

# Unboiling The Egg

*Managing Parenting, Really!!!*



**Saugata Nandi**

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By  
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This book is entirely a work of fiction and all characters are fictional. It has no resemblance to any person, group or community – either living or dead.

*Dedicated to  
my Parents and my Son  
They have taught me so many  
things and helped me evolve*





This book is not for those people who give all kind of excuses to avoid one of the toughest challenges of life – parenting. The responsibility of parenting is immense. It's about bringing up a citizen of the nation and the world; it's about being responsible for the behavior demonstrated by one's child and it's about the ability in you to really unlearn and learn.

This book is not for those people who cannot decide on the right priorities in life. This book is about focusing on the vital few, about doing the right things at the right time and achieving outcome through influencing and persuasion skills.

How do you measure whether you are a good parent?

The answer is in the behavior of the child. Simply put, a child is like play dough. The way he/she shapes up depends entirely on the parent. If the child does not reflect the behaviors you want him or her to display, then there are some gaps in the parenting process.

If the child does display most of the behaviors you want and many of them better than you expected, then of course you have been a good parent. Behavior cannot be coerced; it has to be developed and imbibed. Do not confuse this with the individual traits of the child. For example, while the trait of a child can be aggression, through good parenting the displayed behavior can be moderated substantially and the aggression can be positively channelized, towards a sport, for example.

My work as a learning and development professional and educator has given me the opportunity to interact with various frameworks of education and management, and I tried to dip into these whenever a youngster asked a question. More often than not, I could not use these models for arriving at the answer.

This book focuses primarily on children in the age group of 5-18 years, although some instances may be applicable to other ages too.

I have used male pronouns throughout the book as a matter of convenience; this does not indicate any gender bias. The situations, advice and opinions presented here are equally applicable to female children.

This book is dedicated to all those parents who have done their best to bring up a child at home, went through the pain,

given up the cheap thrills of trying to buy happiness for their child and really invested in the development of the Future of the World, by investing time in the child.

A CHILD GIVES BIRTH TO A MOTHER

CHILD IS REALLY THE FATHER OF MAN

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## *Measuring Parenting*

In management, there is a saying: 'You cannot improve anything you cannot measure'. The same is true for parenting. What do you want to measure? What are the leading indicators and the lagging indicators? As a hardened professional manager, I remember asking my four-year-old's teacher, 'What are his strengths and what are the areas of improvement?'

The teacher was absolutely stunned by my question. I thought that I had outsmarted her, but the lessons she gave me that day are still embedded in my mind.

'A child is like clay,' she said. 'They get molded over time depending on the environment they grow in. There is no such thing as 'good' or 'bad' behavior. Every child is talented; as teachers and parents, we must be able to identify the talent and help him or her develop it. Behaviors will get shaped according to their experiences during the process of growing up.'

'But, how do I measure whether my child is on the right track or not?' the manager in me persisted.

'Is something wrong with you? Are you really serious?' the teacher asked me.

Well, I was serious, but something warned me against arguing further with her.

Nevertheless, the question of how to measure parenting grades and quality prevailed in my mind. Many years later, as my child entered his teens, another teacher gave me the answer.

'A child has to reach his or her maximum potential,' she said.

It was a measure, but it was a moving target, I realized, as the potential of every child is unlimited. They continue to surprise with their abilities; sometimes succeeding in the most severe conditions and at times failing in the simplest scenarios. Their ambitions range from wanting to become scientists, and fire fighters, to cowboys and even, occasionally, ninja warriors. They might give a geeky, data-loaded speech about neutrinos one day, and present a passionate defense of their behavior with mommy another day...

Over time, I realized that reaching one's potential is a factor of several things:

1. The environment at home, immediate family and all its members
2. Friends – within and outside school
3. Teachers and other role models
4. Interests of the child and exposure to experiences and opportunities
5. How the child uses the above factors (or a combination of them) to assess situations and make decisions

The last point is not about the way we want them to think or achieve their potential; it's about the way the child has evolved his or her thinking over years – undergone multiple transformations; borne the stress and strain of achieving 'success'; subjected to embarrassment, humiliation and ridicule – and whether they could achieve what they wanted to or were expected to.

To handle this, should every parent become a behavioral expert? Well, expert or not, an understanding of behaviors would definitely help.

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## *Understanding your Child*

**F**rom the moment a baby is born, friends and relatives point out similarities of his features with those of other relatives, indirectly placing expectations on the infant to measure up to those relatives. As the child grows, so do the expectations. His life is expected to be defined by this ability to meet expectations.

