

## **C.L.A.S.S. FELLOWSHIP**

### **Character – Leadership – Attitude – Social Responsibility – Skill Management**

Brought to you by A.Vijayakumar

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Preamble

It is impossible to conceive a civilized society without some system of discipline. This was true even of most primitive societies. In modern civilized society characterized by numerous types of institutions, some system of discipline, of one kind or the other is absolutely indispensable. Discipline is a way of life which is well planned and well lived, is the means to preserve civilization, transmission of culture, knowledge, values and perfect development of the society. Discipline is like a force that channelizes one's energies and efforts to yield something of a progressive nature by set rules and norms.

Educational institutions in our country are facing a general all-round deterioration in discipline in the modern time. In some of the universities especially things have degenerated to such an extent that the situation is considered as alarming. It is therefore imperative that urgent and immediate steps are taken to mend and reform the situation and remove the canker of indiscipline from our midst, otherwise the entire pattern of our society stands in constant jeopardy. Pandit Nehru has clearly stated. "The leaders of India of tomorrow will come out of the students of today." and says, "What kind of leadership are we going to have in that tomorrow if their training in the present is going to pieces."

This problem of indiscipline, it must be pointed out, is not peculiar to our country alone. It is in fact a worldwide phenomenon because the Sun, it has been said, never sets on the problems of conduct. Every country and every institution faces these problems at one time or another. Some tackle them successfully, others make a mess of them. There is, however, a difference in the degree and acuteness of the problem in different institutions at different times in different regions and different countries and our misfortune is that the problem in our country has recently taken a turn for the worse. The whole situation, therefore, is embarrassing and intractable.

Apart from other reasons which may be given for this extremely bitter, wretched and unenviable state of affairs, one of the most important reasons is that we in this country have been under a foreign yoke for quite a long spell of time. The rulers in their own interest used coercive and negative methods to keep order in the country. We obeyed the rules framed by the foreign government

not because of any respect for law but for fear of punishment and as such we lost our sense of mutual regard, social participation and the obeying of law for the sake of respect that it commands, mutual benefit that it bestows and social progress that it ensures.

We can not ignore the unnecessary interferences of politics in education and it is worthwhile to state that the exploitation of students by political parties has done irreparable harm to the cause of discipline in our schools, colleges and even the universities. Commenting on this cause, the Randhir Singh committee of Allahabad University to enquire into the causes of indiscipline prevailing in that place of learning, has suggested that political parties should withdraw from the sphere of university life in the larger interests of the country. It has also proposed that politicians should enter into a kind of gentleman's agreement, voluntarily undertaking not to exploit students for party ends. These politicians have used the students for furthering their own ends and having tasted blood on many occasions in the past, it is to much of a pious hope to expect that they would turn 'vegetarians' and lose their power, prestige and influence.

Among other causes of indiscipline, the abnormal rise in numbers without a corresponding increase in the staff, accommodation and equipment, is the most outstanding. In our higher educational institutions the rise in numbers has been phenomenal and the teacher-pupil ratio in certain cases stands at 1:50 whereas in the old universities of Oxford and Cambridge it is never higher than 1:8. Consequently the personal relationship between the teachers and the taught remains a thing of past—most of the teachers believing that they have only been "hired" to teach. With large numbers, friendly cooperation and sympathetic understanding are not possible and teachers, as a rule, do not have any genuine interest in the welfare of their students. This is why the teachers of today have lost their hold on the student community in general and have failed to mould the pattern of student thought both in the classroom and outside. Some of them have even begun to feel that they have nothing to do with the well-being and welfare of their students, they have only to teach a particular subject on fixed days and fixed hours.

Besides, other major causes responsible for indiscipline may be counted the waning of home influence, frustration due to unemployment, absence of moral instruction in the different stages of education especially the initial stages, lack of proper facilities for engaging students in healthy activities outside the classroom, baneful effects of unwholesome pictures, laxity in administration and absence of cooperation.

