

**Caste-Based Harassment and Institutional Suicide: A Qualitative Case Study
of Ayush Ansha, Darshan Solanki, and Nithin Raj**

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Abstract

This paper titled “Caste-Based Harassment and Institutional Suicide: A Qualitative Case Study of Ayush Ansha, Darshan Solanki, and Nithin Raj” analyzes the existence of caste discrimination and suicides in higher education institutions in India. The paper focuses on three cases, namely Ayush Ansha of IIT Delhi, Darshan Solanki of IIT Bombay, and Nithin Raj of Anjarakkandy Dental College, Kannur (Kerala). The study looks into the prevalence of caste discrimination in each institution and the response of the institution, peers, and family to the unfortunate incidents that happened in the prestigious institutions of the country. It also studies the patterns emerging across these cases using various theories like Social Identity Theory by Henry Tajfel and John Turner, Social Exclusion Theory by Amartya Sen, Theory of Suicide by Emile Durkheim, and Causal Attributions by Aronson and Wilson. The paper also puts forward a cross-cutting analysis of the three cases to analyze the pattern and shed light on the causes of such unfortunate incidents in a rapidly developing country. The study drew patterns based on the analysis of the three cases that can be narrowed down to caste Vs meritocracy, structures of everyday caste violence, institutional denial, depoliticization, and victim-blaming, broken support systems, family, peer, and activist counter-memory, and government inadequacies and interventions. Further, policy changes and governmental initiatives are also studied to provide a safe space and a progressive and inclusive environment for students. The study holds relevance in 21st-century India, where education and technology have taken our country to the zenith of success; however, the evil system of caste is deeply rooted in the educated minds that shatter the lives of the backbone of our nation.

Keywords: Caste-based harassment, institutional suicide, social identity, social exclusion, inclusive environment, etc.

1.Introduction

Casteism is a deep-seated hierarchical system that induces social segregation and alienation, showcasing one's social status, economic stability, and opportunities. Established more than 2000 years ago, casteism has led to the stratification of society between the haves and have-nots, dictating unjust and unfair treatment of citizens. The eradication of this system has been a long-term crisis since the construction of the Constitution and the Ambedkar movements; nevertheless, it remains an evil system in modern Indian society.

The influence of casteism is explicitly visible in every sector of society. In the 21st century, with the immense progress in innovations and scientific explorations, society is still adamant about following all the stringent caste rules and lifestyles. Its presence in the educational field is the greatest threat faced by students, where they are treated unequally, questioning their dignity and self-respect. It's a common myth advocated by the upper-caste society, including students, faculty, and media, that caste-based discrimination and superiority are absent in academic spaces and are only practiced in uncivilized rural spheres. However, the recent unfortunate cases in Indian institutions regarding the suicides of lower-caste students caused by caste-based harassment point to the fact that Indian society has a strong foundation of the caste system, molding the thoughts and ideals of humanity.

Casteism is highly prevalent in the higher educational wing in both direct and indirect ways in the form of ragging, harassment, casteist slurs, opposition to the constitutional provisions of reservation, microaggressions, alienation, etc. Many instances are traced in the current educational scenario, where the institution blames the victims and addresses them as "mentally weak" and "incapable of handling academic pressures", following their suicide. Society has witnessed the suicide of Rohit Vemula, a PhD scholar at the University of Hyderabad, who committed suicide due to caste discrimination and frequent humiliation from his professors. He was denied his scholarship amount for many months, which was the only means of his family's survival. This led to his suicide, writing a note, "My Birth is my fatal accident". Though this incident initiated social outrage and protests to end the resentment towards the lower caste sections of society, it continues, which is evident through the death of Nithin Raj.

