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Crisis of Children: From A Different Perspective

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Abstract

Human society, as a changing Reality along with its social, economic, political and cultural aspects, has to be at par with the need of human beings of the contemporary era. Nothing can remain eternal and stagnant. From this perspective the crisis of children has been dealt with. The crisis of children is not to be viewed exclusively in economic terms. A huge section of child population, especially those who belong to middle and upper middle-class families, by and large in the urban and semi urban areas, in the contemporary era, are the worst sufferers of emotional crisis. The diminishing number of joint families on the one hand and parents' irrational expectation on the other are predominantly responsible for their crisis. More importantly in such cases, children's autonomy and sense of dignity are in jeopardy. This is an uncalled-for scenario and undesirable for the future of a democracy and a nation. Today's children are tomorrow's responsible citizen. Proper upbringing with due emotional care is an important factor in this respect. But unfortunately, crisis of children generally is dealt with only in economic terms. Legislative measures barring child labour, Right to Education, Mid-day meal system in school –all these are few examples to confirm this point. But owing to emotional setback suffered by a huge section of child population, the crisis of children needs to be reviewed and redefined. This sort of emotional crisis, in view of its objective reality, has to be duly addressed. It needs recognition from the concerned authority. It needs a widespread debate in various forums. This social recognition which, in turn, may lead to constitutional and legislative measures to settle the issue.

Key Words: Crisis of children, Democracy, Dignity, Child upbringing, Parents, expectation

Introduction: Every human child irrespective of caste, religion, social or economic status of his or her family etc. is born with immense potentiality. Human prospect does, in no way, depend on hereditary aspect; The Right to equality as a fundamental right has been incorporated in the constitution of Free India on the basis of this Reality (Johari). There are directive principles in the constitution as an extra support.

Yet there are certain social phenomena which, though not within the purview of constitutional or legal framework, need to be addressed so that human prospect can flourish

unhindered. One claiming to have modern outlook must agree that no human being can be held responsible for where he is born. A human being can neither be praiseworthy nor blameworthy for the advantage nor disadvantage, he or she enjoys or suffers for wherever he or she is born.

In the backdrop of this principle, the predicament of a large section of child population belonging to the middle class or upper middle-class families, especially in the urban or semi-urban areas, needs to be addressed. These ill-fated children right from their early childhood, day in and day out, have to go through trying time in the process of their upbringing. Their problem gets compounded with the inception of their schooling. They have their education initiated from pre-nursery schooling at the cost of colourful and rollicking childhood. The condition is even worse when both parents are employed. If you go by intuition and don't look at the larger picture of your actions, words, and their repercussions on your child, it could be counterproductive to their development. Strict discipline is important, but unless you learn to mold yourself to the child's capabilities and circumstances, it's difficult to raise them into responsible citizens. (Shreshtha Dhar) These children, in general, are the victims of emotional crisis which leave an ever-lasting impact in their life.

These children do not have to face any economic hardship. So, the problems they have to go through do not have any economic aspect. But to be realistic, if sympathetically considered, the problem of these children is no less acute than those who belong to financially weaker families. These children too deserve humane approach to have their problem properly dealt with. It requires a newer outlook.

Statements of the Problem: In the contemporary era happiness or unhappiness, well or woe of human life is predominantly determined is economic term. It is a common perception that the more a man is enriched in economic and material terms, the more a man is happy. Government's policy relating to administration is supposed to be based on this approach. The policy makers relating to the welfare of common people have their motivation from material poverty. Eradication of material poverty undoubtedly is one of the necessary conditions of public welfare. But this is partial reflection of the crisis. Material crisis of human life, in versatile forms, can hardly address the totality of undesirable condition of human life. Mere material prosperity can hardly bring about welfare in the true sense of the term.

A child born in a family with material prosperity is not considered to have any crisis in general terms. These children often are referred to have been born with silver spoon in their mouth. This proverbial saying evidently rules out any crisis, any adversity in their life. But the fact of the matter is not as simple as it seems to be. These ill-fated children have their process of upbringing very complicated. Parents, often both are employed; have to be awfully engaged in their jobs. They cannot balance between their job assignment and responsibility to their children. The problem turns out to be more complicated because parents fail to have exclusive and quality time for their children. Children's unique

sensitivity can read the degree of love and affection they get from their parents who, day in day out, have a tight schedule (Bhagwan and Bhushan). Children feel neglected, unattended and emotionally deprived. Some parents of these children opt for crèche while some others resort to hired domestic help to take care of their children. These parents have to do these things owing to their predicament. Yet mother's love can never be outsourced. Mother's love and affection is too unique to be a purchasable or saleable commodity. Victim children are the best judge of the pain and agony of staying away, especially from their mother. These parents often misjudge that their children are too immature to feel that they are deprived. Crèche or hired domestic help cannot be a sustainable alternative to mother's love and care.

Methodology: The methodology followed has been based on study and analysis of secondary documents relevant to the subject.

Context: We belong to the era of Democracy. Citizens of a modern state like India have certain rights guaranteed by constitutional and legal institutions. Citizens enjoy these rights which are conducive to their well-being. Notwithstanding certain Exceptions, the fact is that civil and political rights enjoyed by the citizens of India in general cannot be denied.

But the concept of Right, to be precise civil and political rights, is not a stagnant one. Concept of right must have the adaptability to cope with the changing social and political reality. So, in the context of changing social and political Reality and Necessity, the concept of right has to be reviewed and, if required, must be redefined. One claiming to have modern and democratic outlook can ill-afford to stick to a concept which does not stand at par with newer requirement of the society.

