

Parenting

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Education



Photographs by Pramod Gupta

The Right Upbringing

Osho's thoughts on helping a child become independent

Children need to be taken care of, they need your help, but they don't need to be made dependent on you. The only way you can help is to make them independent.

They are strangers in the world. You can keep an eye on them so that they do not fall into a ditch, but there is no need to enslave them just to save them from the ditch. If these are the only two alternatives, I prefer the ditch. At least by falling in the ditch they will learn something. They will learn what ditches are; they will learn not to fall again into any other ditch. But slavery for their whole life, protection for their whole life, makes them incapable of learning.

When you send them to school, a basic education should be given to all children. By basic education I mean - one international language to create one world, their mother tongue, and the big three: reading, arithmetic, writing. People's handwriting is so ugly for the simple reason that nobody pays any attention to their writing. And writing is their signature - it shows their whole personality, whether there is a rhythm, an art. Their writing should be a painting. This should be the basic education. And after the basic education, teachers, psychoanalysts and psychologists should be continuously learning about the children and their potential. Tests can be developed which can give more evidence that the person can become a great musician or a painter or a poet or a scientist. Right now the whole world is chaotic - the painter is making shoes, the man who was meant to make shoes is painting. Everybody is somewhere where he is not supposed to be. It is such a mess!

I am reminded of a great surgeon. He was respected, a Nobel prize winner - and he was retiring. He was almost 75, but still no young man was capable of doing such artful surgical work as he was capable of. Even at the age of 75, his fingers were not trembling. He was a brain surgeon. In your small skull there are seven million nerves - you can think how small they will be - and when somebody is operating on the brain to remove some nerves, the danger is that he may cut other nerves which are so close together, so the hand has to be steady. At the age of 75 he was still a perfect surgeon, and all his colleagues had given him a party because he was retiring. They were dancing, singing, but he was sitting in a corner, sad, with tears in his eyes. One of his old friends came by and he said, "What is the matter? Everybody is so happy and you are looking so sad - I even see tears in your eyes."

He answered, "Yes, there is a reason. In the first place I wanted to become a dancer, I never wanted to become a surgeon. My parents forced me to study medicine. Although I became the most famous surgeon, it was not my heart's desire. I would have been far happier just with a guitar on the street as a beggar - a singer, a dancer. All this fame has meant nothing to me. All these awards have meant nothing to me. Each award has only reminded me of one thing, that I am losing my life and I am not where I am supposed to be. And now my whole life is finished. I am crying because I am thinking - why could I not rebel against my parents, and just do whatever I wanted to do?"

The world is so miserable. 90% of its misery and anguish comes from the fact that everybody is doing somebody else's work. Naturally, he is not happy. He cannot put his whole soul into it. So, parents should not decide in what direction their children should go. It should be decided by psychoanalysts, psychologists, teachers who have watched those children for the years of their basic education. The children should be given tests so everything is clear.

When parents decide the future of their child, their reasons for doing so are different. They are not deciding for the child and his potential, they are deciding for financial reasons, for respectability. If he becomes a great engineer or a surgeon, he will have a good life, a comfortable life; he will have a respectable life. Their intention is not bad, but the path to hell is paved with good intentions. The question to be asked is what is hidden in the child that needs flowering.

And that is possible now. We can find out what is hidden in a child and let him move in that direction. Perhaps he may not have a very comfortable life, but he will have a very contented life - and what is comfort in comparison to contentment? Perhaps he may not become world famous, but who cares? How many people know him does not make any difference. But dancing or singing or painting, he will have a fulfillment, a flowering. His life will be juicy. His aura will be of joy. This whole world can be a paradise, we just have to put everybody in his own place. At the moment everybody is in the wrong place - nobody is contented. And the whole responsibility is on how we start bringing up our children.

*Excerpted from Socrates Poisoned Again After 25 Centuries/
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