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Education for Citizenship

Learning Curve is a publication on education from the Azim Premji University for teachers, teacher educators, school heads, educational functionaries, parents and NGOs on contextual and thematic issues that have enduring relevance and value for them. It provides a platform for the expression of varied opinions, perspectives and stories of innovation; and, encourages new, informed positions and thought-provoking points of view. The approach is a balance between academic- and a practitioner-oriented magazine.

FROM THE EDITOR

What makes a good citizen, particularly in a country, which while being an ancient civilisation, rose like a phoenix from the ashes of colonial rule only a little over seven decades ago?

In a general way, countries define good citizenship as allegiance to the flag and all that it stands for, loyalty to the mechanism of the State, readiness to defend the country against enemy attack and be humane. A good Indian citizen too is required to do all of the above. In return for loyalty and patriotic commitment, citizens are vested with rights – to equality, justice, fraternity and liberty.

However, in India, many inbuilt divides of caste, class, gender and religion could rend us apart again if we do not put justice, equality, liberty and fraternity first. Thoughts of modern citizenship can be traced back to November 6, 1949, when a group of far-sighted Indians, headed by B R Ambedkar gave us the Constitution of a 'new' country, making us a gift of the ideas of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity – four very lofty ideals which have the power of creating a dynamic society, perhaps changing with the times, but always for the better.

This declaration of Indian independence was almost the first time that we, as a people, had articulated what a civil society should, and can, be. It was our affirmation of liberty from foreign rule and our acknowledgement of the fact that these four ideals were going to be instrumental in our progress as a nation. The principle of citizenship has the power to unite a people for greater good.

How to inculcate these noble ideals in future generations, while protecting some inalienable personal rights (such as choice of religion, place of domicile) so that the nascent nation could progress and become what Indians wanted, is the basis of citizenship education. Honouring others, respecting their choices and ways of life, thinking about fellow citizens, working together, valuing every individual, are difficult things to do. This makes it necessary to teach and remind ourselves – and others – that the underlying principle of education can be summarised into one tenet- *treating others as one would like to be treated oneself.*

It is clear that an all-encompassing concept like citizenship cannot be taught at the macro-level: it has to begin with the family, the smallest yet most significant unit of society, spread concentrically to friends, strangers and finally to society and country. This is why the school, especially in the primary years, is considered to be the best place to impress upon our children, who are already citizens at birth, what their attitudes could be if they want to 'be the change they want to see'. To call oneself a citizen is more than possessing a passport or claiming voting rights.

When we chose *Education for Citizenship* as our focus topic for this issue, we did not quite know the extent and depth to which thought had been applied by individuals, teachers and organisations across the country to give these principles shape in the minds of our children. All the articles in this issue show how dedicated have been the attempts to use the classroom to implant and nurture the ideas consecrated in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution. The articles have brought out many points of view – With the *Focus* articles defining the concept of citizenship, examining textbooks which further the concept. In the *Voices* section, teachers have described events in school where the ideals of equality, fraternity, liberty and justice have been actually demonstrated. There have been experiments that resulted in children finding their voices in their own spaces which, hopefully, will result in an informed adult citizenry. Writers have recounted the ways in which their organisations have worked with children and teachers in diverse ways – theatre, workshops, story-telling to create opportunities to cultivate habits and ways of thinking that will result in considerate and responsible behaviour for the greatest good of all.

We hope that the ideas in this issue will be useful – and be used – in classrooms across the country.

Please send your feedback to the email id given below.

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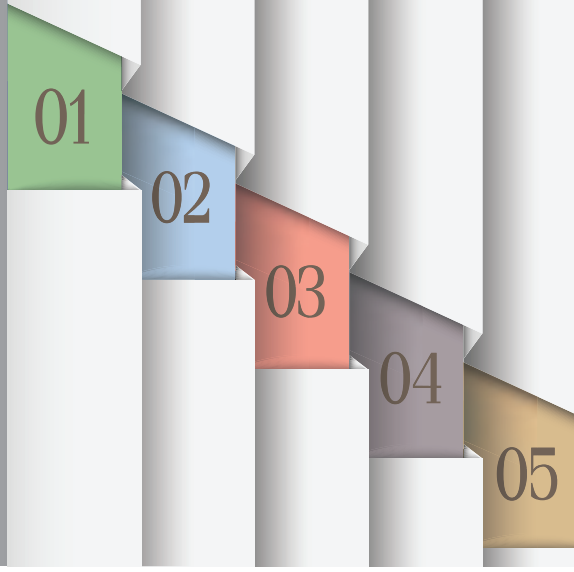
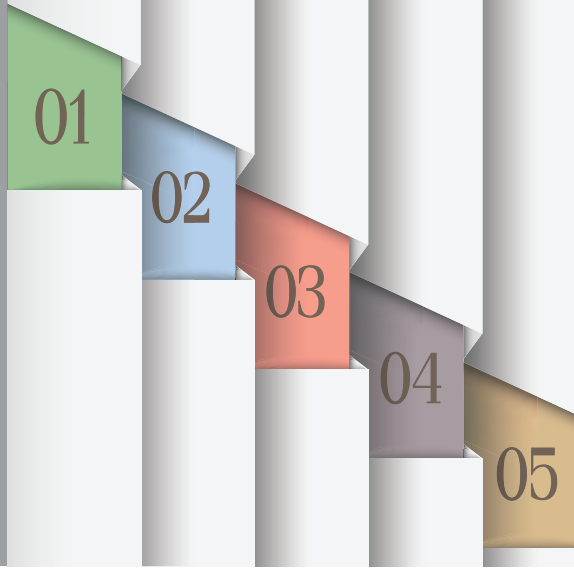


CONTENTS



CONTENTS

Different Cultures of Citizenship | Which to Teach?

Amman Madan

What should be the content and goals of an education for citizenship? This is not a simple question. There can actually be several ways of answering it, with serious disagreement among the various positions possible. It is also a dangerous question to ask, but schools and teachers have little option but to pose it, if they wish to be relevant to our times and be able to teach something meaningful to their students.

To begin with, there is the issue of whether to take the narrower view of looking at citizenship that focuses on how we behave vis-a-vis the State – for example, if children should learn to follow what the government says. Or should we take a broader view of citizenship as being about how to behave in the public realm as a whole and not just with respect to the government? For instance, how to act in one's local residents' welfare association, on the roads, on public issues like those of global warming, communal harmony and so on. This perspective on citizenship is much bigger than that which deals with the government alone. Most people in education today, when pressed, would probably say that they prefer the bigger and broader version of citizenship. Children should, after all, learn to be active and responsible members of the local community and that community is not just the *panchayat* or the municipality. This is an easy choice to make. But other choices are more difficult.

This article is about some conflicting ideas which I had seen in a *taluka* of central India two decades ago (Madan 2003, 2005) about how to behave in the public realm, and which still vex us. I was then working with *Eklavya* and lived in the small town of Hoshangabad for three years. This became the base for doing an ethnographic study of cultures of citizenship in the town and three villages around it, while also running libraries in them. It turned out that there were deep divisions between different possible approaches to life in the public realm. The issue of what kind of citizenship to teach in schools is similarly divided into different possible paths, of which we need to choose the one to take.

Rational and egalitarian Constitution

Standing at one side of the divide over citizenship is the Indian Constitution, written by a committee headed by B.R. Ambedkar. It does not just give the framework followed by the post-colonial Indian state, it is also a stellar example of the culture and code of behaviour for public life which our freedom struggle stood for. The culture and values which underlie the Constitution have influenced the activities of many individuals, NGOs, the government and private companies. At their heart is the idea that all humans are the same and we should see everyone at a deeper level with the same eye. This is the idea of equality, which comes from the growth of western democracies and also from portions of the *Upanishads*, from Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism and other powerful cultural influences. This culture says that all the people of this country are ultimately the same. Their socially ascribed identities – their religion, caste and gender - do not really matter.

> When the government builds a primary health centre in a village, it is for everyone and there is no discrimination on the basis of the social identity of the person who comes there. It is held that the caste, religion and gender of those who seek treatment in it should not matter to the centre. Only a positive discrimination to favour the weak is acceptable. So, for example, when government installs hand pumps, instruction is given that these be set up first in the *mohallas* where there are none already. The instruction could further say that these be set up in the *mohallas* of SCs (Scheduled Castes) and STs (Scheduled Tribes), since they usually lack resources for building wells and hand pumps. This is apparently an exception but is still in the spirit of equality of all. After all, creating equality requires that those with no resources be brought to the level of the rest.

The growth of markets and the penetration of the Indian state into remote parts has given a

big boost to the culture of reason and equality in many places, including Hoshangabad. While acknowledging that everyone is the same, these have also led, in practice, to growing inequality in many places, but I shall leave that question aside for the present. The point is that in a region like this, with deeply entrenched caste and gender inequalities, the market and the State are important institutions which promote more inter-connected cultures and ways of thought. With their growth, the spirit of reason and universalism has expanded, even if it is often compromised by the existing inequalities. When we look at this vast social transition taking place in our land, it appears that teaching citizenship would mean teaching a culture of equality, reason, universalism, freedom and so on, which are enshrined in our Constitution.

Domination, not equality

The Constitution and the religious voices which spoke of the oneness of all humanity, it should be noted, confront a social reality that denies and rejects equality. The caste system was strong in Hoshangabad when I was there, and inter-caste marriages were rare. The caste system rests on the basic principle of inequality, not equality. It believes that there should be different rules for different social groups, not the same for everyone. In the caste system, it is held that some people deserve more respect and resources than others. By all reports, this has not changed much.

The upper-ranking castes had a powerful belief in their superiority. Their beliefs were supported by the fact that they were also the biggest landowners in this primarily agricultural region. They made up the largest number of government employees too, having been the first to get an education. They also controlled the biggest businesses and most political positions. One particular Brahmin family – one of whose men was the local MP, another an ex MLA, a third the head of the *Zila Parishad* and a fourth the principal secretary of Madhya Pradesh – owned over a thousand acres of land. Public power was predominantly male and the few women who were taking up official positions were habitually mocked. The lower OBCs (Other Backward Castes) were slowly rising and trying to form a political force with their numbers. But the upper castes were a powerfully entrenched force which they had to deal with.

The culture of caste reached out into many corners of social life. Eating meat was publicly frowned upon. Upon meeting a stranger one of the first things which was inquired into (if the surname did not reveal it) was that person's caste. Getting a house for rent in 'upper' caste localities in the town was very difficult for Muslims and those who were not from those castes. The spirit of the Constitution here was squashed by the forces of the caste and class system. The culture of public life was that of deferring to one's superiors and being assertive and dominant over one's inferiors.

Caste, wealth and occupation formed the structure on which power and politics rested. The employees of the government, particularly the officials of the Collectorate were deferred to by all. A cluster of politicians and contractors worked intimately with employees of the local state government to work in ways that suited them. The ideals of the Constitution faded to irrelevance here. People joined the State or worked with the State because it was a step towards power, not because they wanted to deliver equality, justice or fairness to all. A government job was much sought after not because it was a way of creating equality and providing justice to all, but because after getting it you could 'take it easy.'

Gender, caste and social networks were the basis of most public activities. Cultivating social networks was necessary if one wanted to get things done. Through them, one was able to use money and position to cajole, bribe or threaten to achieve one's ends. This was done primarily through networks of men – women were conspicuously left out of them. Differences in power and a hierarchy of respect were clearly visible to all. Social life was divided into segments and one worked for one's own segment, not for universal good as recommended in the Constitution. When any *panchayat* got some money for the improvement of roads in the village, it was the road in front of the *sarpanch's* house or in the *mohalla* of his caste-folk that was repaired first.

There was also widespread resistance and unhappiness with this social pattern. Cynicism and a lack of faith in the government were widespread. Youngsters, women, Dalits, Adivasis and the lower OBC – all those at the lower levels of the social hierarchy - were the ones who spoke to me most passionately about freedom and equality. Yet, what could you do? In the absence of an alternate vision of public life, one based on fairness and justice, it was easy to slip into apathy and try to just work along with this system.

The local hierarchy was held in place through a mix of the use of fear, apathy and cultural symbols.

Journalists who tried to expose the complicity of contractors, politicians and government officials would get beaten up. Disagreements were frowned upon. The powerful thought that any disagreement was a sign of political opposition that could lead to losing face in public. Those who disagreed were considered a nuisance and had to be silenced in one way or the other. Publicly questioning a local ward member meant you could forget about getting anything done from the government so long as the person was in power. He (or rarely she) would, henceforth, oppose all your proposals tooth and nail, irrespective of their merit. Honouring and paying obeisance to powerful people was an important agenda for all religious and cultural festivals. Not honouring them in the various public events being hosted meant, as *Eklavya* learned at its cost, that they thought you were arrogant and needed to be cut down to size. Staying on the right side of powerful people was very important at all times.

I asked a large number of people why they and others worked and took action in the public realm. Why did they help to dig a water tank, or organise a religious festival or donate money for a cause? The answer in almost all cases was because the person leading the cause was someone they had to follow so that they could get into his good books or simply stay out of his bad books. Rarely were things done just because they were good things to do, about which, more later.

The contrast between this culture and that which lies behind the Constitution is sharp. The Constitution's culture insists that the government's activities be in the service of universalist values, like equality and justice. So, the state would make rules that said that the allocation of funds was for setting up, say, a hand pump, in a Dalit *mohalla*. But the various actors involved would consider it the most normal thing in the world to extract their pound of flesh from it. They would, for instance, obstruct or delay the work and would have to be approached through networks of men of their caste or other affiliations. It was ordinary for a cut of 20-30 percent to be deducted at various levels before the hand pump was installed.

The conflict between these two kinds of cultures acted at many levels. *Eklavya's* social studies programme had textbooks that passionately taught about rights for all that had been guaranteed by the Constitution and what we could do to protect our rights. The teachers of the government schools with who this programme worked were deeply moved by those textbooks. And yet, some of them said, 'If we teach these textbooks as they are, the next day the *sarpanch's* lathi-bearers will come to our school.' They ended up glossing over the contents of the textbook at places where they feared repercussions.

Community love

Between the rational equality and justice of the Constitution and the local ways of life in the public realm, there was a vast gulf. But there were other voices too in the local ways of public life. Asking around for why people did things in public spaces and whom they were trying to appease led me to several exceptions. One of them was a man from the OBC category who had led the construction of steps (a *ghat*) along the river Narmada. The river has a special place in the cultural life of people of all religions who live here. They enjoy telling and re-telling the local belief that the Narmada is so sacred and so pure that just seeing it is enough to absolve one of one's sins. They point out that you have to actually go and dip into the Ganga to achieve the same.

Ghats have been made at some places along the river with donations from the rich or because of the influence of politicians trying to show how noble they are, while still taking their 20 percent cut from the construction materials. But the *ghat* I want to write about was constructed under the leadership of an ex-junkie, never-do-well. The story he told me was that he and his friends used to sit and smoke drugs by a cut on the river's bank that had many boulders scattered along the water. One day they saw a Dalit woman being scolded for having come in the way of an upper-caste woman who had come there to bathe. The Dalit woman had a difficult time stepping over the rocks to find another place for herself. So, the drug-addicts decided to tidy up the rocks a little one day. They cleared them up a little more the next day and then the day after that and so on. Slowly people began to get to know about their work and started coming to help. Someone gave a bag of cement, someone else came to mix and apply it. Some Muslims joined in too. There was no profit to be had by helping these men, they could not harm anyone either. And yet that *ghat* got built and they left their drugs behind as they worked on it.

A sense of common good was at work here. People were inspired by a selfless action and joined in to take it forward, again in a selfless way. This was

possible because it was a small community, word spread quickly through it and everyone could come and see what was being done. At the core of this public work was what they called *prem* or love. The workers and the contributors said they were doing this out of love for the river, for the idea of building a *ghat* and for the devotion that could be seen at play here. This is not the same as the rational equality of the Constitution, but it is not the hierarchical power structure of the caste and class system either. The culture of community love is another side of the divides around the kind of citizenship we want to teach children.

Conclusion

The kind of citizenship we want to teach to our children never speaks to a vacuum. Children do not come as a blank slate to school. They are part of a complex culture with many threads interwoven together. Alex M. George's study (2004) of children's knowledge about civic affairs tells how elementary school children knew quite well that money power was being used for the upcoming elections and who was taking how much as a bribe in the *panchayat*. So, which of the three threads in their culture do we want to promote as the model of citizenship – universalist equality, tactics of survival in a patriarchal class-caste system, or the love of goodness in the community? Others may choose other options, but I would promote the culture of our Constitution, combining it with the ability to see and bond with the selfless goodness that exists around us.

How to teach this is a long and separate story. Here, I stop by only saying that it cannot be taught by ignoring the realities of students' own life experiences. If we ignore these, they will simply say that yes, this is what one does in the classroom, but that is what one does outside it. Instead, schools need to start talking about what is actually happening in our world and why we should be concerned about it. Most schools and textbooks find that embarrassing and even dangerous to talk about. Yet, it is when we start talking directly about casteism, class inequality and patriarchy that students will begin to see why the culture of the Constitution gives us a way of dealing with these. Schools need to start discussing the way oppression actually occurs. That is the first step to creating a counter-culture that will transform it. The freedom struggle saw independence as only the beginning of a social transformation. It is the responsibility of schools to enact that social transformation.

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Citizenship Education | Reflections on Methods

Arvind Sardana

When we first started work on social science at *Eklavya* for the middle school in the 80s, it was difficult to make sense of the section on Civics in the state textbooks prevalent then. The chapters were either a set of rules and procedures or a moral science lesson for 'ignorant and uneducated' citizens. The sequence of chapters almost followed the Constitution headings with many lines taken verbatim from the document. This was all correct but made no sense to the students. The memorisation of important questions was a quick and swift way to get it out of the way for both teachers and students.

The alternative framework that we adopted for Civics was to enlarge its scope to cover relevant themes from social, political and economic life. We also decided to look at contemporary political life and discuss the institutions as they work in reality while contrasting them with the ideals of law. All this was part of the innovative Social Science programme of *Eklavya* from 1986 to 2002. We worked on Social Science textbooks, teacher training and new forms of assessment.

However, two contrasting viewpoints remain embedded in our education culture. The first calls for passive citizenship that speaks of the need to educate others or of deficits of ignorance that need to be filled. This perspective is shared by a large group reinforced by years of repeating such arguments in civics classes. Among them are many government school teachers who look upon themselves as bureaucrats who cannot be openly critical of the government.

The second is the view of a much smaller group of government teachers who believe in informed and critical citizenship, who would be open to discussing failures of our democracy. A critical citizenship perspective has gained limited acceptance. In this, all citizen are considered equal and therefore, the poor and disadvantaged sections cannot be talked down to. One does not blame them for their poverty or the injustice meted out to them. The social and historical reasons for injustice, inequality or lack of fraternity in the contemporary world are discussed in a more nuanced manner.

These conflicting viewpoints come up in many interactions with teachers and education administrators in the state or central bodies and deeply affect curricular design and process, in many significant ways. Critical citizenship is resisted in the curricular reform process, hence, it requires a deep engagement and dialogue so that one point of view is not thrust upon the other. To recall some examples from teacher sessions:

At a teacher training session in Rajasthan, a group of teachers protested that they would not discuss hypothetical questions, such as the concept of direct democracy in a *gram sabha*. They insisted that we keep the discussion to the set of rules present in the State. Years of Civics teaching had made them look at the subject as a collection of rigid rules to be passed on to the next generation.

In Chhattisgarh, one group of teachers insisted that the seasonal migration of labour from the State could be mentioned without using the term *palayan* (forced migration). The State had declared that there was no *palayan* while the railway stations at Raipur and Bilaspur were filled with people who were desperately boarding trains to Delhi.

Issues of bonded labour, domestic violence or any issues of human rights were difficult points of negotiation in curricular design. When facts could not be denied, or if we used government reports, the response to deflect the issue was that these children are too young to understand these issues. These are better left aside for they damage these impressionable minds. Others would suggest that we talk of ideals and not discuss the grim reality. The framework, chapters and examples in curricular sessions all required long hours of debate and negotiations.

The two groups with different belief systems remain, though perhaps in varying numbers. Extensive dialogue with teachers when new and modified textbooks are launched has been the missing link. Without this, classroom processes do not change, even when there are better curricular materials.

Passive vs critical citizenship

Passive citizenship view

The passive citizenship view among the leadership has the capacity to derail new initiatives. Consider these two instances:

A vocal politician in our field area who opposed our programmes would say that our chapters incite people to revolt against elected representatives since the chapter on *Panchayat* showed people protesting outside the house of the MLA, demanding action against corruption. On the other hand, a liberal secretary of education in Madhya Pradesh, who was to approve the textbook for government schools, once advised us, 'You can be critical of the government, but don't lampoon'. The collaborative programme with the government survived for as long as it did because of such liberal views.

In around the year 2000, *Eklavya's* Social Science textbooks were adopted by a few elite schools in Indore. The teachers at one school were initially hesitant but later started enjoying their classes. In the next academic session, the Principal at this school changed. The new Head called the teachers for their opinion on the initiative. Teachers were honest and very supportive, asking for the programme to be continued. However, the Vice Principal quietly advised the teachers that the Principal was looking for 'evidence' to discontinue the programme. The teachers told us that the next time they are asked, they would be non-committal, to protect their jobs. The programme wound up since the leadership was of the opinion that teachers just needed to be sincere in their work and that textbooks with a critical perspective were a western approach, irrelevant to our country.

Critical citizenship approach

A critical citizenship approach will imply finding confidence and ways to discuss sensitive issues in your own context. Consider some examples:

Many of the new chapters have space for engaging with and bringing in views that children gather in their own social situation. However, it is the ability to engage with different perspectives and with conflict that is most telling. A lady teacher from an elite school in Indore, while hesitant in discussing caste reservations, was very vocal on reservation for women. Taking a cue from one of the questions in a chapter, she began to narrate stories that she had witnessed and how reservation provided the stepping stone for many women. However, they have to do the expected housework as well as their jobs. This was questioned by some male students. Suddenly, there was an avalanche of evidence from the girls in the classroom, narrating stories from their own families. The way she guided the class through this spontaneous debate was amazing.

