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Ragging in India: Mapping Legal Consequences for Student Perpetrators

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ABSTRACT

Ragging in higher education institutions in India has long been trivialised as initiation or harmless campus tradition, yet the law has decisively recharacterised it as a legal wrong capable of triggering layered liability. This paper adopts a doctrinal and descriptive-analytical approach to map the legal, disciplinary, and criminal consequences that may follow when a student commits, abets, or participates in ragging within an Indian higher education institution. Reading the UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, the Supreme Court's anti-ragging jurisprudence in Vishwa Jagriti Mission and University of Kerala, the operational architecture of the national anti-ragging portal, and the post-2024 criminal-law framework of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, it situates the student perpetrator at the centre of analysis. It demonstrates that consequences operate through institutional and academic sanctions, criminal prosecution for the specific acts committed, parallel proceedings, the growing significance of cyber-ragging and electronic evidence, and enduring collateral and reputational burdens. The paper concludes that the framework is coherent in principle but fragile at implementation, and offers preventive and procedural recommendations to render its sanctions credible in practice.

Keywords: Ragging, perpetrator liability, UGC Regulations 2009, anti-ragging framework, cyber-ragging, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ragging in higher education institutions (HEIs) in India has been trivialised as introduction, initiation, or some other element of student life. The law, however, has moved in a different direction, recognising the evils behind these seemingly innocent elements and seeking to create a protective environment for students by passing interim guidelines under Articles 32 and 142 of the Constitution, while also making an important institutional point: student discipline ought, without any delay, to be addressed through the disciplinary authorities of educational institutions rather than by moral outrage after the damage is done.¹

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¹ *Vishwa Jagriti Mission v. Central Govt.*, (2001) 6 SCC 577 (India).

The Court's subsequent intervention sharpened that understanding. It noted that ragging in educational institutions had been a source of concern for some time and referred to the limited practical impact of earlier directives. It noted the constitution of the R. K. Raghavan Committee and pressed for a more enforceable framework for prevention, reporting, and punishment.² The Court observed that ragging is not mere unpleasantness, but follows a pattern of hierarchical abuse, resulting in a practice capable of producing fear, humiliation, withdrawal from study, and self-harm, or worse.

The momentum set by the Supreme Court was formalised in the University Grants Commission's (UGC) regulatory scheme. The UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, were designed to prohibit, prevent, and punish ragging across universities, colleges, deemed universities, constituent units, hostels, and even student transportation.³⁴ The definition is deliberately broad, and the regime covers a wide variety of conduct.⁵⁶ The most important feature of this framework is its consequence structure. The anti-ragging Regulations are drafted to make the student perpetrator's liability more concrete.⁷ The same framework also holds institutions legally liable. Universities and regulatory bodies may penalise colleges, institutions, and even faculty members that fail to curb ragging or fail to act in accordance with the Regulations.⁸

The current administrative design reinforces that conclusion. The official anti-ragging portal is not a mere encyclopaedic entry providing information; it operationalises prevention and enforcement through student and parent undertakings, annual compliance filings by higher education institutions, online complaint registration, complaint status tracking, a national helpline, and a monitoring arrangement maintained by the Centre for Youth. Complaints may be escalated to university authorities, institutional heads, local police authorities, and concerned

² *University of Kerala v. Council of Principals of Colleges, Kerala*, (2009) 7 SCC 726 (India).

³ University Grants Comm'n, UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, No. F.1-16/2007(CPP-II), GAZETTE OF INDIA, June 17, 2009 (India).

⁴ *Id.* regs. 1.1–1.3, 2, 3.

⁵ This includes, but is not limited to, overt physical violence; rude or teasing conduct; rowdy or undisciplined activity that causes, or is likely to cause, hardship or harm, physical or psychological; and coercive demands that force a student to perform acts that cause shame or embarrassment. The definition also extends to academic disruption, exploitation of labour, financial coercion and extortion, sexual abuse, public insult, abuse through physical or electronic means, and conduct affecting a student's mental health and self-confidence.

⁶ Anti Ragging, *What Constitutes Ragging?* (official information sheet).

⁷ UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3, reg. 9.1. At the institutional level, the student perpetrator can be suspended from classes; have scholarships or other benefits withheld or withdrawn; be debarred from appearing in examinations; have results withheld; be expelled from the hostel; have admission cancelled; or be rusticated, expelled, or fined, and may even receive collective punishment if individual perpetrators cannot be identified or verified.

⁸ UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3, regs. 9.2–9.4.

councils, while protecting the complainant's identity unless disclosure is permitted. What emerges is a compliance-oriented enforcement network rather than a merely symbolic prohibition.⁹

This necessitates a perpetrator-centric study, as the Regulations clearly interface with general criminal law. The 2009 Regulations identify the ingredients of ragging in terms that overlap with many criminal acts.¹⁰ Ragging is not a self-contained moral label, but a fact which can trigger layered forms of liability: disciplinary, regulatory, and criminal.¹¹ The necessity becomes more apparent after the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) came into force on July 1, 2024, as a current analysis of perpetrator liability can no longer rest only on the now repealed Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and the Indian Evidence Act.

This paper thus asks a narrow but practically significant question: what legal, disciplinary, and criminal consequences may follow when a student commits, abets, or participates in ragging within an Indian higher education institution? Methodologically, it adopts a doctrinal and descriptive-analytical approach, reading the UGC Regulations, the Supreme Court's anti-ragging decisions, the operational structure of "antiragging.in," and the post-2024 criminal-law framework together in order to map student liability with precision.

II. CONCEPTUALISING RAGGING: FROM CAMPUS TRADITION TO LEGAL WRONG

A. Social understanding of ragging

Ragging did not become a legal problem because of any new phenomenon; it became one because such atrocities had long been concealed inside campuses behind the veil of campus culture. Ragging was often defended as an introduction to seniors, a way of adjusting to hostel life, a device for instilling discipline, or simply a form of fun. The persistence of these descriptions matters. The official anti-ragging portal itself acknowledges that the practice is still seen by many as a mode of "familiarisation" and an "initiation into the real world" for young students.¹² Once the practice is cast as a tradition rather than as coercion, the junior who resists can easily be represented as immature, unsociable, or unwilling to become part of the institution.

