



**Expose ABVP-BJP's Desperate Slander Campaign to Falsify Rohith's Caste Identity!**  
**After Hounding Rohith as 'Anti-National', ABVP and Modi Govt Are Now Slandering Rohith's Memory and His Mother's Struggle As a Dalit Woman !**

12.16

On 30 Jan, Rohith Vemulla's birth anniversary, the ABVP and the saffron brigade declared to run a "countrywide campaign" to prove that Rohith was not a Dalit and that he falsified his caste certificate! The same day Union Minister **Sushma Swaraj** amplified this lie, saying publicly that Rohith was not a Dalit. The same canard has been repeated in last two days by other BJP leaders. The IB is spending public money and time 'investigating' Rohith's caste and submitting 'reports' to the National Security Advisor that Rohith was not Dalit. Not content with hounding the dalit scholars of HCU and pushing Rohith to death, the saffron brigade is now crossing all limits of lies to carry out its mission of vendetta politics.

**Let there be no mistake:** Rohith was subjected to a political witch-hunt by Union Ministers of the BJP, and expelled from his University, because these powers knew him to be Dalit, and an Ambedkarite activist to boot. It is based on this social identity and ideological viewpoint of Rohith and his friends, that the BJP minister Bandaru Dattatreya dubbed them as 'casteist', 'anti-national' and what not and used the govt machinery to victimise them. It is doubly abominable that even in death, his grieving mother, who brought him up single-handedly, should have to keep 'proving' his Dalit identity in the face of slander by those who hounded him.

**Let's take stock of the ABVP-BJP's slander campaign:**

The ABVP and Modi Government are resting their claim on the 'fact' that Rohith's father says he is Vaddera (BC), and married Radhika, Rohith's mother, after being assured by Rohith's maternal grandmother that she too was Vaddera. (<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Vijayawada/rohiths-father-seeks-judicial-probe-into-his-death/article8155152.ece>). None of these facts are being disputed by anyone.

**What ABVP-BJP Wants to Shout Down:** However, it is the other, terrible, disturbing facts about Rohith and his mother's life that are being slandered and shouted down by the ABVP and Modi Government.

**1. The Stark revelations by the HT journalist:**

The investigative report by Sudipto Mondal of the HT (Rohith Vemula An unfinished Portrait, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/static/rohith-vemula-an-unfinished-portrait/index.html>) puts these facts beyond doubt or question, explaining what Rohith considered 'the fatal accident' of his birth, the reason why he felt that be it his father or his University, all would shun him for being born Dalit. All human relationships had been irretrievably corroded by the poison of caste.

Rohith's mother Radhika was born to Dalit (Mala) migrant labourers. A well educated and well-off Vaddera woman, Anjani, saw the baby Radhika playing at a construction site, took a fancy to her, and 'adopted' her, much as someone might 'adopt' a pet. The sheer casual cruelty of this 'adoption' is all the more terrible, because Anjani could see herself as a benefactress, not an oppressor!

Radhika then lived in her adoptive 'mother's' house as a domestic worker. She did not receive the good education or privileges that the 'adoptive mother's' real children enjoyed. Even as a child, she was abused as a 'Mala b\*\*\*\*' by the woman she knew to be her 'grandmother.'

**Day 5: JNUSU's Indefinite Hunger Strike**

Punish the Culprits of Rohith's Institutional Murder!

Unequivocal Removal of UoH VCI

Sacking of Bandaru Dattatreya and Smriti Irani!

Down With Repeated Police Crackdown on Protestors in Delhi!

In Solidarity With the Continuing Struggle of UoH Students!

**Join JNUSU's Mashal Julooos**

**1 Feb Tonight 9.30pm from Ganga Dhaba to Ad Block**

Rise Up Against Repeated Police Crackdown on Protesters Demanding Justice for Rohith Vemula!

Against Massive Police Brutality of 30 Jan on Student Protestors Outside RSS Office at Delhi

**Join PROTEST DEMO**

**2 Feb at Delhi Police HQ ITO, 11 am**  
**assemble at Ganga Dhaba at 9.30am**

Radhika was married off to Rohith's father at the age of 14, with her Dalit caste status concealed from him. But after five years of marriage, someone leaked the truth to Rohith's father. And as Radhika says, "Mani was always abusive. But after he discovered my caste, he became even more violent. He would beat me almost every day and curse his luck for being cheated into marrying an untouchable." Radhika had to leave her husband's home with her children. She brought up her children all alone, by her own hard labour.

Radhika was exploited as child labour and subjected to child marriage by a Vaddera woman. Rohith's father abandoned Radhika because she was Dalit, not Vaddera. Radhika brought Rohith up, working hard at her sewing machine.

It is preposterous that Rohith's mother's testimony and her brave struggle as a Dalit woman should now be slandered by the ABVP and Modi Government, who already slandered him as 'anti-national' and hounded him to death.

**2. The Legal Position:**

The legal position on this matter is crystal clear, and is being wilfully ignored by the Modi Government and ABVP. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/rohit-vemula-supreme-court-verdict-of-2012-supports-his-dalit-status/article8131528.ece>

The Supreme Court's 2012 verdict in the Rameshbhai Dabhai Naika versus State of Gujarat case holds that there was no "inflexible rule of general application" that in every case of inter-caste marriage in which the mother belonged to an SC/ST community, the child should take his father's caste.

