

The Late-Comer

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It was the month of March some years ago. I was on the interview panel to interview applicants for admission to the university. A tall and well built youth entered the room. From his appearance he seemed to be a cultured boy. This was Behram. He was wearing a white starched shalwar suit. As soon as he entered he sat down on the seat, reclining at ease. We found this a little strange. He also did not have his documents with him. Anyway, we took a brief interview and got his documents the next day. To cut a long story short, he got admission in the university.

Classes began. I used to have my class in the morning. Behram would enter the class when the period was almost over. He had neither books nor stationery with him. This went on for about three weeks. I never reprimanded him for coming late, nor for leaving his books at home.

One day I sent for him in my office. He walked in looking somewhat embarrassed and hesitant. I motioned to him to sit down. After a pause I asked him, "So! How are your studies going? Are you following everything we are doing in class?"

"Madam I come late in the morning so I don't know which topic we are doing."

I ignored his confession and continued to say, "Listen Behram, you are a responsible boy and I need your help in managing the class. I would appreciate it if you could make sure that there are no outsiders sitting in our class and that the chairs and everything else is in order. You don't have to do anything yourself, you will have the peon to help you move things around."

Hearing me give him all these instructions, Behram looked a little surprised. I don't know what he had expected me to say when I called him to my office, but it was certainly not this! But he stood politely with his hands folded and promised to do as told.

And he kept his promise.

Behram is now a senior official at the Secretariat. When I meet him he still remembers this incident and how his whole attitude changed for the better, how being made in-charge of the class turned him from an irresponsible student to a responsible officer.

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