⁹ Anti Ragging, *Home; You Are Going to Fill an Undertaking for Anti-Ragging; Register Complaint; HEIs Compliance; Advisory; Information, Education & Communication Guidelines for Councils, Universities and Colleges for Curbing the Menace of Ragging* (official portal materials).

¹⁰ This includes, but is not limited to, abetment, conspiracy, unlawful assembly, wrongful restraint, wrongful confinement, extortion, use of criminal force, assault, sexual offences, criminal trespass, offences against property, and criminal intimidation.

¹¹ UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3, regs. 1.1–1.3, 3.4.

¹² *Id.* *supra* note 4.

The literature suggests that this social understanding is not marginal. A major study found continuing support for the idea that ragging functions as a rite of passage, helps students toughen up, and even fosters friendship and attachment to the college or hostel. The same study, however, shows why those claims are misleading. Ragging thrives where hierarchy is already entrenched, surveillance is weak, and institutions either trivialise the harm or defend the practice as tradition. Seniors, especially in hostels, often acquire informal authority over space, routines, and access to amenities. In such a setting, a fresher's compliance is better understood as accommodation to power than as wilful participation.¹³

B. Legal understanding of ragging

The legal understanding of ragging rejects this romantic vocabulary and focuses instead on conduct, effect, and power. In *Vishwa Jagriti Mission*, the Supreme Court described ragging broadly, encompassing disorderly verbal or written conduct, rude handling, rowdy or undisciplined acts, and compelled acts that cause shame, hardship, fear, or psychological harm. Crucially, the Court also identified the logic underlying ragging as the display of "power, authority or superiority" by seniors over juniors.¹⁴ Such a shift is momentous. It moves the focus away from the act being described as playful and towards what the act actually does to the student subjected to it. This change from social excuse to legal wrong is carried forward by the UGC framework. As discussed above, the definition is deliberately kept wide. The 2016 Third Amendment widened the framework still further by expressly including physical or mental abuse, including bullying and exclusion, directed at a student on grounds such as caste, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, region, language, or economic background. Ragging, therefore, is not confined to apparent physical violence. It also includes humiliation, exclusion, and everyday coercion that may be verbal, social, academic, financial, or digital.¹⁵

C. Why perpetrator liability matters

Placing the perpetrator at the centre of a study is vital because the Regulations are structured not merely to remedy harm after the event but to prevent it in the first place, as the objective of the anti-ragging framework is to prohibit, prevent, eliminate, and punish ragging. Even the national portal is built around the same logic of prevention, complaint registration, and action against offenders. The Supreme Court similarly insisted that anti-ragging measures must send a clear institutional message that no act of ragging will be tolerated or allowed to go unnoticed

¹³ Mohan Rao et al., *A Study on the Prevalence and Nature of Ragging Practices in Selected Educational Institutions in India*, 15 CONTEMP. EDUC. DIALOGUE 187, 187–202 (2018).

¹⁴ See *Vishwa Jagriti Mission*, *supra* note 1.

¹⁵ Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions (Third Amendment) Regulations, 2016, GAZETTE OF INDIA, Extraordinary, pt. III, sec. 4, No. 269, para. 3(j), June 29, 2016 (India).

and unpunished.¹⁶ Liability, in other words, is not a secondary question to be addressed. It is part of the legal strategy by which ragging is deterred.

This approach towards deterrence is justified because the context of ragging distorts consent. A fresher may laugh, obey instructions, or remain silent, but those outward signs often emerge within a setting shaped by fear of retaliation, need for acceptance, dependence on seniors for informal guidance, peer pressure, and institutional silence. The literature describes ragging as sustained by tacit acceptance within institutions, diffusion of responsibility within groups, and pressure on newcomers to secure social inclusion. For that reason, ragging is best understood in law not as mutual interaction between equals, but as coercive conduct operating through hierarchy.¹⁷ That is precisely why students who perpetrate ragging must be treated as subjects of legal responsibility, and not merely as participants in campus culture.

III. EVOLUTION OF THE ANTI-RAGGING FRAMEWORK IN INDIA

A. Judicial concern and Supreme Court background

The current anti-ragging regime in India was not created by a single enactment. It emerged in stages through judicial intervention, committee recommendations, regulatory codification, and, later, a national infrastructure. The decisive shift came when the Supreme Court ceased to treat ragging as a merely internal disciplinary problem and instead began to view it as a matter implicating student safety, institutional accountability, and the quality of higher education. In its 2009 decision, the Court noted that ragging had repeatedly scarred educational institutions and held that the recommendations of the R. K. Raghavan Committee required immediate implementation. Among the measures endorsed were professional counselling for freshers, institution-level anti-ragging committees and squads, and a centrally linked crisis hotline and anti-ragging database.¹⁸

B. The UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009

The UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, translated that judicial concern into a binding regulatory framework. The Regulations apply not only to universities and colleges in the narrow academic sense, but also to hostels, transport, and other institution-linked spaces. Their definition of ragging is intentionally broad,¹⁹ to provide a larger umbrella under which legal protection can be sought. The structure

¹⁶ See *Vishwa Jagriti Mission*, *supra* note 1.

¹⁷ Mohan Rao et al., *supra* note 13.

¹⁸ See *University of Kerala*, *supra* note 2.

¹⁹ It covers verbal abuse, coercive acts, physical and psychological harm, and similar conduct.

of the Regulations is therefore both prohibitory and preventive, as no institution may permit or condone ragging, and every institution is obligated to act against those who commit, abet, or conspire in it.²⁰²¹²²

What makes the framework especially important is the way it disperses responsibility through ordinary administrative processes. Institutions must print the Regulations in the prospectus, obtain affidavits from students and parents or guardians, sensitise freshers and seniors, strengthen hostel supervision, encourage reporting, and maintain records in electronic form. The Regulations also prescribe a concrete governance structure. Every institution must establish an Anti-Ragging Committee with both internal and external representation, and a smaller Anti-Ragging Squad entrusted with vigilance, surprise inspections, and on-the-spot enquiry. The framework is not designed to legitimise arbitrary action, however; the Squad's enquiry must follow a fair and transparent procedure consistent with natural justice. The reporting chain is equally formalised, because affiliated institutions are expected to submit periodic compliance reports to the Vice-Chancellor, and universities in turn must report to the State Level Monitoring Cell.²³²⁴²⁵

C. Anti-ragging portal and complaint structure

The framework becomes stricter once a complaint arises. The Regulations require the head of the institution to determine whether the facts disclose a case under the current penal law and, if so, to file an FIR within twenty-four hours. Just as importantly, the institution is not permitted to suspend its own response. It must continue its internal enquiry and complete remedial measures without waiting for the criminal process.²⁶ This is a crucial feature of the anti-ragging regime, as campus discipline and criminal law are meant to operate in parallel, not one after the other. The punishments available against students are correspondingly serious.²⁷ The Regulations also contemplate sanctions against erring institutions themselves.²⁸ The development of a national portal heralded a further evolution of the regime. The Regulations

²⁰ UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3, pt. III, sec. 4, pmbl.

