



## Diary of a young Indian Leader

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Such an initiative has been taken up by  
A Karthikeyan of std x studying at Bharatiya  
Vidya Bhavam R.S Param, Coimbatore.



Karthikeyan participated in the  
South Asia Workshop on  
Ethics Education for Children

This Child-led project was supported by Shanti Ashram's  
Bala Shanti Program and Green Brigade Program children from  
Kulathupalayam and Vaikkalpalayam collaborated with Karthikeyan  
for this project. Shri. Vijayaraghavan served as the mentor.



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# CHILD RIGHTS

"Every child is potentially divine" ✓  
— Swami Vivekananda.

Child is the father of a man. ✓  
— Shakespeare.

In spite of such emphasis given to children and childhood, it is extremely unfortunate to see the rights of a child trampled with impunity. Family is essentially the most fundamental unit of a society. But a number of children live without parental support such as orphans, street children, refugee children, children affected by trafficking and following economic and sexual exploitation. Such cases need to be given special care and support. To serve this purpose, the UNO (UNICEF) has envisaged sixteen rights for children.

Though there are several organisations which aim to protect the interests of the child, children themselves should get involved to know about their rights and also to propagate the concept among their peers.)

Are the rights of the child trampled?





## Context of my field experience

*"Every child  
is  
potentially divine"*

- SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



## My Intention...



(2)

He has associated himself with Shanti Ashram of Kovaiipudur, Coimbatore for this endeavour. Under the able guidance of Ms. Vinu Aram and with the support of Mrs. Vijayaraghavan Iyengar, Karthikeyan has come out with innovative ideas to propagate child rights among rural children.

Karthikeyan conducted a question and answer session with more than 80 children from rural schools of Perur area which have been adopted by Shanti Ashram.

His intention basically was to assess if these children were aware of their rights. This interaction made him realise that children had little knowledge of this whole concept. In fact the only common answer was that they were denied the right to play. One of the main reasons, Karthikeyan attributes for this ignorance is the lack of information among some urban and rural classes of children. Chronic poverty perpetuates this illiteracy which forms the backbone for all social evils.

Karthikeyan next visited Kulathupalayam Govt High School. He addressed a gathering of around hundred children studying in IX + X stds. He handed over neatly laminated chart containing the sixteen rights as to the Principal.



# How I went about it?

He conducted a general quiz on various matters and the students were too eager to answer them. Karthikeyan gave them many tips on how to save money, electricity, to grow more trees to make Kovai cleaner and greener; regular reading of newspapers<sup>etc</sup>. He also stressed the importance of having a strong will to succeed..)

( Karthikeyan has put forth this many novel ideas. He has published notebooks } with the cover carrying ~~news~~ messages on child labour and its effects. He also plans to express his solidarity against child labour during the Divali time. Many more schools are to be visited by Karthikeyan in his task of spreading child rights message.

Such initiatives by children can be adopted for schools, NGO's interested in child rights etc. because "a happy child becomes the nation's pride".

*Karthikeyan*  
10/30/08



Learning materials designed by Karthikeyan for the project

# My conclusions...



## My conclusions based on <sup>my</sup> experiences.

- The reason why India is still not a developed nation is because of its poor awareness of child rights among children. Western nations have a much superior awareness on children's rights. Their children have sound knowledge on the rights and responsibilities of children.
- Indian rural children lack rights.
- Indian urban children lack responsibilities (but have more access for rights).
- The reason behind the increasing gap between urban and rural children is mainly due to the lack of information more among the rural.
- Example.  
"Who is the only Olympic gold winner of India".
- This question remained unanswered by about 10% of rural children.
- I personally feel this lack of knowledge makes them more reserved and shy.
- Rural children lack the exposure which their urban brethren have. This makes their world confined to their family & village.



## My inspiration to innovate...

## My Friends from Vaikkalpalayam & Kulathupalayam

A compilation of responses. (Questions in Tamil).

Q1. Which is the period called childhood?  
Answers variable. (4, 15, 16, 18) years.



Q2. Do all have rights?  
Yes. (everyone without an <sup>exception</sup> ~~exceptions~~ have said yes)

Q3. What rights children should have?  
\* Right for education. ✓  
\* Right to express opinions. ✓  
\* Right to speech. ✓  
\* Right to play. ✓  
\* Right for balanced diet ✓  
\* Right for love ✓  
(✓ all say so)



Q4. Do you have any instance where you have been denied your rights.  
general answer → No freedom to play.  
girls in particular → No right to express opinions  
No right to participate in various competitions.

Q5. Do you feel that there are deprived children than you.  
general answer - HIV affected children.

# Few Suggestions...



## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE & EDUCATION FOR RURAL CHILDREN

- Yoga and meditation for the rural children.  
(Yoga has gained the prominent position in the urban curriculum).  
These exercises make us more concentrated and determined in work.
- Daily compulsory newspaper reading in classroom.  
Special importance for English - which forms the window for communication.  
Spoken English must form a part and parcel of the curriculum.
- Regular competitions to bring out the hidden talents.  
(urban students have enormous number of competitions).
- Asking experts in various fields to give lectures in various fields relevant topics.
- Making all parents aware of child rights.
- Teaching children some special forms parent of technical work (weaving, embroidery) as a hobby.
- Compulsory library in each village.
- Compulsory children's parliament.  
All textbooks should contain a lesson on child rights.
- Religious harmony should be a part of curriculum at a tender age.



Rights of the child

DIARY OF A  
**YOUNG**  
INDIAN LEADER



# Lessons Learnt...



INFERENCE → Discrimination against HIV affected children is not a phenomena seen in innocent children, who look at everyone as one's brother but is a notion arising in adults' mentality.

Q6 \* Some have stated that children affected by natural calamities are the worst affected among <sup>their</sup> ~~our~~ brethren.

Q6. How can we help these less fortunate?  
No concrete idea!

Q7. How can elders help them?  
P  
providing money, clothing, shelter and moral support (common answer)

Q8 How to spread the message of childrights among children.

- \* children's forum.
- \* children's parliament
- \* posters, banners etc!
- \* introduction in curriculum.

Q9. What is the role of children towards society.

- \* keep environment clean.
- \* self help.
- \* study well and support the nation. (very thought provoking)



*'We envision a world in which all children are empowered to develop their spirituality - embracing ethical values, learning to live in solidarity with people of different religions and civilizations, and building faith in the Divine Presence. We believe that ethics education will enhance children's innate ability to take positive contributions to the well being of their peers, families and communities, and that this in turn will help the entire human family to thrive in an environment of greater justice, peace compassion, hope and dignity.'*