

Magnitude of Traumatic Experience of Caste-Based Onslaughts

Psychological Terrorism

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Abstract

The issue of discriminating against the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribes(ST) students on the campuses of various institutions of higher learning may or may not be that rampant, yet it hurts the sensible and sensitive citizens who believe in constitutional equality, social justice and wish to promote equity and equitable environment. Since the issues is rooted in de facto phenomenon of caste-based inequality and prevails in the temples of learning, it is all the more hurt some. It is a 'social threat or menace' which needs to be addressed.

The cause of developing even desire for death may be found in the perceived burdensomeness and a sense of low belongingness and social alienation thrown upon the under privileged by exposing them to the trauma of discrimination, exclusion and humiliation which are inherent in caste system. Indian constitution's provisions designed to stop discrimination could not be translated into action as intended. The caste-based discrimination persists in India and functions in well organized manner on the lines of racism.

With the ever increasing diversity and SC-ST student population and likewise presence of faculty members belonging to the same categories is getting more noticeable. This has unleashed new forces: established caste elite take the aspiring SC/STs as posing a challenge. They react by asserting decaying caste-ridden social ethos with more aggressive overtones. The SC-ST's worth is not prized. They are denied justice. Legal safeguards are side tracked. They are coerced to adopt upper caste identity so as to hide their own. Mismatch has been emerging between the

psychological pressure and the forbearance to live with it. The change is taking its toll. Being on the receiving end of overt or subtle caste-ism these students experience intense and constant stress, which boosts the risk of depression, anxiety and anger. Exposure to such practices may cause one to become anxious, paranoid, helpless/hopeless, frustrated, and fearful. This can result in a cycle of lowered performance and lowered expectations for performance. The discrimination has a compounding effect on mental health. Such people as have been practising psychological onslaughts on caste-basis even if they are 'fringe groups' should now be called "terrorist groups".

The state and the society are under the obligation to stopping the ongoing 'psychological terrorism' by adopting an effective operational system having inbuilt checks and balances, and providing psychological inputs of curative and preventive nature.

Key words- Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, Social Justice, discrimination, exclusion, Psychological Terrorism

Magnitude of Traumatic Experience of Caste-Based Onslaughts -Psychological Terrorism

Incidents of committing suicides by Rohith Vemula, Muthukrishanan and other Dalit students were condemned by entire Nation. Should even the academic community stop at condemnation? The incidents of Dalit students resorting to suicides in one or the other institution of higher learning are not isolated phenomena. A number of institutions have gone through such saddening experiences. The issue acquires added significance in that it relates to institutions of higher learning and, then, the Dalits. Pertinently, it demands a deeper and wider understanding of the problem as the one emanating from undesirable societal sickness. The issue not being that old indicates as if it is rooted in the emerging or changing socio-academic fabric of educational institutions. What is the major societal change that has been taking place relating to and affecting lives of the Dalit students on campus? One may argue that the Dalit students might have fallen victims to discrimination that have been turning out to be unbearable. But the issue is not just discrimination against Dalit students in campuses, more than and along with that it is a 'social threat or menace' which needs to be addressed together by the sociologists and psychologists. The scenario is compelling enough for taking cognizance of the issue in a serious manner so as to address the problems faced by Dalit students in the institutions of higher education. Gaurav Pathania, a researcher with a University College London and working on a project on

discrimination in Indian higher education, told The Wire (2017). “We live in a society full of oppression which is reproduced in our psychology, minds and behaviour. Instead of giving hope, our education institutions offer a feeling of fear and despair. ”

It would be quite pertinent to ascertain the reason and identify the driving force behind suicidal attempts occurring among the Dalits.

Driving force for the extreme step-Suicide

Suicide is the act of intentionally causing one's own death. The interpersonal-psychological theory of suicidal behaviour (Joiner, 2005) proposes that an individual will not die by suicide unless s/he has both the desire to die by suicide and the ability to do so. The question arises then who desires suicide, the theory asserts that when people hold two specific psychological states in their minds simultaneously, and when they do so for long enough, they develop the desire for death. The two psychological states are *perceived burdensomeness* and *a sense of low belongingness or social alienation*.

Between 2008 and 2018, the number of dalit students in higher educational institutions that committed suicide was more than 25 across India. This number only represents official statistics without counting all the dalit students whose families did not protest against the incessant discrimination that eventually led to their suicide.

