

This publication was launched to educate and promote human rights targeting school-children, on the recommendation of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), appointed by the Government of Sri Lanka.

Protect Rights for a Peaceful TOMORROW

Published by
The Educational Publications Department on behalf of the Ministry of
Education, in collaboration with Save the Children International

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Educational Publications Department

Message from the Hon. Minister for Education

I welcome with great pleasure the production of a supplementary reader to educate Secondary school children on human rights, since, in accordance with the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission, the onus of educating school children on human rights lay with the Ministry of Education.

It is an accepted fact among the academia that although there was awareness of rights and freedoms, flaws in translating knowledge into action was one of the main reasons for the crisis that prevailed in the country for over three decades. Imparting knowledge, promoting human rights and providing school children with a rights friendly

education will certainly make school children today, the citizens of tomorrow, gain a deep understanding of their rights and duties. I firmly believe that such an understanding will lead to peace, unity, brotherhood and development within the country and school children who are a part of the knowledge economy will contribute to a human rights knowledge centred society, when they leave school and step into the wider social spectrum.

My sincere thanks to Save the Children, the Educational Publications Department and all those who dedicated time and energy to present this book to you.

Bandula Gunawardena (M.P.)
Minister of Education

Message from the Hon. Secretary to the Ministry of Education

I welcome with great pleasure the launching of this supplementary reader on human rights for secondary level students, at this moment of time when the Ministry of Education is in the process of implementing the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission.

It is my belief that the inclusion of the study of human rights in the school curriculum would inspire the present day schoolchildren who are the future citizens of this country, to actively contribute to the wellbeing of a harmonious society and the sustainable development of the country.

Anura Dissanayake

Secretary to the Ministry of Education

I thank the Ministry of Education, the Educational Publications Department and all those who contributed to the successful implementation of the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission, through striving to create a society based on a knowledge economy.

Message from the Country Director of Save the Children International

Dear Students,

Save the Children is honored to have been given the opportunity to help the Ministry of Education to produce supplementary reading materials on human rights. We here at Save the Children are firm believers that human rights are children's rights.

The concept of child rights gained attention nearly 90 years ago when the founder of Save the Children, Eglantyne Jebb drafted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. This declaration was signed by world leaders in 1926 in Geneva, Switzerland.

These rights have since been expanded upon and developed to ensure that all children are entitled to reach their full potential in a healthy, nurturing, accepting society that respects and protects the bodies and minds of all children.

Good luck and have fun with the exercises.

Peace,

William Lynch
Country Director
Save the Children International

Sri Lanka has come to the fore in recent years as an exemplar of child rights. Among South Asian countries its children are among the best educated, healthful and nourished. The scourge of child soldiers has been eliminated. The fear of bombing, displacement and sorrow have receded.

Through this book we hope to help Sri Lankan students understand the concept of human rights as they are applied and need to be enjoyed by children. We also hope you will understand that rights come with responsibilities. Students reading this book will learn they have the responsibility to respect not only the rights of their fellow students, but also the rights of strangers, of those younger, older, handicapped or different than they are.

Message from the Commissioner General of the Educational Publications Department

The UNESCO Declaration points out that since conflicts arise in human minds, conflict resolution too could be done only through human minds. Scant attention paid to rights and duties is a strong reason for different types of conflicts arising around the world. The main purpose of producing a supplementary reader on human rights for the students of the secondary school is the desire to create a society with minimum conflicts by widening their knowledge and understanding in the area of rights.

The Secretary for Education proposed the idea of producing a supplementary reader on human rights in view of the recommendation in Section 9.60 of the Report of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission. We must

mention with gratitude, the financial patronage extended to us by Save the Children, Sri Lanka for this project we launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

I acknowledge with thanks the contribution made by all academics, all others who supported in so many different ways, and the staff of the Educational Publications Department to this holistic venture aimed at creating a peaceful and harmonious society through attitudinal changes in the minds of the young.

I sincerely hope that you, the reader, will not only enrich your lives after studying this book but also make a genuine effort to educate others around you.

Thank You!

Tissa Hewavithana

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About this book...

The world we are blessed with is a beautiful and magnificent creation. Its beauty can be further enhanced by its inhabitants through their efforts to respect each other and contribute to ensure the protection of each other's rights.

All people are entitled by birth to enjoy a number of rights. These rights flow from their birth as human beings. They are essential for the continuation of a free and protected human life.

Although the entitlement to rights is inherent, history tells us that our ancestors had to sacrifice their lives at times to gain their rights at different stages and times in history. History also reveals that there were many such instances in the past, when human rights were grossly violated. Therefore, in order to prevent the future generations from experiencing such worldwide disasters and the repetition of past mistakes, world leaders conferred to establish the United Nations Organization. The United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the 10th of December 1948. Both these initiatives were important landmarks in the process of the development of Human Rights for all.

The General Assembly of the United Nations has requested the member countries to facilitate awareness, knowledge, understanding and clarification of the contents of the Declaration through schools and other educational institutions. Sri Lanka is playing a very important role in this effort. Steps have been taken to include the subject matter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the school curriculum, and

programmes based on Human Rights are being conducted island-wide.

The report of the Sri Lanka Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) too, has stressed the need to educate school children on Human Rights. Section 9.60 of the report states thus:

“The primary need is to guarantee that the past events will not be repeated in the future and that lessons are learnt from the past experiences. The Commission emphasises the need to conduct programmes to educate school children, youth, members of the armed forces and the police, island-wide on human rights.”

Being Sri Lankans living in a multi-cultural society, it is important to know about human rights and freedom, to work towards protecting our rights, respect other's rights, and dedicate ourselves to performing the related duties that will ensure unity, peace, harmony and brotherhood within our society. It will expedite the course of achieving peace and harmony we wish for.

Our dearest wish is to live in peace, freedom and harmony as children of one mother without any form of divisions. Through this book, you will gain the necessary knowledge and foundation to do this.

Please study this book well, and add to your life the skills necessary to dedicate yourself to be a good citizen, respecting other's rights and working towards the benefit of all. This will help you to develop into a dignified citizen of Sri Lanka as well as in the world.

Human Rights



Human Rights

Human Rights are the moral principles and the norms to which a person is entitled to, at birth. People have these rights based on equality, irrespective of the differences arising from race, gender, nationality, religion, colour or any other discriminatory factors. Respect for, and acceptance of, differences among people and equality in entitlement of rights are special features of human rights.

Human rights help to create a qualitative development within society as a whole by improving the standard of living and helping people to access the goal of living a full life.

At the same time, every right we enjoy entails a set of duties and responsibilities. For instance, when you enjoy the right to education you are bound by the duty and the responsibility of using available educational facilities and resources to their fullest potential. Further, it is your duty to share with your society, the knowledge and skills you have learned and developed through your education.

A deep understanding and execution of your duties and responsibilities ensures your rights and helps to protect the rights of others. Therefore, we need to focus on our duties and responsibilities, which are an essential part of enjoying rights.

Milestones in the History of Human Rights

Although all people are entitled to human rights by birth, throughout history, rulers have imposed various limitations on the enjoyment of rights of citizens. As a result, struggles between the privileged classes and the ruling monarchy as well as struggles between the autocratic rulers and the ordinary citizens have taken place to gain their legitimate rights. Given below, are a few milestones in the history of the development of human rights.

- Magna Carta Act (A.D.1215)
- Bill of Rights (A.D.1689)
- American Declaration of Independence (A.D.1779)
- French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (A.D.1789)
- Russian Revolution (A.D.1917)

Instead of the isolated individual struggles for human rights in different countries as it happened in the past, the concept of human rights gradually developed into a universal concept in later times. Let us examine the causes that led to this development.

The savagery and the barbaric aftermath of the First World War (1914-1918) and the Second

World War (1939-1945) were a major factor that focused the attention of the world leaders and the world populace on human rights. Because of the two world wars, tens of millions of valuable lives were lost and a great number was left disabled. A great number of women and children who had nothing to do with the war paid the supreme penalty with their lives. The loss of property was incalculable. In brief, the tragic aftermath of the Second World War still haunts some countries of the world.

In view of these harsh ill effects of war, the United Nations organization was established in 1945 to stabilize world peace, to protect human rights and freedoms of people and to prevent the repetition of a world war. The formation of the United Nations in 1945 can be regarded as an important landmark in the development of human rights. On the 10th of December 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration incorporated 30 Articles that can be categorised under the headings of Civil & Political Rights, Economic, Social & Cultural Rights, and Collective Rights.

Later on, certain groups of society were identified as vulnerable groups and measures were taken to ensure the rights of these groups. For example;

- Women
- Children
- Persons with disabilities
- Elders (Senior Citizens)
- Indigenous & Tribal groups

Women

The role of women within the family as mother and wife in respect of its human and social aspects remains vital. Her contribution in promoting the welfare and the growth of society by bearing, birthing, nurturing, providing love, affection and security, food and nutrition for her children is incomparable. Further, she plays an active role in different activities within society.

Today, women carry the additional burden of supplementing the family income. Her contribution in the economic sphere for her family, society and the country should capture the attention of the society. Her functions in her traditional role as a mother, has become increasingly complex. The value of the services rendered by a woman goes beyond assessment.

Yet, despite her increasingly difficult role within the family and society, she is also subject to violations and limitations of her rights, violence, assault, abuse, and discrimination. Special legal

provisions were needed to remedy this situation. As a result, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women on 18th December 1979.

Children

Child rights were frequently violated specially into the early 20th century with the rise of armed conflicts, child labour and children being subject to various abuses. Hence, the United Nations identified children as a vulnerable group and adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 with the goal of protecting their rights. It defines the child as a person under the age of 18 years. Children are a special group of society, needing special attention, as they are still in the process of developing mentally, physically and socially. They require the guidance, love and protection of parents and adults for their holistic wellbeing.

A child makes his own contribution as a member of his family, school and society. It is essential to facilitate a child's total development physically and mentally. They have to be given the opportunity to enjoy their rights without hindrance.

There are many instances in today's society where the opinions, hopes and expectations of children

are not recognised and accepted, as they should be. Children are subject to violence, abuse, slavery, engagement as soldiers etc. It is essential that opportunities for such violations of their rights be prevented, assuring the child of his/her right to protection. These factors have very specially contributed to identify children as a vulnerable group and protect their rights.

Persons with Disabilities

Persons with long-term physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional or combined impairments are defined as persons with disabilities. A person with disabilities may not be able to participate in different activities within society on equal terms with others due to various shortcomings in their environment. Yet, they, like all of us, are endowed with special skills that enable them to contribute to society as a whole.

Persons with disabilities are a vulnerable group and the United Nations has taken necessary steps to ensure unhindered enjoyment of their rights and a full social life. Special attention has been given to discrimination, self-respect, dignity, and equal opportunities in participation.

As members of the wider society, we need to realise the importance of our moral duty and

responsibility to respect their rights and help them to enjoy a full life.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted in 2006 to ensure their rights.

The Elderly/Senior citizens

There is no clear, common, internationally agreed definition on who an elder is, but in our country, the age of retirement (between 55 and 60) can be considered as a boundary for identifying elders.

The elderly should hold a special position within society as persons with experience and wisdom as they have devoted their time and energy for the well-being of society in their youth and mid-life. As elders, their freedom, dignity and protection within society need to be assured. Being elders, their right to participation and their self-satisfaction too has to be equally secured. Society must realise that ensuring the rights of elders is a moral duty. Interestingly, by 2030 Sri Lanka will have the highest percentage of elderly population from the South Asian countries. Therefore, we have a tremendous responsibility to protect the rights of our country's elders.

The United Nations is conducting a continuous dialogue on a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons internationally, while

nationally the government of Sri Lanka has passed an Act on the Rights of Older Persons (Act No.9 of 2000).

Indigenous & Tribal groups

The International Labour Organisation introduced a Convention on the Rights of the Indigenous and Tribal groups in 1989, in order to protect the rights of indigenous groups.

Criteria for the identification of Indigenous groups, has been set out in the Convention. The life style, customs and rites, language, traditional livelihoods, beliefs and habits are some of the criteria.

The main purpose of the Convention is to guarantee the preservation of a background conducive to the continuation of their traditional culture.

The indigenous population of Sri Lanka are known as Veddahs. It is the duty and responsibility of the different communities residing within a country to respect the rights of the indigenous people.

Human Rights and our Responsibilities

Sri Lanka has a long, noble history and a rich culture. We also have a proud past that speaks of a tradition of duty consciousness and hospitality. Our tradition of abiding

by our duties towards each other is well known.

This duty consciousness is a major factor in protecting and ensuring the human rights of others. It is a source of encouragement to progress as a peaceful, harmonious nation, respecting the principles of equality and brotherhood. Duty consciousness provides a strong base for the development of the individual as well as for society.

When Mahatma Gandhi was consulted on his views on rights by the head of UNESCO, an agency of the United Nations, at the time of the preparation of the Declaration of Human Rights, Mahatma Gandhi had written back, that every right is bound to a duty that has to be performed first - all men and women

have a duty to protect such rights. What Mahatma Gandhi has taught us is that if we are to enjoy all the rights and freedoms as humans, then it is essential that we first perform our duties as citizens. He further added that if we first perform our duties then it should inevitably open the path to the optimum enjoyment of our rights and freedom.

Chapter I

Civil & Political Rights and Responsibilities

Civil rights help to protect a person's independence and freedom. Protection of civil rights can prevent another person, groups of people, or institutions from violating an individual's rights and freedoms.

As humans, we value our identity, independence and freedoms.

These basic human needs are ensured through our civil rights.

Our rights as individuals to engage freely in political activities and to participate in the political and legal decision-making process of the country, is ensured through our political rights and freedoms.

It is the duty of every citizen to enjoy his/her civil and political rights, in accordance with the law and order of the country.



1.1 Suddhappu



H.M. Sanduni Niwanthika

Grade 13 – Dharmapala Vidyalaya, Pannipiitya.

Suddhappu wants to play with the children. However, the moment the children spot Suddhappu they run home. So Suddhappu hides behind a tree and watches the children at play.

One day when the children came to the playground to play, the ground was decorated with wild flowers and a large *Habaralayam* leaf was spread on the ground under the shade of the *Kottamba* tree, with

big bunches of various wild berries like *Konkingna*, *Dam* and *Kirilla* on it.

“Who do you think has done this?” the children wondered. Different children came up with different ideas. Suddhappu came out from the unused land, towards the children hoping to tell them “I was the one who did it. Will you allow me to play with you?” Though he was a child of the same age, everybody thought he was

mad because of his disorderly ways and behaviour patterns. His friends nicknamed him 'Suddhappu'. The moment the children noticed him walking towards them with a smile, showing his stained teeth they started running away. The wild berries were all scattered around.

The children did not come to the playground for some days as they were all afraid of Suddhappu. But eventually, the children came to the playground once again, because children love to play. So the children played with a ball and Suddhappu kept watching from behind a tree.

A child hit the ball and it went over to the unused land. The children did not know what to do. They knew that Suddhappu was there in that land. The children were wondering how to get the ball back. Suddenly the ball fell right near them. They looked towards the unused land, but they did not see Suddhappu anywhere around.

That evening the children played to their heart's content. The ball that fell into the unused land was thrown back in no time. And, Suddhappu never showed himself, as he thought if he did so, the children would stop playing and run away.

The following day too, the children came out to play. The ball went over to the unused land but it did not come back as usual. The children waited for a while. But no,

the ball did not come back.

Although the children did not let him join them at play, their fear of Suddhappu had lessened. Slowly they approached the unused land. They thrashed the bushes with their bats and started looking for the ball.

They heard a soft groan coming from the thicket. Good Lord! Suddhappu had fallen into a pit. He was holding his bleeding foot and groaning. The pit had broken pieces of glass in it.

