

# Essay on Life in A College Hostel

For one who has spent most of his life at home under a mother's loving care and a father's watchful guidance, the first day in a college hostel is likely to be frightening. Surrounded by new faces, and thrown completely on one's own resources, it takes time to get accustomed to the new environment and adjust oneself to the novel conditions of life. Soon, however, the charm of the new life asserts itself and once the initial distaste is overcome, one takes kindly to this new way of life. It demands, however, a fresh attitude – in some ways healthy, in others perhaps not very much so.

A college hostel has a resident superintendent who is usually a teacher. He is the guardian of the students, but his guardianship is for the most part formal and official. Provided a student pays his fees and other hostel charges and does not overstay the liberal provisions of time for recreation outside the hostel, he is not likely to attract much notice from his superintendent. He is left to his own devices in the matter of studying or not studying. The studious apply themselves to their books regularly morning and evening, but their number is small. For the most part, they avail themselves to the full of the opportunities for gossip and play. The common-room offers them newspapers and journals to read, and a few indoor games like carom or chess to while away their time. The evenings are spent outside – visiting friends, or patronizing the gymnasiums, or the playgrounds, or dropping into some cinema or theatre as one's means and opportunities permit. Even the most un-studious, however, can hardly avoid sitting down to his book at least for a brief period at night.

When the examinations draw near, the whole atmosphere changes, gone is the light-hearted charmed thoughtless gaiety; the laughter loses its care-free tone; faces wear an anxious look as of men under

sentences of doom. There is repentance and regret for valuable time wasted. There are hasty attempts to make it up by discussing probable questions and possible answers. All through the day, and even far into the night, the drone of monotonous voices feverishly memorizing the books comes muffled through the closed doors.

So far about studies, but the hostel has more lively interests than studies. There is missing: it is managed by an elected committee which is always under criticism of the rest for its various faults of omission and commission. The committee has to strike a balance between the desire for good food and the necessity of keeping within the budget: not an easy task when the former always outstrips the latter. But it is a good training for the boys. The practical experience they gain in making purchases, in checking stores, in arranging menus, in satisfying the idiosyncrasies of various groups and individuals, provides a healthy training for the practical affairs of life.

Then there is the social side. Here there is ample room for crating tradition. One hostel may be particularly kept on the gastronomical side of life: and for it, the twenty-nine days of the month are only a preparation for the thirtieth, – the feast day, which is for them the day of all days. Another may be of a literary turn, and produce hand-written magazines or wall-papers and what care and devotion are expended to make these striking! A third may encourage music and play-acting. Or it may be that the bias varies from year to year in the same hostel. Usually, this depends on the initiative of the more active and original minds; they set the tune, others follow appreciatively. Altogether these aspects are not the least important part of hostel life, nor are their value in building up mind and character to be under-rated.

Hostel life has its advantages as well as well as disadvantages. As

regards the advantages it teaches a student to be self-reliant. It develops organization Talents. It fosters a taste of corporate life. A student has to subordinate his own whims and desires to the general will. He has perforce to develop qualities of sympathy and social service. He will have to put up with petty inconveniences with good grace. Grumbling or complaining will not help him because there is no one to attend to these. On the country, the selfish grumbler excites only irony and ridicule.

On the other hand, there are certain disadvantages. In the hostel, one has to look after one's own interests, and the result may be that one may not be able to think or feel so much for others. Habits of freedom may make one impatient of the discipline of home-life. Usually, a hostel provides greater amenities to the average middle-class students than he is likely to get at home. Here he has his own separate arrangements, and he is not cramped for space or restricted in his comforts as he is often at home. Consequently, he may come to dislike the inadequacies of his middle-class home and it may even result in serious maladjustment. His sympathies may be limited and attitude warped.

Our college hostels are often little better than boarding-houses. It is necessary to organize them on right lines, with regular committees of management and programmes of work and play. Too much system is not always good, but lack of system is even worse. The borders should be taught regularity and discipline. Rightly organized a hostel may provide suitable conditions for the building up of character and personality.