

Violence on Minorities in Kerala

What is the issue?

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- In recent times violence against the marginal sections of the population has been increased in Kerala.

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- This has put spotlight on the treatment of Adivasis and other marginal population in “progressive” Kerala.

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What are the series of incidents that threatened minorities?

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- **Violence on Adivasis** - In Kerala a 27-year-old mentally challenged youth in a tribal settlement at Attappady was killed by a mob.

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- The crowd had accused the poor youth of a petty theft in the village market, and thrashed him for several hours and handing him over to the police, but the tribal youth collapsed and died in the police vehicle.

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- The post-mortem report showed that he died of internal bleeding caused by the blows, especially on the head.

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- **Violence on Migrant workers** - In Jan 2018, a migrant worker from Bihar was subjected to mob brutality in the northern district of Kannur.

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- The reason was that the man had in his purse a picture of two children with a fair complexion.

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- Unfortunately for him, there had been a mass hysteria in the State at the time, triggered by a social media campaign, of child-lifters on the prowl.

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- All the descriptions on social media targeted migrant workers, especially those from north India.
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- **Violence on Transgender** -The latest in a series of assaults happened in the state capital Thiruvananthapuram.
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- Where a transgender was beaten up, and video graphed on mobile phones by a crowd accusing her of being a child-lifter.
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- At least half-a-dozen incidents of attacks on Transgender have been reported in 2017.
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What is the distressing status of tribals in Kerala?

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- For the tribals of Attappady in Kerala, mob violence is nothing new.
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- They have been experiencing it right from the 1950s when large-scale land alienation started at the initiative of settlers talking both Tamil and Malayalam.
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- The migrants from western Tamil Nadu and central Travancore made the indigenous people a minority in the region.
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- In the rain shadow region, where fertile land, drinking water and other basic requirements remain scarce, mob violence always targeted the marginalised and dispossessed.
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- As the tribals remain unorganised, political parties have always remained more sensitive to the needs and aspirations of only the settler community.
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What does these incidents implies?

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- These series of violent incidents has raised questions about the State's social and economic equality indices.
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- The murder of an innocent proved the anti-tribal attitude of the settler

community in the tribal heartland of Attappady.

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- The incident pointed to a disturbing trend of persons who do not satisfy the “values” of Kerala’s predominantly middle-class society becoming targets of violence.

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- The mobs have no specific religious, cultural, social or political identity, only binding factor among them being a shedding of inhibitions as they came together to form a mob that tracked down the vulnerable people.

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What measures needs to be taken?

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- Though successive governments have spent crores of rupees on tribal welfare in Attappady, there has hardly been any attempt to adopt them and keep them safe from violence.

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- Kerala’s society may have to do some hard introspection on changing mind-sets of the people.

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- The state government must launch an intense campaign to bridge the divide between the powerful, predominantly middle class, local communities and the most vulnerable people like tribals, Dalits and migrant workers.

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- Strong legal action must be taken against the culprits, apart from sensitising law enforcing officials to the need to act beyond racial and linguistic considerations.

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Source: The Hindu

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