



SUNANDAN MISRA

In the hope that you don't see this column as chapters of a self-help book, I've been rather fastidious about the topics that have risen stridently to your eyes in recent weeks. Still, having recently read an interesting article in the Guardian by Lee Glendinning I seemed to have an epiphany that has binned my self-imposed reticence.

It said, as part of a study, that "children today stop believing in such things as elves, goblins and fairies around the age of six, whereas their parents mostly held on to such beliefs until the age of 10." That's odd. I thought Sherlock Holmes existed till I was 14, typed with my right index finger till I was 17 and was excited about using a pen when I went to 6th grade. Today, toddlers boast of skills that I couldn't until my pre-teens. And that's about as exciting as the dumbfounding incredulity of watching BappiLahiribeat Usain Bolt to 100 metres.

In fact, goblins and fairies have long been dropped off the present day urban schoolchild's gripsack of expectations. Be it studies or playtime, tuitions or dance class, bloated expectations are leading children endlessly from one to the other. And whereas an assortment of hobbies would go miles in fleshing up a child's reper-

toire of experience, that such activities are becoming increasingly performance-driven instead of learning-driven is steadily taking the form of disenchanting and impersonal parenting.

If you're the sort of parent who's replaced an exulting glance at your child for having 'participated' in a debate competition with a frown of disappointment for having lost '1st place', don't worry about me. I have decided to keep this out of self-help territory and I will. And anyway, I've never stood first in anything (on paper). That makes me 'not qualified' to comment on your style just as I'm not qualified to have the seemingly normal life that I, by some comic fortune, do have!

Parents buy into a realm of imposed superlatives not so much out of insensitivity towards children as a perceived notion that the lack of it is even more harmful to their future. It is a settled order of nature that children be pushed slightly beyond their cauldron of comfort to challenge their ability and help them develop. But forcing 2-year-olds into gruelling hours of 'coaching and mock school interviews', as chronicled by Sharmeen Hakim Indorewala in the Open Magazine as 'Toddlers under Stress', is daft. And blind. And downright criminal.

What follows on for such a child is an overriding stress on being the 'best'. In some cases, every

# Toppers and Poppers



activity is structured with the sole aim of projecting her best possible version to society. Whether she finds them fulfilling is a broken consideration that fades away as imposed hobbies go on record towards the eviscerated vision of a successful life; one that is cast in stone for her to follow. Her 'involved' parents then take on the cheeky badge of 'helicopter parents,' the sort of people who constantly hover over and drone about every single aspect of their child's life.

It isn't a particularly friendly situation when everything is timetabled and there's no allowance

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for mistakes. To quote Madeline Levine, a San Francisco psychologist - "Think back to when your toddler learned to walk. She would take a weaving

step or two, collapse and immediately look to you for your reaction. You were in thrall to those early attempts and would do everything possible to

encourage her to get up again. You certainly didn't chastise her for failing. You were present, alert and available to guide if necessary. You knew she had to get it wrong many times before she could get it right."

Having tutors train 2-year-olds for kindergarten interviews and enrolling your 6th grade future pride on a 'GITJEE course for cracking the coveted IIT-JEE exam' is not involvement. It is something called over-parenting, sloshed in a poisonous struggle to use the child as a vehicle for social status and affirmation.

Building an authentic

and autonomous person out of a child takes as much 'involvement' as 'letting go.' While some children might be IIT bound, an overwhelming majority might have fortes elsewhere. In not accepting that and treating every moment in a kid's upbringing as lines to fill into his CV, one might as well do better to display her in a museum. Why bother 'preparing' her for the real world? Why are we heading, inexplicably, to a point where we wear a baby off milk and straight onto double vodka?

For as long as numbers exist, ranks will exist. In any given class, group or competitive environment, there will always be the

'first' and the 'rest.' If we breed a system where only one's happy and many are disappointed, something's surely not right! And that 'something' best come from within because truth be told, the numbers will exist. Albert Einstein once said, "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid." Sadly, while adept at glorifying Einstein, commoners possess an excellent ability to miss the point within the quotes. Signing off, happy 'kids' and cross parents!

