



## Book Review on Aparna Vaidik's 'My Son's Inheritance: A Secret History of Lynching and Blood Justice in India'

**Chanda Rani**

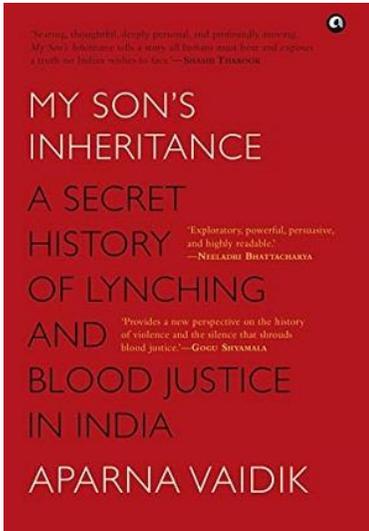
This book is of our time. It is dedicated to every minority of India, to every Asif, Akhlaq, or Zunaid who face violence in the name of their religion. My son's inheritance: A Secret History of Blood Justice in India is a genealogy which inverted the popular narrative of India being a non-violent country and said violence is also India's inheritance. The memoir of eight chaptered a non-fictional novel is a well investigative account of what the author witnessed personally. This book addressed to her son 'babu' very rationally debunks the myth of India as a tolerant and non-violent land of Gandhi and Buddha and bring forward the alternate history which depicts how

nation's history is rooted in violence and lynching and also explains how it's up to the people to change their legacy.

The book starts with an informal encounter with her neighbor. The small conversation sets her mind whirring about how communal hatred and prejudice against Muslims transmitted inter-generationally. In the search of larger truth, she started recalling her personal experiences especially with her grandfather who make her aware about history books and historical places in her childhood. Talking of her memory of her grandfather she traces the inception of Arya Samaj, Gaurakshas and beef lynching in India.

Ms. Vaidik traces the violence in communal enmities between Hindus and Muslims but in search of larger truth she also locates the deep cognitive violence among Hindus. She has ancestral connection with Bharmall, where an accountant immolated himself after a local Muslim butcher ignored his pleas to stop slaughtering cows. With the help of this story she explain how with the growing dominance of Vaishnavism in Rajasthan cattle which were simply valuable economic resource until then became so sacred that no one can eat it. And the meaning which were attached with the cow protection: to protect them from disease and snake bite get changed and cow protection become sacred duty.

While exploring the construction of Hindu identity Ms. Vaidik focuses on the role of various reformist organization emerging in 19<sup>th</sup> century. The role of Arya Samaj has been critically scruitized in developing animosity against Muslims through various programme such as cow protection movement during the tenure of Dayanand Saraswati . Arya samajis has saffronizes the public spaces which mobilizes Hindus above the caste and sectarian line and give them a



common enemy in 'the Muslims'. To show Muslim as a hypersexual and prowess give them legitimacy to protect their women which is wives, mothers, daughters, sisters and Gautama.

Ms. Vaidik also examines the legacy of Jyotiba Phule, who was a maharastrian social reformer and the first person who point out that the essence of Indian civilization was not tolerance but violence. For him it was the religious conservatism of people who enslaved their consciousness. And by his writing he wanted to explode the Brahmnical bogey and to awake the people who are landless or peasants. But his thought get sidelined and never given importance by congress or British.

The author further shed light on how the Hindus have romanticized their myth and portrayed the righteous and worthy men are flawed in itself. She inverted the popular narrative upside down and showed how race purity, superiority of race is in our mythology. Hinduism which is shown as a tolerant religion is also tolerant towards its violence. She presented that how in making of the Rama, Krishna and Arjuna the heroes, it was the Barbareek, Eklavya, Bali and Karna who paid the blood price.

Ms. Vaidik explicitly and very rationally showed that despite the fact that in post-independence India the number of Muslims killed are more than the Hindus but still it is the perpetrator who show themselves as the victim or 'victimized non-victim'. She compares lynching with the Gang Rape and said in symbolism Gang Rape and Lynching are the same. Both are about male power over the victim's body. And Lynching is always used to show the supposed moral superiority of majority community.

She states that in India animals were sacred but it was not so sacred that we cannot eat it. It's not only the Muslims who eat beef, in many parts of the country the Dalits, the pastoral community, different tribal groups or forest people are dependent on Cattles or different animals' meat. And cattle are integral part to their economic and cultural life. Beef consumption is also associated with the progressiveness and

modernity and not as ritual impurity as shown by the upper-caste Hindus.

After busting all the myth of India being a peaceful and non-violent country, she concludes the book with an optimistic note as she addresses her son. Violence is our inheritance but you are free to choose element of your inheritance that you wish to own, to celebrate, to discard to be indifferent to, or even to fight. You are not bound by it and will give a new meaning to it. This book is must read in a time when violence has its full display in the socio-political landscape of Indian political system.

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Title: [My Son's Inheritance: A Secret History of Lynching and Blood Justice in India](#)

Author: Aparna Vaidik

Publisher: Aleph Book Company

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## About the author

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### Aparna Vaidik

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Aparna Vaidik is an Associate Professor of History at Ashoka University. She has previously taught at Georgetown University, Washington DC, and Delhi University. She studied at St. Stephen's College and the University of Cambridge and received a PhD from the Centre for Historical Studies, JNU. Her research

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monograph, *Imperial Andaman: Colonial Encounter and Island History*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan, Cambridge Imperial and Postcolonial Studies Series in 2010; her forthcoming book is *Waiting for Swaraj: Inner Lives of Indian Revolutionaries*.

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## About the reviewer

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Chanda Rani has done MA in Political Science from Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi. She has been writing on social and political topics and several of her writings have been published in many journals.

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