One day, I received a phone call from a younger friend that she was aghast at the questions being asked at a teachers' meeting. They asked her point blank, 'Would it not be best for us to be a Hindu *rashtra*? This would end this everyday strife.' Her first reaction was, 'How could they ask this? This goes against the Constitution. It took her some time to realise that the question is less about the Constitution and more about the kind of society that we might become. Why should we reject a theocratic position today? The Constitution is a living document and reading this with care can help reaffirm our faith in its values. It has to be acted upon not just by lawyers and courts but in all other forms of discourse.

Similarly, a teacher who was discussing a passage from Omprakash Valmiki's autobiography *Jhootan*, narrated that she faced a sensitive situation in her class. This was part of the social and political life NCERT textbook for class VI. Some children targeted the Dalit students and started teasing them saying *jhadu laga*, copying the experience Valmiki had faced in his school. The teacher was shaken as her entire discourse was overturned by their behaviour. Later, she decided to spend considerable time discussing the caste practices prevalent in her context. From her own experience and by asking pointed questions such as: Is a separate glass kept at home for some? Are some people allowed only in the courtyard? She made a long list and discussed how they violate the concept of equal dignity for all. To her credit, she was able to do this without stoking personal animosity among students.

> The nature of citizenship that we take as our belief – passive or critical – is going to become all the more important in the near future. In the contemporary situation, where divisiveness in society is being stoked by current legislations, such as CAA or 'love-*jihad*', we are likely to see an oscillation towards a passive citizenship belief by the State. Emphasis is likely to be on duties, discipline and sincerity while human rights, social welfare, marginalisation and exploitation in society would be viewed with suspicion. In all likelihood, liberal spaces for curricular reform are going to be limited.

However, even in this pessimistic scenario, we may

yet find unexpected spaces for welcome curricular interventions. However, we need to move towards non-curricular spaces in a much more creative and vigorous manner, if we are to hold on to our belief of critical citizenship. Hence, what we can learn from teachers' actions is discussed below.

Actions speak louder than words

One of the things that needs to be done is recognising and encouraging teachers' initiatives in their context. In India, democracy was constructed against the grain, both of a society founded upon the inequality of the caste order and of an imperial and authoritarian state. If the initial conditions were unlikely, democracy has had to exist in circumstances that conventional political theories identify as being equally unpropitious: amidst a poor, illiterate and staggeringly diverse citizenry. Not only has it survived, it has also succeeded in energising Indian society in unprecedented ways. Introduced initially by a mincingly legalistic nationalist elite as a form of government, democracy has been extended and deepened to become a principle of society, transforming the possibilities available to Indians. *They have embraced it, learning about it not from textbooks but by extemporary practice. Yet the very success of India's democracy also threatens its continued institutional survival.'* (The Idea of India, Sunil Khilnani. *Italics mine.*)

Citizenship education should be a *lived experience and an engagement with democracy in one's own context.* This endorses what Sunil Khilnani expressed in his book. This is also the time where its survival is being threatened. Before I discuss what may be feasible for the future, I outline below the many thoughtful and creative ways in which teachers have practised democracy. The contribution of such actions goes a long way to the deepening of democracy in our society. If we look at the lived experience of teachers, we are sure to find many examples in our own regions. It is just that we have been blind to them and do not recognise their worth and potential.

I know a Dalit teacher, part of the social science group who lived for over two decades in the village where he was posted. He was passionate about Dalit issues but would not discuss them much in the classroom or even with us. I realised much later that he chose symbolic moments and subtle ways to support the education of Dalit children. One incident stands out clearly in my memory. A parent approached him for the Transfer Certificate of his child, but he would not come into the school premises. He preferred to speak from the courtyard. The teacher understood and he stepped out of the classroom and slowly got him to come in, sit on the chair, even though the father was rather uncomfortable. He carried on a casual conversation while he hunted for the certificate in the files. Meanwhile, the entire class watched the incident and absorbed its meaning.

There were many other ways of practice for him. He supported the education and hostel fees of a girl from a very poor family and she went on to become a teacher amid extremely challenging circumstances. Many boys from poor families were encouraged to take the class VIII examination so that later they could seek work in the growing transport sector. Years later, this teacher explained that many of these actions were feasible only because of the *tacit support from his colleagues at school.* It was a silent fraternity that avoided public discussion and kept a low profile while their impact was substantial.

Another Dalit teacher from a neighbouring village established a tuition centre for students of the village so that they could compete for the entrance examination of *Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya*, where education and care are state-supported. He was successful, though it is rare to find a Dalit teacher run a coaching class that all the caste groups in a rural society attend. It is through such experiences that students would imbibe the notion that within the school space all are equal though this is not true in the village space.

A group of teachers from a school devised a simple formula to encourage the education of girls at their middle school. Under the *Operation Blackboard* scheme of the Government (1986), women were appointed as primary school teachers, with positive results. There were more girls completing primary education and enrolling for middle school, a level at which family pressures and security issues begin to mount. This group of teachers, rooted in the local community, assured the parents of the security of the girls and urged them to let them attend middle school. Since the school was on the outskirts of the village, as a basic measure, the girls were let off first and given a lead time of ten minutes when as a group, they would easily reach the village chowk. This simple tweaking of rules added so much more confidence among parents and girls enrolled in large numbers.

In another instance, the principal and social science teacher at a high school for girls began a transformation process with the construction of a boundary wall and followed this up with the proper

distribution of books, scholarships and uniforms. They also ensured that classes were held according to the timetable. The enrolment in this school increased from 80 to 400 girls within a year, with many girls leaving smaller private schools to come back to the government school.

A teacher at a village middle school would come half an hour early and write down the main news of the day on a small blackboard. It would be short and cover many topics. He would cleverly choose local, national and international news. Children would read this and often copy it down in their notebooks during the break. This was a time when TV penetration was beginning to increase but few newspapers would be distributed across the large village. The travel experience of children was limited to surrounding villages and rarely even to the neighbouring towns of Ujjain or Dewas. Over time, this practice started showing results. Children would ask questions in class, often related to places mentioned and also questions such as why does an earthquake occur or why has war taken place? Some snippets would be discussed among them and also at home. They were quite involved and would look forward to the news of the day. It was their window to the world.

The lady teachers of government schools associated with the Adolescence Health Programme of *Eklavya* were clear that many issues required frank discussions with girls. Some of the topics involved discussing gender, domestic violence, menstruation and contraception – not easy topics in a highly patriarchal society, but these women were surprisingly undaunted and supported each other to conduct these workshops. This sense of purpose and eagerness to use this opportunity came from their own deep struggles with the same issues. It had not been easy for any one of them to become teachers and then to manage dual roles within the family and school. The fraternity in this women's group was remarkable and has lasted over the years.

In the context of school education, there has been a focus on curricular materials but almost no dialogue with teachers on their perspectives and world views. In the lived context of a democracy, many teacher experiences show us multiple ways of meaningful engagement. The subtle methods used by them to engage with constitutional values show creative pathways if only their autonomy is strengthened. The culture of autonomy for the teacher and the school team is the more crucial determinant for change. The Adolescent Health Programme team's suggestion is that one way could be to take up thematic workshops, build a teacher peer group and keep a loose curricular link without falling into the narrow spectrum of completing the syllabus. *(Anu Gupta, Health Education: Some insights)*

It is clear that in citizenship education there is no one formula for action. There can be many supportive structures, but the actions will emerge in an organic manner within the local context. The idea is to think outside of the regular curriculum and build a cogent framework for the themes. It is important to build on the participation of teachers, discuss their perspectives and enlarge their autonomy for action.

This article is dedicated to the memory of the late Panna Lal Chavhan of Dewas.

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Ideals of Citizenship

Hridaykant Dewan

Education is the process that prepares a child to be a part of his/her country. It should make the child a good and responsible citizen and give him/her knowledge of the roles to perform, along with the reasons for doing so and the various forms of these. It is important for a good citizen to not just look out for oneself but be aware of others. Good citizenship means considering the wider context and being prepared to participate in and engage with efforts to deal with and change situations detrimental to the nation or any of its people.

There are many factors that shape a child, her notions and ways of engagement. The first of these is her family and the community around her. It is the desire of all families and the need for all societies that their children are so educated that they become a harmonious part of the community and integrate to the way it functions; that they feel at home in it; that they contribute to it; and eventually, gain confidence and assume the responsibility to take it forward.

With communities becoming larger and structurally more complex, children interact with many more persons who are outside their family, even those who their families may not know. They come across new situations and have to interact with strangers. They have to negotiate encounters with strangers and others who are not strangers, but also not part of their families. Children have to develop relationships and understand how to deal with these without the support of their family, except in the case of certain general edicts in real situations.

Learning the nuances of interaction

Children have to deal with situations in their immediate sphere that require them to make choices. Their immediate sphere that influences them the most includes those who may care for them, those who may be indifferent and even those who may want to manipulate or use them. A child needs to understand how to distinguish between these and respond to each appropriately. In particular, a child must know when someone is trying to manipulate him/her through temptation and/or domination and resist it. For this, one of the things that the child must be educated about is the personal self, their body and rights and what others may do to it.

There is also the need to be educated about the patterns of approach in such cases. As society and situations keep changing, the pattern and nature of the possible manipulative and violative behaviours can also change, so the education of the child must be extended to include newer responses. These needs for education and learning are a part of the entire process of becoming a member of society and being protected from possible hazards.

In brief, a major aim of education is for the child to grow up safely as a citizen, be aware of the surroundings and have the ability to protect herself within it. For this, she needs to know the precautions and care in using implements and facilities that may have potential hazards, for example, walking on the road, being around electrical connections, water bodies etc. The child also needs to be aware of the basic norms of co-existence and interaction, for example, while playing a game, rules need to be followed, everyone should get a turn, and no one can win all the time. In being a part of the community, the child has to learn the customs, rituals and ways of functioning of the immediate and the extended family. Opportunities to learn all this are generally available to children growing up in a community. Much of this is not even clearly articulated, consciously imparted or enforced but is a part of the tradition and culture that the child experiences. This education affects the way the child grows up and develops her belief system.

A child has several rights - of being looked after, being protected, being educated to understand all of this and more, the right to her share of the resources and activities around. This means that there are rules of behaviour and participation that are duties, that is, the child is also required to fulfil certain roles. The education of the child in the community includes all of this and is a natural process.

Rights and duties in a complex society

This process of *acculturation* is not enough in terms of the education required. We know that societies have to develop, transform, adapt and adopt new ways as well. This makes curiosity, exploration, inquiry and asking questions important. The child should have a right to be educated about all this so that as a grown person she can make choices and be capable of dealing with new situations and challenges that may be somewhat different to those the community around has been aware of. We also know that the community is a part of the larger society that constitutes the nation and the world. A child needs to know that access to this knowledge is possible and that she has the right to choose what to become and not be restricted to the few choices around her and, in particular, be bound to the only or the very few choices available in her family and community. The framework of rights, when we include this, becomes suddenly much wider.

In a society that is already very complex and increasingly becoming more complex with specialised roles requiring specific preparation, each child needs to be aware of these and of the availability of the possibilities of these opportunities. For instance, children must know the roads to reach these choices and the mechanism that would help to prepare for them. This is a right in a country that is democratic and promises equality. This implies that there must be an educational process that enables a child to know about the roles of being an artist, a musician, an engineer, a doctor, a teacher or a nurse and the preparation required for each.

In reality, the actual circumstances children live and grow up in are far from this. It is obvious that within this right is embedded the responsibility of the child to work towards the goals to be reached and make the effort to fulfil their aspirations. So, while it is the right of the child to expect to be provided with the resources and the opportunity, it is her responsibility to put in adequate effort. In a community, there cannot be many rights without responsibilities of some sort but there should not be children trapped in situations where they have only responsibilities and very few or no rights. It is important for any society to ask itself about the responsibilities and the rights that society considers necessary and how it will ensure that these will reach all children. It is for each one of us to ask whether the balance of rights and responsibilities is fairly distributed among the children of the nation.

Learning to be national citizens

This natural education of children drives from the context they live in. It comes from their families, community, media and other sources with mixed perspectives on the roles and rights of the individual in society, mutual relationships and interactions. There are market forces wanting to create demands and aspirational values in children that promote competition or create a sense of unreasonable entitlement and demands. These forces can hide reality by misconstructing equality, diversity and plurality. There are social and political forces that misinform and attempt to radicalise the young.

Due to the increasing social media usage and access, a lot of unregulated information now reaches everyone. Users need to be able to assess the nature, intent and veracity of the information received. The context of these can be different kinds of mobilisation for parochial gains, including elections. An important element of being an informed and active citizen is the ability to sift through the messages and to form a reasoned view on these aligned with the basic tenets of a democratic constitution.

Education for citizenship requires developing the tools to enable children to achieve this knowledge. These tools are: firstly, the ability to access newer sources of knowledge and this means the ability to read with confident comprehension and the desire to know more. Secondly, also required is a sharpened ability to assess whether a point of view, a statement (or text) is logical and internally consistent and how it matches with what other sources convey. This requires an open mind and a temperament that can suspend judgement. These sharpened tools of foundational abilities, reasoning, temperament, however, need a basic ethical framework. This framework will suggest the principles of using the tools and must emerge from constitutional and human values. Along with foundational literacy, foundational mathematical ability, scientific and rational temper, these have been again underlined in the National Education Policy of 2020.

The Preamble as a promise

The essence of values for Indian citizens emerge from the Preamble to the Constitution, a statement of promise by all people to each other. The promise is for equity, justice, liberty, and fraternity along with scientific temper and reason. The promised social, economic and political justice has many

implications, including that of the treatment of diversity in schools. Education makes everyone aware of assessing the treatment of diverse people and respond to inequities.

The promise of *fraternity* is the most important of the promises made in the Constitution and necessary for building togetherness in diversity and respect for the plural forms of living. It is this value that is at the core of all others and without it, none of the others can become ingrained. The ramifications of building fraternity are vast and encompass the desire to become close to diverse others and accept them as being the same as oneself.

Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship allows a citizen to feel the confidence to think, express and argue freely and to worship the way she thinks appropriate.

Other values

Equally, it requires forbearance to accept diversity and respect plurality of beliefs, ways of thinking, ideas, forms of worship and expressions of alternate ideas and forms. In the Indian context, with its diverse faiths and forms of worship, ensuring this liberty for oneself is intertwined with allowing it to others. This requires an awareness and opportunities to participate in or be an interested spectator in the celebrations and ways of worship of different faiths. This sense of acceptance is essential for claiming democracy for oneself.

Another essential aspect of being a democratic citizen is to be able to participate in the democratic process with understanding and intent. Participation in the democratic process is not about supporting or opposing the government in power and certainly not restricted to voting. It means being aware of and analysing what is happening, assessing and judging the work of the government and administration, asking questions to seek justifications for the steps taken and decisions made. Being a good citizen is not about being an obedient subject to those in authority but being an informed citizen who seeks to better not only her life but that of others, as well. To be an educated citizen in a democracy means:

- Having the ability to acquire and judge information
- Obtaining and assessing evidence, perspectives, views, analysis, projections
- Appreciating logic and reason

Only these three attributes can engender the confidence to feel somewhat equal to those governing and administering and the ability to appreciate the importance of one's role as a citizen and not be overwhelmed into accepting authority like a feudal subject

Patriotism

An important component of being a citizen is being concerned about the nation and being public-spirited. However, the ideas of being patriotic and responsible as a citizen need to be examined. It is necessary to question the notion of the nation, the meaning of patriotism and the whats and whys of it. Asking questions and disagreeing with governmental or administrative actions is not unpatriotic.

> Citizens must appreciate and act with the recognition that it is people who constitute the nation. Any idea of a nation that is devoid of the concern for the people in it and demands unending sacrifice for the abstract idea of nationhood is an undemocratic formulation. Pride in oneself and one's nation has to be calibrated with the realisation that one's pride can only be respected if one respects and honours the pride of other individuals, communities and nations.

We need to recognise that the past can only help us to recognise mistakes, it cannot make life better today. There is a need to place the past mistakes in today's context and examine the idea of a sovereign republic and what ensuring the unity and integrity of the nation means. Is it devoid of respect for people and all diversity? Does it mean a push towards homogeneity and the hegemonic ascendence of one way of thought and one faith? Does it mean sowing the seeds of fear and anger against other communities or individuals? It must concern itself with the people who inhabit the country, as it is not merely about physical land and geography. Overemphasis on that and on the nation as an abstraction, looking back to the past, being hyper-nationalist, parochial and non-inclusive is disrespecting the idea of being Indian as conceptualised in the Constitution.

Role of the school

It is towards this idea that the school processes need to and can contribute. This can happen with the development of a culture of participation and togetherness among all in the school; taking up a

variety of joint tasks and activities; embracing a culture that includes shared roles among students and teachers towards contributing to the work of maintaining and running the school. This will entail groups having the responsibility and authority within a framework of planning and executing their ideas for the different tasks assigned to them.

The tasks of the coordinating groups can be the maintenance of equipment, ensuring that the classrooms and the premises are clean, looking after the grounds and the plants, helping ensure attendance, supporting those children who need help etc, in short, a system and culture of participatory responsibility for the functioning of the school. It could include being a part of informed decision-making, for example, about timetables, school activities, functions and other such areas. These, within the framework of the overall structure, can help students develop a sense of collaborative work and accept the decisions of the majority when they have different viewpoints and participate in the review and planning with an open mind to take criticism and suggestions positively. These would also work as forums of dialogue where students can ask questions about school decisions.

The closest to the idea of common schools are public schools as they can cater to children from diverse backgrounds. In school, they can come together to play, talk and listen to each other, eat and share food. They learn how to conduct themselves and also, the language, ideas and games from each other. By participating or observing the plural rituals in the environment of the school, they can develop resistance to misinformation campaigns that demonise some sections of the people. In sharing food during break or as colleagues sitting next to each other during the midday meal, many barriers are pulled down.

However, all this can happen only if the school respects fraternity and does not itself distinguish between students and encourages them to form friends, associates, team members across the boundaries of caste, community, family professions and economic statuses. Playing together as a team, learning to win and lose and accept the results, rubbing shoulders with one another in cultural and other activities and tasks for the school develop an understanding that can withstand many challenges.

For the idea of justice to sink in, transparency and objective responses to students is essential. The internal functioning and activities of a school, for example, through providing experiences of working together, ensuring transparent treatment and ensuring mixed groups, are important for the development of acceptance of diversity in the microcosm of the school and are also a preparation for immersion in the wider society and its challenges. This preparation must include engagement with concerns that are wide and affect the macrocosm. Concern for others, the unknown and the unmet and their challenges through discussion and knowledge about current events, resisting being influenced by and preventing mobilisations around sectarian issues, having a concerned response to the larger crises unfolding (as in the mass migration of people in the recent pandemic), promoting responsible ways to treat the environment, stemming degradation, urging the use of sustainable materials, products, methods and avoiding consumerism. All these are ways of being aware of social responsibilities through participating in community projects and acting on them in some way.

In summary

Much of this is not easy for schools to do, but the effort to raise the bar of an enabling environment is attainable. The school can initiate dialogue across macro- and micro-contexts that children can be aware of and touched by. Taking up some actions outside the school and in the community are indications of being a socially responsible and good citizen; secular participation in teams and groups, forming non-sectarian friendships ensure a fraternal feeling across diversity. It would require children having to do things like team games, taking joint responsibility for school tasks, organising small and big events in the school, helping each other through diverse needs etc.

But over and above this, citizenship training requires that children develop the ability to confidently acquire new knowledge by reading and from other sources; express themselves logically and clearly; have a positive image of themselves; have a strong ethical system and be fearless. Citizenship is about each learner being confident of her importance and being responsible for her role.

For the school to make this possible depends heavily on having a committed team not only of teachers but the entire staff and an atmosphere where this team also feels secure, self-assured and has a sense of citizenship. They must be confident of being able to hold a dialogue with the outside world, including parents, knowing

that it may not always be harmonious and aligned to the values described above. This will require them to understand citizenship, have the ability to appreciate what they can push through in the school's socio-cultural environment and be able to put aside their own prejudices and loyalties to allow open and fair conversations so that children learn to form their own reasoned views imbued with humanistic and Constitutional values.

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Constructing Citizenship Through Textbooks

Rupamanjari Hegde

Citizenship education, referred to differently as civics, citizenship education or education for active citizenship in different parts of the world, is usually aimed at inculcating in students certain knowledge, skills and dispositions that are considered important to prepare them to actively participate in a democratic society. This often translates into developing in young children awareness about their duties, responsibilities and rights so that they can effectively contribute towards national development and nation-building. In some NCERT civics textbooks (1975-2000), for instance, the learner is constantly reminded to develop appropriate qualities of a citizen - rational conduct, co-operation and concern for fellow beings – in order to fulfil his/her obligations towards his/her family, community and society at large.

But it is not enough for a person to be a mere citizen. Rather, he/she is encouraged to become a good citizen (NCERT 1988: 49) by imbibing certain other qualities: obeying the 'laws of the land' *(ibid)*, keeping oneself 'well informed about the happenings and problems of the country' (NCERT 2003:186), and giving priority to the interest of the nation - in order to be of any value to the nation. While the learners are asked to be 'conscious of their rights and duties' (ibid.) the emphasis in these textbooks clearly is on the duties and responsibilities that they are expected to imbibe.

However, citizenship within a democracy is not just a *matter of duty,* but a question of *rights* guaranteed by the Constitution under which every citizen, irrespective of her class, gender, religion, caste and ethnicity has been granted legal status, is entitled to a range of rights and is supposed to develop a sense of identity and belonging (Jayal 2013:2). Can a textbook that is designed differently bring in some changes in the way ideas of the nation, citizenship and identity are imagined?

The National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF 2005)[i] has been critically acclaimed by scholars for having introduced radical shifts (Batra 2010:13). In the NCF, it has been argued the citizenship education has been situated within the perspectives of human rights and critical pedagogy and issues of equality and social justice are included to bring in the perspectives of marginalised communities. Attempts have also been made towards 'multiple ways of imagining the Indian nation' and emphasising gender concerns.

This article briefly examines the Environmental Studies (EVS) and a few Social Science textbooks, namely the *Looking Around* (classes III-V) and *Social and Political Life* (classes VI-VIII) series to understand to what extent such new perspectives have been given a concrete shape.

The curricular changes reflected through textbooks, however, become meaningful only when they are able to effectively transform the classroom pedagogic process. This can happen with the active intervention of the teacher. The article also examines how the teacher can play a critical role in nurturing future citizens.

