

Why have India's elite institutions become murderers of Dalit Adivasi-Muslim scholars ?

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The suicide of bright young scholar Fathima Latheef at the IIT Madras is reflective of the brutal and atrocious caste order prevailing in these institutions which discriminate against Dalit, OBC, Adivasi and Muslim students. This suicide is an institutional murder where the masterminds and caste supremacists are well protected. The list is long in recent years as how bright young dynamic scholars particularly hailing from Dalit Adivasi Muslim background are being targeted not merely by the Savarna students but their faculties. It is difficulty for India's racists savarnas to accept brilliant self respecting bright scholars from other communities who dont agree with them.

These institutions who I term as Gurukuls now where a Droancharya is ready to cut the fingers of students from marginalized sections, are today becoming the hunting ground for these students who aspire high though their social location might not be that strong. Rohith Vemula was murdered in Hyderabad Central University Campus, Dr Payal Tadvi faced very similar pressure in her medical college in Mumbai while nineteen years old Fathima became the latest victim of this murder series.

Fathima was a topper in the entrance examination. She topped in her earlier exams too. Hailing from Kollam district in Kerala, Fathima had big dreams when she got into Integrated MA programme in Humanities and Social Sciences at the IIT Madras. Her parents have accused Prof Sudarshan Padmanabhan for mentally torturing her.

Fathima's story is not alone. The caste forces have revolted with a vengeance everywhere. There are attack by targeting institutions and individuals. Look at the JNU and how the government and all others have joined hand to destroy this credible institutions. They are unable to break the spirit of the University and yet through media and the paddlers of lies, we are witnessing a campaign against provisions which ensure that children of all the communities who are the margin can enter into a credible and privileged institution. IITs and IIMs are actually much regressive in their caste prejudices and that is why it is very difficult for girls like Fathima to survive there.

Not long ago, a Ph.D award of a scientist who happened to belong to scheduled caste community was held up by the brahmanical faculty in IIT Kanpur, accusing the scholar of plagiarism, when everybody knew the track record of the senior scholar as brilliant. His father passed away hearing about the same that his son might not get his hard earned Ph.D. Finally, after much campaign by friends the IIT K appointed a committee and ultimately charges against him were dropped.

In the universities like JNU, despite all differences, the students from the margins can enjoy freedom to challenge the might but such freedom does not exists in any other institution. In fact, the brahmanical elite are now ensuring that other institutions do not go JNU way. I dont consider JNU revolutionary but given today's circumstances, it is a model that the government could have adopted like Navodaya vidyalayas and spread across the country to ensure that persons from the marginalised sections participate in our nation building and contribute.

How will they contribute when all these institutions are being made beyond their economic limit. The fees and other expenses at the IITs, IIMs and other medical institutions are deliberately being made such so that the students who hail from economically weaker background do not reach there. The

social and cultural environment in these institutions is as such that the students from Dalit-Adivasi-OBC-Muslim community become mute and totally isolated. They remain in atmospheric intimidation which I call criminal and oppressive environment which reminds students of their 'social background'.

Can the Ministry of HRD respond as what happened to the probe into Rohith Vemula's murder ? What happened in the Payal Tadvi case ? What happened to Nazeeb's murder ? And what is the progress in the investigation of murder of Fathima Latheef. These are institutional issues and need to be seriously addressed. If our institutions are becoming killing fields of the scholars from Dalit Adivasi-Muslim communities then it is time to have a serious look into their structure. Are there teachers from these sections in these institutions ? Are there enough students from these sections ? Are there enough staff from their communities ? If not then the students will always remain in 'alien in wonderland'.

Sad part is that there is no out cry. Political parties as usual remain silent as these are not issues for them. More criminal is the silence of those who 'represent' Dalit Bahujan-minority communities. It is not the issue of making one statement. It is time, they develop their vision for education particularly how are they going to strengthen and encourage India's huge Bahujan communities into these institutions.

Fathima Lateef's killing is the story of discrimination against Muslims too who are now increasingly feeling it at every level. Isolation, contempt and attempt to define them further. We must speak up against such efforts. You blame communities are being pampered. You blame them for not being 'educated' but what happens when the students come at their own. Fathima was not wearing 'Burqa' so by all the 'standards' of the brahmanical IITs, she was a modern Muslim girl and yet she was forced to die.

The basic question is why Fathima died or was killed or allowed to be killed ? And the answers are simple and one need to read into what is happening in our campuses in the last six years. Institutionally, all of them are being restructured in such a way so that the Dalit-Bahujan-Adivasi-Muslim students remain outside their domain or unable to make entry into them and if they are able to make an entry inside the brahmanical club, then it is ensured that they are isolated, depressed and compel to commit suicide. So these institutional murder will continue if we are unable to democratise our institutions and that will only be possible if they reflect diversity of India in these institutions and not merely brahmanical diversity but non brahmanical diversity too. Representation of India's diverse religious and ethnic, caste groups is important for democratisation of our institutions. Will it be possible ? I dont think those who have enjoyed privileges and fruits of power for last so many years will easily leave it. The only way is political battle and our continuous struggle for social justice and human rights when political parties have failed to take up the cause of people. That is the most worrisome part in India but there is a reality and that is a revolution happens in the most frustrating situations and I am seeing that in India, people are feeling it. Will those who are socially excluded organised themselves not merely in the University campuses but also politically and outside the urban domain, in our villages too. If they do it, I can say, we will not have to see the sad and deeply painful lives of Fathima or Rohith Vemula or Payal Tadvi, cut short by brahmanical crookedness.

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