

## **We are violent, earnestly**

11<sup>th</sup> March 2011, Karachi

*(Published in Dawn, March 2011, Frustration leads to mob justice)*

This is apropos of headline in the Dawn Metropolitan (11.3.11) Extortionist lynched, aide held. After seeing the news I hurriedly read it out to my wife and her instant reaction was “Acha hua, Acha Hua” (What happened was good). I tried to correct her and made her realize that by saying this she was endorsing violence. The mob used anything they could lay their hands on besides punches, sticks and knives, to thrash the gangster to death. She was persistent with her remarks. People are sick and tired of being helpless. When the law enforcement agencies, courts are dysfunctional then the people have no choice but to become the law, judge and executioners themselves. This is exactly what is happening to our beleaguered society.

Our unfortunate megalopolis has become a gangster fiefdom, divided into areas and sectors, looted and bloodied left right and centre, and it seems there is no one to address the complaints of the people, while the government representatives and their appointees are playing politics in their secured zones. The politics gets uglier and the criminal elements are emboldened, when the representatives of the government publicly align with ‘alleged gangsters’ of an area notorious for criminal activity. Perhaps neutrality on this issue would have defused a bigger confrontation and mess.

Another related news was about ‘peaceful street protests’ announced by the sitting government representatives against the Supreme Court judgment on sacking the pro-government NAB chief. Immediately the city of Karachi saw fully armed gangsters in action, all over the city, burning buses, shutting businesses etc. The dirty politics has turned Karachi into a breeding ground for violence? Doesn’t this seem like a patronized anarchy instead of democracy.

But the bigger tragedy is that there is no count of gangs in Karachi, some of which thrive on political patronage and they are armed to the teeth, and any small incident with any single member of the gang can engulf the locality in violence. Next the gangs start patrolling the area shutting businesses. The fire then spreads to other parts of the city. All this is besides the daily crime calendar of the city which has taken a monumental proportion. To top it all the citizens are crushed under the back breaking cost of living and painful daily hurdles of life. Governance has become a sick joke. So what are the citizens to do such a bizarre situation? They are pushed to the wall and the beast within takes over. They become corrupt and sick. An average person is forced into violent behavior.

People are convinced now that the police are almost dysfunctional and the justice is inaccessible. There is no help. If I had a gun and I saw an intruder in my house at night, which is common occurrence nowadays, yes, I confess, I will shoot to kill. I may lack the courage and the ‘gun mentality’ but now I am willing to own a gun.

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