Identified reasons of Suicide – caste based discrimination, exclusion and humiliation

What factors prepare ground for taking extreme steps? These may be summed up in the words of Jake Thoenes. These, according to him are “Apathy and evil”. He contends that the “two work hand in hand. They are the same, really.... Evil wills it. Apathy allows it. Evil hates the innocent and the defenseless most of all. Apathy doesn't care as long as it's not personally inconvenienced”. In the present case the two may be identified with the attitude of establishment and caste-ridden slurs and onslaught by fellow beings. The last words of Muthukrishnan “When Equality is denied everything is denied” communicated the perception of shocking state of affairs and gave a big jolt to our democracy and constitution. Whether we are really living in Gandhi's and Buddha's land! His last post posed a number of questions.

The Andhra Pradesh High Court (April 2013) took suo motto cognisance of a newspaper report which spoke of the cases of suicide by students and directed the universities to take appropriate measures to tackle the possible causes. A group of 29 academicians identified a number of reasons of suicide and suicidal attempt by students from marginalised groups. These included failure, fear of failure, administrative indifference, hostile regulations and academic stigmatisation. More importantly the group of academicians also found insulting social behaviour, and rejection among the reasons.

Research studies underline the experiences of discrimination, exclusion and humiliation as being the predominant reasons behind committing suicides. As Sukhdeo Thorat reported (2016) that after analyzing some cases of suicide, academic Anoop Singh concluded that “there seems to be more than enough evidence to believe that caste discrimination played a significant role in driving these extraordinary individuals into committing suicide”, and that “elite professional institutions are the places where caste prejudice is so firmly entrenched that it has become normal”. A study ‘Widening participation: Diversity, isolation or integration in Higher Education?’ in 2010 by Professor Mary Thornton and others of five higher educational institutions in India and the United Kingdom explore issues of diversity and integration, social cohesion and separation, equality and discrimination as experienced by students and staff on higher education campuses in India and the UK. Initial findings suggest that “separation of groups on the higher education campus is pervasive and ubiquitous. While some such separation may be for supportive reasons, at other times it is due to overt discrimination on the grounds of race, region, nationality, caste, class, religion, or gender”.

In 2013, Samson Ovichagan, in a study on the experience of Dalits in an elite university in India, quoted good universit[ies] do not protect students from caste discrimination. In his view, it is evident that this premier university is yet another arena in which the practice of caste division is perpetuated. The university environment reinforces and maintains a divide between Dalit and non-Dalit, with the latter engaging in patterns of indifference and exclusion (Dhawan, 2005).

Political scientist N. Sukumar’s (2008) research gives us an insight into the general milieu of stigmatisation and discrimination faced in particular by Dalit students in the context of Senthil Kumar’s suicide, and on how caste comes into play in interactions of Dalit students with upper

caste students, teachers and administrators. Upper caste people refuse to get their mind out of the gutter. It blocks rationalist view. It is this exclusionary social milieu that pushes Dalit students to the wall, and those who lack the capacity to deal with the psychological pressure of humiliation resort to suicide.

Discrimination is inherent in caste system. To put it more squarely, discrimination is essentially an inseparable ingredient that is the spring-board of caste system. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the champion of human rights, once observed: “Millions of people living in the midst of civilization are still in a savage state and are leading the life of hereditary criminals. But the Hindus have never felt ashamed of it. This is a phenomenon which in my view is quite unparalleled”. That was why the Indian constitution provided some preferential schemes designed to stop discrimination against the scheduled castes/scheduled tribes

The Government of India’s *Anthropological Survey of India* (ASI), undertaken under the leadership of K.S. Singh, brought out a series of publications, titled ‘*The People of India*’. This project identified 2800 castes including 450 SC, 461 ST and 766 OBC. It concludes that, caste continues to be the basic building brick of Indian society. This historic finding of the ASI project did not get any publicity in India’s press because the ruling class is shy of admitting this fact which has made them the rulers (Rajshekar 2002). *Dalit* Vice editor Mr. V. T. Rajshekar says, “Almost all political party leaders be they nationalists, socialists, communists and Hindu Nazi have uniform opinion on caste, ‘caste is bad and hence it has to be destroyed’. Some Indian scholars and researchers have produced considerable literature to prove that caste is ‘non-existent’. They believed and made others believe that with economic development, the superficial “caste” could be eradicated. Based on this belief, our planners and rulers introduced hundreds of welfare schemes and invested thousands of crore of rupees on these schemes. All these economic programs proved an utter failure (Rajshekar 2002). What Mr. Rajshekar says is true because, caste system yet persists in India and functions in well organized manner.

