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## Karnataka To Enact Rohith Act Amid Growing Movement Against Caste Discrimination In Universities

*The tragic deaths of Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi highlighted the ongoing issue of institutional caste discrimination in universities across the country.*



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By [ETV Bharat English Team](#)

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**Bengaluru:** A statewide movement in Karnataka has gained momentum, urging the government to implement the Rohith Act, a proposed legislation to curb caste discrimination in higher educational institutions. Civil Society Groups, Student Organisations and activists have rallied behind this demand, pressing for the law's enactment by April 14.

Despite constitutional promises of equality, Dalit, Bahujan and Adivasi students continue to face systemic discrimination. The tragic deaths of students like Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi brought national attention to the institutional casteism that persists across universities.

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Between 2014 and 2021, 122 students died by suicide in India's premier institutions like IITs, IIMs, NITs, and central universities--68 of them from SC, ST, or OBC communities--from 2018 to 2023, over 13,000 Dalit-Bahujan students dropped out of central universities due to various institutional challenges.

The Thorat Committee's findings further documented how caste bias affects everyday life on campus, from hostels and mess halls to classrooms and playgrounds. "These are not just statistics," said an activist. "They are dreams shattered by a system that continues to exclude and discriminate."

Responding to the growing concern, Congress MP Rahul Gandhi met with students and teachers from marginalised communities in Parliament. He later wrote to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, emphasising the need for legal safeguards against caste discrimination in education.

"It is a shame that even today millions of students from Dalit, Adivasi and OBC communities have to face such brutal discrimination in our educational system," Gandhi stated in his letter.

On April 18, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced the government's commitment to enacting the Rohith Act. "Our government stands firm in its resolve to ensure that no student faces discrimination based on caste, class, or religion," he said. The law will aim to protect students' rights and dignity, inspired by the memory of Rohith Vemula, Payal Tadvi, and others.

While laws like the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act exist, activists argue they do not adequately address the day-to-day discrimination in academic settings. The proposed Rohith Act would require anti-discrimination policies, caste-sensitisation training and support systems like language assistance for students from marginalised communities.

"This is a welcome move," said Dr Ashna Singh, a professor,

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told ETV Bharat. Despite existing regulations, discrimination persists due to weak implementation. The Rohith Act will ensure accountability.”

Speaking to ETV, advocate Maitreyi Krishnan, part of the ongoing People’s Movement for Change, emphasised the importance of forming implementation committees with Dalit student representation. “Our goal is to eradicate caste discrimination from education and build an equal Karnataka.”

As the movement continues to gather support, rallies and public discussions across the state echo a single message: education must be a right for all, not a privilege for some.

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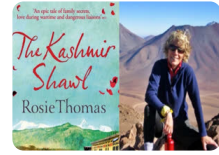
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