

CURE REPORT CR2007/07-16
Issue Date: July 16, 2007



Raghavan Committee Report

A brief analysis





1 Summary

1.1 Highlights of Report

- Urgent action required to solve problem of ragging
- Acceptance of criminal nature of ragging and as an act of human right abuse.
- A list of 250 cases of ragging in last 10 years and quantitative analysis of ragging over last 2 years submitted by Coalition to Uproot Ragging from Education (CURE).
- Guidelines of Supreme Court Judgment 2001 not implemented by stakeholders
- Focus on measures of prevention of ragging apart from affirmative action on default.
- Identification of awareness about ragging as a major component towards prevention.
- Requirement of ragging awareness not only to freshers, but all stakeholders i.e. seniors, freshers, teachers and the civic society at large.
- Need for strong and uniform ragging law identified.
- Proactive monitoring to identify existence of ragging (for instance by surprise checks and anonymous surveys) to offset the fear associated with reporting ragging by victim.

1.2 Key Recommendations

- Central Regulatory bodies to take ragging situation as an important factor in accreditation of educational institution.
- Set up anti-ragging cells at central, state and college level
- Setup of toll-free helpline for ragging victims
- Strong law against ragging with responsibility to prove not-guilty that of perpetrator
- NCERT, SCERT school books to include chapter on ragging
- Psychological counseling on anti-ragging and human rights at senior secondary level
- Colleges to organize interactive sessions between juniors and seniors in presence of college staff.
- Staggered entry of freshers and seniors in colleges



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1.3 CURE's view on report

The key point of the report is identifying that spreading awareness about the prevalence of criminal forms of ragging both to stakeholders and civic society is necessary to solve the problem of ragging. The report suggests a concentrated effort on part of government and NGO's to spread awareness in this regard through print media, TV, radio and other campaigns. This bottom-up approach to the problem has been for the first time proposed as a policy by the govt. in regard to ragging and CURE welcomes this move. Though it is left to be seen how well it is implemented.

The second key aspect is provision of alternate means of interaction and 'ice-breaking sessions' between seniors and juniors. The government seeks to protocolize the structure of these sessions for the colleges to implement. The third key aspect is proactive monitoring to identify existence of ragging on campus to relieve the burden of reporting the incident from the traumatized victim. CURE has advocated both these measures for a long time. The fourth element is formulation of a strong law and affirmative action for guilty of ragging. CURE believes that a uniform law against ragging is necessary and should be enforced, however its nature and implementation needs more thought and debate to prevent misuse. The law should act more like a deterrent than the need of actual punishment.

2 Detailed Analysis

Last week the Ministry for Human Resource Development, Government of India made the Raghavan Committee report, titled "The Menace of Ragging in the Educational Institution and Measures to curb it" public by putting it on its website: <http://www.education.nic.in>. This report was submitted to the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India this year in May.

The Committee invited various stakeholders associated with the problem of ragging including NGOs for consultation, discussion and recommendation. Coalition to Uproot Ragging from Education (CURE) (www.noragging.com), which started as a small online awareness group (soon after the 2001 Supreme Court Judgment on ragging) has today grown by leaps and bounds; got a valuable opportunity to work closely with the Raghavan Committee at various stages and in various capacities. One of the Co-founders of CURE, Harsh Agarwal was invited to be a member of the esteemed group of consultants on ragging.



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Besides giving a detailed presentation at the HRD Ministry on 14-02-07 and attending some important meetings of the committee, CURE submitted a comprehensive 70 odd page Research cum Recommendation report to the Raghavan committee on 25-03-07 (parts of this report are available to public at <http://www.noragging.com>). CURE is thankful to the committee to take its views seriously which is reflected by quoting CURE analysis, statistics and recommendations in several parts of report with due acknowledgement to the help provided by CURE.

In absence of any documentation on the number, place or nature of ragging incidents by any organization or the government, CURE's comprehensive list of more than 200 reported cases of ragging in last 10 years forms a crucial piece of evidence to expose the widespread extent and criminal nature of ragging (RC Report, Annexure IX). The report also enabled the committee to undertake a comparative study on the prevalence of ragging in various states and also understand if there was any correlation between existence of state law and frequency of ragging incidents in the state. Apart from a list of more than 200 cases, CURE also submitted a quantitative analysis of the ragging incidents reported since 2005. As the Raghavan Committee report states, "the report debunks the popular myth that sexual and physical ragging is no more prevalent after the Supreme Court judgment of 2001" (RC Report, Page 10)

CURE made several recommendations to solve the menace of ragging. CURE recommendations were indeed taken with due seriousness by the committee members as many of them coincides with the important recommendations made in the Raghavan Committee report.

CURE identifies ragging as a socio-psychological phenomenon, which needs to be dealt with by involving various stakeholders, members of civil society, media, etc. CURE puts major thrusts on publicity campaign and awareness drive to educate and sensitize not only the victims and the perpetrators of ragging but also the stakeholders and the civil society.

In its report the committee clearly observes that since a very small percentage of the country's population avails the higher education and thus affected by ragging therefore the society by and large remains oblivious to the evils of this phenomenon. In its long list of recommendations, Raghavan Committee has at several instances emphasized the importance of public awareness and has recommended that state and central government must undertake publicity campaign against ragging. It has recommended of setting up of media committee at state and central level.



