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**In the aftermath of the institutional murder of Rohith
The Questions we need to answer for Annihilation of Caste!**

Statement release by **All India Anti-Caste Forum, University Community for Democracy and Equality (UCDE) and Naujawan Bharat Sabha (NBS)**

The institutional murder of the brilliant research scholar and progressive activist Rohith Chakravarthy Vemula has caused a tremendous unrest amongst the students and youth of the country. Not only students and youth from various universities, educational institutions and cities but also concerned citizens from all over the country have taken to streets demanding justice for Rohith. As we know Rohith was a student activist associated with the Ambedkar Students Association and a research scholar who had committed suicide on January 17. But Rohith's death is not a suicide but a cold-blooded institutional murder.

Who Killed Rohith?

Rohith and his friends were active against the Sanghi goons and Fascists in the Hyderabad campus. They openly denounced the acts of awarding capital punishments to all alleged terrorists in the garb of appeasing the collective conscience of the masses, they protested against beef ban, they organized a screening of the film 'Muzzafarnagar Baaqi Hai' which exposes the real face of the communal Fascist saffron brigade, they fought against the caste-based oppression by various Brahminical and Fascist forces active in the campus. As a result, Rohith and his friends had become a threat to the Fascist and Brahminical forces in the campus. As a consequence, taking into cognizance a false complaint of an activist of Sanghi Student organization, Union Minister Bandaru Dattatreya wrote to Human Resource Development Minister Smriti Irani to take action in this matter. Consequently, a series of five letters were written by the HRD ministry to Hyderabad Central University pressurizing the university administration to expel Rohith Vemula and few of his friends. Rohith's NET fellowship had been stopped since July 2015 citing some official reasons. Rohith hailed from a working class household and a significant portion of his family's expenses was met by his fellowship. It can be understood what kind of economic pressure was mounted on Rohith by the University. After this Rohith and his friends were thrown out from their hostels and they were expelled from the University. They were banned from entering the hostel and all the public spaces on the campus. After being targeted and harassed in this way by the university administration, Rohith slowly went into depression and ultimately committed suicide taking with him his beautiful dreams of exploring science, nature and the world of stars. Now BJP is referring to the fact that Rohith in his suicide note had not put the blame on the Government. But everyone is aware of the contents of the letter that Rohith had written to the University administration after being fed up with the oppression and telling the university to provide sodium azide (poison) and a rope to all dalit students at the time of admission. It needs to be noted that in the last one decade itself 9 dalit students have committed suicide at Hyderabad Central University and if one takes into account institutions of higher education in the country, since 2007 around 18 dalit students have taken their lives. Almost all of these students hailed from working class households and lower middle class families. From delay in assigning Research guides or showing inability to provide one at all to delaying all other significant or trivial official academic works has been the general demeanor of the

administration at Hyderabad Central University towards dalit students. Even amongst the students there exists a segregation between the dalit and non-dalit students. In this scenario anyone can fathom the reasons which led to the development of a sense of alienation between mind and body even in a brilliant and sensitive student like Rohith. Rohith was a sensitive, rebellious and conscientious individual who was living in a system and a society that reduces 'every man to his immediate identity, to a vote, to a thing'; where a man's identity is not based on his ideas and philosophy but his caste and his economic background. In a society ruled by a Government which decides what people can and cannot eat, which propagates barbaric frenzy amongst the people based on their religion and their caste; which serves the interests of the corporate houses to prepare a ground for economic exploitation and social oppression of the poor, dalits, minorities, tribals and women; where myths are propagated as scientific truths in Science Congress and no one objects and where the Chief Scientist of ISRO shares stage with Sanghi barbarians and flaunts a Fascist salute. Rohith started a committed fight against all this. Despite being associated first with student front of a parliamentary Left party and later with an Amberkarite student organization and despite help from his comrades, he found himself alone. A sensitive, justice loving and conscientious youth like Rohith found himself in a system and a society which made him consider his own birth as a 'fatal accident'. And in the end he chose to find solace in death. Rohith Vemula's unsuspecting murder has put a question mark on this entire system and it is this very question that is agitating the students and youth of the country today. But why was the entire government with its massive machinery hounding Rohith and his friends in this manner? What was Rohith's crime?