²¹ *Id.* regs. 1–3.

²² *Id.* reg. 5.

²³ *Id.* regs. 6.1, 6.2.

²⁴ *Id.* reg. 6.3(a)–(e).

²⁵ *Id.* reg. 6.2(o)–(p).

²⁶ *Id.* reg. 7.

²⁷ *Id.* reg. 9.1. The punishments range from suspension, withholding of scholarships or results, and debarment from examinations to hostel expulsion, cancellation of admission, rustication, expulsion, and even collective punishment where individual perpetrators cannot be identified.

²⁸ *Id.* regs. 8.2(c)–(e), 9.2–9.4. Such sanctions include withdrawal of affiliation, withholding of grants, loss of eligibility for assistance, adverse accreditation consequences, and public declaration of non-compliance.

mandate a toll-free, round-the-clock Anti-Ragging Helpline, an online relay for distress messages, and an electronic database built from student and parent affidavits that would also record complaints and the status of actions taken.²⁹ The official portal reflects that architecture in concrete form. It allows students to file the undertaking, enables higher educational institutions to submit compliance forms, permits complaint registration, and provides tracking of the status of a complaint. The portal also publicly displays the National Anti-Ragging Helpline and contact email.³⁰ Taken together, these developments show that India's anti-ragging framework evolved from judicial alarm into a preventive regime that expects institutions to intervene early, document compliance, notify authorities, and act immediately; the framework does not wait for ragging to become a fully adjudicated offence. It treats ragging as an immediate breakdown of institutional governance requiring an immediate response.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL AND ACADEMIC CONSEQUENCES FOR STUDENT PERPETRATORS

Under the anti-ragging framework, the most immediate consequences for a student perpetrator are ordinarily institutional and academic rather than purely criminal. The UGC Regulations mandate that institutions cannot remain mute spectators until the police or a court acts. Once a complaint or recommendation reaches the head of an institution, the institution must determine whether the facts disclose an offence under penal law and, if so, lodge an FIR within twenty-four hours. The institution must, however, continue its own inquiry and take remedial action without waiting for the criminal process to run its course.³² Educational institutions, of course, are not criminal courts. Their disciplinary jurisdiction flows from their statutory and regulatory role in maintaining institutional order and student welfare. Under the UGC scheme, the Anti-Ragging Committee is the body that decides what punishment, if any, should follow; the Anti-Ragging Squad performs the vigilance and fact-finding function, including surprise raids and inquiries.³³ Disciplinary proceedings within universities need not imitate a criminal trial. As long as the inquiry is fair and the student is given a meaningful opportunity to answer the allegation, courts have deferred to the judgement of the academic authorities.³⁴

²⁹ *Id.* reg. 8.1(a)–(f).

³⁰ See Anti Ragging, *supra* note 9.

³¹ Press Release, Press Info. Bureau, Gov't of India, Ministry of Hum. Res. Dev., *Anti Ragging Toll Free Helpline 1800-180-5522 Operational in 12 Languages* (Mar. 27, 2018).

³² UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3, reg. 7.

³³ *Id.* reg. 6.3(a)–(e).

³⁴ *Suresh Koshy George v. University of Kerala*, AIR 1969 SC 198 (India); *Prem Parkash Kaluniya v. Punjab University*, (1973) 3 SCC 424 (India).

The range of punishments available under the Regulations is broader than many students realise. They authorise the Anti-Ragging Committee, depending on the gravity of the misconduct, to impose such sanctions as are necessary.³⁵ The Regulations also provide an appellate structure, generally to the Vice-Chancellor in the case of an affiliated institution and to the Chancellor in the case of a university.³⁶ The framework extends beyond immediate punishment. The institution is also required to note in the migration or transfer certificate whether the student has been punished for committing or abetting ragging.³⁷ That requirement transforms a disciplinary finding from a temporary campus event into something capable of following the student beyond the original institution.

These consequences are serious precisely because they can alter a student's educational trajectory even without imprisonment. Suspension from classes or debarment from examinations can delay graduation. Withdrawal of scholarship or fellowship support can be especially burdensome for students with limited financial means. Hostel expulsion may be devastating for an out-of-station student. Cancellation of admission or rustication creates a stigma of a kind that ordinary academic failure does not carry, in addition to appearing on a student's record, while an adverse entry in a transfer or migration certificate can deter admissions to other institutions. The practical harshness of such sanctions is visible in litigation as well. In one case, the Gujarat High Court dealt with disciplinary action that included suspension from the current academic year or semester and a direction that the students would not be admitted to the hostel in future; the Court treated the maintenance of institutional discipline as a matter of high importance and declined to interfere merely on grounds of misplaced sympathy.³⁸

A strict anti-ragging regime cannot, however, mean arbitrary punishment. Procedural fairness is paramount, and adequate opportunity must be given to the accused student as well as to other witnesses to voice themselves and place their documents and views on record. Victims or witnesses who report ragging are to be encouraged to do so, their identity is to be protected, and they are not to suffer adverse consequences merely because they reported the incident. A

³⁵ Such sanctions can be one or more of the following: suspension from attending classes and academic privileges; withdrawal of scholarship, fellowship, or allied benefits; debarment from tests, examinations, or other evaluation processes; withholding of results; debarment from representing the institution in meets, tournaments, or youth festivals; suspension or expulsion from the hostel; cancellation of admission; rustication from the institution for one to four semesters; and expulsion from the institution along with debarment from admission to another institution for a specified period.

³⁶ UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3, reg. 9.1(b)–(c).

³⁷ *Id.* reg. 6.4(m).