In our attempts to resolve the problem of indiscipline we have to consider the very purpose for which education is imparted. It is

said to be a "preparation for life" or to use Herbert Spencer's words, it is for "complete living". Voices may be raised against a total acceptance of these aims and we are conscious of the criticism that have been levelled against them, but it can not be denied that the idea contained in these statements is very significant and must form an essential ingredient of any purpose that may be assigned to education. In fact, no society can progress unless its individual members have been prepared for the life they have to lead and given adequate and suitable training in disciplined living. It, indeed, is the sine qua non of any progressive society and by training children in the art of disciplined living; the teacher certainly makes a solid and signal contribution to the welfare of his community and his state. This is so because no society can exist and no state can run unless every individual member composing it learns to analyze the social situation he is placed in and to modify his conduct so as to fit the same in that social pattern. A machine can run smoothly only if every part of fits in where it belongs. It is only this realization that needs to be created and the rest will follow as a natural consequence. But this realization, it must be borne in mind, can only be an inborn process and not an imposition from without

As such discipline becomes an essential part and parcel of all human associations and may be better termed as social discipline. We are, however, constrained to point out that a vast majority of our teachers in schools, colleges and universities do not realize this aspect of discipline at all. They neither see nor appreciate its constructive aspects and its educational possibilities. They also fail to realize that the problem of discipline is essentially concerned with a person's feelings and emotions. It is, therefore, not only wrong but definitely harmful to limit classroom discipline to a correction of wrong or undesirable conduct only. Discipline must carry out into life of which the classroom or the school is a mere microcosm.

Taking all that has been said above into consideration, it might be affirmed that discipline, if it is to further its own cause, must be positive and not negative, it must be constructive and not destructive, It must be suggestive and not prescriptive, It must be indirect and not direct and lastly, it must be remote and not immediate. Positive, constructive, suggestive, indirect and remote discipline seeks to create in the pupils wholesome ideas and ideals and healthy and desirable attitudes and habits and it accomplishes this through the effective agency of the classroom, study periods, hobbies, leisure-time pursuits and other co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. In this way, it touches the inner springs of thought and conduct and develops self-control which in turn protects the individual from the tyranny of his own lower desires

and passions by appealing to the highest level of conduct—the ethical level.

Negative, destructive, prescriptive, direct and immediate discipline, on the other hand, seeks to administer laws and wield its authority by resorting to repressive and suppressive measures. It believes in correcting the wrong conduct or misdemeanours on the part of a pupil by means of unquestioned obedience to the will of the teacher. Instead of appealing to the higher levels of conduct, this form of discipline makes use of the fair motive—fair of punishment. It does not tolerate any deviation from the prescribed code of conduct, but uniformity of procedure and subservience to commands are its watchwords. It, therefore, strives to secure and spread goodness by proscribing and suppressing wrong, undesirable and harmful conduct. It is certainly true that occasions do arise sometime or other for such eventualities but to make this type of discipline as the very ideal will defeat its very purpose. Even in such cases when this type of correction alone seems to be effective, it is suggested that its tools, detentions, rebukes, punishments, withdrawals of privileges and the like should be used with the sole and specific purpose of making them and auxiliary to the positive type of discipline. It is so because true discipline is essentially creative and unless it creates an atmosphere of mutual regard and self-restraint no progress or advancement is ever possible.

We, on our part, are conscious of this difficulty but there is certainly a large common measure in regard to qualities which has persisted in all times and in all climes. There is, therefore, no need whatever for us to delve deep into the meanings of this word. Taking in general terms, therefore, we might say that good character which is an essential part of good citizen consists of the following traits:

- (1) Self-control and obedience
- (2) Honesty
- (3) Courtesy and consideration
- (4) Promptness
- (5) Helpful initiative and perseverance
- (6) Orderliness
- (7) Putting others before self

The training of character, therefore, implies that school, colleges and universities must work towards the cultivation of the above qualities. The need of the hour, therefore, is to revise the working and organizations of our educational institutions in such a way that they will develop in the pupil an integrated personality which

consists of "organized ideas, attitudes, traits and habits which an individual has built up into roles for dealing with others and himself." This kind of personality, it should be remembered, can not develop in vacuum but grows out of real participation in the social life of the school and community. When looked at from this point of view, discipline in schools and colleges does not remain a problem for the classroom alone but envelops the entire life of the child and becomes co-existence with living.

