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RAGGING MENACE

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Freshers enter the portals of colleges keeping in their minds the picture of great college life. But ragging incidents within or outside educational institutions may devastate the students and destroy their life.

Ragging may be in different forms : addressing seniors as 'Sir'/'Madam', performing mass drills, copying class notes for seniors, asking or answering vulgar questions, looking at pornographic pictures to show the freshers out of their innocence, being forced to drink alcohol scalding tea, being forced to do acts with sexual overtones and homosexual acts leading to physical injury/mental torture or death and doing obscenities.

The probable cause of indulging in ragging is deriving a sadistic pleasure or showing of power, authority or superiority by the seniors over the freshers.

The Andhra Pradesh Prohibition of Ragging Act, Act No.26 of 1997 prohibits 'ragging' in all educational institutions in the State of Andhra Pradesh.

Ragging : Definition

'Ragging' means doing an act, which causes or is likely to cause insult or annoyance or fear or apprehension or threat or intimidation or outrage of modesty or injury to a student¹.

Prohibition of Ragging :

Ragging within or outside any educational institution is prohibited².

Preventive measures :

The institutions right from the time of advertisement for admissions shall initiate the anti-ragging movement³.

The heads of institutions shall obtain an undertaking from the students/parents at the time of admission that the students shall not resort to ragging, shall give full publicity to the punishment for ragging through circulars

1. Section 2(e)

2. Section 3

3. *President V.J. Mission v. Cabinet Secretary, Central Government*, AIR 2001 SC 2793.

and posters and shall constitute anti-ragging squads involving teachers and students⁴.

The students must be made aware of dehumanizing effect of ragging inherent in its perversity through posters, notice boards and signboards⁵. To keep a continuous watch and vigil over ragging, proctorial committees consisting of senior faculty members and hostel authorities like wardens and a few responsible senior students have to be constituted⁶. The schedule for first year students should be that they should come to the college early and to leave first⁷.

Strict surveillance shall be maintained in hostels and messes, vacant classrooms, canteens, play grounds, student activity centers and bus stands⁸. Secret student vigilance groups shall be formed to bring to the attention of the ragging⁹.

The Principal and the teaching staff shall interact with the freshers and generate confidence in their mind that any instances of ragging will be dealt with promptly and the complainants will be protected from any harassment by perpetrators of ragging¹⁰. Every new entrant shall be given telephone numbers of the Principal, the teaching staff and the wardens with advice that he/she should not hesitate in reporting incidents of ragging¹¹.

Strangers shall not be allowed to enter the premises of the institution or its hostel without prior permission of the principal¹².

Students shall carry their identity cards and show them on demand by any authority of the institution¹³. Teaching staff and wardens can visit hostels and inspect the rooms at any time¹⁴. Girl students must be in their hostel rooms by 9 p.m.¹⁵.

Photographs of students who have been involved in ragging shall be published in notice boards and in the local newspapers¹⁶.

Review Committee consisting of the District Collector as Chairman, the Superintendent of Police as Vice-Chairman and the Revenue Divisional Officers, the Sub-Divisional Police Officers and the College Principals as Members shall meet twice before the academic session and twice during the academic session to review the prevalent situation and evolve effective measures to combat ragging¹⁷.

Consequences of failure to prevent ragging:

Failure to prevent ragging shall be construed as act of negligence in maintaining discipline in the institution on the part of the management¹⁸. The Funding Agency shall consider for stoppage of financial assistance to such institution till such time as it achieves the same and the University shall consider disaffiliating such institution¹⁹.

Penalty for ragging :

Ragging entails imprisonment and/or heavy fines²⁰.

4. Rule 3(b) to (d) of the A.P. Prohibition of Ragging in All Educational Institutions Rules, 2002 (G.O. Ms. No.67, Higher Education (EC) dated 31-8-2002).