Two children ran off. Before long, they returned with two or three adults. But no one could go down to the pit. It was full of broken glass. One of the adults went back home and brought a ladder. They had to work hard to go down to the pit along the ladder and haul Suddhappu out of it.

They took Suddhappu to the doctor to dress his wounds. Suddhappu cried loudly. The children comforted him. Suddhappu looked at the faces of the children around him. Suddenly he remembered something. He took out the ball that was hidden around his waist and offered it to the children. All the children had tears in their eyes.

The adults discussed among themselves and took Suddhappu to the temple and made him stay there. They were curious and puzzled. Who is Suddhappu? Where did he come from?

Suddhappu started talking. “My name is Isuru. My father died when I was 11 years old. After some time my step father came to stay with us. He harassed me. In the end when I couldn’t bear it any longer I left my home. Now I have no one. I have nowhere to live. I have no school. All my documents are at home. I’m an orphan now.”

“If you had no one, you would have been still in that pit. Who treated your wound? Who brought you to the temple? Whatever you may not have, you have your freedom. It is that right which brought you all this. You have the right to play with your friends, to go to school, to believe in any religion. Do you understand that? Now you can stay at the temple till you get organized.” the chief priest told Suddhappu.

Isuru liked to stay at the temple.

He joined his friends and laughed.

Now the children welcome him to join them when they play. What’s more? They even go to school together.

Every person is entitled to equal rights at birth. But, when you live in a society there may be occasions when these rights get undermined. Isuru had to face such a calamity because of the

unsatisfactory conditions within his family environment.

The intervention of the children, adults and the priest at the temple was a turning point in Isuru’s life. The priest explained to him his right to education, to believe in a religion of his choice and the right to play with his friends.

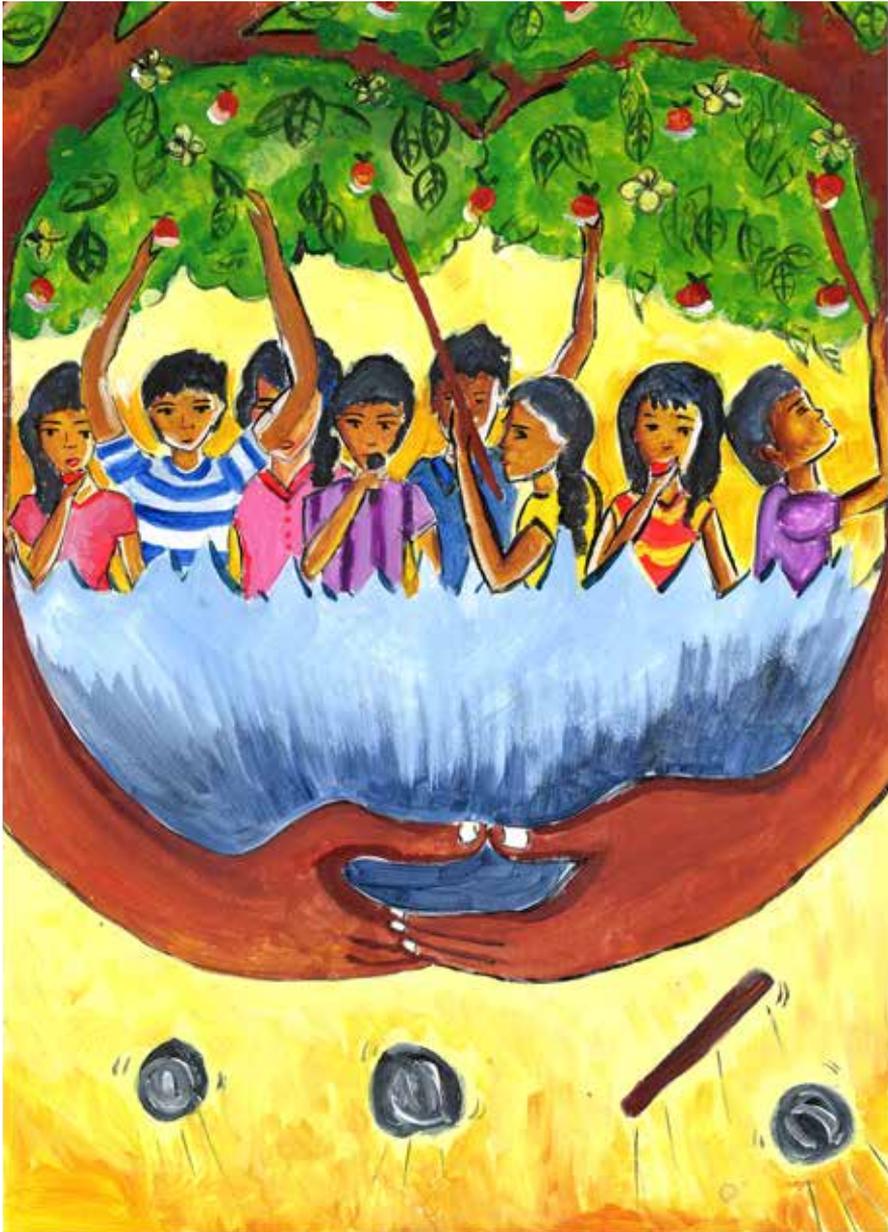
Providing Isuru with the opportunity to enjoy these rights will certainly have a positive effect on his ability to lead a successful life. It will also add to his happiness.

This story would have convinced you that providing the opportunity to everybody to enjoy their rights equally, promotes brotherhood, friendliness and cordiality among all. It is also our duty to allow everyone to enjoy their rights with equality.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 1 - All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

1.2 A mother bird's lament



W. Bawanthi Thatसरani
Grade 10 - Samudradevi Balika Vidyalaya, Colombo.

*Oh! Where are my little babies?
Oh! Where is my little nest?
Nowhere can I see these
To whom do I complain?*

*Boys, you've taken my kids
With no care or compassion
And shaken my nest
Why set alight a fire of grief?*

*By chance if you are lost
Lament, your mum would no doubt
Why ruin my comfort?
My heart is now as if on a stove*

*In future dear good children
Know this grief of mine
For us to live in the wild
Bless you, leave us alone*

Translation of 'Kirilliyakage Vilapaya'
by Kumaratunga Munidasa

This poem expresses the thoughts of a mother who is grieving for her children. As her words show, humans as well as animals have a right to life. No one has the right to violate or breach that right. We need to respect everybody's right to life. It is our duty and our responsibility. Further, it is the duty and responsibility of society to facilitate everyone's right to life by providing them with essential food, clothing, shelter, health and protection.

Article 3 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child refer to this right.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 3 - Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 6 - Children have the right to live. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

1.3 We are friends!



M.D Chamath Geethan Perera
Grade 13 – Ananda College, Colombo.

“How much is two upon five plus three upon five?”

Imesh looked up and down; wrote in his book; counted on his fingers; but could not find the answer. His face turned red. His face flushed. Though his father had taught him fractions, he could not remember a thing about fractions.

Father was looking at the Maths book. Imesh had lost his way in trying to find the answer.

“Imesh, why can’t you remember anything? Haven’t I taught you fractions earlier?”

Imesh nodded looking down.

“Pamalka, What are you doing there as if picking invisible stones? Come here.”

Imesh turned his eyes towards where his father was looking. Pamalka probably must have come to play. Imesh felt sorry for him, thinking his father will scold him.

Pamalka who was scratching the parapet wall with his finger came out into the front garden.

“What are you doing here child?”

Imesh, worrying whether to say, ‘It was I who asked him to come to play with me’ and wishing he

could go out and play with Pamalka, remembered his Mother's command.

'You can play with Pamalka. But don't get too friendly with him, and don't you dare bring him inside the house.'

"Why are you keeping quiet?' Father's loud voice brought Imesh back to reality.

"Sir, I too was listening to you teaching *Punchi Mahattaya*."

"Ah! You are also in *Punchi Mahattaya's* class, aren't you?"

"Yes Sir..."

"OK, if you were listening, then work out this sum" said Imesh's father giving a paper and a pen to Pamalka.

Pamalka standing in the front garden and keeping the paper on the veranda steps worked out the sum. Imesh's father was amazed.

"Very good! Now you must explain to *Punchi Mahattaya* how you worked the sum."

Pamalka who was never tolerated in the house was asked to come into the house by Imesh's father. Imesh wondered what would happen if his mother came there now.

Pamalka came near Imesh. He took the paper that was given to him, drew a square on it, and divided it into five sections. Then he coloured two of the sections. He drew another square, divided that too into five

sections. In the second square, he coloured three sections.

Like a little teacher, Pamalka explained the sum to the son, step by step. Imesh's father was very surprised. He recollected how on a previous day, he taught his son the same thing in the same manner. On that day too, Pamalka would have been learning from behind the wall, he thought. He felt ashamed of himself.

He felt that setting up boundaries and treating their cook Kusumawathie and her child in a discriminating manner was a big weakness on his part and regretted it.

Kusumawathie came to the front garden in search of Pamalka. When she saw Pamalka seated with Imesh, she clutched her head with her hands.

"Kusumawathie, go back to the kitchen, it was I who asked Pamalka to come into the house." Father told her.

Earlier, the front area of the house was made a prohibited zone. This sudden change was a quiz to Kusumawathie. A puzzle. A surprise.

"Pamalka, from next Saturday you must join us when I teach Imesh Maths" Kusumawathie on her way back to the kitchen, heard the words uttered by the *Loku Mahattaya*. They were the sweetest words she had ever heard. Kusumawathie knew that everyday

Pamalka listened to the lessons taught to *Punchi Mahattaya* seated on the ledge from behind the wall.

“I will, sir. Thank you very much.” Pamalka felt as if a flower had blossomed on the top of his head.

The sun was setting. This time Kusumawathie came to the front garden to take Pamalka home. *Punchi Mahattaya* and Pamalka were seated on the ground playing. She felt sorry to take Pamalka away.

At the same time, *Imesh's* father walked into the garden. The two children were writing something on the sand.

Father lovingly watched the two children writing ‘WE ARE FRIENDS’ on the sand. There was another person who watched them with tears of joy in her eyes. It was Kusumawathie.

The main reason for this discrimination by *Imesh's* mother and father was Pamalka's mother's job. But a livelihood should never be a cause for discrimination. All forms of livelihood are a service to the community.

In the same way, no person should be discriminated based on race, religion, caste, language, social status or any other difference. It is the duty of every person to provide equal opportunities for all within society. Articles guaranteeing equal

opportunities for the enjoyment of rights without discrimination are as follows:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 2 - Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms included in this Declaration, without differences of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 2 - The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It doesn't matter where children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis. If a child is discriminated on the above grounds, the government must take all appropriate measures to ensure that a child is protected against all discriminations and punishments.

1.4 You too are a Citizen



“Good morning..... This is an announcement regarding a special Mobile Service. Please attend the special Mobile Service that will be held on Sunday the 23rd of November from 9.00 o’clock in the morning till 4’00 o’clock in the afternoon. This is a valuable opportunity for you.

A person must be registered as a citizen in his/her country to enjoy the rights and privileges he/she is entitled to as an independent person of the country. The Birth Certificate

is the document that proves your registration.

If you do not have your Birth Certificate and your National Identity Card or if you have lost it, then do not postpone acquiring them. Please come to Degellewa Maha Vidyalaya on the 23rd. We are ready to provide you with your Birth Certificate and National Identity Card through our one-day instant service.

Thank You.”

Children ran in a line behind the van fitted with loud speakers. They fought among themselves to collect the leaflets that were thrown out of the van. Some leaflets were torn. Next, the children ran near the boutique and handed over the leaflets to the adults who were there and went back to play.

“It is the ideal opportunity for everybody to get their National Identity Cards... since it has come to you it is best to go there early morning.” said the boutique keeper while giving Mahendra his cup of tea.

“Once you go there it’s not as great as they boast,” said Mahendra without even looking at the boutique keeper.

“There you go..... with your predictions even before the work has begun” The boutique keeper who was going into the boutique turned round and came back.

“To tell you Mahendra....., you and I know each other, but do others in the country know who we are? I am asking you..... Shouldn’t we too travel here and there, around the country someday? If at some other place, for something or the other we have to prove that we’re people from here, how can we prove it?”

“You are right *Mudalali*. I have faced that problem. I went to get a passport. In order to fill in the details on that form, they told me

that I need either the Birth Certificate or the National Identity Card. I am originally from Kandy. I went there to obtain my Birth Certificate. It was a very difficult task, as I could not furnish any information. I had to go several times to get it done.”

“So, Mahendra, without continually cursing the war that is now over what you must do is to go there tomorrow and find out what could be done. You will realize that you need these things only when you go to admit your child to a school or when you travel inside or outside the country.”

“Let’s see... let’s see. I will go there because you insist”

“You know what, *Mudalali*. That Piyasiri who works at the timber mill; he had to take his child to the children’s clinic for his injections and they had asked for the child’s card. You know that family was left with only the clothes they wore. What card then? It was only on that day that Piyasiri realised that he should get the Birth Certificates he lost as early as possible.”

“Every person needs a Birth Certificate. If not, how can he or she obtain the services that he or she is entitled to?”

“See what Rizana knows!”

“Not only I, these are things that everybody should know. If you

have a Birth Certificate, it is easy to admit a child to a school. If you have the National Identity Card, it is easy to enrol as a voter as well as to get a Passport. Am I not right, *Mudalali*?”

“That is quite right Rizana. We must understand these things. How can you register your name in the Voter’s list if you are not a citizen? Having your identity registered at birth has an importance throughout your life. Everyone should realise that if a Birth Certificate gets lost or destroyed for some reason one should obtain another one.

“If you fail to prove your identity you will not be entitled to any rights as a citizen of the country.”

“*Mudalali*, however much you try to alert them, there are some who will not get these things done.”

“Yes yes.... we will try to send as many people as possible, who do not possess their Birth Certificates and National Identity Cards to the mobile service tomorrow. It is our duty towards them.”

“Yes, we will try our best to make them aware in this manner and get them to go. We can’t say how long it will take for another mobile service to be held here.’

“I too will persuade those whom I know, since they all come here to buy whatever they need.”

“You are always a social

worker, aren’t you *Mudalali*? So no one will ignore your words. Everyone knows that you do not force anyone to do the wrong thing.”

“Alright, *Mudalali*, we are going then”

“You can go, but come tomorrow. We need to find out what is happening at the mobile service too.”

Citizenship is a basic human right. From the time of birth, personal identity is very important to fulfil a variety of needs. Although your family is basic to your identity, within an accepted frame, identity is based on citizenship and the registration of birth. The National Identity Card issued by the State, Birth Certificate and your Passport are some of the documents that prove your citizenship and your identity.

Citizenship and identity provide the necessary basis and approach to a host of human rights and child rights that you enjoy from your babyhood to adulthood. As a baby and child, your citizenship legally entitles you to health facilities, education and other facilities. As an adult, personal identity is essential for you to obtain various services and ensures inclusion in relevant social security initiatives. Failure to prove your identity leads to the loss of your rights as a citizen, recognition before

the law, the right to employment, ownership and privileges of property, to travel out and re-enter your country etc.

When relevant documents to prove one's identity are lost, the State takes the necessary steps to help people replace them. It is important to make use of the State initiatives and obtain the necessary documents to prove your identity in order to enjoy your rights. It is the responsibility of the State to protect the rights of children and adults at a time when their identity cannot be proven.

Please read the following Articles to learn more about these rights.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 15 (1): Everyone has the right to a nationality.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 7: All children have the right to a name, and a nationality (to belong to a country).

Children also have the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by their parents.

Article 8: Children have the right to an identity – an official record of who they are. Governments should respect the right of the child to preserve a child's identity, right to a name, nationality and family ties.

