

The Concept Of Parenting

Sangeeta Kumari Baranwal*

The Foundation of the growth of personality lies in the womb of the family, that refers to a group related to blood or marriage (English and English, 1958) constituted by a man, a woman and their socially recognised children in its nuclear and primary form (Harre and Lamb, 1983) and serves as an effective agent of socialization – a process of growing up and learning the norms of society where a child acquires a few workable assumptions about the world and is apt to become a competent and useful member of society. The child uses his parents as models for his adjustment to life and fundamental pattern once established at home, cannot be eradicated completely yet modified or changed as the child grows up. Relationship between the parents and the child happens to be a central factor in the social upliftment of the individual. Parents are supposed to create a most congenial, happy, democratic, lucid and warm atmosphere (Backer, 1964 and Erickson, 1974), where a child can blossom his own hidden potentialities and may also develop social interational skills (Bhardwaj, 1994).

Psycho-analysts have stressed the importance of early family experiences on the child's behavior and attitudes. It is the attitude towards the child (love, affection) that determines how well the child will adjust outside (being wanted, appreciated,, trusted or accepted as a person) the home (Stout and Langdon, 1950). Parental unfavorable attitude toward the child, as in case of dominant, the possessive or the ignoring parent becomes harmful, as the child' adjustment outside the home is likely to be poor.

Parenting as the style of child upbringing refers to a privileged or responsibility of mother and father, together or independently to prepare the child for society and culture (Veenes, 1973a) which provides ample opportunity to a child to find roots, continuity and a sense of belonging (Sirohi and Chauhan, 1991) and also serves as an effective agent of socialization. The two distinctive roles of parents include both mothering and fathering. A child bestows on both mother and father

together or independently, the responsibility of upbringing him/her. These perceptions may be referred to apparently direct and immediate knowledge associated to their conscious or unconscious experiences by which they initiate and control behaviour enormously. It is important to note that most of the children have a fairly definite clearcut concept of 'father' which differs markedly from their concept of 'mother' (Meltzer, 1943). Therefore it appears to be of utmost importance to study perceptions regarding their fathering and mothering separately as well as parenting as a whole on different dischotomous modes of parenting.

FATHERING : The role of a father or – the style of individual's upbringing – stands as a bridge by which the child comes into the contact of outside world (Meerto, 1968) encourages curiosity and a will to face the challenges of the world and appears as a symbol of assertive, independent, emotional and is predominantly a feature of fathering in non-deviant families (Jain, 1986) and relates to acceptance, satisfaction and differentiating experiences in the children (Khokhar, 1983) because it is acquired or earned by the child's performance of duty, obedience and fulfilment of father's expectations. Whereas, inadequate fathering is usually understood to be a prime source of adjustment (Erickson, 1963), truency, guilt, self-devaluation and dependency (Coleman, 1970) and chemical dependence (Bhardwaj, 1996).

MOTHERING : The role of mother or – the style of upbringing – is largely associated with congenial development of personality because the child first comes in contact with mother and always depends on her to satisfy his basic needs. The role of mother shows better control over the children and stands for friendship with less punishment and dominance (Kegan, 1965), symbol of emotional support, interpersonal sensitivity and helps (Farren & Ramsey, 1977) and plays an important role in making a person more productive and imaginative. Whereas, patterns of inadequate maternal behaviour seem to be responsible for the problem of children's behaviour and chemical dependence (Bhardwaj, 1995d) for and tends to inhibit the exploration of child's personality in the environment.

The chief models or dimensions of parenting are :-

- (a) Rejection vs. Acceptance,
- (b) Carelessness vs. Protection,
- (c) Neglect vs. Indulgence,
- (d) Utopian Expectation vs. Realism,

* Ex Research Schoolar (Home Sc) J.P.U. ,Chapra Lecturer in Home Sc, M.S. College, Mairwa, Siwan (Bihar)

- (e) Lenient Standard vs. Moralism,
 - (f) Freedom vs. Discipline,
 - (g) Faulty Role Expectation vs. Realistic Role Expectation
 - (h) marital Conflict vs. Marital Adjustment.
- (A) Rejection vs. Acceptance : A child develops shocks when he does not find proper care and response of his parents. The infantile honesty and truthfulness meets and adverse atmosphere and therefore the psychological growth of the child is affected. It is quite natural that a child meets proper nourishment of his genuine feelings. Denial of love and affection freezes the genial current of infantile simplicity. Various aberrations in the behaviour of child are the product of his denial of natural love to them.

Rejection of parents manifests itself in interpersonal relationships in direct ways, when the child has to face excessive criticism, harsh and inconsistent punishment by both or either of the parents in his upbringing. Rejection of parents may also evince itself in physical neglect, denial of love and affection, lack of interest in his activities and failure to spend time with him.

