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The metamorphosis of parenting in urban India and the significance of a father's role in child psycho-social development

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Parenting roles in the past were clearly carved out and rigid; while nurturing, caring-for and conscientious upbringing was primarily the Mother's responsibility; providing for, disciplining and protecting was the Father's. The overlap was minimal and also dependant on the social organization of the family, which in most cases leaned towards Patriarchy, especially in India. Parenting in India is transitioning. While traditional notions endorsed the father's role as a provider, protector, teacher, and moral guardian to children (Kane, 1974; Krishnan, 1998), with more middle-class women entering the workforce and gender equality taking centre-stage in India, the demand for a man who has the knowledge, attitude, and skills to share co-parenting responsibilities is growing (Bharat, 2002; Datta & Maheshwari, 1997; Rajadhyaksha & Smita, 2004). Urban Indians are becoming conscious of their individual parenting roles to ensure the best for their children (Datta, 2007; Gore, 2003; Sinha, 2003; Sriram, 2003). This makes the constructive participation of the father inevitable in the overall development of the child. Research on Father Involvement in children's psycho-social development although sporadic, presents a positive correlation between highly involved fathers and a child's cognitive functioning, emotional and educational development, overall well-being and even occupational competency (Allen & Daly, 2007). According to a summary of evidence published by the Father Involvement Research Alliance, Canada, children who grow up with extra care from the father are said to be more attached to them, more resilient in the face of stress, happier during adolescence and even less depressed (Allen & Daly, 2007). This study aims to understand the involvement of Indian Fathers in their children's upbringing and the resulting effects using participant narratives, specific literature and learnings from clinical work.

Biography

Rohini Kesavan Rajeev is Psychotherapist with almost 15 years of clinical & corporate counseling experience. She is Resource Person of Anti-Sexual Harassment Committee. She has pursued MSW in Medicine and Psychiatry from Bishop Heber College, Trichy, India and is PhD Scholar of Social Sciences from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India. She specializes in couples therapy, women's mental health, combating and overcoming sexual abuse, building resilience, confidence and self-image strengthening as well as parenting. Her areas of expertise also include psychotherapy for different levels of distress across age groups, clinical work with persons struggling with acute psychosis and neurosis, corporate counseling (organizational & individual work related issues), handling change and management transition, rebuilding confidence & trust, conflict management, grief counseling, and prevention of sexual harassment at work and school.

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