

Children's Parliament

Vision: Present day social challenges like social injustices, inequalities, poverty, corruption, terrorism, unemployment, lack of basic human relationship, disease, casteism, communalism and atrocities against women, children and socially and economically weak and so on are the direct result of lack of people's (at individual level) active participation in governance. Governance here means, direct power in the whole process of identifying their own problems and needs, discussing them, taking decision to set them right, charting out suitable action plans for the same, implementing the action plans and evaluating the implementation and so on.

Towards this, we promote the importance of children's participation in self-governance and in the above whole processes by educating, organising and empowering them which alone will lead to the much needed social change through a programme called "**Children's Parliament**".

Why the name "Children's Parliament"?

As all are well aware the word **Parliament** comes from the Latin word **Parlare** which in English means **to speak** and thus parliament means the **place to speak**. Parliament is the highest decision making body in any democracy but people do not have any accessibility to these parliaments and their processes and they do not have an assertive say in anything which is directly related to them and to their welfare and development and they are left high and dry powerless and helpless at the mercy of their "elected representatives". Hence, we propose to bring this parliament to the streets where people live (**as neighbourhood parliaments**) where people will have a strong assertive say and where people have active participation which alone will ensure the permanent eradication of the above stated and other social challenges. Since making people participate (due to their already filled up selfish notions and other factors) is a long and laborious process, we have felt the need of introducing this participatory process among children and form them as children parliaments. Children Parliaments are formed at every neighbourhood level of 25 to 30 houses, as only these children are going to be the adults in their neighbourhood in a few years, so that the **neighbourhood parliaments** become a possibility in the near future.

Children In charge:

Today there are efforts all over the world to help children to be in charge as children are the best agents of the much-sought social change.

Children refuse to be any more just objects to be looked at. They are not any more to just listen to whatever the elders say without being listened to. They are not any more to be kept away from the decision-making foray and processes. They have started demanding that their viewpoints be also heard. They are beginning to participate in various social and political decision making forum. They too want to determine the direction of tomorrow's world. They believe that they can do this better than the elders without any inhibitions or selfish expectations.

They are not anymore just to be governed, but also to govern, not in the sense of just preparing for tomorrow's governance but to govern now. They have realized their rights to participate in governing right now.

Children Parliament: Highly Innovative:

Children Parliament is not only an education process in its strict sense but also it is a children's movement with deliberations, interventions and actions at neighbourhood level of 25 to 30 families. All the children between 6 to 18 years in these families are formed as a parliament irrespective of their caste, community, race, social and economical status or their educational status. Every child in the particular neighbourhood is an equal member of the said Parliament.

After an initial training the children of each parliament elect their prime minister and other ministers like home, finance, education, health, environment, law, communication and public works and so on, as the need may be through the sociocratic election process or which is called a consensus objectionless election process. The rest of the members will be divided into groups as may be required by each ministry to help the concerned minister. Thus each member is responsible for something some way or other. Each minister and his committee will have a specific role to play. These parliaments will be networked by representation at village, panchayat, block, district, state and national levels.

Functioning of Children Parliament:

Once Children Parliament is formed the swearing in of the ministers is complete, members are trained in children rights and basic human rights. They are trained to identify problems or social evils or rights violation, which affects them or their families or the society at large directly or indirectly. They are trained on the process of healthy and open discussions, decision making by consensus, charting out action plans, implementing the plans, evaluating the implementation and so on. They are also given training about the government policies and available government schemes and facilities offered and the departments and agencies responsible whom can be approached in need. The ministers are also trained about their duties and responsibilities and functions.

Children Parliament convenes its formal meeting once a week according to their convenience and the members discuss any matters or problems put forward by each minister and if need be they chart out action plans and the method and time frame for its implementation and evaluate the already implemented plans and thus participate with maximum active involvement in every step and process of finding permanent solutions to the problems and their total eradication. And thus each member exercises his or her absolute power in self-governance.

Children Parliament and Sustainability:

It is children who are running these parliaments. Since it involves personal participation of each child in the whole above processes, children will find themselves enthralled in their ability and power of actions and their success, which will develop them into holistic personalities. They find their dignity and strength more so their self confidence when they experience exercising their rights and political powers and when their say reaches the unreachable. They just feel aghast at their own achievement, which are otherwise monumental to them. Once these experiences of power, strength, achievements and reachability grow day by day they will naturally own the movement, which in turn guarantees the sustainability, which is already witnessed in all areas.

