

## WHITHER ENCOURAGEMENT

These days the children are losing their childhood somewhere along the course of the rat race for perceived future careers. They are also losing their value system and healthy personal habits largely due to their pestering parents, awesome teachers and tutors. With every wayside town boasting of an engineering and medical college and an “international” business school, (and this tally going up every year); every single parent wants his or her offspring to become an engineer or a doctor or a business prodigy.

Are the career stakes truly so high? Are engineers, doctors and MBAs successful careerists? Do they have balanced attitudes in life? Do others fare badly in careers? The single answer to all these questions is “No”.

Then why is it that the parents drive their children to the wall? Why do the children have a schedule more hectic than an average well paid corporate manager or a responsible government officer? Clearly, somewhere our priorities have gone awry. If we feel it is normal for a tenth or twelfth standard student to attend coaching classes from 6 AM to 9AM, attend school from 10AM to 5PM and again go for coaching in the evening- followed by the mindless burden of homework, we need to do some introspection of our ideas and ideals.

Remember the good old days when we all had free time in the morning, followed by school for about 6 hours with a games period thrown in, games and sports in the evenings with friends, a short spell of homework, supper with the family to the accompaniment of Hawa Mahal (of the Vividh Bharati) and then it was off to bed! Life was so simple for the students back then! The more intelligent lot went to the engineering and medical colleges and the majority found easy acceptance in science, arts and commerce colleges. Sedate and regular studies, couple of movies on the sly in a month, an odd students’ strike every year and no *goondaism* or political interference in the academic institutions were the hallmarks of that era.

Contrast that with the chaotic scene today-round the clock TV with trash and junk - programmes without aesthetics, academic values and relevance, media agog with lurid details of the latest sex scandals, people moving along in fast track careers, students rushing to professional colleges-with their parents in tow carrying briefcases full of currency notes for admissions, parents pestering their school and college going children for tuitions, actually pressurising them for coaching classes, possibly 26 to 28 hours a day and encouraging total absence of wholesome activity, physical fitness and games - epitomise an average student post the Y2K. The remaining time if there is utilised in playing Computer games, Internet surfing/chat and Mobile chat and sending SMS.

Newspapers advertise proudly the ‘Hot friendship line - 24 hours open’ just above another ad claiming to develop your personality from scratch to the Dale Carnegie level. There is this new breed of soothsayers who make a pretty packet out of gullible suckers with pure gimmickry and glib tongue. These certainly are not the answers to the academic problems of our young generation.

Identification of family goals (including those of our offspring) and working consistently and consciously to achieve these, can help those, who are genuinely interested in better quality of life. Some of the things that will certainly improve the parent child relationship are given below.

- Regular communication with the child and discussion about the events at school
- Regular study and reading habits of the child
- Encouragement for regular games and sports and physical fitness
- Healthy entertainment and encouragement for socially useful work
- Family outings and social events with children
- Periodical interaction with schoolteachers, principals and friends of the child
- Healthy and balanced diet, proper rest and sleep
- Avoiding negative strokes, comparisons, insulting language hurting ego, self esteem in presence of others
- Mutual respect and care for feelings of the child as an independent individual
- Gauging the aptitude and capability of the child and conditioning own aspirations accordingly

Our parents gave us the environment and the means to reasonably good quality of life. As parents, we owe it to our children to protect them from the horror shows, the whodunits, the soaps showing illicit relationships and suchlike trash invading our homes through the idiot box.

Harm control is a very useful trait for parents today. As mature and understanding individuals, we must spend a little more quality time with our own children and see them blooming into full fledged, well developed personalities, good students and excellent - responsible citizens of tomorrow.

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Dr. Seema Tatwawadi is Head, Assessment Centre at MET Institute of Management. The above article was published in a magazine released at the 22nd Annual Conference organised by Marathi Manas Shastra Parishad at Raipur.