Racism and Caste System: From all the types and characteristics of racism, it seems caste system more or less fits as racism. British parliament's decision to recognize the existence of caste alongside race as a form of discrimination could hurt India's long-held argument that the two sources of bias could not be equated. Worse, it may give a strong push to portray caste as a

global phenomenon like race, undercutting India's claim that caste prejudice was indigenous to Indian society and it could not be a subject of policy at international fora like *the United Nations (Times of India)*. Avinash Pandey Samar (2010) observed that ‘Even if the discrimination against the Dalits is intra-racial, the consequences for them are no less brutal than that in racism. Paul Divakar (2015), chairperson of Asia Dalit Rights Forum, induced that the sustainable Development Goals’ (SDG) pledge to “leave no one behind” will remain handicapped by not specifically mentioning caste as a major cause for poverty and deprivation of opportunity. “Discrimination based on work and descent [caste] is an important determinant for the exclusion of a large section of the global population... When age, sex, race, ethnicity, origin are mentioned, why leave 260 million Dalits out of the document,” he asked.

Meen Bishwakarma, MP from Nepali Congress, echoed that his country’s Constitution took some historic steps in affirmative action, including guaranteed 13 per cent representation of Dalits in all levels of government. “But India appears to block all efforts to allow caste to be recognised internationally as a major cause for exclusion. We are demanding that the issue of caste-based discrimination not be seen as simply an internal problem in India — there are Dalit communities across South Asia who are historically deprived,” he said.

There might be an absence of ‘racism’, but casteism is an equally ideological structure based on the belief of superiority of some people because of birth and inferiority of others because of the same! And there is no doubt that this ideology is becoming stronger day by day despite all the attempts of Indian government to put an end to this ‘evil’ practice’.

Caste-based discrimination in educational institutions

Dalit bias runs deeper and deeper even in 21st century, not only among the uneducated people but also even among *educated* modern people. In view of pre-conceived notion about *academic calibre* of the SC/STs students, they are labelled ‘academically backward’. A number of cases are reported wherein biased treatment was meted out to scheduled caste students in schools. Several such facts have been revealed in the ‘*Indian Education Report*’. Upper caste teachers refuse to touch scheduled castes students. At the same time they make these children special targets of verbal abuse and physical punishment (*Times of India*, February 27, 2002). During the

informal interaction of the author with one Brahmin lady teacher, she reported that she is compelled to touch these people's notebooks 'where has the caste-ism now remained'?

In Madhya Pradesh cases of discrimination have been reported from 12 districts like Bhind, Chhatarpur, Harda, Hoshangabad, Khandwa, Mandsaur, Morena, Narsinghpur, Rewa, Sagar, Sehore and Satna. In Sehore district there was complaint that plates of dalit children were marked so that food is not served to upper caste children in those plates. Though Madhya Pradesh government denied any discrimination, HRD sources said there is incriminating evidence. (Times of India Dec 19 2014)

According to a news item dated Jun 25, 2012 (Radheshyam Jadhav, TNN): Caste bias manifests itself also in higher educational institutions, where there have been reports of teachers ignoring SC students and unjustly failing them in exams; social exclusion and physical abuse; and the unwillingness of university administrations to assist SC students and support them. In the recent past, the present author visited a premier Institution (Uttar Pradesh) in connection with data collection for a research study on scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students. One of the professors of the institution asked me the cause and purpose of my presence there, incidentally, the professor was found to be belonged to high caste. No sooner than he came to know of my subject of research, he was uttered blatant enough to tell 'what is the problem in identifying them! All the black and brown complexion students (usme kya problem hai chale jao jo bhi kale peele students hain sab wohi hain) belong to SCs and STs'. The higher caste students and teachers also communicated their perceptions equally bluntly. Thus, Vemula's last words that 'my birth is my fatal accident' is true rendering of his pain. Pande and Tripathi (1982) in their research on Dalit children articulated that 'cognitive content-specificity hypothesis', a component of Beck's cognitive theory, maintains that the negative self-evaluation results into social anxiety. The social anxiety leads to 'avoidance behaviour' in certain social situations which demand beholders' attention and decision making. In these situations dalit and deprived children were found to be more tense and anxious for the fear of things going wrong (Yurolova 1990). A deprived student is generally more cautious, careful and guarded as compared to the privileged group students. 'Memory for self-relevant information' research suggests that once a person views himself and his performance negatively, he is more likely to recall incidents in

which he performed poorly. These easily accessed negative memories serve to precipitate social anxiety when future encounters are contemplated

