

INTERPRETER OF MALADIES

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Mob Behaviour

A very disturbing trend of violent mob behaviour has erupted in some parts of the country lately. Lynching a woman over a rumour of child abduction is quite unnerving for any normal person.

Emotions are contagious and mob emotion can quickly become uncontrollable. People who are cognitively challenged, highly driven by emotion and are incapable of resisting urges to act on emotions get quickly sucked into this kind of mob behaviour. They have no capacity to filter the emotions running in the environment or to create a safe emotional boundary in the midst of chaos.

In most scenarios, only few so called "morally right" aggressive people participate in this kind of mob behaviour, some join by fluke and cheer the abusers, while majority remain as indifferent, detached bystanders who could have stopped this from happening if they had intervened appropriately to deescalate the situation. This shows how people are withdrawing from social responsibilities and are living selfish self-centered lives. This avoidant behaviour by vast majority contributes to further deterioration of social order. These bystanders don't realize that it could happen to any of them on another random day if there is no public resistance to aggression, no demonstration of respect to law and order and no empathy or sympathy for the victim. This is a sign of social devaluation and disintegration.

It is easy to instigate and agitate a mob when there are lot of people in the society roaming around purposelessly. Many of them are like time bombs with suppressed anger and disenfranchisement, waiting for a reason to explode! Anger is a mixed emotion. It is normal to experience anger when basic human needs are unmet. Situations like widespread poverty, unemployment, lack of justice or lack of trust in the justice system can create a fertile ground for mob violence. When personal values and beliefs are cruelly degraded or basic human rights are violated at a mass scale, society becomes a "mine field" where one wrong step at a wrong time by an unfortunate person can detonate the mine and cause severe casualties!

Society is a bigger picture of its average family unit. There is evidence that people who experience abuse in personal life can later become worse abusers with their unresolved anger. In an abusive family, children have to walk on egg shells in order to keep peace. In an abusive society, innocent citizens walk in terror feeling powerless over the situation.

Displacement of anger often follows the rule of hierarchy. In a patriarchal family, father displaces anger on mother, mother on children, children on younger siblings and finally it comes down to household employees or stray and pet animals! Society displaying and accepting random abuse of power (e.g. political, financial, religious etc.), unequivocally gives permission to be abusive to the powerless in the society. Mentally ill, intellectually challenged, socially isolated, disadvantaged people are easy victims of this abuse. This vicious cycle of violence cannot be corrected by coercing or applying force alone. Punitive measures alone cannot solve this problem if the root causes remain unaddressed.

Inadvertently, women and children become easy targets by men who deem themselves to be "morally" correct and justify their action as "righteous" acts! These are mentally sick people who need to be in court ordered treatment programmes. Counselling and psychotherapy may be useful in some cases to prevent repetition of these behaviours. The victims must get justice and should be compensated appropriately. Socially harmful people should be restricted from public places by appropriate legal measures. Nevertheless, law shouldn't discriminate and public perception of justice system needs to be restored by walking the talk.

Beating a woman to death over a rumour is just tip of an iceberg! Political violence by people who have no basic understanding of politics is also an expression of similar disturbing phenomenon. Uneducated, disadvantaged, emotionally charged people are easily influenced by others, and have always been used by vested interest groups to destabilise a society and country, after all, a lawless country is a safe haven for bigger criminals.

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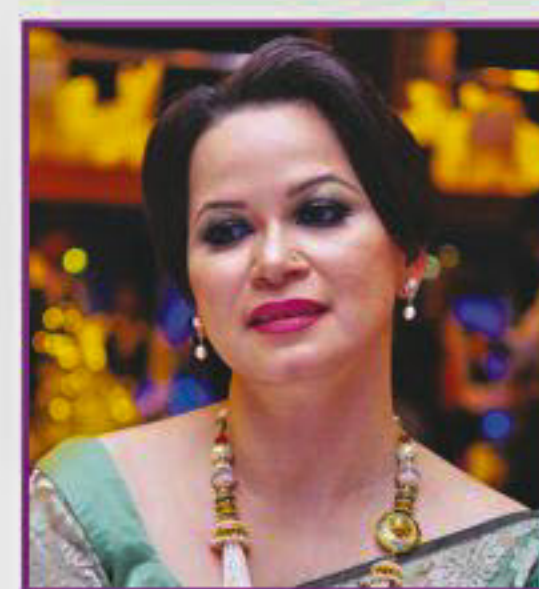
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