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Right To Play

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Play is defined as follows..

"Play is the means by which children explore their environment, their world, their roles and relationships".

As per the proclamation in the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child: "The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation; society and the public authorities shall endeavour to promote the enjoyment of this right". This proclamation was further strengthened in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) of 1989 which explicitly states in article 31 that "States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts."

It is observed that even though India Government has adopted Convention on the Rights of the Child and our government has its own policies for provision of play and recreational facilities to the children there are no precise guidelines on this aspect. Most of the research work being done about child's rights is on shelter, food and other facilities that should be provided to the children. Very less is focus given on child's right to play and recreation. This area needs to be explored more seriously and in depth.

The participation in Play and Recreation is the most natural medium through with their lives can be more comfortable and happy. Various personal and social values can be taught through participation in play and recreational activities.

The importance of play and recreation in the life of juveniles has long been recognized by international community. Various development plan and programmes are being implemented worldwide towards the establishment of right to play. For this, more emphasis is being given on the provision of structured and organized activities, but the need to create time and space for children to engage in spontaneous play and recreational activities are equally important.

The rights in article 31 states that every child should be able to enjoy these rights regardless of where he or she lives, his or her cultural background or his or her parental status. The participation in Play and Recreation is the most natural medium through with their lives can be more comfortable and happy. Various personal and social values can be taught through participation in these activities. Thus provision of such facilities is extremely important for all-round development of any child. It shall include various indoor and outdoor games, cultural programmes, audiovisual facilities, music, picnics and tours, library etc. Such activities should be appropriate to the age of the child. Not only do children have the right to play but Government must also ensure the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity for all age groups. This may lead to promotion of physical, mental and emotional health among all age groups through play, sports, recreation, artistic and cultural expression, personality development and character building.

The Government should develop adequate sports and recreational facilities such as libraries, gymnasiums, playing areas, cultural centers, fitness and yoga centers in the rural and urban communities. Such facilities should be provided in schools and educational institutions as well.

As per the Article 31 of Play, every child has a right to spend some time on recreational pursuits like sports, entertainment and hobbies to explore and develop. Yet it is observed that most of the poor children in India don't get enough time to spend on recreational activities. The Government shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

In India, it is observed that this right is one of the most neglected rights. The schools and colleges don't have enough facilities for engaging each and every student in sport and play activities. There is no provision of play arena in residential areas. There is more pathetic condition in rural areas. Even though, there is enough space in rural areas for provision of facilities there is utter negligence towards establishment of right to play. There is extremely serious condition in provision of play and recreation facilities in slum areas where such facilities are extremely needed for all round development of the children.

The educational pattern in India is also contradictory to provision and establishment of child's right to play. More focus is being given on intellectual development of the child and less importance is being given to play and recreation. This is leading to poor health and growth of the children. This will have very serious implications in future.

The participation in play and recreational activities contribute to all aspects of everyday life of the child. The children learn by doing; thus it is mandatory to provide them with these facilities. Through these activities the child learns to adjust with their family, community and society, and through this they can create their sense of identity. Thus, not only government, but each and every citizen of India should give importance to promotion of right to play and work for ensuring this right to every child.

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