

## **Ragging: Can we ever solve this problem?**

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Coalition to Uproot Ragging from Education (CURE)

In July 2008, CURE analysed the ragging incidents of past 5 years and did a comparative study with the cases reported after the Supreme Court judgment in May, 2007. It was shocking to know that even after the SC judgment, 11 cases of death due to ragging and 5 cases of attempted suicides were reported by the media and there was no significant decrease in ragging. After making so much effort to curb ragging, whenever a fresh case is reported it makes everyone think as to why we are still not able to successfully deal with this menace? It makes us feel disappointed to comprehend the fact that the most educated section of our society is involved in one of the worst form of human rights abuse. Let us understand some of the important fundamental issues associated with ragging which are essential to be understood and addressed if we really want to get rid of this social menace. These are the issues which have been ignored or have not been addressed with the right spirit.

**Anonymity of the Complainant:** This is the first step to solve the menace and one of the key elements if we want to encourage the fresher to report any incident of ragging. There is tremendous fear in the minds of the freshers and huge possibility of backlash because of which the fresher decides to tolerate ragging and as a result almost 99.99% of the ragging cases go unreported and problem remains suppressed. Provisions like putting a compliant box or expecting the fresher to report the incident to anti ragging cell/committee don't work because such provisions fail to convince the fresher of complete anonymity and his /her safety.

The best way to tackle this problem is by making it mandatory for every college in the country to do a weekly/fortnightly anonymous survey of the entire first year batch to find out if any sort of ragging is taking place in their college. The idea is to encourage the

students by approaching the entire batch and maintaining absolute anonymity rather than waiting for a whistle blower to come forward and report the incident. Unless we make this important provision, the college authorities will continue to live in oblivion and feel that ragging is not a problem in their institution.

**Awareness:** This is another key element in solving this problem. Though ragging has been banned but since the time it has been banned there is an atmosphere of confusion prevailing in the campus. There is confusion as to what is ragging what is not; what will happen to the senior–junior interaction in the absence of ragging. Reason as to why ragging has been banned, what are the ill effects of ragging, what is its origin? Where did it come from? – These questions have not been answered and several students still believe that this ban has been unnecessarily imposed on them. It is therefore very important to disseminate right information about ragging, about its origin, highlight its ill effects, and why is it irrelevant in today’s time. Also, we need to introduce alternative and healthier methods of interaction to replace ragging to break the ice between the seniors and freshers.

**Psychological Menace:** Ragging is more of a psychological problem than anything else. Ragging is perhaps the only Social and Human Rights problem in the world in which the victim himself/herself becomes the perpetrator of this crime in a short span of one year. This problem can best be solved by going into the roots of this menace and understanding its psychology. Psychological concepts like **Stanford Prison Experiment, Miligram Experiment, Stockholm syndrome**, which have close similarities with the psychology of ragging need to be studied carefully to understand this problem and look for appropriate solution.

**Role of Media:** Be it publishing a front page picture of a Delhi University boy giving rose to a girl to portray ragging or writing only about the provision of FIR or quantum of punishment with regard to ragging, media has failed to disseminate the right information and essential knowledge about ragging. Since the Supreme Court judgment in 2007, the role of the media with regard to ragging has been more to spread sensation. Though there

is a long list of guidelines made in the Raghavan Committee report but media chose to highlight only few sensational ones. Today all that the country knows about the Raghavan Committee report is about provision of filing an FIR or about provision of sending director of a college to jail but is completely ignorant about the dozens of other important recommendations/guidelines which can be key to solve the problem of ragging.

**Hard Approach:** This provision should be used as deterrence and as the last resort when all the other softer efforts fail to curb ragging. Firstly, we need to look from a 17-18 year old fresher's perspective and understand that a young student who joins the college with a dream to become a doctor or an engineer will find it extremely fearful to use the provision of FIR and later get involved in a court case. Secondly, gathering evidence to prove any ragging incident has always been very difficult as nobody comes forward to testify. Thirdly, we need to ask ourselves that is it easy to de-recognize an institution or stop its fund if it is several decades old and there are several hundred students studying in it? What will happen to the future of those innocent students who were not involved in ragging? Fourthly, successful implementation of hard approach depends largely whether various stakeholders of ragging are convinced that it is bad. Presently ragging is seen as an age old ritual by the college community, there are conflicting views about ragging, for some it is a painful torture whereas for others it is a healthy interaction or a personality development exercise. When knowledge about ragging is so low then how will we be able to implement these harsh measures?

Unless and until we act on the above issues seriously, college authorities will continue to label ragging deaths as suicides due to academic pressure; majority of the ragging incidents will continue to go unreported; seniors and teachers will continue to believe that ragging is a healthy interactive and personality development exercise; media will continue to report only sensational stuff about ragging; parents, relatives and society will fail to understand the pain of the ragging victim, and as a result of all this, the harsh provision to curb ragging might soon lose its deterrent effect and we may never be able to solve this problem.

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