

Effective Teaching for the Undergraduates

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“Teaching is an art: Like singing or imaginative writing or picture painting, the art of teaching comes chiefly by nature. But through training, all can cultivate and develop it. Without wisdom, it cannot exist”.

Who is a successful teacher? Not the one with more knowledge...but the one with much wisdom. Knowledge is power, agreed; but wisdom is how, when and where to use that knowledge. It is not finishing the portions according to the syllabus that makes a successful teacher. Neither an extremely silent class room is the quality of a good teacher. The class room can be noisy with interactions and laughter. It is like learning swimming and driving. Is swimming possible without the sound of water? Or driving possible without the sound of engine? It is not what you do: it is how you do.

Just take the case of the flower to illustrate this. Flowers bloom for the flies. And there are different sorts of flies. The beetles, the bees and the butterflies. The beetles suck the honey from the flower tearing the soft petals and inflicting pain to the flower. The bees suck the honey without even letting the flower know that they are enjoying the action of sucking. But the butterflies... they suck the honey, caressing and fondling the flower, a true blending of ecstasy for the flower and the fly, a perfect bliss and satisfaction in the enjoyment of giving and taking.

Yes, that's what a class must be—an academic suckling and sucking mood for the teachers and students like that of the butterfly and the flower. A teacher can raise himself/herself to the occasion or he/she can catch the attention of the students by knowing himself/herself where he/she is. Not what he/she is. George Bernard Shaw succeeded as a Play Wright with the presentation of an anti-romantic comedy 'Arms and the Man', which he called a "Play Pleasant". Before that he had presented three plays which he called "Plays Unpleasant" which turned into utter failure. Similarly we can also attain success as a teacher when we present "Class Pleasant".

The students should derive pleasure from the way of expression of the teacher; particularly his movement, action and presentation. And pleasure is like beauty; it is conditioned by contrast. As Fulton John Sheen said; "Fireworks are very attractive when they are shot in the background of darkness. A lady wearing black velvet is more attractive when she stands in the background of a white curtain. Lilies are more beautiful because they grow in foul water". Like beauty, pleasure is derived from its background.

And what is the background of a class where we are trying to make teaching effective? Adolescence: because we are dealing with students between sixteen and twenty in which time there comes the feeling of rebelliousness. A boy wants to be away from the parent of his same sex and a girl wants to be away from the parent of her same sex. They show their rebelliousness at home and also at everything that restricts their freedom.

It is then that we get them. Don't expect them to love you. Don't try to love them also as it is not a good criteria for unbiased evaluation. Always tolerate them. Love will work only in private life. In public life, tolerance only will work. It is needed in a queue, in a train, in an office and also in class rooms. There are two ways of conducting a class. One is the 'Nazi' way. Get into the class; thrash the ones you despise and throw the ones you dislike: you make the class unpleasant. There is another way. The way of democracy; the way of tolerance: that will make the class pleasant. ■