



Ashwini Nachappa

I am a product of school games. Way back in the 80's, schools gave great importance and recognition to sports. Sport was an integral part of our education and a great vehicle for schools to exhibit their team's performance which instantly brought them into the lime-light. It wasn't only about the team that performed on the field, but the students, teachers and principals showed their interest by joining in to cheer. Unfortunately, over the years the intellect has overtaken all aspects of a child's development and in the extremely competitive, stressful lives that our children live, sports has been completely excluded from education.

Today's education system looks only at grades and not on developing or identifying and grooming talent in the child beyond academics. With the result, the 'average' child has no place in our present system. Our education system must therefore be inclusive of sports as 'Sports and Games'. This will allow children to make a choice and by participating the child is exposed to values such as fair play, respect for officials, respect for opponents, courage, honesty, perseverance, team building, fellowship, and appreciation of rewards, all of which lead to living a responsible life.

Inclusion of sports and games in the education curriculum means ensuring that we develop the child's



mind and body and we teach courage, dependability, honesty, perseverance and self-discipline. As is often said, "A sound mind is found in a sound body." Developing motor skills in kindergarten is as important as developing physical skills along with acquiring knowledge in later years. It also creates a platform for the many extremely talented sportspersons to attain competent sporting skills by the end of compulsory schooling. These may become the vehicle for higher level participation as well as life-long participation in leisure activities, which have health benefits.

I am certain that positive educational outcomes can be derived through participation in sports and games. Sports, when taught properly, provides important developmental experiences for children and youth, not only through increased competence in performance but also personal growth and responsibility. Sports provides the child an experience to taste defeat and success at the same wave length and also teaches us how to implement true "sports-for-all ethic". We need to educate students so that they are not only more knowledgeable game players, but are also stronger advocates for good sports practices in the larger sports culture and life in general.

Sports and education are complementary to each other. They must be in sync with each other. While knowledge is of great importance, sport teaches children how to work as a part of a team and cooperate with others, while at the same time improving physical condition. Unfortunately, teaching of sports in India has not been linked to a scientific basis to understand the same. The PE teachers at school need to plant the seeds of scientific enquiry in the minds of individuals:

- 1) Nutrition - how does it help?
- 2) How to check heart rates - what does it mean?
- 3) Haemoglobin - its meaning.
- 4) Training principles.

This is essential to build the sporting culture. contribution of parent in feeding the children, educator and so on.

Studies have shown that higher physical activity levels are associated with greater academic achievement among students. When our sports teams won medals at district and state level competitions, with their photographs splashed all over the dailies, they had instantly become heroes and were looked upon by fellow students with pride and envy. My mathematics teacher, Mr Sanil, came up to me and said, “These kids who have won laurels in sports have become more focused in their studies and have performed well in academics too.” Coming from a teacher of mathematics, a subject feared by many students, only goes to show that when sports get integrated with education, development and positive results take place simultaneously.

Not many of us realise the value of education, mainly because we take it for granted. We were blessed enough to be born into a good home with good parents and it was taken for granted that we would attend good schools and go on to graduate from good colleges. But for those who are less fortunate, education remains a distant dream, one that can be achieved through sports. Children from poor backgrounds who are talented in sports and games are offered a shot at school through scholarships and funding, and for them, education is the key that opens the door to a



totally different life from the one they know. They use sports as a ladder to climb up the rungs of education. Sport helps in furthering the cause of education.

In conclusion, sports, as we all know, is a natural stress buster. Any activity that we enjoy and that gives us a good workout releases feel-good endorphins which elevate the mood. A good mood is conducive to performing well in academics because there's peace of mind that allows greater concentration. Sport is a great outlet for frustrations of any kind. Our children need it!

Ashwini Nachappa brought accolades to Indian sports by participating and winning at both national and international level in the 100 meters, 200 meters and 400 meters in track and field. In 1991, after retiring from active competitive athletics, she joined Special Olympic program and remained associated with it for 12 years. The program provides year round sports training in different sports disciplines to the mentally challenged children and adults. In 2004, she along with her husband Datha Karaumbiah launched the Karuambiah's Academy for Learning and Sports (KALS), an ICSE affiliated school, built for sports people. www.kalschool.com

Currently, a state-of-the-art, sporting program – “Ashwini Nachappa Sports Foundation”, is being developed. She may be contacted at Ashwini.nachappa@gmail.com