The marginalized students are considered outcaste, and the psychological trauma and burden carried by them and their families shed light on the prejudiced lives, leaving them no choice to live with pride. As B. R. Ambedkar pointed out, "The outcaste is a by-product of the caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes. Nothing can emancipate the outcaste except the destruction of the caste system." (Annihilation of Caste: The Annotated Critical Edition). Thus, Ambedkar urged students to prioritize education and become responsible citizens through his words, "Be educated, be organized, and be agitated." (Annihilation of Caste). However, these educational institutions, responsible for shaping the minds of society to lead an equal and fair life, pave the way to humiliation, physical and mental abuse, and finally to suicide.

This study aims to analyze the caste-based discrimination faced by three students, namely Nithin Raj and Darshan Solanki, in various Indian universities, leading to their suicides. It also aims to study the victims' family members, peers, and institutions' responses to identify the underlying factors of the unfortunate incident and to develop practical solutions and recommendations to this grave issue.

2.Objectives

- To analyze the existence of caste-based harassment in each institution.
- To study institutional responses followed by suicide cases.
- To understand the experiences and observations of peers and families of related cases.
- To analyze the pattern emerging across three cases.

3.Research questions

- How did caste discrimination manifest in each institution according to the peers and family members?
- What institutional responses (or lack thereof) followed complaints or incidents?
- How did peers and families experience and interpret the events?
- What patterns emerge across the three cases?

4.Methodology

Social Identity Theory was developed by Henry Tajfel and John Turner during the 1970s to explain the concept of social identity and the psychological basis of interactions between social groups (Abrams & Hogg, 2016). According to the theory, individuals develop and understand their social roles through three interconnected psychological processes: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison (Turner & Reynolds, 2001). Social categorization is the cognitive process of placing people into different social groups, which helps individuals simplify and interpret complex social interactions. Social identification occurs when individuals adopt the identity of a group with which they associate and adjust their behavior according to its perceived norms and values (Plous, 2003). Social comparison involves differentiating one's own group from other groups to enhance the perceived status and superiority of the in-group (Turner & Reynolds, 2001). Overall, SIT offers a useful framework for understanding the psychological roots of intergroup discrimination, exclusion, prejudice, and conflict.

Social Exclusion Theory by Amartya Sen defines social exclusion not merely as low income but as a relational failure in which people are blocked from fully participating in economic, social, and political life (Sen A, 2000). His focus on the relational nature of institutions and society in denying people's rights and community connections has a deep impact, rather than measuring their low income. It also rejects the binary terms of inclusion vs exclusion, as he observes multidimensional aspects, where sometimes they are included (like in labor) and sometimes excluded by placing them at the lowest step of social hierarchy and denying basic safety. It also introduced the concept of 'capability deprivation'. Capability here means real opportunities or the freedom to achieve something that adds value to their lives. When people are valued based on their functionalities, such as being healthy,

being respected, or being part of the community as decision-makers, they can turn everything around them into meaningful choices.

Emile Durkheim's theory of suicide states that suicides are socially instigated through social integration and moral regulation. In his seminal work "Suicide", he classified it into anomic suicide and fatalistic suicide. In the world of rapid modernization and lifestyle changes, anomic suicides are often due to a lack of moral regulation and social guidance. Individuals feel lost, confused, and disoriented as their desires can no longer be satiated by an unstable social norm whose enforcement is weak. Fatalistic suicide occurs when there is oppressive control over people's lives and choices. Individuals live in a suffocating world, where everything controls them, giving them a blurred and choked vision of their future.

In social psychology, Aronson and Wilson proposed a phenomenon called Causal Attributions in 2015, which showcases the prejudices and attitudes of in-group and out-group members about each other. For instance, the academic achievements of upper-caste students are attributed to their skills, hard work, and perseverance. In contrast, the accomplishments of lower-caste students are ascribed to reservations, scholarships, etc. This builds a prejudice in the minds of upper-caste students and faculty that shapes their attitude toward lower-caste students. Similarly, lower-caste students also assume that upper-caste students' success is due to financial stability that provides better exposure, opportunities, good accommodation, study materials, and support from faculty and administration. This makes them place upper-caste students ahead of their own abilities, skills, and values.