³⁸ *Jwalant Jitendra Wadhwa v. Inst. of Infrastructure, Tech., Research & Mgmt.*, R/Special Civil Application No. 18303 of 2018, slip op. at 7, 10–11, 19–21, 49–50 (Guj. H.C. Dec. 19, 2018) (India).

disciplinary order need not reproduce every feature of a criminal court, but it cannot be secretive, prearranged, biased, or vindictive.³⁹

Even though different institutions levy fines, the official UGC guidelines are framed primarily in academic and institutional terms and do not separately enumerate a stand-alone fine, as they do for suspension, rustication, or expulsion. The Draft UGC Guidelines included a clause for a fine ranging from Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 1 lakh.⁴⁰ For the purposes of this paper, the Regulation has been treated as the primary authority, with monetary penalties mentioned cautiously as part of secondary guidance material or institution-specific practice.⁴¹

The larger point, finally, is that anti-ragging law derives much of its force from this layered institutional machinery. A student perpetrator does not face only the possibility of later criminal prosecution; the perpetrator may first encounter academic discipline and response. The legitimacy of this structure depends on a balance that the Regulations themselves attempt to preserve: swiftness and seriousness on the one hand, and procedural fairness on the other.

V. CRIMINAL LIABILITY FOR RAGGING: IPC, BNS AND RELATED OFFENCES

At the all-India level, ragging is not ordinarily prosecuted through a single, standalone central penal offence called "ragging." Instead, the UGC framework assumes that when the facts disclose criminality, the institution must move beyond internal discipline and initiate action under the appropriate provisions. For incidents occurring before July 1, 2024, the governing penal code remains the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and for incidents occurring on or after July 1, 2024, the operative code is the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

A. Why criminal liability turns on the nature of the conduct

This structure relies on conduct, because ragging is a descriptive label, not a self-contained penal category. The same episode may involve multiple wrongs at once. If seniors lock a fresher in a room or prevent him from leaving a hostel corridor, the facts may disclose wrongful restraint or wrongful confinement. If they slap, beat, burn, or otherwise grievously injure him, hurt or grievous hurt provisions may arise. If they threaten to continue the abuse unless he obeys, criminal intimidation may be attracted. If money, alcohol, or "treats" are extracted through fear, extortion or hurt-to-extort provisions may become relevant. If the incident includes stripping, compelled sexualised conduct, indecent gestures, or gendered humiliation, the law may move

³⁹ UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3, regs. 6.1, 6.2, 6.3(e).

⁴⁰ University Grants Comm'n, Draft UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, No. F.1-16/2007(CPP-II), reg. 8.1.10.

⁴¹ Centre for Youth (C4Y), *Information, Education & Communication (IEC) Guidelines for Councils, Universities & Colleges for Curbing the Menace of Ragging* (2022).

into sexual-harassment or assault provisions. If ragging is recorded or circulated online, the Information Technology Act may also apply. In the gravest cases, where sustained abuse is alleged to have driven a student to suicide or caused death, the analysis moves toward abetment of suicide, culpable homicide, murder, or negligent homicide, depending on the evidence. The following table maps the relevant offences.

Nature of ragging conduct	Earlier IPC provision	Broad BNS counterpart	Brief explanation
Physical assault causing hurt	§ 323	§ 115(2)	Covers ordinary bodily injury.
Grievous hurt	§ 325	§ 117(2)	Applies where injury crosses the statutory threshold of “grievous hurt.”
Hurt or grievous hurt by dangerous means	§§ 324,326	§ 118	Relevant where weapons, dangerous objects, fire, corrosives, or similar means are used.
Wrongful restraint or confinement	§§ 341,342–346	§§ 126(2), 127(2)–(6)	Covers blocking movement, locking rooms, secret confinement, or prolonged detention.
Assault or criminal force; humiliating force	§§ 352,355	§§ 131,133	Useful where the object is physical domination or dishonour rather than serious injury.
Criminal intimidation	§§ 503,506	§ 351	Applies to threats to body, reputation, or property meant to cause alarm or compel obedience.
Extortion or fear-based monetary demands	§§ 383–389; cf. §§ 327,329	§ 308; cf. § 119	Relevant where money or valuables are extracted through fear, threats, or violence.
Sexual harassment, disrobing, voyeurism, stalking, insulting modesty	§§ 354,354A–354D, 509	§§ 74–79	Applies where ragging takes a gendered or sexual form.
Obscene acts or compelled obscene behaviour	§ 294	§ 296	Relevant where public obscenity or forced lewd conduct is involved.
Defamation or reputational humiliation	§§ 499–500	§ 356	May arise where false imputations or defamatory publication are made.
Abetment of suicide	§ 306, read with § 107	§ 108, read with § 45	Relevant where the prosecution can connect the suicide to instigation, conspiracy, or intentional aid.

Homicide or murder in extreme cases	§§ 302,304,304A	§§ 103,105,106	The exact charge depends on intention, knowledge, causation, and surrounding facts.
Common intention or group violence	§§ 34,141,146–149	§§ 3(5), 189–191	Important where ragging is collective and violence is coordinated.

Two short clarifications are necessary. First, older case law, FIRs, and literature will frequently describe these wrongs in IPC language, because the IPC governed conduct before July 1, 2024, and continues to govern liabilities already incurred under the savings clause. Second, the decision to frame a charge in a contemporary ragging case must resist the temptation to treat "ragging" as a sufficient legal description. The specific acts must be classified with care, because fair prosecution depends on precision, and not solely on moral outrage.

Where ragging is accompanied by caste-based humiliation, further liability may arise. If a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe student is intentionally insulted in public view, abused by caste name, forcibly stripped, or subjected to similar acts prohibited under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, prosecution under that special statute may stand alongside the applicable penal code.⁴²

B. Role of state anti-ragging laws

Several states have enacted specific anti-ragging statutes. Kerala's 1998 Act expressly prohibits ragging within or outside educational institutions, criminalises committing, participating in, abetting, or propagating ragging, and also requires prompt institutional inquiry, suspension on a prima facie finding, and referral to the police.⁴³ Punjab's 2013 Act similarly defines ragging broadly and links its prohibition to an institutional anti-ragging committee structure.⁴⁴ It is vital to note that the UGC Regulation does not exhaust the field. General criminal law can and does operate alongside a state anti-ragging statute.

