

Important Vocab For the Editorial

1. **lynching** (noun) – an act of punishing/killing someone by hanging for claimed offence by the group of people without legal trail.
2. **suspicion** (noun) – misgiving, doubt/qualm, scepticism.
3. **dilute** (verb) – weaken, modify, moderate.
4. **underscore** (verb) – underline, emphasize, highlight.
5. **amount to** (verb) – be regarded as, be equivalent/equal to, be tantamount to.
6. **quite** (adverb) – in every respect, in all respects, without exception.
7. **debatable** (adjective) – questionable, arguable, disputable.
8. **culpable** (adjective) – offending, guilty, misbehaving, blameworthy.
9. **homicide** (noun) – murder, killing.
10. **layman** (noun) – non-professional, non-specialist, amateur/enthusiast.
11. **strange** (adjective) – unusual, odd, peculiar.
12. **prosecute** (verb) – charge with, accuse of, indict.
13. **sectarian** (adjective) – denoting a sect (a group of people); factional, partisan.
14. **mob** (noun) – a large, disorganized, and often violent crowd of people.
15. **imprisonment** (noun) – incarceration, confinement, captivity.
16. **two-pronged** (adjective) – having two different aspects.
17. **succumb** (verb) – die from, die of, pass away as a result of.
18. **forensic** (noun) – the application of scientific knowledge & methods to legal problems and legal proceeding.
19. **attribute** (verb) – ascribe, assign, accredit.
20. **trauma** (noun) – torment, distress, suffering.
21. **invoke** (verb) – cite, refer to, adduce.
22. **premeditation** (noun) – pre-planning, deliberation, intent.
23. **deprive** (verb) – dispossess, strip, divest, relieve.
24. **provocation** (noun) – prompting, inducement, incitement.
25. **narrative** (noun) – a representation of a particular situation; portrayal/account.
26. **reiteration** (noun) – the process of repeating something (some action) for clarity/emphasis.
27. **resolutely** (adverb) – firmly, determinedly, purposefully.
28. **spontaneous** (adjective) – unconstrained, voluntary, unprompted.
29. **ambiguity** (noun) – inexactness, doubtfulness, obscurity/opacity.

Lynching, not murder: On Tabrez Ansari killing

Suspicion that the Ansari case is being diluted underscores need for anti-lynching law

The decision of the Jharkhand police that the killing of Tabrez Ansari, 24, in June did not amount to **murder** is quite debatable. They have chosen to charge the 11 men arrested for his lynching with culpable homicide that does not amount to murder. To the layman, it would seem strange that those who labelled Ansari a thief, tied him to a pole and assaulted him for hours at night, are not going to be prosecuted for murder. It is not clear if the police

are going to include accounts that claim he was forced to chant ‘Jai Shri Ram’. This aspect may help establish a clear sectarian motive on the part of the crowd to turn into a lynch mob and attack him. It is known that it was only the arrival of the police that ended the assault on him. That the police have chosen to prosecute them for culpable homicide shows that the causal link between the assault on his person and his death has been established. It is true that the line between culpable homicide and murder is thin. It is the courts that usually assess the circumstances in which a homicide took place and decide whether it amounted to murder or not. Murder is punishable under Section 302 with death or life imprisonment, while forms of culpable homicide attract either a life term or 10 years in prison under Section 304 of the IPC.

The official explanation for concluding that it was not murder is unconvincing. The two-pronged argument is that the medical report gave the cause of death as ‘cardiac arrest due to stress’, and the fact that the victim did not die immediately, but succumbed some days later. The **police** also say a second opinion from forensic experts was that the death was caused due to a combination of heart attack and the injuries he suffered. It is quite obvious that merely attributing death to a heart attack is meaningless without referring to the trauma caused by the physical assault. It may not make a legal difference to the prosecution whether the accused are given a life term for murder or mere culpable homicide not amounting to murder. However, invoking only the offence of culpable homicide not amounting to murder may make it easier for the defence to claim that their offence lacked premeditation or intention. Instead, they could claim that they were deprived of their self-control by the “provocation” given by the victim. The narrative in recent lynching incidents that it was the victim who was at fault may come in for needless reiteration unless the prosecution resolutely makes a case of murder. The suspicion that the charge is being diluted underscores the need for a special anti-lynching law. Such a law could cover acts of group violence, whether spontaneous or planned, so that those who join lynch mobs do not gain from any ambiguity about their intentions.