

Corporal Punishment in Schools

The term, 'corporal punishment' means 'physical punishment'. It is a kind of punishment that affects the human body adversely. It could be in the form of beating, thrashing or even whipping. Thus, punishment of this kind is physical torture to a student and should be condemned and stopped immediately. Moreover, such kind of punishment may sometimes physically impair a student for his whole life. Psychologists are of the opinion that such a punishment can affect a student mentally, for a very long period of time.

In India corporal punishment has become a common feature in schools. Several incidents of physical assault have been reported in the newspapers for instance, a student of class xii from a popular school in Udaipur and a student from Delhi Municipal Corporation school died due to the beating they received from their school teachers. This is shocking. In another incident, a class xi student in Ahmedabad accused a teacher of having hit him so hard that he suffered a temporary loss of hearing. Making a student kneel down or stand for hours, pinching and slapping are all set to be banned under plans to widen the definition of corporal punishment in school.

The national commission for protection of child rights has suggested a code of conduct for teachers in school. The main feature of the code is a total ban on corporal punishment. Some states in India have banned corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is just another form of physical violence and has no place in an enlightened society.

However, there are numerous instances of milder punishment that go unnoticed. There is enough evidence to suggest that teachers, including those at elite schools, physically and verbally intimidate children some of whom could be as young as five years old. There is unfortunately no national law banning cruel or unusual punishment in schools. The national policy on education merely says that corporal punishment is not permissible.

Discipline is a must for students in schools and colleges. However, enforcing it through corporal punishment is highly objectionable and rather inhuman. This kind of punishment was generally practiced during the medieval period, and is now outdated. Moreover, this is not the right procedure or technique to discipline a student.

Teachers should realize that children at the school level are at an impressionable age. If they are subjected to such kind of physical torture, they may develop a

fear to approach or meet a teacher, or even attend school. They will never respect and love their teachers which is very essential for the overall development of student personality. This is because a guru or teacher is role model for a student. He must set an example for his students through his behavior and actions. He must deal with his students patiently, advising and guiding them to excel in every sphere of life such as academic, sports, music and various other extracurricular activities.

The supreme court states that children are not to be subjected to corporal punishment in schools and they should receive education in an environment of freedom and dignity, free from fear. The national policy on education directs the school authorities to take necessary action in the matter, so that this evil practice affecting the physical and mental health of children can be nipped in the bud.

Corporal punishment does not have any positive effect on a student. It instead worsens the situation. For instance, a student who is very naughty, or least interested in studies, when subjected to corporal punishment, may become more aggressive in nature. He may even leave the school and studies. Such development may be disastrous for a child's future and for the society. Corporal punishment may even cause permanent physical disorders in a child. For example, her slapping upon the ears can make him totally deaf for the rest of his life. Harsh whipping and canning of the hands and legs can damage the bones and muscles.

There are some people who would say scolding of schoolchildren and verbal intimidation should not be outlawed. This argument is flawed. Verbal abuse could be as damaging and humiliating for children, especially the younger ones, as physical punishment. Parents often complain to school authorities against abuse of their children in school, but they are too often cowed down to silence by school authorities. In such a situation, there is no alternative but for the state government to intervene.

To conclude it must always be borne in mind that teaching is one of the noblest professions where one imparts knowledge to others. The teacher must consider his students as his own children and treat them as lovingly and caring as possible. He should praise a student's achievements, and help him to overcome his shortcomings by motivating him to pursue his interests. A teacher should be there to guide a student to become a responsible, educated and well-groomed citizen of the country. While handling students it must always be kept in mind that they are like flowers. They have to be nurtured with great care to help them blossom and spread their fragrance.