C. Abetment, participation, and group responsibility

Ragging is often collective even when violence is not evenly distributed. Many may carry out the individual acts involved in the ragging, and criminal law can touch each perpetrator through varying means. Where shared culpability is proved, common intention or unlawful assembly charges may be attracted. Where a person instigates, conspires, or intentionally aids, abetment

⁴² The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, No. 33, Acts of Parliament, 1989, § 3(1)(e), (r), (s) (India).

⁴³ The Kerala Prohibition of Ragging Act, 1998, Act No. 10 of 1998, §§ 3–7 (India).

⁴⁴ The Punjab Educational Institutions (Prohibition of Ragging) Act, 2013, Act No. 25 of 2013, § 2(f), 3–4 (India).

provisions become relevant even without direct physical assault. Liability is thus not limited to the student who landed the blow or spoke the loudest threat.⁴⁵ At the same time, criminal group liability must be distinguished from collective punishment in the institutional setting. The UGC framework permits collective disciplinary penalties when individual perpetrators cannot be identified, but criminal conviction still requires proof of the legal basis for individual guilt. That distinction is important. Anti-ragging law must be tough, but criminal courts must convict on the basis of evidence.

For that reason, criminal law does not perceive "ragging" as a distinct label. It punishes the specific acts committed through ragging, not the act of ragging itself. Proper classification is therefore central to both fairness and deterrence, preventing the trivialisation of serious abuse while guarding against vague overcharging that collapses every form of misconduct into an undifferentiated moral category.

VI. CYBER-RAGGING, DIGITAL HUMILIATION AND ELECTRONIC EVIDENCE

A. Forms of cyber-ragging

The growth of the Internet has been both a boon and a curse. The anti-ragging debate in India still imagines the offence to be perpetrated physically. That view is now lacking. In contemporary institutions, abuse can happen through the digital sphere.⁴⁶ The UGC framework is already broad enough to capture this shift. Ragging includes conduct by spoken or written words or by an act, conduct causing physical or psychological harm or fear, acts generating shame or embarrassment, abuse by emails, posts, or public insults, and acts affecting the mental health and self-confidence of a student.⁴⁷ Cyber-ragging, therefore, is not conceptually separate from ragging. It is one of its contemporary methods.⁴⁸ The digital setting deepens coercion because the victim is not merely humiliated in the moment; the content may remain capable of repeated circulation. What begins as domination within a closed group can quickly become a wider spectacle, and that is precisely why digital humiliation fits within a legal framework that already treats shame, fear, psychological harm, and written abuse as relevant forms of ragging.

⁴⁵ The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, No. 45, Acts of Parliament, 2023, §§ 3(5), 45–49, 189–191 (India); The Indian Penal Code, 1860, No. 45, Acts of Parliament, 1860, §§ 34, 107–109, 141, 146–149 (India) (repealed w.e.f. July 1, 2024).

⁴⁶ For example, WhatsApp groups, Telegram channels, Instagram pages, video calls, anonymous confession pages, edited images, recorded humiliation, and the threatened circulation of compromising material.

⁴⁷ UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3, regs. 1–3; The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, 2023, No. 47, Acts of Parliament, 2023, § 2(1)(d)–(e) (India).

⁴⁸ For example, a student may be pressured to send photographs or videos, compelled to perform degrading tasks during video calls, kept inside abusive messaging groups, mocked through memes or edited images, or threatened that material will be uploaded unless they comply.

B. Legal consequences

As a matter of positive law, such conduct is dealt with under the existing anti-ragging framework and the ordinary penal provisions that apply to the act. If a private image is captured, published, or transmitted without consent, section 66E of the Information Technology Act, 2000, may become relevant. If obscene or sexually explicit material is electronically published or transmitted, sections 67 and 67A of the same Act may be attracted. Threats sent by message, voice note, or post may amount to criminal intimidation under section 351 of the BNS, while reputational smears or humiliating imputations may raise defamation under section 356.⁴⁹ The position becomes graver where online abuse is sexualised or gendered. Under the BNS, online forms of sexual harassment, voyeurism, stalking, and insulting the modesty of a woman or intruding upon privacy are separately punishable. A senior who records or circulates degrading sexualised content may not only expose himself to university discipline, but also to multiple penal provisions.⁵⁰

C. Electronic evidence under the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam

The evidentiary aspect is equally important. The BSA defines "document" to include electronic and digital records and expressly treats emails, server logs, smartphone messages, websites, locational evidence, and voice-mail messages as documentary material. Sections 61 to 63 further provide that electronic or digital records are not to be denied admissibility merely because of their form, but their proof still depends on compliance with the statutory conditions. This means that screenshots alone should not be treated casually as self-proving. The source, manner of production, and technical integrity of the digital material remain legally important.⁵¹ Early preservation thus matters. Original files, device details, account identifiers, links, timestamps, chat exports, call logs, and, where available, data retained by platforms should be secured before deletion or manipulation occurs. Cyber-ragging intensifies both harm and proof, as it enlarges the audience, prolongs humiliation, and turns abuse into a potentially traceable record. A study would therefore remain incomplete if it remained confined to physical campus spaces, as the relevant site of coercion now often includes the online realm.⁵²

⁴⁹ UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3; The Information Technology Act, 2000, No. 21, Acts of Parliament, 2000, §§ 66E, 67, 67A (India); The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, *supra* note 45, §§ 351, 356.

⁵⁰ Depending on the content and the manner of dissemination.

⁵¹ The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, *supra* note 45, §§ 75, 77–79.

⁵² The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023, *supra* note 47, §§ 2(1)(d)–(e), 61–63.

⁵³ *Id.* §§ 61–63; The Information Technology Act, 2000, *supra* note 49, § 67C.

