



# AN ODE TO MODERN DADS

In Sanskrit, the classical language of India, 'sun' means father, progenitor, enlivener, the source of energy, motivation and inspiration. No one other than the father is represented by the sun in the planetary system of Vedic Astrology and his role is seen as shaping our sense of self and providing us with a sense of direction and self-worth in life. Looking at our world today, and seeing how many of us seem to struggle with identity and self-image problems, set **Dini Martinez** pondering about modern dads. Just as women have gone through a revolution over the past few decades, men in general – and fathers in particular – are redefining their roles and values in our modern world. And generally, this shift is something to embrace and be grateful for. »



**I**t's not enough anymore for dad to be the mere provider for the family and the apparent authority. They are also expected to be in touch with their feminine side, take paternity leave, know all their kids' milestones, understand the ins and outs of different baby carriers and generally care for their offspring in the same way that mothers do. Ideally, on top of that, they also help in the household, bake organic bread at weekends and join us for yoga once in a while.

But all of this, of course, should not come at the expense of a strong façade, a respectable career, a balanced touch of masculinity, the right dose of virility and, in the eyes of their mates, sometimes pure blunt mateship (think bucks' nights, etc.). How to find the balance? Well dads, all I can say is that every challenge comes with an opportunity. If you grasp even just some of those presented to you within your own family, then you are worth more than your weight in gold!

#### **Thank you!**

So here's a heartfelt thank you, in time for Father's Day, for all those amazing, opportunity-grasping, modern dads out there. You increasingly share work and family commitments. You can take over the reins when mothers need a rest. When you come home from work in time to put the kids to bed, you don't laugh at us mums when we say that we're tired. You might even massage our tired feet once the kids are down and you don't hesitate for a moment when it comes to changing newborn's nappies at night.

You voluntarily get involved in your children's lives because you have a genuine interest in being a part of it. You have just about given up all forms of recreational activity so you can rush home as soon as the clock hits five. But you haven't given up your dreams. Instead, you share them with your family and encourage your children never to settle for second best.

At the weekends you happily take your daughters to dancing class and your sons to football, so that mum can have some time to herself. You are a walking example of what more and more studies confirm: modern fathers have much closer bonds with their children than they had with their own dads.

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#### **Dads in labour**

It starts at the very beginning. From the moment of conception you get involved in your baby's life. During pregnancy you accompany us to healthcare visits. You know our paediatrician's name, study natural birthing books and are there with us every minute throughout labour. You keep us safe and hold our space. Your love, words, encouragement, massages, caring and constant preoccupation accompany mum and baby through every contraction until the moment you shed your first tears on seeing the crown of your child's head.

To your sons, you become an example of how one can be strong and responsible, and at the same time compassionate and emotional. You love and value your daughters so much that they fundamentally know they are worthy of being loved and valued their whole life. Growing up with your unconditional love, both your sons and your daughters know that, no matter what they do in life, the door to your heart will always be open!

#### **Dads for Mums**

Our modern dad is not only there for his children, but also treats mum with utmost respect, love and admiration. He graciously accepts his default chores such as taking out the rubbish every morning and cooking the dinner at weekends. He helps make the few 'couple moments' we get special and makes family life look almost as glamorous as the occasional reminiscent nostalgia of pre-kids' dates and outings. Even after almost a decade of marriage – and despite occasionally forgetting birthdays and anniversaries – he still surprises mum every now and then with a romantic dinner out, her favourite wine and cheese from the deli or her favourite coloured bouquet of flowers.

#### **The many facades of modern dads**

The modern dad comes in so many shapes and sizes. He is the sole provider who tries to offer his kids all the financial security that he himself never had during his childhood years. He is the stay-at-home dad who can seamlessly weave his daughter's hair into a fine fishtail plait just like Disney's *Frozen* Elsa's. He is the single dad who regularly attends meet-the-teachers evenings at school and Sunday sailing lessons. He is part of a two-father family who prepares the most amazing bento boxes for his son who usually doesn't touch vegetables.

#### **Fun with Dad**

Uncomplainingly, fathers work hard to be able to take the whole family on holidays every now and then. They make casual weekend picnics at the beach most special and exciting. Whether out and about or back at home, our kids can count on dad for having fun. When he is around, there is no need to try and painfully lure the children away from some kind of screen or other.

Back in the old days, fathers undoubtedly loved their children just as much as in our generation but gender roles would have unfortunately kept many of them from truly connecting with their kids. Fathers have so much to give and so much to teach and it is wonderful that nowadays they are making their presence felt.

So this is a celebration of how fathers are now embracing their roles in raising children! Thank you for getting your hands – and arms and shirts and trousers – dirty. You are making a huge difference! 🍀