



# Lies and Bullies

Boarding school life is all about tales. In fact life in a boarding school is itself like a tale. It is no less compared to a fairy tale minus the fairies as ours was an all boys' school. Apart from the fairies, we had all those characters that we normally find in a fairy tale. There were heroes and villains, witches and midgets, ghosts and ghoulish fiends, as well as animals. I would even say that living in a boarding school is no less than living in a fantasy. Of course, I would not have said this when I was a student there, now looking back I would say that we all lived in a fairy land.

Now it is also true that not all tales in a hostel are true. Of course, by saying this I do not mean that all tales are fabricated in a hostel. Naturally, students do fabricate some ingenious and patented tales before their housemasters or their wardens to save themselves from carrying a forced fashion statement of having some zebra prints on their skin after a date with the cane. Such tales, although wrong, have an amusing side. But not all tales told are worth appreciating. These tales are such that they should never be taught or told at all. More particularly these

tales have a specific name of their own. They are called 'Lies'.

Of all things which come to us easier than the easiest are lies. We lie about little things, we lie about big things and we lie to lie. A lie comes to us faster than we can even blink our eye. Lies are also legendary in nature. We inherit them as easily as we inherit our destiny. I think amongst the first things a child learns is a lie. A child learns to lie from many sources and the foremost among them are parents. They learn to lie by simply imitating a parent. For instance, I remember an incident dating

some years back. I was with a gentleman. It so happened that between our conversation he got a call on his cell phone. Picking up the phone from the table, he called out to his son. I sat looking at the entire event and thought that the call must have been for his son. But when his little son came to him, he told his son to take the call and tell the caller that he was not at home, and that he had forgotten his mobile phone at home. The boy did likewise and that too very obediently. Meanwhile, seeing all this, I just sat there totally shocked out of my wits and also very angry at what had happened. Seeing my shocked expression, the father smiled at me and simply told me “*O ji, kuch log bahot hi pareshaan karte hain.*” (Some people can be very annoying) I still cannot forget that incident.

That incident was indeed a very shameful incident; at least as far as my conscience tells me. Imagine a father teaching his son to lie. Such parents would like to see their child admitted to one of the top schools of the country. They would do all they could to give their child the best education

possible and as far as such parents are concerned their duty simply ends there. For they think, post admission, the school is entirely responsible for educating their child. After all they have paid the fees and made all the required payments. So why be bothered! Some parents even go to the extent of arguing what good a school is if they had to educate their child themselves. I guess such arguments and logic do not deserve any discussion, nor do they deserve any mention here. These arguments can very well be termed as baseless.

These baseless arguments have a very harmful and negative influence on a child's bearing. Such is the impact of these teachings that, no matter how hard one tries or whichever school one sends one's child to, these habits can never be alienated from a child's character.

There is a very famous saying; “A student's life is a seed's life”. Simple and crisp, this sentence says all about the mind of a student. It is just like a seed planted in a fertile ground, nurtured with all love and care, and

expected to grow up to be a strong and fruitful tree. Likewise a student who gets all the right knowledge and upbringing will also grow up to be a towering and illustrious personality – a personality a nation would be proud of. Now this would only happen if parents too take the responsibility of shaping their child's growth, along with the school. It is true that school teaches a child to read and write, but it is only at home that a child gets the first lessons on manners, charity, and respect and so on. After all, if we count the number of hours a child spends in a day school it is evident that they spend more hours at home than at school. Take for instance, a child who leaves for school at 8 a.m. and returns home at 2 p.m. Counting by hours, the child spends only six hours in the school whereas the rest of the day is spent at home and with friends on the playground. Now, would it be wrong to say that parents who send their kids to day school have an equal responsibility of shaping their child's life as the teachers in school?

However, in boarding schools, such responsibilities of

educating a child in all such matters rest with the house wardens, teachers and the Principal. And I must say, that when I was in school I was taught all these in a manner which my father would have done himself. After all these years, I must say, that the lessons I got from my house wardens and teachers have today made me what I am. And I am proud of them and who I am.

It is not only the boarding school that can groom a child to its potential. The mutual support of parents in this aspect is also vital to a child's mental development.

There are many things parents can practice to ensure the proper upbringing of the child even better if their child goes to a boarding school. To start with, parents can help in their child's development by following the school discipline and the calendar of events. This has the list of all the holidays and approved days to meet their children besides all other rules. For parents it becomes easier to plan their visit to the school and as for the children they have selected days to look out for their parents. And that waiting time

becomes a hope for the children. This eventually makes their stay more comfortable and positive. And yes, in between there is always the telephone. But only if a call is allowed every fortnight or a month. It is important for parents to call less frequently, so that every child learns to grow on their own. It cultivates survival instincts and makes the child confident. It is also advisable for parents to call their child's tutor or warden before talking to their child so that one can anticipate the negative and the positive part of every conversation. The mother of all conversation, which is also 80% of calls, is a child requesting his/her parents to take him/her back home. I too did the same when my parents enrolled me in the School. I repeatedly kept on telling my father that I would be a good boy and would always stay at home and not venture out to the fields on hot summer afternoons to watch buffaloes lolling about in the muddy water. When I realized that my words were falling on deaf ears, I resorted to howling my heart out. All this is very normal. It's called, 'homesickness' and almost every child goes through it during the

initial months. For some, it even goes on for a year. Homesickness is often triggered by a challenging social experience because the child is in a new place with strict routine and rules to follow. It is, of course, unlike home, where one can do whatever one likes. As a parent, the best thing one can do to help the child deal with homesickness is to remember that this is a natural part of the adjustment process. And then give a sense of security. It is crucial that the child knows that there are people who listen and appreciate his/her concerns.