1.5 Bridge



Thanusha Shakthivel

Grade 9 – Ramanadan Hindu Ladies College, Colombo.

So.... I was really sad to leave my friends and come away. We lived together for a short while under the same roof, but it was time for us to part. It was for our own good, to begin a new chapter in our own lives. Even if we had all the comforts, yet you can never forget the lack of parental love and affection. Those days I always felt that the darkness of the night came upon us only to hide our sad faces. When we lost our parents in the war and were brought

to the camp, I thought that it was the end of our lives too.

At a time when we were left without parents and helpless by the war, it was actually the opportunity we were offered to belong to a family that added value to our lives. The lady from the Probation Department worked hard to hand me over to my new parents. She looked after me and at the same time always discussed with me about my likes and dislikes. At first, I was afraid of going

to Courts. But later I found out that I would not be allowed to live with my new parents without a Court Order. Now I feel that everything turned out well, as everyone did their level best to give us the best of everything.

When my new father and mother came to take me with them, I wished that all my other friends too would soon get the chance of going to their own homes. Every time my new mother visited me, I smelt the fragrance of a mother's love for a child.

I came to my new home with a load of expectations rolling in my mind. I cannot describe the joy I feel, as one by one my expectations are fulfilled. Only six months have passed since I left the camp. But I feel as if I have been living here for ages.

Guess what my father asked me the moment he came to take me away?

“Daughter, would you like to live with us?”

Those few words promised a clear assurance of the protection and the future of my life. The responsibility of caring for me was not limited to documents. They found a new school for me. With new books, new uniforms and new teachers..... I found a new life.

Umayya had sent me a long letter. She has said that the members of her new family too were very

good. She now lives in Bandarawela. We, who lived in the North are now scattered all over the different provinces. Although we are away from each other, I firmly believe we will always remain friends.

I was very interested in learning the Japanese language. I told my father about it. I started attending a Japanese language class from yesterday.

I have written a lot about my life. I would love to hear all your news too. Please write to me as soon as possible. My father and mother send their regards to you. May the Triple Gem bless you and keep you.

Your Loving friend,

Nethmi

You may be blessed with the opportunity of enjoying the benefits of living as a member of a family. The parental love, protection, care and nutrition a child receives within a stable family environment prepares him/her for the role of a good citizen in his/her adult life.

The child's best interest has been given special emphasis in the family environment that is described in this story. It is the primary responsibility of the government and non-government institutions to work for the best interests of the child. This story would have given you an idea

of how the State and the Judiciary fulfilled that responsibility.

A child's right to a wholesome family life and consideration of the child's best interests are stated in Articles 3, 5 and 18 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 3 - In all activities involving children and in making decisions involving them the child's best interests has to be given prime consideration.

Article 5 - Governments shall respect the rights and responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child to direct and guide the children so that as they grow, they learn to use their rights included in the present Convention.

Article 18 - Both parents share the responsibility for the upbringing up of their children, and should always consider what is best for each child. Governments must respect the responsibility of parents for providing appropriate guidance to their children. The Convention does not take responsibility for children away from their parents and give more authority to the governments.

1.6 Dear Mothers!



M.D Chamath Geethan Perera
Grade 13 – Ananda College, Colombo.

“Out of these mothers who have come to the maternity clinic the majority are first time pregnant mothers. The advice I give you now would have been heard by the mothers who have attended the maternity clinic earlier. Never mind listening to some good advice again, don’t you think so?”

“You are waiting to receive a treasure worthier than the whole world. The maternity clinic is prepared to assist you in this responsibility of giving the world this treasure, without you facing any

difficulties or problems. Although I referred to it as assistance, it is the responsibility of the State to provide you with this service. You must be aware of these to get the maximum benefit from these services.”

“Now you must take note of what I am telling you. Taking note of these facts is not enough. You must also implement them. Because the final result of what you do, is the birth of a healthy baby. Additionally, along with giving birth to a healthy baby, you too must be a healthy mother.”

“Out of all the South Asian countries, Sri Lanka is currently the best place to be a mother and deliver a healthy baby. Hence, Sri Lanka has the lowest infant and maternal mortality rate in South Asia. Therefore you must be firmly determined to get the optimum benefits of the Infant and Maternity Health Services in Sri Lanka.”

“You know that we have a traditional custom of arranging for pregnant mothers to listen to Pirith Chanting. Before I tell you why, can a mother say why we do it?”

“Because the baby in the womb feels what is happening in the outside world.”

“Can another mother tell me about another related programme we implement in this clinic?”

“You have organised for us to listen to light music. Actually Nurse, I must thank you for it. We spend those ten to twenty minutes as if we were in a trance.”

“Now can one of the experienced mothers tell the first time mothers about the services they can expect from this clinic”

Buddhika : “My dear Family Health Nurse, Firstly I thank you for giving us this opportunity. My first request to the new mothers is to attend these clinics on the due date and make use of this service properly.

I would also like to remind you that you must follow the instructions given to you and discuss openly any problems that arise with this nurse or the family midwife who visits you and obtain the necessary help to solve your problems.

Mangeshwari : “Mother’s personal hygiene directly affects the baby in the womb. So I would like to tell you that you must be very conscious of good personal health. You will receive things that improve the health of the baby ranging from vitamins to Thriposha packets. Don’t waste them. Don’t give them away. Remember that they are given to you to ensure the healthy growth of the baby and the mother.”

Vishwa : “I received these benefits. I am expecting my third baby. I have always attended the clinics regularly and followed the advice given to me. I can say that the clinics directly helped me to give birth to my two healthy babies without any mishaps. After childbirth I could weigh my babies at the clinic, get Thriposha for the baby’s development and the inoculations free of charge.

Olu : “All those who attended the clinics are pregnant mothers. The advice, the vitamins, Thriposha and the music sessions were given to all. There was no discrimination of rich or poor, religious or racial differences. I’m thankful for all of these and wish that you will be able to go through

your pregnancy and deliver a healthy baby safely by attending these clinics and that you yourselves will remain healthy.”

“Thank you very much, Buddhika, Mangeshwari, Vishwa and Olu, through your own experiences you gave them advice better than I expected. Now we will listen to this light music to relax our minds.”

Everybody turned towards the Nurse with smiling faces as if to indicate that they are ready to listen to the music.

The main goal of health services is to ensure a healthy human resource for the country. Similarly, the right to health services is set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as given below.

Good health leads to educational and professional efficiency and high performance in day-to-day work. When everybody is given the opportunity to enjoy the right to health without discrimination, it is an affirmation of the right to life and survival.

Hence, the ability and access to use health services is a right of every person, and the provision of health services without discrimination is the responsibility of the State. It is our right, responsibility

and duty to utilise our health services to lead a healthy life.

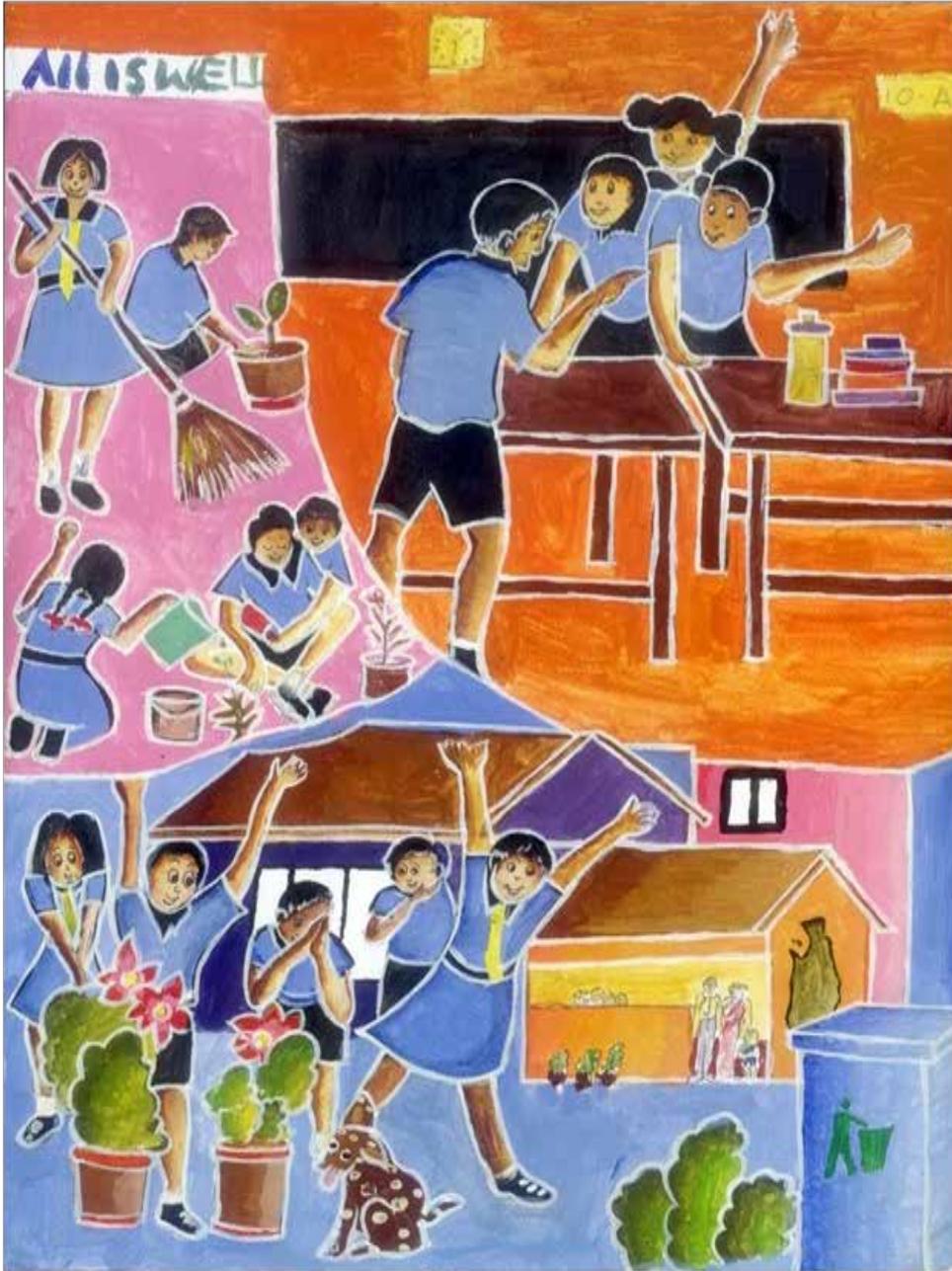
Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article No 25 - Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article No 24 - Children have the right to good quality health care – the best health care possible – to safe drinking water, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay healthy. Especially, children have the right to educate themselves on available public health care facilities. Governments must ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right to access such health care services.

1.7 Look! This is how we work!



Harinee Nallirajah

Grade 9 – Ramanadan Hindu Ladies' College, Colombo.

“Good morning everybody!”

“Dear sisters and brothers, we have assembled here today to collect the information we discussed about on 21st of August. Those who have appointed class leaders in your respective school please put up your hands. Thank you.”

“Very well. All have collected the necessary information. Today we have to make a common decision applicable to every school with the help of the information collected by all of us.”

Eshan listened attentively to the words of the Zonal Environment Officer. Eshan was very happy that he was representing his school at the launching of the programme “Let us Protect the Environment”. He found it very easy to get involved as the programme was already operational in his own school and he was one of the main players in it. He was appointed by his colleagues in the project as the most suitable person to represent the school.

Appointing class leaders, holding discussions with them, obtaining the help of the Principal and the teacher of Agriculture helped Eshan to organise his task successfully.

In accordance with the ideas of the class leaders, they first prepared a form for suggestions. All

the class leaders contributed to the preparation of the suggestions form. The class leaders themselves copied the form and distributed it among the children. They themselves collected and delivered the completed forms.

Eshan recollected with pleasure how he executed the work allocated to him at the meeting of the 21st of August. With the assistance of the class leaders Eshan arranged their suggestions in order of popularity.

- Waste management
- Tree planting
- Care for plants

were the most popular suggestions.

At the next meeting of the committee leaders, the committee leaders arrived at a common agreement with the assistance of the Environment Officer. All the schools in the region decided on a common theme. ‘We grow trees for the future. We manage the waste. The environment is ours.’ These suggestions were approved with the participation of all committee leaders.

Eshan suggested organising a competition among the schools to ensure the effective implementation of the programme. The committee leaders discussed his suggestion and

agreed to it.

The meeting adjourned and every member was determined to implement the programme in their school as effectively as possible.

Since the environment conservation project was already operational in his school, Eshan had only to organise its effective execution. The gesture of the Agriculture Teacher offering to direct the class leaders and the Principal's patronage was a great source of strength.

When the class leader of Year 8 Melan revealed that his father was employed at the Central Environmental Authority, the Agriculture Teacher came up with a bright idea. He wanted to find out whether they could get assistance from the Central Environmental Authority to obtain waste bins for all the schools in the region to manage waste. It was a holiday, when Eshan and the Agriculture Teacher went to see Melan's father to discuss this matter. Melan's father advised them to make a request through the school. The Agriculture Teacher prepared the letter but it took another day to obtain the Principal's signature and the frank.

At the next meeting, Eshan informed the committee leaders about the request and the Environmental Officer pointed out

that the request could be made as a group of schools rather than a single school and then he could obtain the bins from the Central Environmental Authority. The Committee leaders assured the commitment of the class leaders and the Environment Officer appreciated their efforts.

The school ground was allocated to the different classes according to a plan the Agriculture teacher prepared in consultation with the environment committee. Eshan got the approval of the Agriculture teacher to organize an inter-class competition. Every student worked with dedication for the victory of their class. The committee leaders reported their progress at each meeting. It led to an exchange of ideas among the schools.

During the first month, the Environment Officer obtained the waste bins for the schools. Three bins marked Polythene and Plastic, Glass, and Degradable Waste sat near the main entrance to the school, three near the canteen and three at the playground.

As the children entered the school premises almost through habit, they never forgot to either water a plant or to pick up any polythene and put them into the bin. Eshan learned from a student of another school that they repeated it in their own homes. Eshan shared it with his class leaders and he himself

organised waste management at his own home.

The Agriculture teachers advised that a part of the school premises be kept apart for home gardening and that the trees be conserved.

The Environment Officer continued, “All schools achieved the same level as a result of acting with responsibility through active participation, planning and leadership. Now the challenge is sustainability of this programme. What would you suggest?” he asked the committee leaders.

They suggested an essay and poster competition. The Environment Officer noted their suggestion and wished them luck.

Children get the opportunity to participate in different activities within the family, school and community. We need to focus on how much these opportunities contribute to the development of the child’s personality.

Primarily, it is good to let the child decide on his right to participate. Meaningful and active participation is a right of the child. Children should be allowed to meaningfully participate in planning, organising, implementing and evaluating activities and programmes that

affect them. This story highlights such a situation.

In this story, the important factors were that the children initiated the planning of the project, their suggestions were taken into account, and decisions were taken through active participation of both children and adults.

It is important to let children participate, assemble, voice their thoughts and engage in decision making in processes involving children. Ensuring the maximum participation of children will certainly have a direct influence on the quality of the outcome. It is the duty and the responsibility of adults to honour and respect these rights of the child.

Providing these opportunities to the children will result in their empowerment, development of leadership qualities, the ability to work within a group and enhance their belief in collective strengths, which prepare the background for the development of a balanced personality.

Further information regarding these rights is found in Articles 19 & 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Articles 12, 13, 15 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 19 - Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20 -

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 12 – When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.