Imagining the nation

The construction of citizenship in textbooks usually reflects how the nation is imagined. Who is included within this imagination as legitimate citizens and how? Who is left out? These questions demand a critical analysis. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2000, and the English and Social Science textbooks that followed it were severely criticised for articulating a national identity that was majoritarian and patriarchal thereby undermining the pluralistic character of Indian society. The NCF 2005, in contrast, proposes an education system that would be capable of responding to 'cultural pluralism inherent in our society' (NCF 2005: 7) which in turn would 'sustain a robust democratic polity' *(ibid)*. Thus, it reiterates a national identity based on the ideals of secularism, egalitarianism, pluralism and social justice.

A closer examination of the series, *Looking Around (LA)*[ii] and *Social and Political Life (SPL)*[ii] reveals a society inhabited by people located in different regional, socio-economic and cultural contexts The citizens hail from a range of regions and locales of the country, from metros like Mumbai (the storyboard of Shanti, SPL III: 67), peri-urban areas like Kurnool

in Andhra Pradesh (the story of Swapna, SPL II: 105) to the rural hinterland of Madhya Pradesh (the story of the Tawa Matsya Sangh, SPL II: 118) as also the tribal belts of Orissa (the storyboard of Dadu, SPL III: 81-82). Regional specificities related to food habits, clothing and architectural conventions of housing are also delineated. For instance, a lesson titled *Food We Eat* (LA I) talks about the diverse food habits of people living in different parts of India ranging from Kashmir to Kerala while another lesson, *A House Like This* in the same textbook has characters like Bhupen (Assam), Naseem (Srinagar), Chameli (Manali), Kanshiram (Rajasthan) and Mitali(Delhi) exchanging notes about how houses they live in are designed differently according to the local environmental requirements. In most cases, the written narrative is accompanied by relevant colourful visuals to enable children to visualise the textual information.

The socio-cultural space in these textbooks is also multi-religious. This is evident from the presence of members from different minority communities, like Anwari, a Muslim washerwoman (LA III: 26), Melanie, a Christian domestic help (SPL II: 49), and Jaspreet, a Sikh upper-middle-class homemaker (SPL II: 47). The textbooks thus challenge the reduction of the Indian socio-cultural space as flattened and homogeneous. Rather they uphold the pluralist, heterogeneous, and multi-cultural character of the Indian nation.

Cultural diversity and economic disparity

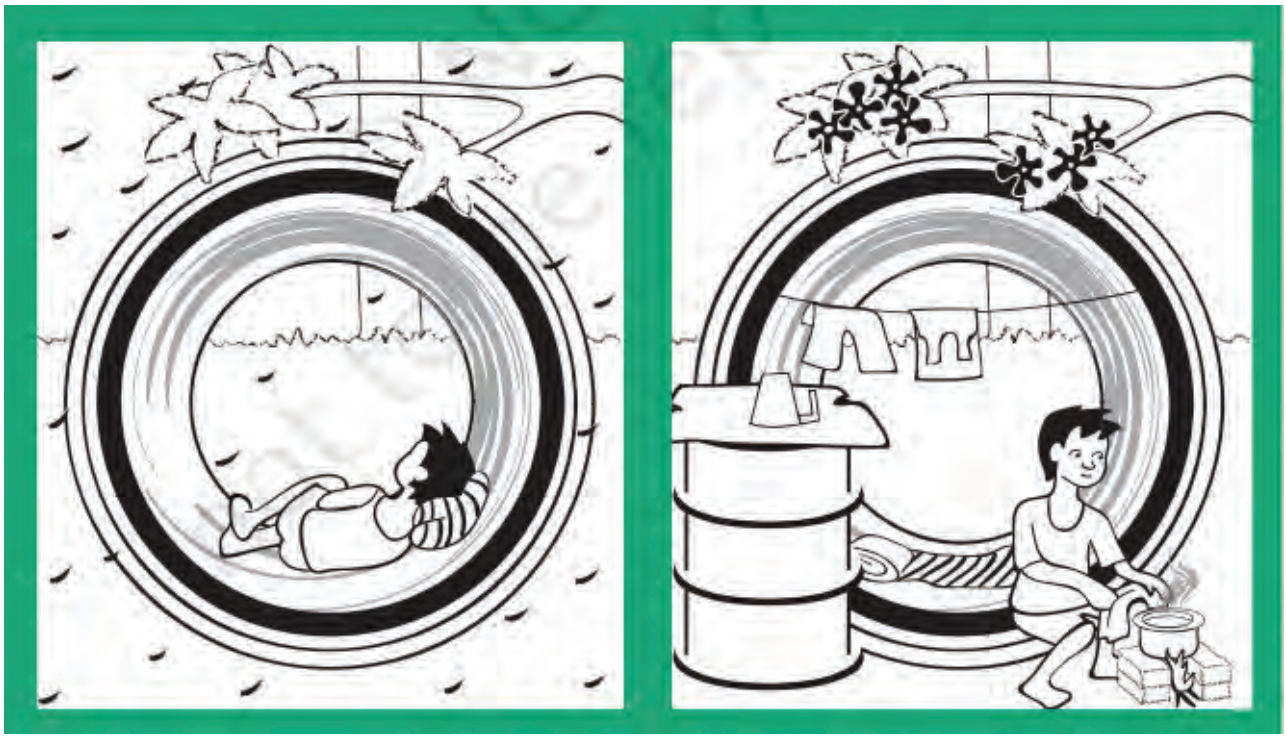
Unlike some of the earlier NCERT textbooks (1975-2004), which portray cultural diversity exclusively as a source of strength, thereby overlooking the economic inequalities and socio-cultural disharmony, both the LA and SPL series problematise diversity. While pointing out its benefits, attention is drawn to how the diversity arising out of socio-economic differences often leads to inequalities and discrimination. For instance, a lesson *Food We Eat* (LA I:36-42) begins with a thought-provoking visual showing a group of children from diverse backgrounds discussing the food they ate on the previous night. As different children talk about relishing 'poori, kheer, omelette' or 'fish' or 'dal and rice', one child shares about enjoying leftover noodles brought from the house where her mother works as domestic help. Yet another child reveals how 'no food was cooked' in her house. The discussion not only highlights the cultural diversity but also draws attention to the harsh economic inequalities that exist in our society. The visual is followed by a series of thought-provoking questions, thus, creating space for a deeper engagement with the issue:

- *You must have noticed that in the picture there is one child in whose house no food was cooked. What could be the reason?*
- *Has it ever happened to you that on some day you were hungry but there was nothing to eat? If yes, why?*

Instead of depicting rural and urban spaces as binaries - either as idyllic locations or ridden with multiple problems, the textbooks represent them as contested spaces stratified by hierarchies of class and caste, where diverse interests negotiate and clash to get their due. Whether it is an urban or a rural context, the people in the LA and SPL series are also shown to belong to different social strata, having diverse modes of livelihood and living standards. The textbooks also highlight how in both spheres, ordinary citizens struggle for the fulfilment of their basic rights to live a life of dignity.

The agricultural community in the LA and SPL series, for example, is deeply fragmented consisting of rich land-owning farmers (Ramalingam, SPL I:71), small farmers (Sekar, SPL I:70), as well as landless agricultural labourers struggling to earn a living (Dhanu, LA II:200; Thulasi, SPL I:68). The rural economy is shown to depend on a variety of non-farm activities like fishing, weaving, animal husbandry and money-lending (chapter 22, LA II; chapter 8, SPL I). The difficulties that the rural citizens, like farmers, undergo (Sekar, SPL 1:70 crop failure, debt and suicide) are also get highlighted.

The urban landscape in the LA and SPL series is not only represented by skyscrapers, fast-paced vehicular traffic, plush hospitals and well laid-out shopping malls but is also characterised by unhygienic working-class neighbourhoods, overcrowded government hospitals and roadside open markets. People belonging to different socio-economic strata constitute a city's eco-system. Here, highly affluent industrialists, upper-middle and middle-class consultants and government servants are shown to co-exist with lower-middle and working-class people like factory workers, roadside vendors, domestic help, artisans, rickshaw-pullers, daily wage labourers and homeless, street children. Urban people are shown to struggle with their own set of problems namely unhygienic living conditions (the storyboard of Kanta, SPL II: 4-5) , lack of access to basic amenities like water (Nandita Comes to Mumbai, LA, Class IV; the case-study of the citizens of Chennai, SPL III: 106-107) as well as homelessness ('Chhotu's House, LA, Class III).



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Addressing gender concerns

Although both sexes are well represented in the earlier NCERT civics textbooks (2002-2004) the visuals reinforce certain social stereotypes regarding the division of labour. With the exception of iconic personalities, like Sarojini Naidu and Vijaylakshmi Pandit (NCERT 2003:176), the most prominent image of the women in the textbooks (NCERT 1987; NCERT 2002) emerges to be that of the nurturer and care-giver (homemakers, nurses).

In the LA and SPL, series one finds women sharing an equal platform with the male citizens. Although the contribution of iconic figures, like Pandita Ramabai and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain are discussed, there is a distinct attempt to go beyond the achievements of a few successful women. The textbooks are replete with examples of ordinary women belonging to various social groups actively contributing to the family's income as also to the socio-economic development of the community and nation. They are depicted not only in their traditional care-giving roles of homemaker (Shabnam Bano, SPL II: 5), but also as earning members of the family, like manual scavengers (LA III: 147; SPL III:101), fisherfolk (Aruna, SPL I:73), domestic help (LA I:83; Melanie, SPL II:49), washerwomen (Anwari, LA I:27), bee-keepers (Anita, LA III:38) and factory workers (SPL II:109). They are found to be engaged in a range of professions as teachers (Manjit Kaur, SPL II:4), government employees (Yasmin, SPL I:57), business entrepreneurs (Vandana, SPL I:80-81) and lawyers (Kamala Roy, SPL III:69-70).

The problems faced by working women are represented through several stories. Mention needs to be made of the stories of landless agricultural labourers, like Thulasi, suffering due to irregular source of income and less pay and the vulnerability of women factory workers, like Nirmala, employed on a casual basis.

A space is created in the SPL series to engage the readers in understanding how gender stereotyping is a social construct. The fact that gender stereotypes and devaluation of women as homemakers and caregivers exist in different strata and communities in the society is further highlighted through the storyboard on Jaspreet, an upper-middle-class homemaker (SPL II:47-48) and the case-study of Melanie, a domestic help (SPL II:49). There is also an attempt to emphasise the dignity and value of housework. One of the EVS textbooks, for instance, includes a story about a young girl Deepali (Work We Do, LA I:83). Being the eldest child of a vegetable seller and domestic help, Deepali is entrusted with the responsibility of managing the household from cooking and cleaning to taking care of her younger siblings while her parents struggle to make ends

meet. The story, thus, subtly yet powerfully focuses on the harsh realities of life and how poverty often forces the girl child to forgo schooling and education.

The textbooks further discuss how women, in contrast to men, are subjected to the double burden of housework and employment. In this case, a survey carried out in Haryana and Tamil Nadu (SPL II: 50) is referred to. Reference is also made to instances of gender-based discrimination like domestic violence (the storyboard on Kusum and Shazia, SPL III: 46-48) and dowry deaths (the case-study of Sudha Goel, SPL III: 58).

Constructing citizenship

It has been mentioned above how in the earlier NCERT textbooks (1975- 2004) citizenship hinges on the notion of duties and underplays the question of rights. This is evident in the manner the learner is repeatedly reminded to develop *appropriate qualities* in order to contribute towards nation-building and thus, evolve into a responsible and dutiful citizen.

Moreover, in these textbooks, the State is always portrayed as a monolithic, paternalistic and benevolent structure, looking after citizens' well-being. There is little scope for any discussion on any lapse/malpractices that can occur in the functioning of the State machinery or how such gaps can be addressed by the government in a democratic manner.

Challenging societal inequality

In the SPL series, citizenship is defined within the framework of the rights of the citizen. Here an attempt is made to go beyond defining citizenship merely in terms of political rights – rights that enable all adult citizens in a democracy, to vote as equals irrespective of their social location. Rather it questions the very basis of this equality by situating it within the socio-economic reality of the citizens' lives which are characterised by inequalities and differences of various dimensions. One of the textbooks, for instance, includes a storyboard that shows citizens from different socio-economic backgrounds (a teacher, a domestic help, a consultant, an industrialist) queuing up before a polling booth, thus representing their equal status as citizens. However, in the course of the day, Kanta, the domestic help, realises that although she could stand in the same queue along with her employer, Mr Jain, a rich industrialist, and cast her vote, a chasm of difference exists between them. In contrast to the spacious apartment of her employers, Kanta is shown to live in a dingy slum in extremely unhygienic surroundings and is forced to go to work leaving her ailing minor daughter alone at home. It is only after completing the chores and borrowing some money from her employer that she is able to take her daughter to a doctor at the end of the day. This leaves her wondering, 'We may be standing in the same queue to vote but are we really equal?' (SPL II: 4-6).

It is against this background of existing inequalities that the textbooks draw attention to the importance of the civil, social and economic rights enshrined in the Constitution in the form of Fundamental Rights. Reference is specifically made in the textbooks to the Right to Equality (Article 15) and the Right to Life (Article 21). Through several case studies, the textbooks attempt to show how these rights, when accessed, can not only challenge the social inequalities but can ensure a life of dignity for all citizens. The textbooks further highlight that, although the rights are enshrined in the Constitution, it is not always possible for citizens to exercise their rights easily. Rather, these rights are repeatedly challenged, thwarted and infringed upon by individuals, groups, institutions and even the State. In a majority of the cases, the citizens are shown to be subjected to some form of societal discrimination which is either caste-based (the stories of BR Ambedkar, SPL I: 19-20 and Om Prakash Valmiki, SPL II: 7-8) or gender-based (the story of Jaspreet, SPL II: 47-48) or even religion-based (the story of the Ansaris, SPL II: 8). One also finds instances where the economic background of the citizen renders him/her vulnerable to exploitation by the more affluent and powerful sections of the society (the story of Om Prakash, a landless labourer, SPL I:44-45).

Holding the State accountable

The SPL textbooks also include a number of instances that discuss the lapses in the working of various government departments resulting in depriving the citizens of their rightful entitlements. Some stories clearly reflect the deliberate and lackadaisical attitude of the State (as seen in the failure of the State in ensuring safety and security of factory workers and citizens, the photo-essay on Bhopal Gas Tragedy, SPL III:124-127). In certain cases, the State is also depicted as taking deliberate measures to encroach upon the rights of the citizens (as in the case of the forest dwellers, the story of the Tawa Matsya Sangh, SPL II: 117-119).

Reclaiming rights

What is striking about the textbooks is that the representation of citizenship here is not limited to a discussion about citizens' rights or how such rights are denied to individuals and groups. Rather the discussion shows the possibilities as to how such rights can be realised and reclaimed. Irrespective of their social class, many of the citizens are seen to exercise their agency. Women, for instance, are shown to reclaim their rights in different ways – challenging the prevalent social norms and prejudices (Ramabai, SPL II: 59) or pursuing their aspirations through sheer willpower (Laxmi Lakra, SPL II: 57). In several instances, citizens are shown to resort to legal assistance and ask for intervention by various State institutions, like the police (the story of Mohan who lodged an FIR in the local police station against his neighbour for encroaching on his land, SPL I: 49-50). They also approach the judiciary when their rights are thwarted. Here attention needs to be drawn to the case-study of Hakim Sheikh, an agricultural labourer who after meeting with a serious accident filed a case in the court against government hospitals when they refused to treat him (SPL II: 21).

Collective action

Collective action, like forming cooperatives and organising social movements, is also upheld by the textbooks as another rightful way for reclaiming fundamental rights by the citizens. The textbooks refer to the struggles put up by the educated middle or upper-middle sections of the society against social discrimination (e.g. the storyboard on the contribution made by the Lawyers' Collective and the National Commission for Women to pass the Domestic Violence Act, SPL III:46-48). But very often, attention is drawn to the collective front put up by ordinary citizens, especially those living on the margins, who are shown participating in public rallies and protest marches, holding public hearings, sitting on *dharnas* and expressing their dissent through innovative tools like theatre, song and creative writing. Some important examples provided in the textbooks are the struggle put up by the Tawa Matsya Sangh (SPL II: 118) to reclaim the right to livelihood for the displaced forest dwellers in Madhya Pradesh and the women's movement to reclaim equal citizenship rights (SPL II:63-67).

The citizens however are not shown to emerge victorious always. Rather the textbooks invest the citizens with a spirit to fight and highlight that rising against any form of injustice and inequality is legitimate and in the very spirit of democracy. This definitely marks a shift in perspective in the way citizenship and citizenship education has been conceptualised in these textbooks.

Women Change the World, SPL II, NCERT, 2007

Role of the teacher

While the textbooks can outline the nature of citizenship in the national imagination, the role of the teacher in translating that vision for the students in the classroom is crucial. To begin with, it is extremely important that teachers create a space within the classroom where students feel free to share their thoughts and ideas on a range of issues unhesitatingly. The idea is to create a democratic culture where diverse and multiple perspectives can be exchanged by children without the fear of being judged or silenced.

Teachers should be able to encourage students to bring relevant local examples based on their lived experiences related to the topic that is being studied. This would necessarily require the teacher to take the students beyond the textbook. Such a practice would not only enrich the class discussion but by discouraging memorisation of facts, strengthen student learning in the long run.

It is important that the teacher understands that children acquire knowledge not only from the textbook but from multiple sources including media, both print and electronic. It, therefore, becomes important that the teacher remains aware of relevant local and national issues and is able to critically engage the students through discussions on these issues whenever necessary.

It has been pointed out in one of the SPL textbooks (Introductory Note to Teachers, SPL III) that the series, specifically dwells upon specific forms of inequality based on caste, gender, class and religion and there is every possibility that the classroom would be characterised by such distinctions. Keeping this context in mind, it becomes all the more critical for teachers to show the required sensitivity while discussing such issues.

Conclusion

Textbooks are cultural tools that shape the collective imagination of the nation. The *Looking Around* series and the *Social and Political Life* textbooks that followed the introduction of NCF 2005 have successfully laid out the template as to how citizenship education needs to be imagined in tune with the values enshrined in the Indian Constitution. This is evident, as the above analysis reveals, in the manner that the nation has been imagined, the way gender concerns have been addressed and citizenship has been constructed within the framework of human rights. It remains to be seen how, through the mediation of the teacher, these ideas get translated within the classroom.

i The NCF 2005 was operationalized during the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance regime (2004-2014) or UPA I and has continued beyond 2014 (which witnessed another regime change).

ii The textbooks 'Looking Around' and 'Social and Political Life' would be henceforth referred to as LA and SPL respectively

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Learning Democracy Through School Practices

Abhilasha Awasthi

In the winter of 2019, I did a limited research study at the Azim Premji School, Dineshpur to understand how democracy plays out in the school and the effect of teaching concepts related to democracy. I worked with classes VI, VII and VIII but the focus group was class VII. I taught them some basic concepts under the topic of democracy as presented in the NCERT Social Studies textbook which was revised post the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005.

Presence of democracy

School curriculum

Many factors shape the learning of a child. A major one being the school curriculum. However, this inadvertently gets impacted by many other factors, significant among these is the hidden curriculum in a school setting. The school curriculum and the hidden curriculum work in tandem to shape a child's learning.

In the context of the Azim Premji School, Dineshpur, my observation was that the understanding of equality, a fundamental tenet under the description of the Indian democracy, was deeply understood by most students as they were able to discern undemocratic practices in the activities and stories discussed with them. This clearly showed that children had an innate understanding of what was constitutionally wrong, and they could identify instances where this existed.

Academically, (the school follows the NCERT syllabus), the concept of 'equality' was spread over three grades. In grade VII, while I was teaching them about gender inequality, the idea of having equality came from them. The girls questioned why boys were not made to work as they do. Some boys mentioned that they participate equally in household chores.

I showed the students of class VII a short film on gender inequality, *The Impossible Dream*. The film, through humour and wonderful visuals, makes quite clear its intent about the need for men to share the burden of household work and child-raising. The students immediately figured out the problems in it and related these to their lives. They brought out examples of discrimination that they and others face because of their gender. Then, we linked it to what the Constitution says about equality and surprisingly, class VII seemed to have really internalised this concept deeply. They were quite vocal about the inequality that prevails in their homes, especially in the case of girls, who had to do household chores after attending school, something the boys were exempt from.

When I asked them, 'Do you think you are equal in this school and in this classroom?' They answered in the affirmative. On probing further, 'Why do you say so?' The reply was that the school treats them equally. Some of them even gave the example of their Principal who treated everyone equally and had often stood up against discrimination.

When the storyboard on a character from the chapter titled, *My Mother Doesn't Work* from the textbook, *Growing up as Boys and Girls*, was being read with the students of class VII, we discussed the topic of helping out at home extensively. When we came to the reasons why boys did not help at home, they said that they were simply not asked to help as their parents held the archaic notion that it is not the duty of the boys to help out at home. To this, a boy added, 'I once asked my grandmother if I could give puja (daily religious ritual) to the Lord and she said that it is not a boy's job to do it'. This emphasised the rigidness in households of delegating tasks between boys and girls and how little flexibility exists in the overlapping of these tasks. A girl mentioned that most of the girls have to go back home and help out despite being tired after school because it is expected of them. This theme was debated upon in several groups in class VII and they came up with various arguments for and against this parochial view in the older generations.

The concept of equality was known by everyone from classes VI to VIII. They knew that they could not be discriminated against and if it happened, they could seek help. Therefore, an immediate association with this concept was realised across these grades along with the appreciation to uphold the notion of equality. It did not feel like an alien concept given in the textbook but a more concrete and relatable

one. They connected with it on a deeper level as we transitioned through the chapters in the NCERT textbooks, assisted by the non-discriminatory atmosphere carefully cultivated in the school environment.

Class and student representatives

Each class had two class representatives (CRs) – a boy and a girl. The CRs have a varied set of duties, for example, ensuring the cleanliness of classrooms, disciplining the other children, solving the internal matters of the class, communicating with the teacher on important issues, etc. They have school-wide duties as well. For example, serving the mid-day meals, making sure that the plates were being washed and kept in place, shoes are being kept in place, noting down the names of latecomers.

