

GARDEN PARTY

Taken from the book of Fr. P. Ribes, s.j. "Parents, Teachers and Educators, what are you?" published by the Gujarat Sahitya Prakash.

Intent of the Allegory.

The primary job and responsibility of Parents and teachers is to educate their children.

Target Audience:

P.T.A. Parents, teachers and those in the ministry of education.

The Allegory

Mr. Gardener was a man in love with flowers. To grow flowers – all sorts of flowers – was his joy in life. To talk to his flowers, to look at them, to enjoy their fragrance was all his delight.

One day, Mr. Gardener invited his close friends to his garden for a party. He wanted to regale them with the beauty of his exotic and exquisite flowers. He thought to himself: "What present shall I give my guests that they may treasure it? Will a bouquet of my most beautiful flowers do? NO! NO! I feel bad to cut so many young blooming flowers. Besides, a bouquet of flowers will soon wither and my guests will forget my garden."

At last, he exclaimed with joy: "I know what present to give my dear friends. I'll gather seeds of my most exquisite flowers and offer a small bag of them to each of my guests. In due time, they will be privileged to enjoy a garden as beautiful as mine. Surely, the world will be a more beautiful place to be with so many scented flowers!"

At the close of the party, Mr. Gardener gave each guest a little bag of seeds and said: "My friends, I love flowers. You can see the splendor of my garden. Take these seeds which I, carefully, have chosen from among my most exquisite flowers. Cultivate them with love and care – as I do – and you too, will be the proud owners of a magnificent garden."

The guests took the little precious bags, thanked their host and went home. As he left the garden, one of the guests murmured: "What for do I want these seeds? Why should I waste my precious time cultivating flowers? There are more important things in life than flowers." And straight off, he threw the bag away.

Another guest muttered to himself: "These seeds are really good. Yes, I'll cultivate them, not now, but later on, when I'll have some leisure"! When he reached home, he kept the little bag in one of the drawers of his desk never to open it again.

A third guest said to himself: “Yes, I love flowers, but I have no time to cultivate them myself. I’ll get someone else to do it for me”. He called his servant and ordered him to cultivate the seeds for him. Needless to say, the seeds never bloomed to the full. The servant cultivated them just for a wage, not for love!

Still another guest said: “Oh! Yes, I love flowers! I will cultivate them in my little garden, of course, but I am a busy man. I’ll give to my garden the spared moments of my day.” The flowers grew, but turned colorless.

Finally, full of enthusiasm another guest exclaimed: “I love flowers! I’ll cultivate these seeds with love and care”. He spent on them the time, the energies and the money they deserved. And of course, it goes without saying; his garden was as beautiful, as colorful and as scented as the one of Mr. Gardener.

Note

Taking it for granted that in the allegory, God is the gardener, the world his garden, men and women his flowers, our children the seeds, and parents and teachers the guests of the story, let us reflect on how the attitudes displayed by the different guests towards the seeds, exemplify the different attitudes we Parents and Teachers may display towards the education of our children.

There are five attitudes:

- 1st attitude: **Unconcern.** There are more important things in life than to spend time on our children’s education.
- 2nd attitude: **In theory, we have concern** for our children, but in **practice, we do not show concern.** Somehow, we neglect them.
- 3rd attitude: **Concern by proxy.** We care for our children, but we do it through others. We entrust their education to servants, tutors and the like.
- 4th attitude: **Halfhearted concern.** Not sufficient care. We do care for them. But we do not give them the time and attention they need and deserve.
- 5th attitude: **Full concern:** Children are our first priority. We devote all the time and all means at our disposal for the education and upbringing our children.

THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION.

1. What were the different attitudes of the guests of the story towards the seeds entrusted to them? Can you enumerate them and explain their significance?.
2. Can you apply the moral of the story to the attitudes Parents and Teachers may display towards the education of their children and pupils?
3. Do the various attitudes of the guests reflect our attitudes as well, towards the education of our children? How? Give instances.
4. Can such delicate seeds, like our children, blossom to maturity without being given the best of our attention, time and energies? Why?

5. For good and responsible parents and teachers what should be their top priority in their lives and work? Why?
6. According to your experience, how much are today's parents, teachers, tutors and those in education professions spending themselves in the **cultivation and "education"** of those delicate seeds?
7. If Parents abdicate their educational responsibilities towards their children to Grandparents, Maids, Ayahs, School Authorities, Tutors, Servants, and the like, what will the consequences be? Why?
8. If our children turn useless and even misfits, whose responsibility is it?
9. In all honesty, let each one of us ask ourselves: "With which of the guests of Mr. Gardener's story do I identify most?"
10. Can I improve the way I care for my children? What can I do from now on?
11. What shall I do? (*For memory sake you may take a few notes*)