VII. PROCEDURAL CONSEQUENCES: COMPLAINT, INQUIRY, FIR AND TRIAL BURDEN

A. Institutional complaint process

Once a complaint of ragging is made, the consequences for the alleged perpetrator begin long before any court delivers a verdict. The framework is designed to interrupt the act at an early stage, not merely to punish the perpetrators. The institutional process is thus expected to move quickly. Complaints may reach the college directly, the Anti-Ragging Helpline, the online portal, or the monitoring agency. Within the institution, the Anti-Ragging Squad is expected to conduct on-the-spot inquiries, and its report is then placed before the Anti-Ragging Committee for further action. The framework also protects complainants and informants. Students who report ragging are not supposed to suffer adverse consequences, and a victim's identity is not to be disclosed without consent.⁵⁴ This stage is important because the institution is often the first forum in which the alleged facts are assessed. The inquiry's purpose is preventive, disciplinary, and protective at the same time. If the allegation appears credible, the institution is expected to take immediate steps to prevent recurrence, isolate the vulnerable student from further harassment, and preserve enough material to decide whether disciplinary or criminal action must follow. The Regulations also allow for an appellate channel, which underlines that institutional punishment is meant to be structured rather than purely discretionary.⁵⁶

B. FIR and police process

Where the reported conduct discloses a penal offence, the matter moves beyond campus discipline into criminal procedure. The UGC Regulations require the head of the institution to determine immediately whether a case under penal law is made out and, if so, to proceed to lodge an FIR within twenty-four hours of receiving the information or recommendation. That obligation matters because, as highlighted above, ragging frequently overlaps with criminal acts.⁵⁷

After the enforcement of the BNSS, information relating to a cognizable offence may be given orally, in writing, or through electronic communication; cognizable cases may be investigated by the police without a Magistrate's prior order; witnesses may be required to attend; and their statements may be examined and recorded during investigation. In cyber-ragging cases, this

⁵⁴ UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3, regs. 6.2(g), 6.3(a)–(e), 8.1(a)–(d).

⁵⁵ Centre for Youth (C4Y), *supra* note 41.

⁵⁶ UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3, reg. 9.1(a)–(c).

⁵⁷ *Id.* reg. 7.

procedural layer becomes especially significant, because digital records may become crucial evidentiary material. That makes the investigative burden on the alleged perpetrator both immediate and tangible, as the process may include device search, seizure, interrogation, and continuing police supervision even before the trial begins.⁵⁸

C. Procedural law after the BNSS

As the adage goes, the process is the punishment. The practical burden of the criminal process should not be understated. Even in cases where arrest does not occur immediately, the accused student may have to respond to police notices, join an investigation, appear for questioning, seek regular bail or anticipatory bail, and remain available for further inquiry. If an arrest is made in a non-bailable case, the student must also navigate the law relating to grounds of arrest, bail, and production before the competent court. The process itself can become punitive, regardless of the eventual result.⁵⁹

D. Parallel proceedings

Institutional proceedings and criminal proceedings may run together, and this is by design. Their purposes are different. A criminal court determines penal guilt, while an institution determines whether the student's conduct violates the regulatory and disciplinary order of the institution. The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that there is no absolute legal bar to simultaneous disciplinary and criminal proceedings, and it has also clarified that an acquittal in the criminal case does not automatically wipe out disciplinary consequences, because the standards of proof and the objects of the two processes differ. The Court has also recognised that natural justice in such inquiries is flexible. The student must know the accusation and have a fair opportunity to answer it. Still, institutions are not required to reproduce a full criminal trial, especially where witness and campus safety are at stake.⁶⁰ For the perpetrator, therefore, the burden is not limited to final punishment, as the process forms a continuum of consequences. The anti-ragging framework is deliberately structured in this way because it seeks to stop escalation early, signal seriousness to potential offenders, and prevent the institution from using procedural delay as a substitute for action.

⁵⁸ The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, No. 46, Acts of Parliament, 2023, §§ 94, 105, 106, 173, 175, 179, 180, 185, 193 (India).

⁵⁹ The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, *supra* note 58, §§ 47–48, 482.

⁶⁰ *State Bank of India v. Neelam Nag*, (2016) 9 SCC 491 (India); *State of Rajasthan v. Heem Singh*, 2020 SCC OnLine SC 886 (India); *Hira Nath Mishra v. Principal, Rajendra Med. Coll.*, (1973) 1 SCC 805 (India).

VIII. COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES BEYOND FORMAL PUNISHMENT

Collateral consequences are often overlooked because anti-ragging discussions usually stop at suspension, rustication, or criminal liability. A finding of ragging can, however, alter a student's institutional identity itself. The UGC framework authorises serious academic sanctions.⁶¹ A student may therefore continue to bear the effects of a finding of ragging long after the formal order has been issued.

One important collateral effect concerns educational mobility. The Regulation contemplates that admission materials may include a school leaving, transfer, migration, or character certificate containing a report on the applicant's behavioural pattern, so that an institution may keep a closer watch on a student carrying an adverse entry.⁶² That possibility is not merely theoretical. University of Delhi notices from 2025 and 2026, for example, require character certificates and, in hostel contexts, no-dues and conduct certificates from the previous hostel.⁶³ Punishment for ragging may thus travel beyond the originating campus and complicate transfer, hostel admission, or fresh academic entry elsewhere.

The collateral burden is also social. The anti-ragging regime does not treat ragging as a purely private dispute among students. Parental undertakings at the beginning result in disciplinary exposure extending immediately into the family sphere.⁶⁴ Institutions also communicate the consequences directly to parents. The National Institute of Technology Kurukshetra, for instance, issued a 2025 letter to parents warning that ragging could lead to dire consequences.⁶⁵ Family embarrassment, peer distrust, and loss of institutional confidence become penalties in their own right, even though they are not formal punishments.

Professional and reputational consequences may follow as well. In public employment, the Supreme Court has treated character and past conduct as serious questions of suitability, rather than as matters exhausted by the formal result of a criminal case.⁶⁶ In regulated fields, the effect may be more immediate. The Bar Council of India's 2024 circular on criminal background checks for law students requires disclosure of ongoing FIRs, criminal cases, convictions, or

⁶¹ Such as withdrawal of scholarships, hostel expulsion, cancellation of admission, rustication, and expulsion coupled with debarment from admission elsewhere. See UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3, reg. 9.1(b).

⁶² *Id.* regs. 6.1(f), 6.4(m).

⁶³ University of Delhi, *Notice Regarding Documents Verification of B.P.Ed. & M.P.Ed. Admission 2025–26* (July 17, 2025); P.G. Men's Hostel, University of Delhi, *4th Admission Short-List 2025–26* (Jan. 20, 2026); Jubilee Hall, University of Delhi, *Fourth Provisional Admission List 2025–26* (Nov. 11, 2025).

⁶⁴ UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009, *supra* note 3, regs. 6.1(e), 6.1(g).

⁶⁵ Dean (Students' Welfare), National Institute of Technology Kurukshetra, *Most Important Letter to Parents of 2nd Year Students (as Part of Measures to Prevent Ragging in the Institute)* (July 7, 2025).