Apart from these, the school had two student representatives (SRs), again, a boy and a girl, in addition to a judicial officer. All these office-bearers -- CRs, SRs and judicial officer – met every Wednesday after school and discussed their duties and responsibilities, made plans to improve their respective classroom environment by suggesting changes in structure or aesthetics, and acted as a bridge between the students and member of the staff. Some of these discussions were also targeted at their capacity-building as leaders. All of this was done through a democratic procedure with the CRs acting as elected leaders of the students and taking decisions for the betterment of the student population as a whole, all the while not exhibiting any form of autocracy and taking into account the views of other representatives. Essentially, this gave them a good idea of what a parliament meeting might look like. All of them cast votes in meetings and expressed their viewpoints.

However, I soon realised that despite it seeming ideal in structure and principles, no one actively put forth any suggestion and the process had been rendered mechanical with students going about their job diligently, but not actively seeking to improve practices. I asked a CR the meaning of the word 'representative' in a social studies class. No one, not even the CR, knew the answer. This made me realize that children have the understanding that they are in a position of power because of the votes of others but they could not grasp the concept of working with the people, in this case, the students, as being their duty. The representatives understood the capacity they had but could not extend it to the responsibilities it should translate into. Students also seemed to be oblivious to the fact that they could question their representative and put forward their demands.

Display of model behaviour by teachers

Outside of the formal school processes, I saw other examples where teachers displayed democratic behaviours. One such example was when I was sitting in the playground and I overheard the Sports Teacher talking to two children who had been involved in a fight. He had made them sit together and asked them a few questions - where their parents worked, did they have any trouble at home and finally, why they had fought. When both the children had explained their side, he analysed the facts, looked at the details and logically discussed the other options that they could have taken. He helped them reconcile. I also saw a few students listening to this conversation. It made me realise how essential this kind of observational learning is for internalising the concepts of problem-solving and in this specific case, of seeing the adult arbitrator presenting them with a fair and unbiased solution after taking into consideration the perspective of each party involved.

Reasons behind the familiarity with these concepts

The high levels of familiarity with the concept of equality sprang from their lens of distinguishing equality and discrimination. This was being developed in school over time. The system – the teachers, processes and curriculum (along with the hidden curriculum) valued equality highly. The link between claiming to be equal and seeing people as equal was present to a large extent. Another example of the same is that no rigid hierarchy existed between the teachers and the Principal. They all sat together in the daily morning meetings and everyone cast their vote on all matters; each one had a voice.

The hidden curriculum assisted this process as well. Unlike most schools where the teacher-student hierarchy is clear through most processes, in this school, most teachers and the Principal were accessible. Any child could run up to them and explain their problems or ask questions. They treated students with dignity. I was surprised to see that in some areas, teachers were at parity with the students. For example, in peak winters, there were no heaters for teachers as it was deemed unfair that only teachers got to use them, not students, and heaters for everyone was not a viable option. This was a stark example of treating everyone equally and this gets observed and internalised by students.

Teaching democracy

As a part of my research methodology, I taught concepts related to democracy to middle school students, as already mentioned. I chose a few themes that were common to the idea of democracy, that is, the idea of having representatives and questioning what they do, government, equality in the various domains of life and being an active citizen.

Class VI: Patwari, urban and rural administration

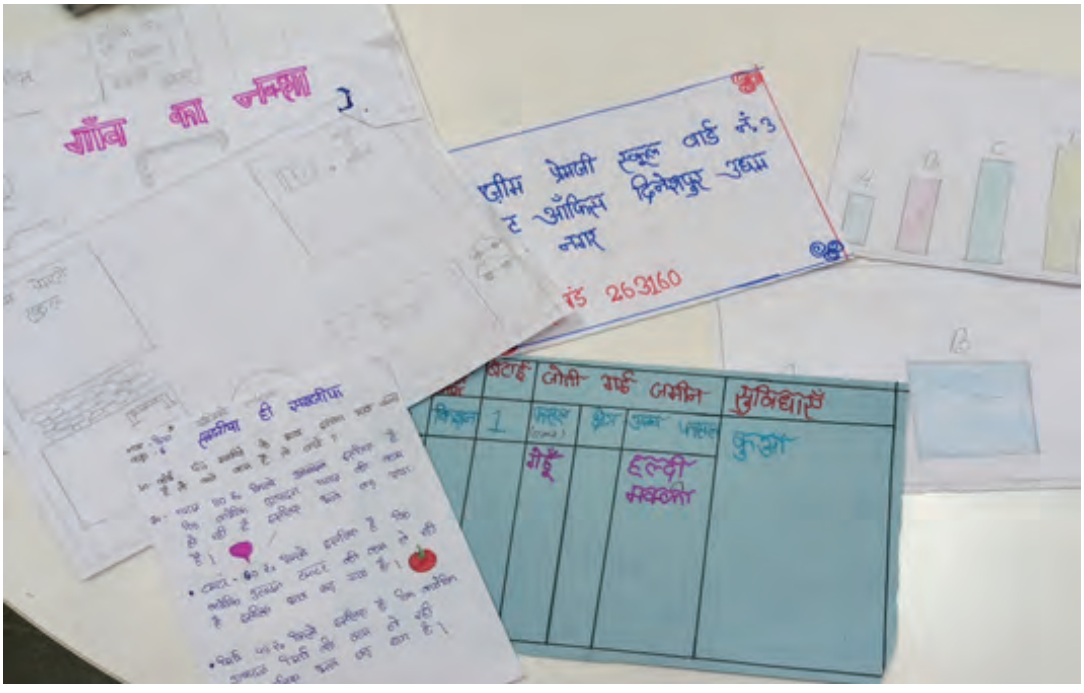
When I taught about rural administration and the representatives (*Patwari*) of the government in a rural setting, I brought out how the media criticises/praises the representatives in newspapers. In classes VII and VIII, I taught about how our chosen representatives fight for our rights and demands in the Lok Sabha. As this underlying theme was taught to them, they brought in examples from their real lives and found the examples given in the NCERT useful.

This theme was extended in the chapter on urban administration too. When we talked about their ward members and chairman, although most of them were aware of these leaders, they could not see them as part of the *Sarkar.* They saw them as people asking for votes and winning elections. After the idea of a 'good city' was given to them by showing them good cities across the world, the students questioned why their own town was not as clean and as well-maintained, which again came back to the idea of those who represented us. Soon, they could link the role of local governments to welfare and started seeing them as accountable to the people who vote for them and who they represent.

On asking class VI about why there was so much garbage and pollution in one of their localities, the reply was, 'No one comes to clean the road'. I asked them if they ever questioned the local representative. The children replied that if they try to speak up, their families hold them back. A child added, 'Now they even dump our waste in the local park.' Probing them about why they never questioned their leaders made them realise that they are allowed to do that. The NCERT textbook for grade VI did not give a direct example of anyone questioning the government through the local representative.

Class VII: Media, gender and equality

As a part of creation (higher order of learning; Bloom's Taxonomy), post a week of classes on newspaper literacy, class VII was asked to make their own weekly newspaper in groups of five. They posted a news item asking why sports for class IX have been stopped, *'Kaksha 9 ke sports kyu hua band?'*. Students of class IX reacted to this by calling this 'fake news' and 'not true'. On probing further, class IX admitted that the news was true however, it was written in an accusatory tone which showed them in a poor light. They clarified that it was a 'deal' between them, and the Principal and the decision was consensual, not imposed. The initial vehement reaction was because they were conscious of their



Exercises to know area under urban administration

image since the newspaper was circulated in the entire school. They voiced their misrepresentation. It showcased to the students the power that the media holds in misconstruing information.

When we conveyed this feedback to class VII, they were taken aback by the realisation that they had printed incomplete news. In the discussions, they admitted that they had not cross-checked before verifying the news. Here is when I emphasised the need for writing a balanced news report based on research, which objectively states facts and brings out both sides of a story. Media, as the fourth pillar of democracy, was discussed in the context of the school and was expanded to its role at the national level.

Class VIII: Parliament -- Constitution, organs, functions

The gap between what the textbook delivered to them about the government and what they had seen in their real lives was substantial for class VIII students. They had not seen the Parliament before, either on TV or otherwise. Therefore, they had the most difficult time connecting with what and why the *Sarkar* is. However, rerouting it through the local government really helped them to make the connection. Moving from the local to the central was helpful in all the three classes that I taught.

Students' understanding of equality and the concept of representatives helped me develop further on the academic concept for the same. The experiences were derived from their school itself so they could critically reflect on these and treat these as real-life concepts instead of reducing them to non-relatable, abstract ideas. Further, they could even identify the areas where they saw these ideas failing in practice, especially, at the school level. Though the students were not suitably aware of the political framework at the national level, they were quite familiar with what was available to them – their local leaders and school leaders who they knew was responsible for their well-being and whose actions if required they could question. Also, the CRs were aware of the power they wielded, but also knew that their actions could be questioned, and they could be asked to relinquish their powers if they fell short of the demands of their roles.

Even for concepts like equality, freedom and justice, students brought examples from their surroundings to class. This linking helped them with understanding higher-level concepts under these topics and extending those to the examples given in the textbook.

Focus group discussion

During my work with this school, I also conducted a focus group discussion with children of class IX to check their understanding of the same. Three groups of ten children each were formed. *Group 1* had children who were very active in class, especially in voicing their opinions and being aware of things. *Group 2* had children who were neither too active nor too passive in class. *Group 3* had children who were not active at all. Most of the ideas around democracy and government were understood well by the three groups. Clear linkages were seen between how their class functioned with how the government did.

Apart from this, *Group 1* had leads on the procedural aspect of democracy as they had many students taking part as representatives of the school. They were aware that they could be questioned, hence, they should question their leaders.

Group 2 seemed to represent the more common mentality; students knew that asking for votes was like a trap and questioning the government could mean getting killed or just being disappointed. This group considered it too much of a bother to get involved in.

Group 3 saw the government as a parent who takes care of the poor while being aware of the fact that it is involved in corruption and it also works to find those involved in corruption.

In terms of examining if the concepts taught in the three classes (VI, VII and VIII) helped students to understand these ideas, the outcome was positive and to a large extent, it helped. However, not all groups could come up with the names and functions of the three organs of the government. Moreover, they could not recall the name of their local ward members, which was an outlier case scenario because some of them were politically aware.

Conclusion

As seen from the examples above, as a concept, democracy needs to be lived practically. One can provide children with a suitable environment where they feel equal and do not hesitate to voice their questions and opinions. Children make quick associations with things they can see concretely. This happens with concepts that are lived and practised too. Similarly, in this case, when the school space is continuously helping them to understand this concept in practicality, it is easier for them

to understand the details given in the book and extending it to the situations and scenarios that the texts present. That, then, helps them question what they are studying and apply the same in their life outside the school.

Newspapers made by class VII

Discussion on types of news

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Responsibility Comes from a Sense of Belonging

Archana R

The reason we insist on children taking part in deciding, organising and implementing a school's day-to-day processes is that we believe that children do not come to school to be taught or be 'worked upon' by adults – the teachers. A child's place in the school is not that of an observer or a receptor, but of an active participant. This participation can only go smoothly if they have a voice and a platform to present their needs. This platform and the amount of agency granted to children has always varied across schools. For example, in the school attended by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi (or Totto-chan)[i] , we know that the Headmaster was responsible for setting up the rules but did so in a way that it assured complete freedom for children to be themselves within the school space.

More formal and significant energy is dedicated to this idea of children being involved in coming up with their own democratic setup in Summerhill School, run by A.S Neill[ii]. Neill stresses that although the meaning of 'Children's Government' may vary across ages, it is important that they know that it concerns them and that they can present arguments about matters important to them. The examples he gives of children asserting their ideas range from discussions on the suitable punishment for theft or of 8-9-year-old pupils arguing for the lifting of the ban on smoking on children aged below 12-years.

In a school like Summerhill, children have the final say even on things that the rest of the world may consider negative or extreme. What we also gain from the description of these events is that in this school, children have been given a space to express themselves, they choose the matters that need to be discussed, there is no hierarchy among them or among headmaster-teachers-students and rules are based on the best argument. This process is successful because the school has already made children understand (through experience) the core ideas of the school. Children have been allowed to be free and have been taught that anything that hinders their freedom is against the school's principles and can be contested.

Election day at school

I was at the Government Higher Primary School, Kanchagarahalli (Yadgir) as part of my Associate Programme. The school has students from the village and as well as a *tanda* (a tribe hamlet). In Yadgir, almost every village has a *tanda* with Lambani-speaking people. The *tandas* are usually more secluded and remote, away from the main roads.

Children had gathered for prayer in the school on a Saturday morning. They were to vote for leadership positions for the new academic year and do a thorough cleaning of the school. Voting for positions included those for different clubs, like cleanliness, gardening, library, sports, English, Hindi; and tasks such as overseeing midday meals and uniform checking etc. While speaking to students and teachers, I learnt that there was a pattern to the students who were absent on that day:

- Many girls from classes VII and VIII were absent.
- Several students from the *tanda* were absent.

The headmistress informed me that the absence of students from the said *tanda* was not unusual; they always skipped school on the cleaning day. I also found out that the girl students' absence was linked to the fact that the same set of students were voted into leadership positions. The shyness and feelings of anxiety, especially around the kind of popularity that comes with these leadership positions may be common among adolescents but to clearly see that girls are more prone to feeling inferior or ignored, also depended on factors, such as:

- Several positions required the appointment of both – a boy and a girl, but this was only in name. Depending on the position, the responsibilities either fell upon either the boy or the girl. For example, boys would 'lead or organize' events related to sports and gardening, and girls would oversee everyday tasks, such as midday meals and cleanliness.
- The remaining positions, like leaders of various clubs, tended to be about academics, so only a select number of students were picked for these.
- Boys who were industrious, for example, brought

plants to the school or were interested in sports could become leaders. When it came to the girls, the same set of four to six girls from classes VII and VIII were chosen for all the positions, as teachers believed that those who did well in studies were responsible enough to oversee everyday tasks.

Migrant children

The absence of the Lambani-speaking, *tanda* students was disconcerting. Their academic performance is a challenge across this region since they struggle with Kannada as the medium of instruction. But there are areas in which they can lead, like the Hindi Club (they are more comfortable with speaking in Hindi), or cultural activities (they show interest in singing and dancing). While academic performance affected their overall chances of being elected, their being absent, brought these chances to nil.

When I attempted to understand why they were absent and known to always skip cleaning duties, I realised that I had to look at their presence at the overall school level. Starting from the early grades, children from the *tanda* struggle to blend in with Kannada-speaking students in the classroom. Due to the difference in their parents' occupation, it is common for these children to be 'seasonally absent' (around harvests, festivals, etc.). They are also more likely to be absent for long periods when they migrate with their families to big cities for work. In these big cities, they lose their Kannada environment along with the learning. When they return to school, the language barrier intensifies their challenge in getting along with their classmates and teachers. This makes it routine for these students to feel out-of-place among peers and consistently anxious about being reprimanded.

Sense of belonging

Responsibility is closely related to a sense of belonging. In the case of young children, they first develop this sense of belonging to which responsibility can be introduced at a later stage. An example of this is seen in a description by A.S Neill in Summerhill where a child who has been breaking windows refuses to see it as a mistake or as bad behaviour but offers to pay for the damage he has caused, saying, 'They're *my windows*!' (Neill 1960). In this case, the child's sense of belonging has come first and because of his age, it is of a possessive nature. He is not of an age in which he can be made to feel guilty for his actions or to understand that what he has done is wrong. But his sense of belonging makes him take responsibility for the action in a most natural manner.

It is this incident mentioned above that I thought of while reflecting upon the reason why the *tanda* students tried to escape school-cleaning. It is common knowledge that no child enjoys these tasks that border on labour. Children need some other motive to do such work, whether they are at home or school. Children can be made to do these by introducing a rule, making threats, or forcing them to believe that it needs to be done. But the example of the *tanda* students shows how children respond when they feel no personal motive to do something. If students have not felt like they really belong to their school for six to seven years, they will not feel responsible for cleaning the school when such responsibility is assigned to them. And if the girl students have not experienced a sense of belonging over six years, adolescence may only intensify the feeling.

Teachers' biases

Coming to the elections, the bias among teachers, while it needs to be discouraged, is quite commonplace. Any adult who ever went to a government school and excelled in studies will corroborate this. They will tell you that they were their teachers' favourite and admit that the best teachers from their school were the ones who only focused on a few, select students. Teachers too admit to it; they do form favourites as they recognise those willing to learn and would rather direct their efforts towards their development.

We must remember that a school government is formed by the children for the everyday functioning of the school. That leadership is more about taking responsibility and providing support to others in carrying out their assigned duties. This process cannot possibly occur unless all children are involved in making decisions. Decisions should be made based on collective consent, rather than on mutually agreed upon exclusion. And most importantly, a children's government is made of, for and by children to ensure that it is not about monitoring other students in place of teachers, but to bring about an environment of students carrying out their tasks and responsibilities 'for themselves'.

It is this feeling of doing it for their own sake that I found missing when the *tanda* students did not show up in school on that day.

Rules by children

Although I could not do much at the school level, I did want to know how children would react to a system of governance they themselves came up with. When my students of class V began shouting

and saw me close the storybook I was reading from, they shushed themselves at first, but then launched into a louder din as they began to harangue one another. When I asked them to figure out their own way of making sure that we can complete one story each week (which could only happen without disruptions from their side), they came up with the most comprehensive set of rules (one detailing who should not sit with whom to avoid fights!). I tried the same with class VI and VII too, and they worked.

The rules did not guarantee a perfect classroom atmosphere. But what made the process successful was that when an issues came up, children knew what had gone wrong and how we could address it. Of course, there were times when issues had to be dealt with in other ways. There were also moments when students did not bring a particular issue to me because they felt that my way of handling it would not work. But for the brief period that I was with them, I could tell that a government formed by children does work. I think that the attempt I could make (at a very small level) only had a chance at working because one, I could make it a priority to include all the children, and two, I could manage to include all children because the rules they prepared were directly related to their behaviour. It was about their fidgeting, fighting and shouting at a time when a story of their choice was being read out to them. The act of possession followed by responsibility was simple (if not easy) to establish. I could only do this with grades V- VIII. In the case of *Nali-Kali*, children could not be expected to remember the rules, regardless of who made them. Even if they had agreed to it the previous day, they tended to get carried away in their play and forget it the next day. But we had smaller setups maintained in every class (like sitting in a semicircle only while listening to a story) that gave them structure and consistency.

In my understanding, Citizenship Education in our government schools revolves around four major points: first, children need to have an environment that makes them feel like citizens of the school; second, children need to understand that their environment exists on the basis of each member in the school having a fixed set of rights; third, children need to be involved in maintaining, asserting and implementing processes in which these rights can come into play; and fourth, children's awareness of how democracy has been structured for them should be drawn into a formal learning process (like when they learn about Indian democracy in their civics textbooks).

The idea of creating responsible citizens, or even responsible students may seem complex and daunting, but that of making each child feel a sense of belonging towards the school is a responsibility that falls upon us. Playing a part in creating citizens who belong is a good place to start. And, in my brief experience, wonderful to see.

i Totto-chan, the Little Girl at the Window (1981) is an autobiographical memoir written by a Japanese television personality and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Tetsuko Kuroyanagi.

ii Summerhill School is an independent, boarding school in Leiston, Suffolk, England. It was founded in 1921 by Alexander Sutherland Neill with the belief that the school should be made to fit the child, not the other way around.

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Democracy in the Science Classroom

Chandrika Muralidhar

There is one duty that is unique to India under Article 51A (h) that encourages the citizen to 'develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform'.

How does a teacher of science view democracy in her classroom? Does it play a role in defining the approach to classroom teaching and learning? In Dewey's words, 'If we were ever to be governed by intelligence and not by things and by words, science must have something to say about what we do, and not merely about how we may do it most easily and economically.'

What is it that Dewey means by 'what we do' in science? The life that we lead outside the classroom and its influence in shaping our perspective to aspects of life cannot be ignored. Owens, Sadler and Zeidler (2018), in a study, speak of the socio-scientific issues that need to be brought to the fore. A science classroom includes opportunities to seek out trustworthy information, develop positions concerning controversial issues, practice defending those positions using scientific evidence and respectfully evaluate alternative positions held by others.

Fostering a scientific temper

> Practising science in a manner that leans on evidence helps prepare students for the responsibilities of democratic citizenship which, while strengthening their content knowledge, helps them see both the benefits and the limitations of scientific inquiry (Reiss, 2003), and gives them opportunities to practice robust argumentation and develop reflective judgement (Zeidler, 2014).

Traditional science education has focused mostly on dispensing established and secure knowledge while relegating controversial or ethical topics to the sidelines (Hodson, 2003). In doing so, it enables teachers to avoid conflict with students, parents and other stakeholders by removing controversial issues from the curriculum and keeping their own ethical perspectives to themselves. Yet, these topics that teachers deem too controversial to teach are precisely the kinds of issues that are most relevant to students' lives and to the development of democratic citizenship (McGinnis & Simmons, 1999)

Owens, Sadler and Zeidler (2018) emphasise creating strategies that would establish classroom communities that support thoughtful questioning and attempt to critique the ideas related to science concepts. This builds muscle in children to ask their peers difficult questions, challenge different interpretations of experimental results and understand that questioning and critiquing can lead to productive discourse and learning.

However, before providing opportunities to delve into socio-scientific issues, it would help a science teacher to look closely at how she could inculcate some basic democratic practices in the classroom, for example, the usage of common resources provided in the environment. This could be an important feature in science, especially during lab work – being aware that the space is common for all like a regular classroom, respecting the space and using apparatus with a sense of responsibility. We will now look at some narratives in a science classroom.

Lab work and democracy

Class VIII students come into the science lab. There is a sense of excitement as this is perhaps the first time that they would be performing experiments individually and all by themselves. They have been used to watching demonstrations by their teachers and participating tentatively whenever the teacher permitted. The lab is a familiar place for them but not in terms of a workspace. It is different from a classroom in that it provides freedom of movement, allows for a greater approachability towards the teacher and peers and above all, in a sense of 'doing science'. These class VIII students have been looking forward to this experience.

The teacher walks in and absorbs all the excitement that she sees in the twinkling eyes and bright smiles.

Teacher: Welcome to the science lab! It is wonderful to see your happy faces and I look forward to our

year together. How would you describe what you see around you?

Student 1: Worktables, shelves, bottles, specimens…

Student 2: Varied materials for performing experiments arranged meticulously.

