

Breaking the myth that perfect parents exist

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- Geeta Ramakrishnan -

Family is one of the most fundamentally important institutions in our society. The urge to procreate is at the heart of the institution of family. We have moved away from a joint family system to nuclear families. What has remained constant is the importance attached to parenting. Parents are entrusted with the most crucial task of raising a family and also keeping it together. However, it is a matter of debate if there is anything called "perfect parents". Let us see if it is a myth.

Untrained and inexperienced

We as a society have imposed an unprecedented amount of pressure on parents. It is as if we expect all humans to be perfect at the art of parenting. But, the reality is far removed from our idealism. Parents are untrained and inexperienced. Everyone learns the skills of parenting only after the child is born. There's no single book of golden rules to be a perfect parent.

The subjective theory of perfection

What is perfection after all? What kind of parents qualify to be perfect? It is a highly subjective concept. Parenting is full of life-altering challenges. Some of it is sweet but most of it entails sheer hard work and patience. Perfection itself is a big myth. What is perfect or ideal for one child may not be suitable for another. It is the social, economic, mental, physical, and political system that has a lot to do with the kind of parents a society has.

Parenting at the cost of personal freedom

There is no training for parenthood. There is no formal degree. Parents, after all, are humans, fallible and vulnerable. Parents are capable of mistakes and can have a lot of flaws. Now we realize that perfection is not important. In an orthodox society, parenting is a compulsion. There is no choice. In a liberal society, parenting can be very tough as children don't pay heed to strict rules. In any situation, a great deal of personal freedom needs to be sacrificed to be a parent. There is nothing perfect about giving up on personal freedom.

Happiness trumps perfection

The perfect parent is a myth propagated by mainstream media. There cannot be a single benchmark for

perfection in parenthood. Parenthood does not equal sainthood. An overtly loving and caring (seemingly perfect) parent could end up harming the child at times. A selfish parent can sometimes make a child learn the values of compassion and generosity. We would any day take a happy and compassionate parent over a 'perfect' parent. To an innocent child, his or her parents are perfect. When the child grows up this naive assumption may change into disillusionment or may not change and he or she may continue to hold onto this naive belief.

But the world implicitly knows that there is no such thing as a perfect anything.

Perfection is a superficial and unreal template

The quintessential cinema mother is unidimensional, saintly and angelic. A stereotype created to fulfil the expectations of the majority. Interestingly, mythology is full of examples of imperfect, flawed, selfish, vindictive and imperfect parents. Parenthood doesn't change the fundamental beliefs and values of most individuals. In fact, it hardens, affirms and confirms many erroneous and at times vicious values. In orthodox societies, parenthood is often thrust upon individuals in a loveless marriage. The result is often witless, careless and tragically unprepared parents. The motives behind embarking upon the journey of parenthood, range from foolishly idealistic to shockingly evil. The resulting parents are not perfect or imperfect. But just lucky or unlucky accidents, for themselves, their offspring and the society at large.

As there are no perfect people, there are no perfect parents not perfect children. It is advisable to not evaluate parenting with a flawed yardstick of perfection. What matters more is freedom and happiness. It is necessary to dispel the myth of perfect parents to save everyone from the exasperating ritual of parenthood. It is time to get real, candid, and rational about the way we view parenting.



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Geeta Ramakrishnan grew up in Mumbai, India. Her marriage brought her to Dubai. Keenly interested and intrigued by human behavior, she focused on human capital management of the family business. Her curiosity and passion led her to attend an ontological coach training program from Newfield Asia, Singapore. She offers coaching and also conducts workshops on her favorite subject 'Change'. Over the last 50 years, she has recognized key lessons on how to be happy, while holding her own in her family and in this world. She offers her experiences demonstrating the balancing act of nurturing success with happiness.

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