**MOB LYNCHING DURING THE LOCKDOWN**

Pain. Anger. Frustration. Rage. All these emotions affect the actions of a person in a way that can result in something catastrophic and barbaric. And in times like this, when the entire world is bombarded with news about a microscopic virus running rampant in the streets, terrorizing people in the name of a disease for which a cure has not been found and multiple people are succumbing to it, the least we expect is to hear some small acts of kindness and goodness in the world. Something that gives us the hope that humanity still exists. But we are unfortunate. Because the meagre glimpse of hope keeps dwindling day by day.

Within the past few months, despite the majority of media coverage being dedicated to COVID-19, we have also been hearing cases of violence and disparity among people. One of the recent being that of a mob lynching incident in April 2020.

By definition, Mob lynching is a pre-planned, criminal activity performed by a group that results in the killing. It is the most decent way to describe a heartless criminal activity that is based on a personal agenda or something that could not be carried out legally. It involves public executions and the public audience is mostly essential for these mobs to display their dominion. This is one of the things that doesn’t get discriminated; mob lynching cases have been recorded in the struggles of religion, caste, creed, sect, and race. Though incidents have been reported all over the world, the latest mob lynch in India in these few months of quarantine when the entire nation is under lockdown, sparks terror.

As I began researching this topic of mob lynching, I was surprised to see a large number of cases that I have never heard before. One case that went viral and captured the attention of all news channels was that which happened in Dadri in 2015 against a 52-year old Mohammed Akhlaq because he was suspected of slaughtering a cow, eventually resulting in his death. Apart from that, there have been multiple cases since then (and some even happening during the lockdown) which haven’t made it to the media’s spotlight.

**QUARANTINE STORIES OF VIOLENCE – MOB LYNCHING**

Ever since quarantine began, multiple cases have been rising regarding mob lynching.

In Patna, a 20- year old Bablu Kumar (20) was beaten to death after he was found to have informed officials regarding people from his village who were suspected to have contracted COVID-19.

Following this unfortunate incident, a new case sprung up in Mumbai where 2 men and their driver were lynched by a tribal group in the Palghar district. The three men (2 Hindu priests and their auto driver) were first pelted with stones and then hit with sticks due to which all three victims passed away. The victims were alleged to be thieves and they were surrounded by a group of 200 tribals. Even the police who tried to intervene were attacked by the mob. People tried to bring in the fact of religion trying to spark violence and make cultural differences the reason behind this attack. More than 160 villagers who are believed to have been a part of the attack were arrested on charges of murder. All this arose due to a rumour that was spread via social media stating that robbers and thieves were harvesting organs. Later the names of all those who were arrested were listed by the government.

From the suspects one man, who is 55 years old was tested positive for COVID -19.

In Odisha, a man was accused of stealing a goat due to which a group of people lynched him after which he succumbed to his injuries. The victim, Kalandi, after being lynched was thrown near a railway track. Two people have been arrested.

Not long after this incident, a college student was lynched by tea garden employees. Debashish Gogoi and Aditya Das were the unfortunate victims of the lynching. Gogoi passed away due to heavy injuries. Four people who were suspects have been detained. Das reportedly informed the police that the lynching took place due to an altercation that took place at a tea estate. But while they were on their way back, due to skidding they hit 2 women and following which hundreds of people gathered at the site and started attacking them. This incident took place 2 weeks after a vegetable seller was beaten to death by 5 people.

On May 30th, a 30-year old migrant from India was lynched in Gujarat on the suspicion of theft. The victim was subjected to a brutal attack while he was returning on a motorcycle with a friend who also sustained severe injuries. But the victim, Pandit, succumbed to his injuries and passed away. The police have arrested 6 people regarding this issue after a complaint filed by the deceased’s friend.

We might think that violence requires a major cause to rise to the occasion but we are wrong. Agra witnessed the lynching of a father of 6 because he was against the game of marbles that he considered was spoiling children of the locality. This is just a ridiculous reason to claim a life over.

These cases are but a mere drop in the ocean of cruelty and animosity that has been ruling our country for years to come. Group killings and violence have been with us since forever and the majority of us, especially the government, pay very less heed to it. It is not that quarantine has brought out the worst in us but it is now that many cases are being talked about and light is being shone on many cases that have never had the opportunity to come into the limelight. This increase in brutality and cruelty is merely a result of bad ideas regarding culture and religion and that shouldn’t be the cause for a lynching to be called in place. The law and the court have also not been very supportive regarding this issue and even if actions or measures have been taken, they are not considered very effective.

Due to this steady rise in cases related to mob lynching, the Supreme court in 2018 decided to call lynching a horrendous act of mobocracy and set some laws.

The law first taken up in Manipur defines mob lynching to be a serious act of violence by mobs based on religion, race, caste, sex, etc.

Nodal officers are to be appointed in each district and for the state government to take up responsibilities for the protection of victims and witnesses.

Strong actions need to be taken against this violent and brutal behaviour. On the whole, every part of the world experiences group killings for no solid reason. It is always advisable to carry out the issue in a legalised manner to resolve the issue easily. The killers and victims need not be in from a different caste, different religions, different races, etc. Mob violence can cause large damage to the non-victims too who become a target unintentionally.

The police officers also must take care of the victims and provide them proper medical conditions. The police are usually not immediately present in the scene but do not respond as early as contacted. Other cases that display violent behaviour by people like rape cases and online wars are still going on and these never seem to halt.

The WHO reports that violent behaviour has been increasing ever since the lockdown began. Helplines and call centres that work to alleviate mental stress shave been constantly receiving an increasing number of calls. Abuse, pain, and frustration are rising by the minute. The Callas are almost always a case of domestic violence and physical abuse. Multiple employment issues, massive economic crisis, looming joblessness, and threat of essential deprivation have been a rising cause of violence.

COVID-19 has been able to bring the entire world to a halt by inducing a major blow to the economic and health industries of the world by bringing in quarantine. Millions of people are dying due to this particular disease and this is a time when people have to be careful and be considerate about the welfare of others as well as themselves. But COVID-19 was not able to get a hold on the ever-present violence.

I came across a beautiful statement provided by an educator regarding hate. “Why do we hate?”, asks the journalist. She replies, “We hate because we are taught to hate and we hate because we are ignorant.” It is blatantly true and shows that we need to take a step, in preventing violence from prevailing and spreading more faster and claiming more lives than a virus that we can’t see.