A child is born to parents to fulfill a destiny. Often, I have wondered why a soul takes birth in a particular home. How is it decided? Reading of spiritual texts gives me an idea: The soul has a destiny, depending on which it is born in conditions and circumstances that will take it to its destiny, provided the individual works hard to achieve it.

Parents do not own the child; the child is a citizen of the country. This distinction helps in dispassionately understanding the child as an individual. I have seen children of very successful people unable to make a decent living; while children of financially weak families sometimes really make it big in life. I am sure you would have seen enough evidence of these too.

In spite of the best intentions, why and where do parents go wrong in understanding their children?

The first fact is that the problem is at the parents' end, not the child's.

Recently, I met a highly educated gentleman and told him that I had created a document on my child's strengths and therefore, possible career opportunities. He immediately asked me the profiling tool I had used, whether it was a free evaluation tool or some other proprietary tool. I replied that the 'tool' I had used was my observations about my child for the past 15 years. He wasn't very convinced with the answer, though.

Sure, there are profiling tools, but they are not substitutes to a parent's insight. After all, parents have watched the child grow at very close quarters over the years, and no statistical tool can substitute that depth of understanding. Teachers are a very good source for information as well, but then, most of them give a one-year view of the student – not how they have evolved over the years in school.

*How do you understand your child?*

A complex question, but one with a very simple answer: Try not to see your child through the lenses you have grown up with.

A few statements which indicate the presence of the 'lenses':

'We are both IAS officers. We expect our child to be even better than us.'

'We never had to pay so much for school fees.'

'You must come first in class.'

'Engineer or doctor: What do you want to become?'

'Why do you want to learn music? It's not going to help in your career!'

'Dogs bite. Stay away from them.'

Very often parents push *their* understanding of the world on to the child. This is fundamentally flawed. Instead, parents must guide the child in such a way that he develops his own understanding of the world and the way it works. This guidance is not a one-time conversation. It is a discussion which evolves over years.

Consider the two scenarios provided below, and understand the difference. Note how the parents' mindset is revealed.

## Scenario I: Rohit and his father

Rohit	Father, I want to join cricket coaching classes.
Father	Why would you like to do that? This game is full of corruption and very few people actually become big and make money.
Rohit	My friends are going for the coaching and they say that the coach is a young sir and very good.
Father	If the coach was all that good, he would be a part of state team or the IPL, at least!
Rohit	The fees are less. It's just Rs.500 per month.
Father	This is Rs.6000 a year! How is it less?
Rohit	Please, father. Let me attend the coaching. I really want to.
Father	Ok, if you really want to... But remember, you must be the first in it, whether it be batting or in bowling.
Rohit	Thank you, father!

## Scenario 2: Arin and his father

Arin	Father, I want to join cricket coaching classes.
Father	I think it's a good idea. Sports are a very good form of exercise. Where is the coaching taking place? How's the instructor?
Arin	It's at the nearby colony and the instructor is very good.
Father	What do you want to focus on – batting or bowling?
Arin	I just want to play.
Father	Enjoy your game, but don't hurt yourself.
	<i>After one month ...</i>
Father	So, Arin, how is your cricket coaching going on?
Arin	I stopped going for it.
Father	Any particular reason?
Arin	My friends laugh at me.

Father	That's mean of them. I remember in my childhood also such things happened and it made me feel very bad. But why do they laugh at you?
Arin	I run slow and am not able to field well.
Father	Does not matter at all. Everyone is not supposed to do everything. But still, that does not eliminate other sports for you.
Arin	But I want to play only cricket.
Father	I have minus four power in my eyes from the time I was in 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade. I always wanted to join the Air Force and become a pilot. However, it made no sense for me to try that option because one needs to have perfect vision for that.
Arin	You could have gotten Lasik done and got the power rectified.

Father	It was not available back in those days. Had it been available, maybe I would have done that. However, what I'm trying to say is that you need to play to your strengths.
Arin	What are my strengths?
Father	I think you are a very good in voice modulation, you mimic actors very well.
Arin	I also do that for my teachers. Everyone asks me to do that in class whenever there is free time.
Father	Have you ever thought of joining a dramatics class and furthering your talent?
Arin	There is nothing nearby.
Father	Let me try to find this out for you. Join it and see. If you do not like it, you can always leave it.
Arin	What's the point?