Apart from the child, parents should also stay in touch with their child's Principal, housemasters, wardens and teachers. They provide valuable insight into a child's progress and parents can support them in their efforts in helping their child make a smooth transition into the new environment.

It is also a common expectation among parents that, their children would become a whiz kid in a couple of days. Probably, it's because of the fast competitive world we all live in. But

it's a dangerous thing to put such pressure on the child. Learning requires time and patience and parents should provide these in plenty to their children.

For all the parents who want to shower all their love materialistically, I would say, "Hold on. Nouveau riche parents need to understand the education system and how a child develops when he is among equals. That's the very reason there is a uniform in every school. Giving him more pocket money and expensive gadgets will only spoil a child. Parents play the most important role in shaping the personality of a child, irrespective of whether they are a minister, a bureaucrat or a big businessman."

Your child is your likeness. Without doubt this statement is true. Every child carries, if not all, most characteristics from their parents. It is true even in case of animals. Be it in manners, looks, or physique every child is a copy of his parents. Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect which a child gets from its parents would have to be their nature. What I simply meant to say 'in your parents' is that, in your child you would find some bit of your true nature. Along

with the environment which you give to your child for his growth and development, it is your nature which also has a direct bearing on its development. Have you ever considered an instance where you had to scold or shout at your house helper for no fault or reason? Or better still, consider a case when you shouted at your household help for a reason as simple as getting you a glass of water which you could have done yourself? Now consider this, have you ever spared a moment to think what impact your behaviour would have on your child after seeing and absorbing all of these? Scolding or you showing off your power or position to someone who is not at par with your status is similar to bullying. A bully is someone who is defined in a dictionary as, "A blustering, quarrelsome, overbearing person who habitually badgers and intimidates smaller or weaker people."

People say that boarding schools are a den for bullies. I would say that this statement is totally wrong. Even before a child comes to a boarding school, there are parents whose behaviour turns

a child into a bully. After listening to and seeing their parents in action, showing off their power and position to someone weaker than them, they turn into miniaturised bullies. It is true that bullying is present in schools. But at this point I would like to question all, on who makes bullies out of innocent kids, considering that a child is enrolled in a school at 4+ years.

Schools do not encourage bullies. They also do not promote or foster them in any way and a student caught in the act goes through all the necessary disciplinary actions to the extent of even getting expelled. But that's just the tip of this unwanted social act. What we don't see is the root cause of it. And parents are partly responsible for it. We teach them to throw around authority and encourage them to break rules of ethical behaviour. At times, the end result is so ghastly that many children end up taking their friends' life. This is something which I think no parent wants. Also what if, the one losing one's life is someone's only child? How would one feel or what would they do?

Here is when the role of parents becomes critical and

important for their child's upbringing. Parents must show by percept of what's right and portray themselves as role models, ideal for their child. To start with, parents must know exactly what to say and how to react when their child does something wrong. Even before this, it is necessary that parents change their behaviour. They should set an example of piety and humanity before their child and not that of some gangster or big bully. Parents should always remember that their judgments and behaviour not only affect their lives but also affect the one for whom they would give their lives.

Simply denying or showing aggression to correct your child's behaviour may not be the correct way. This would only result in hatred and foster that aggressive and bullying nature all the more. The correct way would be injecting in their child the thought that we live in a society and everyone has the freedom to live without fear. A child should be taught that, every wrong doing they commit is detrimental to them more than to their parents or the society. And that understanding will come from

the parents teaching their children and setting an example.

It is also said that bullying can be the product of boredom. This is the reason why boarding schools are packed with numerous activities, be it intellectual or physical. The same can be done for children who stay at home. As parents one should spend time with their children, talk to them about the ways of the world and surround their children with activities. Be it by enrolling them to a painting class or a cricket coaching camp.

Bullying is a social evil and only by our combined efforts can we eradicate it for good. If it is not eradicated in childhood, it may so happen that a child may grow up to be a big bully in college and may end up ragging his juniors and finally returning home not with a degree certificate in his hands but with an expulsion letter from the Principal. Or if a child goes further, it may so happen that instead of the child knocking at the door it may be the police who would be calling for the absconding child wanted for ragging. I guess nobody wants to face such situations ever.

It may be a good idea, if parents of unruly students, by rule or law, be asked to go back to their child's school to attend classes to learn to control their children or face court-backed compulsory parenting lessons from the school.

Every parent should be responsible to back the teachers and make sure that rules are enforced. More consideration should be given to the parents' role when their child gets into problems of indiscipline. It is only by following rules and being disciplined, that a child can be made a thorough gentleman. This plan is being considered to be legally enforced in the United Kingdom.

Here, I would like to say, that irrespective of the number of sections and number of laws a democracy makes, it is up to the parents to give their child a good upbringing by being role models. As no matter how many laws we make, a child will only take the word of a parent I believe, no force on earth other than the parents at the end of the day can change their belief.



When it comes to inter-house activities or events, students of boarding schools show extra-ordinary enthusiasm. In many boarding schools students of various houses compete for the most coveted award for inter-house competitions based on overall performance of all events and other extra-curricular activities including March Past and Band performances. In some schools, this award is known as School Banner, in some they are called Flaghouse or Cockhouse.

Above: The house flag of the winner house of the school (Flaghouse/Cockhouse/School Banner) is proudly displayed in the school lobby throughout the year.