Article 13 – Children have the right to get and share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or others. In exercising the right to freedom of expression, children have the responsibility to also respect the rights, freedoms and reputations of others. The freedom of expression includes the right to share information in any way they choose, including by talking, drawing or writing.

Article 15 - Children have the right to meet together and to join groups and organisations, as long as it does not stop other people from enjoying their rights. In exercising their rights, children have the responsibility to respect the rights, freedoms and reputations of others.

1.8 Until Amma Returns



The teacher Miss Champika spoke to Priyantha during the interval.

“Why are you always so thoughtful?”

“No..... teacher, it is nothing”

“It is alright if there is nothing that bothers you. But if there is some problem, Priyantha, it is better to tell someone and get rid of the burden of keeping it to yourself. The other thing is there is always a solution to any problem. Alright..... Then go and play.....”

The teacher, Miss Champika looks after the children in her class like a mother. Priyantha felt sorry to have lied to her. ‘Only if my mother was there.... but she went abroad for our own good.’ he thought. Work, work, work..... endless work. Younger sister’s and younger brother’s work, household chores. Priyantha had no time to devote to his school work. That was not all. If he overlooks even the smallest thing, then he has to deal with his father’s beatings. The mark left on his arm as a result of yesterday’s beating from his father was still there.

Priyantha’s homework was being neglected daily. Priyantha was not a child who neglected his studies. What is happening to him? Miss Champika was keeping an eye on Priyantha.

So she sent a message to

Priyantha requesting him to come to the staff room.

“Priyantha, son, you were a child who promptly attended to your daily homework. Since of late, you have been neglecting your studies. You are late in the morning almost every day. Actually, what is your real problem?”

Priyantha looked down.

The teacher lightly held him by the chin and forced him to raise his head.

“Son, Is there any problem you cannot tell me?”

“No... Miss... My mother” and Priyantha was about to cry.

“Yes, it is sad that your mother is away, but it is only for a short while..... she will be coming back to Sri Lanka.... teachers are also like your own parents. Don’t feel sad about that. If you have a problem you can always tell me.”

Priyantha thought of confiding in the teacher but he was almost crying. However much he worked, if he forgot to do even the slightest thing his father beat him. Thinking of all these things gave Priyantha a headache. Every time it happens, Priyantha is reminded of his mother.

Earlier, Priyantha used to write the most creative essays. But now his essays were getting worse

and worse. Miss Champika turned back the pages of his Sinhala essay book. She found a rapid downward trend in his work. Since she was the teacher in charge of the class, she could detect even the slightest change in the students.

For the third time she thought of speaking to this child and she got him down to the staff room again.

“Miss I am neglecting my studies. But it is not intentional. Since my mother’s departure, I do most of the work around the house. I have to look after my younger sister and brother too. These days my father beats me often. I am beaten for the slightest fault. I have no time to think of my studies teacher, the whole time I am thinking of the chores my father has set for me. I keep thinking of completing all the tasks before he comes home.” Priyantha rattled on before the teacher uttered a single word.

Miss Champika sent Priyantha back to the class and tried to find a solution to his problem.

With the approval of the Principal, she sent a message through Priyantha to his father, and met and spoke to him.

“Priyantha has become very weak in his studies. He is not coming to school regularly. This child was a very good student. What has happened to him?” Priyantha’s

father had no reply for the teacher’s question.

The following Sunday the teacher visited Priyantha’s home. He was washing some clothes at the time. Priyantha’s father saw the teacher and stepped out of the house.

“Priyantha attends to all the house work when I go to work. His mother is also not there. We have no one to help us.” Priyantha’s father offered excuses.

“We must not beat a child even if he had really done something wrong. When we beat children we hurt them not only physically but mentally and emotionally too. They keep thinking about these things. Their little minds cannot cope with these situations. His mind gets confused. Studies are neglected. Think hard about what I said and please stop punishing the child. He is only a child. He cannot carry the burden of doing all the house work.”

Priyantha’s father listened with shame and tear filled eyes to the words of advice the teacher offered like a mother. When the teacher jumped over the stile at the end of their garden, he walked over to the well.

“Son..... go wash your face and get dressed. Your clothes are very wet. I will wash the rest of the clothes.” Priyantha felt very happy.

Corporal punishment can cause a simple wound or even bring about a sad situation of disabling a child. Corporal punishment can never remedy a child's educational shortcomings or change his/her erratic behaviour patterns.

In the same way, punishing children within the family, society or in school can bring about disastrous results. Punishments within the home environment can breach the love, trust and respect for the adults and the parents. Punishments could harm the relationships between children and parents. Punishments in school could lower their achievement levels and make them detest school almost instantly.

Punishment can trigger stubbornness, create violent thoughts, and cause poor self-esteem and depression. It may also make them less sensitive to others and awaken thoughts of hatred and revenge within their minds. The subsequent result will be significant harm to the child's mental development, and limit his opportunities to be a good person in society.

Article No 37 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out that it is your duty and responsibility to respect these rights within the environment of family, society and school.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 37 - No one is allowed to treat or punish children in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way. Children who break the law should not be treated cruelly. They should not be put in prison with adults, they should be able to keep in contact with their families, and should not be sentenced to death or life imprisonment without the possibility of release.

1.9 Confusion



M.D Chamath Geethan Perera
Grade 13 – Ananda College, Colombo.

Jayanetti has come home....

It did not take long for the news to spread by word of mouth around Kandewatte. As he got down from the bus with Chandanie, Jayanetti told everything to the Shop Keeper at the junction before he

continued home. The Shop Keeper said “oh! I’m sorry”. Jayanetti related the same story, in the same way to everyone whom he met on his way home. A few of them walked behind Jayanetti as if to share his grief.

Even after stepping into his house he was not allowed to even draw a breath of relief. He just could not avoid speaking at least a word or two with the people who had heard about his return and came to see him.

Chandanie offered a cup of tea to all who visited them. While the visitors enjoyed a cup of tea, Jayanetti went to have a wash and a change of clothes.

As darkness gathered one by one the visitors left; Jayanetti and Chandanie were left to themselves. Chandanie, holding a bottle lamp in one hand, applied medicinal oil along the painful areas Jayanetti pointed out. "Oh, my God! See what has happened to us" Chandanie sighed while wiping her hands with an old piece of cloth.

Jayanetti sat on the veranda and recollected the incident that took place. Jayanetti sat just like this on that day too. When two people who got down from the three-wheeler that suddenly stopped and jumped over the stile in front, Jayanetti walked up to them as a courtesy. Jayanetti had no time to even think. In a flash, one of them kicked him in the lower abdominal area. Jayanetti fell down. Without any hesitation, they pulled him into the three-wheeler and went off raising a cloud of dust. As Chandanie came up to the veranda with a cup of tea the three-wheeler was activated.

She saw her husband lying on the floor of the three-wheeler when she looked at it. His legs were jutting out of the three-wheeler. She ran screaming behind the three-wheeler. Hearing the screams, one by one the neighbours joined her.

Jayanetti raised his head slightly. The next moment he was kicked on his hip. Jayanetti felt the pain; anger; and sadness. Why were they kicking him without him knowing even the reason for it? Jayanetti did not know what he had done wrong.

The three-wheeler reached the junction and even before it stopped some persons who were there pulled him out. As they assaulted him mercilessly Jayanetti's cries of pain reached far and wide. His screams brought people who were at the boutique. Everybody knew that Jayanetti was a person who was never accused by anybody for any misdeed. So everybody got together and saved Jayanetti. The men who assaulted him accused him of committing a robbery in a house in town. No one could make head or tail out of this story.

On everybody's advice, Jayanetti went to the Police Station. Since Chandanie too had come to the junction by that time, she joined him. Before Jayanetti could lodge a complaint, his attackers had lodged a complaint against Jayanetti accusing him of robbing some valuables from

their house. Jayanetti suffered more injustice.

Even an actual offender is treated as innocent until he is proven guilty before a Court of Law. That was what Jayanetti had heard. Until it is proven, he is only a suspect. Jayanetti had to face a situation totally opposed to this. He was assaulted by an unknown group who decided that he was guilty and took the law into their hands.

Jayanetti had to wait until the OIC arrived. Suddenly Jayanetti fainted. A woman who was close-by offered a bottle of water saying, “He may be a thief, but he is after all a human being”. Chandanie felt like screaming out “No, No my husband is not a thief”. When a few drops of water were sprinkled on Jayanetti’s face, he regained consciousness. Some people who had come to the Police Station and were gathered round him went away commenting, “They should know that they have to suffer before robbing others.” When Jayanetti heard these words he felt as if he was stabbed in the chest. The beaten areas on his body were red and oozing with small drops of blood. Chandanie could not bear it. She came out of the Police Station to get her bottle of medicinal oil. Yesterday, the three-wheeler driver Sameera had said he was going to get his children from school, when he came to give the medicinal oil bottle. He had at the same time did not forget to give her Rs.100 for

the bus. Such kindness was a small comfort to Chandanie.

The OIC was conducting inquiries in his office. Chandanie slowly got close to Jayanetti.

Jayanetti and Chandanie managed to learn about the whole incident only when the complainants described to the Police how Jayanetti from Pahala Deniyawatte had staged the robbery in their house. Chandanie was filled with anger towards the attackers when the OIC released Jayanetti from Kandewatte. How can the suffering of the past few hours be forgotten? Chandanie let out a long sigh, as she was terrified to even open her mouth.

Jayanetti took action, as he could not forget the series of happenings he went through, although now he was free. He lodged a complaint at the Police Station about the injustice that he suffered. He knew very well that he had the right to do so.

Chandanie who was staring at him with the bottle of medicinal oil in her hand broke into his thoughts.

“Now that is enough of thinking. Come I will apply this oil on you”

Like a little child, Jayanetti gave in to her compassionate words.

The assault on Jayanetti by the people of the neighbouring village accusing him of an offence committed by someone else is a wrongful act. No one has the right to take the law into his/her hands and act accordingly.

In the same way, a person is only a suspect until he is declared guilty by a court of law. Punishment is decided only after a formal trial before a Court of Law.

Jayanetti was subject to a lot of physical and mental distress due to the actions of the people from the neighbouring village. It also affected his self-worth adversely. It led to the violation of a number of his rights. Subjecting a person to torture is a penal/punishable offence. As a member of society, it is your duty to respect and protect the rights of others and provide them with opportunities to live within the society with self-respect.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 5 - No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6 - Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 9 - No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

1.10 Let's Stay Safe



U.D.S Kushani Ruwanjana
Grade 11 – Gothami Balika Vidyalaya, Colombo.

Teacher: “Good Morning childrenToday I am going to teach you all a totally new lesson. This lesson will not give you any new academic knowledge. Do you understand? You may have heard and seen information about various crimes through the media. Especially crimes against children... haven't you? Today we will discuss about them. We will discuss how we can avoid them.

Now think of your mother hugging and kissing you with a lot of love. You like it don't you? You want to respond and what do you do? You cuddle close to her, don't you?

Now why is everybody silent? Please speak up. We need to speak to exchange our ideas. Do you or do you not you cuddle up to your mother?”

Children: “Yes we do cuddle up to our mother”....

(the children answered in unison)

Teacher: “Why? Why do you do so?”

Saroja: “Because we love her”

Teacher: “Yes...when she kisses you, you feel her love and affection..... now if I put it this way...

Supposing a person known to you or a complete outsider tries to touch you even though you don't like ithow would you feel?"

Nashmiya: "Repulsive"

Kaveesha: "Angry"

Teacher: "What else?"

Hiruni: "Shame"

Teacher: "What will you do at that time?"

"There you go again... murmuring. Children, we might face this type of situation often in society today. If someone tries to touch you being well aware of your dislike you have the right to reject them, shout, run".

"In the same way they may try to make you agree to their actions, without asking if you like it or dislike it.....you should be able to sense it from their behaviour. You don't need to give in to their wishes. You can reject them. You can push them away and run. Children have a right to protect themselves."

"Okay Ruhaila, come to the front of the class please. Children, imagine this book is a slab of chocolate. Watch how I give it to her."

"Did you all notice it? I gave it to her while stroking her back lovingly. She might think that the teacher gave it to her with love. Well, I may be a complete outsider.... an unknown person. Why would I give you a chocolate stroking your back,

Ruhaila?"

Ruhaila: "To get my consent".

Teacher: "Very correct. If someone gifts you things you love to have, like sweets, clothes and trinkets or books and tries to win you over, you have to learn to protect yourselves from them. You must be able to see through their concern for you and know what they want. Then you can refuse to accept the gifts."

"Imagine a relative coming to celebrate a special occasion in your life giving you a present and kissing you and embracing you. Will you run away?"

(The children start to giggle.)

Teacher: "Don't laugh at it. These things happen mostly with people you know well. If a relative comes into the house when no one else is in the house and tries to kiss and embrace you, would you like it as you did at that special occasion?"

Children: "No"

(children speak in unison.)

Teacher: "If they ask you to touch them? Or if they try to touch you?"

Githmi: "We will refuse to do it"

Teacher: "Good, That is right. Please remember this. There is absolutely no need to let anyone touch your body, or for you to touch anyone else's body. By any chance if you are forced to face such a situation don't keep quiet about it. Never forget to confide in someone you trust."

“Now Dilan, come up here please. Okay, now show that you are trying to tell something to Ruhaila by frightening her.”

Dilan: Ruhaila, I will not tell you again. You know what I am like.

(The children giggle.)

Teacher: “No no, not like that. Say like this...., Ruhaila, if you tell anyone what I have told you... you will be sorry. Now say it again please.”

Dilan: “Ruhaila..... If you tell anyone a word of what I have told you, you will be sorry.”

Teacher: “What do you think Ruhaila should do in such a situation?”

Ruhaila: “Keep quiet”.

Teacher: “Any more ideas?”

Kaveesha: “Scold him”

Teacher: “What about the others? What do you all think?”

Hirudini: “Tell the teacher”.

Teacher: “That’s right. If you keep quiet thinking that you will be harassed, then it’s you who will suffer. Keep this in mind..... it may be to a friend, a sister or brother, father or mother or else may be the teacher... you need to tell somebody. Are you going to keep quiet and suffer with that fear or are you going to tell an adult and ease your mind? You need to realise that.”

Hirushini: “Teacher, if we tell anyone they will threaten to harass us. Isn’t it? Then what?”

Teacher: “You must talk about such things only to a person you could totally trust. Your mother will never tell anyone else anything that would harm you. Moreover they will decide on a course of action and find a solution”

“Supposing it happens to someone who has no parents or a trusted person.... what can he/she do?”

Lakmi: “Tell the Police”

Teacher: “Yes, there are other places too. You can inform the Probation Officer or the Child Rights Promotion Officer in the area.”

“There is another thing I nearly forgot to tell you. You need to know this too. If someone wants you to see any photographs or watch any video strips that are not suitable for you, please don’t watch them. You have the right to say “No”. We discuss these matters with you with a lot of love and affection. It is our responsibility to protect you. But, we also need your co-operation for it.

Keep this too in mind. Tell your parents about your movements every day. Go home before it is dark. Do not engage in conversations with unknown persons.”

“That, I think is more than enough for today. So you must remember what I told you and protect yourselves. Did everybody understand that?”

The greatest wealth of a country is its children. Various laws and strategies are adopted within a society to ensure their protection. Yet instances that threaten the protection of children are often heard of. Today, we hear of incidents where children are abused by not only unknown persons, but close relatives of the family.

Children are exposed to such situations not because of the fault of children but because adults trap them using devious methods. But children must also be careful to avoid such situations and protect themselves from such individuals. Children should be especially careful of people who seek to forge close relationships with them in devious ways.

As children, it is of paramount importance that you realise the value of living under the protection and care of your parents or guardians for your future welfare. Being a party to underage marriages or consenting to such actions is a violation of the laws pertaining to children. Creating such opportunities for yourself will be completely disastrous for your future. You need to act at all times paying constant attention to your own protection.

