poor Sri Lankan factory manager, for alleged blasphemy because he ordered some religious posters removed from the factory. The people who attacked him seemed to have had a personal beef with him. Soon a mob collected from within the factory and from outside. And they set about the poor man until he died many times over.

I am really at a loss for words. Sri Lanka has been good to Pakistan, but I am afraid to say that Pakistan has not been good to Sri Lanka. They took our side after their cricket team was attacked by terrorists in Lahore some years ago and after many years of no cricket, they were the first to decide to tour Pakistan again. Are we ingrates? We are happy to call others ingrates but sometimes just stop and take a look at yourself.

A crazed mob is a phenomenon in every country by people of all levels of education and nationalities. It is not a preserve of Muslims. But the behaviour of Muslims reinforces the false notion that they are congenitally killers. The government did all it could to mitigate the revulsion caused by this barbaric act – but how much could it do? This is a signal to us to sit back and analyse our society and to figure out what causes the beast to emerge from within

What happened in Sialkot epitomises ignorance and its effects perfectly. Ignorance is not removed by education alone. The enlightenment against ignorance also comes from within and depends upon upbringing, the people you live amongst, your peers, your teachers and so much else. A lot of the ignorance that abounds in our society comes from the teachings of a bigoted class of people – for example, religious clerics. It happens in every religion. We have heard of crazed Hindu, Muslim and Sikh mobs during Partition. We also saw uncontrollable mobs during the French Revolution.

You must remember that a revolution can lead to a change in the status quo but it is nearly always sparked off by the littlest of incidents. Successful revolutions like the advent of Islam are all grounded in an ideology. A misinterpretation of Islam or a poor interpretation of it is no ideology. So, it is about time we took control of the preaching of these ignoramuses. Crazed mobs do no service to their faith and only give more ammunition to their opponents.

You saw a mob storming Capitol Hill in Washington not too long ago. It was a totally demented situation. But it led to fatalities and the US is still wrestling with what happened and what could have happened. But Pakistan for its part has to sit back and think about what is happening here. Unless we do something about it in the long term, bigotry and ignorance will win and we will be the biggest losers. All I can do for my part is apologise to the Sri Lankan people on behalf of my nation and tell them that there are many people in Pakistan who absolutely condemn what happened, are ashamed of it and hopefully will try their best never to let such things happen again.

For starters, the government should stop mollycoddling these crazed people who take out huge processions and bring whole cities to a standstill. Instead of correcting them, the government caves in to their demands and signs deals with them that we don’t know anything about. It is the kind of surrender that defies description. This adds more fuel to the fire and emboldens the obscurant even more. Remember Lal Masjid. President Musharraf did the right thing in liberating the mosque during which only a few people were killed and certainly no women and children, yet not just the bigots but the media too played a huge role in turning the mob against Musharraf after having told him that they would not oppose him if he liberated the mosque.

It was deliberate exploitation of this incident which had grave consequences, for we lost a fantastic leader (certainly better than the lot that followed him). Meanwhile, the demands of the obscurants have gone up.

By caving in to the TLP we have forgotten the nearly one dozen policemen killed by them. What would their families be feeling? If you want to fix this problem, caving in is not an option and you have to be tough – for a bully respects only the tough.

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