



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
Only IAS Academy by Grandson of "Perunthalsivam Kamarajar"

Ragging

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Why is in news?

Five days after the death of a first-year student at West Bengal's Jadavpur University (JU), a new hoarding on campus declared in bold, red and black letters: 'Ragging: A Criminal Offence.

The Supreme Court of India directs institutions to expel students found guilty of ragging.' Also on display were names and telephone numbers of 22 members of the university's Anti-Ragging Committee.

About:

Ragging is a disturbing reality in the higher education system of our country.

Despite the fact that over the years ragging has claimed hundreds of innocent lives and has ruined the careers of thousands of bright students, the practice is still perceived by many as a way of 'familiarization' and an 'initiation into the real world' for young college-going students.

Definition of ragging:

The Supreme Court defined ragging in the **Vishwa Jagriti matter** (1999) as, "**Any disorderly conduct** whether by words **spoken or written or by an act** which has the effect of **teasing, treating or handling with rudeness** any other student, indulging in rowdy or undisciplined activities which causes or is likely to **cause annoyance, hardship or psychological harm or to raise fear or apprehension** thereof in a fresher or a junior student or asking the students to do any act or perform something which such student will not in the ordinary course and which has the effect of causing or generating a sense of shame or embarrassment so as to adversely affect the physique or psyche of a fresher or a junior student."

Other organisations/bodies working in this field have also attempted to define ragging, the variety of definitions being reflective of differences in perspective and interpretation.

In 2007, the **Committee of Consultants to Raghavan Committee** considered ragging "**neither a means of familiarization nor an introduction with freshers**, but a **form of psychopathic behaviour** and a reflection of deviant personalities. Further, ragging reproduces the entrenched power configurations prevalent in civil society".

Over the last five and a half years, **at least 25 students have died by suicide** after they were subjected to ragging between January 1, 2018 to August 1, 2023, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has revealed.

Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have reported four deaths each followed by Odisha with three deaths. Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana have reported two deaths each.

Forms of ragging:

Dress Code Ragging: The freshmen are asked to dress in a specific dress code for a particular period of time. But this isn't as easy as it seems. For the dress code prescribed is generally weird, eg., dressing totally in white or black with the hair oiled and combed in a particular style. The dress code ragging may make the freshmen feel awkward

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and uncomfortable as it often brings them unnecessary attention from everybody.

Formal Introduction: This involves asking the freshmen to introduce themselves in 'Shudh Hindi'. The introduction includes the freshmen's name, address, school, marks, etc.

Verbal Torture: Verbal torture involves indulging in loose talks. The freshmen may be asked to sing the lyrics of any vulgar song or use abusive language while talking to the seniors.

Sexual Abuse: This is the severest form of ragging that takes place in colleges. The seniors are mainly interested in 'juicy' details such as the anatomical description of one's body parts, his or her sexual interests, etc. In many cases, the freshmen have been asked to strip before the seniors.

Playing the Fool: The freshmen may be asked to enact scenes from a particular movie or mimic a particular film star. In many cases, the seniors may also ask the freshmen to do silly things like climbing a tree, kissing a tree, proposing to someone from the opposite sex, etc.

Hostel Ragging: Outstation students who stay in the hostel are most vulnerable to ragging. They may be asked to do all odd acts from cleaning the room of seniors to washing their clothes, from fetching them water or milk to completing their assignments.

Drug Abuse: This can be the worst form of ragging wherein the freshmen are forced to try drugs thereby driving them into addiction.

Anti-Ragging Movement:

With the situation of ragging worsening yearly, there is emerging a **spontaneous anti-ragging movement** in India. Several voluntary organisations have emerged, who conduct drives for public awareness and arrange for support to victims.

Online groups like CURE, Stop ragging, No Ragging Foundation became the major Anti Ragging groups on the internet. Among them, the No Ragging Foundation has transformed into a complete NGO and got registered as **Society Against Violence in Education (SAVE) which is India's first registered Anti Ragging non-profit organisation** (NGO).

These groups are working on issues related to ragging. Each of them is running anti ragging websites and online groups.

The Indian media has been playing a crucial role by exposing ragging incidents and the indifference of many concerned institutions towards curbing the act.

The Supreme Court of India has directed, in its interim judgement, that action may be taken even against negligent institutions.

Cases related to ragging:

Ragging of Freshers in Thiruvananthapuram Government Engineering College vs. State of Kerala.

Vishwa Jagriti Mission through President vs. Central Government through Cabinet Secretary.

The judgment in the case of **Vishwa Jagriti Mission vs. Central Government** is particularly significant as SC, while exercising its jurisdiction under Articles 32 and 142 of the Constitution of India, has **laid down broad guidelines for colleges and educational institutes to prevent ragging**.

Government's Steps against Ragging:

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In India, some states have their own legislations on ragging. But, many states don't have their own legislation and therefore these states have to follow central legislations on ragging.

A **National Anti-Ragging Helpline** was launched by the Indian government.

Indian Penal Code (IPC):

Every single incident of ragging or abetting in ragging puts an obligation on the institution to get the FIR registered.

There are provisions in the IPC, which can be used by a student to register an FIR in the nearest police station.

UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009:

In 2009, in the wake of Aman Kachroo's death, UGC passed these regulations to curb the menace of ragging in the universities in India.

The guidelines **extend to all the premises, whether located in the campus or outside and also in means of transportation whether public or private.**

The objective of these guidelines is to **ensure completely wiping and prohibiting the activities** of ragging.

These regulations mandate every college responsibilities to curb the menace of ragging, including strict pre-emptive measures, like lodging freshers in a separate hostel, surprise raids especially at nights by the anti-ragging squad and submission of affidavits by all senior students and their parents taking oath not to indulge in ragging.

Other Institute Specific Regulations:

Apart from IPC and the UGC Regulations, there are **other government bodies** that have their own laws on ragging in their respective acts.

For example, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the Medical Council of India have made their own regulations under their respective acts.

The AICTE has created "All India Council for Technical Education (Prevention and Prohibition of Ragging in Technical Institutions, Universities including Deemed to be Universities imparting technical education) Regulations, 2009" under Section 23 and Section 10 of the AICTE Act, 1987. Similarly, the Medical Council of India has made "Medical Council of India (Prevention and Prohibition of Ragging in Medical Colleges/Institutions) Regulations, 2009" under Section 33 of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956.

Conclusion:

Ragging can be prevented with a collective effort. It should be an effort from academic institutions and society. It must have the employees, administrators, legal experts, parents, media people, psychologists, the local authorities, political representatives, and social organisations. Cooperation from all these people can help us build a wall against the heinous act of ragging.