What was Rohith and his friends crime?

The biggest crime of Rohith and his friends was that they not only raised their voice against the communal Fascists in their university campus that are in power today but also mobilized and organized students against their politics of communalism, caste-based oppression and Fascism. Amongst the various characteristics of Fascism, one of the most important is that it cannot tolerate any kind of political dissent. This is the reason behind crushing the reasonable and valid demands of the students of FTII, sacking a Gandhian teacher Sandeep Pandey by the BHU alleging him of being a Naxalite and anti-national, not allowing Siddharth Varadarajan to deliver a talk at Allahabad University, targeting Arundhati Roy for a constitutional act of advocating the rights of a political prisoner. And this is the reason why Hyderabad Central University administration was penalising and harassing Rohith and his friends at the behest of the central government. Rohith and his friends had become a threat for the Sanghi lumpen goons. This is the most important reason why the entire government was after Rohith and his friends.

The second reason for Rohith and his friends being targetted by the government was the fact that they were dalits and came from a vulnerable and weaker section of the society. This made it easier for the government to harass and oppress them in this naked and immoral way. Here it is noteworthy that Rohith belonged to a working class family. This made his position even more vulnerable. The incumbent Fascist government is crushing all kinds of political dissent with barbarism, either by using the official government machinery or by using its unofficial brigade of hoodlums and hooligans. For them it is relatively easy to target Muslims and other religious minorities and specially dalits. The lynching of Akhlaq, beef ban and other fabricated lies leading to the murder of the members various religious minorities stand in testimony to this. Rohith's

institutional murder also corroborates this. It is evident that for the incumbent Fascist government in particular and other oppressive governments in general, dalits are 'soft targets' because they come from an already vulnerable section of the society. The effect of the rampant caste-based discrimination, prejudices and brahminical heirarchical and supremacist ideology in the society ensures the fact that people from backward castes and to an extent dalits can be killed with virtual impunity. Do Bathani Tola, Lakshmanpur Bathe, Khairlanji, Mirchpur, Gohana, Bhagana incidents not stand witness to this fact? Economic oppression and social persecution get intertwined and enhance each other. Those who view economic exploitation and social oppression as two separate things and advocate two different kinds of ideologies to combat them, neither understand economic exploitation nor social oppression. Nor do they understand that any such project of social-political change primarily demands a scientific approach and method and not a pragmatic mixture or integration of mutually opposite or incompatible ideologies.

Rohith Vemula's crime was that despite being a dalit, coming from a vulnerable and weaker section of society, he not only proved his intellectual prowess in an institution of higher education and showed exceptional potential, but he also raised his voice against the hegemony of the elite, Fascist and brahminical ideologies and became a threat to them. Rohith's suicide is an act of rebellion, possibly a desperate rebellion, yet an act of rebellion and in this way even after his death Rohith has not ceased to challenge the system.

The limitations of the Identitarian perspective of struggle for justice for Rohith and the question of the correct viewpoint

The struggle for Justice for Rohith Vemula is continuing in various campuses and cities of the country. Seven of our friends at Hyderabad Central University have been sitting on an indefinite hunger strike for more than 10 days now. Protest demonstrations are being organized throughout the country. The demand of resignation of Smriti Irani is being raised which is justified. Besides, the demand to sack the VC of Hyderabad Central University for his role in Rohith's institutional murder is also being raised. But despite all these justified demands, there are a few problems in the present struggle that face us and without resolving these problems, ultimately we will be strengthening the Right-wing Fascist brahminical forces.

In the words of Rohith himself, his individuality, ideas and struggle should not be reduced to his immediate identity. Not just because Rohith was against this but because this ultimately delivers a fatal blow to the struggle for annihilation of caste. The struggle for justice for Rohith that we have undertaken today and the struggle that Rohith and his friends have been fighting in the Hyderabad Central University against the Fascist brahminical forces is a political and ideological struggle. It is neither a struggle of identities and nor should it be turned into one. This battle cannot be fought standing on the identitarian ground. The biggest proof of how the incumbment government is using this to their advantage is that now BJP and the Sangh are advertising the caste identity of the student member of Sanghi student outfit on whose false complaint Rohith and his friends were persecuted. Smriti Irani gave a statement saying that the other helpless (!) student is being targeted because he is an OBC! In this way the Fascists are retaliating to the act of reducing this political struggle to dalit identity by the progressive forces, that is, by using the OBC caste identity of the student who filed the false complaint against Rohith and his friends. In fact, according to Ambedkerite politics, OBC are friends of the dalits and by integrating these two