Generally a person is motivated to seek others' approval, acceptance and affection than to seek others disapproval and rejection. When need for approval is high, a person tries to manage a better impression. Therefore, the factors which heighten people's motivation to seek approval are associated with increased social anxiety and that is why a person's feelings of self worth are partially dependent on other's evaluation. Deprived caste students who are in want of social approval and acceptance, carry high levels of social anxiety as compared to general population of students. This anxiety interferes with their work efficiency resulting in poor performance. Studies reveal that deprived caste students have unrealistic motivation, external locus for success, personal inadequacies for failures, harsh and rigid self-evaluation and extreme anxiety for outcome of personal performance. They exhibit avoidance behaviour, lack in decision making capacity, tend to have negative memories of past experiences, carry very low self-concept and need social approval. Success is not that reinforcing as it should be, and failure is extremely discouraging. They experience the fear of failure because of internalization of personal inadequacies, negative memories, and low perception of self and heightened social anxiety. The entire mechanism is motivationally damaging and that is why deprived-caste students account for largest population of failures in examinations and drop-outs from educational institutions.

Subsequent to meta-analysis on dalit and deprived caste researches Jiloha (2007) found that India's deprived caste present a number of difficulties related to mental health. Their developmental process to assume psychological maturity and to achieve mental health is retarded by a number of factors like deprivation of childhood experiences, lack of qualitative interaction for healthy cognitive and linguistic development, unrealistic motivation, external locus for success, harsh and rigid self-evaluation, high levels of social anxiety, avoidance behaviour and so on. They are exposed to multiple psychological strains that lead to mental health aberrations. Though there are not many systematic studies in this regard, it is implicit from the observations that they need more attention in the form of praise and recognition which is almost non-existent.

Safeguards-- constitutional

The Indian constitution provides some preferential schemes designed to stop discrimination against the scheduled castes/scheduled tribes. The provision in the constitution resolves ‘the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, place and birth or any form’. In the Directive Principles it adds that the ‘state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the scheduled castes/tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation’.

But and despite all these provisions and attempts caste based discrimination still continues, notes K.S. Ingole. The question arises as to why the constitutional provisions have not been appropriately and effectively translated into action. It is presumably because the depressed castes are far off the capacity to implementing the provisions made in the constitution. The crucial political, social and economic powers are vested predominantly in the hands of upper castes Hindus. As upper caste Hindus did enjoy power by virtue of castes system; they do not want to implement the constitutional provisions which hit and hurt their own vested interests. Consequently, the law-enforcement machinery and the political class have united to put off the depressed castes from utilizing programs designed for them. The statistics speak for themselves. The great enemy of societal equality is the alignment of caste-ridden mindset with political power and wealth. This alignment continues to tear apart the social fabric.

On the other side, the available evidence shows that the SC/STs continue to remain a deprived lot. The importance of human resource capital, particularly education, for growth is duly recognised but the SC/STs are obstructed in the institution of learning from acquiring potentialities for the required purpose. Also, they face psychologically aggressive environment on account of their birth-based (humiliating) status and this denudes them of self respect and nips their productive potential at the budding stage. Moreover, they acquire psychological sickness of sorts. At the end of the day, they emerge as burden even for themselves instead of being productive stake holders in the society and economy.

