

LETTER OF THE DAY

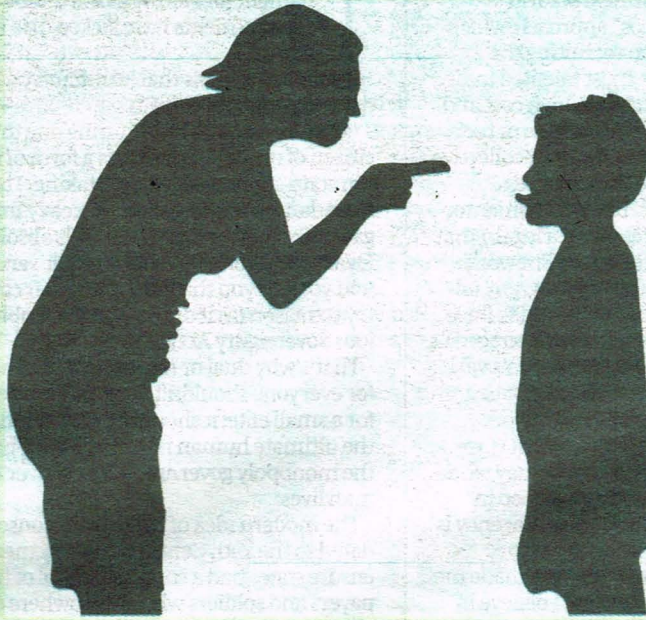
Parenting crisis: These day parents fear their children

Last weekend, I had a privilege of traveling with my mother, Adyeeri, on a long journey to Fort Portal. The winding roads, the green countryside, and the calm silence between conversations created the perfect atmosphere for reflection. Somewhere along the journey, our discussion turned to one subject that has become impossible to ignore in modern society - parenting and the changing behaviour of children.

Out of curiosity, and perhaps concern, I asked her a question many people have quietly asked themselves in recent years: "What is happening with children these days?" Her answer came instantly and without hesitation. "Nothing is wrong with the children," she said calmly. "The problem is with the parents." That response caught me off guard.

For a moment, I expected the usual criticism directed at today's generation - claims that children have become stubborn, disrespectful, entitled, or morally lost. Instead, my mother shifted the focus entirely. According to her, the real crisis lies not in children, but in the gradual withdrawal of parents from their sacred responsibility of raising them. Then she made a statement that stayed with me for the rest of the journey to date: "These days, parents fear their children instead of children fearing their parents." This was a painful observation, but also an honest one.

Across many homes today, authority has quietly changed hands. Parents hesitate to correct their children. Discipline is often mistaken for cruelty. Guidance is replaced by negotiation. Many mothers and fathers now walk cautiously around their own children, afraid of con-



frontation, rebellion, emotional backlash, or being labelled "too harsh." Yet generations before us understood parenting differently. Parents were present. They guided firmly. They corrected lovingly. They invested time, values, and attention into shaping character. Children grew up knowing boundaries, respect, and responsibility.

Today, however, life has become, understandably, increasingly demanding. Parents are busier than ever before. Economic pressures force many to spend long hours away from home trying to provide better lives for their families. In the process, many homes have become more financially stable but emotionally disconnected. My mother pointed out another painful reality: children now spend most of their formative years in schools and institutions rather than under the influence of their parents. They wake up early for school, spend the entire day with teachers

and peers, return home exhausted, and then disappear into phones, television, or social media. Others spend the entire school term in boarding schools. As a result, the little time left for genuine parent-child interaction has kept shrinking. Meanwhile, teachers themselves are overwhelmed with academic targets and administrative responsibilities. Their role is increasingly centred on producing grades rather than shaping character. As a result, a dangerous gap has emerged: Children are growing up educated, but not necessarily guided. They are informed, but not always mentored. They are connected online, yet emotionally distant at home. And perhaps most tragically, many are growing up without deeply understanding discipline, resilience, empathy, or accountability.

This is not merely a family issue. It is becoming a societal issue. When parenting weakens, society eventually pays the

price. We begin to see rising indiscipline, emotional instability, substance abuse, violence, entitlement, and growing disrespect for institutions and authority. Communities are becoming fragmented because the foundational unit, the family, has become fragile. My mother called it a "looming generational crisis." The more I reflected on her words, the more I realised she was right. No society can outsource parenting entirely to schools, churches, technology, or domestic workers. Children may learn mathematics in classrooms, but values are first learned at home. Respect is taught around dining tables. Integrity is modelled by parents. Emotional security is built through presence, attention, and conversation.

Parenting has never been easy. But perhaps the greatest challenge of modern parenting is not lack of love; it is lack of time, consistency, and intentionality. In chasing success, many parents are unknowingly becoming strangers to their own children. The solution may not require expensive programmes or complicated policies. Perhaps it begins with simple but intentional actions: parents becoming emotionally available again, families having conversations again, fathers and mothers reclaiming their role as guides and mentors, and homes becoming places of learning, not merely sleeping spaces.

As we approached Fort Portal and the beautiful hills emerged in the distance, our conversation slowly faded into silence. But my mother's words continued echoing in my mind. Maybe the greatest inheritance we can give the next generation is not wealth, expensive schools, or modern gadgets. Maybe it is simply present, courageous, and intentional parenting.

Protazio Sande, parent.