Student 3: Neat worktables!

Student 4: A setup and procedure sheet for our experiment.

Student 1: Lots of informative charts that we can use as reference!

Teacher: Wonderful! You will experience all the aspects of this work area in the coming weeks. Let's begin. You will find the procedure sheet of the experiment for today which is in line with what we discussed in the class yesterday. I will come around your tables and you can clarify your queries then.

The teacher provides clarifications across the class and supports the students wherever needed. She rounds them up for a brief discussion of the experiment and the home tasks to be completed.

Teacher: I think you all have worked through the experiment well and I look forward to responses on the home task. Just one thing – I would like you to look around at your worktables and tell me what you see now.

The students look around.

Teacher: Are they the way we gave them to you?

Students shake their heads to indicate 'no'.

Teacher: There is another set of students who will come in now. Can we present them with these untidy tables?

Students in chorus: No teacher

Student 2: Can we have something to clean the tables with?

Teacher: Sure. (hands over some dusters).

Students get into groups and tidy up the tables.

Teacher: Thank you very much for respecting this space, especially as it belongs to each student who steps in here.

The teacher here has established an important tenet of freedom with responsibility, respect for common space and the importance of cleaning up after one has used it.

What could be the importance of this in the everyday life of the child? It would help instil in children responsibility towards the use of public spaces and work towards their upkeep. This kind of approach is not restricted to the urban child whose exposure to such places is more than that of a child in a non-urban space. For such a child, her/his home, school, market, places of worship, community centres provide opportunities for exhibiting these practices.

An eclipsed view

A student comes up to his class teacher (also his science teacher) and gives a letter of request. The letter is to seek permission of absence from school the next day as there is a solar eclipse and he must be at home as instructed by the elders. The teacher is not surprised as this is not the first time that she has come across such a request. She also understands the sentiments behind such requests, yet as a teacher of science wants to provide her students with a scientific perspective towards natural occurrences, such as eclipses. Her intention is not to critique long-held practices, rather to provide a rational perspective to them.

Teacher: Students do all of you know that tomorrow is a solar eclipse. You do remember the concept of an eclipse from an earlier class?

Students in unison: Yes!!

Teacher: So, tomorrow being a solar eclipse, what is going to happen?

Student 1: The sun will get eclipsed.

Student 2: By the moon… meaning the moon comes between the earth and the sun.

Student 3: We need to remain indoors. We cannot eat food or drink water.

Student 4: If we look at the sun, we will become blind.

Teacher: Okay. So, an eclipse is a phenomenon in which the shadow of the moon covers the sun. Why are you not allowed to eat food or drink water during an eclipse?

Student 1: The food turns into poison!

Teacher: Is that so? Do you have any evidence?

Students chorus: Evidence?

Teacher: Yes, as students of science anything you say needs to be supported by evidence. If you say that during an eclipse one can become blind, what is your basis for it? Presenting evidence to prove a hypothesis is very crucial in the learning of science. Our task for tomorrow is to gather as much information about the solar eclipse as we can and present it in the class. I will look forward to our discussion.

The teacher here has provided a platform for the children to look beyond their acquired beliefs and

question them.

In the two narratives, the teachers have gently and sensitively raised questions and attempted to create a certain level of awareness about issues and responsibilities. By doing so, an atmosphere is created for discussion of practices that might not have a strong scientific rationale. The essential part of such interactions is the need for continuous dialogue and making sure they are not isolated cases in a science classroom. The teacher and student will need to consistently question social beliefs that are prevalent, explore the basis of their existence and work towards finding plausible explanations for them.

In conclusion, a science classroom where discourse is encouraged, questions are welcomed, seeking evidence is non-negotiable is a space that can be created by a teacher who instils in her students a sense of rational thinking and exposes them to democratic processes. These students could be expected to approach socio-scientific issues in an objective and fair manner.

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Solving Real Life Challenges Through Citizenship Education

Neha Yadav and Asmyta Tiwari

The guiding documents in the area of education, like the *Aims of Education* and the *National Curriculum Framework*, 2005, have constantly highlighted the need for human values and the awareness of rights, duties and principles of the Constitution. In the Indian context, the National Curriculum Framework, 2005 (NCF 2005) affirms that the responsibility of the development of citizenry that is conscious of citizens' rights and duties and depicts commitment to the principles embodied in our Constitution, is vested in school education.

In order to achieve this, there have been several curricular upgradations post-2005. However, despite this effort, in our experience of working with students and teachers, the feedback on Civics/Social and Political Life (SPL), is that it is generally theoretical, 'not relevant' or 'not practical'. For a country like ours, this signals a crisis. It means that on the one hand, we have a great many uninspired students coming out of schools every year, ill-equipped with the information and practical skills needed to be active and engaged citizens and, on the other, issues of poor governance faced in our villages and cities that could be addressed through effective citizen-engagement with the State machinery will persist.

We, The People Abhiyan, a civil society organisation with the mission of expanding an informed, active and responsible citizenry in India, has been working to bridge this gap by focusing on the capacity-building of teachers and students through a carefully designed curriculum called, *Citizenship Education Programme (CEP)*.

Quality civic education is fundamental to inculcating responsible citizenry and it is commonly felt that this is best done in the primary school years. CEP focuses on understanding SPL as a subject, through the perspective of the citizen. It tries to answer the question – how is SPL education relevant to me in my life, as a citizen in a democracy? In this way, students access innovative methodologies in class and practical application through *Civic Action Projects* (CAP) and campaigns. Their learning journey is strengthened through the attitudes, knowledge and skills framework.

Our methodology

Our content is developed on the answers to these three fundamental questions:

- What shifts are needed in citizen's attitudes/ perspectives?
- What information and knowledge are needed for civil society education?
- What skills and tools are needed to take action on the ground?

The content is organised around the framework outlined as:

Attitudes	Knowledge	Skills
'WHY' of a concept, like why we need freedom, why equality is important, etc.	'WHAT' of a concept, like what are fundamental rights, what is law, what is structure of the State, etc.	'HOW' to take action, like skills/tools required to take any action.

Different aspects of the Constitution are understood from the perspective of *what* and *how* a citizen can engage with them. It also combines a practical application of tools for civic action. We attempt to integrate CEP within the school curriculum and follow a Training of Trainer (TOT) model with Social Science teachers. Mapping of the curriculum is an essential step in this process. It enables us to create a strong connection between CEP and the SPL curriculum.

'The activities helped inculcate interest in Civics among students and helped them see the value and practical relevance in the subject.'

- Mentor Teacher, Directorate of Education, New Delhi

'With all this exposure and methods, I am not sure

how much will finally get translated in the class. But one thing I can say for us all, we are not the same teachers as we were 6 months back.'

- Private school teacher, Pune, Maharashtra

Civic Action Projects

This is an action-driven methodology that has worked in many schools in Delhi-NCR and Maharashtra to empower students and teachers to be engaged and active citizens. Students choose a civic issue from their surroundings, inform and equip themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills to initiate civic action and work closely with the authorities to solve the issue. The project creates opportunities for students to apply learned competencies to solve the real-life issues around them, thus practising aspects of responsible and active citizenship.

We carried out a study to assess the impact of CAP on the civic capabilities of students. To do this, we created two groups of students – a control group and an experimental group – to see how the capabilities of students were rated. The objective of the study was to assess how the two groups put their civic knowledge, skills and dispositions to use in writing their action plans and if there has been a qualitative difference between action plans recorded by the two groups.

The findings of this study show that experimental students who underwent the intervention exhibit significant enhancement in their civic knowledge, skills and dispositions as compared to the control group students. Action plans written by experimental students depict a well-researched and well-structured civic action. It is supported by several simple civic tactics, such as the use of written communication while working with government authorities. In contrast, while the action plans of the control group students displayed the willingness and appropriate perspectives to solve issues, they struggled with the knowledge and skills needed to substantiate their civic actions.

The experimental group students were able to write a civic action plan based on the activities that they undertook in their projects. They were also able to connect the hypothetical issue to the curricular concepts like fundamental rights and constitutional provisions around it. It is evident from the action plan that post-CAP intervention experimental group students gained significantly on civic capacities. On the other hand, control group students needed to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to transform their willingness to address the issue into effective civic action.

'In order to solve this issue, we will firstly, see the concerned right from the Constitution and will look for the laws made for these rights.'

'We will go to the municipal corporation office, register a complaint and watch if they make note of it or not. If they do not accept our complaint, then we, all the students of the school, will collect money and get the drainage work done.'

– Responses of students in the study

Advantages and outcomes

Our experiences and impact assessment have highlighted that a well-planned CAP design is highly feasible in a school set up. The hands-on experience of CAP makes it a great tool for teachers teaching SPL. It enables them to make learning more practical and skill-based.

Students get streetlights in Majalgaon

During one such engagement, students at Mahatma Phule Vidyalaya, Majalgaon, Dist. Beed, Maharashtra chose to work on the issue of missing streetlights around their school premises. An application supported by well-researched documents and a location plan was submitted to the municipal council of Majalgaon. After consistent follow up and meeting of students with officials, a streetlight was installed.

Students use RTE to get a boundary wall for their school

Students of Mahatma Phule Madhyamik Ashramshala, Dist. Satara in Maharashtra made an application to Gram Panchayat Katgun regarding building a compound wall around their school. The school premises belonged to

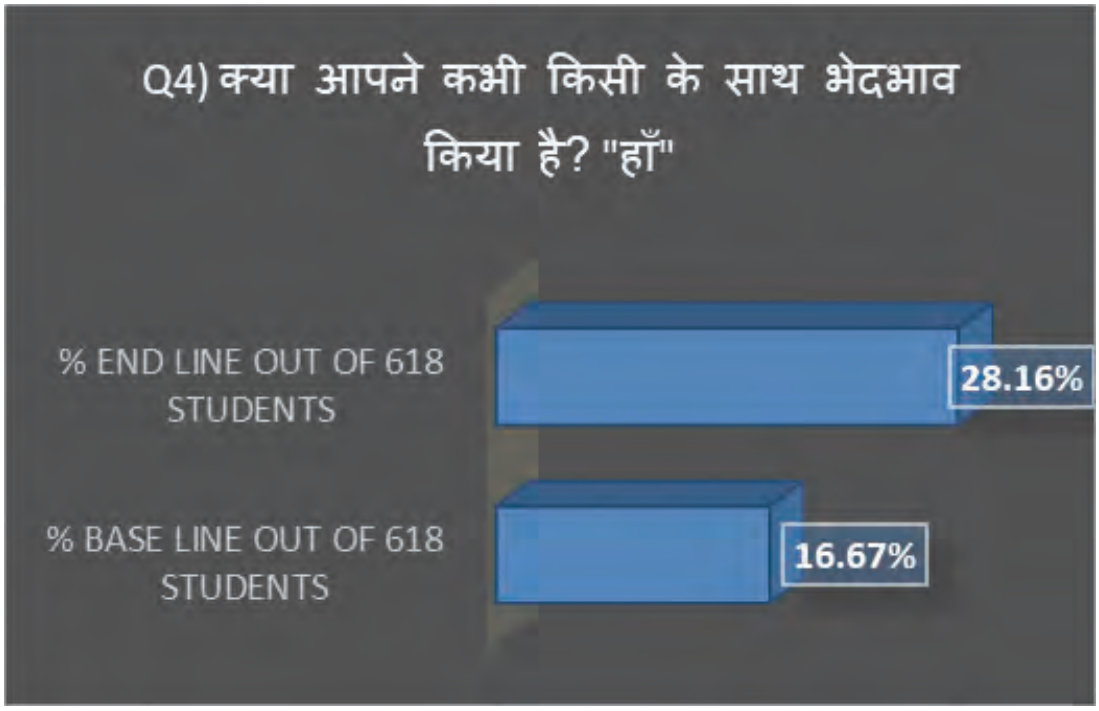
the Panchayat and was being used by the school on a lease. Students attached copies of the Right to Education Act, 2009, which mandates every school premises to have a compound wall around it.

The application was submitted in the month of January and then was followed up for a couple of months by students. The Gram Panchayat used Rs 1,21,000/- from the budget and got the school its much-awaited wall.

Campaign on constitutional values

This form of interaction requires the simplest yet the most crucial resource: the lived experiences of individuals, even those of young citizens. Over the last few years, we have been working with Mentor Teachers under the Directorate of Education, New Delhi. We have also engaged with students and all subject teachers from their government schools to work on *The Constitution at 70*, a short campaign on constitutional values.

The impact of the campaign was studied through a set group of teachers and students in different schools that we were constantly engaging with. Though the students in different schools were of different cultural and social backgrounds, their reflections were related to one crucial point - the Preamble of our Constitution. As a part of the campaign, they had to interact with similar groups of people around them - like everyone had to interact with their family members and people in their neighbourhood. Because these groups of people were similar for all, it helped all of them relate to what these values meant to people and how they engaged with the values on a daily basis.



Example from the Impact assessment of the campaign

Attempting to embed this consciousness and developing a lens of value amongst young citizens served as a way for us to continue to work on the *Preamble* with them. Further, we ensured that all subject teachers were involved in the campaign and it also served as a way for teachers to engage with constitutional values. Linking lived experiences with the subject matter seems to have made teachers and students interested in learning the *essence of the Preamble.*

With the Campaign, there are many stereotypes being broken about gender norms and caste-based discrimination amongst the students. Earlier, few wouldn't talk to the ones who did not match their economical standards but those are just stories now.

- Teacher, Government Boys Senior Secondary School, New Delhi

Conclusion

Studies from all over the world suggest that imparting civic education is not hurdle-free. In the Indian context, the biggest challenge has been to shift Civics, as a subject, away from rote learning methods and making it an engaging process of learning. Keeping this challenge in mind, We, The People Abhiyan works closely with schools on enhancing civics learning methodologies in such a way that it makes the subject interesting, practical and relevant to our lives. However, it is the capacity building of teachers and their willingness to experiment that are the pre-requisites for its success.

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Film: https://youtu.be/u6EB6lNiJ3M

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Inclusion | A Basic Right

Adiveppa Kuri

As soon as his name is called, wherever he may be, Madhava comes running to appear before his teachers. The teachers like calling him for every task. He is not fluent in speaking or adept in reading and writing, yet he is the leader of the whole school.

This child, who was struggling to perform even his daily tasks when he was admitted to class I, is today doing all his work himself and is mingling freely with everyone, just like any other child. Madhava is now confident in talking face-to-face with people who visit the school.

Transformation through inclusion

This transformation of Madhava, a child with special needs, has been possible because of the love and affection of his teachers and the opportunities they provided to him. This is also a testimony to the fact that given the right opportunities and assistance to cope, inclusion of every child is possible and that it is their right to get these opportunities more than empathy. Empathy is not enough; children with learning or physical disabilities should be provided with opportunities to grow. They need to be treated with patience, love and respect which go a long way in helping them to learn, which is part of their right to equality and justice as enshrined in the Constitution.

A few years ago, we had arranged a *mela* at Surpur for children with disabilities. Our team had worked hard for about two months to make it a success. On the day of the event, the way each child presented the assigned topic left teachers and parents spellbound with immense love and appreciation for the children. We felt an inexpressible sense of accomplishment; the children had made us proud of ourselves!

A mindset that children with special needs are a burden on family and society still pervades among us. Rather than looking at their differences, we need to explore how we can ensure their right to education within our system. It is my belief that if teachers make up their minds, every child can be educated well. When the parents of another 7-year-old child with disability came to know about Madhava's progress, they also admitted her to the same school and now that child too is able to carry out her daily tasks independently and parents are very happy with her transformation.

Diverse social groups

Children from diverse social backgrounds come to Government Lower Primary School, Shadimahal (Mudagal, Lingsgur block, Raichur district). Currently, there are 42 children studying in this school and they have different mother tongues (eighteen of them speak Telugu, five speak Marathi, eight speak Urdu, one child's mother tongue is Kunchati (the language of *Kunchikoravas*), and the mother tongue of the rest of the children is Kannada. The parents of these children are drama artists (*hagalu veshagaararu*), stone masons (*kallu kutigaru*), basket weavers, bangle sellers, vendors of small kitchenware. Some parents even beg for a living. They live in shanties. And some of these children go for begging after school. Even those whose mother-tongue is not Kannada, speak it well because Kannada is the language of their livelihood.

However, because of the teachers' sense of equality and social justice, children from such diverse social backgrounds do not have any inferiority complex. What visibly stands out is how they play freely with each other, share food, work together and help each other. Teachers have love and compassion for the children.

Teachers' role

When children join the school in class I, they have a hard time in adapting to the school processes; they often want to go out and hesitate to mix freely with others. One of the teachers, Ms Pramila not only respects their way of life but also allows senior students to interact with the younger students for short periods of time during school hours. Since she can speak their language, children share their feelings freely with her. She encourages children to sing songs, tell stories and helps them to contextualise their daily life. She also makes good use of the knowledge children already have about their social environment and recognises and shows

appreciation for even the smallest work done by the children. So, the children gain a sense of self-worth because of the democratic approach of the teacher. When spoken to, one can clearly see that the teacher knows each child well and also what and how each one is learning.

Pramila teacher is aware of the potential of these children. She uses the *Nali-Kali* methodology to add to their everyday experiences. She gives children a chance to talk, discuss with each other, and express themselves freely. Most of the children love storytelling, drawing, and making toys out of clay. This is because many children, even before coming to school, have the experience of selling toys and kitchenware along with their parents at local fairs in neighbouring villages. Hence, children from this school participate in drawing and storytelling programs at the Talent Show (*Pratibha Kaaranji*) held every year.

In sum, in this school, children learn about life along with acquiring literacy. Children come to school willingly every day. The school is like a family and learning is a part of everything that the children do at school. The fact that children are able to talk freely and their talents are encouraged, shows that the enacting of the Constitutional precepts is possible and can be a reality in every school.

**Names have been changed to protect the identities of the children.*

Adiveppa Kuri has been working with the Azim Premji Foundation, District Organization, Raichur for the last ten years. He has supported the *Guruchetana* programme organized by DSERT, Bangalore. He can be contacted at adiveppa.kuri@azimpremjifoundation.org

Investing Children with Responsibility

Anil S Angadiki

Most of our educational goals or curricular guidelines point towards developing rational thinking individuals through education. It is clear that the responsibility lies, to a large extent, with the schools and on the collective efforts of all stakeholders. The operationalisation of this idea is not very simple as has been experienced by many teachers. Most of us will agree that teachers have a prominent role in facilitating many of the practices that help in shaping children's thoughts. Although caregivers and peers also play a crucial role, they too are influenced by teachers through regular interactions. Schools usually have a holistic plan and run different processes and programmes for operationalising it.

At the Azim Premji School, Yadgir, we tried a practice that, in my view, supported many other practices in the school. When we started establishing a free and fearless environment for the children, there were some gains for us in the form of a good relationship with them; open and confident children who started expressing themselves freely and asking questions about things they did not understand in class. But gradually, we started facing challenges in managing children's behaviour – there were instances of some children not respecting their peers or their work; not responding properly to parents, not completing classwork, disturbing the class or morning assembly, not showing interest in participating in school events or not cooperating with the others.

After discussion on these challenges among ourselves and with expertise and observations from other schools, we started enhancing and improving the ongoing practice of holding dialogue. With the children individually, with their parents, peers and sometimes in groups in which a variety of modes were explored. To some extent, these were helpful. However, they took up a lot of time in classes, during assembly or events and when some children started taking these dialogues lightly, a few more actions, like establishing classroom rules by children and regular follow up on those were established. Feedback from the children and those parents who were having trouble controlling the children's behaviour using punishment (which they mostly follow in their homes) and our experience of losing precious time during the class or other school practices, we started feeling that there must be something in addition to having dialogue that would help us in saving our time, making children more responsible, and would, above all, bring a sense of responsibility.

A few practices in other schools to overcome such challenges through democratic practices triggered some thoughts in us. One of the effective practices that I should mention here is conducting elections effectively with representatives elected from all the classes and then establishing legislations through meetings of the elected committee. The routines of the school, challenges and mostly behavioural aspects can be discussed by this committee. This method of bringing children to a responsible role of establishing practices and discipline in the school is good and many schools might have succeeded in establishing democratic values among children using this. This model of school governance has many advantages.

We started discussing all the practices that could be dealt effectivity by adopting this model. The main focus was how to get each and every individual in the school to participate in the school routines. This was thought to be more effective compared to the electoral method in which after the responsibility of casting vote and electing representatives, the others become almost passive.

Democracy is a way of life and an experience built on faith in human nature, in human beings, and in working with others. It is a moral ideal requiring effort by people. It is not an institutional concept that exists outside of ourselves. The task of democracy is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute. (John Dewey, Creative Democracy).

To do this, we decided to form committees that would have representation of every member of the school, covering all the areas of school

operations. The good thing that we did during that time, about six years back, was that each committee had representatives from all the classes so that every child and teacher was part of one of the committees. The committees met every week to discuss and understand the role and responsibilities of members in the effective functioning of the school processes, setting up rules that have to be obeyed by all. The teachers were part of the committees and not in the driver's seat but guiding the discussions during meetings, delegating responsibilities among the members of a committee and communicating decisions and developments in the school assemblies.

In operationalising, initially, the idea seemed difficult because of the efforts that needed to be put in to convince or bring children to understand the democratic lines that need to be in place for the formation and functioning of the committees. To make the processes transparent and to ensure that each one was getting the experience of working in all areas, the lottery mode was adopted. Groups were formed according to ten functions and then a lottery system was used to choose a committee for the group. In a monthly school meeting, the functions were rotated among groups. Hence, at the end of the year, everyone got the opportunity of serving in all ten committees. It was very exciting for the children and teachers to sit together in small groups with a specific responsibility under the name of a committee and then, working on the smooth functioning of the same.

The committees were formed to focus on different areas in the school. The purpose of choosing these areas was to bring efficiency in these with new ideas, participation of all the children (from all the grades) and of them becoming more responsible as they design things. Following are the ten committees and their functions.