**The SC verdict stated:**

"It is open to the child of such marriage to lead evidence to show that he/she was brought up by the mother who belonged to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe. By virtue of being the son of a forward caste father he did not have any advantageous start in life but on the contrary suffered the deprivations, indignities, humiliaties and handicaps like any other member of **P.T.O.**

the community to which his/her mother belonged. Additionally, that he was always treated as a member of the community to which her mother belonged not only by that community but by people outside the community as well."

"The court further noted that a presumption in favour of every child taking his father's dominant caste was almost impractical. On this point, the court illustrated the case of a pregnant tribal or Scheduled Caste woman, abandoned by her forward caste husband, who would go back to her people and community." (quoted from Supreme Court Verdict of 2012 supports Dalit status of deceased scholar, The Hindu, January 21, 2016)

This is precisely what happened in Radhika's case. Abandoned by her husband for being Dalit, she brought up her kids in the same life of relentless labour, deprivation and humiliation that she herself had known. After all, her own life in a Vaddera home was not one of privilege but one of a forced domestic child labourer. Anjani gave her own birth children the best education - but Radhika received no comparable education, and Rohith and his brothers had to work as construction labourers or domestic workers in order to fund their own higher education.

Rohith and his siblings, as well as their mother Radhika, were expected to work as free labour in Anjani's house, as the HT investigative report establishes:

"Rohith would hate to go to his grandmother's house because every time they went, his mother would start working like a maid," Riyaz says....in Radhika's absence, her children would have to take over the housework. This practice of summoning Rohith's family for housework continued even after they moved into an independent one-room house a kilometre away."

### **3. Saffron Brigade's Patriarchal Casteist Mindset**

Mr Modi has called Dr Ambedkar 'son of a Dalit mother' (Dalit maa ka beta). Rohith too is a son of a Dalit mother, and the BJP should stop displaying their patriarchal casteist minds, that assume that child bears the caste of a father who abandoned him, not that of the mother who bore him and brought him up.

Mr Modi likes to call himself "*ati pichde parivar mein paida hua gareeb ma ka beta*" (son of a poor mother, born in an extremely backward household). Mr Modi, please have the grace to show respect for Rohith's struggle as a 'son of a poor Dalit mother, brought up in a Dalit household.'

### **4. How Rohith Viewed His Identity**

Rohith's own facebook posts (circulated by the Hyderabad Central University Students' movement) holds a clue as to how he viewed his identity and his relationship with his mother's life and struggle. In one facebook post hailing dalit poet Gurram Jashuva, Rohith wrote:

'Who is Gurram Jashuva and why is it important to remember him on his death anniversary day (July 24th)?

*Mahakavi Gurram Jashuva was the first compelling organic Dalit voice in Telugu literature, who exposed the hypocrisy of caste ideology. Jashuva was born to a Dalit (Madiga) woman and Golla (BC) father. He, in his whole life strongly asserted his mother's identity and voiced for abolishing of untouchability and for women's rights... He was humiliated, subjected to an intense mental agony and treated as a literary outcaste by the scholarly world that was dominated by the upper castes....'*

No doubt, Rohith Vemula had every legal right to claim a Dalit identity and avail caste-based reservations, as established by the 2012 court verdict. Yet, the police are inquiring into his caste status and BJP leaders are calling Vemula and his mother liars, much in the same way that the meat in Akhlaque's fridge was investigated. For them, the victim - whether Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim or women - is the accused.

But more than that, it is clear from Vemula's post on Jashuva that it was probably a conscious political choice for him to "strongly assert his mother's identity" as a tribute to her struggles in bringing him up, as a way of embracing Dalit identity with pride. It is this that the BJP leaders and social media hecklers, with their Manusmriti mind-set, simply cannot begin to grasp."

Union Ministers Sushma Swaraj and Smriti Irani - stop slandering the heroic, unbearably painful struggle of Rohith Vemula's mother Radhika - a struggle inextricably and cruelly bound up with her identity as a Dalit woman.

Posting a photograph of his mother's sewing machine, Rohith had said, "This was the main bread-earner for our home before I started getting JRF..." (<http://www.thenewsminute.com/article/my-mother%E2%80%99s-sewing-machine-dads-security-uniform-glimpses-rohith-vemulas-life-37874#sthash.i5bfe0XS.dpuf>)

Rohith wanted to "strongly assert his mother's identity" and her struggle. Prime Minister Modi, shame on your Government and its Ministers, as well as your Government's pet ABVP, for slandering Radhika's identity and her struggle.

It is time the Sangh Parivar and BJP realised that 'Maa' (Mother) is not just an empty honorific to be used rhetorically to suggest national identity (*Maa Bharti ka Laal*, etc). 'Mother' is someone whose labour - literally, right from the nine months of labour in the womb to the entire upbringing of a child - defines a child. No matter how so much Modi & Co. try to falsify his identity, which Rohith proudly owned and for which he was hounded to death, how ever much they call him '*Maa Bharti ka Laal*' - Rohith was a son of his mother Radhika, a sharer of her sufferings, humiliations and whose labour have birth to him, fed and educated him. Don't disrespect and slander Rohith and his mother Radhika, Mr Modi.

*(the leaflet is adapted from the article by Kavita Krishnan, "Radhika Vemula lost her son. Now she's being insulted by the Modi government", Scroll.in, 31 Jan 2016, <http://scroll.in/article/802785/radhika-vemula-lost-her-son-now-shes-being-insulted-by-the-modi-government>)*