



The slow, tortuous path to justice

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The slow, tortuous path to justice-The Delhi High Court judgment convicting Sajjan Kumar reminds the country that it must not forget mass killings

- Thirty-four years after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the killings of Sikhs that followed, Sajjan Kumar a political leader who may have electorally benefitted from communal violence has been sentenced to imprisonment for life.
- The wheel of history has turned ever so slowly, as some believe, but its arc may have yet turned towards justice.
- The assassination of Indira Gandhi, on October 31, 1984, was a national tragedy.
- The anti-Sikh pogrom that followed in north India, with the worst violence taking place in Delhi, was a greater tragedy.
- But the greatest tragedy of all was the stonewalling of investigation by the law enforcement agencies, and the seeming deafness of the justice delivery system.

Maze of inquiries

- It took years of commissions of inquiry and other inquiries before six accused, including Sajjan Kumar, a formidable Congress leader in Delhi, who was a member of Parliament at the time, were sent up for trial some time in 2010.
- Now, the Bench of Justices S. Muralidhar and Vinod Goel has overturned the April 2013 judgment of the trial court, and sent Kumar to prison for life.
- Their judgment carries the echo of the crimes committed in the days after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination and failure to hold the guilty to account for so long.

A moment of reflection

- Sajjan Kumar is not very different from many other politicians of this

era, who use mob emotions to ride to power.

- However, he is probably the first to be held guilty of conspiring with the mob to cause the deaths of his constituents.
- It is for us as a country to ensure that mob violence yields no political dividends.
- If we as voters decide to electorally punish those who incite mobs, yield to them, or fail to stop their violence, the resort to politics of mass murders will simply stop.
- While the 1984, 1993, 2002, 2008 and 2013 riots are painful episodes in our history, the judgments of the Delhi High Court of 2018 in the Sajjan Kumar and Hashimpura cases shine like good deeds in a vicious world.

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