If you encounter even the slightest hint of a threat to your protection, inform your parents, an adult sister/ brother or a teacher about the situation immediately. Further, the Police, the Department of Probation and Child Care Services

and the National Child Protection Authority are institutions that are dedicated to provide protection for children.

Please read and understand the Articles No 19, 34, and 36 of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child to learn more about your right to protection.

You can also learn more about the institutions established to provide you with protection by referring to Annexure 1.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 19 - Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them

Article 34 - Governments should protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, unlawful sexual activity for commercial purposes, prostitution and pornography.

Article 36 - Children should be protected from any activity that takes undue advantage of them or could harm their welfare and development.

1.11 Swishshsh! Whats this?



“See who is ringing the door bell, son”

Malindu was by the door even before his mother uttered the words.

“Is it Malindu?”

“Yes..... *Amma*, someone is here.”

Malindu’s mother came to the lounge patting her hair.

“Hmmm.... whom do you want to meet?”

Malindu’s father too came to the door.

“Ah..... come..... come in, this is Kavinda isn’t it?” With the father’s welcome another father and son came into the house and sat down.

“Son, this is Kavinda whom you saved. They have come here to see you and want to talk to you.”

“Oh my dear” Mother was addressing Kavinda. “Was it a long time since you were brought there?”

“Yes, Aunty.... It’s about three months now. I could not see anything of the world beyond the wall. I wasn’t used to working in the kitchen. The lady gave me a load of work which I could not do. There was no one to share my sorrow. When I remembered my home and my parents, things just fall and get broken. On such a day, I would not get anything to eat. I was also beaten.”

“Oh my God, didn’t you meet anybody before you met our son?”

“No... I was given work in the kitchen. Because I got used to the place they thought they’d be able to keep me for a long time. From the day I was given work in the garden, every time I heard the sound of someone’s footsteps on the road I thought to myself, “If I manage to tell someone on the road I’ll be able to save myself.”

“How did you find a pen and paper in the kitchen?” Malindu interrupted.

“I had picked up a discarded carbon filter of a pen from the waste paper basket earlier. The paper was also from the waste paper basket.”

“Was it to me you gave the message for the first time?”

No.... How many letters like that

did I throw over the wall? Nothing worked. I threw out seven letters exactly.”

Malindu remembered everything so well...

Swishshshsh! When Malindu was returning from school that day a ball of paper fell right in front of his feet. When he picked it up it was not a ball of paper but a stone wrapped in a piece of paper. Malindu slowly removed the stone and spread out the paper. He read the letters written there.

“Oh! Please save me. They are keeping me here as a servant by force. One day when I was returning from school an uncle came and told me that my father was very sick and is now in hospital. He put me into a van. I was shocked because they said my father was very sick. I realised that I was not being taken to see my father only after we had traveled some distance. That uncle has sold me to this house. My father and mother must be desperately searching for me. Please help me to go to my mother.”

Malindu’s heart was pounding when he read the letter. Do I tell someone about this or not? Malindu was in a dilemma.

In the evening Malindu waited anxiously for his father to come home. He could hardly wait until his father washed himself and

had a cup of tea. When his father listened to the story, he phoned the Police straight away. As his father took the bicycle up to the road to go to the Police Station, Malindu asked whether he could join him. Father refused. Malindu gave the piece of paper to his father and at the same time passed him another leaflet. That was to refer to the telephone numbers of Department of Probation and Child Care Services, and the National Child Helpline of the National Child Protection Authority.

Malindu's father was amazed. "Son, from where did you get these?" he asked.

"This was a leaflet distributed in school one day. I had to pull all my books to find it," he said.

Father stroked Malindu's head and his mother walked into the house with him with words of praise.

That day father returned home late in the night. Malindu waited without sleeping with the greatest difficulty.

As he came into the house, Malindu's father put a piece of paper in his hand.

"You saved me. Thanks friend." The boy whom Malindu saved had written.

"We'll all have a cup of tea now." His mother's voice brought Malindu out of his thoughts.

"Why are you lost in thought?" Kavinda asked Malindu.

"I am so glad, Kavinda. I could save you because I saw that letter even though by chance. If I failed to see it how long would you have continued to suffer like this?"

"That is why I'm so happy too, Malindu. For three months, I missed school. I felt so sad when I watched the children of that house leaving for school every morning. I was reminded of my studies. I had no proper meal times; could bathe only once a week. Even if I fell sick, there was no one to care for me. I got my freedom only because of you. That is why I came to see you. I'll never forget you."

Kavinda and Malindu put their arms around their shoulders and went out into the garden

Children who are abducted and sold in this manner are employed as child labourers, child prostitutes, child soldiers and in other hazardous employment, which can harm the child. Using children as labourers is a serious violation of their rights. It exposes the children to mental pressure, loss of parental love and protection, undermining their right to education and access to health facilities. According to the laws of Sri Lanka, employing children under the age of 14 years is a punishable crime.

There may be many instances when you help your own parents in their work. Assisting parents in the fields during the seasons when planting or harvesting paddy is a classic example. But in such situations, there is no violation of child rights. You may work during your leisure time, in such a way that it does not obstruct your access and right to education.

Malindu's actions in saving Kavinda are an example to society. It is also about one child fulfilling

his duties to protect the rights of another child. Malindu's father too performed his duty by helping to protect the rights of a child. The responsibility of the State to protect children's rights was fulfilled by the actions of the Police.

Please read the following Articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to learn more about a child's right to be protected from trafficking and child labour.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 32 - A child has the right to be protected from situations and employment that are detrimental to his education, health or development. The State must decide on the minimum age for employment of children. A child friendly environment has to be created in the case of employing children.

Article 35 - Governments should take all measures possible to make sure that children are not abducted, sold or trafficked for any purpose or in any form.

Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000)

- According to this, strict laws would be enacted against persons responsible for the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography while the victims will receive more protection.

1.12 From the Battlefield to the Stage



B.M.G Nilupul Bandara
Grade 13 – Ananda College, Colombo.

“Now children, have you finished introducing yourselves to each other? The children who are present here are a group of children selected from different schools and children’s organizations. You will all be writing and producing the dramas. That means you have to work together. You can get together to discuss among yourselves and decide on a theme. You are absolutely free to choose the theme. The script writing, selecting the characters, and production could be allocated according to your individual talents. If there’s any need, we are in the office. You can talk to us.”

The convenor gave us the necessary instructions. The main hall of the Cultural Centre turned into a

platform for our free ideas.

“What kind of theme shall we choose for this play?” The first voice broke the silence. Each person was in his/her own imaginary world. I just could not keep quiet.

“*Nangi, Malli*, I would like to put forward my idea. I feel it will be good if you can listen to it and write a script for a play based on that theme. However, you are free to look for another theme if you think it is not suitable.”

I was motivated to continue as our drama group looked at me as if they were mesmerized.

“I am a former child soldier who was involved in the war. I had to

join although I did not like it. I do not think it was my *Karma*. Child soldiers were not children who went into the war willingly. The adults created a war mentality within them.”

“That day we were playing. The terrorists broke into our village and by both their force and our parent’s consent, took us to the battlefield. After that day we never had the chance to play.”

“We never had the opportunity to wake up early morning and step on the dew, to touch a leaf or a tree, talk to the birds or chase the butterflies. We even did not have the liberty to chat freely with our friends.”

“Only the feelings of hatred and revenge arising from the information about the war implanted in our minds by the senior soldiers remained within us.”

“School education became a dream. We carried arms in our hands instead of the pen. There was no hope of religious observances. We slept without a pillow under our heads. We did not feel the discomfort of not having proper clothing. It was all due to the anger our leaders had fed our minds with.”

“Instead of living within a loving family environment in the midst of parents and siblings, we were sent to the battle field. Instead of the food and drinks we loved as children, the clothes we loved to wear, our heads were filled with

thoughts of winning the war.”

“Now, everything is over. We can never get back what we have lost. But if we can give some kind of a message to prevent a recurrence of the same situation I feel it would be quite worthwhile.”

I had stopped speaking, but the other members of the group were staring at me dumbstruck.

“Now tell us your ideas,” I said, and they relaxed.

Oshadhi: “Can’t you write the script for us?”

“First we will see whether we like this theme. There may be other ideas,” I said.

Oshadhi: “No no. This idea is very good. Please put your hands up, those who like this theme.”

Everybody put up their hands.

Ishwari: “Then *Ayya*, you can write the script. Can’t you?”

“For years I was on the battle field. Later I was in the rehabilitation camp. Though I am back at school, I don’t have the knowledge to write a script for a play. This is the result of losing the right to education.” I murmured softly.

Malmi: “I will write the script. *Ayya*, you help me.”

“I will help you as much as I can,” I agreed from the depth of my heart.

Faiz: “You can produce this play....

you have the experience for that”

Oshadhi: “That’s true. You are the best person to be the producer.”

Binura: “Now we have the script; we have the producer. We will select the characters next. You can bring the script for the meeting next week, can’t you?”

Yanushka: “No no, we can’t select the players for the characters today. We will select them next week when the script is ready. Today we will discuss how we should plan the script.”

“Yes that is how it should be done. We will think of a plot. Then it is easy to write the script.” As I said the words, the convenor came up to us.

“I have organised some refreshments for you. Will all of you please come?” We accepted his invitation and followed him.

It is an accepted fact that no child under the age of 18 years should be made to join in a war or be enlisted in an army (the 2002 Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child on involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts). The purpose of these principles was to protect children who are considered to be a vulnerable sector of society. Yet, information about the violation of these rights by terrorist organisations prevailing in most countries is often reported.

Enlisting children or using them in an armed struggle violates

many rights of children. It leads to undermine the right of a child to a family, education, protection and so forth.

Further, the brutal experiences related to war hinders the development of a child. Instead of peace, harmony, joy and respect for others, thoughts of hatred, revenge and destruction will fill the young mind. Inevitably, such destructive thoughts would direct him towards violence. It hinders the development of humane virtues in a child and becomes a threat to social security.

We need to realise that it is a humane duty of all members of a society to prevent children from being victims of such abuses.

Convention on the Rights of the Child -

Article 38 - Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Children under 15 should not be forced or recruited to take part in a war or join the armed forces.

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2002) - further develops this right, raising the age for direct participation in armed conflict to 18 and establishing a ban on compulsory recruitment for children under 18.

1.13 Where is Pubudu?



As the curtain went up, the whole stage depicted an ocean. The sound of the sea could be heard in the background. Everybody was mesmerised by his lilting voice. I simply could not fathom the joy I felt.

“Pubudu Udayanga Disasekara, a student of Maligawatte Maha Vidyalaya, in the Kalutara District will now present the item that won the first place in the All Island Junior Solo Dance Competition.”

I can still remember Pubudu standing on the other side of the

half wall of the dancing room telling me “Sir, train me also for the dance competition... please”

“You?...” was my instant response.

“I can sir, I will train hard. My classmates promised to help me.” Pubudu posed an embarrassing problem for me. Since then, I kept thinking of what I could do for this child.

After appealing to me, Pubudu had gone and seen the music teacher.

She came to me to discuss this problem. Pubudu's appeal was a challenge to us.

When we told the Principal about it, he was very pleased. "A child with courage... He has the right to participate in this competition. Tell the art teacher. All three of you can get together and train this child. He too might love to sing and dance like the other children. Your duty is to carry the responsibility of encouraging him. You can always produce a totally novel creative item."

The Principal's encouraging words was a source of strength to us. Isn't the performance before us the result of that strength? The music teacher trained Pubudu's voice very well.

The ocean waves the art teacher produced with light blue saris was really creative. It was done by Pubudu's friends who offered their help collectively. So beautiful to look at. What a lot of practice Pubudu had with me?

The skills shown by the classmates cannot be overlooked. The air blown by the fans on either side of the stage to make the saris flutter looked very much like the rolling waves of the sea.

Pubudu's solo dance item is the result of a collective effort. When he won the provincial competition, the students from the higher classes

designed a new boat to replace the temporary boat we had made. Their contribution was a duty performed for their school.

Since the students made a collective effort, our school won with honour. I thought to myself 'The school aesthetic section should celebrate this by organising a function appreciating this effort'. I am certain that everyone will support my idea.

When the whole school was talking about Pubudu's achievement, our school was given the opportunity to present the item at the National Cultural Festival.

At this moment, we are enjoying that opportunity. With the clapping from the audience, my eyes turned to Pubudu who was performing on the stage. Pubudu was not to be seen. I was shocked for a moment. Suddenly Pubudu's head emerged from the folds of the saris. This cute fellow has added something more to his performance after the all-island competition. For a moment, I was really worried.

If this wonderful child had not told me about his idea, if we had not done our duty to the school, we would have failed in our duty to this child. We must appreciate the assistance given by the students of the school. This child's courage was an inspiration to all.

As the curtain came down amidst the clapping that echoed

around the hall, the music teacher suggested going up to the stage.

By the time we got there, the art teacher was gathering the sari waves. The friends were trying to get Pubudu out of the boat. They were breaking the boat to pieces.

The boat was made around Pubudu's wheelchair. Pubudu sang while pushing at the oars... really turning the wheels of the wheelchair with his hands. To the audience it looked as if he was rowing the boat. Since he was supposed to be in the boat, only his torso could be seen. It was all designed by the students in the upper classes under the guidance of the art teacher.

The friends came off the stage pushing Pubudu's wheelchair. We walked behind them. Pubudu's father took a photograph of the group.

A disability should not be regarded as a reason to prevent a person from developing his skills and talents. Nor should it be a reason for them to neglect their talents. Persons with disabilities too are entitled to equal rights enjoyed by normal persons. Family, schools and all relevant social institutions should realize their duty towards children with disabilities. It is your duty to contribute in giving faith and confidence to such persons while protecting their rights.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Article No 7 - Children with disabilities are entitled to all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children. The best interest of the child has to be given primary consideration in all activities involving children with disabilities. Children with disabilities have the right to express their views in all matters that concern them.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 23 - Children who have mental and physical disability should enjoy a full and decent life. They have the right to special care and support, as well as all the rights in the Convention, so that they can live full and independent lives.

1.14 Malithi's Diary



M.D Chamath Geethan Perera
Grade 13 – Ananda College, Colombo.

02nd February

My face is burnt. I was brought to the hospital day before yesterday. My whole face is smarting. When I think of that unfortunate incident I feel a sense of terror.

On the way home after school there was a big commotion at the junction. I can remember a splash of some kind of water on my face. When I gained consciousness, I was on a hospital bed.

03rd February

I saw it only when I went to the washroom. My right cheek is burnt. It's amazing the way my eye has been spared.

04th February

Today is Independence Day. Last year I too attended the Independence celebrations in school.

05th February

Today my friends visited me. According to them, there had been a fight between two parties. The acid they had thrown at one of them splashed on me as I was walking along the edge of the road.

06th February

Today the Police came to the hospital. They asked me a lot of things. I did not know anything about that incident. The policemen were near my bed even during the visiting hours. Those who came to visit other patients were crowding round my bed instead of visiting their patients. The hurt within me was worse than the pain of my wound. An acid attack on a girl's face and the police officers being there near my bed can provide good plots to craft all types of stories.

09th February

The TV news broadcast has started. I heard the name of my school mentioned. At once, my eyes turned there. Good Lord! They are putting me into a van and I am still in my uniform. A large portion of my cheek is burnt. I fainted. When I regained consciousness, there were two nurses on either side of my bed. Those who were caring for other patients also were near me. I want to be on my own, yet...

10th February

Today my class teacher visited me. Teacher has also seen me on TV. I embraced her and cried to my heart's content. Someone from one party who fought with each other had video recorded the incident to use me for their benefit.