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**"I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say!"**

# Man, woman are not adversaries

ABHIJEET KUMAR

I was really bored watching all news channels selling 'Rape' for TRP. Thanks a lot to Team India for winning the last few matches, Arvind Kejriwal for his continuous fight against corruption and our Bollywood celebrities for providing some much-needed, even if occasional, relief from the monotony. Together, they change the telecast from fictional rape with fictional characters to fictional plots with fictional victims but real accused. The most unfortunate thing is that 'The Rape Show' has already been planned to be telecast as soon as the cricket fever gets over. TRP, TRP and more TRP. That's all the media cares about. And hilariously 'We the people', presumably the sovereign one, follow like herds of animals.

One day, the media shows at least 10 women protesting against a rap singer Honey Singh for singing a lousy song. But it shouldn't surprise you if you find that they are the same lot who would, while sitting in one of the many kitty parties, enjoy listening to the same 'Ashlee' song and sing it to be the object of attention. Following these well fed and highly paid protesting ladies, other girls and guys fall for the 'Aandolan' against the government for the so called 'cause'. I wonder what would have happened if Damini belonged to rural Rajasthan. She would, in all probability, have been another Bhanwari Devi (the famous Saathin case), where the patriarchy was on its extreme. Because of all these past acts of men, my ideology is a little tilted towards feminism. But there is a problem here too. Most feminists are unaware of the fact that feminism is for bringing equality and not giving an upper hand to any particular sex. Meanwhile, all that these protesters do is to just 'Hamari Maangin Poori Karo' and 'Indian Government haai haai'. And how innocent we are, following their leadership, and making them our new-age Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant.

There is an irony in this situation: while the crowd is

shouting for justice to be done, it will not give anything but the vilest abuse if a beggar happens to be passing by; it would shoo away the hungry mother asking for some money to feed her hungry child, who has not eaten for days. All this because these problems are not the issue they are protesting for. The hungry, homeless and poor mother should be raped brutally first for the crowd to have some mercy and hold out its hand for support.

I noticed people using social networking sites to post pictures of the deceased, her mother and her father, and even asking others, the users, to share and like it, swearing in the name of their mother and sisters. But most of them are unaware of the fact that there are numerous fake photos being used for the above cause. A Keralite girl's family and friends were shocked to see her picture on the FB, as the rape victim of 'Delhi Kand'. The father had to file a complaint in the Court before police wrote to FB to remove the said pictures. Another rumour being posted by FB users is related to an unknown Section 233 of IPC according to which a girl who suspects a man to be a rapist can apparently 'do anything to him, including killing him' without any charges being framed against her. This really made me laugh. How senseless people could be in this country? I wondered. As far as my knowledge of law goes, the said section deals with counterfeiting of currency. But let us not get into the validity of such rumoured law, because until parliament really passes it, it remains just that - a rumour.

One of my friends posted many facts regarding crime against men on FB. The conclusion that he reached was really shocking. He raised an interesting question: when protest took place against the gang rape in Delhi, men joined in large numbers to lend their support to the cause, but why was it that not even one female friend supported his cause when he raised issues about violation of men's rights and unjust treatment through his posts?

Now let us talk on the

basis of available empirical data. As laws are silent about protection of men, separate data as to the number of crimes against men never comes out. In 2005, a total of 22, 64, 000 cases were registered as crime against men, while the number of cases of crime against women was just 1, 55, 000. The difference has only widened in the past five years. In 2010-11, 62, 433 married men committed suicide while only 32, 582 mar-

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ried women committed suicide. Yet, whenever a married woman dies due to any reason - be it accident, illness or suicide - it is immediately turned into a dowry death case while large scale suicides by men are not even acknowledged, let alone provide justice to them. In this democratic nation, even animals have their own welfare ministry but men, who contribute to over 70% to the economy, don't have any official institution to look after them. A study done by the Save India Family Foundation (SIFF) with data provided by the National Crime Report Bureau (NCRB) says that about 22,000 men ended their life between 2005-08 because of reverse dowry harassment, as against 6, 800 women who committed suicide over dowry harassment during the same period. Interestingly, in all 6, 800 cases, husbands have been put behind bars without investigation despite the fact that over 68% of them have later been found innocent. Only six cases have been registered for the death of 22,000 men. It goes without saying

that no proper investigation was done and thus there was no conviction.

