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From: British Hindu Voice <bhv@bhv.org.uk>

To: Professor Louise Richardson <vcweb@admin.ox.ac.uk>

Date: 25/03/2021 17:45

Subject: Dr Abhijit Sarkar's hate comments on Sanatan Dharma



Dear Professor Louise Richardson

Re Dr Abhijit Sarkar's hate comments on Sanatan Dharma

I am writing to you on behalf of the British Hindu Voice.(BHV). Details can be accessed through this [weblink](#).

I have followed with interest the views and comments made by many people, media etc on the events leading to the resignation of Ms Rashmi Samant as head of the Oxford Student Union. It appears there has been a co-ordinated and concerted effort to force Ms Rashmi Samant to resign as per the social media posts by Dr Sarkar.

The BHV would like to know what steps University of Oxford has taken to establish the extent of this campaign against Ms Rashmi Samant and what was the specific role played by Dr Sarkar in this?

It would be an understatement to say that the British Hindu community is seething with anger on the statements reportedly made by Dr Abhijit Sarkar, a postdoctoral history researcher at New College, Oxford. In particular, his comments posted on his social media accounts that Samant's parents were followers of "Sanatan Dharma" and such people "should not be allowed" to head the Student Union defies belief. This is seen as hateful not only against the followers of a major "religion" but it is also highly discriminatory against Ms Rashmi Samant at a personal level.

In one of his posts, he is also reported to have said "Very glad to see that she has been forced to resign within 2 days after her election. Tell Zee News that Oxford students are still not ready for "Sanatani" president." Heads would have rolled very quickly if he or anyone else had made similar comments of people belonging to other Faiths.

The above comments are seen as hateful not only against the followers of Sanatan Dharma but it is also highly discriminatory against Ms Rashmi Samant at a personal level.

I understand that in a particularly vile post, Dr. Sarkar accused Ms Samant of being Islamophobic by alleging that she came from coastal Karnataka, which the faculty member termed as "a bastion of Islamophobic far-right forces". This is an intolerable allegation and an irresponsible slur on the Indian state of Karnataka.

Can Dr Sarkar and the University as their employers, justify such outrageous statements? What are the facts to back these statements?

In another post comments were made "...Far-right Desi forces hate White people and Western modernity because they want to reinstate Sanatan Hindu "culture" with its inherent caste-based tortures and the most violent form of patriarchy. Of course, they are always ready to destroy statues of non-Hindutva people, be it Muslims or Christians or liberal Hindus," These are absurd and vile racist and bigoted statements.

It would be helpful to know how is the University proposing to deal with these unwarranted and hurtful statements from a senior academic of your institution? How can students and staff of Indian Sanatan Dharma feel safe from such people if no action is taken against him?

I am told that on February 16, he shared a post in Bengali with Goddess Saraswati photo in it and wrote, "I remember when I was a kid, I broke several Saraswati idols by thrashing them on the floor. I have been aggressively anti-religion from childhood you see." These actions are not anti-religion, they are completely hateful. If they were anti-religion, he would have entered places of worship of other Faiths and destroyed Statues or items of religious significance in there.

Oxford University enjoys a good reputation worldwide. It is one of our most cherished institutions. However, only full and frank replies with prompt and appropriate actions will help Oxford University to maintain this reputation.

I find it difficult how the University can do anything other than to sack Dr Sarkar, of course after a thorough enquiry which should keep in mind the hurt he has given to the followers of the Sanatan Dharm.

I await your response.

Yours sincerely

Vinod Papat

Chair, British Hindu Voice

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