On the other hand parental acceptance implies an attitude of love for the child. The accepting parent puts the child in a position of importance in the home and develops a relationship of emotional warmth. Parental acceptance encourages the child and makes itself apparent in receptive or positive attitude towards the child's idea and judgment, worthiness and capability, love and affection and admiration along with the adequate attention towards him.

(B) Carelessness vs. Protection : Parenting on carelessness dimension manifests itself, when both or either parents do not pay adequate heed towards child's activities thus giving an impression of unwantedness by careless and unthoughtful negligible behaviour towards him even in presence of his proper and worthy behaviour in day to day matters.

On the other hand the sense of protection in the child makes him better and more confident. It is true to over-protection is a disease and obstructs the independent growth of the child. But the sense of protection gives him strength and psychological support. So, the sense of protection should not be confused with the term overprotection which consists in excessive contact of parents with the child, such as fondling him or sleeping with him, prolongation of infantile care as nursing, bathing

and dressing when child can do it itself, prevention of the growth of self reliance by supervising the child's activities too much and defending him or solving his problems. It also shows over anxiousness towards the child's health and shield him from vigorous participation in competing activities. Thus, over protection signifies giving more care to their child than what is necessary and can only be deemed as the hyper state of protection.

(C) Neglect vs. Indulgence : Neglecting the children by their parents even after conscious of their need is again injurious to their psychological health. It manifests itself in lack of attention and cooperation with them, willful ignoring them and their activities and avoidance of their genuine needs. Giving more importance to self designs of work but least attention to their feelings and needs, come within purview of neglect.

On the other hand, over indulgence of parents with the child develops certain whims and psychological inconsistencies in the latter. It may be seen in the parents yielding to every demand of the child and failure to exercise the needed constraint even when necessary. Such a child becomes unfit for a reasonable adjustment in the social circumstances. However, it should be kept open to ourselves that indulgence with the child to a reasonable degree shall be deemed as a health giving sign. It helps in developing the child's emotional response to the situation.

(D) Utopian Expectation vs. Realism : The utopian expectation dimension exhibits itself in expecting a very high quality of performance from the child even against his capabilities. Some parents use their children as a means of achieving their abilities and limitations. Such parents are over-ambitious regarding their children. The more children achieve, the more parents expect of them. Thus, very high, unrealistic and imaginary demand of parents regarding to the performance of their children come within the purview of utopian expectations which are not fulfilled by the children.

A parental attitude of realism signifies itself in taking into consideration the objective realities pertaining to both, the child's capabilities and outside world while setting up and expecting his level of performance.

(E) Lenient standard vs. Moralism : This mode of parenting takes into account lenient standard as an negative dimension and moralism as a positive dimension. Lenient standard of parents make themselves

apparent in permitting lesser restrictions from deviations from ethical and moral behaviour and an attitude showing indifference against such inhibitions to restrict child's freedom and individuality.

Moralism as a socio-cultural product refers to the doctrine of duties of life, principles and conduct adhering to what is right and virtuous and plays an important role in the dynamics of social relations. It would be an admirable exercise, if a child is prone to inculcate a reasonable degree of moralism in his personality orientations. If parental behaviour evinces moralism to an excessive degree, it harms the child's natural and dynamic integration. Certain parents develop an attitude of condemnation of the child's mild departure from the ideals of morality and force them to live a strong puritan life. This attitude is again harmful.

(F) Freedom vs. Discipline : Freedom manifests itself in absence of restraints over all matters, to what they may pertain to. In fact the child is a sole decision maker of his activities. There is hardly any questioning or impediments on the part of parents. He may disregard or disobey his parents without any fear of punishment from them.

On the other hand parents with a penchant for strict discipline simply pass on orders to their children who have to merely obey them. The child is not allowed to take any decision regarding his dress, appearance, manners, friends or other activities of his life. Disobedience is met with punishment whereas obedience is appreciated.

Although, the discipline is strong need of social orientation yet the severe discipline on the part of parents hamper the delight and liberty of the child which he wishes to obtain at every stage of life.

(G) Faulty Role Expectation vs. Realistic Role Expectation:- On the dimension of faulty role expectation parenting, the child is always confused and embarrassed because of the unpredictable expectations of his parents. Parents usually expect divergent and contradictory roles from their children.

The other dimension of realistic role expectation is just reverse. Parents present themselves as an example to be followed by the children and their behaviour is thoughtful, consistent and predictable in day to day strifes. The children know for certain what their parents are like and what is expected to them.

(H) Marital Conflict vs. Marital Adjustment : on the negative open conflicts affects the child as and when he/she witnesses open conflicts

between their parents. The child is not able to reconcile with and it leaves a non-palatable feeling on his mind.

Marital adjustment exhibits itself in a calm and composed adjustment between the parents thereby creating a solidarity and congenial atmosphere of peace and harmony in the family.

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