5.Literature Review

In the article titled "Caste-Based Discrimination in Higher Education: An Application of Microaggression Theory in Indian Context" by Bharat Rathod, the author envisions the serious impact of caste-based harassment in Indian institutions through the lens of microaggression theory. He stated that implied, subtle caste-based microaggressions are visible on university campuses and hamper lower-caste students from performing proficiently in academics and other activities.

The qualitative study conducted in one of the state universities in Uttar Pradesh by Rakesh Kumar Maurya, entitled "In Their Own Voices: Experiences of Dalit Students in Higher Education Institutions," reflected that both explicit and subtle ways of caste discrimination, humiliation, and exclusion were experienced by Dalit students from faculty, peers, and administration. Key examples include the analysis of their surnames to decode their caste identity, addressing them as 'quota students' who are not bright enough to handle the academic pressures, ignoring social relationships with them as a result of weak financial status, self-devaluation that hinders their self-respect and dignity, etc. This resulted in significant changes in their personalities and group behaviors, alienating them from the mainstream. He also pointed to the institutions' attitude towards complaints raised by lower-caste students, which are often ignored, mocking their inability to cope with the educational environment.

“Caste Conflicts on Campuses: Examining Diversity Research to Transform Indian Universities into Inclusive Learning Spaces” by Geetha B. Nambissan and N. Sukumar explores the archaic notion of caste-based pollution, thereby creating a hostile situation in various spaces they engage in. The general assumption that lower-caste students are less competent and inferior, and that their entrance to the prestigious institution was paved by scholarships and reservations, failed to recognize their academic abilities. They also asserted that explicit and harsh treatments were replaced by subtle microaggressions, initiating an unequal space within the campus environment.

In the book review of N. Sukumar’s “Caste Discrimination and Exclusion in Indian Universities: A Critical Reflection,” L. David Lal points out that the book embarks on a journey to explore the social relationships and experiences of lower caste students in higher educational institutions. The book was composed based on field-based research, extensive questionnaires in various languages, and interviews that portray a comprehensive analysis of the consequences of caste-based discrimination, such as lack of social dynamics, struggle for equality and self-dignity, mental imbalance leading to self-harm and suicide, and systemic discrimination.

The Senthilkumar Solidarity Committee, in “Caste, Higher Education and Senthil’s Suicide” in 2008, proposed that the universities feign responsibility for Senthil’s suicide by shifting the focus of the issue to his mental illness and incompetence. As a Dalit research scholar, his education depended on the non-NET fellowship he received from the university, which was revoked, claiming his lack of proficiency in coursework. This led to his suicide, where the university claimed it was a cardiac arrest, while the real cause of death was poisoning. To safeguard from legal repercussions, the university’s tactics to blame the victim and question his capability were highly criticized by society. The repeated domination and discrimination by the upper-caste students and faculty push the marginalized into eternal despair, leading to suicide as the final option to regain their dignity.

“Complexities of Inclusion and Exclusion: Dalit Students and Higher Education in India” by Sunil M. Neelakandan and Smitha Margeshwar Patil envisions the role of caste in seamless educational provision in various institutions. They opine that the helplessness of the Dalit community is caught between social inclusion and exclusion. While the Constitution guarantees privileges to the marginalized sections, they are often unenforced, perpetuating the hegemonic dominance of the upper caste and inducing social exclusion of the marginalized. The authors question these ideological contrasts to shed light on the harsh realities of Dalit scholars surviving in such a biased environment.

Though caste discrimination has been widely a subject of discussion for a long period of time, the study of its harsh influence in educational institutions is limited. Therefore, this study aims to bridge that gap by understanding the nature of caste discrimination evident in various Indian institutions through a cross-case analysis of three distinct cases. The study also aims to

provide suitable recommendations that preserve the ethical, moral, and legal rights of marginalized students of our country.

