

## RAGGING RUINS

Ragging, notoriously known to be a huge part of the initiation process in educational institutes around the world, is a facade of tradition. It is often justified as an introductory process; I describe it as a derogatory process. It is treated to be a sacred ritual of initiation that determines a fresher's position in the social hierarchy. Ragging includes humiliation, harassment, mental abuse, physical abuse and sometimes a combination of all. It is an inhumane act of violating the victim's dignity that has a sole purpose of spreading hate and fear among the masses. This act not only destroys an individual's self esteem but can have lasting psychological, emotional and physical impacts on the victim. In this essay, I will be enlightening you on its negative impacts on an individual's well being, educational institutions and society.

In today's day and age, young minds are addicted to their phone screens and tend to be easily influenced by social media. In this era of social media dominance, our generation constantly feels the need to seek validation and consequent dopamine doses from strangers on the internet. Now, I am in no way trying to bash our generation because social media has helped people be more vocal about their experiences and journeys. People are becoming more aware and "woke" because they have a platform to voice their feelings out on but what about what about the ease with people trample each other online to get the upper hand?

Bullying, harassment and ragging has now become even more complex with the addition of social media since it serves as another medium through which a person can be exploited.

Ragging often starts off as some light-hearted fun between the seniors and juniors but it takes an ugly turn when the fine line between fun and cruelty dissipates. Experiences of ragging can leave lasting traumatic scars on victims that can cause severe anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues. These psychological impressions can hinder the normalcy and well-being of an individual. Emotional distress caused due to such negative experiences can disrupt an individual's academic performance thus undermining the very purpose of seeking education. This could lead to high dropout rates and even higher rates of suicides, an unretrievable loss of young talent.

Fear of ragging can also deter college aspirants from pursuing higher education altogether; individuals who could have contributed to the society with their unique talents and individualistic approach, may choose to avoid institutions that tolerate and condone such activities. This can result in a huge loss of potential and diversity within our society.

We often hear people say that "college years are going to be the best years of your life". The best years will only be best if they were to have positive implications on an individual's growth. People don't often realize that personal growth and progress requires safety of self and the environment around them. If the environment around an individual is not welcoming and nurturing for self discovery, one cannot grow and blossom into a holistic being that they are supposed to "in the best years of their life". Thus it is important to transform the environment of educational institutions into spaces that are inclusive and safe for individual growth and development. Young adults are quite vulnerable at the age that they start their college journey; their habits and personalities are still malleable, thus there is a need for caution with how they are treated.

Prevalance of ragging in institutions just shows the insecurity that breeds within our society, an insecurity that is absolved by demeaning the dignity of others by creating a fake sense of superiority and bureaucracy. The imbalanced power dynamics and misuse of authority is what can perpetuate and normalize the culture of harassment, abuse and bullying.

Ragging being illegal in educational institutions across India, does not only ruin the victim but can also

have serious implications on the perpetrators. Such a violation of human rights is a criminal offence that is punishable with an imprisonment of 3 years and a fine. Other consequences include expulsion from educational institutes, job rejections, community disapproval and isolation.

Positive measures taken by the University Grants Commission (UGC) for curbing the menace of ragging in educational institutes across India such as anti-ragging helpline and implementation of "zero tolerance policy" has been a major improvement in the higher education system of the nation.

In conclusion, the ruinous effects of ragging are extensive and impactful, affecting not only the individuals who directly experience it but also the educational institutions and society as a whole. It is crucial for educational institutions, students, families and society to collectively address and eradicate this toxic practice to ensure a safe and nurturing environment for all students to thrive in their educational pursuits.

Ragging must be strictly prohibited and anti-ragging workshops should be promoted at all educational spaces because "ragging is not an ice-breaker, it's a heartbreaker".