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Physical Education For Children

Child-to-child programme was conceived by the Institute of Child Health, London to mark the International year of the child 1979. The concept has grown from the recognition of the central role older children play in caring for younger siblings. Thus began the formulation of devices for children's health education. Therefore, the need for imparting physical education to children from the primary level is gaining momentum in all countries of the world.

The early years of childhood represent a time when games in various forms are of great attraction for the children. In kindergarten schools at the initial stages children learn through games only. Physical exercise in drill form is now a common feature in all schools, primary or secondary. Therefore, teachers are being trained as specialists in physical education and generally known as "drill masters" in schools. They are being provided in-service courses in physical education, so that they may impart physical education to children in a scientific way so that girls and boys are made aware of their physical limitations and various functioning of their bodies better.

As a matter of fact, during the formative years, a child utilises physical movement and play in the growing and development process. He or she builds up a strong physical base for the future, by simply running, skipping and playing 'hadoo-doodu'. During these formative years, children in the natural process are exploring, cruising, investigating and trying to discover what kind of environment exists around them and what should be their specific role for their own physical and intellectual development.

Therefore, play becomes a child's work since much can be learned in these tender years. And play being a child's work, there is ample evidence to show that a child who is physically active has a better chance of being healthy than one who is sedentary. A healthy child invariably achieves better results than the one, who is not physically active. The latter comparatively will lack both strength and power for sustainable endurance.

Education at the primary level has been made compulsory, free and universal and had been formally launched in our country in 1993. This had been done with a sense of remorse, and a full awareness of the fact that both in theory and practice, the country has embarked on the task at least two decades later than it was due.

Like some Third World countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, our first priority should have been education at the grassroots, as the most viable infrastructure for development. But unfortunately we lagged behind. There is no doubt that our problems in matters of mass literacy have been made extraordinarily challenging now due to the magnitude of the task. These relate to the sheer physical needs, which have been grossly neglected in the past. As it is, most schools are hopelessly understaffed. The teachers lack training particularly in physical exercise and drills.

Therefore the need of the hour is to immediately train at least one teacher in each school in physical exercise. Our jawans of the armed forces are good enough to give them lessons on PT. Also the very first hour of the class may be earmarked for physical exercise Sunday through Thursday. And to emphasise the obvious again and again is fact that 'health is wealth'.