

Editorial

Friday, May 31, 2019

The unintended fear psychosis

Election is an important component for the success of democracy. BJP under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi creates history in Indian democracy by winning 302 seats out of the 543 seats. Lok Sabha has 543 seat at which two are nominated. Getting 303 is indeed the real mandate of the people in Indian electoral system, no matter some critic says majority of the Indian don't vote for the. But as per the system - first past the post it is a victory that we are ought to believe.

But then having the number or peoples' mandate does not mean that they are handed all power to do whatever they can. Doing something that hurts a single community will definitely be an Armageddon to Democracy.

The post election scenario felt many people across the country - A sense of fear of uncertain future. The BJP leadership believed in a strong India. For that they had many a time highlighted to build a nation with one religion and one language. Different strategies are being taken up and had made public. For example, introduction of the Citizenship amendment Bill or the strengthening the draconian Act AFSPA.

Manipuri people have reason to worry the coming back of BJP with a landslide victory even as the people also gave their mandate to the party's candidate.

But then, the idea of nation having one identity, one religion, one culture, one language promulgated by leaders of the party has created fear psychosis to various ethnic communities in the country. At a time when chauvinistic idealism of creating a nation of only one community is seen marching ahead, it is natural that each and every ethnic communities of the nation have reason to be feared. Because it is family first then come the society then it is the nation.

India was and is a nation of diverse people. The beauty of India is the existences of different ethnic people with diverse cultural people. It is important that if India has to prove the world as the most successful democratic country, the leaders and the so called self style son of the soil should tried to become real son of the soil by accepting that the concept of one religion, one culture and one language should not be followed in the Nation called India.

During Kargil war, two soldiers from this region, that too from a border village between Myanmar and India in the state of Manipur were martyred while fighting the Pakistani troops. Family of the two did not know the common language that their sons spoke with their fellow soldiers and moreover, the villagers of the two soldiers are fighting tough safeguarding their villages from intruders of the neighbouring villages. Yet they pray for the success of India.

The Indian administrators of the time was not the one which brought victory to the Kargil war, but it was the prayers of those thousand parents, whose sons were fighting for the country, but who never see Delhi, or who never understood the common language (Hindi) that make India success. Indeed, many critics are of the views that India is still in the process of nation building. But the reality is that India is already a nation. A nation of imagine community living under the same roof.

The peaceful co existence and communal harmony was put in dead danger with the rise of communal centric feudalism classes. They spew venom of hate feeling among the various communities for their mere selfish gain. Last few decades showed rise of many such feudalists and the rise of this class raises the feeling of enmity among the various community.

Coming back to the state of Manipur, the problem facing right now has similar roots. The force annexation is often pin point as the root of all sort of trouble here, but the reality is that the root of the entire problem facing in the state of Manipur is the chauvinistic attitude of the ruling government in the mainland India.

Instead of looking on the problem, the then ruler of the mainland India had sideline the real issue submitted by the then expert officials deputed by their government, they never tried anything to put a halt to the rise of the armed opposition group. But rather the then government incited hate feeling among various communities thinking that the same technique adopted the British ruler can suppressed any movement in the region.

Instead of taking into consideration and finding a means to end all sort of violent activism a Scheme called Surrendered Rehabilitation Schemes had been introduced and the result - people now suffered double the problem that they had faced before the coming of the scheme.

Well Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, the last President of USSR had understood the important of safeguarding each community and USSR was separated into various independent nations. Problem will be there as long as human kind exists. Because they think and act and those act are sometime negative from one's view point even if he or she thought it right from his viewpoints.

The fear factor right now is felt to everyone. Man dies and sacrifices for their children and nation. If the fear factor grows no one can guarantee any untoward incident at which the fear factor was challenge and wipe out completely to restore the once upon a time nation state called Manipur.

The Culture of Professional Colleges Failed Dr Payal Tadvi – Just as It Did Me

Bright, well-meaning students convinced me that I didn't deserve to be in my university. I so deeply internalised their narrative that I couldn't fight it within my own self, let alone with them.

Courtesy The Wire  
By : Mrudula

The conversations around Dr Payal Tadvi's suicide, on May 22, 2019, have been quite unsettling. That some have attributed it to work pressure or "cowardliness", shows a lack of understanding about how caste works or how deeply pervasive it is. I can imagine what could have driven her to end her life - I experienced unapologetic casteism at university too.

I attended one of India's elite law schools. In these spaces - unlike in medical and engineering colleges - casteism was subtle and intellectualised (perhaps because aspiring lawyers knew how to avoid a penalty under the Prevention of Atrocities Act). I could never really tell what made me feel different, lonely and marginalised.

I sensed that I didn't think like them, share their fascination with the same cultural icons and activities, and did not behave in a manner deemed appropriate by them. All of which, I later understood through my readings, was shaped by one's caste background.

In my first year, a faculty member proclaimed that she was Brahmin, and went on to ask other Brahmin students to raise their hands. The same lecturer asked us to make a project on our ancestors. I wasn't comfortable sharing my ancestry, but I had to - it was to be marked for 20 marks.

