

ISSN: 2582-6433



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR LEGAL RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Open Access, Refereed Journal Multi Disciplinary  
Peer Reviewed 6th Edition

**VOLUME 2 ISSUE 7**

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR LEGAL RESEARCH & ANALYSIS  
ISSN

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# **Lynch Files: The Forgotten Saga of** **Victims of Hate Crime by Ziya Us** **Salam: A Book Review**

*Authored By- Mohd Mustafa*

Ziya Us Salam's "Lynch Files: The Forgotten Saga of Victims of Hate Crime" is one of the few research works on lynching in India. The author divided the book into five parts, covering various aspects and incidents of lynching in recent years. It was published by SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd. in the year 2019 with an ISBN 978-93-532-8219-6 and consists of 232 pages. The "Lynch Files" is about the newly rising crime of mob lynching in India. The book is a compilation of numerous incidents of lynching in India. It highlights the possible reasons behind lynching, but the major portion of this book is dedicated to the incidents of lynching with their factual details and complexities. Mainly, the book is about politics, polarization, and societal aspects of the lynching incidents. It hardly touches its legal, jurisprudential, and constitutional essence. To some extent, the role of police enforcement and the judiciary has been highlighted. After an analysis of this book, it can be concluded that it's not an exhaustive piece of writing on lynching. The author has done a great job of providing information about lynching episodes in India in a precise manner. He has underlined the regular mode of operation in these incidents, their causes, and their effects on society. He has vividly described the experiences of the victims and their families through his intense writing, allowing the reader to experience the suffering, anxiety, and trauma of the victims. The chapter-wise book review of this piece of writing is as follows:

The author, Ziya Us Salam, is a social commentator and Indian author who has been working in field journalism for the last 20 years. He has worked with several news agencies, such as The Hindu Group, Frontline, The Times of India, The Statesman, The Pioneer, etc. He authored

The first chapter is titled "Lynching," where the author describes lynching as a hate crime and calls it a new substitute for communal riots. In the beginning of the chapter, lynching is described as a political crime committed with the purpose of polarization. This chapter also discusses the possible causes of the rising number of lynchings in India. The role of police enforcement, the rate of inaction, and the further victimization of victims have also been addressed. The author further described how the vigilantes are affecting law and order and running a parallel system to deal with alleged criminals. To corroborate his assertion, the author listed several incidents of lynching and relied on various articles published in Indian newspapers and other secondary resources. The author described lynching as a hate crime and called it a new substitute for communal riots. On page 23, the modus operandi of lynching incidents is highlighted, whereas on page 28 of the first chapter, it is explained how and when vigilantism originated and how, with the passage of time, it became a part-time or full-time job for several people.

The second chapter, "Muslims: Easy Targets?" has been allotted the largest portion of the book, which runs from page number 49 to 144 and almost 50% of the entire book. This chapter is a compilation of numerous incidents of lynching, and based upon the place of occurrence of the incident, it has been further divided into 7 parts. It covers the lynching incident in different states such as Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, New Delhi, Haryana, Jharkhand, and Himachal Pradesh, etc. Upon perusal and deeper examination, like the first chapter, this chapter too has been compiled from various news articles and papers. In this chapter, the author has successfully described the plight and sorrow of the victims of lynching. With certain photographs, in a detailed manner the author analysed the lynchings of Akhlaq in Haryana; Mohsin in Pune; Pehlu in Rajasthan; Mustain Abbas; Sammi in Uttar Pradesh; and Rizwan in Delhi etc. The chapter also counts the reasons behind lynching. It will not be wrong to say that this chapter is a one-sided story and does not sufficiently include the voice of offenders. It also highlighted the nexus between politicians and offenders.

The third chapter titled "The Mob Now Targets Dalits", like the second chapter, in this chapter the lynching against the Dalits has been recorded. The third chapter starts with a reference to a lecture delivered by renowned academician and author Dr. Rolima Thapar at Dr. B. R.

Ambedkar University, Delhi. With the highlighting of the atrocities against Dalits, the heart-wrenching plight of Shri Chikka, a Dalit, has been described. He was going to the Maidani Baba temple but was prevented by a person, poured with kerosene, and set on fire thereafter. In this chapter, another lynching incident in Una, Gujarat, has also been described, resulting in widespread protests in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and New Delhi.

The fourth chapter titled "Lynched and Forgotten", although this chapter is titled "Lynched and Forgotten," it nowhere provides the reasons for forgetting the incidents of lynching by the police and society. Rather, it's a kind of extension of the last two preceding chapters (2 and 3), because it provides for nearly 30 more incidents of lynching in various states. The incidents mentioned in this chapter are not explained as in chapters 2 and 3, but are limited to a small paragraph.

The fifth (last) chapter is titled "Aftermath", the subject matter of this chapter has been bifurcated into two parts, namely, "Supreme Court Shows the Way" and "Desecrating Hate, Bigotry, and Everything That Leads to Lynching." The first section discusses the decision of the Supreme Court of India, *Tehseen S. Poonawalla vs. Union of India*, 2018 SC. This chapter also deals with the preventive, punitive, and remedial measures issued in the *Tehseen S. Poonawalla* case to the state government and subordinate courts.

The second part of the fourth chapter then discusses how the media handles these incidents. It also describes how lynching perpetrators act freely and with impunity. It is also provided how the injustice is perpetuated by the police's continued inaction or inadequate action and how we are transitioning from democracy to monarchy and silencing dissent. Lastly, the author positively records his good faith in the judiciary, calling it a ray of hope.

The book is relevant for students, scholars, and any other reader showing interest in the incidents of lynching in India. When the same thing is being discussed under these, I find the chaptering unreasonable and illogical because I don't find any reason for separate chapters for Muslims and Dalits. Moreover third chapter is also highlighting only the incidents like chapter 2 and 3. The book is silent about the legal and constitutional aspects of this crime. In writing of this book the primary sources are rarely being referred therefore its lacking with authenticity and accuracy of the data mentioned. Overall, in the absence of much data and research on this

issue in India, it's a valuable resource for understanding the problem of lynching in India.

While the book has some limitations, it is recommended for students, scholars, policymakers, and legal practitioners interested in understanding the lynching in general sense.