I have to suffer for something I was never connected with. How wrong it is to publicize the embarrassing situation I was in? When my disfigured face and unkempt hair flashed on the screen, I felt some form of dread. Only I know the mental agony I suffered as I continued to think about it.

11th February

Today too, the visitors to the hospital who came to see other patients in the evening crowded round my bed. Why... oh why... why, why did this happen? They keep asking the same question. They are asking me whether I need any help. Actually, have I become so helpless? Why are they sympathising with me? They do not realise that I am just another patient treated at the hospital. I too need my privacy.

12th February

My friends from the Dancing class visited me. One of them handed me a piece of a newspaper. Once again, I was embarrassed. The newspaper carried a photograph of me being

carried to the hospital. I feel so sad. My photograph is published in the newspapers without my knowledge. I don't like it.

13th February

Today the Principal visited me with my father. My father told the Principal what he was told. My father and the Principal had a lengthy conversation in the corridor.

14th February

Today a newspaper had informed that they will visit me to find out more about the incident. The hospital refused permission. I was very happy.

16th February

Today I came home. I felt very sad when I went near the mirror. My hand automatically moved to my face. I felt some happiness when I heard my father's words. The Principal had made a request that no details about me should be given to the media.

28th February

I came back to the hospital for treatment on my face and to restore it. The doctor had said that my face can be restored in six months. I was very happy.

Incidents involving children, taking photographs without their consent, publishing them through

the media and encouraging rumours is a threat to a child's privacy, dignity, self-worth and protection. Therefore, every person in society should realise that it is their duty and responsibility to respect the privacy of the child.

In situations of this nature, it is very important that a child is allowed to exercise his/her right to expression, that his/her ideas are respected and that it is responded to positively.

The following Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child need to be read.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 12 - No one, shall be subjected to arbitrary interference, neither with his privacy, family, home or correspondence nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 16 - Children have a right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their families and their homes.

Chapter II

Economic, Social, Cultural Rights & Responsibilities

Economic, social and cultural rights are rights and responsibilities relevant to employment, social security, family life, participation in cultural activities, and the opportunity to enjoy food and nutrition, shelter, clean water, health services and education.

It is the responsibility of every citizen to enjoy their rights in accordance with the law and order of the country.



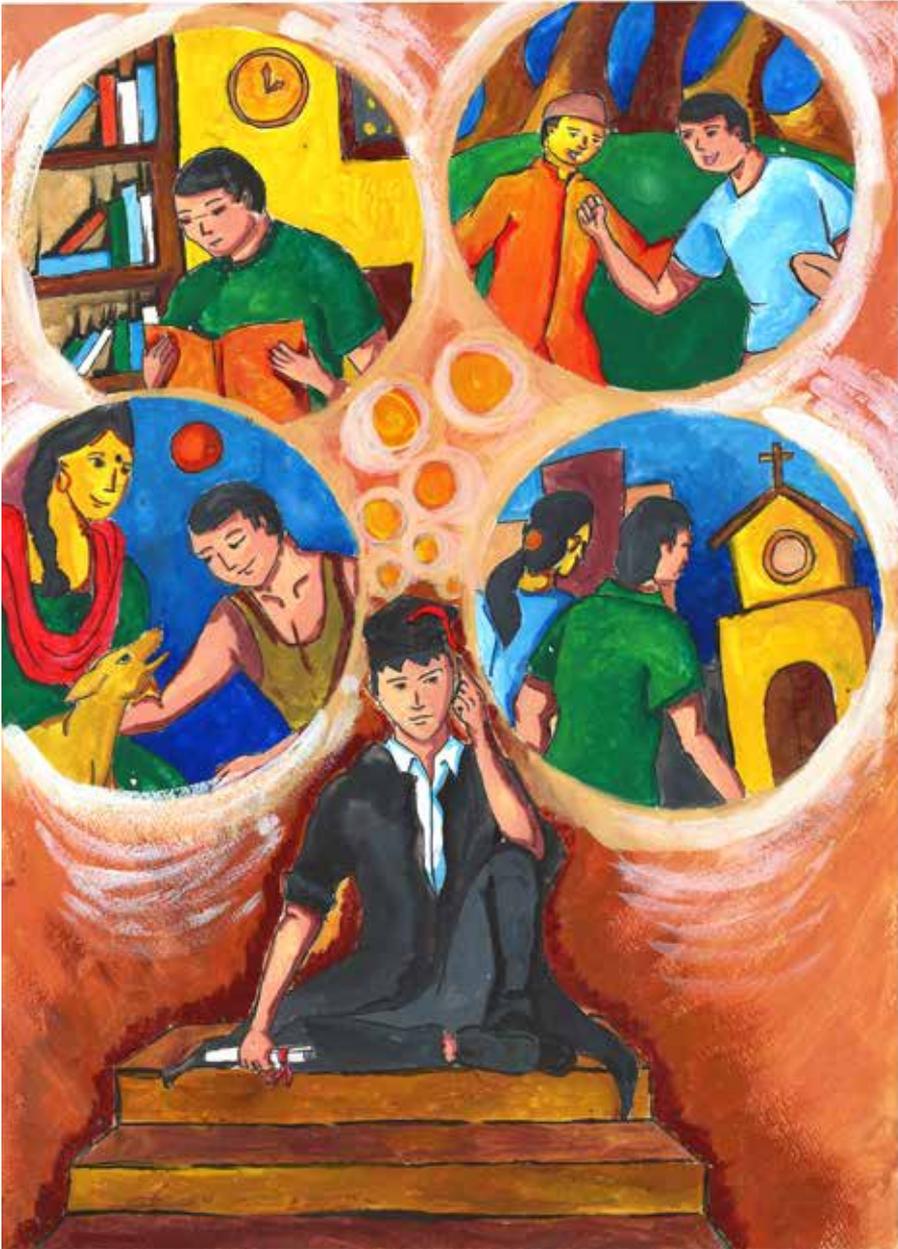
2.1 A Happy Life



K.K. Yugani Sashini Sithara
Grade 12 – Gothami Balika Vidyalaya, Colombo.



B.M.G Nilupul Bandara
Grade 13 – Ananda College, Colombo.



U. D. C. Deshan Gunaratna
Grade 10 – Isipathana College, Colombo.



Diagram 1

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 25 (1) - Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 27 (1) - Children have the right to an adequate standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Governments should help families and guardians who cannot afford to provide this, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing.

2.2 My Son is the Best!



B.M.G Nilupul Bandara

Grade 13 – Ananda College, Colombo.

“Janith has won a scholarship to study abroad” the most wonderful words I ever heard in my life.

Janith is my eldest child. Janith’s mother and I are both blind. I have studied up to GCE Ordinary level using Braille. So I know the value of education very well. My happiness knew no bounds when I found out at Janith’s birth that he was not endowed with our disability. But, after awhile he contracted Polio. Only we know the ferocity of the fire that blazed within our hearts.

Janith’s mother and I knit woollen garments. It was from the School for the Deaf and Blind that we received that training. We sell them at various shops and the income is our living. A number of shops helped us to market our products. From his childhood, Janith showed a talent for Arts. He would sing while keeping time by tapping on a tin and we listened to him eagerly. When we walk from shop to shop with our products... he will say... “there is a stone here... be careful” or “we have

to cross the road here” or “there is another shop close by”... Thus, he shows us the way. Not only that, our son would choose the wool for us saying, “these colours match well”. The people working at the shop were happy about his choices.

Our biggest problem was finding a school for Janith. He insisted that he wanted to attend the same school as his cousin, my brother’s son. We were in a quandary. Will we be able to admit a child with a disability into a normal school? The two of us can never forget the assistance our *Grama Sevaka* offered at that time. He went to the Regional Education Office on our behalf and with a lot of effort we managed to get Janith admitted to the school he wanted to attend. Then the next problem was taking him to school. A schoolmaster in the village willingly undertook to take that responsibility. He took the child to and from school in his vehicle with him. Janith is a child with wholesome merit from his past births for all his problems to be solved as they came up.

At first, the other children were not used to him but with time, he became a very popular friend. How can I forget how the school office helper helped him to go to his class in the morning and get into the vehicle after school? If by chance Janith fails to go to school the helper would come home in the evening to see my son.

What a lucky boy Janith was, despite the fact that he had lost the use of both his legs due to Polio? He was our greatest comfort. Our second child was a daughter. She was a healthy child. Though Janith was still young he loved to look after his younger sister. He attended to his studies and small as he was, he was a great strength to our lives.

He received a scholarship to study abroad because he got himself educated. He never considered his disability as a problem. He passed the grade 5 scholarship bringing tears of joy to our eyes. However, he did not want to leave his village school. He just did not want to abandon the school that contributed so much to his educational achievements. After he passed the GCE Ordinary level exam he had to move to another school because the village school did not have Advanced Level classes. Janith who was singing all the time from his childhood now decided to offer Art for his Advanced Level examination. Though we could not see, we could read his drawings. Our daughter describes the drawings to us. Janith says that watching us knit inspired him to draw.

My son did not have a writing table. He kept a plank across his wheel chair and used it for his work. While he was working he helped his sister too. He was never miserly about sharing his knowledge with her.

Time simply flew. When my son passed his GCE Advanced Level, he won a scholarship to study in Japan. I can't comprehend any of this. He must go as far as he can in his education. We must bless his courage. I comforted Janith's mother by pointing this out to her.

When I think of Janith's educational achievements despite being a child with disabilities as a father my joy knew no bounds. Janith's mother feels the same. When Janith wants to learn something he commits himself fully to his work. My son is a child who has achieved much through his school education. He is our pride and joy and he does our country proud too.

The parents, Principal, teachers and even the office helper who were involved in Janith's education were committed towards ensuring equal opportunities without any discrimination for Janith, a child with disabilities. Guiding him with concern for his special needs had a positive effect on his achievements.

The primary purpose of education should be to identify skills, talents and expectations of the child; to provide him with appropriate opportunities for him to achieve the highest levels in education. The right to education becomes meaningful only if such opportunities are provided.

We should be firmly determined to utilise fully our right to education and become good citizens who can contribute to the welfare of the society in a meaningful way. Let us help to provide equal opportunities for everyone to enjoy the right to education. Through our education let us contribute to encourage peace and harmony, sustainable development and moral development in our society. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Articles 28 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are given below for you to learn more about the Right to Education.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 26 - Everyone has a right to education. Education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 28 - All children have the right to education. Primary education must be compulsory, which should be free. The Convention places a high value on education. Young people should be encouraged to reach the highest levels of education of which they are capable of.

Article 29 – A child’s education shall be directed to the development of the child’s personality, talents and abilities to the fullest potential. It should encourage children to respect the parents, children’s own cultural identity, language and values, other cultures, the national values of the country in which the child is living. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other nations.

2.3 Children of a Single Nation



B.M.G Nilupul Bandara

Grade 13 – Ananda College, Colombo.

“Good Morning! As the day is lit up with sunshine drying up the morning dew, Kasun, the Chairman of the National Children’s Council, Daxon, the co-Chair and Malik, the Secretary of the Committee for Social Survey and Education are with us to participate in a meaningful discussion.”

“Good Morning everybody”

“Good Morning”

“Okay, first of all, we will begin with Daxon. if you can kindly tell us something about the National Children’s Council”

“The National Children’s Council was formed in 2014 by the Department of Probation and Child Care Services, under the auspices of the Ministry for Child Development

and Women's Affairs. The main goal is to provide an opportunity to promote children's active participation and leadership qualities."

"An important feature is that the children from all districts, all races, religions and cultures come together to form a network which works for the common good of all."

"Who does the National Children's Council represent? Kalik, would you like to explain to us?"

"Yes, I would like to explain. The leaders of the children's societies formed at the village level constitute the Divisional Children's Councils and the Divisional leaders constitute the District Children's Council. The leaders of the District Children's Council are appointed to the National Council. Seven children represent each District and thus 175 children like me represent the National Council."

"You have got the opportunity to be a participant of an extremely worthy project. What programmes have you launched through the National Council?"

"We completed a very special programme in 2013 titled "Children Building Bridges". Two children from every district participated in the programme representing the whole country. We came from various backgrounds. Although we were different in terms of race, religion,

language and culture after the five-day programme to date we exchange information on our activities. When we get the opportunity, we meet friends from other districts."

"There is an ongoing training process to develop the talents and knowledge of the Executive Committee members and the members of the National Children's Council. We prepared a two year plan within this training process."

"What the members of the Executive Committee and the National Council learn in this training process is shared with the members of the District Councils. They in turn train the Divisional Council members. The Divisional Council members share their training with the members of the village level children's societies. Those members train the children in the village. In this way the attitudes and the skills of all the children in the country is improved."

"Here we had the opportunity of identifying the challenges that we face as children. The most vital factor was the opportunity we had to propose ways and means of minimising such injustices. We are personally glad that the children's ideas were respected."

"Today we have with us here three students representing the National Children's Council, participating in this dialogue. Now we will take a short break"

“After the break now, I would like to ask Kasun about their future programmes.”

“I will be proceeding to New Delhi with a group of our members to participate in an international programme. When we come back we hope to share our knowledge and experience with the other members.”

“We are children of one country. Whichever province we belong to, whatever position we are in, whatever way we live, being children we are all entitled to our rights. It would be like a preview for us to experience and learn to follow the religion of our choice, to learn about the nature of each other’s cultures, to respect other religions and cultures.”

“What’s more there will be an exchange of knowledge of each other’s regional customs and behaviour patterns. The cordiality, leadership, and co-operation that they experience will spread from divisional level to district level, from there to national level and may be even to the international level!”

“Very good Kasun, May you be able to realise your goals. Hope you will be able to lead your team towards this goal of uniting the nation! On behalf of our broadcasting channel, I wish you all success!

“Finally there is one question. Kalik, how can a child join the National Children’s Council?”

“You can get all the information from the Child Rights Promotion Officer at your Divisional Secretariat.”

“Thank you Kasun, thank you for being with us for so long. I will now bid you good bye with the hope of meeting you on another day.”

This story tells us about the National Children’s Council which gives precedence to children’s participation based on the respect for religions and cultures of others.

According to the narrative, the selection of officials for the National Children’s Council to represent the different races and regions without any discrimination, is an instance that affirms the right of the child to non-discrimination. Everybody’s participation without discrimination is the basis for success of a process of this nature.

The programme ‘Children Building Bridges’ has promoted understanding of different cultures, cultural co-operation and cultural harmony. It is essential for everybody to learn and understand other cultures for the well-being and harmonious living within a multicultural society. Respect for

other cultures is vital to peace and harmony.

More about this right is found in the following Articles.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 27(1) - Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 15 - Children have the right to meet together and to join groups and organisations, as long as it does not stop other people from enjoying their rights. In exercising their rights, children have the responsibility to respect the rights, freedoms and reputations of others.

