



THE VALUE OF PARENTS

We cannot repay them in any way

HADHRAT IMAM MUHYI-UD-DIN MUNIR A. AZIM (Jamaat Ul Sahih Al Islam)

Why the world today is facing such a dilemma concerning the parents, and the kind of treatment which should be given to them? Each and every religion since the creation of the heavens and earth has given parents a predominant status, but of course human loyalty should be to Almighty God first and then to their parents. But nonetheless the parents hold a definite place in the lives of their children or rather it should have been! A specific price or value cannot be put upon what the parents have given and strived for the welfare of these children, be they biological or even adopted children.

All in all, children should become conscious of their incumbent duties towards their parents. All that our parents have done for us, we cannot repay them in any way, even if we may carry them for pilgrimage (for the pleasure of Almighty God). The pains and striving they went through are unique. Thus, O people, O my brothers and sisters, be kind and considerate towards your parents. Let it not be that you have your parents in their old age but you miss receiving the divine blessings by not catering to their needs and making them feel wanted, secure and loved. Can money and mundane success ever re-

place what they have done for you? Can the sometimes unwanted advice of your spouse ever fill the emptiness when you abandon your parents to the care of others? Wake up to this call for you will live only once, and can you guarantee that whatever harm you have done to your parents, can you be absolutely sure that the repeat of this injustice not be meted out to you by your own children?

Therefore, take hold of the hands of your parents, be for them a fortress of will, strength and love, and cater to their every need, for paradise lies under their feet. Your father was your inspiration; let him remain

till the end of his days your inspiration. Your mother was the embodiment of love and protection; let her feel that she is still that embodiment of love and fill her life with your smile and love. Your parents deserve your support. Make their everyday lives be Mother's or Father's Day – not just one day, but everyday of your life. The time which you shall devote to them shall never be wasted. Be conscious of this and you shall be a happy man or woman, and consequently in turn a happy parent and human being. May Almighty God enable you to do so...

THE END

THE WAY FORWARD SERIES...

Education, Politics, Will!!

KRISHNA JADUNUNDUN
MMM Youth Wing (Jeunesse Militante)

Mauritians always ask why our education system is failing. Simple answer: the system is outdated and it has produced a vast population able to read but some of them or most unable to distinguish what is worth reading. The system teaches young people how to make a living but not how to make a life. Rather than loading the memory of students with thoughts of other men, the education system should enable the students to think for themselves. In order to improve and move forward, many politicians should stop thinking that any bright individual is a menace for their pockets. The government must have the guts to bring a proper reform.

In Mauritius, teaching is seemingly not honoured. The low salaries teachers earn compared to other fields requiring Bachelor and Master's degrees support this fact. Countries that top education ranking in the world like Finland, Australia and Korea, have very high salaries for school teachers. We must improve the public education system not by constantly testing students, but by strengthening the education profession and investing in teacher preparation and support. Teachers' high level of knowledge and skills will make sure that they can have considerable independence in the classroom to choose their preferred appropriate pedagogical methods.

Investment in people is the best investment. Political authorities must see education as the key to survive and thrive in an increasingly competitive world. Education must be the catalyst of the economic growth of our nation. To be competitive, Mauritius has to substantially boost investment in education and research to foster innovation and cutting-edge development. Government must invest in warm school meals, learning materials, text books, transportation, new equipment, new facilities, student counseling etc so as to allow teachers to focus on teaching and learning, and bring new ideas and practices in schools.

The government, trade unions and employers' organisations must form a tripartite, closely coordina-

ting, communicating and heading to a common goal. In many countries the opposing parties usually polarise debates and public opinion. The parties must begin focusing on the subject-matter, on cooperating and acting together. There must be a close partnership between the labour organisations and the government, between the employees and the employers, in both planning and implementation stages. This will allow the teacher union to change from an external political pressure group into a stakeholder in government decision-making. This is a key element in good quality of governance. It will be the driving force of education performance and economic competitiveness in Mauritius.

Our education system must emphasize more on creative problem-solving skills. After concepts are taught, students should be assisted in finding skills and logic to prepare for lifelong learning. Also, students having problems learning should be assigned tutors and remedial specialists from the first day they are evaluated until the day they graduate. Lastly, education should be free from beginning to end. Who wants to start off life after school with a huge debt?