1. Assembly committee: responsible for the daily assemblies in school – morning assembly, classroom assembly, teachers' assembly, evening assembly.
2. Food committee: responsible for the midday meal (MDM) and milk/egg for children
3. Library committee: management of the school and classroom libraries
4. School garden committee: Planting of trees and maintenance of kitchen garden
5. Sports committee: responsible for sports and games
6. Cleanliness and hygiene committee: responsible for the cleanliness of classrooms, washrooms, other areas in the premises and personal hygiene
7. Events and celebration committee: management of national festivals, school events like *Bal Shodh melas*, subject week, etc.
8. Safety committee: responsible for the physical safety of children, for example, during movement in the corridor.
9. School rules committee: responsible for setting up and monitoring the execution of rules in the school and classrooms
10. School environment committee: responsible for aesthetics and neatness of classrooms and outside.

In the last year, a decision was taken to merge two committees – number 9 and 10 as their work was almost similar. Hence, currently, there are only nine functions or committees.

How we benefited

School operations became smoother. For example, for keeping the premises clean and well maintained, the committee members, who were from all classes, started telling the others in their class to maintain cleanliness, like using dustbins while sharpening pencils.

The MDM committee members started taking care of organizing sitting arrangements, monitoring, and discussing with children who used to waste food, motivating them to eat the vegetables etc. It was interesting to observe children from younger classes monitoring the upper primary children and even teachers to not waste vegetables. A practice of displaying the menu, ingredients used in terms of quantity, student and staff attendance and the food waste generated on that day, created awareness.

Discussions prior to events and celebrations on how meaningfully they can be celebrated, bringing variety in the activities in the daily assemblies, discussing and deciding practices related to safety were all very useful. Monthly meetings called *mahasabhas* coordinated by the school rules committee were organised to discuss all the current challenges in the school and solutions. In these meetings along with complaints about children's behaviour, a few interesting discussions and demands by children would also come up. For example, for striking off from the menu *Bisi bele baath* that was served on Thursdays and was not

liked by most of the children or to ask why shoes are not given instead of sandals, or why Hindi was only being taught to children from class VI onwards and not to early grades, and also a demand for more library or sports periods in a week.

We started observing positive changes with respect to cooperation, coordination, ownership, responsibility, participation and commitment all the qualities that are expected of a responsible citizen. I was delighted when I heard a student's speech during the Republic Day celebration in our school recently, he was comparing the Indian Constitution with the practices of setting norms in our school and functioning of committees. That indicates our efforts are in the right direction.

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Citizenship education cannot be delivered in a short-term manner. It has to be done consistently and repeatedly for the long-term. In different groups different ideas/concepts will work. There is no pattern of what will work and what will not.

Umashankar Periodi, Citizenship Through Creative Workshops, p 105.

Citizens in School | Practices and Reflections

Anil Ausha and Sanjay Daniel

The makers of modern India, like Baba Saheb Ambedkar and Rabindranath Tagore, strongly believed that India could not be a nation until it was made to become one. In other words, they believed that India was a nation-in-the-making. In this sense, nations are not merely made of geographical boundaries, standing armies or elected representatives, but of *citizens*: citizens who are good and are critical in their thoughts and spirit, who are *made* and not just born in a country.

Some institutions, like family, religion, schools, peer groups, political organisations, media etc, influence our day-to-day lives. We often approach the concept of citizenship with larger political ideas, such as nationalism, universal adult franchise and elections, but forget about being responsible members of our families and our schools. This article sheds light on how certain practices in schools nurture the characteristics of a good citizen.

Children as evolving citizens

The government schools in Ballari district follow the general practice of forming a school parliament in which each child is designated a role so that they may discuss, debate and execute issues related to the school. The schools worked with the Azim Premji Foundation on a project called *Arogya Suraksha Abhiyan*, resulting in a collaboration with the village panchayat libraries. *Odhuva Belaku*, a joint programme of the rural development department and the panchayats to engage children of public schools in reading and learning in public libraries in rural Karnataka, gave us an opportunity to provide books with contents on our Constitution to the panchayats. This encouraged many of our teachers to take this unique opportunity to design new pedagogical processes to inculcate the values of citizenship amongst their students.

A teacher named Manjappa from Hosur Higher Primary School, Hospet initiated a programme of forming a school *panchayat*. He was able to form a team of children from different schools of the Vinobha Bhave cluster and asked them to observe the issues in their locality, like open sewages, leaking taps, dumping of waste in public places etc. Children collected the information from the community, resulting in an interaction between the children, the teachers and the *panchayat* officials. Their discussions not only gave them an understanding of local governance, but also of the issues they were facing in their surroundings. Every child's voice was heard with respect and dignity. With the help of the officials, the children later organised themselves to solve the problems of the villages by cleaning up the school premises and repairing leaking taps.

Children as reflective practitioners

Shivakumara and Akkamahadevi, teachers from Ambedkar Lower Primary School, Kottur, Kudligi Taluk created a skit that portrayed children as workers in a railway station and post office and doctors in a government hospital. While creating the skit, the children focused on the aspects of cleanliness and hygiene in the hospital and their acting showed their strong conviction that a hospital should help people.

The teachers took these children to the local hospital and railway station and the children were shocked when they saw that these places were not as clean as they had imagined in the classroom. The teachers told them to make careful observations and reflect on why these places were not kept clean. Back in school, the children's response was that people did not feel they owned these places, they thought that the hospital and station did not *belong* to them.

This helped Shivakumar and Akkamahadevi to initiate thinking among their children about owning their school. It was surprising how, when they understood this idea, the children started to keep their school premises clean and even asked the adults to stop dumping garbage in their school premises. This sense of ownership made them actual 'citizens' of their schools.

Being effective in the field

Having attended the workshop conducted by Azim Premji Foundation as part of a social science workshop, we were able to discuss the concept of

'citizenship'. Volunteer Teacher Forums (VTFs) on the theme Citizenship were organised. Ravindra B, a teacher from Bevoor Higher Primary School, chose Discussion as his pedagogy in the classroom. While teaching a lesson on Public Property from the civics textbook to classes VI and VII, he asked them a few questions, such as, Who constitutes the public? What is public property? Who is a taxpayer? The children discussed the questions and responded saying the public was everyone and when everyone paid taxes, the property would automatically belong to everyone.

The next day, the children went to the village public bus stand close to their school with their teacher and cleaned it. They requested the people present to keep the area clean as it belonged to the public. It was a common practice in the village to use Bevoor Higher Primary School premises as a grazing ground for their cattle which destroyed the plants and trees growing inside the school premises. But after these insights, with the help of the teacher, the children stayed even after school hours to fence the trees and lock the gates to secure the property. The villagers stopped bringing their cattle into the school premises.

As part of the *Oduva Belaku* programme, the same teacher mobilised parents in *Makkala Grama Sabha* (Children's village sabha) along with the children and explained the importance of Child Rights to parents and the importance of consulting children in decisions taken in the family. They asked the parents to listen to their children's experiences. The parents in the gathering agreed wholeheartedly and also agreed that they would take their children to public institutions like banks, police stations and *gram panchayats.*

Conclusion

Enabling children to exercise their rights and duties thoughtfully should be the larger goal of every educational institution. We believe that every school should design activities like these to inculcate the values enshrined by our Constitution. This will help in the process of making good citizens and bring into reality the visions of the founders of a modern, democratic country. As mentioned in the introduction, nations are not merely formed, they have to be built. In the same way, good citizens have to be created. Empowering them with information and educating them about the various perspectives of being a modern, empathetic and a liberal citizen should be one of the most important goals of a public school.

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Learning Constitutional Values Through Activities

Ankit Shukla

In a democracy, the most exacting and challenging job of a citizen is citizenship. This is so because a citizen is responsible for selecting the government and to use this right, the individual must be capable of decision-making. Education plays a pivotal role to develop this competence by helping us develop our ability to think clearly and grasp new ideas.

An ideal and rational public discourse requires the interest of all citizens, the availability of relevant information to all and well-developed critical thinking abilities among them. Education aims at developing these critical thinking abilities in the citizens, where each citizen can make his or her own decisions rationally and can understand intellectual integrity and sift truth from falsehood, facts from propaganda; reject partiality and radicalism. An educated mind has a scientific temperament and faith in outcomes based on data. It has the ability to receive and perceive new ideas.

Activity 1: Situation analysis and the good of all

Based on my understanding of democracy and citizenship, I did an activity in a school I was invited to. After having a discussion with the teachers and students, instead of giving a lecture on constitutional values, I proposed an activity to help students understand the basics of constitutional values. I gave them a few questions, two of which are discussed here. The students had to analyse and answer these.

Situation 1: Let us suppose that there is a public tubewell in an area to provide water to three hundred farmer families of five villages in the vicinity. What arrangements will you make for the planning and distribution of water so that all farmer families can get the benefit of irrigation?

Situation 2: Who would you choose to be the sarpanch of your village?

The students worked in their respective groups and presented their solutions to the larger audience. One of the groups shared their views on the above situations which were as follows:

Answer 1: We will dig wells, lakes and other means of water storage and use the tube-well for storing the water. The water as a resource will be well distributed among all, rich or poor.

Answer 2: Voting for the sarpanch: Based on the work done by individuals or promise of essential work that needs to be carried out in the village, they would choose the individual for *sarpanch*.

Activity 2: Welfare of all

Democracy is based on the idea of the common good, that is, the common good of all citizens must be ensured. It is possible on the idea level while making any decision, the common good of the people is being ensured. But to ensure that it translates into practice, each citizen must understand his/her rights and duties. We must try to sow the seed of citizenship at a very early age. This was realised by me through an interaction with the children after watching the movie *Harry Potter* and *the Sorcerer's Stone*. After watching the movie, I asked them a simple question. 'What will you do if you get the power like that of Harry Potter?

The children's answers were varied. The initial response was to have a lot of money and become rich. This is something quite understandable given their economic circumstances. We always focus on what we do not have and their wish to have a lot of money is an obvious choice as they think that money can solve most of the problems they face in their daily lives. But on further probing, we found that they wanted the money for the welfare of the people around them, their village and not just for themselves. This was quite touching for me. Here are some of the responses:

- Cleaning of the village
- Providing water to all
- Building a palace
- Making money and giving it to the government which will give it to the poor
- Making a magic bus that would let people travel for free

The idea of cooperation amongst the students and the opportunities where this may be translated into practice should be developed at school.

Democratic values cannot be developed overnight. This requires continuous effort and hard work from teachers. A passion for social justice, sensitivity to social evils and exploitation must be kindled in the heart and mind of our children and the foundations for the change should be laid in school.

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Children have to deal with situations in their immediate sphere that require them to make choices. Their immediate sphere that influences them the most includes those who may care for them, those who may be indifferent and even those who may want to manipulate or use them. A child needs to understand how to distinguish between these and respond to each appropriately.

Hridaykant Dewan, Ideals of Citizenship, p 11.

The Preamble in the Classroom

Asmyta Tiwari

The Indian Constitution as a framework of life exists for all of us and, we, the citizens, young or old must use it. Its first few words – *We, The People of India* – hold deeply significant meaning with respect to citizenship. It is we, the citizens who need to ensure that we live by this vision of our Constitution in our day-to-day life. The Preamble, being the essence of the Constitution, paves the way to do this. It is a vision statement for all Indians.

This sentence, which is one page-long, has at its basis core human values that bind us together as the people of India. These values are a part of our daily life and our experiences are shaped around these values. But how many of us read the *Preamble* printed on the first page of our textbooks?

We must attempt to make it come alive and connect it with the everyday experiences of the young citizens, our students. Our aim at *We, The People Abhiyan* is to enable each citizen to understand their role as citizens and act with power and responsibility. We believe that within one's sphere of influence, however small or large that may be, it is important for citizens to take actions that are based on the human values of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity as enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution of India.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training's (NCERT's) Social and Political Life (SPL) textbook for class IX talks about the Preamble in detail. In line with it, over the last few years, our work with teachers and students across different regions in India has enabled us to unpack the Preamble with them and has provided all of us with a way to look at the one-page document from a citizen's point of view and connect the values to our daily life.

Mode and approach

In 2019, a three-month campaign, the *Constitution at 70* was organised in collaboration with the Directorate of Education, New Delhi. It was an opportunity to engage with the teachers and over one lakh students from classes VI to IX and XI from all the 1,200 Delhi government schools. The purpose of the campaign was to spread awareness and develop consciousness of the Preamble in such a way that the students would be able to connect the human values of liberty, equality, and fraternity to their everyday lives.

This need arose from the perception of students in classes VIII to X that the SPL curriculum is not only 'boring' but also 'not relevant' and 'not practical'. These responses signalled the necessity to connect the teaching-learning material to one's lived experiences. Lived experiences play a major role in one's growth and development and enable a smooth connection with the source of learning. Learning through reflection on one's actions leads to richer learning experiences. As a part of this campaign, tap-on experiences were designed to connect young citizens to those in their sphere of influence: friends, family and people in the neighbourhood. The purpose was to enable them to acknowledge and imbibe Constitutional values in their everyday life and become empowered citizens.

Based on this plan, month-wise teaching and learning materials were developed for teachers

and students. This included both textual and audio material for the teachers and textual material for students. At the end of every month, the schools organised *Samvidhan Melas* (Constitution Fests), in which various activities, such as street plays, panel discussions and debates on topics like gender and class discrimination, were conducted to promote collaborative learning. Engaging, experiential, reflective, thought-provoking bilingual content was created. It was divided into short sessions to aid in disseminating widespread awareness about Constitutional values.

Teachers received content for each value every month. Audio material included podcasts based on the explanation of each value with reference to everyday experiences. The textual material included Lesson Plans and Teacher Companion Sheets (TCS). The TCS comprised the concept map for a deeper understanding of one value and guidelines for executing the activities in the classroom.

Values Diaries and Game Booklets

Values Diaries contained survey questions for self-exploration. The reflection questions guided students' thought process to build an understanding of each value based on their interaction and experiences within their immediate circle. The students selected a member within their immediate circle, who they look up to with regard to the practice of these values.

The Values Diaries were complemented by *Game Booklets*. These were action-oriented and included activities for the recommended values to come alive. These motivated students towards self-exploration and guided experiential learning based on learning by doing. Students could choose four activities every month to experience and understand the relevance of each value.

According to *Erik Erikson's Theory of Psychological Development*, during the adolescent stage, a sense of identity is developed as adolescents begin to associate themselves with a social and cultural group. Erikson termed this a crisis, which does not mean adversity: it implies a point of important change. This change is dependent on a person's exposure to his or her social and cultural environment. At such a stage of physiological and cognitive development, an orientation towards the values of equality, liberty and fraternity guides the development of an individual.

In my interactions with students during this campaign, several episodes of sharing highlighted their incredible experience with values. I grouped these episodes into three themes:

- power of freedom
- consciousness of one's actions that are fair
- consciousness of one's actions that are unfair

These reflect the powerful impact of teaching the Preamble to students and bring to the fore the experience that they have had with the values and connecting these with their day-to-day life. Some responses were as follows:

Power of freedom

- The power to vote and to choose one's own government is a fruit of the value of freedom and liberty. I have learned about the freedom to choose.
- My parents gave me the freedom to choose the stream [of study] of my choice. Education is more important than dictating which stream to choose.
- My friends and I went to a restaurant recently to celebrate my birthday. It was a little expensive place but did not feel like we were not meant to be there - no one questioned us on why we were there. We enjoyed spending time and celebrating my birthday there.

Consciousness of one's actions which are fair

- मैंने कभी किसी की पसंद या स्वतंत्रा को बाधित नहीं किया क्योंकी हमारा कोई अधिकार नहीं है की हम दूसरों को रोक-टोक करें| हम सब स्वतंत्र हैं| (I never restricted anyone's actions because it is not our right to limit others' freedom. We all are free.)

Consciousness of one's actions which are unfair

- हाँ, मैंने दूसरों को बाधित किया और पहले मुझे अच्छा लगा पर अब मुझे अच्छा नहीं लग रहा है क्योंकि मेरा अधिकार नहीं है कि मैं दूसरों की स्वतंत्रता बाधित करूँ| (Yes, I have restricted others' freedom and earlier I used to enjoy it, but now I don't because I have no right to restrict others).
- कोई अगर SC है या general है तो उसे ऐसा नहीं करना चाहिए कि बस SC का दोस्त रहे या general का| उसे दूसरे लोगों के साथ भी रहना चाहिए| (If someone belongs either to the SC or the general category, then they should not be friends only with people from their own group. They must be with people from other categories too.)

Building on these experiences has enabled us to create more such experiences in active citizenship for young citizens. Although they were involved with concepts in their SPL curriculum, engaging in

self-reflection, interactions with family and people in the neighbourhood gave them a chance to experience human and constitutional values come alive. This way, they did not see the Constitution and the Preamble as a thing distant from them. The supplementary material shared with them during the campaign made them live these values. They realised that the Preamble is not just a remote idea printed in their books but something that they deal with regularly in various situations.

Other uses

This campaign is evidence that this method can also serve as another approach to delivering the content of SPL curriculum. Also, while using this campaign as a methodology, it is essential for us as teachers or facilitators to become more involved in constitutional perspectives. It can aid in the facilitation of such methods in our classrooms.

The values in the Preamble to our Constitution lie at the core of citizenship. Today, even the National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP 2020), states the values mentioned in the Preamble to be, 'one of the fundamental principles that will guide both the education system at large, as well as the individual institutions within it.'

Seen in this light, it is vital that we read, learn and recite the Preamble in our classrooms and start unpacking it through interactive and experiential methodologies. It is through actively engaging with the surroundings and experiences of young citizens in different settings that the Preamble and its values can be brought alive.

Resources

A short film on the campaign – Constitution at 70 campaign: https://youtu.be/jXxQYZ9KayA

Find more resource materials here: https://www.wethepeople.ooo/resource-center

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Citizenship Education Through Mantri Mandal

Gururajrao K

School is the institution whose ultimate purpose is to provide citizenship education through all its planned and systematic processes, which include curricular and co-curricular activities. I am sharing the experience of our school in Imalpur which succeeded in providing citizenship education through some unique approaches.

Our experiment

The Government Higher Primary School, Imalpur (Yadgir district) has around 200 students studying in classes I to VII. It is one of the border schools of Karnataka where the mother tongue of most of the students is Telugu. From 2012-2015, I worked with the School Leadership Development Programme (SLDP) for head teachers. As part of the programme, each head teacher had to pick one initiative in the school as a project and work on it with all stakeholders in the school. They had to also draw learnings from the experience.

Bassappa was working as Head Teacher (HT) in the school. He had 20 years of experience as an assistant teacher and 8 years as the HT. His project was creating a democratic space in the school through the formation and implementation of a *Mantri Mandal* (a cabinet of ministers). It was a unique initiative among all the others that the other head teachers of the block had selected because it dealt with the promotion of constitutional values and citizenship education. The work on this had already started in that school and the HT wanted to continue and sustain it through the SLDP programme.

The HT and teachers had a detailed meeting with all the children regarding the formation of a strong *Mantri Mandal*. They assured the children that they would provide them with a free and non-threatening environment to perform duties and make decisions as members of the *Mantri Mandal*. They also told them that it was the *Mantri Mandal* that would drive the school processes and have the right to implement democratic processes in the school. These included, the students' rights to ask questions, express opinions and be equal partners in all the school processes.

A proper election with nominations and votes took place and the *Mantri Mandal* was formed with a Prime Minister and ministers for Education, Culture, Cleanliness, Environment, Finance and other members. All the members were inducted and familiarised with their roles and responsibilities. Quickly, the elected members started performing their duties. Bassappa and Venkatesh (Assistant Teacher) supported the students by clarifying their doubts related to their roles. It took almost six months for the children to understand their roles better. By then, there was a visible impact in the school. Children had started questioning their teachers. Following are some examples:

- Children had started questioning the teachers who came late to school
- They made official complaints to the HT about the lack of resources in the school. For example, chalk, dusters, drinking water pots and materials for teachers.
- The school attender was made answerable in the morning assembly for not cleaning classrooms and not the drinking water pots in the school premises even after several reminders.
- Teachers who gave children harsh punishment (or hit them) or humiliated them in any way were also named.

Children started enjoying real democracy in the school. There were monthly meetings wherein all the elected members met and discussed the issues of the school and actions to be taken. According to the HT, there was an increase in the children's confidence levels and a decreased fear of expressing themselves to teachers and elders. The students became well behaved in many ways; they started coming to school regularly, completing assignments, paying attention and participating actively in class.

Beneficial results

The demand for becoming members of the *Mantri Mandal* increased every year. Experienced students started inducting junior members to perform their roles. Questioning was the major ability developed in the children. They started to question everything in the school. This made both teachers and students more accountable and punctual in their work. Because of this, the school gained fame in and around the area. Teachers, Block Resource Persons (BRPs) and children from nearby schools started visiting the school to see the students' increased confidence level and the idea of the *Mantri Mandal* which was now making all the school decisions.

Here are some examples of the work they accomplished in three years:

- There was a shortage of textbooks and children were complaining regularly to the HT to solve the issue. One day, the Block Resource Person (BRP), who was responsible for textbook distribution. visited the school as part of his day-to day-work. The children stood around him and questioned/ him. He promised the children that he would resolve the issue and within three days, all the children had received their textbooks. The BRP would later share this incident at the various teacher training platforms to motivate teachers to start such initiatives in their schools.
- There was only one toilet in the school which was not sufficient for use by all 200 children. The girls would go to their homes during the break to use the toilet and the boys would relieve themselves outside the school, in the open. The *Mantri Mandal* took up this issue with the HT and the school team requested the local Gram Panchayat to construct toilets for children in collaboration with the School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC). When the issue was not resolved even after three months, the students took the path of peaceful protest and gathering outside the Gram Panchayat, demanded the construction of toilets in the school. Within ten days, temporary toilets were in place and the new toilets were constructed within six months.
- In another incident, the children were able to explain to the Block Education Officer (BEO) how a temporary school attender hired to clean the premises had shirked his duties and threatened the HT. This resulted in action being taken against the erring attender. The BEO was impressed with the children for explaining the situation correctly, confidently and without any bias.

This initiative that was started to create a democratic process in the school through a *Mantri Mandal*, had a great impact on students. They were able to question, raise their voice against discrimination

and fight for their rights. It also helped them to better judge right and wrong and become aware of their duties and responsibilities.

This is how children learn about citizenship and become better citizens of society. There may be a few schools that are also working like this, but we need all schools to practice democracy in similar ways. If children learn to use democratic ways of dealing with issues in the school, in their homes and in their villages, they will grow up to respect the value of democracy and become active citizens. This can be achieved through the regular and persistent efforts of the school's students, teachers and parents.