6.Case Presentations/Findings

In the current epoch, discrimination exists widely in various forms, both implicit and explicit, that deteriorate their fundamental right to live with dignity, causing severe mental, emotional, and psychological barriers that hamper students from pursuing successful careers. The three case studies of Darshan Solanki, Nithin Raj, and Ayush Ansha showcase the harsh atrocities confronted by lower-caste students on campus, ultimately leading to suicides. Lack of education or knowledge on social inclusion and the rights of every citizen is out of the picture in these cases, as Professors and highly qualified scholars are largely accused of creating a discriminatory environment in classrooms and campuses, building a barrier between students based on their marks secured, reservation criteria, etc.

Case 1: Ayush Ansha

Ayush Ansha, a 21-year-old final-year B.Tech student of IIT Delhi, hailing from Barcilly, Uttar Pradesh, committed suicide on July 9, 2023, failing the values of our educational system. His suicide has sparked huge protests in the streets of the IIT Delhi Campus, where students were mistreated by the police force, denying their right to speak about the issue to the national media. The students questioned our system on the denial of the right to express and demanded what kind of freedom we are exercising when the public has no right to address the injustice and the plight of our students, who had to succumb to death, not because they were cowards, but because they no longer believed in our system. The students alleged that professors constantly spewed their hatred toward low-caste students, demeaning them if they arrived from jungles based on their dressing. His father, Ramesh Kumar, filed a written complaint at the police station regarding the harassment his son was facing from hostel mates and other faculty members at the commencement of the academic year. The father also suspected it was a murder, as his son couldn't have taken such drastic steps. However, the police wrapped up the case, pointing to pressure in academics, as stated by his family.

The student's fraternity challenged the accountability of the institution and called it an institutional murder. An IIT student commended that "even during the condolence meeting, the administration continually tried to evade responsibility by labelling him introverted, despite their lack of personal knowledge about the boy". A statement was released by APPSC reflecting the lack of inclusivity on campus, where his identity was kept in the dark. They condemned the administration's strategy to depoliticize the death of a marginalized student and close the case with the tag of a suicide, which allows the authorities to wash their hands of the atrocities lashed out at them, which impelled them to move into drastic decisions. During the candlelight march on July 13, a JNU student remarked on the urgency to sensitize SC/ST cells that must accommodate members from the community, who can work closely towards issues faced by the marginalized communities.

There were loud voices raising concerns about the silence of the institution and its disregard for social consciousness in dealing with issues like caste discrimination, and shouldered responsibility for eradicating this evil system. They also pointed out the hypocrisy of numerous research studies and publications on SC/ST rights, education, career, and future, whereas the reality seems dark and deep, with no trace of humanity existing in the minds of the privileged sections.

Case 2: Darshan Solanki

Darshan Solanki, an 18-year-old student at IIT Bombay, committed suicide on February 12, 2023, owing to fierce mental and psychological monstrosities he had to tackle on campus, making him feel insignificant and less of a human. Though the court dismissed the case by declaring there was no significant evidence of caste discrimination, his family and peer group strongly asserted the harassment he had to withstand, citing every instance that humiliated him to the core.

One of his seniors from the chemical engineering department handed in a statement to a 12-member panel assigned for investigation that he was alienated by his roommate being aware of his rank. Thus, Solanki approached the senior to inquire about the procedures to change his room so as not to create any annoyance to his roommate; however, there were no such formalities, and the senior advised him to ignore his presence and try to build new relationships with other students.

