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'Ragging now organised crime, not harmless prank'

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KOLKATA: The death of a Jadavpur University student, allegedly triggered by ragging, shows that the practice has turned into an organized mob activity from spontaneous pranks, said city psychiatrists and psychologists. Many of those who indulge in it have a troubled past and derive a sense of power and control by abusing juniors, they said.

While decades ago, ragging would be a harmless prank, it has been allowed to degenerate into psychological torture and violent physical abuse, which, at times, results in deaths, said psychiatrist Jayranjan Ram.

“It is now an organized activity, well-planned and executed ruthlessly by a group of students. In the JU case, it seemed that

once the victim was singled out, there was a concerted effort to break him down psychologically, isolate him and then drive him to desperation through physical abuse. This shows there is a group of boarders which runs the show. The incident also demonstrates that they were setting an example by being particularly harsh on this student to establish their rule over the hostel,” said Ram.

Deriving pleasure out of abusing and tormenting juniors is sadism at its worst, according to psychologist Souma Mukherjee. “It indicates a weak personality, behavioural and even mental disorder. These youngsters either couldn't live up to their expectations academically or have been left frustrated by the fact that they haven't yet been able to find a job even after making it to JU. Interestingly, many of the accused boys are former students

from a humble background and their parents worked hard to educate them. They seem to be suffering from a sense of deprivation and are keen to see people around them suffer,” said Mukherjee.

Any ‘extraordinary’ behaviour should not be dubbed ‘psychological’, said Ram. “Those who did it have a criminal mindset and operated like goons. Some of them might have had a troubled past but that does not justify this planned teamwork to victimize a fresher. They need to be treated as criminals,” he added.

A psychologist who has worked with victims of ragging said the JU hostels have been a ‘heaven’ for depraved seniors. “A teacher at the university who is a friend was abused by hostel boarders just because he had gone to the second floor of a hostel a few years ago. Unless the authorities step in, things won’t change at JU or other campuses,” the psychologist said.