Children Parliament and its Strength:

Each children parliament is in no way an isolated set up though each parliament's individuality is kept. Since the numbers of NGOs, welfare associations and even GOs those show keen interest to form these parliaments in their working areas are increasing, quite a large number of parliaments will be formed in various districts. As they are formed at wider areas they will be networked through their elected representatives at various levels like district level and the state level. When this networking takes place at state and national level, the small, little feeble voice of each child in each parliament will be heard at various levels specially at state and national level and thus this small parliament at a neighbourhood level can play a contributive and constructive role at even national level, becoming a very strong movement at national level.

Children Parliament and its impact:

As already stated, all the social challenges are the direct result of powerlessness and helplessness of people, lack of awareness among the people, lack of selfless mindset, lack of active participation of each individual in the whole process of self-governance and lack of proper forum for participation.

Children Parliament play pivotal role of removing these above lacking. They create an awareness among children about the evils and their causes and the role they should play to eradicate them. They create the right mindset of selflessness, the mindset to realize their individual and collective responsibilities and actions and the mindset to approach a problem as a problem of the whole society however individualistic it is. And more importantly besides broadening their social outlook and social approach a new mindset of love, sharing, tolerance, equality and justice blossoms.

They create an opportunity for each and every individual to actively participate however small and marginalized he or she is, in the process of self-governance.

Finally they become the basic foundation and the basic platform where each one participates and sustains his power thus paving a way for a society sans any evil and become the inevitable and effective tool for the total social change.

Children Parliament and their effect.

Children Parliament will witness:

1. An empowered society of children; committed band of citizens involved in active and constructive socio politics, a community of children with no communal, caste disparities or its hangovers.
2. Children pursuing education with sharpened clarity and self confidence
3. Children understanding socio-economic, political conditions of their society and the world and their role to bring a change for better.
4. Eradication of school dropouts
5. Eradication of child labour
6. Eradication of child abuse
7. Eradication of child trafficking
8. Eradication of Child marriages
9. Eradication of female infanticides and feticides
10. Children exercising their rights and power in self-governance
11. Children discovering their dignity, strength and the power of success
12. Children identifying the causes for all the social challenges and discovering the methods to eradicate them
13. Children experiencing the importance of participation and dialogue.
14. Children making their presence felt and their view points heard
15. Children ensuring their own security, welfare and development
16. Children experiencing the value of basic human relationship and the sense of belongingness

And Ultimately

These children parliament become the basic foundation for the future neighbourhood parliaments, which ensures each individual's participation in self-governance in a much more meaningful and empowered manner.

Children Parliament and the final result

Through these Children Parliaments, the children participants are molded in their positive, constructive and social mindset so that they out rightly reject any type of differences including castism and communalism and important global challenges like terrorism, hunger, disease and so on as they grow and this mindset is immunized against any kinds of disparities practiced or left unconcerned by the elders. Thus a new social approach and a new outlook of treating everyone equal and important

will be the order of the day and when they become elders a new social order of equality and justice will be established.

As these children participants become aware of their rights, they easily identify the violation of their rights and the causes, people and circumstances responsible for the said violation and they take the necessary steps to ensure once and for all the eradication of these violations permanently through their active and constructive participatory process of identifying, discussing, decision making, charting out the required action plans, implementing the taken action plans and evaluating the results.

Through these process of participation and self governance,

- Eradication of illiteracy
- Eradication of school dropouts
- Eradication of child abuse
- Eradication of child labour
- Eradication of female infanticides and feticides
- Eradication of child marriages
- Eradication of child trafficking
- Eradication of terrorism and extremism
- Eradication of hunger
- Eradication of physical and mental diseases
- Eradication of corruption and exploitation
- Eradication of any violation of any of their rights totally
- Building human relationships
- Building a new socio political order where even the last person has an assertive say
- Every one's welfare, development, safety and security
- Every one's fullness of life (life of joy, happiness, prosperity and peace)

are ensured without any compromise.

As these children participants become aware of their strength and ability to achieve almost impossible objectives for their age, and this awareness definitely increases their self-confidence, which enables them to grow fully empowered so that their participation in turn becomes more and more active and constructive which is the most important requirement for the transformation of the society.

As these children participants realize that their economical well being is their right, they device their own accommodative and constructive participatory courses through which they as a group ensure their economical development which results in a common self sufficient and self reliant society as they grow.

These children parliaments imbue a new culture of social, political, economical and humane responsibility in the minds of the children participants so that they grow into responsible citizens building the future society sans evils and thus establishing a new inclusive, accommodative and responsible social order.

And finally, as these children participants become aware of the importance of participation, healthy dialogue and discussion a new selfless mindset and a new culture of sharing, tolerance, equality, justice and human relationship and mutuality is inculcated in the minds of children, so that ultimately the future society blossoms into a transformed selfless society of love, brotherhood, peace, equality, justice, tolerance, co-existence and so on.