

Punishment Galore!



Harish Malhotra

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My father always brought his family with him to whichever city he was assigned by his employer, Central Bank of India. When we moved from Patiala to Meerut, I was admitted in the Government High School there.

As I stepped into sixth grade, the class teacher, Mr. Mathura Prasad, took an instant liking on this “transferee.” He made me the class monitor. As I was thinking about the “leadership status” that Mr. Prasad tossed me into, I think that he liked me because I was one of the better-dressed students. My father was a bank manager, and I belonged to the upper-middle class. My classmates were children of labourers, peons, or clerks. There was noticeable contrast between the quality of their clothing between mine.

And, not to mention, I was a fairly good-looking kid. Ahem!

Another thing, it wasn’t just fine clothes and good looks. I excelled in all my academic subjects, too. In his science class one day, he asked me to describe the workings of the human digestive system. I described the functions of the mouth, the duodenum, the gastric juices, the enzymes, and the colon to the minutest detail as he had taught us. That impressed him so much that from then onward, Mr. Prasad treated this “smart” kid very special.

As a class monitor, I had multiple duties like making sure that the blackboard was clean for the teacher’s use, and chinks were ready. I had to control the noise level in the classroom, and to see to it that the kids stayed put in their seats. If the kids would be out of control, I could always report the commotion to the teacher in the next room. He would then come and slap the unruly kids, threaten the class, and return back to his class.

Was I good in my duties? “Slapping” incidents were not uncommon. I think I was an effective “noise pollution control officer,” as well as a diligent “police officer,” keeping the boys in fair control.

I had to get a bucket of food and distribute it to all my classmates (whew!). Food was mostly chick peas or roasted peanuts. Was I a good “food distributor?” Nah. I played favourites. I gave fistfuls to my friends. I gave less to those who weren’t. How I wish I understood good values then as I have now. I’d have treated all of them equally.

There was a five-foot teacher’s cabinet behind the teacher’s chair and desk. Our class supplies and class register were stored in it.

Mr. Prasad liked to explain the class material to small groups of students before the formal class began. A gathering of about 10 to 15 students around Mr. Prasad’s desk before the class began was common.

A very unusual incident happened one day. While Mr. Prasad was absorbed in his explanations, a lone figure climbed and stood on top of the cabinet. Nah, it was not just standing; it was moving, err, dancing. It was one of Mr. Prasad’s students. The kid was having his fun thing on his small stage!

The dancer was suddenly pulled out of his fun by the sudden hush in the air. He stopped and surveyed the room. The kids seemed to be struck by lightning. All living beings inside the room were like statues, rendered immobile by the “unimaginable” that was taking place before them. They had their mouths open as they stared with disbelief at the dancer atop the cabinet. The dancer’s eyes moved quickly to the teacher.

The unthinkable that passed before Mr. Prasad’s eyes seemed to cripple his psychomotor ability. The dynamics atop the cabinet seemed to be a big “What!” to his senses.

The teacher froze. The dancer froze. All movements were suspended as everyone waited with suspense for what would follow. Couple of seconds seem like minutes.

Finally, the teacher came out of his catatonic state, amidst the anticipation in the room. With purposeful steps, he lunged towards the cabinet, pulled the dancer down, and threw him on the ground. The dancer was shaken, but he quickly picked himself up from the floor. The teacher dragged him towards the desk by his left ear, and banged his head on it. He pressed on to hold the dancer’s ears with both hands, and continued to bang his head on the desk.

The banging seemed to go on for eternity. The dancer felt his ears grew inches thicker and his head numb. Mr. Prasad’s voice was deafening as he said, “You’re the class monitor! How dare you! You, the class monitor! How dare you! You... You... You...!”

Yes, the dancer was yours truly (gulp), the class monitor!

As he was banging my head, perhaps he would have thought, “How could you, the class monitor, have the nerve to climb at the top of my cabinet and dance as if I wasn’t in the room!”

It never entered my mind that what I did was insulting to a teacher. I can’t remember what I had eaten that day to give me the boldness to climb atop the cabinet and dance.

Thankfully, I didn’t think Mr. Prasad put a bad word for me because when I entered into seventh grade, I was again made class monitor by the next teacher. But I had learned my lesson: No more dancing on top of cabinets.

When I looked back, I find that particular behaviour awful.

If I could meet Mr. Prasad today, without second thought, I’d sincerely apologize to him.

Wherever you are, Mr. Prasad, I want you to know that I’ve become a responsible person in life. For two terms, I was made chairman of my hospital’s department of psychiatry. I never misbehaved in any way, since the day I you nearly uprooted my ears.

I have never surrendered to an impulse to dance – except in my house or on a dance floor.❖

Samples metaphor from Dr. Malhotra's book *Metaphors of Healing*. Please look at the preview at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). It is available on Amazon & Kindle, Barnes & Nobles & Nook. If you like these metaphors, please share with your family and friends to spread the benefit of the message.

Dr. Malhotra’s new book, *Pathways to Hope*, is also available at [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com).

Small Repair, Big Results!

There was an unusual sound emanating from your car. You checked. You saw the problem. You got a tool and tightened one loose screw. The sound disappeared. You had located the small problem, repaired it, and brought about a big solution—no more irritating sound.

How does this apply to relationships?

A couple didn't get along with each other. They complained.

"When I enter the house, she doesn't come out of her bedroom to welcome me," said the husband.

I asked the wife, "Why?"

"When he chews tobacco, he becomes extremely irritable. The smell of tobacco also turns me off. These things bother me when he walks into our home," the wife said.

He looked her. So what do you want me to do?

She then turned to him and said, "If you stop chewing tobacco, I'd be there to welcome you."

He promised. I will never chew tobacco again.

He stopped chewing tobacco; she greeted him every time he returned from work.

Small repair. Big results!