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Topic Name: Play

Lecture Title

Play Script

Well students, all of you are familiar with the term 'Play'. The term play gives us joy. Tendency to play is universal. Human beings as well as animals play. It is present in children, in grown ups and in all ages and stages and in every strata of society. It is integral part of our life. Play has assumed an important place in education system. Modern systems of education are based on play. Every child has a desire to play but there is a variety of manifestations of this desire.

Tendency to play has led psychologists to believe that play either is an innate tendency or it is an instinctive urge, but both beliefs are not satisfying. Undoubtedly, all children have a desire to play but they do not play exactly the same way. They participate in variety of activities and at different times they play different activities. There's no special instinct which we call play instinct, neither we can call play as an innate tendency, nor can we label it as an instinctive urge. Answer to this query still remains unanswered. Ryburn's observation can satisfy the query, who observes "Play is a way, a means which is used by the self when the different instinctive urges are trying to express themselves." It provides us a means for activity of so many different kinds and thus gives opportunities for expression of our instinctive urges like combat, curiosity, self-assertion, self-abasement, gregariousness, acquisition, construction and laughter.

We will look at certain definitions to have a more comprehensive view about the nature of play.

According to Stern, "Play is a kind of voluntary self-constrained activity"

According to Hurlock, "Play relates to any activity engaged in for the enjoyment it gives, without consideration of the end result."

According to Nunn, “Play is a profound manifestation of creative activities.”

According to Valentine, “Play is a kind of amusement in the work.”

According to Thomson, “Play is impulse to carry out certain instinctive actions.”

According to Ross, “Play is joyful, spontaneous and creative activity in which man finds fullest self expression.”

According to Crow and Crow, “Play can be defined as the activity which a person engages when he is free to do what he wants to do.”

On the basis of the definitions, by consensus certain features of the play emerge as:

- ⇒ It is an innate tendency.
- ⇒ Play is any activity that gives joy and pleasure to the individual.
- ⇒ It is voluntary as individual carries it at will without restraints.
- ⇒ It's spontaneous.
- ⇒ It has no specific aim or purpose.
- ⇒ It releases pent-up energies. In other words, it can be said that it has a cathartic value.
- ⇒ It's an end in itself, which means that play is not a means to an end but an end in itself because it is taken purely for itself.

Concludingly, it can be said that play is any activity undertaken for the sake of fun. It is free from any formalities. There are no social and personal restraints.

But, we have so many queries, like:

- ⇒ Why do we play?
- ⇒ Why nature has bestowed on man this tendency?
- ⇒ What is the nature of play?
- ⇒ What is the purpose of play?

We shall discuss various theories to satisfy these queries.

The first theory is Surplus Energy Theory.

Surplus Energy Theory: This theory was initiated by German poet Schiller and it was supported by Herbert Spencer (renowned philosopher). According to this theory, children are taken care of by their parents for all needs. They are fed and dressed-up by their parents. So they have lots of surplus energy. Proponents of this theory opined that play is nothing but a manifestation of this surplus energy. Play is a safety valve which gives outlet to the surplus energy which otherwise could create problems. Play is analogous to safety valve of steam engine or pressure cooker. This theory logically seems to satisfy our query but is open to criticism because it fails to satisfy few questions like

- ☐ Why does an individual play even when they are tired?
- ☐ Why there is no definite form of play?

- □ This theory has focused only on physical energy. What about psychological energy?
- □ To compare play with the safety valve of engine is not justified when we focus on the productive value of play as play contributes to all-round development of the individual, whereas safety valve only discharges surplus energy.

In spite of these drawbacks, this theory is acceptable to common man.

2. Next Theory is:

Anticipatory Theory

∴ This theory was propounded by Karl Groos. He was of the opinion that play activities of children are anticipatory in nature which means that the child anticipates the future business of life and sub-consciously prepares for future vocation. Different children play different games, they perform different roles of teacher, doctor, soldier, mother, father, shop-keeper, policeman, driver etc. According to Karl Groos, energy spent in the play is not useless. Play prepares the individual for future and contributes to the individual's physical, mental and social development.

