

Student Ragging in India: Current Status

To

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International Journal of Ethics, Trauma and Victimology.

The term ragging refers to the playful teasing or mocking of new students, often involving rough or boisterous behaviour. The practice has roots in British schools and universities originating in the 17th century. Over time, the practice opted for a more sinister connotation, particularly in the context of the educational institutions in India and Sri Lanka, where it is referred to as the physical and mental harassment of new students by their seniors. In India, ragging has become a significant concern, with many institutions implementing strict anti-ragging policies to prevent the physical and emotional abuse of new students. An estimated six million young students enrolled in approximately India's 335 universities and 17000 colleges are contaminated by ragging. It is most prevalent in engineering, military and medical colleges. The medical colleges are worst affected by ragging in India. At first, it was practised mainly in the army and English public schools. During the 90's private medical and engineering colleges were established in large numbers and it was during this period that ragging started showing its ugly face. Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal reported the largest number of reported incidents of ragging.

The first ragging-related death occurred in 1873 at Cornell University in the US. Gradually in the 20th century, related violence started to escalate in the West. All countries in the world today have enacted laws banning ragging and it has been completely eradicated in countries like Canada and Japan. However, recent research shows that India and Sri Lanka are the two countries where the main ragging persists. With ragging becoming a National issue affecting thousands of students across India, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India condemned the act mainly in two landmark judgments – Ragging of freshers in Thiruvananthapuram Government Engineering College vs. State of Kerala and Vishwa Jagriti Mission through President vs. Central Government through Cabinet Secretary and laid down guidelines. The Hon'ble Supreme Court also formed a committee in December 2006 to look into the ragging issues, which observed that institutional authorities are required to be made accountable in a variety of ways as their attitude was evasive. The committee also viewed the absence of Civil Society initiative on the issue of ragging as a matter of serious concern. The Medical Council of India, now the National Medical Commission, also made the regulations to check ragging under "The Medical Council of India (Prevention and Prohibition of Ragging in Medical Colleges/Institutions) Regulations, 2009.

Despite all these regulations and guidelines, ragging incidents continue to plague India, with a staggering 30% of all ragging cases reported from medical institutions. Recently, a first-year MBBS student at Gujarat's Dharpur Medical College died after being forced to stand for three hours as part of a ragging session by senior students, showing the situation is still alarming and highlights the need for stricter measures to curb this menace with a zero-tolerance policy towards ragging. These incidents serve as a reminder that ragging is a serious issue in India that needs to be addressed through collective efforts from educational institutions, governments and civil society. Although it is a problem of the students and by the students therefore, the solution to it also lies with the students. It is high time the Indian student awakens its consigns to this inhumane practice before more and more innocent students become victims of this menace and before more and more educational institutions are degraded by it.

Thank you for all your efforts

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