The Burden We Place on Those Who Once Carried Us

By Yunus Ahmed Bhamjee

Parents never really stop worrying about their children. They go to bed worrying about them even when those children are elderly themselves, beginning to grow grey hair and carrying families and responsibilities of their own. A parent can still lie awake wondering: Are they happy? Are they safe? Are they coping? Is there something they are carrying that they cannot say?

No parent wants their children to be unhappy. No parent wants to see their children fighting, arguing or being forced to take sides between their parents. And children should never make their parents' relationship a battlefield. A mother may be soft, forgiving and lenient, and sometimes that very love can make her vulnerable to being influenced or manipulated by the children she loves.

But there comes a time for a reality check. Instead of constantly asking, “What have my parents done for me?”, ask yourself: “What am I doing right for them?” Be honest. Have I brought them peace or added to their burdens? Have I comforted them when they were lonely? Have I made them feel valued, especially now that they are growing older and may themselves be alone and in need of emotional strength?

Parents spend much of their lives carrying the burdens of their children without keeping an account. But when parents reach old age, perhaps the greatest gift their children can give them is not money, explanations or arguments. It is peace, respect, companionship, patience and reassurance.

Strength is not always standing your ground. Sometimes strength is knowing when to put down your own burden so that it does not become someone else’s pain. Maturity is knowing when not to take sides, when not to manipulate, when not to retaliate—and when simply to bring peace.

Before we complain about what our parents failed to give us, we should pause and ask ourselves a more uncomfortable question: How much peace have I given them? How have I comforted them? And what am I doing right for them now?

Because one day, the people who worried about us every night may no longer be here to worry about us. And when that day comes, what will remain is not the argument we won, the side we took or the burden we placed upon them. What will remain is how we made them feel while they were still here.

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