sections, 'Bahujan Samaj' is formed. But anyone who closely follows the incidents of caste-based violence and oppression in this country for many decades can tell you that the principal perpetrators of atrocities on poor and working class dalits from Haryana to Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh to Tamil Nadu have been rich farmer castes belonging to the OBC. How can one today implement the idea of establishing unity of Shudra castes and dalits on the basis of identity? Does establishing a unity of the so-called 'Bahujan Samaj' on the basis of caste-based identities in the country make sense today, anywhere from Uttar Pradesh to Haryana, from Bihar to Maharashtra, from Andhra Pradesh to Tamil Nadu? These are the questions that need contemplation.

The reality of Caste is one of the main realities of our society. To consider Caste-based oppression as merely social oppression is a fatal blunder. To reduce it to the world of social-cultural values and Hindu religion is also a big mistake. Caste-based oppression acts as a very powerful tool of converting economic exploitation into super-exploitation. And economic exploitation and plunder in turn give rise to even more horrible forms of caste-based oppression. The recent incidents of atrocities against dalits and murders of dalits in Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan are a testimony to this fact. This is the reason why the struggle for annihilation of caste and struggle of tribals cannot reach its point of culmination inside the ambit of a profit-driven capitalist system which thrives on the loot and exploitation of the labour of working masses as well as the Nature. At the same time, it must be emphasized that without launching an immediate political, economic and social struggle for annihilation of caste right from today, without laying the foundation of a powerful anti-caste cultural movement, without starting an uncompromising struggle against superstitions, religious dogmas; there can be no revolutionary unity of the working classes through which the task of revolutionary transformation of ideology, politics and society can be accomplished. It is also true that in bourgeois electoral politics casteism and brahminism provide the ruling classes with a powerful instrument to divide the prize of plunder amongst themselves and even more than that it helps them to create caste divide and segregation among the working classes that are already plagued with caste-based prejudices. And precisely because of this, annihilation of caste is not possible within the realm of capitalist system. It also needs to be understood that without establishing militant anti-caste and working class-based movements today it will be very difficult to establish a unity required to smash this capitalist system. Whereas on the one hand, a strong struggle against religious dogmas, values, superstitions and brahminical hegemony is the need of the hour, on the other, there is an equal need to view this struggle as an integral part of, and to make it an integral part of the struggle against the entire oppressive-exploitative political, economic and social system.

Those who think that dalit oppression and the caste question can be resolved through gradual economic and political reforms seriously need to retrospect the past. They need to look at what has been achieved through the entire history of the constitutional reforms and those social movements that view the struggle for annihilation of caste as separate from the political struggle against the system and the state. Those who think that there should be one ideology for caste annihilation (in the area of social oppression) and another different revolutionary ideology for the economic and systemic change, need to understand that in our society caste-based oppression also has a class dimension to it. Even where caste-based oppression appears to be completely autonomous of class relations, there too for the annihilation of caste it is imperative to make it a part of the class-based struggle. Merely from the identitarian perspective,

religious reforms or religious conversions, separated from the revolutionary struggle of political state, it is not possible to bring about annihilation of caste by the means of anti-caste socio-cultural movements.

This is the reason why we also need to abandon the identity politics for the struggle of justice for Rohith Vemula. Have we already not sustained huge damage due to this politics of identity? Has not this identity politics already provided enough fuel to the politics of Fascist and brahminical hegemony? We humbly propose that we need to contemplate these questions with utmost seriousness to advance in the right direction of struggle for justice for Rohith. The need to make the entire project of annihilation of caste an integral part of the class struggle and the project of revolutionary transformation has become more pressing than ever. The revolutionary movement of India has been unsuccessful in carrying out this task and this failure has been responsible for the flourishing and proliferation of identity politics. There cannot be a more opportune time to rectify this mistake and only this can be our true revolutionary tribute to Rohith.

Down with Casteism!

Down with Capitalism!

Down with Fascism!