According to the senior, Solanki felt both lonely and pressurized of studies to take such a drastic step. The isolation he felt within the campus, and in his own room, based on his caste identity was wholly overlooked by the investigation team to dismiss the case by reporting 'no specific evidence of direct caste-based discrimination'. The case considered his deteriorating academic performance as the cause of suicide, which led to anxiety about his future, based on an audio recording collected from the SC/ST student cell that was devoid of any particular instance of caste-based harassment. Also, the absence of suicide notes or complaints in the SC/ST cell or students' wellness terminated the case as 'accidental death'. Based on a survey conducted by IIT Bombay in 2022, one out of three SC/ST students was asked about their caste. 15.5% of students endure mental health issues from caste-based segregations. One out of three students firmly believed in the inaction of the SC/ST cell on this matter and called for a strong need to address casteism on and off campus. This survey vividly states the inaccuracy of the investigation that merely dismissed the case based on evidence from the SC/ST cell or students' wellness, as they are not effectively functioning groups that steadfastly act on such grave concerns. Similarly, according to the internal survey conducted by the SC/ST Students' Cell of IIT Bombay, over 37% of SC/ST students reported asking their entrance scores, mindful of their identity, to choose companions accordingly. This states the reality of the senior's statement of Solanki's alienation by his roommate having realized his rank, which was

unheeded before the repudiation of the case. Additionally, another survey conducted in collaboration with Students' Wellness reflected the extent of discrimination encountered by Dalits and Adivasi students on campus.

His family evidently stated the distress he was in due to constant harassment he encountered. His mother commented, "he was in distress; he was being tortured". His aunt also stated that he was a subject of mockery among the fellow students as he studied for free and was hugely jealous. He was laughed at for asking questions in technical aspects and other subjects, according to his sister, who stated it before the panel of investigation. The Ambedkar Periyar Phule Study Circle (APPSC) commented that the report released by IIT Bombay is a 'haunting reminder of denial of justice'.

A student's life, merely reduced to his caste identity, that led to his suicide was denied justice, where the institution escaped through victim-blaming and pressure from peers and academics. As an SC student, he was subjected to the general stereotype of an incapable student who acquired an opportunity through reservation, putting back his hard work and aspirations.

Case 3: Nithin Raj

Nithin Raj, a 22-year-old first-year BDS student at Anjarakandy Dental College, Kannur, Kerala, committed suicide on April 10, 2026, by leaping from the college building. His family and peers affirmed that it was a caste killing driven by systemic harassment. He was the son of a painting labourer, who carried aspirations of his family and worked hard with determination in the dream of climbing the zenith of success. Despite his accomplishments in the academic field, he was constantly subjected to harassment and mockery based on his caste, color, and financial background by his teachers.

His family reported that he was derided as a "slum dog and mad dog" in classrooms in the presence of his peers. His father claimed that there were deliberate threats from the part of teachers who would reduce his internal marks as punishment. He added that his mother's surgery was also taunted in classrooms. Other students were encouraged to laugh at all the mockeries, and this was not an isolated case. His answer sheets were shared in the classroom to humiliate him, and this crossed all limits as the Professors began using derogatory terms. They even threatened to chop off his hands and legs if he dared to speak up. Tolerating all the verbal and mental harassment, Mr. Nithin settled on speaking up and drafted a complaint against his Head of the Department to the Principal, which further worsened the situation.

Following the suicide, two faculty members were suspended after the initial internal inquiry. The registration of the case as 'unnatural death' initiated the mob, which draws comparison to other institutional murders in India. Indian politician Shashi Tharoor has condemned the incident, stating that 'education must be sanctuaries of learning rather than arenas of humiliation'. The disturbing pattern of casteist suicides that is increasing at an exponential rate in Indian institutions points to the dark reality of our society, which is

emerging powerful in scientific and technological explorations, where at the same time moral, social, and humanitarian values are plummeting.

7.Cross-cut Analysis of the Three Cases

The three cases of Ayush Ansha, Darshan Solanki, and Nithin Raj, who succumbed to death due to the failure of our system, collectively present a consistent pattern: institutions readily evaded accountability, putting the burden upon students themselves, accusing them of lacking willpower to navigate academic pressure and their personal issues, while denying the existence of caste discrimination, isolation, and institutional failure.