Before bringing out the outcome of the above discussion it must be pointed out that the methods adopted or followed for the purpose of inculcating the right type of discipline are not to be confused with mere policing. The line between the two must be drawn very carefully and it should be remembered that discipline develops best in a free atmosphere. Freedom, moreover, does not mean freedom for only an individual or for a group but it means freedom for all. It should, therefore, be recognized that freedom will not be real freedom if its enjoyment by an individual deprives somebody else of his or her freedom. Consequently there is no such thing as absolute freedom—freedom is always relative and invariably implies some restraints or restrictions. It is, therefore, wrong to suppose that the terms freedom and discipline are contradictory. They are different sides of the same coin. This is so because that discipline which takes effect voluntarily is tantamount to freedom; and that freedom which gives up its rights in view of the inner voice or self-imposed restrictions is discipline. Freedom, therefore, always means disciplined freedom and likewise discipline is of the highest type when it is free discipline. Thus, good discipline is always self-discipline and self-commanded. A good and well disciplined citizen, is therefore, he who obeys orders and commands and respects law not because of any alien authority but because he recognizes the good that will come out of such obedience.

The question now arises as to how we can produce such results. What methods should we follow, what activities should we introduce and what kind of organization should we follow with a view to achieving best results in the minimum of time? In the programme of opportunities that should be provided for the purpose two principles are of paramount importance and they must come before everything else. The first principle in this respect is that school organization and control should not be the sole province of the head of institution or that of the members of the staff either but students should invariably be associated with them in all the different aspects thereof. Secondly, hobbies, leisure-time pursuits and extra-curricular activities should be so numerous and so organized as to appeal to the tastes and temperaments of all

pupils besides giving them a lot of experience in managing them on their own.

The principle of student participation is based on the psychological dictum that "there is no age at which children may not be held at least partially responsible for their own conduct." Even a small child can be held responsible for sharing some responsibilities especially those which are directed towards his own emancipation. Furthermore, we have to bear in mind the fact that we live in an age of democracy and as a natural consequence of this fact it is imperative for us to provide opportunities to our pupils in sufficient numbers to engage in cooperative activities and thus socialize themselves. They must learn to work in cooperation with others and imbibe, at as early an age as possible, those ideas and ideals that will enable them to become active effective members of a democracy. Moreover, by taking part in the organization of the school and its activities, they will not feel that they are mere cogs in the wheels of the school plant but they will come to regard themselves as vital parts of the school society which represents on a smaller scale, of course, the broader society of which the child is a member.

Student participation, moreover, is primarily meant to stimulate a sense of individual and group moral responsibility. It thus seeks to develop initiatives, judgment and leadership in children. It also gives practice in administering social machinery. Last but certainly not the least, student participation improves teacher-pupil relationship and gives birth to a healthy school spirit which will animate the school as a whole and which in turn will have great influence on discipline than mere discipline will or can ever have on school spirit.

The second principle that we have suggested above is the provision of hobbies, leisure-time pursuits and extra-curricular activities. The inclusion of these activities in the work of schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions will go a long way in providing opportunities for training in discipline. This is so because education has to perform the dual task of providing for livelihood and for leisure; If it fails in its tasks, it results in and leads to serious injury of mind, body and character. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that extra-curricular activities are "Organized phases of student life where conduct is more conspicuous than knowledge." As such they play a very important role in controlling the inner springs of conduct and in guiding the actions of an individual. Besides the above mentioned activities, different clubs like cricket club, hockey club, football club, kabaddi club, gatka club etc. should be made for debating society, old boys club, dramatic club, scouts club, girl guides club, school

journey club, holiday club, naturalists club, study circle, N.C.C., festival committee, guild of courtesy, league of mercy, book club, safety club, social service league, art club, photographic club, gardening club, cycle club, cooperative society, junior red cross and students' magazine. It is not suggested for a moment that every school should make provision for all these and these alone. What is implied is that every school should provide a host of such activities depending upon the initiative, interests and enthusiasm of the teachers on the one hand and the needs, demands and stage of development of the pupils on the other. Besides, it is imperative that they should be carried on in such a manner as to increase manifold the school's opportunities for doing good by enabling the students to take upon themselves corporate and social duties which in turn will lead to a socializing of the members and have a humanistic and civilizing influence on them in general.