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What should be the content and goals of an education for citizenship? This is not a simple question. There can actually be several ways of answering it, with serious disagreement among the various positions possible. It is also a dangerous question to ask, but schools and teachers have little option but to pose it, if they wish to be relevant to our times and be able to teach something meaningful to their students.

Amman Madan, Different Cultures of Citizenship - Which to Teach?, p 03.

When a Poem Opened Doors for Discussion

Nanda Sharma

While working with primary school children, we often use the *Khushi-Khushi* textbooks from *Eklavya's* Primary Education Programme. We also use Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs), such as word cards, picture-word cards, poetry posters, etc.

Generally, we use poetry posters in classes I, II and III to help children overcome their hesitation in speaking, identifying words and sentences and in helping them to make sense of the text they read. We have seen that children are able to do various activities based on poetry posters with ease. These activities include colouring, identifying words, encircling the identified word, writing sentences in the notebook and taking the poem forward on their own.

I am sharing my experience related to a poetry poster that I used in a primary school in Khedla, a village in Hoshangabad. This experience not only paved the way for discussions on human and constitutional values, like gender discrimination or equality in the classroom but also drew my attention towards the potential of using poetry posters in the primary classes.

Ms Kala Meena and Ms Pragya Sharma are two teachers of this village who under the *'Hamara Ghar-Hamara Vidyalaya'* scheme, teach a few children at home because of the COVID-19 pandemic. One day, when I reached Khedla village, as usual, the teachers had divided the children into two groups. The teacher, Kaka Meena, was taking mathematics with the children of classes I and II and the teacher, Pragya Sharma, was about to begin her class on language with five children from classes III to V. I sat down with this group.

The teacher had a poster based on the poem *Lalaji Laddu Do* (Give us laddus, *Lalaji*). She sat with the children in a circle and made sure that all children could see it properly. Since two children from class III were not able to read, the teacher was paying more attention to them. She read the title of the poem, *Lalaji Laddu Do* aloud. Then she instructed the children to colour the pictures on the poetry poster so that the poster would look beautiful and it would be more interesting to read. She kept crayons in front of the children.

The children were watching the pictures on the poetry poster carefully and also talking to each other. One said to another, 'You colour the *laddu*, I will colour *Lala ji*'. The teacher, who was listening to the conversation of the children, interrupted and said, 'Look, all of you take turns to colour, one of you can colour *laddus*, somebody else can paint *Lalaji's* face, the third child can colour his kurta, the fourth, his hair, and the next child his moustache.' The children laughed loudly when they heard the word 'moustache'.

A girl quickly picked up a black crayon and started colouring *Lalaji's* hair. When she was done, the second child started to paint the kurta red, while the third one painted the *laddus* yellow. Now came the turn of *Lalaji's* moustache, which was also painted black. In a short time, all the pictures in the poster were painted.

The teacher asked a child to stand up and hold the poster straight. Then, she recited the poem by keeping a finger on each word. Next, all the children were given a chance to read the poem by keeping their finger on each word. It appeared that the teacher wanted the children of class III to recognise the words because these children were not able to read. After a while, the teacher asked the children some questions.

Teacher: 'How many *laddus* did the child ask *Lalaji* to give?

Students: 'Four.'

Students: 'No, one.'

They got the correct answer by looking at the poetry poster once again.

Teacher: 'Who do we call *Lalaji* in our village?'

Student: 'My brother-in-law.'

The teacher repeated her answer saying, 'Yes, brother-in-law or son-in-law is also called *Lalaji*. But here the *Sethji*, who sells sweets, is being called *Lalaji*.'

Teacher: 'How was the child praising *Lalaji*? Do you also praise someone when you want something from them?'

Students: 'Yes, we praise our mother; we praise grandmother, and we praise father.'

Teacher: 'How do you praise your mother?'

Students: 'Mummy, you make very good gulab jamuns.'

Teacher: 'How do you praise grandmother?'

Students: 'Grandmother, you sing bhajans very well, we enjoy listening to you.'

Teacher: 'Who makes *laddus* and *gulab jamuns* in your house?'

Students: 'Mummy.'

Teacher: 'So who would have made *laddus* in *Lalaji's* house?'

Students: 'Probably his wife.'

Teacher: 'How did the child praise *Lalaji*?'

Students: 'He praised his moustache.'

Teacher: 'By the way, who has a moustache?'

Students: 'Men have.'

Teacher: 'Have you seen anyone else having a moustache other than men?'

Students: 'Yes, lion, cat and mouse have moustaches.'

Then a soft voice was heard, 'Some women also have.' This answer was given by the child who was shyly colouring *Lalaji's* moustache sometime back.

All the children laughed loudly.

The teacher asked, 'Have you seen a woman who has a moustache?'

The children kept quiet for a while. Then a couple of children said hesitatingly that they have seen women having a slight moustache and not a thick one.

The teacher told the children that hair growth on the body is due to the hormone and this can happen to anyone, man or woman.

It appeared that we were going deeper into this discussion. But that day's class got over. We were able to do some language-learning activities with the children of classes III and V. But I could not understand what else could be gained from the poetry poster. I felt that we had missed out on achieving something that day but could not put my finger on what it was.

Most of the pre-NCF 2005 books depicted gender-based discrimination. Very deep prejudices were seen in the textual exercises. For example, textbooks were dominated by male writers. The content was also male-centric. Most of the descriptions found in the books depicted the woman as mother, sister, or housewife, while men were shown as breadwinners, or in other responsible roles.

While pondering deeply over these thoughts, I called a friend and shared this experience with her. She told me that while talking to the children on *Lalaji's* poem, she had asked children to assume that *Lalaji* is having a stomach-ache and hence, *Lalaji's* wife is managing the shop. So, keeping *Lalaji's* wife in mind, change the poem and recite it. Some children immediately changed *Lalaji* to *Lalain*, but then stopped not knowing how to praise her. Some children said that if *Lalaji* is ill, then his son should be managing the shop. I am stopping here without telling the details about the changed poetry poster. Actually, I got a new direction from this conversation.

I understood that the role of the teacher is very important in eliminating discriminations based on gender. The National Teacher Education Curriculum 2009 (NCFTE 2009) also states that:

'As teachers develop curriculum materials and learning experiences, informed by the perspectives enunciated above (Gender, Peace, Sustainable development), they will also learn, through actual participation, the skills to identify and process the specifics for the purposes of meaningful curriculum transaction.'

- NCFTE 2009, Pg 14, National Council for Teacher Education. New Delhi.

A few days later, I went to Khedla village again and was once again in front of the children of the primary school with the poetry poster of *Lalaji*. Last time, we had done some activities related to colouring and words. We decided to carry on with the discussion. Both the teachers were also with me.

What if *Lalaji* is ill, and his wife is managing the shop? We started the discussion from this point. The children were not ready to accept this change easily.

Teacher: 'How many grocery shops are there in our village?'

Students: 'There are three shops.'

Teacher: 'Who manages those shops?'

Students: 'So-and-so uncles manage (that is, men manage these shops).'

Teacher: 'Do women also manage these shops?'

Students: 'No.'

One girl said, 'We have a grocery store. When our father goes to the farm or to have his food, our mother manages the shop for some time.'

This means that the role of the woman here is like that of a reliever. All she is required to do is safeguard the goods of the shop and manage sales in the absence of the shopkeeper for about an hour or so.

The teacher asked: 'Which are the shops run by men and which by women?'

The students answered – men run the shops like a grocery store, barber shop, shoe-shop, manure-seed shop, clothes shop, etc. Some children believed that most of the shops are run by men only. The women usually run shops that sell items related to makeup, vegetable shops, beauty parlour and flower-*bael-patra*-coconut shops (common on the banks of river Narmada).

The teacher then asked, 'Would it be okay if all the shops are run by women?'

Some children said that if there are women in all the shops, then they would not be comfortable going to the market. Only women will be seen everywhere.

We felt that the children did not understand the question properly. So, it was asked again saying that we would go to the market just as we go now with mother, father, uncle, aunt, etc. but the shopkeepers would be women and not men. That would be the only difference.

Two children agreed that they would have no problem with it. One of them said, 'Like if we have to only buy a shirt in the market, it would not matter whether the shopkeeper is a woman or a man.'

But one child was still uncomfortable with the idea of all-female shopkeepers. But he could not openly say what was bothering him. After a long time, he said, 'What will fathers do if mothers run the shop?'

Teacher: 'Fathers will work in the field, do household chores, cook.'

Students: 'Fathers do not know how to cook.'

Teacher: 'They will learn cooking. Is there any man known to you who sweeps, cooks, etc.?'

The children gave two examples, but these were men who had lost their wives.

Teacher: 'Why is the work done by women and men different?'

One student (hesitatingly): 'Certain type of work requires a lot of strength.'

At this point, the teachers told that it is our misconception that a woman's body is weak. Even women can drive a tractor, truck, train or plane. Just as five lady teachers are running their school. Everyone should get opportunities to do all kinds of work.

At this juncture, we looked at the poster of *Lalaji*. It appeared as if *Lalaji* would reach out to us and give *laddus* to all the three of us.

That day we were able to touch on the issue of women's employment through *Lalaji's* poster. We were able to understand the stereotypes that were created in the minds of children. Children have become so used to seeing men as shopkeepers that they are uncomfortable with the very idea of a woman shopkeeper managing a shop. They are not ready to imagine this situation even for ten minutes. They start thinking about what the father would do if the mother starts managing the shop.

Even after this, there are many more possibilities of discussions based on this poster. Artisans, waiters working in *Lalaji's* shop, their work, their salary, *Lalaji's* treatment of employees, etc. can all be discussed. These are various areas through which one can explore the experiences of *Lalaji* from giving *laddus* on praising his moustaches to *Lalaji* getting children to work for him. Therefore, poetry posters are not limited to just language teaching, but they also give the opportunity to examine many social issues.

Acknowledgements

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Citizenship in the Times of a Pandemic

Praneet Gudladana and Sankalp Koripalli

They [the two students] made a valuable and sizable contribution which would greatly benefit the underprivileged in Hoskote - Chandan, Goonj Coordinator

What must individuals do in order to fulfil their roles as citizens? Other than following the rules and laws of the country, citizens are expected to respect and acknowledge the needs of others. Volunteering is a socially beneficial act that strengthens the community and fulfils a core principle of citizenship.

People are the building blocks of a democracy. The first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru said, 'Citizenship consists in the service of the country'. In 1997 when the Labour government came to power in the United Kingdom, it aimed to transform citizens from mere complaisant users of public services to more active and engaged members of the community. This interpretation of citizenship benefits the community and, more importantly, the nation as a whole.

The recent months opened our eyes to the severe impact of the pandemic on certain sections of society. For the first time in our lives, we saw how a lockdown enforced in the interest of public health could negatively impact them. These included street vendors, daily wage workers and small businesses. While the Government was taking measures to ease the situation, we wanted to do our bit as concerned and empathetic members of the society.

We explored different ways to help the people who were affected. After some research, we chose to collaborate with a reputed NGO called *Goonj*. It has an established donation distribution network, which assured us that all donations would reach the people in need. In September, we proposed a donation drive across Bengaluru in multiple neighbourhoods to collect various essential items, such as clothes, shoes, books, dry rations, oil, stationery, bags and blankets.

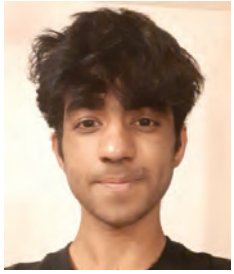
When we started, we were doubtful if it was a good idea; if we would be able to collect enough donations. But we relied on the generosity of fellow citizens. By the month-end, we had focused all our efforts on publicising the donation drive through WhatsApp messages and emails. We made a fervent appeal and spread the word through our friends' networks. To make it easy for the donors to contribute, we planned to place collection boxes in the communities. Getting big cartons was another challenge. A week before the drive, we requested friends and neighbours to save any boxes they got from online shopping. We approached our neighbourhood grocery store with a similar request. The store owners were very cooperative and told us to come back in a couple of days. After an appropriate sanitization process, we placed the big cartons at all proposed locations.

As the word spread, we received overwhelming support. People jumped at the opportunity to give away their unused items. Motivated by the positive response, we set up more boxes to deposit

donations and began collecting these donations periodically from the middle of October.

The next step of the process was to transport these donations to the *Goonj* facility in Bengaluru. However, the sheer number of donations made this task difficult. We required help from a few friends and family to carry the boxes to the vehicle, and numerous trips to the centre. Finally, after a week of heavy lifting and travelling, we were able to transfer all the contributions to *Goonj*. They were delighted to see everything we had collected and promised us that these valuable supplies would be distributed to those in need.

Helping people in need builds the psychological feeling of connectedness and belonging. A good citizen values this spirit and embraces it. A true citizen is one who actively participates in the community and empathises with all its members. We believe it is our responsibility to engage in the civic community and not just to offer blind allegiance to an authority. When people focus on their personal business, along with the wellbeing of their neighbours, they embody the spirit of citizenship. From offering community service to organising events and festivals, every activity done to aid and strengthen the community builds this spirit.



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Empowering Others

Prashant Mishra

We can all be honest, law-abiding citizens who are aware of our rights and responsibilities towards society and the nation. But being good citizens also requires us to contribute to society in ways that we can. Here's what I decided to do.

The core philosophy with which I started *Project Careach* was to care and reach out to those who need help and in ways that benefit them over a long period of their lives, ideally, lifelong. India has the world's largest child population; 95 percent attend primary school and only one in ten go on to do undergraduate degrees.[i] Having realised the magnitude of the problem, I felt encouraged to pursue this social cause. As Nelson Mandela once said, 'Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world'.

How I started

The first task was to locate the beneficiaries. Based on my research and suggestions from my parents it was decided that I work with a government school. After meetings with the General Body of Kudlu Government School, Bangalore, the Management approved this project.

To align the interests of all stakeholders - parents, students and school administration - I conducted around 145 interviews and found that students were interested in English, mathematics and sports. A lot of them were also interested in co-curricular activities which I believe could be a result of exposure to television and other media. But from an academic point of view, English came up as the subject of greatest interest and therefore, I decided to teach spoken English to class V students (English is introduced in class V in government schools).

The school administration was also keen to get some development work done at the school. This required some funding and it took me some time to mobilise monetary resources, but eventually I was able to. The list included the following:

Progress so far

1. A group of 54 students in classes V and VI are being taught spoken English.
2. A crowd-funding platform, *Careach.in*, is operational, with presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We also campaigned door-to-door.
3. We created content for the sessions, which are interactive and have conducted 45 sessions so far.
4. We have already collected about 50 percent of our funding needs which has been used for purchasing a printer, green chalkboards, and some indoor games.

While I was making steady progress, COVID-19 brought things to an immediate halt and as things evolved, it became evident that parents and children were certainly going through hardships. So, I changed gears and decided to support the student families in whatever way I could. In my meeting with the school Principal, it emerged that it would be best if we could support the neediest 30 families with food and day-to-day supplies between August to November 2020. A list of beneficiaries was made in consultation with the school Principal. Extensive door-to-door and online donations were sought and I got a steady flow of funds to help these families.

Work ahead

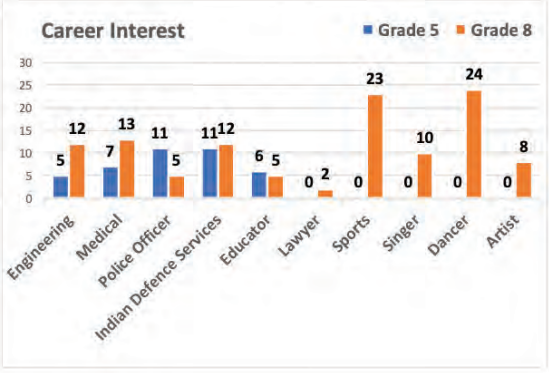
Beyond the other planned activities, the school needs extra toilet facilities. My quest to help continues and I am scouting for some corporate/ CSR funding. The estimated cost is ten lakh rupees, which I am certain we will eventually be able to collect. But for now, my work of teaching only spoken English and helping with minor infrastructure improvement continues.

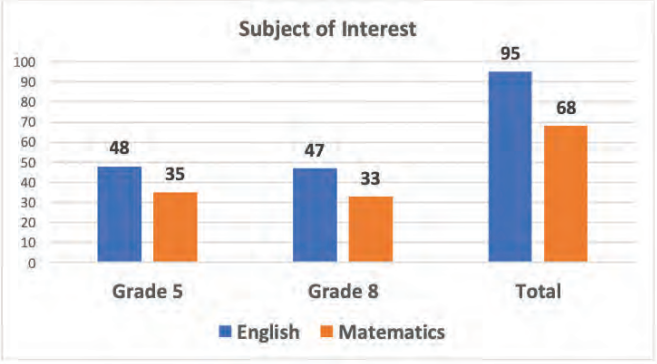
Recently, I was also able to help the school with a high-speed internet connection.

As citizens of democratic nations, it is the duty of every person to help make life better for everyone. Instead of choosing to do what is easy, we need to

take actions that are just. We need to work towards unconditional equality and not categorise our society based on irrelevant factors, such as wealth, gender, caste, religion, etc. It is obvious that it will take time for this to happen, but the least we can do is to take steps we can. I am trying to do my part.

Met a total of 145 Stakeholders = 124 Students || 11 Teachers || 10 Parents





Inside the classroom

- English text books Rs. 30,000.00
- Class library Rs. 120,000
- Green chalk boards Rs. 47,436
- Benches and desks Rs. 154,000

Office & Building

- Photocopier Rs. 106,672.00
- Painting, artistic walls Rs. 150,000
- Indoor games Rs. 17,000

We are supporting one government school

Estimated spend of Rs. 617,618 ($8,880) with 10% contingency

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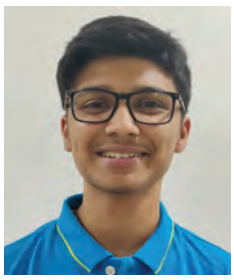

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Inculcating Citizenship Values in Children

Radhika Rajanarayanan

I was a volunteer with the Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA) for four years (2010 – 2013). As urban volunteers for private schools, our work was to have weekly sessions with children of class VIII in private schools. It was a club which children voluntarily joined. Usually, about 15 to 20 children would join it. The concepts that we introduced them to were:

- Concern: Initially, about surroundings, wastage of water, power, littering, etc, with practical activities on how to make the change; later about the environment and child labour, etc.
- Co-existence: Precepts on how to avoid bias and prejudice and learn to live with diverse people.
- Co-operation: This included activities on how to interact with authorities, such as school or local government bodies to bring about change.
- Confront: How to protest and confront authorities peacefully when appeals and persistent representation to them do not work.

In addition, principles of democracy, rights and responsibilities were also imparted. All these concepts were instilled into the children through activities, practical examples, stories, films etc. Children would also run campaigns on these topics in their schools, to bring awareness of these ideas among other children.

Methodology

The first behavioural trait I noticed in most children was their reluctance to speak. My experience is that they are conditioned by family and teachers not to 'talk back' or ask questions. It took several weeks to coax them out of this reticence.

To inculcate the concepts we wanted to convey, the method that worked was to get the children to perform activities related to these concepts with their families, for example, saving water by not leaving the tap open while brushing teeth; and keeping a diary to note the changes they observed in themselves, their families, school and neighbourhood. Another method was to get them to teach other children these concepts. I found that this exercise embedded the concept better in a child's mind. However, this method seemed to work much better with the younger children rather than the older children (classmates of CMCA club members).

Peer pressure

I believe by the time the children are 13 years of age, they have already developed habits, both good and bad, as I found during my sessions. Teenage rebelliousness also starts showing up. It was an uphill task to get them to follow the principles of good civic behaviour, for example, not riding two-wheelers without a driving licence. Peer pressure and the desire to be part of the 'in' crowd tempts them to ignore these precepts of good citizenship. Some of my colleagues had a tough time persuading, cajoling or threatening their own children to stop them from driving motorised vehicles before the legal age of 18 years.

Peer pressure works in other negative ways too. The children of the CMCA club would be jeered at by other schoolmates if they tried to have an anti-littering campaign at their Sports or Annual Day. They would tell me with downcast faces later that the other children teased them saying, 'Oh, you are from CMCA; pick up the waste wrappers yourself!'

Another strong demotivator is the harsh reaction of some parents, especially the father, to any suggestion. The children are brought up to fear the parent and hesitate to broach the topic again. But despite these ingrained habits or resistance of their parents or friends, a surprising number of the children did change over the course of a year and got people around them to change too.

Changing habits and small initiatives

Small undesirable habits, like disfiguring school desks by scratching initials on them, water wastage etc, at one point drove me to despair at the end of a whole year of drilling into them to change. One day, as I walked out dejectedly, thinking that I had failed utterly, a few CMCA club children came running behind me. 'Ma'am, there's a house next to the school where a lot of water has been flowing out of a pipe. Can we go and tell them to do something

about it?' At first, I could not believe my ears. 'Yes indeed, but be polite and go as a group', I advised them and waited for them to return. In about ten minutes, I could see the flowing water trickling to a halt and the children returning, grinning triumphantly. Full of enthusiasm, they told me what had happened – the owner had switched on the water pump and gone away. There was (luckily) a watchman there, who they managed to convince to switch the pump off. Such a simple incident, yet it was enough to trigger in them the need to be more active as young citizens.

There are several other examples of small initiatives by children that made a difference.

At a wedding, Vimla saw that after the meals, people were washing their hands and leaving the taps open. She stood there and requested everyone to turn off the taps after use.

Bhawna convinced her father to wear a helmet while driving.

Shruti convinced her older sister to stop riding her scooter till she gets her driving license.

Bibi Naaz saw her friend throw a wrapper from the balcony. She picked it up, took it right back to her friend and ensured that she did not litter again.

Abdul stopped charging his phone overnight and convinced his parents to do the same. Many children, by adopting this and other power-saving methods, reduced their monthly electricity bill by as much as Rs 300!

Keerti found a child being employed as a labourer and being beaten. She called the Child Helpline number which she had memorised and was thrilled when the authorities rescued the child.

Komal stitched a cloth shopping bag for her mother. Not only is her mother very proud of her child's craft, she also uses only that bag to go shopping. Thus, effectively, Komal stopped at least one person from using plastic carry bags.

Swati, concerned about the terrible effect of poisonous paint used on Ganesha idols on water bodies, used a clay idol during the Ganesha Festival, immersed it in a bucket of water and used the water in the garden.

