

Lesson to Parents

In childhood, you were never taught responsibility. You have been shoved and pushed around. The majority of childraising that I have seen in this country is very regimental. Nobody uses heart; it is all a head thing. This kind of childhood is very painful. If I would have been raised as we raise children here, I would have committed suicide at the age of two. True! The way you address your children is so rude, so inhuman, so neurotic! You are so discourteous in speaking to your children. In spite of that fact you think you are very loving **parents**. You never say to a child, "Please." You never call a child by his full name. You never treat him or her like a person. You just treat them like puppies, and you expect them to learn how to live. Impossible.

I remember how I was addressed when I was three or four years. My full name was always called. My mother never called me by a nickname. Never. I still remember my mother would call, "Harbhajan Singh ji, this is the time for you to come and join us for breakfast." Or she would call me by my full name and say, "I have prepared the food you love very much. It is there. Let us go and sit down and eat. I'd like to feed you." There was a great respectability and responsibility. The greatest thing I was taught was that I have a complete, full, sovereign identity. Your sovereignty can only be given to you as a child by your mother, by her identifying you as a complete, total individual. What you call 'grit', the strength of the identity, is given to you by the father. It is all done in the first eleven years. Afterwards, anything done or said or taught by the **parents** is useless, because the base is already built.

The sweetness of giving a child an identity is very difficult for you. You think the child is a piece of furniture – that he is your property that you have absolute control over. Is there any parent who can just feel that their own child is a complete, independent, sovereign person within the family? Not at all. Maximum you can give him is he's a night's guest or a visitor or a dependent. If you are affectionate, you are very loving. If you are mad, you are very obnoxious.

Do you bring things to trial? If a child has done wrong, have you given him a chance to defend himself? If a child has done wrong, totally wrong...bring him to trial. In my life, I remember, I used to do things sometimes intentionally wrong. I would intentionally get mad sometimes and do something really weird. Then the notice was served. "Okay, tomorrow at 11:00, what you have done today will be considered. Prepare yourself."

So I'd ask my governess, "Well, I did it. Now how to get out of it?"

And she'd say, "Well, I have told you many times, but you always put me on the spot with these troubles. My job is at stake, you fully understand. I'm a very good woman. I am always with you, but why do you do these things? Now we have to go to grandpa and plead mercy. There is nothing we can do. The facts are against us." I would say, "Well, what are the facts? Tell me the facts."

And she would say, "Well Baba, this was expected of you, and this was the situation,

and this is what you did wrong. What am I going to do?" So in that very affectionate situation I would look at her, and she'd say, "Well, there's a way out. We'll ask for a postponement." So the next day at 11:00, grandfather would sit, and we'd go, and she would say, "Baba has to prepare for school exams, and we need one week's postponement." After a week we would go again and by that time there was enough of a gap, and things had calmed down, and I had done very, very good things that week. First it was discussed that my exams were very good, my results had come back, and my grades were very good, and that I had participated in the best dressed show among the children. She would plead the whole thing, and then say, "Well, it was a slip of circumstances and Baba did lose control. I am not saying it was right. He has recognized it, and every morning he has read two extra Japji's, and I think that should be enough." Or something like that. So basically I was taught the most fundamental law of karma - cause and effect: so shall you sow, so shall you reap. Also, that you are a sovereign independent identity and when you do something wrong, you lose your sovereignty and you subject yourself, and subjection is worse than death. I was taught all that right from day one.

It was a continuous process. It was a continuous learning, it was a continuous training, it was a continuous behavior. I definitely remember, when I was nine years old I said, "I don't like when the newspaper comes to me all crumbled, and it is not in set order." I like to read the newspaper, you know, page by page, as it should be. And normally the newspaper always goes to the elders first, right? They would pull out the section they wanted to read, and when it came to our room, it was upside down. I didn't like it. I lodged a protest, and I said, "I have said it three times, and it is not heard, therefore I would like this to be done." And my father had to put in writing that the newspaper would always be sent to our quarters totally complete. You just say, "Nobody is above law," but do you train your children like that? Do you give them the practical experience that nobody is above the law? Do you tell your own child that nobody is above the law? Do you subject yourself sometimes when you have done something outside the family rule? Have you apologized to your sons? Or do you just say the right things and give them knowledge all the time? Where is the practical application of life, living, and living principles? When the living principles are practiced, life is practiced. That is the job you as **parents** are missing.

What can you give to your child except the values of self-justice, self-identity and self-sovereignty? A child must be told in a practical way how to behave and must be treated as self-sovereign. Otherwise you are absolutely not giving self-respect to that child. If you take away self-respect, after childhood, the child reacts and then needs psychologists, psychiatrists, mental hospitals, and the like. In childhood we have to be taught about life and justice, we have to be asked to relate to our independence and the reality of life in practical sovereignty. We have to have a judiciary system within ourselves so we can have the experience.