Psychological onslaught and its Impact

Discrimination is as old as the caste system; why suicides now? One may take note of a major societal change that has been taking place affecting lives of the Dalits on the campuses. The student population on campuses of higher education has become increasingly diverse: according to 2008 data, of the total number of students in higher education in the country, four per cent were Scheduled Tribes (STs), 13.5 per cent Scheduled Castes (SCs), and 35 per cent Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The community wise composition of student populace consists of Hindus accounting for about 85 per cent, followed by Muslims (eight per cent) and Christians (three per cent). Increasing entry into these institutions along with the noticeable presence of faculty members belonging to the SC/ST has been unleashing new forces, aspiring SC/STs, appear to be posing challenge to the established caste elite. There seems to have been emerging a nerve testing situation for legitimate requirement of togetherness. Assertion by decaying caste-ridden social ethos has increased and acquired more aggressive overtones. The constitutional safeguards and self-built mechanism (such as adopting other castes' identity) have failed them. The change is taking its toll. It seems to be on account of discernable mismatch arising between the psychological pressure on one side and the forbearance of SC/ST's to live with it, on the other.

While in college the identity of SC/ST students is manipulated and name calling is quite common as they are characterized 'reserved quota' students. Thus, in spite of academic competence, comments like 'these reserved chaps will never be as good as us' are passed. Another issue is the non-admission of 'merit' students in the 'open' category, despite a central direction that they must be. It is always thought why enrol an extra low caste student when we already have to admit a certain number of them? This follows two consequences, it brands a brilliant student as one coming from the reserved category and it deprives another needy SC/ST student of a seat (Ramesh Chandra,2005). Their contribution is not recognized in any area; they are always put in an environment which hampers their personal development and performance. Constant attempts are made to destroy their 'self'. In educational institutions, social media and even at work places discussions are held on reservation policy. The major objective of such discussion is not to find out the ideology behind the measure, but to create hatred among the students and employees in organizations. The worth of SC/STs is not prized at work place,

though they have potentials. No one can deny that backwardness arises, rather very substantially, from lack of access to economic resources and facilities like quality education and employment opportunities. However, the two aspects are conveniently overlooked by upper castes Hindus (Ingole 2011).

The cruelty of the caste system is that one is born into that caste - or non-caste, in the case of the Dalit, - and from this there is no escape ever, no matter what one does or achieves. The elite castes were, and still are, opposed to genuinely abandoning Brahminical Hinduism in favour of a more modern idea of democracy and citizenship. Centuries of oppression have inflicted on the Dalit people deep psychological wounds, the trauma of low self-esteem.

Constitutional safeguards have failed to yield desirable results. Apprehensive of discrimination and mental harassment and facing it in day today life, the dalits often use higher castes' surnames such as Singh, Verma, Chaudhary, Malik, Chauhan etc. These attempts to hide their SC identity, and assuming identity of upper caste is indicative of self defence mechanism. At the same time, it denominates failure of constitutional provisions at grassroots level. The unwillingness of university administration to assist SC students and support them pushes Dalit students to the wall, and those who lack the capacity to deal with the psychological pressure of humiliation resort to suicide (News item dated Jun 25, 2012, Radheshyam Jadhav, TNN).

'How? Being on the receiving end of overt or subtle racism creates intense and constant stress, say some experts, which boosts the risk of depression, anxiety and anger -- factors that can lead to or aggravate heart disease' (Sid Kirchheimer 2003).

Adverse effects on health of racism are well documented. One British study of 4,800 people finds that those who felt victimized by discrimination by various forms of racism were twice as likely to develop psychotic episodes in the next three years. Meanwhile, a group of Harvard researchers documented that a mere one per cent increase in incidences of racial disrespect translates to an increase in 350 deaths per 100,000 African Americans.

A team of researchers from the University of Melbourne studied 461 cases of racism linked to mental health outcomes, marking the first study of its kind to draw the connection. The study's

lead researcher, Dr. Naomi Priest, of the McCaughey Vic Health Centre for Community Wellbeing, said the study showed racism was an important influencing factor in kids' developing sense of self-worth. "The review showed there are strong and consistent relationships between racial discrimination and a range of detrimental health outcomes," Priest said in a press release, "such as low self-esteem, reduced resilience, increased behavior problems and lower levels of wellbeing."

Research has mainly conceptualised racism as a stressor. An individual's perception of society as racist and the experience of everyday minor acts of discrimination are thought to constitute a chronic stressor. Individually, more overtly racist acts are considered as life events (acute stressors) that are superimposed on this chronic stress (Bhugra & Cochrane, 2001).

