Parents need to nurture their children emotionally, physically, spiritually and socially.

IN my doctoral studies, adolescents were voicing their concerns regarding freedom and empowerment. They wanted their own time, their own group of friends and to be able to decide on their future career. They wanted parents to treat all their children equally and allow each child to grow to their fullest potential.

They did not want their parents to compare them with their siblings, their neighbour’s children or their relatives.

In my opinion, these young people are maturing and know what they want in life. But they are in a tug-a-war with themselves and their parents as well as those around them especially when their thoughts, ideas and opinions do not flow in the same direction. Such a situation gives rise to conflicts and the young ones feel stressed.

I used face-to-face discussions with different focus groups (all girls, all boys, and mixed groups) and found that they loved the space to voice their opinions and resolve real-life dilemmas that they were facing in their daily lives. They had diverse ideas and their moral judgments were based on what they learnt from their parents. They kept repeating that they picked many habits (good and bad) from their parents when they were younger.
The point is that parents are the first teachers in our students’ lives. They bring them to the world biologically and start nurturing them emotionally, physically, spiritually and socially.

Children are innocent and the values they learn at home are then brought to other social spheres like the school, the neighbourhoods etc. When these values match those of society, the children become more confident and reinforce their self-esteem to become part of society.

However, if the young adolescent’s values do not coincide with societal values, then they are at a junction where they have to decide wisely which road they should take. This becomes a difficult task, especially when parents and family norms are the opposite of societal norms.

The parents of my research participants were a mix of everything. But the one commonality is they expected their children to be what they want them to be, and this is where the “cold war” starts.

The adolescents respect their parents for who they are and expect mutual respect from their parents.

Things like asking children to be neat and tidy when parents themselves are not becomes a subject of argument in the house.

Children learn their values through active observation and when they are told to do something which parents themselves are not practising, it is quickly pointed out by their children. Of course, parents do not like that situation.

I call on all parents to start becoming proactive educators before sending your young ones to others for further education.

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