The reasons for disciplinary problems may not only be due to the activities of pupils, but teachers also seem to be responsible. Bad teaching, for example, invariably leads to poor and ineffective discipline. Besides, inactivity fatigue and boredom also create disciplinary difficulties. Not only this, misdirected energy, whether deficient or surplus, lack of legitimate outlet, resentment against improper control, bad physical conditions, undue egotism, low mentality, desire for sensationalism, misadventure and malice, besides a host of factors, all breed problems of discipline and the responsibility for their causes cannot be ascribed entirely to the pupils. There is another point which merits serious and active consideration on the part of every teacher. When considering wrong actions and other problems of conduct and misconduct, the teacher should not be satisfied with only a superficial study of the case but should make a serious effort and an earnest attempt to discover the real cause of misconduct or misdemeanor and remove it. He should, therefore, regard each case of misconduct as a problem to be studied and not as a situation to be met and this study of the problem should be carried on in a sympathetic manner. Prescribing the same kind of punishment for the same kind of fault in different individuals will not be very effective or go very far in most of the cases. It has also to be remembered, as stated above, that there will be certain problems that arise out of the teacher's own personality or quality of teaching and they can best be solved by the teacher himself through self-analysis, self-correction and self-improvement. This end can be achieved only if the teacher develops a proper and healthy attitude towards himself, towards his work and towards his pupils. He should try to create interest in the minds of his pupils and arouse their curiosity in regard to the work in hand by means of questions, descriptions, illustrations, references and a greater and wider use of teaching aids. In short, he should strain every nerve to motivate his pupils properly to a high

pitch. As a result of this, he will find that most of the disciplinary problems will just vanish into thin air. This is so because an active interested and properly motivated pupil is so much absorbed in his work that he has no time of acts of misconduct and misbehaviour—much less be guilty of doing them.

In order to give a practical shape to these principles, devices, dictums or "tricks of trade" effectively, a teacher will have to know his pupils and have an insight into their attitudes, aptitudes, likes and dislikes. He will have to see that his work suits the individual capacities and capabilities of his pupils and that he is not in any way forcing the dullard too fast or withholding the intelligent unduly behind. Even such small things as the learning of their names, readjustment of their seats, assignment of their duties in keeping with their mental make-up and approaching them on a personal level, instead of dealing with them en masse as a herd of cattle, will go a long way in enabling him to win over their willing cooperation and putting in their very best with a view to furthering the activities of the school and fulfilling its purposes.

#### Conclusion

The problem of discipline is the problem of problems and bristles with many difficulties. To a cursory observer it even baffles solution but the imperative and immediate urgency of solving it can not be challenged. This it must, however, be pointed out cannot be accomplished in it's entirely by any individual or any institution only by its own efforts. In the words of the Report of the University Education Commission (1949), "Administrators and teachers cannot solve satisfactorily the problems of promoting good life and high ethical standards on campuses. They must have the cooperation of the parents, the political leaders, the public and the press. This is cooperative task which deserves the support of all good citizens. The outcome is significant not only for higher education but for the sound growth of our country." We sincerely hope that this cooperative nature of the problem is realized by the inhabitants of this vast country as a whole in general and the teachers and the pupils in particular and efforts commensurate with the urgency and the magnitude of the problem are put in by one and all, so as to remove the canker of indiscipline which has been responsible for the demoralization and degeneration of our education and has acted as an insurmountable obstacle in the achievement of progress and prosperity.

#### Concluded