

Is it so tough to root out ragging

Nov 04, 2011 - Nidhi Sethi | Age Correspondent



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A few days back 21-year-old MBA first year student Sinduja committed suicide by hanging herself in her house at Puttur due to alleged ragging by her senior. It's been two years since Aman Kachroo's death due to ragging, followed by many similar cases. But the drive to completely wipe out ragging has still not succeeded. Even Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called for "zero tolerance" towards the menace of ragging and asked Governors to ensure that the practice is rooted out once and for all.

We do have anti-ragging laws in place. But what makes it easy for the offenders to get away with it? Lawyer Sumant Batra feels it is the lack of effective implementation that is to be blamed. "Law is adequate. It is a problem peculiar to our country. We do not have mechanisms to effectively oversee the implementation. Part of it is also a cultural issue. As a society we sort of provide sanctity to ragging by considering it an acceptable norm in some way. The subject has not received the kind of priority on reform agenda as it deserves," says Batra.

Others blame the country's large education sector and tremendous diversity and its status as a developing country for the uncontrolled sadism that takes place in institutions here. "There are various social action groups which have come up to address the unheard cries of these students, but the range of Human Rights abuses often makes it difficult for the human rights movement against ragging to act as one," says author and motivational speaker Nitya Prakash.

Law is the cure. And fear can make people know that if they get caught, there will be hell to pay. We should have structures in place that enforce that fear, suggests research scientist Arnab Ray and says that Indian laws don't provide that kind of culpability for universities. "As someone who has worked in the US all my life, I am still shocked by the kind of things that happen in India that pass off as okay. Here ragging kind of has this 'Arre kids playing' attitude. But if people get killed, then it shouldn't be considered ragging. It's homicide. If people get physically hurt, put the offenders in jail. I think every college should have a special body where students can anonymously lodge complaints. Also it should be a mandatory body, which treats ragging at par with sexual harassment," says Ray adding that it all boils down to laws and their implementation.