

[Parenting, Part 1](#)

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Parenting, Part 1

Hindu precepts, societal customs and elders' example all guide parents in child-raising. But invariably everyone molds their own very unique approach. Below, two fathers and two mothers from Madras look back and share how they handled 13 sensitive areas of parenting.

QUESTION: What were three values you taught your children?

S. Tyagarajan (ST): Total honesty with themselves, respect and consideration for others and humility born out of compassion.

Dr. N. S. Vyas (NSV): Fearlessness, respect to elders and faith in God.

Krishnaveni Lakshman (KL): Help people when they are in need without hesitating, be friendly with everybody and respect all as one. Also, hold strong ties with family members because people are more important than money.

Kalpana Jeyaram (KJ): The three values that I feel are very important and that have been passed on to my children successfully are honesty, sincerity and perfection.

QUESTION: What were the most important Hindu teachings you gave them?

ST) By exposing them to Ramayana and Mahabharatha and Bhagavatam, we tried to get across human compassion, tolerance, love for all beings on earth and to consider all humanity as one.

NSV) I taught them to rely only on God to overcome difficulties. I am proud that despite moving with a variety of company, neither fail to visit the Hanuman temple.

KL) To be a true Hindu and follow all the true customs of Hinduism.

KJ) Be pious enough to perform all functions concerned with us and to respect all relationships.

QUESTION: Was there regular worship in your home?

ST) Both of us spend 10 to 15 minutes in prayer every morning. We have never insisted our children join us.

NSV) I perform a simple meditation daily. We celebrate Hindu festivals and the family enjoys doing all this, including a yearly visit to Tirupathi temple.

KL) I have a puja room and my daughter cleans it and lights the lamp daily. Occasionally all go to the temple. A Ganesha shrine built by my husband in our compound has arati daily. Our children sometimes attend.

KJ) It is our family ritual to do puja every morning. I taught my kids Sanskrit slokas which they recited daily. They saluted the Lords before leaving home in the morning and weekend visits to the temple were of utmost importance.

QUESTION: Did you ever strike your children to discipline them?

ST) Yes, I occasionally used physical violence-slapping, pinching-which I regretted immediately. Physical beating is unnecessary. It only highlights the inability of the parent to communicate with the child. When I saw it as my shortcoming, I stopped beating them.

NSV) Yes, on rare occasions, especially when they try to draw attention by being disobedient. But there is nothing like rewarding good behavior with gifts, hugs and kisses!

KL) One can be strict with children without slapping them. With love and affection we can raise the children and that is what I have done with my children.

KJ) Until the age of ten both my daughters did get lightly slapped when no amount of talking or pleading did any good. I think I was justified to get them on the right track.

QUESTION: Did you permit them to date?

ST) We encouraged them to mix with boys and girls. They studied in co-ed schools and made friends with the opposite sex and learned to respect them from childhood. Both are now over 20 and we will not interfere with their dating.

NSV) Not allowed. No going out without elder escorts. "No arguments, please." But they are welcome to bring any number of boys and girls to our home. Parties!! No problem. Enjoy yourselves! In fact, we often participate.

KL) I do not believe in dating so I will not allow my children to do so.

KJ) My children did not believe in dating. On the other hand, they were always encouraged to go in groups. Since I trusted them both, there were never any hard and fast rules concerning them.

QUESTION: Did you set any restrictions about marriage selection?

ST) We would like them to marry their "own kind." It's easier to accept Hindu tradition and societal demands. Not averse to them marrying outside provided each are tolerant of the others' customs.

NSV) We tell them we brahmins, are an "endangered species," a "vanishing tribe." Hence we should conserve our genetic potential by marrying only Hindu, preferably Iyyengar brahmins.

KL) Not against love marriage, but I prefer they marry within their caste. Intercaste/international marriages are not advisable as their children do not get the proper identity in society.

KJ) I tell my daughters (one is married) I prefer they marry an Indian Hindu, but more important is his intellect, sensitivity, family background and, most important, being my daughters' happiness.

QUESTION: Were there different rules for your son than for your daughter?

ST) Never differentiated between daughter and son. Both given equal opportunities to do what they want.

NSV) Yes. We taught my daughter not to be too exuberant and display emotions etc.-unlike my son, who used to howl and yell while watching TV or video.

KL) Yes, I raised my daughter in an Indian way. Though she can go out freely, she has restrictions unlike her brother who is more free in going out and coming home late at night and other things.

KJ) Not applicable-I have two daughters.

QUESTION: What was, or is, your counsel to them to have a happy marriage?

ST) I would advise my daughter to insist for a two-way relationship and never put up with insensitivity from her spouse just because he happens to be a husband or because of what people will say. -Mrs. Tyagarajan

NSV) To both young men and women getting married, we tell them to stay in a different place, away from their parents, but close to them!! Rule two-no secrets between partners, please!!

KL) No answer.

KJ) I told my daughter not to let her ego be misused while dealing in petty matters. Try to compromise in matters and not to hold a stubborn and negative point of view in silly matters. But also, never sacrifice her beliefs because that would kill her individuality.

QUESTION: Did you talk about sex matters openly?

ST) Yes, very open discussions about premarital sex and related problems. They have felt free to ask any questions about sex. We have been very frank and open.

NSV) Not directly, but indirectly by citing how I wanted my wife to be. It is best that they figure it out themselves. Of course, this may not be the best method.

KL) Yes, I talk very freely with them about this. I believe one man for one woman. I was brought up that way, and I want my daughter brought up this way.

KJ) No.

QUESTION: Did you set dress rules?

ST) We told them rather strongly about our disapproval on dressing provocatively after they were teenagers.

NSV) Yes. Rules were simple-don't copy "X" or "Y." No make-up, hair style, etc. Sometimes, I myself used to long to see them dressed like "X" or "Y" that I saw in TV, but never dared to tell them so!

KL) No restrictions of any kind. They may wear what they like.

KJ) I told them to maintain individuality in dress. Only rule was that clothes in no way be indecent, i.e. short or revealing.

QUESTION: Did joint family members help in parenting?

ST) When we had doubts about certain aspects of our children's activities, we checked with other family members.

NSV) Yes, particularly my sisters made the childhood of my children especially enjoyable by affectionately caring, loving and looking after them.

KL) The joint family system is a boon to parents. My children were entirely brought up by my parents. It teaches children to share everything and obey others.

KJ) Participation of extended family helps give a child responsibility, sharing, caring, respect for elders. It enhances development of the child mentally.

QUESTION: What did your children protest the most?

ST) My conflicting behavior on the same issue at different times which unsettled the child and raised doubts as to what my stand actually was.

NSV) They protested whenever I wanted them to be dressed in orthodox Indian style for religious functions as they saw others dressed in unorthodox dress.

KL) They liked the way they were brought up.

KJ) When they were in their teens we moved. They started breaking away and I got very strict. They complain I should have been more sensitive and less rigid.

QUESTION: Did you teach your daughter cooking?

ST) I was never taught cooking. I learned it because I liked it. My daughter volunteers and learns by helping me. I have no idea she should learn cooking just because she is a girl. -Mrs. Tyagarajan

NSV) No answer.

KL) I teach cooking to my daughter not only because she will need it in the future, but I believe that a woman should know everything to run a house and that includes cooking.

KJ) I was never taught cooking. I learned only after I got married. But I trained my eldest daughter before her wedding.