

From,
Anita Augustine, Mother of Late Ms. Anna Sebastian Perayil

To,
Rajiv Memani, EY India Chairman

Dear Rajiv,

I am writing this letter as a grieving mother who has lost her precious child, Anna Sebastian Perayil. My heart is heavy, and my soul is shattered as I pen these words, but I believe it is necessary to share our story in the hope that no other family will have to endure the pain we are going through.

Anna passed her CA Exams in November'23 and joined EY Pune on March 19th, 2024, as an Executive. She was full of life, dreams, and excitement for the future. EY was her first job, and she was thrilled to be part of such a prestigious company. But four months later, on July 20th, 2024, my world collapsed when I received the devastating news that Anna had passed away. She was just 26 years old.

Anna was always a fighter, from childhood through her academic years, where she excelled in everything she did. She was a school topper, and a college topper, excelled in extracurricular activities, and passed her CA exams with distinction. She worked tirelessly at EY, giving her all to meet the demands placed on her. However, the workload, new environment, and long hours took a toll on her physically, emotionally, and mentally. She began experiencing anxiety, sleeplessness, and stress soon after joining, but she kept pushing herself, believing that hard work and perseverance were the keys to success.

On Saturday, July 6th, my husband and I reached Pune to attend Anna's CA Convocation. Since she had been complaining of chest constriction upon reaching her PG late at night (around 1 am) for the past week, we took her to the hospital in Pune. Her ECG was normal, and the cardiologist came to allay our fears, telling us she wasn't getting enough sleep and was eating very late. He prescribed antacids, which reassured us that it wasn't anything serious. Though we had come all the way from Kochi, she insisted on going to work after seeing the doctor, saying there was a lot of work to be done and she wouldn't get leave. That night, she returned to her PG late again. On Sunday, July 7th, the day of her convocation, she joined us in the morning, but she was working from home even that day until the afternoon, and we reached the convocation venue late.

It was my daughter's great dream to take her parents to her convocation with her own hard-earned money. She booked our flight tickets and took us. It breaks my heart to tell you that even during those two days, which were the last we would spend with our child, she couldn't enjoy them because of the work pressure.

When Anna joined this specific team, she was told that many employees had resigned due to the excessive workload, and the team manager told to her, "Anna, you must stick around and

change everyone's opinion about our team." My child didn't realize she would pay for that with her life.

Her manager would often reschedule meetings during cricket matches and assign her work at the end of the day, adding to her stress. At an office party, a senior leader even joked that she would have a tough time working under her manager, which, unfortunately, became a reality she could not escape.

Anna confided in us about the overwhelming workload, especially the additional tasks assigned verbally, beyond the official work. I would tell her not to take on such tasks, but the managers were relentless. She worked late into the night, even on weekends, with no opportunity to catch her breath. Her assistant manager once called her at night with a task that needed to be completed by the next morning, leaving her with barely any time to rest or recover. When she voiced her concerns, she was met with the dismissive response, "You can work at night; that's what we all do."

Anna would return to her room utterly exhausted, sometimes collapsing on the bed without even changing her clothes, only to be bombarded with messages asking for more reports. She was putting in her best efforts, working very hard to meet the deadlines. She was a fighter to the core, not someone to give up easily. We told her to quit, but she wanted to learn and gain new exposure. However, the overwhelming pressure proved too much even for her.

Anna would never have blamed her managers. She was too kind for that. But I cannot remain silent. Burdening newcomers with such backbreaking work, making them work day and night, even on Sundays, has no justification whatsoever. She had just left her hometown and loved ones. Everything was new to her—the organization, the place, the language—and she was trying very hard to adjust. You should show some consideration to new employees. Instead, the management took full advantage of the fact that she was new and overwhelmed her with both assigned and unassigned work.

This is a systemic issue that goes beyond individual managers or teams. The relentless demands and the pressure to meet unrealistic expectations are not sustainable, and they cost us the life of a young woman with so much potential.

Anna was a young professional, just starting her career. Like many in her position, she did not have the experience or the agency to draw boundaries or push back against unreasonable demands. She did not know how to say no. She was trying to prove herself in a new environment, and in doing so, she pushed herself beyond her limits. And now, she is no longer with us.

I wish I had been able to protect her, to tell her that her health and well-being mattered more than anything else. But it is too late for my Anna.

I am writing to you now, Rajiv, because I believe EY has a profound responsibility to ensure the well-being of its employees. Anna's experience sheds light on a work culture that seems to

glorify overwork while neglecting the very human beings behind the roles. This is not just about my daughter; it's about every young professional who joins EY filled with hopes and dreams, only to be crushed under the weight of unrealistic expectations. I took the time to read [EY's human rights statement](#), which bears your signature. I cannot reconcile the values expressed in that statement with the reality my daughter faced. How can EY begin to truly live by the values it professes?

Anna's death should serve as a wake-up call for EY. It is time to reflect on the work culture within your organization and take meaningful steps to prioritize the health and wellness of your employees. This means creating an environment where employees feel safe to speak up, where they are supported in managing their workload, and where their mental and physical well-being is not sacrificed for the sake of productivity.

No one from EY attended Anna's funeral. This absence at such a critical moment, for an employee who gave her all to your organization until her last breath, is deeply hurtful. Anna deserved better, and so do all the employees who continue to work under these conditions. My heart aches not just for the loss of my child but also for the lack of empathy shown by those who were supposed to guide and support her. After her funeral, I reached out to her managers, but I received no reply. How can a company that speaks of values and human rights fail to show up for one of its own in their final moments?

Becoming a Chartered Accountant involves years of toil, hardship, and sacrifice—not only for the student but also for the parents. Years of my child's hard work have been snuffed out by just four months of EY's callous attitude.

I hope this letter reaches you with the gravity it deserves. I don't know if anyone can truly understand a mother's emotions when she lays to rest her child—the child she held in her arms, watched grow, play, cry, and shared dreams with—unless they have experienced the same pain.

I hope my child's experience leads to real change so that no other family has to endure the grief and trauma we are going through. My Anna is no longer with us, but her story can still make a difference.

Sincerely,
Anita Augustine.