

Cf: Attachment

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The "atmosphere" - concern for humans etc within our best institutions, is abominable -

There are many scientists who are humane, good people but if some one runs into a problem there is no mechanism which

can intervene + + deflect the "monster" - not the director, not the head of the lab, not fellow Scientists

- no one. I have heard + know of 5 cases in the last 3 months where despair led to disaster. - Delhi is the HQ - of
with Compliments pollution + solution!

DEPARTMENT OF SPACE

Can something
get started?

Cat'sh
9/1/98

Why do our scientists commit suicide?

IT has been over 25 years since Dr. Vinod Shah (a senior IARI scientist) committed suicide. In his suicide note, he had written a number of complaints about the working conditions.

His suicide rocked Parliament. There was strong public condemnation of the congenial working atmosphere prevailing in the institution. But such suicides continue unabated, and there has been little improvement in the working conditions in our scientific institutions.

This year, Dr. Shikha Gupta, employed at the Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital (Delhi) ended her life because of matrimonial discord, and Shalini Dayal, an M.Sc student

at Moradabad (U.P.) committed suicide on account of sexual harassment by a Reader of the college.

Last year, Santosh Rangahwal, an engineer in a private organisation, committed suicide. In 1995, Dr. Davis Frank Singh, a scientist at the Coimbatore-based institute and in 1994, C. Adhishesu, a lecturer of the Delhi University ended their lives. Dr. Singh's wife publicly alleged that official harassment was the cause of her husband's death.

It is indeed disturbing that there is a strong suicidal streak among school- or college-going children because of either failure in the examination or an uncertain

future. The problem has received the attention of social workers who attribute it to a variety of factors such as depression, career frustration, drug addiction and personality disorders. Stress and bottlenecks in social interactions are some of the factors leading to suicide.

The vitiated environment in our institutions forces scientists to end their lives. They become disgusted with the working conditions, harassment and blocks to their progress. The top brass of the institutions, however, dismiss these tragic events as motivated by personal reasons.

The Indian Agricultural Research Institute (New Delhi) has had the dubious distinction

of having the first suicide in the country when Dr. M. T. Joseph took his life in 1960.

And the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and its institutes have 10 suicides to their credit. Since 1960, over 30 scientists have committed suicide in the 10 nationally funded research institutions.

Commenting on the suicides in the ICAR, the Supreme Court, in its 1983 verdict, said, "these are not stray incidents but the outcome of persecution, torture and harassment emanating from the polluted environment in the ICAR and its affiliates". The Court also observed that even after two decades, things have not "improved" at all.

This organisation suffers for lack of

appropriate personnel policy and there is no accountability. The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) system has proved disastrous as it destroys leadership and creates individualisation.

The assessment scheme (every five years) for promotion has been faulty. Those who are denied promotion under the assessment scheme twice, three times or even four, are retrospectively promoted after their cases are reviewed.

The UGC pattern of pay-scales adopted by the ICAR in 1986 compelled a large section of scientists to move court to seek relief because of large-scale anomalies. The courts

indicted the organisation for indulging in wasteful litigation. Other scientific institutions have also been suffering from a similar malady. The CSIR Review Committee (1988) commented that science (in CSIR) had perished while few scientists flourished.

The CSIR Scientific Workers Association has pointed out a number of constraints in the working of the organisation and made specific suggestions for improving the work culture in the laboratories.

Will social scientists and organisations create a better atmosphere to help prevent such human tragedies?

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