5. Rule 4(2)

6. Rule 4(1)

7. Guideline No.10 of the Guidelines annexed to G.O. Ms No.67

8. Guideline No.5

9. Guideline No.17

10. Guideline No.6

11. Guideline No.8

12. Guideline No.13

13. Guideline No.4

14. Guideline No.16

15. Guideline No.15

16. Guideline No.23

17. Guideline No.2

18. Guideline No.25

19. Rule 4(6)

20. Section 4

| Nature of Offence | Punishment Provided |
|---|---|
| For teasing or embarrassing or humiliating a student | Imprisonment upto 6 months or fine upto Rs.1,000/- or both |
| For assaulting or using criminal force or criminally intimidating a student | Imprisonment upto 1 year or fine upto Rs.3,000/- or both |
| For restraining or causing hurt to a student | Imprisonment upto 2 years or fine upto Rs.5,000/- or both |
| For causing grievous hurt to or kidnapping, raping or committing unnatural offence with a student | Imprisonment upto 5 years or fine upto Rs.10,000/- |
| For causing death or abetting suicide | Imprisonment for life or upto 10 years with fine extending to Rs.50,000/- |

Ragging also entails suspension or dismissal of a student from educational institution. A student convicted of an offence and punished with imprisonment for a term shall be dismissed from the educational institution and a student convicted of an offence and punished with imprisonment for a term of more than 6 months shall not be admitted in any other educational institution²¹. There shall be an embossment on marks cards and other academic certificates in bold letters that student had indulged in ragging and had conducted himself in manner unbecoming of a student²².

Punishments may also take the shape of expulsion from the institution, suspension or expulsion from hostel or mess, suspension from the institution or classes for a limited period or fine with a public apology, withholding scholarships/fellowships, debarring from representation in events, withholding results, withdrawing benefits like travel concessions and campus selections²³ and restraint from participating in national and

international meets, tournaments, youth festivals, quizzes, *etc.*²⁴.

Student indulged in ragging would have a bleak future inasmuch as he/she will not be entitled to get a passport or visa to go abroad, if a case is registered in the police station or if his/her academic records are tainted with black marks.

Abetment :

If the head or manager of an educational institution fails or neglects to take action in the manner specified under the Act, the person shall be deemed to have abetted the offence and shall be punished with the punishment provided for the offence²⁵.

If a student commits suicide due to or in consequence of ragging, the person who commits such ragging shall be deemed to have abetted such suicide²⁶.

Steps to be taken by institutions on receiving complaints :

21. Section 5

22. Rule 5(5)

23. Guideline No.22

24. Guideline No.24

25. Section 7(1)

26. Section 7(2)

The acts of indiscipline and misbehavior on the part of students must primarily be dealt with within the institutions and by exercise of the disciplinary authority of the teachers over the students and of the management of the institutions over the teachers and students. Students ought not ordinarily be subjected to police action unless it is unavoidable. The students going to the educational institutions for learning should not remain under constant fear of being dealt with by police and sent to jail and face the Courts. Ragging if it becomes unmanageable or amounts to a cognizable offence the same may be reported to the police²⁷.

Whenever any student complains of ragging to the head or manager of an educational institution, such head or manager shall enquire into the complaint and if the complaint is *prima facie* found true, shall suspend the student or students complained against²⁸.

The head of the institution shall lodge a criminal case against students resorted to ragging for taking action under the Act²⁹.

Duties of Police :

On receiving complaint, the police shall register a case, investigate into the case and file report against the offender before the Magistrate concerned if there is evidence against him/her.

The police have to enter into the campus only at the instance of the head of the institution. The police have to deal with the

incidents of ragging by keeping in mind that they are dealing with students, not criminals, and their action should never be violent and always be guided by correctional attitude³⁰.

What the victim has to do ?

The victim can report to the head of the institution.

Ragging is a cognizable offence. The victim may report to the police.

Legal aid and assistance can be sought from the AP State Legal Services Authority, Hyderabad on toll free telephone No.1800 425 2999. Complaints/representations can also be sent to the Member Secretary, A.P. State Legal Services Authority, Nyaya Seva Sadan, City Civil Courts Building, Hyderabad or the Chairman or the Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority, Nyaya Seva Sadan situated at District Court's Building or the Chairman of the Mandal Legal Services Committee, who in turn forward the same to the authorities concerned for necessary action under the Act.

Conclusion :

Ragging is a reprehensible act, which does no good to any one. Some seniors under a misconception that ragging is their right may indulge in ragging. Doing Counselling to such seniors can stop this. No act of ragging shall be tolerated and any act of ragging shall not go unnoticed and unpunished; otherwise ragging may take the most ugly form.

27. Ibid, 3 supra

28. Section 6

29. Rule 3(c)

30. Guideline No.28