T.P. Nunn quotation justifies the same view, "Nature invented play not merely as a means of disposing harmlessly of young animals' superfluous energy but it is devised for using that energy to prepare him for serious business of life"

Anticipatory theory convincingly justifies certain play activities of children but fails to provide answers to certain questions like

- ⇒ How do children anticipate future business of life?
- ⇒ Why do adults play?
- ⇒ Why do children engage themselves in activities or games like Kho-Kho, Hide and Seek, Hopscotch etc., which has nothing to do with future business?

Though this theory is not flawless, but it lays stress on vocational training in education. It also emphasizes that play spirit should be introduced in work.

Next theory is,

Recapitulatory Theory: This theory was put forward by Prof. Stanley Hall. He advocated evolutionary theory by saying man has an inborn desire to live as a primitive man. According to him, this inborn desire to pass through different stages of evolution is made possible only by means of play activity. While playing the games like hide and seek, shooting arrows, climbing trees, stone throwing, building sand caves, child recapitulates activities related to biological aspects of evolution. Though this theory satisfactorily explains the reason of playing games like

- ⇒ hide and seek
- ⇒ shooting arrows
- ⇒ climbing trees
- ⇒ stone throwing
- ⇒ building sand caves

Yet it fails to provide satisfactory answers to the questions raised for certain playful activities like playing with paper-made rockets, airplanes, sputniks etc.

Theory also fails to answer questions like:

- ⇒ why do they play the games portraying roles of mother, father, teacher, police etc.?
- ⇒ how does child remember the activities undertaken during evolutionary stages?

Concludingly, in spite of certain objections, this theory helps us to understand interests and aptitude of children.

Next is,

Recreational Theory: German scholar, Lazarus propounded Recreational Theories of Play.

Lord Kames and Patrick supported his theory. As is evident from the name, proponents of the theory were of the opinion, after doing work or study, physically and mentally get fatigued.

The indulge in playful activities for seeking relaxation and recreation. Play is nothing but a means to relax, refresh and recreate. This theory advocates play only for the sake of recreation but fails to explain

- ⇒ playing games for the purpose of competition.
- ⇒ Playing games by children even when they are not tired and indulge playing even by ignoring important assignments at home.

Next theory is,

Cathartic Theory: Ross advocated Freud's Cathartic Theory to explain the nature of play.

According to him, play is cathartic in action. It provides an outlet for certain pent-up instincts and emotions which otherwise fail to get suitable appropriate outlet.

Play activities therefore provide opportunities for the expression of the feelings that otherwise would remain pent-up. For example, while playing the game of school-school, child can say things while acting as a teacher that he would like to say to his real teacher but he can not dare to say. There is catharsis of instinctive and emotional energy and we engage ourselves in indoor and outdoor games. Though this theory is popular for cathartic value of play it is also criticized on the following points:

- ⇒ Why do children and adults play when they have no emotional problem?
- ⇒ This theory just talks about the psychic energy but neglects the physical aspects of the play.

Psychoanalytic Theory:

This theory was put forward by Freud. This theory is similar to Cathartic Theory. According to this theory. Play is manifestation of repressed desires. An individual can manifest his desires through play which he can not otherwise portray. For example, if a child is bothered about the autocratic behavior of the teacher, but he can not express due to fear of parents and teacher. While playing the role of a teacher, he can give outlet to his repressed thoughts. This theory is criticized on the point that psychoanalytic theory deals with the problems of abnormal individuals. Hence it can not explain the nature of play of normal child.

All activities can not be the result of repressed wishes.

In spite of its drawbacks, the play technique is very useful for locating behavioral disorders of mal-adjusted child.

Instinct Theory:

McDougal propounded instinctive theory of play. According to him play is natural tendency and inborn with the individual. Play is the expression of instincts. It makes possible a legitimate expression of instincts of combats, construction, destruction, self-assertion etc. through play, instinctive energy gets suitable outlet, enabling the child to be comfortable with himself and his surroundings. While playing, children indulge in breaking and making things. They quarrel, fight and show their fearlessness in variety of situations, which helps the individual to have smooth maturing of their instincts.

It is criticized on the point that play is not an instinct but it is a general innate tendency which finds expression in play.