In the USA, interpersonal discrimination has been associated with increased rates of hypertension, depression and stress; poorer self-rated health; and more reported days spent unwell in bed (Krieger, 2000). In the UK, both Burke (1984) and Fernando (1984) have documented relationships between depression and life events thought to be due to racism. Burke reported a 1.5-fold increased incidence of depression in a community sample of 'West Indians' living in Birmingham compared with Whites.

Specific attention is given to the topic of racism-related stress by Harrell (2000). According to her research, there are six types of racism-related stress that have the potential to affect the well-being of an individual: racism-related life events, vicarious racism experiences, daily racism micro stressors, chronic-contextual stress, collective experiences, and trans-generational transmission (Harrell, 2000, p. 45-47). The first type of racism-related stress is the result of specific, time-limited experiences of racism in which one feels discriminated against, harassed, or judged (Harrell, 2000, p. 45). One may also experience stress as a result of hearing about or seeing another person's experience with racism. This constitutes a vicarious experience of racism (Harrell, 2000, p. 45). Racism-related stress, however, is not always overt, and this is exemplified in the subtle daily reminders that one is different. These racism micro stressors may be as simple as being watched in a store or overlooked and discounted in an office setting; however their effects are no less deleterious (Harrell, 2000, p. 45-46).

To this point, racism-related stress has been discussed in the context of specific events that either compound one's stress level directly or vicariously. However, three more types of racism-related stress exist that operate on a societal level and which are more closely related to the concept of institutional racism. Chronic-contextual stress occurs when non-whites are forced to live in a society in which they are subjected to differential treatment and an unequal distribution of resources (Harrell, 2000, p. 46). Non-white families are forced to cope with the unfair treatment and adapt to an environment in which they are given less of an opportunity for success. One example of chronic-contextual stress is poor educational resources in non-white communities (Harrell, 2000, p. 46). Collective experiences, another type of racism-related stress, can be seen when one perceives that the racial group with which they identify is generally not treated fairly. For example, one may experience an increase in stress as a result of witnessing a stereotypical portrayal of the race with which they identify on television or in the news (Harrell, 2000, p. 46). Lastly, it is believed that historical injustices aimed at specific racial groups can be transmitted to new generations. Trans-generational transmission of stress can affect an individual who perceives that the group with which they identify has been historically mistreated or oppressed (Harrell, 2000, p. 46-47). Exposure to racism may cause one to become anxious, paranoid, angry, helpless/hopeless, frustrated, resentful, and fearful (Clark, et al., 1999, p. 811; Harrell, 2000, p. 47-48; Nyborg & Curry, 2003, p. 264). These stress responses can affect one's ability to function in school, work place, and social settings as well as increasing the potential for violent outbursts and suicidal ideations. One study, conducted by Nyborg and Curry (2003), showed a correlation between personal experiences with racism and lower-self concept, higher levels of hopelessness, and depressive symptoms (Nyborg & Curry, 2003, p. 264). It is likely that perception of institutional racism will evoke similar responses if one considers all forms of racism-related stress as having a negative impact on psychological well-being. Harrell's (2000) outline of racism-related stress supports this statement. Coping strategies may be adopted in response to psychological distress (Clark, et al., 1999, p. 809-811). Many times, however, these coping strategies only serve to amplify or compound one's problems (Clark, et al., 1999, p. 809). For example, personal experiences with racism have been found to be connected to behaviour problems in African American boys (Nyborg & Curry, 2003, p. 263). Increased hostility and aggression are common forms of active coping responses that have been associated with racism-

related psychological distress (Clark, et al., 1999, p. 811; Harrell, 2000, p. 47-48; Nyborg & Curry, 2003, p. 263). Other forms of negative coping strategies are verbal expression of anger.

