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Children of Joy or Beasts of Burden?

“The battle of Waterloo was won on the playfields of Eton”-Anon

At the end of the long wait and unending queues, while the monsoons herald the beginning of a new cropping season, one is relieved to have joined the best school possible. For the newcomers there may be many surprises but the senior scholars look forward to one more year of studies and assignments. Each passing year and the size of the school bag is getting bigger and bigger.

The pressure of excelling at academics makes school kids spend more time in study-related activities. Excessive homework coupled with long hours at school and in transit leave very little time for the school children to play. This is compounded by lack of space within the school campuses, thereby denying students the opportunities to participate in games and sports. Whether it is the metropolis or the up country schools, they are over crowded due to student pressure and less than five per cent students can enjoy the games and sports infrastructure. This malady has already cast its long shadow on the youth, which is reflected in their poor performance in domestic and global sports arena.

Universally it has been accepted that the shaping and training of future super champs has to begin very early. Successful grooming for sports and games begins with creation of positive attitude and love for games/sport in school children provided they get an opportunity to express their natural talents early in life. Once they get such an opportunity, then it is up to the coaches and talent seekers to nurture them. But unless they are provided the freedom and the chance to kick the ball or swing the hockey stick by the schools, they would be deprived of the golden phase of sports forever. Lack of such primary exposure to games and sports may lead to lopsided personality development.

The moot question that faces the school children today is how to achieve critical balance between work and play. If you neglect studies, then mere focusing on sports would not push up your grades and vice-versa. But how does one balance both? It can only be done by developing habits and work culture based on sports, which can then be converted into an energy push to the studies as the semester progresses. Example, early wake up habit coupled with jogging and physical exercises not only builds stamina and physique, but also in testing times the same energy can be diverted towards studies. The comraderie and teamwork can help the youth to be an effective team player as well as leader.

Moreover, the exposure to games and sports, where victory and defeat follow one another, teach you many a lesson in your youth. It helps you build your

maturity and emotional strength to take success and failure with equanimity and composure. It helps you respect the victor and the loser alike as you can be on either side of the fence. The sudden swings in games teach a lesson, to take on the fluctuating fortunes in life, with courage and fortitude. It also teaches how one can turn defeat into a victory, so long as you have the will, the passion and the gumption to fight the adversity. And believe me, there are many more such golden nuggets to last a lifetime as we take the field for another day.

The golden rule is to maintain a fine balance between work and play - that is one must play the game first and then convert work into play as you gather momentum in academics and not vice-versa. Always, one must play hard and fast, build up muscles and stamina and then take on the burden of studies. A strong and healthy body will be in a better position to take up the challenge of work and stress, as the play hour may be gradually replaced by study and work.

Therefore irrespective of the monsoon thunder, winds and rains, as the schools open up, students must plunge headlong in the games arena and enjoy every moment of it so as to build a healthy mind with a healthy body.