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## "RAGGING RUINS"

Ragging, we all have heard of this word since our childhood either from the people around us or in news or on hearings etc. What is ragging? From where has it been originated?

Ragging, also known as hazing or bullying refers to the act of subjecting newcomers or juniors to humiliation, harassment and abuse by their seniors in educational institutions. This deplorable practice has been prevalent in many educational institutions around the world; while some may argue that ragging is merely a harmless tradition, it is essential to understand that its consequences ~~are~~ can be far reaching and disastrous. The reasons why ragging ruins the educational experience, jeopardize mental health and also tarnish the reputation of institutions will be discussed later; before that let's see the historic perspective of ragging.

The history can be traced back to as early as 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. In Greek culture new students of sport community were subjected to all kinds of humiliations and teasing to inculcate a team spirit in them. Later adopted by military forces and from there finally entered in education system. Overtime these rituals took on ugly turn and transformed into acts of physical, mental and emotional abuse. First ragging related death occurred in 1873 in Cornell University, New York. And how can one forget 'The Aman Kachoo Case' of RPGMC, Tanda, Himachal Pradesh; 'The Ron Navarasa/John David case' of Rajah Muthiah College of Medical Sciences Annamalai, Tamil Nadu.

Ragging can be done in any form → physical (violence), abuse, humiliation, harassment. All these acts done by seniors considering it as a ritual to get entertained leaves a devastating effect on the life of victim.

It can be a psychological impact - fear, anxiety, depression and stress. It can result in low self-esteem, loss of confidence affecting academic performance and overall well being. One of the most significant casualties of ragging is the educational process itself. Difficulty in concentrating, decline in academic performance, lack of teamwork ultimately hindering their future prospects and career opportunities. This disrupts the learning ecosystem and undermines the spirit of education. The trauma can lead to long term psychological consequences and even Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The victims often suffer in silence, afraid to speak out due to fear of backlash or further harassment and often gets isolated.

The whole series of events leads to victim drop out of college or inculcate suicidal tendencies making it a matter of grave concern. The emotional scars left by ragging can last for lifetime, hindering personal growth and development. But it can have another aspect also; if the victim holds the strength and tolerates everything its not over there because ragging is not just limited to campus, its consequences extend far beyond the educational institutions. Victims carry the trauma into their adult lives affecting their interpersonal relationships and mental well being. It perpetuates a culture of violence, bullying, normalizing aggression as a means to gain power and control. In nutshell an antisocial behaviour ragging often experience a decline in moral values, empathy and emotional intelligence which affects their personal and professional lives in long run.

The hardwork of day and night to get into dream institutions, goals, hopes of both the student and his parents goes into drain for the fun and pride of those who are so naive to understand that their targeted junior also has a family, emotions, feelings, expectations, a life just like theirs. One can't even feel the pain the victim goes through, that, they decide to kill their happiness, the bond with family and ultimately their life. Traumatizing someone to such an extent is no less of a murder.

The question is who is responsible? Who gave a student the right to play with other student's life? Why such practices still exist? Moreover, we only get to know about those cases which get media's attention, what about those who are suffering silently, un-noticed, un-reported? Institutions that turn a blind eye to ragging incidents risk their reputation being tarnished. The practice reflects poorly on the institution's commitment of providing safe and nurturing environment for students. If caught by media it leads to negative publicity that may take years to recover from. Furthermore, potential employers and other academic institutions may hesitate to associate with an institution infamous for its ragging culture.

Several countries have enacted laws to combat ragging like fines, expulsion, imprisonment but despite of legal deterrents ragging continues to persist due to lack of effective enforcement and fear of retaliation among victims. Addressing the issue of ragging requires a multi-faceted approach involving various stakeholders — institutions, administrators, faculty, students and parents. Especially, educational institutions must take proactive steps to create awareness about the negative consequences of ragging and implement strict anti-ragging policies for those found guilty of ragging. Orientation programs should emphasize the importance of respect, empathy, inclusivity among students and encourage them to report any instance they encounter. Senior students should

be encouraged to act as mentors and guide instead of indulging in harmful practices. Counseling support, anonymous reporting systems, can be some measures to combat ragging.

By fostering empathy, inclusivity and a sense of responsibility we can create a learning environment where every student feels safe, respected and free to pursue their dreams without fear of harassment or abuse. Only then can we truly nurture a generation of enlightened and empowered individuals who will contribute positively to society and hence, for country.

“It isn't big to make others feel small.”