Stress is not the only one form of expression of discrimination the other form is Stereotype threat which occurs in a situation where there is an expectation that one may be judged on the basis of social group membership and there is a negative stereotype about one's social identity group (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). There has been a great deal of research demonstrating the negative consequences of being in a situation where one is likely to encounter stereotype threat. In fact, there are more than 300 published studies in peer-reviewed journals on stereotype threat. Stereotype threat has resulted in decreased performance for African Americans on standardized tests (Steele & Aronson, 1995), Hispanics on standardized tests (Gonzales, Blanton, & Williams, 2002), low SES students on standardized tests (Croizet & Claire, 1998), and women MBA students on negotiation tasks (Kray, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2002). Research has further demonstrated that women, African Americans and Hispanics are seen as deficient in attributes critical to leadership success, when compared with men and Whites (Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2005; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Tomkiewicz, Brenner, & AdeyemiBello, 1998). In addition, the context of the workplace is likely to reinforce stereotype threat since in many occupations women and people of colour are in the demographic minority. Token or minority representation increases the salience of negative stereotypes about these groups and promotes greater stereotyping (Ely, 1995). Not surprisingly, studies have shown that in the workplace being in the demographic minority invokes stronger perceptions of stereotype threat (Roberson et al., 2003). Although the negative impact of stereotype threat on performance has been clearly documented, the mechanisms by which stereotype threat influence performance are less clear. It seems that stereotype threat negatively affects performance due to a combination of factors including heightened physiological arousal (Blascovich, Spencer, Quinn, & Steele, 2001; Osborne, 2006, 2007), reduced working memory capacity (Croizet, Depres, Gauzins, Huguet, Levens & Meot, 2004; Schmader & Johns, 2003), impaired self-regulation (Cadinu, Maass, Rosabianca, & Kiesner, 2005; Inzlicht, Block et al. McKay, & Aronson, 2006), and lowered performance expectations (Cadinu, Maass, Frigerio, Impagliazzo, & Latinotti, 2003; Stangor, Carr, & Kiang, 1998). Thus, when an individual encounters a situation where there is a negative stereotype about his or her group, that individual will experience heightened arousal, resulting in

fewer cognitive resources available for performing the task. These cognitive resources are tied up in self-regulatory thoughts such as task-related worry and negative thoughts about one's own performance. This can result in a cycle of lowered performance and lowered expectations for performance in this domain. If we will see in the retrospect a number of examples may be noted where the serotype threat was clearly pronounced. Even the national leader like Bal Gangadhar Tilak who used to call themselves "Nationalists" and leaders of whole country openly said that non-brahmins need not take education and they do not have to take part in politics. Though he said, he does not like Untouchability, but he refused to sign a memorandum for its abolition. In 1918, Bal Gangadhar Tilak at Sholapur declared that he did not "understand why the oil pressers, tobacco shopkeepers, washer-men, etc. [.....] should want to go to the Legislature."

The stereotype threat literature in social psychology has clearly demonstrated the negative impact that stereotype threat can have on task performance. However, our understanding of the range of potential responses to stereotype threat is limited. In fact, researchers have concluded that "dependent measures used in stereotype threat research have been narrow in scope" and that "academic performance may be neither the most important consequence of stereotype threat nor the most effective measure for inferring its existence" (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007, pp. 110, 111). There has been some limited research examining other outcomes of stereotype threat, which has yielded contradictory results. Stereotype threat has been found to lead to a variety of reactions including disengagement and dis-identification from the domain in which the threat is experienced (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999; von Hippel et al., 2005), dis-identification from the group that is stereotyped (Pronin, Steele, & Ross, 2004; Steele & Aronson, 1995), self-handicapping strategies that allow individuals to make external attributions for their performance (Keller, 2002; Stone, 2002), and reactance, where individuals work harder in response to stereotype threat (Kray, Reb, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004). Research has found that individuals who are low in group identification are more likely to try to distance themselves from their devalued group and focus on improving their own status (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, de Vries, & Wilke, 1988). By contrast, individuals who identify highly with their social identity group are more likely to try to improve the treatment of their group. In doing so, they seek to demonstrate that the negative stereotype associated with

their group is not relevant (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998). With the effect of stereotype threats a number of Muslim high profile people like celebrities and scholars either distanced themselves or give the impression that they have distanced themselves from Muslim identity. Thus, individuals low in group identification are more likely to pursue individual-focused strategies, such as fending off the stereotype, whereas individuals high in group identification are more likely to employ group-focused strategies, such as being resilient to the stereotype and trying to improve the treatment of their group (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Ellemers et al., 1988). It may also be simplistic to assume that members of all identity groups will respond similarly to stereotype threat.

As a matter of fact that racial discrimination has a compounding effect on mental health. In a Victorian study (2013) by The Lowitja Institute, an overwhelming majority (97 per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people surveyed experienced racism multiple times. As incidents of racism rise, the risk of psychological distress also increases. This study also showed that subtle forms of racial discrimination such as 'being left out or avoided' were just as harmful to mental health as more overt forms.