Article 31 - Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

Chapter III

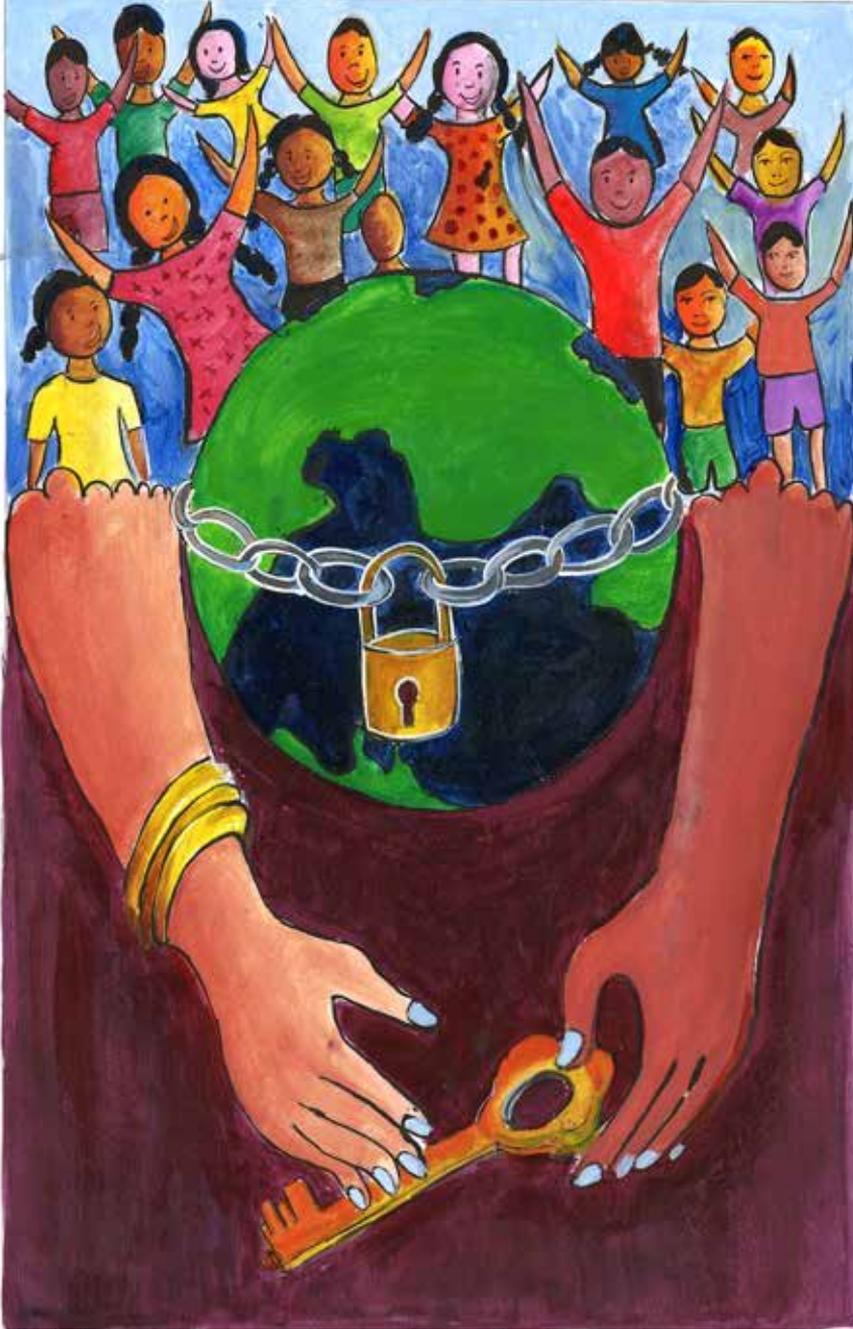
Collective Rights & Responsibilities

Human rights are primarily based on individual rights and freedoms. But the development of common needs and responsibilities as communities, social groups and countries and the awareness of its importance led to the emergence of the concept of collective rights. Though human rights and child rights focus on individual rights, they finally lead to the development and promotion of collective rights. Our focus should be directed on rights and responsibilities that would enable the crafting of a free and peaceful society where every person, including special social groups can thrive and enjoy their rights and freedoms, and help to create a stable atmosphere for everyone to achieve and enjoy a good standard of life.

Collective rights also relate to, and protect the rights of social groups that have special customs, traditions and characteristics, of which indigenous groups are especially included.



3.1 In Search of Freedom....



K.T Dilrukshan Manjith Perera
Grade 8 – Isipathana College, Colombo.

I could not guess why my father was cuddling an Arecanut frond so fondly as if it was a little baby. Stepping into the front veranda my father transferred the bundle he was carrying down to the floor very carefully treating it like a fragile item made of glass.

A Fawn! Ah! His belly pierced by a spike. An involuntary cry of pain escaped through my lips. My mother and sister heard my shriek and came running. My father went into the house, came back with a cup of water and sprinkled a little water on its face. It opened one eye and closed it again. Nangi sat near it and stroked its head. Her eyes were full of tears. My father let a drop of water fall into its mouth. It opened an eye again and made a strange sound. Nangi quickly moved away but her eyes did not leave the baby deer.

Sirisena uncle arrived in a three-wheeler. My father carried the fawn and stepped into the three-wheeler to take the fawn to the Veterinary Clinic. My father went to the forest earlier to collect some firewood. He had seen the fawn there and brought it home. On his way he had sent a message to Sirisena uncle and that is how he arrived so quickly.

My father returned with the fawn saying that we need to look after him very carefully. There was a bandage around its belly. When my sister heard that the Doctor had given it an injection her face went

black. Nangi and I fed the baby deer and nursed it. My mother gave the medicine on time. It helped us without causing any trouble for us. My father took him several times for new dressings for the wound.

After about two weeks, the fawn stood up; walked a little; went to the front garden and started grazing. Nangi was behind it all the time. The moment she wakes up in the morning she comes to see it. While she drinks her glass of milk she pours a little into its bowl. It enjoyed the milk and gradually Nangi started playing with it. It learned to run with my sister and jump over the stile with her.

Suddenly the baby deer stopped eating. It lay in one place and merely gazed on. My sister tried to get it to play with her. She stroked its head. I carried it. But nothing interested the fawn. It looked very sad. My sister suggested taking it to the doctor, fearing it would die. My father took the fawn to the doctor again. My sister accompanied my father.

“The doctor said that there was nothing wrong with the baby deer. Then why is it not eating? It did not drink the milk I gave it in the morning.” Nangi asked sadly. Afterwards both of us held him and forced some milk down its throat. It drank the milk but did not join us at play. It lay in a corner of the veranda and slept. Even when somebody

known to us visited us we showed it and asked them for any cure. But no one could give us a remedy. My father brought the village Ayurvedic doctor and showed it, but he only confirmed that there was nothing wrong with it.

One evening all of us were discussing about the fawn. My sister was cuddling my mother and her arm was round my mother's neck. I was on my father's lap. The baby deer with its nose on the floor was watching us.

My sister suddenly jumped out. She went to the fawn, talked to it lovingly and cuddled it. Then she came near my father.

"Thaththa...,I don't know whether the little deer wants to cuddle to its father and mother the way we like cuddling up to you and Amma. Poor thing! Shall we take it to its father and mother?"

My father stood up along with me. He stroked my sister's head. He went up to the little deer and stroked its back.

"Yes baby, you too must be longing to cuddle with your parents. Though we did not realise it, your friend understood you. Tomorrow we will go in search of your parents"

At first, my mother did not like me and my sister going into the jungle. My father asked her to join us. Then the four of us were to go.

Our neighbour Pala uncle too joined us. My father took care of the little deer the way my mother cared for Nangi and me. It is still a baby. We did not have to go far into the jungle. The little deer got excited. Suddenly it ran through the bushes. We looked at the direction he went. There was a herd of deer by a stream.

"I was right. It wanted its mother and father. That is why it abandoned us the moment it saw its relatives."

Pala uncle stroked my sister's head and said, "My dear, these animals are used to living freely in the jungles in a herd." My sister watched the herd of deer. "Ayya, Ayya, look! it has found its mother. There they are... near that rock. Look Thaththa. Amma did you see? It is drinking its mother's milk. It is a good thing that we brought it here today. Otherwise it would have died." My sister rattled off in one breath.

We watched the herd of deer until they went back into the jungle. The adults were talking about freedom.

I looked at my father's face and said," Even we would not like to leave our parents would we? I am going to relate this story in class tomorrow."

A lovely smile adorned my father's face.

According to this story, the fawn received food, medicine, protection and love in no small measure. But the fawn was not happy, as it had been denied the love of its mother and its freedom. A child too has the right to live with his or her parents in a loving family environment. Everyone in the society should respect that right. This right of the child is protected only if adults respect it. This right is set out in Article 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In the same way, all living beings appreciate their freedom. Humans too need freedom to live a full life within a society. The value of being a human depends on his freedom. A person has to be free to enjoy his rights.

Thus, freedom is an essential factor in personal development and for the blossoming of a developed society.

In all activities involving children, due consideration must be given to their rights and freedom and it is the duty and responsibility of everyone to respect their rights and freedom.

As children, you need to treat freedom as a right that everyone is entitled to and respect other's freedom. Your primary duty is to enjoy your right to freedom without hindering the other's right to enjoy their freedom. This is set out in Article 29 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 29 (2) – A person has the right to exercise his rights and freedom. Such rights and freedom may be limited to secure due recognition and respect for the rights and freedom of others and to meet the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 9 - Children have the right to live with their parent(s), unless it is bad for them. Children whose parents do not live together have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt the child.

3.2 The letter written by the great Red Indian Chief Seattle to the President of the United States of America



W.G Hiran Chamuditha Pieris
Grade 13 – Dharmapala Vidyalaya, Pannipitiya.

The President of the United States of America, Mr Franklin Pierce informed the Red Indian Chief Seattle that he planned to buy the land inhabited by the Red Indian tribes. Given below are excerpts from the letter Chief Seattle sent to the President in response to his plan.

“The American President informs me that he wishes to buy our

land. How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of the Earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clear and humming insect is holy

in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memory and experience of my people. The sap, which courses through the trees, carries the memories of the Red man...

We are part of the Earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters, the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and the man, all belong to the same family.

This shining water that moves in streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you land, you must remember that it is sacred blood of our ancestors. If we sell you land, you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events in the life of my people. The waters murmur is the voice of my father's father.

The rivers of our brothers they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember to teach your children that the rivers are our brothers, and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness that you would give my brother.

But if we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also received his last sigh. And if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where even the white man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers.

Teach your children what we have taught our children that the Earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the Earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves. This we know; the Earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the Earth. This we know; All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the Earth - befalls the sons of the Earth. Man did not weave the web of life - he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover - Our God is the same God. The Earth is precious to Him, and to harm the Earth is to heap contempt on its Creator.

Your destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are slaughtered, the wild horses tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with scent of many

men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the Eagle? Gone. The end of living and the beginning of survival.

We love this Earth as a newborn loves its mother's heart beat. So if we sell you our land, love it as we have loved it. Care for it as we have cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you receive it. Preserve the land for all children and love it as God loves us all.

As we are apart of the land, you too are part of the land. This Earth is precious to us. It is also precious to you. One thing we know. There is only one God. No man, be he, Red Man or White Man can be apart. We are all brothers."

In 236 BC on a Posa day the words uttered by the Venerable Arahant Mahinda to King Devanampiyatissa in front of the rock of Mihintale clearly defines the inter-relationship between humans and the environment. "Great King, you are not the ruler of this land, but only its temporary custodian".

You may have heard of the harmful effects of the unplanned utilization of the environment and its resources by modern man to fulfil his requirements. Maintaining the balance in the environment is

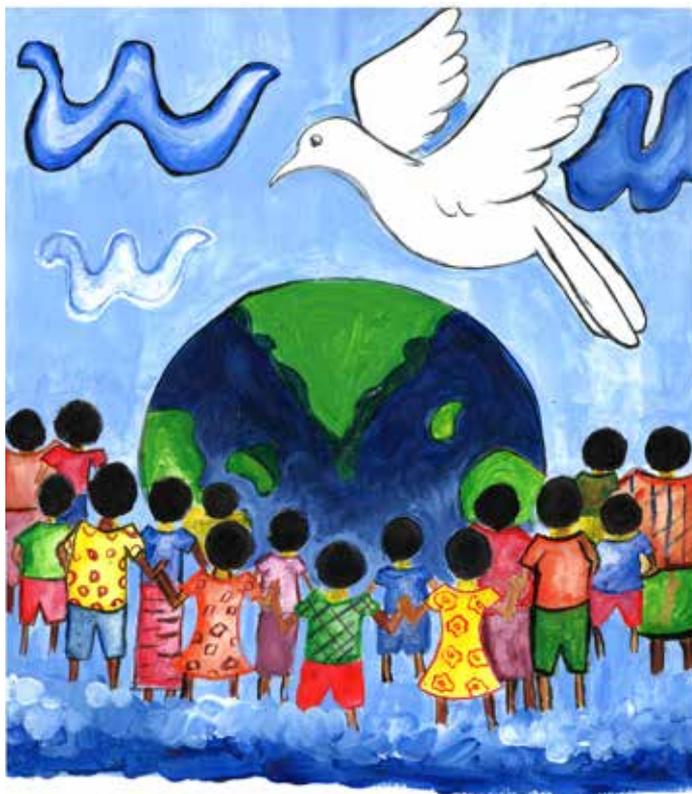
of great importance for sustainable development.

Encourage sustainability by dedicating yourself to live in a balanced environment and ensure the legacy of a pleasant environment to the future generation.

Rio Declaration on Environment and Sustainable Development

Principle No 3 - The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.

3.3 A Black Nation's Struggle for Freedom



H. W. Sewmini Uresha

Grade 10 – Samudradevi Balika Vidyalaya, Colombo.

“The Principal, my teachers and my dear sisters and brothers,

I am here before you today to speak about the story of a Black Nation's struggle for freedom or in other words the story of Nelson Mandela.

Nelson Mandela was born on the 18th of July 1918. The parents named the baby 'Rohihlala'. His father was the principal counsellor to the king of the 'Thembu' people.

So he was trained from his childhood to lead a life full of appropriate traditional responsibilities.

When he lost his father, he went to his mother's birthplace. Her village was located in a narrow strip of land with green grasslands and streams with clear flowing water. It was a village surrounded by mountains full of trees. He loved the small cottages with mud walls and mud floors. Nelson Mandela loved this environment. His humane

attitudes towards his country nation and all human beings were nurtured in this environment of true humane feelings. He received a British education and he was named Nelson at school.

He was sad to leave that beautiful village. He mentions in his autobiography that he loved that small hut as a baby loves its first home and that he felt very sad as he looked back at the village when he left it.

He had also recounted the deep unease he felt when he looked back at the simple huts, the daily wage earners, the playmates who played with him in the streams, the brook, the grassland where goats and sheep grazed, the calves drinking milk off their mother cows.

He left to the city to study law. He obtained a Diploma in Law and practised as a lawyer. He was now drawn into politics.

The fact that the Black Africans lost the right to vote in parliament, the preparation of a separate voter's list for the Black Africans and the need for a permit for black Africans to move from one place to another during periods of emergency laws disturbed Mandela.

The National Party government of 1950 decided to allocate separate buses and schools for the Black people. Mandela did not appreciate this decision. He refused

to acknowledge the decision of the government to discriminate against the Black people and treat them as a separate segment of society.

Mandela launched the Freedom movement with the purpose of gaining the rights of the Black African people.

Because of his activities in the resistance movement, Mandela was imprisoned in 1964. Within the prison, he launched a struggle for the prisoners' rights. Twenty-five years of imprisonment made him a man with wisdom. He realised that the path of violence he chose for the welfare of the nation and the liberation of his people had many shortcomings. During the period in prison the confusion that was in his mind earlier cleared. I believe that during the period of his imprisonment he contemplated on following a middle path as the best strategy to be used specially in his liberation struggle.

In 1990, when F. W. De Klerk became the Prime Minister, Mandela was released from prison. Maybe Mandela realised the value of a 'pardon' when he regained his freedom. His subsequent actions indicate that he had learnt from his experiences. The extent to which he was shaken by his 'pardon' is seen in the fact that the first thing he did after leaving the prison was to visit the Prime Minister during whose period of power he was imprisoned. He was dead by that time but

Mandela met and spoke with his wife and it shows the transformation towards humaneness that occurred in Mandela's mind during his period of imprisonment.

