

How Much do we Care for Our Children?

An Allegory

Mr. Gardener was a man in love with flowers. To grow flowers, all sorts of flowers – was his joy in life. Like Mr. Gardener, God is in love with his garden, our world, populated with his most precious flowers, namely, we all, - men and women

One day, Mr. Gardener thought to himself “What precious present shall I give to my friends that they may be able to enjoy of a most beautiful garden like mine” At last, with joy he exclaimed: “I know, I know, what’s the best present I can give them.. I’ll give my friends a handful of the most exquisite seeds of my flowers so that they too, by looking after them, - in due time- may enjoy of a beautiful garden.”

Similarly, one day, God thought to Himself, “What present can I give to my sons and daughters on earth, that they may enjoy already in their life on earth of my heavenly bliss ?” At last, , God exclaimed: “I know, I know what’s the best gift I can really give them! I’ll give them on earth, the most exquisite seeds - little children, that in due time, looking after them, the earth becomes sort of a heavenly garden with kind, loving and compassionate people”

What did Mr. Gardener’s friends do with the precious seeds entrusted to them? What do we do, with the God’s precious gift of our children entrusted to us?

Read and Reflect

One of Mr. Gardener’s friends murmured: “What for do I want these seeds? I do not want them! Why should I waste my precious time cultivating them? There are more important things in life than looking after flowers and so, he threw them away.”

Another friend muttered to himself: “The seeds, are good. Yes, wish I could look after them. But I have no time for them”! When he reached home, he forgot all about them. Of course, the seeds were lost for good.

A third friend said to himself: “Yes, I love flowers, but, unfortunately, I have no time to cultivate them myself. I’ll get someone else to do it for me”. So, he employed servants, look after them. Needless to say, the flowers never bloomed to the full. The servants looked after them for a wage, not for love!

Still another said: “Oh! Yes, I love flowers! I will cultivate them, of course, in my garden, but I am a busy man. I’ll give to my garden the spared moments of my day.” The flowers grew, but turned colorless and useless.

Finally, full of enthusiasm another guest exclaimed: “I love flowers! ! I’ll cultivate them with love and care”. He spent on them all the time, the energies and the money they deserved. And of course, it goes without saying; his garden was as beautiful, and as colorful as it could possibly be! .

THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION.

1. What were the different attitudes of the guests of the story towards the seeds entrusted to them? Can you enumerate them and explain their significance?.
2. Can you apply the moral of the story to the attitudes we, Parents display towards the education of our children?
3. Do the various attitudes of the guests towards the seeds, reflect the various attitudes of different parents towards the education of their children ? Give instances.
4. Can such delicate seeds, like our children, blossom to maturity without being given the best of our attention, time and energies? Why?
5. For good and responsible parents what should be their top priority in their lives>? Why?
6. According to your experience, how much are today’s parents, spending themselves in the **cultivation and “education”** of their delicate seeds?
7. When Parents abdicate their educational responsibilities towards their children to Grandparents, Maids, Ayahs, School Authorities, Tutors, Servants,etc. what will the consequences be? Why?
8. If our children turn useless and even misfits, whose responsibility will it be?
9. In all honesty, let each one of us ask ourselves” “With which of the friends of Mr. Gardener’s story do I identify most?”
10. Can you improve the way you care for your children? How?
11. What will you do? (*For memory sake you may take a few notes*)

C ONCLUSION

Taking it for granted that in the allegory, God is the gardener, the world his garden, men and women his flowers, our children the seeds, let us reflect on the attitudes we display towards our children 's physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual education.

There are five attitudes:

- 1st attitude: **Unconcern.** There are more important things in life than to spend time on our children's education and formation. We do not want them.
- 2nd attitude: **In theory, we have concern** for our children, but in **practice distracted with many other things , we do neglect them.**
- 3rd attitude: **Concern by proxy.** We care for our children, but we do it through others. We entrust their education to servants, tutors, ayahs and the like.
- 4th attitude: **Halfhearted concern.** We half heartedly care for them. But we do not give them the time and attention they need and deserve.
- 5th attitude: **Full concern:** Children are our first priority. We devote to the education and upbringing our children all the time and all means at our disposal