I.Caste Vs Meritocracy

While all three students pursued their education under the “reservation quota”, many of their peers were disturbed by the opportunity they could enjoy, leading to their isolation. However, reservation was only a criterion that ensured the right to education for these students and their sustenance on campus and their academics, showcasing their skills and intelligence, were largely neglected by the privileged peers of the campus.

All three embody their upliftment through education; nevertheless, their identity, background, and reservation status overshadowed their right to life. Merit was always observed through the lens of caste-coded suspicion, where Dalit students are considered undeserving candidates in the aura of the privileged ones. Thus, the embodiment of knowledge and wisdom itself sees its students through the eyes of caste hierarchies, preventing it from heralding and appreciating its students’ values and interests.

Besides their aspirations and hard work, their peers and professors could only identify them as low-caste, undeserving, and ignorant minds who secured seats only with the ‘privilege’ of reservation. Their reservation ranks were their identity, not their determination to widen their horizon of dreams and earn a reputed life for them and their families. Their caste, creed, and color were the only measuring tool for their intelligence, dreams, and aspirations.

II.Structures of Everyday Caste Violence

Caste-based harassment and mockery were an everyday activity for the peers and faculty members that produced shame, isolation, and fear in the students. If Darshan’s was more implicit and peer-mediated, Nithin’s was faculty-led, and Ayush’s was a mix of peer and faculty humiliation. Together, they represent how caste functions in the minds of society across institutions.

Darshan Solanki had to find a new room to pacify the discomfort of his roommate being aware of his reservation status and to lead an isolated life thereafter. However, his anxiety and loneliness were brushed aside even by the investigation team, casually terming it ‘academic stress’. Nithin was subjected to cruel verbal abuse, calling him a slum dog and even mocking his mother’s surgery. He was threatened with serious punishments for reporting, which reflects the horrific climate of

the institution rather than an educational atmosphere. Ayush also had to face similar situations where he was mocked as ‘coming from the jungle’. Even with prior complaints and disagreements, no action was taken by the authority to bring an egalitarian atmosphere on campus.

III. Institutional denial, depoliticization, and victim-blaming

In all three cases, it is very evident that the institution and investigation team have taken a safe stand of depoliticization of the unfortunate incidents by victim-blaming and total denial of their role in perpetuating the injustice that has taken away their lives. The 12-member committee has ruled out caste discrimination from the scene and focused on the academic pressure, isolation, and introversion. The evidence collected from SC/ST cells, his sister’s testimony, and implicit discrimination was cast aside, which APPSC called a ‘haunting reminder of denial of justice’.

Nithin’s case, registered as an ‘unnatural death’ even after the professors were found guilty, was a clear-cut reflection of the attitude of the authority that sidelined all evidence for institutional legitimacy. The same approach, though geographical differences exist, was visible in the case of Ayush, where he was blamed for evading responsibility.

Stress, academic pressure, and their personality were routine tools for the institution and investigation team to sideline the real cause of their suicide. The absence of formal complaints or suicide notes added to their advantage in denying suicide due to caste discrimination.

IV. Broken support systems

The three cases are an ideal scenario that reflects how support systems exist as formal signs of inclusion; however, lacks in its purpose and efficiency. In SC/ST cells, there is a shortfall in the representation of the communities, echoing the mistrust and fear instilled in the students. And this silence was misunderstood by the investigation team as safety, rather than as a sign of the students’ deep insecurity about approaching the cell during crisis, which is its sole purpose. As a result, the police concluded ‘no caste discrimination’ was evident in these cases, as students haven’t approached the cells to address their grievances. Student statements also emphasize the structural weakness, depoliticized, and disconnected cells that are far from the lived realities of the marginalized communities. Internal surveys also indicate that these cells rarely act decisively in order to protect the rights and lives of students.

V. Family, peer, and activist counter-memory

Families, students, and activist groups argue against the notion of ‘isolated cases’ as these are institutional murders arising from a casteist environment. The continual harassment based on their ranks, the mockery, the loneliness inflicted by peers, the hostility of professors, the threats, and the derogatory terms lashed at them in all the cases show that they are not three exhilarated students who ceased believing the system, but representatives of the thousands who remain among the hidden walls of caste discrimination.