From then onwards he opted for a different path, a path of forgiveness. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on 27th of April 1994 for his acts of forgiveness. He was elected as the President of his country because of his unflinching courage, commitment, honesty and openness. Mandela's government collected information on people who were involved in the murders and rights violations during the period of anti-Apartheid' struggles. The "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu was established during his period of Presidency to investigate and remedy actions of injustice imposed on the Black people through apartheid policies.

The most outstanding quality of Mandela's personality was his ability to forgive. He had perceived the fact that no goal can be reached with militant strategies. Through experience he realised working together was more effective than waging war. He organized open discussions. He met different Tribal chiefs; consulted them; arrived at peaceful solutions.

He openly invited the white people who treated the Blacks with discrimination, destroyed Black

properties, and were responsible for mass killings to admit their wrongful actions. He promised not to punish them but he requested them to ask for forgiveness from the Black people. The strategy Nelson Mandela opted for, at the end of a war was not punishment but forgiveness for mistakes. When his political opponents, the White people, accepted his path of forgiveness and asked the oppressed Black people to pardon their cruel policies, it was a great victory for Nelson Mandela.

Mandela's government investigated the past Human rights abuses and found out the culprits. But it also forgave them. The guilty were made to face the oppressed and instead of promoting conflict, the parties were encouraged to reconcile and live harmoniously.

He is an inspiration to the whole world for the way he directed war and peace towards the proper goal by bringing about peace and reconciliation.

An armed struggle between two racial groups culminated in both parties being brought to the aspired goal. The use of forgiveness by Mandela to achieve this end is a lesson to all. Once he fulfilled his targets, he stepped down after a single term of office setting an incomparable example to the whole world.

I wish to conclude my speech emphasising that Nelson Mandela is

a person whose life and times should be studied and followed not only by you and I but everyone in this world.”

Thank You.

The policies implemented by Nelson Mandela after he was elected President in 1994, had a direct bearing on the establishment of peace and reconciliation in South Africa. The opportunity provided to both perpetrators of violations of Human Rights and the victims of Human Right violations to exchange their ideas and expectations was a very special initiative. The positive outcome of this effort was the decision of the victims to forgive the perpetrators. It opened the path to peace.

Forgiveness offered created an environment conducive for both parties to reach an amicable agreement instead of fostering hatred and revenge. Judicial and non-judicial measures were taken to prevent a recurrence of rights violations.

Children play a major role in peace and reconciliation efforts in a country. Through opening avenues for children and youth to express their views on peace and reconciliation would provide them with the opportunity to participate in activities to strengthen peace and reconciliation. Appropriate knowledge should be imparted to children and youth and they should

be given the chance to develop the necessary skills.

You, the current generation of children and youth will be the future policy makers for peace. You will also be implementing those policies. It is your responsibility to acquire the knowledge and develop the right attitudes and mentality to perform your duties effectively. Making use of the opportunities offered to you to develop the appropriate skills is also your duty and responsibility.

“Denying the human rights of people is a total denial of their humanity”

- Nelson Mandela

United Nation’s Charter

Article 1 - One of the purposes and the main goal of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 2 - Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Chapter IV

Principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Non-discrimination
Best Interests of the Child
Survival and Development
Right to Participation



Principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is based on four main principles related to children.

- Non-discrimination
- Best Interests of the child
- Survival and development
- Right to participation

Let us examine these four Principles.

Non-Discrimination

A modern society has variety in terms of ethnicity, religion, language, colour, gender within its composition. Further, differences could arise based on income, employment, land ownership, political or other opinions and so forth. There are also persons with disabilities. Despite all these differences, there is one common factor -the factor of being a human.

Importantly, this principle confirms that all children should not have to face any form of discrimination and should have the right to equality. As an example, girl children and boy children or less privileged children, refugee children or tribal children, children of small ethnic groups and differently abled children, all have the right to equal opportunities.

Article two of the Convention states that all children without discrimination should be provided with the opportunity of enjoying the rights mentioned in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This ensures the right of every child to be protected from all forms of discrimination. Countries that have adopted the Convention are expected to take appropriate measures to protect this right of the child. The right of the child to be assured of non-discrimination has to be accepted in principle too.

The story titled 'We are Friends!' in Chapter 1 elucidates the need for non-discrimination. You would have realised that the other stories too emphasise how lives of children were positively affected by the availability of equal opportunities to enjoy their rights without any form of discrimination.

Thus facilitating the enjoyment of equal rights based on the principle of non-discrimination for every child leads to the total development of children's personalities. Respecting the principle of non-discrimination with regard to children is a social duty. The end result will be the development of the larger society through individual development.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.”

“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.”

- Martin Luther King Jr.

Best Interests of the Child

Think of the story titled ‘Where is Pubudu?’. It was an instance where a child with disabilities developed his talents to the highest level. His school helped him to achieve his goal. It is the duty and responsibility of every person who works with children to promote the best interest of the child in this manner. Similarly, all levels of society that are directly involved with children – family, school and society – need to always focus on working towards the best interests of the child through their actions.

Article 3 of the UN Convention on Rights of the Child sets forth the principle of the best interests of the child. This Article stresses the importance of all Government and non-governmental organisations, including Social Welfare Organizations, Law

enforcement authorities, the Judiciary and the Administrative Officers of Government, giving primary consideration to the best interests of the child when developing policies, laws, services for children. For instance in the preparation of the Annual Budget of the State, priority should be given to developing facilities that are relevant for children, such as education, health, welfare of children, and maternity health.

The child’s right to express his ideas and participate in decision-making is vital to the promotion of the best interest of the child. All institutions working with children, in all their activities involving children need to recognize and consider children’s opinions and views. Recognising and facilitating children’s right to participate will ensure that the best interests of the child are given primary consideration.

Survival and Development

Article No 6(1) sets out the child’s right to life while Article 6(2) deals with the need to ensure child’s right to survival and development.

The parents and the members of the family as well as the entire society are legally and morally bound to ensure the child’s right to life. Hence, it becomes the responsibility of the State as well.

Basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, health and clean water are essential for the survival of the child. Another right necessary for the survival of the child is non-discrimination. Equality in access to and distribution of basic needs protects the child's right to non-discrimination.

Holistic development includes both physical and mental development. Therefore, facilitating education, protection, social care and security act as pre-requisites that lead to holistic development of the child. Active participation in matters that affect children too is essential to the total development of the child and such opportunities provides the child with the chance to get what he/she needs in the manner he/she needs it.

Right to Participation

Now think of the story 'Look! This is how we work'. Weren't the children in that story given the opportunity to participate in the Environment programme from the planning stage to the evaluation of results? Article No.12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child elucidates this Right.

It is important to give due consideration to the ideas put forward by children, when taking decisions on matters involving

children within the social institutions of family, school, community etc. Providing opportunities to children to express their opinions and ideas, listening and giving them serious consideration and responding to them are pre-requisites that lead to the full realisation of this right. Opportunities for participation should be offered taking into account the stages of development and the changing abilities of a child. It will also serve the best interests of the child.

On the other hand, as children, you need to be conscious of your duties and responsibilities when you are enjoying the right to express your ideas and participating in decision-making.

It is essential that children learn to express their opinions that are formed on a fair and justifiable basis. Similarly, you must develop the habit of respecting the ideas of adults, parents and others. Their ideas and opinions should also be judged and evaluated impartially.

Working in the best interests of the child, non-discrimination and the right to participate are factors that directly influence the survival and holistic development of the child.

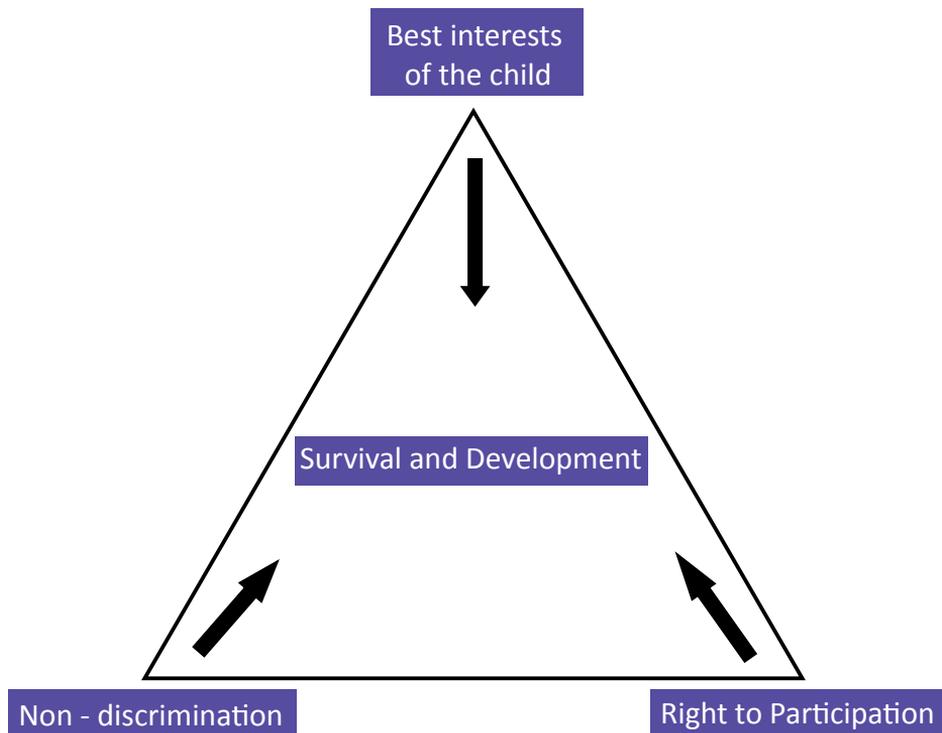


Diagram 2

It must be clear to you that these rights are all inter-connected in such a way that it is almost impossible to distinctly separate one from the other (Diagram 2). Similarly, all human rights and child rights are closely inter-connected. The stories you read too would clearly illustrate this feature.

Opportunities are provided to children from their childhood within the family and the school environment to develop skills relevant to the democratic way of life. Enjoyment of rights and fulfilling the allied duties, respecting individual freedoms, non-discrimination are some of the qualities. Adding these qualities to life would lead to a peaceful life and a peaceful society.

Conclusion

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Annexures



Conclusion

Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural country with a number of ethnicities, diverse religions and cultures. As a nation, we are all bound together as Sri Lankans. We need to respect each other's diversity and value our unity as a nation at all times.

A democratic country strives to ensure equality in providing for the optimum enjoyment of human rights for all. The State has the primary responsibility and duty of protecting these rights. Similarly as a society, community, family and an individual, every person bears the responsibility of respecting and protecting human rights. Human rights provide the guidance necessary to create an equal and fair environment for everyone. Protecting human rights today does not limit it to the present but is a guarantee for the protection of human rights for the future. Your life as a child within a society that protects rights will result in making you an adult respecting others' rights, protecting human rights and appreciating harmonious living.

This reader contains human rights and child rights that would be found in an environment essential for living with a full and developed standard of living for people in general and children in particular. The main concern here should be that as much as we are entitled to

a host of rights and freedoms there are also duties and responsibilities that are intrinsically connected to them. These rights are a vital factor in extending the compassionate nature of our unique social, cultural, religious and moral environment.

Annexure 1

Institutions that work for the Protection and Care of Children

Department of Probation and Child Care Services

3rd Floor, Sethsiripaya.

Battaramulla.

Telephone: 01122186062

Email : pcc@slt.net.lk

Website: www.probation.gov.lk

Divisional offices of the Department of Probation and Child Care Services are found island-wide and any problems regarding children can be referred to these offices.

National Child Protection Authority

No.330, Thalawathugoda Road, Madiwela,

Sri Jayawardenapura.

Telephone: 0112778211-4

E mail: ncpa@childprotection.gov.lk

Website: www.childprotection.gov.lk

Anytime your security is threatened you can access the National Child Protection authority through its National Children's Telephone Service No 1929.

The National Child Protection Authority has Child Protection Officers attached to every Divisional Secretariat in the island to provide services to children.

Police Women and Children's Bureau

Head Office

No 16, Subodha Building, Pagoda Road,

Nugegoda.

Further branches of the children and women's unit have been established at every Police station in Sri Lanka.

A number of State officials have been appointed to provide services to children and families at divisional level.

Position	Office	Services provided
Child Rights Promotion Officer	Divisional Secretariat	All services relevant to child rights and co-ordination Children's societies and groups
Divisional Child Protection Officer	Divisional Secretariat	Inquiring into problems re: protection of children and providing assistance
Early Childhood Development Officer	Divisional Secretariat	Pre-school education and other services related to early childhood
Counsellor Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs	Divisional Secretariat	Counselling services for children and women
Social Services Officer	Divisional Secretariat	Special social welfare services of the government for beneficiaries including children
Women's Development Officer	Divisional Secretariat	Home economics and professional education services for women and girl children
Non-formal Education Officer	Regional Education Office	Services for children not attending school

Annexure 2

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 1 - Everyone under 18 has these rights.

Article 2 - All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.



Article 3 - All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

Article 4 - The government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected. They must help your family to protect your rights and create an environment where you can grow and reach your potential.

Article 5 - Your family has the responsibility to help you learn to exercise your rights, and to ensure that your rights are protected.



Article 6 - You have the right to be alive.

Article 7 - You have the right to a name, and this should be officially recognized by the government. You have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country).

Article 8 - You have the right to an identity – an official record of who you are. No one should take this away from you.

Article 9 - You have the right to live with your parent(s), unless it is bad for you. You have the right to live with a family who cares for you.

Article 10 - If you live in a different country than your parents do, you have the right to be together in the same place.

Article 11 - You have the right to be protected from kidnapping.

Article 12 - You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.



Article 13 - You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people.

Article 14 - You have the right to choose your own religion and beliefs. Your parents should help you decide what is right and wrong, and what is best for you.

Article 15 - You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.

Article 16 - You have the right to privacy.

Article 17 - You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being, from radio, newspaper, books, computers and other sources. Adults should make sure that the information you are getting is not harmful, and help you find and understand the information you need.



Article 18 - You have the right to be raised by your parent(s) if possible.



Article 19 - You have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.

Article 20 - You have the right to special care and help if you cannot live with your parents.

Article 21 - You have the right to care and protection if you are adopted or in foster care.

Article 22 - You have the right to special protection and help if you are a refugee (if you have been forced to leave your home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.

Article 23 - You have the right to special education and care if you have a disability, as well as all the rights in this Convention, so that you can live a full life.



Article 24 - You have the right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help you stay well.



Article 25 - If you live in care or in other situations away from home, you have the right to have the seliving arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate.

Article 26 - You have the right to help from the government if you are poor or in need.

Article 27 - You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.

Article 28 - You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.

Article 29 - Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

Article 30 - You have the right to practice your own culture, language and religion - or any you choose. Minority and indigenous groups need special protection of this right.



Article 31 - You have the right to play and rest.

Article 32 - You have the right to protection from work that harms you, and is bad for your health and education. If you work, you have the right to be safe and paid fairly.

Article 33 - You have the right to protection from harmful drugs and from the drug trade.

Article 34 - You have the right to be free from sexual abuse.

Article 35 - No one is allowed to kidnap or sell you.

Article 36 - You have the right to protection from any kind of exploitation (being taken advantage of).

Article 37 - No one is allowed to punish you in a cruel or harmful way.

Article 38 - You have the right to protection and freedom from war. Children under 15 cannot be forced to go into the army or take part in war.

Article 39 - You have the right to help if you've been hurt, neglected or badly treated.

Article 40 - You have the right to legal help and fair treatment in the justice system that respects your rights.

Article 41 - If the laws of your country provide better protection of your rights than the articles in this Convention, those laws should apply.