Our government clearly does not have the guts to give our young minds the power and knowledge through a better education system, scared of not being able to reign for long periods like some of his African counterparts. Unfortunately governments like ours prefer uneducated people as they are easier to manage and manipulate. This makes our education system today monumentally ineffective. Young people are given cut flowers instead of being taught how to grow their own plants. If the government does not have the will and guts to bring a proper reform, the education of the young minds of this country will keep on following a bad track. Leaders in Mauritius verbally support education but do not prioritize funding for education. If we want near-perfect education system, we really need to change our political systems. It's not the technology we lack, nor the resources, only political will.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Coping with the emerging hazard

YOOSOOF JAUHANGEER (Safety and Health Consultant)

"If it's a good idea, do it today. Not tomorrow. A good idea rarely gets better over time." — Larry Winget

Health and safety was introduced in the early 80s in Mauritius. Thanks to the dedication of the Safety and Health Officers and the then Factory Inspectorate (now Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorate) coupled with the important support of the employers and the employees there has been a marked decrease in the number of accidents, even with some changes in the statistical parameters, from 13,000 in 1989 to 181 in 2010. However, the number of deaths has remained more or less constant, 10 – 13 yearly during the same period with a peak of 27 in 1993. *Alors, peut-on en rester là?* Surely not, as there is a marked change in our industries, from agricultural to service industry and small construction to high rise building bringing about new emerging hazard.

Thus, it is suggested that necessary action be taken now to keep the number of workplace accidents, injuries and deaths at bay.

Setting up of a Professional Safety and Health Officer Council

After 30 years, it is very important that due recognition be given to the Safety and Health Officer by the creation of a Professional

Safety and Health Officer Council. The main objective of this Council would be responsible for all matters pertaining to the profession including registration, guidelines, suggestion to government and sensitisation campaigns. The members of this council should come from both the Government and the private sector.

Upgrading of the basic qualification and salary

Presently, the basic qualification to practise as Safety and Health Officer is a Diploma in Occupational Safety and Health. However, most professionals in the field now hold a BSc in Occupational Safety and Health. Thus, it is high time to upgrade the level so as to cope with the new emerging hazard. This upgrading would also bring about a marked increase in the basic salary of the existing officer and would help decrease with the scarcity / high turnover rate of health and safety officers in the Government sector and parastatal bodies. Additionally, this upgrading would prevent the sense of inferiority when dealing with other professionals, engineers, architects, etc.

However, so as not to penalise the existing Safety and Health Officers having

a Diploma and several years of working experience, a special exemption should be provided.

Sensitisation campaigns and training

It is very important that continuous sensitisation campaigns are carried out to promote occupational health and safety. It is high time to launch a National Award on health and safety whereby the most safety-conscious companies and the most proactive Safety and Health Officers are awarded for their commitment and efforts. This award can be set up under the aegis of the Safety and Health Officer Council.

Moreover, to ensure that the population is conscious about general health and safety (including road safety, proper dieting, etc.) sensitization programs should start at grass root level, for instance at pre-primary school and should be strengthened at primary and secondary school levels. All students in vocational schools and universities should have a proper exposure to the inherent hazards with their trade and how to minimise risks.

Companies should ensure that their labour force is properly trained not only to comply with the law but

also to ensure that the work is carried out efficiently with minimum risks. The Occupational Safety and Health Act 2005 is crystal clear about the compulsory requirement of company to provide adequate and appropriate training.

Companies' directors should use the training levy of the HRDC efficiently to have properly-trained personnel in order to prevent accidents and ill health. Such facilities should be extended to their advisors in health and safety and the safety and health officers.

The media – radio, television and newspaper have a key role to play in the sensitisation and training campaigns.

Health and safety at Board level

Health and safety should be dealt with at Board level and top management. The audit and risk committee composed of members of the Board are now paying more and more attention to the occupational safety and health issues as non-compliance may result in heavy fines, damages and imprisonment. Additionally, more and more companies are including a component regarding health and safety in their annual report to show its importance.