

Awakening the Spirits and Addressing the Safety Concerns in Childhood

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'You took away my life for living your dreams'

Every child who died in recent mishap of fire at the coaching class at Surat [1] must be saying this to his/her parents. Such blames have more emotionality than legality, and it always falls on the deaf ears of this society, waiting for the true justice.

I apologize, as these must be harsh words to read because the society symbolizes parents as the savior Gods for their children, and true it is! As parents, we always try to give our best to the kids. In the process of giving 'our' best, we take away from them the 'universal' best. We are undoubtedly in so much hurry to ignore the safety concerns about living safe and start dictating our terms upon them in haste. We forget a common Hindi proverb '*Jaan Hai To Jahaan Hai*' (If there's life, then there's the world).

In last few years, we have seen an unprecedented rise in the number of coaching institutes in our country. The Asian Development Bank has reported that around 83% of India's high-school children juggle time around school, extra-curricular activities, and tuitions at these coaching centers [2]. Most of these coaching institutes, run either in the residential buildings without any approval by the government authorities or in commercial buildings, continue flouting the rules in place. Apart from openly flouting the basic building construction rules, most of the coaching institutes in small cities do not take any responsibility for the safety and security of the students. Hordes of students crammed into small spaces is the reality of most of the coaching institutes in India with no steps taken towards the well-being of the students. Do these institutes have no responsibility towards the students who spend most of their time studying there?

When the parents are deeply attached to the ultimate targets they have fixed for their kids, and are living in that dreamy world, they tend to ignore above such facts, and surrender their children to these vulnerabilities while reaching the set goals. This parental prototype or psyche is being exploited by the marketing giants. Finance world

understands the emotions better than many biologists here. A product of education is being marketed so well to the parents, giving them a feel of parenting the next 'Einstein.'

Yes, as parents, why not? We are here to do the best for our kids and who shall deny that but let's not confuse ourselves in 'giving our best' or 'doing our best.' The life has its priorities to live with. Living needs to be prioritized over the way of living. Loss of life devalues every other thing about it. No matter how rich your kids would be? How intelligent and high scoring are they? How much over qualified? And so on...

Parents always check and research a lot about the teaching experience of tuition teachers or school brands and the results, but often pay no attention to the actual environment of the schools, including safety in the classes, behavior of concerned caretakers and their commitment, and also the transport safety towards the daily commuting. We have dreams of seeing our kids riding the horses but we fail to see if the saddles are fixed properly. In the zest of making it large, we forget to ensure the life to be a safe. Tragedies will strike with a lightning speed before we realize that we have broken the dreams forever.

Aren't we hypocrites while shaping the future of our kids? We lived our childhood in our own way with our terms, and now under the pretext of being the saviors, we wish to control the life of our kids. Whose life are we living? Shouldn't we be telling them that they have a choice in how they want to live their life rather than to follow a set path that has been laid out in front of them [3].

Parents have a responsibility to instill confidence, desire and drive to make their children live their life [3]. They should allow their children to do what they want to do in their life without being scared of the outcome. Children should be told that there is nothing wrong in trying and failing, and re-trying [3]. Children are capable of accomplishing much more than what their parents want them to achieve by living life of 'their' dreams. Steve Jobs once rightly said, "your time is limited, so don't waste it

living someone else's life" – and this is so correct to be understood and interpreted literally by parents more than even the kids.

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