⁶⁶ *Avtar Singh v. Union of India*, (2016) 8 SCC 471 (India).

acquittals before final mark sheets and degrees are issued, and warns that non-disclosure may lead to withholding of the final mark sheet and degree.⁶⁷ Some institutional anti-ragging policies also go further by expressly connecting ragging to the forfeiture of campus placement opportunities and recommendations.⁶⁸ These examples show that the consequences of ragging may reach future study, professional enrolment, and employability even where imprisonment never follows.

Finally, reputational injury may outlast every formal sanction. The anti-ragging architecture now leaves documentary traces, and serious incidents can migrate into the digital sphere.⁶⁹ Once a student's name, batch, or institution becomes associated with a ragging episode, the damage may persist in peer memory, faculty perception, and online visibility long after a suspension or rustication ends. The anti-ragging framework, therefore, works not only through formal punishment, but also through enduring reputational burdens. For a student perpetrator, these consequences can be life-altering.

IX. CRITICAL ASSESSMENT: IS THE FRAMEWORK COHERENT AND EFFECTIVE?

The Indian anti-ragging framework is, in design, unusually strong. It does not depend only on criminal prosecution after the occurrence of harm. Instead, it combines broad regulatory definitions, mandatory preventive duties for higher educational institutions, internal disciplinary bodies, a national complaint system, and the possibility of recourse to criminal law. That layered structure is its principal strength. At the same time, however, coherence on paper has not translated into uniform effectiveness. The framework appears best understood as normatively robust but operationally uneven.

A. Overdependence on institutions

The first issue to note is the framework's heavy reliance on institutions themselves. The framework assumes that universities and colleges will act as serious first responders.⁷⁰ This is advantageous, because institutional discipline can be faster than the criminal process. Yet the same design also creates a glaring structural weakness. Institutions may be tempted to minimise, internally absorb, or quietly relabel incidents to avoid reputational damage. The Supreme Court

⁶⁷ Bar Council of India, BCI:D:5186/2024 (LE Circular No. 13/2024), *Implementation of Criminal Background Check System* (Sept. 24, 2024); The ICFAI University, Sikkim, *Notice: Undertaking Requirement as per Bar Council of India* (Sept. 25, 2024).

⁶⁸ Shridevi Institute of Engineering & Technology, *Policy on Anti-Ragging 2–3* (on file with institution website) (last visited May 28, 2026).

⁶⁹ Pankul Sharma, *Ragging in Med College: HC Initiates Contempt Action Against Centre, State & Regulators*, TIMES OF INDIA (Oct. 13, 2025).

⁷⁰ Institutions are expected to constitute anti-ragging committees and squads, monitor campus spaces, publicise the prohibition, collect undertakings, investigate complaints, and impose sanctions promptly.

recently acknowledged this problem in direct terms, observing that brutality in the form of ragging is often concealed by colleges and universities to safeguard their reputation, and further noting that anti-ragging compliance has too often been reduced to mere formalities. The UGC's own recent actions reinforce that concern. In 2024 and 2025, it had to issue fresh directions to chief secretaries, district authorities, police, regulatory councils, and universities; in June 2025, it issued a show-cause notice to eighty-nine universities for non-compliance with the anti-ragging regulations; and in January 2025, it proceeded against medical colleges that had failed to secure mandatory undertakings. These developments suggest that the central problem is no longer the absence of rules, but inconsistent implementation.⁷¹

B. Uncertainty in classification

The second issue concerns classification. The legal definition of ragging is deliberately broad. The breadth is defensible because ragging is mutable and often escalatory. Yet the same breadth can lead to inconsistent enforcement. One incident may be treated by one institution as a matter of "student indiscipline," by another as a serious regulatory violation, and by the police as a cluster of criminal offences. The consequence is that outcomes may depend less on the gravity of the act than on how a particular institution chooses to describe it at the initial stage. The framework is comprehensive, but not always predictably translated into action.

C. Due process and fairness

The third issue is procedural fairness. Strict action may be necessary, and a strict anti-ragging regime is justified. But seriousness cannot become a rationale for arbitrariness. Inside a campus, some procedural flexibility is inevitable; the Supreme Court has long recognised that the content of natural justice may vary with context, especially where disclosure of information could expose complainants to embarrassment or retaliation. Even so, flexibility is not the same as unchecked discretion. Where the consequences are academically and socially grave, the accused should still know the substance of the allegation, have a fair opportunity to respond, and receive a reasoned outcome from a body that actually applies its mind. This becomes even more important because the official anti-ragging undertaking states that, if accused of ragging, the responsibility is on students to prove that they are not guilty. Whatever its preventive purpose,

⁷¹ *Amit Kumar v. Union of India*, 2025 INSC 384, ¶¶ 64–69 (India); University Grants Comm'n, Letter No. 1-15/2016 (ARC), *Strengthening Anti-Ragging Measures and Promoting Safe Learning Environments* (Mar. 5, 2025); University Grants Comm'n, D.O. No. F. 1-15/2016 (ARC), *Strengthening Compliance with UGC Anti-Ragging Regulations and Monitoring Mechanisms* (May 13, 2025); University Grants Comm'n, D.O. No. F. 1-15/2009 (ARC) Pt. III, *Letter Regarding Constitution of District Level Anti-Ragging Committees* (Apr. 18, 2024); University Grants Comm'n, *Show Cause Notice to 89 Universities for Non-Compliance with UGC Anti-Ragging Regulations-2009* (June 9, 2025); Advisory, National Anti-Ragging Helpline (listing the Jan. 23, 2025 show-cause notice to medical colleges).

such language should not be treated as a substitute for a fair inquiry. A framework that appears pre-judgemental risks weakening the legitimacy of its own punitive choices.⁷²

D. Digital ragging and evidentiary capacity

The fourth issue arises from the digital turn. The regime was built around physical forms of ragging, but contemporary situations frequently migrate to the online realm. The official anti-ragging materials themselves now recognise complaints through email, helpline channels, and even social-media-triggered reporting, while the 2025 UGC communication to the police emphasises that helpline complaints may be anonymous and that complainant confidentiality must be protected. This is an important step. Yet digital ragging also requires capacities that many institutions may not possess: preserving screenshots, identifying authorship, recording metadata, securing devices, and coordinating with the police before material is deleted or altered. The BSA expressly treats electronic or digital records as legally cognizable documentary material and regulates their evidentiary use. The challenge is no longer conceptual recognition but institutional competence. Without prompt preservation and documentation, the evidentiary trace of cyber-ragging can disappear long before formal proceedings begin.⁷³

E. Analytical standpoint

The best way to describe the scenario is that the anti-ragging framework in India is coherent in principle but fragile at implementation. Its layered design remains valuable because it permits preventive intervention before harm culminates in extreme outcomes. But its actual effectiveness depends on healthy practices,⁷⁴ and future reform should therefore focus on ensuring credible enforcement, oversight, and standardised protocols that institutions cannot reduce to paperwork.

X. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To make the anti-ragging framework effective in practice, institutions should supplement the legal rules with clear preventive and procedural measures. First, all HEIs ought to provide a structured orientation and sensitisation programme at the outset of each academic year. These programmes should explicitly explain that ragging is a serious offence with concrete consequences. For example, students should be warned in advance about the punishments for

⁷² *Hira Nath Mishra v. Principal, Rajendra Med. Coll.*, (1973) 1 SCC 805, 811–13 (India); Undertaking Registration Form for Colleges, National Anti-Ragging Helpline.

⁷³ University Grants Comm'n, Letter No. 1-15/2016 (ARC), *Guidelines for Managing Anti-Ragging Complaints and Ensuring Confidentiality of Complainant Information* (Mar. 5, 2025); The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023, *supra* note 47, §§ 57, 61–63.

⁷⁴ Such as institutional will, consistent classification of misconduct, procedurally fair practices, and competent handling of digital evidence.

ragging prescribed by the UGC Regulations and criminal law. Similarly, the mandatory undertaking signed by students and parents should be treated as more than a formality. Institutions should read out the anti-ragging provisions and ensure that new students and parents understand them fully. As the R. K. Raghavan Committee report noted, when undertakings are "given" but not "taken seriously," their deterrent effect is lost.⁷⁵ To reinforce the message, institutions can integrate anti-ragging warnings into prospectuses, brochures, and induction materials.

Second, institutions should ensure that their anti-ragging committees and related bodies are equipped and motivated. Committees should include members trained in student counselling and discipline, including at least one mental-health professional or experienced counsellor, with a full-time, well-defined role for a warden or student affairs officer. Every institution must have a written, transparent protocol for receiving and handling complaints of ragging. At the same time, cases should be classified by severity so that punishments are proportional. Minor humiliations may warrant internal disciplinary measures, whereas criminal acts should trigger immediate suspension of the alleged perpetrator and the filing of a police FIR. Such triage avoids both over-punishing trivial jokes and under-enforcing serious abuse.

Third, institutions must prepare for cyber-ragging. Anti-ragging squads and committee members should be trained to recognise online abuse. Complaint forms and inquiry procedures should explicitly cover "digital ragging" and require complainants to preserve evidence. For instance, students should be urged to save screenshots of humiliating messages or videos. The anti-ragging committee should cooperate with the campus IT wing or the police cyber cell to retrieve deleted data. Clear rules should be implemented for preserving devices and electronic records once a cyber-ragging allegation is made.

Fourth, to bolster deterrence, institutional discipline should include protecting and supporting victims and witnesses. Those who report ragging should face no retaliation from peers or the institution. Victims' classmates or hostel mates who cooperate with inquiries should be shielded from peer pressure or abuse. For example, interviews with victimised students should be private, and anti-ragging bodies can allow anonymous or counsel-assisted submissions. If witnesses fear speaking up, a hands-off approach will undermine the process. Conversely, maintaining confidentiality and offering counselling sends a message that complaining is safe and honoured.

⁷⁵ Ministry of Human Resource Development, Gov't of India, *Report of the Committee to Enquire into the Menace of Ragging in Educational Institutions and Suggest Measures to Curb It*, ¶ 110 (2007).

Fifth, as the Regulation maintains, all disciplinary actions should follow natural justice. When a finding is reached, the institution should issue a reasoned order that sets out the facts and the legal basis for the punishment. Reasoned orders help prevent arbitrariness and provide a check if students appeal. Moreover, compliance reports should not be treated as perfunctory paperwork but as instruments of real accountability. Collecting and publishing statistics on ragging incidents, actions taken, and pendency can motivate better enforcement over time.

Thus, while the statutory framework provides the tools to punish ragging, effective implementation requires active measures.⁷⁶ By institutionalising these practices, campuses can make the abstract sanctions more real and deter ragging more than regulations alone would.

XI. CONCLUSION

The analysis shows that ragging must never be treated as a harmless campus ritual. Under the UGC's anti-ragging regulations, any form of ragging is expressly prohibited, and institutions are required to punish offenders both under the Regulations and under penal law. This means that a student found guilty of ragging can face serious academic and disciplinary sanctions, even before any criminal proceedings. At the same time, ragging often involves misconduct that crosses into criminal territory. When seniors assault, intimidate, extort, sexually abuse, or otherwise harm juniors, those acts fall under penal offences. Ragging is thus a punishable act and a crime under Indian law, and intent (such as doing it for "fun") makes no difference.

India's legal response to ragging operates through a layered liability model. The first layer is campus discipline: anti-ragging committees and squads must investigate complaints, take immediate protective steps, and impose institutional punishments promptly. The second layer is criminal law: if the conduct involves assault, kidnapping, sexual violence, abetment of suicide, homicide, or other criminal acts, the police file charges under the applicable penal code. This approach was reinforced by the Supreme Court in 2009, which imposed anti-ragging frameworks on all institutions and directed that serious cases be sent to the police. A single ragging incident can thus give rise to parallel proceedings, each with its own procedures and standards.

Finally, the legal treatment of ragging in India is best understood as an integrated system that prioritises prevention and deterrence. Institutions are made accountable for prevention and quick action, while offenders face both academic penalties and potential imprisonment. The new criminal laws simply update the labels and procedures, but leave the core idea unchanged:

⁷⁶ Such as orientation sessions, sincere undertakings, trained committees, clear complaint protocols, victim protection, and transparent discipline.

ragging is punishable by law. The ultimate effectiveness of this framework depends on institutions' seriousness and students' awareness. Clear communication of consequences itself helps deter ragging. Concisely put, students must understand that ragging is not a benign "rite of passage" but a serious legal wrong with potentially severe consequences.