3. Social Contract Theory:

Social Psychologists consider that play is an activity which acts as a cohesive social force because when individuals play, they form peer groups, cultural groups, athletic teams etc. which satisfies the basic instinct of gregariousness. By becoming a member of a team or a group, individuals enter into sort of a social contract. For sociologists, social units like home, marriage, club etc. are a result of social contract among people, which may be spontaneous or may be by choice or imposed by social groups.

Play keeps individuals socially bound. Sociologists consider that play is a great socializing force especially during the formative years. But it is criticized on the point that infants in the beginning do not play in group but still this theory can be defended on the grounds that play is a great force of socialization when children form peers in early childhood and attain the membership of a peer group.

To sum up, all these theories contain an element of truth but none of them is a complete explanation of the play. They are only partial and incomplete. Viewpoints on the play are many and diverse, often complementing and supplementing one another. But none of them is able to present a decisive solution to the term play, its nature, its function and its objectives. A comprehensive view about play can be developed only by putting all the viewpoints together and not taking them in isolation. Concludingly, it can be said, Play is an activity which is recreational, instinctive, cathartic and re-capitulatory.

4. Play-Way in Education

As is obvious from previous discussion, play is any activity carried out for the sake of pleasure which has no restraints, no definite goal. Play is internally motivated without any external motivation, but when we work we are both internally and externally motivated and we have some definite goals. We even have to perform work under unpleasant circumstances.

There's no clear-cut demarcation in work and play. When one plays with own will without any motive, without any restrictions, just for the sake of pleasure, it is play. On the other hand, when the same play is undertaken under restrictions for the sake of money, for the sake of winning medals, it becomes work. Actually the distinction between the play and work, lies not in the activities themselves but in the attitude of the doer towards them. Therefore, we must as a teacher and parent, develop a desirable attitude towards their studies and work. We should try to inculcate play spirit in their work. The need of introducing play spirit has given birth to a new concept known as 'Play-way in Education'. So we try our best to introduce the spirit of play in education so pupils take up education lightly without any mental stress and they come to classroom with the same spirit with which they go to playground so that they don't feel anxious while going to the classroom. To achieve this goal many play-way methods are introduced in education like

- ⇒ Kindergarten
- ⇒ Montessori
- ⇒ Dalton Plan
- ⇒ Basic System of Education
- ⇒ Project Method
- ⇒ Heuristic Method
- ⇒ Correlation Method
- ⇒ Story-telling method
- ⇒ Self-Governments
- ⇒ Scouting Girl Guides
- ⇒ Dramatization
- ⇒ Intellectual Games
- ⇒ Debates and Discussions

The purpose of all these play-way methods is to achieve the purpose of education by providing the pupils a play like environment where they enjoy learning without restraints.

5. Difference Between Play and Work

Play and work are two different things. They have the following points of difference:

1. 1. Motive: Work is something which we have to do; it has some motive behind it. Work is carried out for some end. Play has no specific end or motive behind it. It is done for its own sake,
2. 2. Voluntary: Play is voluntary. It is not performed under the pressure of anyone else. But this cannot be said under work and other activities. Certain works are sometimes done under the pressure of other.
3. 3. Boredom: While work bores, play refreshes, whenever we feel bored or tired after work, we play.
4. 4. Recreational activity: Play is recreational and spontaneous activity. It holds our interest as associated with successful completion of the task. There is no undue strain or pressure on mind but work is strenuous.
5. 5. Natural and Acquired: Play is natural activity and work is acquired.
6. 6. Imagination and reality: Play is connected with the world of imagination and

work has to do with world of reality. In other words, in work, the ends are real world but in play the ends are make believe world.

7. 7. Age: With the growth in age, play diminishes. On the other hand, burden of work grows.
8. 8. In play only the player gains, while in work the interests of others are also involved.
9. 9. According to Drever, "In play the value and significance of the activity is found in the activity itself, whereas in work the value and significance of the activity is found in an end beyond the activity."

In spite of all these differences between work and play, work can be changed into play and play can be changed into work. It all depends upon the attitude of the individual towards any activity. The same activity can be played as well as work. For example, for an artist, painting is work, whereas it is play for many of us.