The upper caste students didn't see it as a big deal. For many of them, it was an opportunity to boast of the achievements of their forefathers and their rich ancestries, all somehow related to their social location. Some of us, who had no such histories to tell, felt ashamed when it was our turn.

The casteism of my peers was mostly implicit. Explicit references to caste were mostly stereotypical and prejudiced. Tambrams and Kayasths were the most intelligent, apparently, Rajputs valiant and emotional; Baniyas shrewd and money-minded, and so on. In groups



people from my caste were routinely humiliated, pushed into bonded labour, and beaten up when they tried to go to school? Okay.

A savarna friend once told me that I was uncultured because I was not trained in any classical dance or music. Another told me she would never forgive people who availed of SC/ST quotas because, if it weren't for us, she would be in a better law school. Her tone made me feel like I had committed a heinous crime.

Some even rationalised the caste system as a result of genetic differences among the varnas, with Dalits and Adivasis as the most inferior. One boy used this as the reason he was in love with a certain Kshatriya girl, because she was apparently honourable and would give birth to strong children.

One boy didn't hesitate to let the elevator shut on a boy from the Meena community, saying "ye Meena log ke saath aise hi hona chahiye". It was that normalised. If you called them out on it, they would brilliantly justify themselves, leaving us feeling like we were just over-reacting.

Classroom discussions on the jurisprudence of reservations were one-sided, usually concluding that reservations

confidence and self-esteem were beaten to a pulp by everyday microaggressions. Eventually, it got to me and I succumbed into believing that I deserved to feel that way. After all, my existence in that university was an anomaly, and I had taken up their space. The assault to my dignity was the price I had to pay for the privilege of studying at such an eminent institution.

Those experiences, coupled with rampant sexism, took a toll on my mental health. I tried to talk to the few people I thought I could, including my parents. But they couldn't understand what I was going through. I'm a first-generation college graduate, and my world is very different from theirs.

My savarna seniors told me that I was victimising myself, and that law schools are extremely competitive spaces; I had to toughen up or be left behind. I didn't know how to explain this to my doctor either. She told me I had "low self-esteem and an inferiority complex and that I should only think positively." I couldn't, so I became a recluse. I took up less space, participated less and confined myself mostly to my room, escaping into books and art. I managed to get through five miserable years. I have had enough time since then to process and understand that ordeal.

alone them.

It wasn't until I read Ambedkar (conveniently excluded from the law school's curriculum), Yashica Dutt's *Coming out as Dalit* or Christina Thomas Dhanraj's writings that I could develop the intellectual ammunition to fight the narrative - first with myself and then others.

My colleagues from the Dalit, Bahujan and Adivasi communities went through similar experiences. When we enter these privileged spaces, we are very vulnerable and develop various coping mechanisms. Some internalise the dominant campus culture, hiding our identities and trying to emulate them. Some become depressed, even self-destructive.

At my university, we refrained from forming a homogenous group, because some of them were not comfortable with being 'that quota group', as one friend put it. Many of us wanted to learn from our savarna peers, even if it meant putting up with their micro-aggressions and gritting our teeth through their thoughtless remarks.

Expecting savarnas to magically unlearn their casteism and make these spaces inclusive would be foolish. It is so central to their lives that they may genuinely not see it, the way fish may be unaware of water. Those of us who were never a part of it, can't help but see it - we are reminded of it with every interaction.

That's where our institutions have failed us. Professional institutions - medical, engineering or law - do not encourage any form of student politics. Their students have no safe spaces in which to confidently come to terms with their identities, and assert the same when someone threatens their dignity.

Greater student representation from these communities would also help make these spaces more inclusive. Another institutional-level solution would be to establish mandatory workshops on casteism and sexism every year, so that these spaces don't churn out even more insensitive professionals, like the ones who killed Dr Payal Tadvi, Rohit Vehmla, Bal Mukund Bharati and others.

The author is a young lawyer, who is deeply interested in learning how to build socially just and diverse institutions and contributing her bit for the same. You can follow her on her Twitter handle @lawandemotions.



dominated by savarnas, such remarks were often made, for each other in jest. It made me wonder how they'd refer to me if they knew who I was: a former untouchable. When I tried to point out that such statements were inherently casteist, they defended themselves, saying they had a right to feel proud of their caste and that I should be proud of mine. Be proud of the fact that

must wither away or be provided on economic grounds. The discussions were dominated by UC students; our voices silenced by their loud, assertive ones, confident in their ignorance of the larger social context. These were all bright, well-meaning, caste-blind students who were extremely thick to the social realities outside of life as they knew it. My

When I look back now, what bothered me most was my inability to respond in a way that made me feel empowered. Instead, I protested weakly, with the savarnas beating me with their eloquence. I was already gaslighted into believing I was a waste of space in a meritocratic institution. I had so deeply internalised their narrative that I couldn't fight it within my own self, let

Letters, Feedback and Suggestions to 'Imphal Times' can be sent to our e-mail : [imphaltimes@gmail.com](mailto:imphaltimes@gmail.com). For advertisement kindly contact: - 0385-2452159 (O). For time being readers can reach the office at Cell Phone No. 9862860745 for any purpose.