VI. Government Inadequacies and Interventions

The Constitution of India protects the lives and rights of every citizen, and thus, it adequately addresses caste discrimination and policies to safeguard the lives of marginalized communities through reservations, scholarships, etc. However, its practical implications remain a failure, as reflected through suicide cases and mental health issues in prestigious higher education institutions.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has also ensured the protection and safety of the students through STRICT policies and guidelines; however, their enforcement remains a question mark, leading to isolation and plummeting mental health in students.

The Thorat Committee report investigated the caste-based harassment faced by SC/ST students in AIIMS, New Delhi. It reported several issues such as academic bias, social segregation, and denigration. Though the recommendations and suggestions of the committee were legally implemented on campuses across India, student suicides due to caste discrimination point to the lack of efficacy of these guidelines on campuses.

The Rohit Act is a proposed anti-discrimination law protecting the rights of marginalised castes (SC, ST, OBC, and other religious minorities), demanding institutional accountability, establishing strict grievance redressal systems, equal opportunity cells with adequate representation of members from SC, ST, OBC sections, and severe legal penalties for colleges, administrations, and students who fail to follow the rules. This bill has been passed and approved by state legislation, such as Karnataka, to bring equity and an inclusive atmosphere in campuses. However, the Union Government has not passed the bill, despite nationwide demand to address this grave concern for a safe, equal, and inclusive environment.

8. Policy Changes and Practical Implications

The rising number of caste-based discrimination cases reported by the UGC, which accounts for a 118.4% increase over five years, with escalation from 173 cases (2019 to 20) to 378 cases (2023-24), accentuates the need to implement strong, strict, and enforceable policies to build an inclusive campus environment. Thus, key policy changes introduced by UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) to address the issue include; Expanded Social Groups – UGC included Other Backward Classes (OBC) alongside SC and ST, extending legal rights and protection to OBCs, which was a major absence in the previous regulation.

Equal Opportunity Centres – UGC instructed every higher education institution to establish an Equal Opportunity Centre (EOC), under which each institution must develop an Equity Committee, chaired by the head of the institution, with mandatory representation from SCS, STS, OBC, persons with disabilities, and women. This ensures an egalitarian and inclusive atmosphere, where every member takes an active role in decision-making and implementation. This framework also facilitates mobile equity squads, a 24x7 helpline, and equity ambassadors to ensure proper functioning and foster equity in institutions.

National Level Monitoring – UGC will set up a national monitoring committee ensuring the participation of statutory bodies and civil societies to regulate, monitor, review complaints, and advise precautionary measures to build a stable and peaceful environment in campuses. Penalties for Non-Compliance – Those institutions failing to follow the regulations may encounter debarment from UGC schemes, restriction to offer courses, or removal from UGC recognition, reinforcing the rules as strong, enforceable, and active rather than remaining passive in the rulebook.

9.Conclusion

The cases of Darshan Solanki, Nithin Raj, and Ayush Ansha reveal a systemic pattern of caste-based discrimination in Indian higher education institutions, where marginalized students face relentless harassment from peers and faculty alike, ultimately driving them to suicide. Institutions consistently evade accountability by dismissing these deaths as outcomes of academic pressure or personal weakness, while ignoring overwhelming evidence of casteist hostility embedded in campus culture.

Despite policy reforms like the UGC's expanded equity regulations and mandatory Equal Opportunity Centres, implementation remains weak, and support mechanisms such as SC/ST cells are often inaccessible or unresponsive to students' lived realities. True institutional change requires not only stricter enforcement of anti-discrimination policies but also a cultural shift that challenges caste privilege, centers marginalized voices in governance, and treats every student's dignity as non-negotiable. Without this, campuses will continue to function as sites of exclusion rather than sanctuaries of learning and empowerment.

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