I don't want to blame the female sex as a whole for anything. But I would ask the same support from them that they get from us. I second the opinion of my friend who told women that all males are not criminals. They are also your father, brother, husband, son and moreover human beings too. And yeah, it's high time that we,

the doctrine of rarest of the rare case would come into reckoning. People should instead demand upholding of the suggestions given by the Law Commission of India on rape and allied offenses for a longer term and ask the government why these changes have not been brought in yet. Even the Verma Committee has recommended only a life sentence as maximum punishment. Just imagine if death would be the punishment for rape and murder both, then the rapists would invariably choose to kill the victim as that would lead to one witness less with the same punishment. We need to be more reasonable in our demands. We should demand for the change in IPC, which itself is too patriarchal in nature, one example being the offense of adultery which is equivalent to using someone's chattel without permission.

Rise for the right cause and demand things which are just and reasonable, and the whole community will support you. But the way it is going is not the right way. Parents, please stop teaching boys about masculinity and girls about 'ijjat-aabroo', they are both needed to be brought up in the same manner to bring real equality. Unfortunately, this is where it all begins, our very own sweet-home. So, the change should be brought from here only. If we want our male offspring to be like Lord Rama, *maryada-purushottam*, then we should be ready that the females will be abandoned like Goddess Sita. It's high time that we woke up and fought for whole of our race, regardless of which gender group we belong to, against a few deviant evils.

Unless each of us changes, the society can't. *Ye samaj humse hai, hum samaj se nahin; Hum jaise hain, samaj waisa hain dikhega* (it's we who constitute society, society doesn't form us; what we are, is reflected in the surrounding). Change yourself, Change the nation. As Gandhi said long back: 'Be the Change You Want to See in the World'.

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## health

### What is a middle ear infection?



How is a middle ear infection diagnosed?

Your doctor will talk to you about your child's symptoms. Then he or she will look into your child's ears. A special tool with a light lets the doctor see the eardrum and tell whether there is fluid behind it. This exam is rarely uncomfortable. It bothers some children more than others.

How is it treated?

Most ear infections go away on their own, although antibiotics are recommended for children under the age of 2 and for children at high risk for complications. You can treat your child at home with an over-the-counter pain reliever like acetaminophen (such as *Tylenol*), a warm washcloth or heating pad on the ear, and rest. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20. Your doctor may give you eardrops that can help your child's pain.

Sometimes after an infection, a child cannot hear well for a while. Call your doctor if this lasts for 3 to 4 months. Children need to be able to hear in order to learn how to talk. — BP

The middle ear is the small part of your ear behind your eardrum. It can get infected when germs from the nose and throat are trapped there.

What causes a middle ear infection?

A small tube connects your ear to your throat. These two tubes are called eustachian tubes. A cold can cause this tube to swell. When the tube swells enough to become blocked, it can trap fluid inside your ear. This makes it a perfect place for germs to grow and cause an infection.

Ear infections happen mostly to young children, because their tubes are smaller and get blocked more easily.

What are the symptoms?

The main symptom is

an earache. It can be mild, or it can hurt a lot. Babies and young children may be fussy. They may pull at their ears and cry. They may have trouble sleeping. They may also have a fever.

You may see thick, yellow fluid coming from their ears. This happens when the infection has caused the eardrum to burst and the fluid flows out. This is not serious and usually makes the pain go away. The eardrum usually heals on its own.

When fluid builds up but does not get infected, children often say that their ears just feel plugged. They may have trouble hearing, but their hearing usually returns to normal after the fluid is gone. It may take weeks for the fluid to drain away.