In the very beginning of its long list of recommendation the committee suggests that the NCERT and SCERT must introduce a chapter on ragging, provide education on human rights and also inculcate human values in general. Further it suggests that at senior secondary school level there must be psychological counseling sessions on anti ragging and human rights appreciations. CURE believes that this would help to establish ragging as a social evil in the minds of the school going children and would thus go a long way in eradicating ragging from its roots.

3 Report Structure, Findings and Recommendations

The exhaustive report which runs into more than 200 pages long attempts to explain in detail the various intricacies and challenges involved with the issue of ragging and lays down a long list of prescriptions to root out this menace from the educational institutions.

The report is divided into six chapters including several pages of annexure consisting of list of ragging incidents and its analysis, responses from various stakeholders, details of the meetings held in each of the eleven cities visited by the committee members, report of the group of consultants, etc.

In its foreword the report identifies ragging as a menace spoiling the standards of the Higher education in India and thus affecting the progress of the country. The above view of the committee clearly calls for serious attention of the Government, Judiciary, Civil Society, Media etc to take urgent action to solve this social issue in the interest of the nation.

In Chapter 3 of its report, the committee examines the recommendations made by the anti ragging committee constituted by the UGC. It can be clearly seen from the report that various guidelines issued by the Supreme Court of India in 2001 based on the recommendation made by the UGC constituted committee were not seriously implemented by the stakeholders.

In the same chapter, the committee observes that except Chattisgarh none of the state legislation laws are preventive in nature. Report makes a subtle difference between the preventive and prohibitive nature of law and calls for a combination of prohibitive and preventive law to curb ragging. This observation made by the committee needs to be appreciated. Later in its recommendations the committee lays down in detail the various preventive measures to control ragging.



This chapter also highlights the severe nature of ragging by quoting some of the reported cases of ragging provided by CURE. This draws the attention of the society that how ragging has deteriorated with time and highlights the inhuman nature of ragging, thus debunking the common myth prevalent in the society that ragging is all about fun and dance. This also highlights the acute criminal nature of ragging, which must be dealt with severely. In one of its public meetings it came across a suggestion that warden's job should be handed over to the police

In its 4th chapter, the committee makes several important observations. In its very first observations the committee finds various possible nature and aspects of ragging and various ways in which the Human Rights abuse in the name of ragging takes place. This observation can be of great help in defining ragging in detail.

A very important observation made by the committee is that a lot of ragging incident takes place outside the campus in 'out of campus accommodation', which is indeed true. Seniors find it very easy to rag their juniors in these places and get away with it very easily as college administration is not bothered of act of ragging taking place with its students outside the college premises. In its recommendation the report says that these hostels must be registered with the local police and the management of these hostels and the college administrations must be made responsible to protect the freshers.

In its chapter on observation the report says that lack of co-curricular activities is also an important reason for the increase of incidents of ragging. The committee makes recommendation for various interactive programmes between the freshers and seniors in the presence of college staff. This has been advocated by CURE from a long time.

The committee observes that in many cases the college faculty are themselves in a way encouraging ragging and dissuade their students from registering a complaint. The committee therefore suggests of setting up of anti-ragging monitoring cells at various levels so as to provide checks and balances at each level.

The committee observes that the Supreme Court guidelines of 2001 were not taken seriously by all the stakeholders and this was a major reason that ragging still goes unabated. This observation debunks the popular myth that ragging has decreased sharply in recent times.



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In the 5th chapter of the report the committee makes 50 odd recommendations touching upon various facets of ragging and tries to plug all the possible loopholes in the anti-ragging mechanism.

In its recommendation on undertaking the Raghavan committee suggests that the undertaking must be printed in both English and vernacular language and must be attached in the prospectus as well. This undertaking must also give relevant information about ragging and must be signed by the students every year. CURE believes that an important advantage of this provision would be that it would definitely send a message both to the students and their parents that ragging is serious offence.

An important recommendation by the committee is that ragging should be considered an important factor in accrediting the educational institution by central regulatory bodies like the MCI, AICTE, DCI etc. This would not only make the educational institutions to take serious steps against ragging but would also make these central regulatory bodies accountable. The committee made an observation that ragging indeed affects the quality of education. We believe that in event of ragging incidents this provision would make these different stakeholders accountable and would thus force them to take preventive measures.

The committee makes an important recommendation of staggered entry of the freshers and senior students. We believe that since the first few days of college life is very important and full of apprehensions for freshers this suggestion would help the freshers to gel among them well, instill in them a feeling of confidence and adjust in a new atmosphere away from home. This will also help in preventing the formation of regional or caste based groups in the colleges done by seniors by attracting the freshers from their own community.

As suggested by CURE, committee recommends of anonymous survey of the fresher students to verify that campus is indeed free of ragging. CURE believes that those students who are otherwise scared of reporting the incidents of ragging can do so in this fashion. This would also help the college staff to assess from the responses received from the fresher students whether any act of ragging is taking place in the institution.

The committee also recommends for exemplary punishment to the perpetrators of the crime so as to deter the others. We believe that strict measures would definitely have the deterring effect on the students provided that unlike in the past, ragging laws are seriously and sincerely implemented by all its stakeholders.

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The committee recommendations on celebration of fresher's day, campus elections, setting up anti ragging cells at various levels, toll free help line number are worth appreciation.

Lastly CURE would like to thank the Raghavan Committee for giving us the opportunity to work closely with them, seriously considering our recommendations, inviting us for suggestions at various instances and acknowledging us in their report.

We hope that with new guidelines and laws as suggested in Raghavan Committee report, ragging will soon be a thing of the past.

Thanks

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