



Discrimination and Ragging

Recently we all came across an incident of racism in which our bollywood queen Shilpa Shetty was ridiculed by a white woman Jade Goody in a TV show called Big Brother, which later became the most unpopular TV show in the world. The incident sparked off a controversy and made the headlines of print and electronic media all across the world and helped channel four and the show reach its new heights. The Indian media also missed no opportunity to provoke the sensitive Indian sentiments and earn their TRP points by highlighting this controversy as much as they could. For that whole week it seemed as if it is only white people who are discriminating against the blacks and browns and that no other form of discrimination exists in the world. I don't know how many of us learned anything from this incident and took out time to make introspection to find out how much discrimination we do in our own lives.

Watching that endless number of debates on discrimination, running on every other news channel all through the day reminded me of my ugly ragging days. It was during my ragging in Medical College in the state of Uttar Pradesh that I first ever came across any sort of discrimination in my life. Most of us might not be aware of the fact that most explicit forms of discrimination takes place during ragging in colleges and it perhaps sows the seeds of discrimination in the young minds forever.

I come from a liberal family where caste and community issues are never taken seriously. It was during my ragging that for the first time I became so much conscious of the fact that I belong to "*Baniya community*" like never before. My seniors who never knew me used to catch me and beat me just because I come from one community and they were from the other. There was another group of seniors who used to rag me simply because I come from different region or had different sort of schooling. Similarly there were many other groups of seniors divided on the lines of regions, language, caste, community, economic background etc. each using ragging as a tool to ridicule the fresher from different background.

Many people from big cities like Delhi, Mumbai etc. may not be fortunate to be familiar with this kind of discrimination common in small cities and might be finding it vague. But when I quit the medical college and took admission in one of the colleges of Delhi University, I saw a new sort of discrimination very much different from the earlier one. It was not caste or community based but here the students were differentiated on the basis of economic class and also classified either into a North Eastern, Bihari or a Delhite.

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Here also ragging was just a tool to vent out the feelings of discriminations that exists in our society.

Though one can't call these sorts of discrimination as racism but it is certainly an example of sub-racism. These kinds of discriminations are rampant in the Indian campus and have taken lives and ruined careers of many young students. Even in the west, ragging called as hazing or bullying was due to the discrimination existing between the blacks and whites.

Ragging is simply a manifestation of different forms of discriminations that we see in our society but it has always been showcased and misunderstood as a healthy personality boosting therapy or something like a friendship catalyst because of which the discriminatory factor hidden in it has never really been identified or analysed.

I would be happy if people spend a bit of their time to go into the roots of discrimination and think about ragging/hazing/bullying taking place in schools and colleges with the young students all around the world and find answer to a more serious question on the origin of discrimination....*Is this the possible start as to what Jade Goody did on Big Brother?*

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Coalition to Uproot Ragging from Education:
A youth movement to eliminate ragging from the Indian Education system
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