Mental health research into the effects of racial discrimination runs the risk of medicalising appropriate social struggle and distress. Focusing on those discriminated against in this way, may only serve to maintain the institution's power over the victimised group, while running the risk of stereotyping the group's identity as nothing more than a response to racism. It has been argued that there should be a closer examination of those bodies that discriminate, rather than their victims. Sashidharan (1993) has voiced concern that focusing on psychological differences between Blacks and Whites rather than on the power disparities inherent in a predominantly racist society serves only to reinforce the idea of racial differences.

Caste Hindus must be reminded that Dalit and Tribal students come with zero and frequently indebted social, cultural and economic capital. Their birth amounts to free unpaid labour of the landowners across states. A Dalit child is imagined as a reservoir for the privileged caste's profligacy. To make something valuable out of a tamed body, Dalit students look up to Ambedkar and choose for higher education. Most of these are first generation learners. Their

parents are distantly aware of their children's educational progress. Even if they tried to understand they would have hard time in making sense of the complicated education their child is undertaking. They are just proud that their efforts and immeasurable sacrifices are coming true. The rubric of a Dalit scholar starts with limited familial academic guidance. Dalit parents who could not go to school to get matriculation cannot mentor their children like other parents.

"It can be difficult to speak truth to power" observed Aberjhani (2003) but Vemula found that "Circumstances ...have made doing so increasingly necessary." Vemula's last note is a potent piece of evidence that provides insight into his deep reflection on the living of a Dalit who defy the norms of societal structures as laid down in the *manusmirti* and yet pursuing doctoral studies. The language which he used needs a deeper understanding and analysis in the broader context. Vemula emphasize, "man (Dalit) is never treated as a mind, but only a thing... to vote, To a number, to a thing, as a glorious thing made up of star dust In every field..., in studies, in streets, in politics, and in dying and living." Vemula adds, "My birth is my fatal accident. I can never recover from my childhood loneliness...the unappreciated child from my past." Was he brought up to speak as if his mouth were filled with sewage? Vemula's words capture the experiences of living as a Dalit. The ruling elite preferred to remain and even ignored the deeper structural problems that actually led to Vemula's death. "Civility, politeness, it's like cement in a society: binds it together. And when we lose it, then I think we all feel lesser and slightly dirty because of it" (Jeremy Irons). 'The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity'. (George Bernard Shaw 1901). But the power structure observed apathy whereas apathy and evil are the same. Above all apathy "is the death knell of any order. Once a system has degenerated to the point that apathy is the only thing holding it in place, it is in its twilight phase. Then one day the music stops"(John Berling Hardy2010) There comes a time when one has to choose between turning the page and closing the book. He found himself coerced to close the book of his life.

In the eyes of the majority people of India, a Dalit, by the fact of birth alone, is forever condemned as an agent of pollution. The overall action which is targeting and hitting the psyche of dalits may be called psychological terrorism which is a form of terrorism that primarily targets people's psychological well being and state of mind, with the time-tested intention of leaving a

negative impact on those people. Terrorism is normally considered as any type of action or effort made with the express or indirect purpose of causing fear and terror in other people. Psychological terrorism, in a real sense, is a form of attack but does not leave any physical marks or impact upon a person or group of people, but eventually leaves psychological injuries or traumas, residual fear or panic impulses that have a lasting impact. In other words any action which is practiced mainly by psychological methods with the aim of evoking a planned premeditated psychological reaction in other people is psychological terrorism. A variety of techniques are used in a calculated way to influence a target population's value system, belief system, emotions, motives, reasoning and behaviour. A mechanism in a well calculated way inducted to make propaganda as a form of indirect aggression so that the opponent begins to doubt the validity of his beliefs and actions. Rohit Vemula's post mortem report might be saying a pressure on wind pipe as the factor causing death. But what emotional and psychological pressure he beard could not reported in any medical report. How he was (psychologically) terrorised which compelled a well educated and bright student to take an extreme step can be studied and understood by psychologists and sociologists. Such people as have been practising psychological onslaughts on caste-basis even if practised by 'fringe groups' should now be called "terrorist groups".

The state and the society are under the obligation to stopping the ongoing 'psychological terrorism' outright. They need to adopt an effective operational system having inbuilt checks and balances, and provide psychological inputs of curative and preventive nature.

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