We cannot ignore the historical fact that women, even in some western European countries, had no voting right and some civil rights. But these archaic practices have been duly abandoned with the change of time. Individual freedom, to the optimum and logical extent, is a necessary condition for the success of democracy if it has to be a successful political and social system (Mukherjee and Mukherjee). So, women population could not be kept away from voting right.

This changeability and adaptability apply even to the present day. Our democracy should be liberal and accommodative enough to address any such problem. The problems faced by the children of the contemporary era have its versatility. The problem faced by children, especially those belonging to middle or upper middle class in urban or semi-urban areas (Bhagwan and Bhushan), if considered with sympathy and objective outlook, is too acute to be ignored by any one committed to civil right of the citizens of a modern democratic country. An honest endeavor for a successful democracy cannot overlook any acute problem in this regard.

Schooling: These children, deprived of parents' adequate love and care, from their early stage of childhood, are ominously set in the track of rats' race with their peer ones. They often have their schooling initiated from 2+ (two plus) years. These children far from enjoying the rollicking school days become mere machine for fulfilling their parents'

expectations. As a part of the process, the innocent kids have to shoulder the physical burden of school bag containing an excessive weight of books etc. to fulfill their parents' expectation. Right from the very beginning of schooling, they begin to feel the heavy burden of their parents' expectations (Banerjee and Duflo). Parents set career target without any concern for the child's capability or proneness. They are expected and taught to fight tooth and nail to win the battle for success. A number, owing to natural reason, find it too difficult, both physically and mentally, to cope with. They are ruled out undeservingly and tagged as 'failure' at the early stage of their life. This intricacy has changed the connotation and denotation of the words 'Success' and 'Failure'.

These children generally belong to family comprising parents and lone child. Gone are the days when Grandpas or Grandmas used to shelter these wretched kids. The advantages of joint family include family members never be alone, you have persons to look after your kids, Works can be shared, Expenses can be shared, Guidance will be there, Caring will be there. (S.B. Bansal) But now-a-days their problems often go unheeded. There is no body to support them emotionally. All work and no play make them emotionally dull. The 'do or die' diktat of the parents leaves little scope for the children to develop healthy relationship among themselves. Whoever around are their competitor to combat with. There is no one who could share their feeling of happiness or unhappiness. The inevitable result is mental depression.

But those lucky ones who survive the struggle for existence too, as desired by their parents, turn out to be money earning machines. The inevitable result is self-centrism. Their success to fight out the battle yields the negative impact when successful children often find little time for their parents. These stories of success in bound to leave a widely negative impact in the society. The very upbringing process is to be held responsible for this outcome.

Man is a rational animal. Rationality, as an essential feature, demands that conduct of human being cannot be inconsistent with his Rationality. This applies personal domain as well as in the public domain. The less these principles apply in a society the more it stands vulnerable to self-contradiction. Human civilization is the history of a rigorous journey of resorting to reason. So, we have to realize the significance of reason which is unique and exclusive to human beings.

The children burdened with the expectation of their parents have to go through an ordeal undeservingly. The parents' approach, in such cases, is far from rationality. The rationality demands a lot of things which include responsible conduct in every sphere of life. Rightness or wrongness, if analyzed properly, can be ascertained in term of one's adherence or non-adherence to rationality. Once parents impose their expectation on their children, they deviate from rationality. Children, when expected to fulfill parents' unfulfilled wishes, are reduced to a machine or means to achieve somebody else's goal. But rationality demands that each man is an end in himself. This is his or her autonomy - the signature of dignity. A man's goal of life is integrally connected with his capability, inner, disposition and choice.

Any sort of deviation leads to compromise of human autonomy and dignity. This has its reflection of Kant's saying "Act in such a way that you always treat Humanity, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end (Paton)".

Man's dignity is proportionate to the degree of Autonomy he or she enjoys to exercise his or her choice in connection with the vital decisions of life. Parents should refrain from setting their career target when they are too young to understand what career is all about. But if a boy or girl in his or her mature stage decides for themselves, of course with due regards to their parents' advices that would be much more meaningful and delightful for them.

Conclusion: Today's children are tomorrow's responsible citizens. So, the problems of children, cutting across social strata, have an integral connection with the wellbeing of a country. Problem, however insignificant apparently may seem to be, directly or indirectly, it has the serious impact on the future of a nation. The authority concerned cannot ignore the gravity of such problem faced by child population. In the present era; complication of family life as well as social life is getting compounded. Children are the worst sufferers. Consumerism has reduced human being to a mere consumer. Everything, even children's rollicking life, has been sacrificed to the consumerism. Parents' irrational expectation put extra pressure on them. They cannot assert. Lack of confidence leaves an adverse impact on them. So, children should be left to their rollicking life, as free as a bird flying high in the sky. Regulations must be there but that too with rational parameters. These children, with their autonomy and dignity recognized, will grow up with sense of responsibility. Man's strength comes from within. Children, have their choice and liking and disliking, throughout the process of their upbringing, imposed from without. This leads to a disastrous outcome. They have their self-confidence crippled. They, even during their post-childhood, tend to depend on their parents for any decision, which, in normal course, should be done by them. Citizens brimming with self-confidence and equipped with assertiveness are what a society should be enriched with for its healthy future.

But the issue being dealt with throws light on the gloomy picture of a huge child population who, in spite of all potentials and resources, are just victim of depression. This is not a healthy sign for a nations' prospect. This undesirable phenomenon is crisis worth calling and needs to be addressed. So, what is the need of the hour is to build public opinion. Public debate may be organized in various forums to reach a concrete decision in this regard. Various social organizations have definite role to play. The Commission for the protection of child right too may reorient their agenda to serve the purpose it is meant for. Until and unless their problem has proper recognition from various public forums, nothing conclusive can be done. The main purpose of the present article is to draw attention of all concerned to pave a smoother way for our child population to their future.

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