Santosh took a cardboard box and went around collecting wrappers of toffees distributed during Independence Day in school.

As Anil was walking home, he saw two men walking with plastic bags full of garbage. They were about to throw the garbage on the pavement. Gathering up courage, Anil boldly stopped them from throwing the garbage, saying, 'This is your city, don't do this.' They looked sheepish and walked away with the garbage. Emboldened by his success, he prevented many more people from throwing garbage on the road.

Probably the crowning achievement of the CMCA club children was the construction of speed breakers and warning boards outside their school, which sees a lot of fast-moving traffic. For this, they convinced a traffic police inspector who said, 'You children yourselves ride two-wheelers rashly on the road', to which they proudly replied, 'No, Sir, we are from CMCA! We never ride two-wheelers as we don't have licences.' My heart was bursting with pride hearing this. Creating the speed breaker involved interacting with the municipal authority, then, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). They learnt to write the application neatly in Kannada (getting praise from the officer for it), and made repeated visits to their office, requesting the officials till the speed breakers were constructed.

As mentioned earlier, a very important point I noticed was that when these young, active citizens started mentoring the primary school children, teaching them basics like not wasting food, not littering etc, I found that the result was much better, and quicker than in the older children. I overheard one of the younger children saying to another, 'Hey, don't sharpen your pencil outside the waste bin – the floor will get dirty. Didn't you hear *akka* telling us where to sharpen pencils?' The tendency among young children to idolise the teacher and seniors, therefore, to do as they say can be an advantage while inculcating values of good citizenship.

One basic concept, taken from Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* can be used as the focal point: 'Do as you would be done by'. We

must make children reflect on actions by asking them how they would feel if, for example, someone else left the bathroom dirty or threw garbage outside their gate. Some basic activities for young children to mindfully do and for teachers to discuss in school could be:

- Turning off the tap while brushing teeth (and asking other family members to do it too).
- Switching off unnecessary fans or lights in the house.
- Requesting parents and older siblings not to charge their electronic devices overnight.
- Making sure that garbage is segregated and handed over to the municipal worker and not thrown on the street or in an empty plot.
- Not throwing sweets or snack wrappers on the street or floor; depositing them only in a dustbin.
- Speaking with respect to all, including household help and municipal workers.
- Placing a small bowl of water for birds in summer.
- Reminding parents, before they leave the house, to take a bag for shopping – this could be extended to COVID-appropriate behaviour, reminding everyone to wear masks before leaving the house and washing hands on returning.
- Requesting older siblings not to ride motor vehicles without a licence and to wear a helmet while riding a two-wheeler.

Many such activities can be thought of. Additionally, encouraging young children to express themselves and talk about their experiences will make them more confident as they reach middle school. By the time these young children reach teenage, the right citizenship attitudes and habits are ingrained in them.

**Names have been changed to protect the identities of children.*

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Giving Back to Society

Sameera Vasa

As the news for an article regarding citizenship education came up amongst the group, I wondered about it and soon found a mentor who had enlightened me through an article in *The Bastion*. The article focused on civic education in schools and the differences in curriculum versus reality in our country. The article surely gave me an idea about citizenship education but there was a gap in my understanding with respect to how it relates to our lives, in general.

As though the universe was leading me to further my knowledge about citizenship education, the very next day, I got a chance to sit in a class while a legendary teacher taught class VII children about *Mylara Mahadevappa*, an Indian revolutionary from Karnataka, who resisted British rule. This legendary teacher, who I have had the chance of meeting several times, has an abundant repository of stories and analogies. She started to explain how the protagonist of the story had felt *videshi* as he put on a cap made by Britishers and immediately threw it away. She moved on to explain *videshi* and *swadeshi*. At this point, she asked children to imagine growing a plant, adoring it, caring for it and finally watching a beautiful flower bloom.

The teacher wanted to highlight the sense of belonging that comes with the feeling of *swadeshi*. She asked the children to describe how they feel about a flower that they planted themselves as against a flower they bought at a market.

This teacher then used another story that everyone could relate to, to explain the definition of responsibility. She spoke about a man who had studied in a government school in India but finally migrated to a foreign country to live a better life. She then, asked the students if they knew of anyone who had made full use of the country's resources but had not given anything back. She provided children with food for thought and she made me also think of what I owed to society. The teacher ended the class by asking each child to think about their responsibility towards their parents as a child, as a sibling and as a student.

The class did not end there. The children came forward and helped their teacher to go to the bathroom, clean her plate, open her lunch box and hand her anything that she required before they left for another class. This might seem odd without context – this teacher has disabilities and needs help to move around. The surprising thing is that children in her class never have to be specifically told to help, they reach out on their own accord and take turns to help their teacher in a very systematic way.

This teacher has won many accolades and one of her traits worth mentioning is that she practises everything that she preaches, and she does so in a way that inspires and motivates others to do better and live a better life. This teacher who is seven months away from retirement has planned to go back to her hometown post-retirement and volunteer her time at the school that she had attended as a child. She explains that it is her responsibility to the hundred-year-old school in her hometown because that school is the reason she is where she is today and that she owes a great deal to her teachers, her hometown and her community.

This teacher always makes me feel motivated and inspired to do more than just exist as a human being. She has the ability to instil good values in her students through language, math and general conversations. I notice how instilling values in children leads to behavioural change and subsequently influences children's learning curve in the positive direction. The children in her classroom are happy to learn, they are empathetic, assertive, problem solvers and work in collaboration. They have a role model who practices what she preaches. Teaching words like *responsibility, sincerity, giving back to society* would be more effective when these are taught by invoking emotions, making these relevant to children and most importantly, by practising what one preaches every single day, patiently and happily.

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It was part of our rules that everybody, including the teacher, would wait for their turn to speak, raise their hand, and not interrupt when someone else was speaking. Every voice would be heard and if there were differences in opinion, we would hear the reasons and let children decide if they could agree with each other. This system helped those students who thought they knew everything and would always speak and give answers first. They learned to wait for their turn, respect others' opinions and accept their own mistakes.

Pooja Vishnoi, School as a Microcosm of Society, p 74.

School as an Inclusive Space | My Experiences

Suhail Hameed

Let us think about ourselves. Which generation of learners in our family line are we? The answer to this question is one way to locate our social privileges. This hierarchical social order of caste has historically marginalised several communities who are in nominal numbers when it comes to the power structure. Communities and their social privileges can also be seen through their representation in different institutions of the state. At the same time, the roots of this huge gap should be traced and treated at the educational institutions itself.

In this article, I am trying to reflect on some of the incidents that I witnessed from my school engagements between 2019-2020 and how these are reflective of the life of students from socially marginalised communities. The incident that follows happened during one of my school visits.

The teacher was discussing different occupations in the classroom. He asked students what their fathers' and brothers' occupations were.

'Sir, *mere papa khethi kartha hein*.' (My father is a farmer.)

'Sir, *mere bhai tractor chalathe hein*' (My brother drives a tractor.)

Shop keeper, construction worker, painter, rice mill worker – answers showered from different parts of the classroom.

'So, this is how it works. Men in the house do different jobs to support the house' added the teacher.

One child said, 'Sir, *mere papa machli pakadthen hein*' (My father catches fish.)

Now came the most unpredicted response from this teacher. 'Yes, there are people like this, who do these kind of jobs. But your people do this job, not others'.

Witnessing a public servant comment on social hierarchy to primary school children was shocking. I do not think the teacher was unaware of what he had said.

I worked as an associate in another school for a year. The area is surrounded by paddy fields and a canal flows through the centre of the village. This canal separates *Theli-Chandrakar* (OBC community) settlements from the *Sathnami-basti* (most of them belong to the SC community). Even though the people I talked to rejected the presence of caste practices and separation in the village, the geographical settlements of the communities itself substantiates its existence.

There are two primary schools in this village. One in the north part (near *Sathnami basti*) of the canal and one on its southern part (where most of the OBC communities lived). I worked in the latter. Students from all parts of the village came to the school but the number of students from the *Sathnami basti* was very low and the pattern of how students sat in the class was very revealing.

There were two boys and a girl in classes I and II who usually sat together. They were shy and refused to mingle, sat in a corner of the class, not making eye-contact. They were neighbours who came from the same part of the village. This is what happened one day.

Rani came to the class a bit late and sat down in the second row. Most of the students had settled down. The boy who was sitting next to her protested. He did not want her to sit there and told her to sit in the back row where she usually sat. It is a question that we all should ask, why are children from marginalised backgrounds always found sitting in the classroom corner? Rani may not have expected this reaction. I do not know what made her change her seat then. I kept quiet and observed; I wanted to know what would happen next. The boy's words were not a request, they were a threat. She did not protest and got up to move. That is when I intervened as a classroom facilitator. I asked her to not move anywhere. He protested with me too. I asked him why she should move from there and he did not have an answer.

Then came the worst part. He had made up his mind not to sit beside her. He asked the boy who usually sat next to her to exchange places with him.

Rani comes from an extremely deprived background, from a broken home with many children, she is the last but one among them. The previous year, she was enrolled in class I, but hardly came to school six or seven days in the whole year, her teachers told me. This year her sister, who wanted her to get educated, insisted that she come to school. The elder sister takes care of all the siblings and is herself a class VII dropout.

NEP 2020 says 'According to U-DISE 2016-17 data, about 19.6% of students belong to Scheduled Castes at the primary level, but this fraction falls to 17.3% at the higher secondary level. These enrolment drop-offs are more severe for Scheduled Tribes students (10.6% to 6.8%), and differently abled children (1.1% to 0.25%), with even greater declines for female students within each of these categories. The decline in enrolment in higher education is even steeper.' (Ministry, 2020)

Students in this school, like many other schools in India, come from different social and family backgrounds. The way they grasp things, learn, do homework, sleep in the classroom, dress, smell talk etc, depends upon their immediate living conditions and the way they are being conditioned to live. What better could a little girl in her early childhood do, other than coming to school every day? If she is far behind in learning levels compared to her peers, we can let that be because as one teacher said, 'She is coming to school, sir, that itself is great.'

There may have different reasons for this exclusion. The students of her class had become close to each other in the last year that she was mostly absent. Their houses are near each other's and they see each other even after school. They celebrate different festivals together. But her case is different. She comes from the other side of the village. No one else in the class comes from that side except the two other boys from the same community as hers. I leave it to you: how to understand caste, the most structured and functional inequality in the world, but is a deep-rooted practice.

Then, on Children's Day, 14th November, this happened:

The day was full of fun and happiness. The boys were divided into four groups to play *kabbadi*. The teacher said, 'We will conduct a *rumal* (kerchief) picking game for the girls.' The girls were also divided into four teams. The game is played thus: a kerchief is placed in the centre and each member of the team is given a number. The players in the other team also have the same numbers. As the referee calls out a number, the girl with that number from both the teams has to run and pick the kerchief. Whoever gets it, wins a point for their team and the game is won over points.

She did not try to be a part of the game. We had to force her to join. The game went on and one team won. After that, the teacher played a song through the speaker. It was a very familiar and popular Chhattisgarhi song. The girls had to dance to it in pairs. Rani was finding it difficult to follow the song and moves. Then I witnessed the moment when her classmate, Lali took her hand and moved along with her to the beat of the song. I saw a special kind of smile on Rani's face. It was beautiful moment – to catch her smile. This was my best Children's Day ever.

As the days went on, I observed how these students became more active in classroom engagements. Along with that, I also noticed the changed concern and empathy of teachers. We used to have long conversations about each child, their learning levels, how their backgrounds were affecting their learning and what we could do to help.

Keeping this mixed group in mind I always tried to make my lesson plans more integrated, inclusive, and enjoyable. We did different activities with names of the students for a week. It was full of fun, on the last day, we planned a puzzle game. The puzzle was drawn on one side of the room and letter cards were kept on the other side.

The teacher blew the whistle, 1... 2... 3...

Ayan, Manu, Vasu, Nimmi, Hema and Krish rushed to collect the letters and run back to place them in their puzzle. But Manu could not find the letters, he kept searching, while his friends were running back and forth. After completing the puzzle Krish started screaming: '*Mein jeet gaya, mei jeet gaya!*' (I have won).

The others did the same. Then, they saw Manu sitting sadly in the corner. Krish and Vasu searched for the letters in his puzzle and completed it as well. And they screamed '*Manu jeet gaya Manu jeet gaya!* (Manu has won).

I was myself learning more and more from them every day by deconstructing and unlearning old ideas. They taught me that *inclusion starts with interaction*, especially in the case of children. Inclusion is a thin layer of being together and helping each other.

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Awareness of gender identities start early, so we must be mindful that gender is not binary but a spectrum. Do not set gendered role and behaviour expectations from children in your classrooms. Rather, challenge gender roles in stories and help your students examine their own assumptions and ideas.

Priya Krishnamurthy, Creating Junior Citizens - Five Common Pathways, p 82.

Exploring Gandhian Values Through Theatre

Usha Prescilla Ambrose

During the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Gandhiji, we planned to engage with school children and teachers creatively and give them the experience of how Gandhiji lived and the thoughts and values he deeply believed in. We decided to enact this on stage for an audience. Along with the field members of Azim Premji Foundation and members of Teachers' Theatre Group, Koppal, Nandish Kumar conceived this programme.

We first arranged a one-day workshop in schools to kindle the children's interest in learnings from Gandhiji's life. The selection of children to act in four short plays was unique. All the higher-primary school children were asked to assemble and we first engaged them in a few simple, fun games in which all the children could participate. Then, the drama groups were formed by taking the children's opinions.

Children would miss classes but would never miss drama rehearsals. They were competing with each other eagerly to play the role of Gandhi, ready even to shave their heads. They would throng the Teacher Learning Centre (TLC) for practice well before the school bell rang in the morning and were reluctant to leave the centre even after dusk. The teachers and all of us realised that the drama practice sessions for the *Gandhi Drama Festival* could provide an excellent opportunity for all children to work and learn together with great enjoyment. We mingled with them and interacted with affection which enabled them to express themselves naturally. We realised that theatre is an excellent learning medium to make children willingly and joyfully learn profound topics in the simplest manner and to inculcate sensitivity in them. Thus, the process of learning was not limited to the children; all of us who were working with them also learned new things from them.

We discussed the theme and context of the plays with the children. They shared the information they had about Gandhiji. When we told them about the relevance of Gandhiji in today's world and the work he did, the children were spellbound. They were surprised to hear that in South Africa, a barber snubbed him and refused to cut a 'black man's' hair. As they listened to these incidents, the children recreated the dialogues of the plays in their day-to-day language.

We talked about how even though he was a barrister, Gandhiji would spin yarn to make cloth, eat simple food, dress in just two pieces of cloth and do all his work himself. He always used things made and produced in the country and had very few possessions. His message was to love everyone, be concerned about others, to forgive and never hurt anyone. His concern for our environment and cleanliness and many such details were enacted and conveyed by the children through their short plays.

Impact on children

Malaya, a little boy from the Government Higher Primary School (GHPS), Gabber who acted in a play, was until then, uninterested in his science projects. Taking part in the drama helped his self-esteem and he has started completing his class projects and showing them to his teachers. He has also started focussing more on understanding assignments and makes an effort to complete them. Similarly, Ratna, a very quiet girl, has now started sharing her opinion in class with confidence. Many children, including the quiet boy, Suhail, have started voicing their opinions confidently as a result of acting in the plays, especially, since they participated in the scenes from the freedom struggle.

Faizal, a student of class VIII was lagging behind in class due to a learning difficulty and preferred to stay away from all activities. He agreed to participate in the play after a lot of hesitation. After that, he also performed very well in a school play and the other children gladly included him in the school drama troupe.

Children who come to GHPS, Sardargalli from the *Sarkari Balakara Balamandira* (Boys' Home under the Government Department of Women and Child Development) would make fun of a child who was playing the role of a sweeper in the play. The boy was dismayed and refused to play the part. But as

the rehearsals progressed and he understood the role better, he realised the importance of the work and performed his role very well.

Two children from the GHPS, Sardargalli were competing for the role of Gandhiji. The director said, 'Whoever wants the role of Gandhiji should shave his head.' Both of them were ready for this. In the meantime, one of them remained absent for a few days. On the day of performance, both the boys arrived with shaven heads. One boy gave up the chance to allow the other to play the role. But the Director made sure that both of them got the opportunity to play the role of Gandhiji on stage in different scenes. Along with these two, the boy who played the role of a sweeper also got the opportunity to perform the role of Gandhi. In one single play, three different boys played the role of Gandhiji.

Teachers' reactions

Teachers supported the entire process of preparation for the plays with utmost interest and dedication. Boys from the Government *Balamandira* who attend GHPS, Sardargalli in Koppala town, were involved in the entire process of acting with full freedom. The wardens of the *Balamandira*, who normally did not let the children go anywhere without prior permission, allowed the children to go to the TLC as many times as we requested. They accompanied children to the rehearsals and were happy to see their children getting engrossed in acting. They brought all the children from the *Balamandira* on the day of the performance.

Dayanand Sagar, a science teacher in one of the schools and a dramatist himself, happily shared that class VII girls of his school who were earlier hesitant to go on stage for any event, were less nervous about doing so after participating in the play.

Mutturaj, a teacher of GHPS, Nilogipur remarked that the children who acted in the cleanliness scenes in the play are keen to keep their surroundings clean. In the same school, children enacted a skit about celebrating national holidays in a meaningful way. This made the teachers realise the importance of making children understand the background of each national holiday and birth anniversary of prominent people. As a result, they have abandoned the practice of just placing portraits of national leaders to pay homage on special days and have instead started having conversations with children about the significance of these days.

Pranesh Poojar from GHPS, Hanumanahalli remembers fondly how his school children had started coming forward willingly to do work such as watering the plants in the school premises and cleaning etc., often citing what they did in the Gandhi play and to replicate with enthusiasm, Gandhi's lessons, in their school. He remarked how, for days on end, children would walk around the school happily repeating dialogues from the play. Seeing so much positive change in the children, he also expressed his desire to initiate another drama performance by his students.

Other takeaways

During every rehearsal, though the scenes were the same, the dialogues by the children would change because they did not mug up the dialogues. Yet children did not speak out of context. The whole play was written introducing the scenes by eliciting the opinions of the children about the different scenes that should be for different life circumstances of Gandhiji. There were extensive discussions about visually depicting the different stages in Gandhiji's life such as his childhood, youth, education, his profession and struggle in South Africa, the *Satyagraha* and the values he believed in and lived for. Children had grasped the subtle firmness that was devoid of rudeness in Gandhiji's personality.

Children who had only seen Gandhiji's photographs in the school, in textbooks and currency notes and had heard that he 'brought independence to our country' in speeches delivered during national celebrations, could experience through the drama performance the true essence of Gandhiji life and work and could also communicate the same to the audience.

If anyone asked them why they were performing these plays, the children would reply that Gandhiji, through his life, has shown that it is possible to live a life with his ideals and everyone should be able to understand this and emulate him. Children were able to recognise that by washing toilets, by cutting his own hair, Gandhi demonstrated that no job is inferior or superior. And that the fight for our rights through non-violence is just as effective.

Some of the questions that students and teachers discussed were, what are the messages Gandhiji gave through his life? Which of these was their personal favourite? Is it difficult to bring about change? If yes, why?

The discussion about boys helping with household

chores was a little new to them causing some discomfort and surprise. It was particularly fascinating to note that children were able to recognise correctly the messages and values of Gandhiji. In this process, students and teachers ruefully admitted that discrimination in the name of caste and gender still exists in our villages and were of the view that, in order to eradicate this, it is important that all of us should strive towards it.

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**Names have been changed to protect children's identities.*

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Children Imbibe the Culture of their School

Vijayashree P S

This experience is from one of the schools I worked with during my fellowship.

A cluster-level *mela* was being planned. We, as fellows, had to work with multiple schools and spend our maximum time with the teachers and students there. We had to try and test activities/games and make sure teachers interacted informally with pupils through these. The teachers had to learn that working and interacting with the learners through activities could make the teaching-learning process more effective. With a hope that by the end of the *mela*, this journey and this experience of interaction and learning would have set an example for both teachers and learners.

It is common to view the rivalry among colleagues as 'workplace competition'. This often leads to the formation of groups and, looked at in a lighter vein, with some gossip, some laughs. I had been in the school for two days or so when I observed that the teachers split into two groups during lunchtime and picking up their lunch boxes, went into two separate rooms. As a fellow, I was confused about which group I should sit with, or if I should sit alone. The Head Mistress observed my dilemma and invited me to sit along with her group (let us call this group, *Harry*). We had a good chat about the food, culture and traffic of Bengaluru.

A few days passed by and I was building up a good rapport with all the teachers, when one day, a teacher from the other group, (say, *Potter*) asked me to have lunch with them. I accepted the offer warmly and had lunch with them for a couple of days, all the time maintaining a good rapport with both the groups. Even after 20 days of sharing lunch with both these groups, I did not hear any gossip or crosstalk in these two groups. I also observed that both the groups were absolutely fine with each other, sharing laughs, lesson plans and anecdotes about the children the rest of the time.

Finally, one afternoon, when I was with group *Harry* for lunch, the Head Cook approached the Head Mistress and mentioned that the sambhar and *burfi* prepared at the school kitchen that day had turned out to be delicious, so would they like to have some of it. The Head Mistress asked the Head Cook to send the items through one of the students. The Head Cook nodded and left. After a couple of minutes, one of the teachers suddenly asked another, seated close to the door, to check which student was bringing in the food and she muttered that the Head Cook may send *anybody* inside the office room. By now, I had picked up their dialect and somehow sensed what the teacher may have meant by *anybody*. Meanwhile, the teacher seated near the door had got up and rushed out to check which student was bringing the food. She brought a girl along with her and made the girl serve food to all of them. Everyone enjoyed the meal.

This entire episode had made me very curious. In the evening, all the fellows met at the town bus stop daily to get back to the city. I asked one of them, who was a local, about the lunchtime incident, 'Did she mean caste when she said *anybody*?' My colleague replied, 'Yes. Didn't you realise that from day one? Why do you think there are two groups of teachers!' I was flabbergasted. I began to connect the dots, the grouping of the teaches had nothing to do with workplace competition, it was a clear demarcation based on societal norms of not sharing food between two *classes* of people. I cannot judge the actions of the teachers because this is how our society is and all of us have to follow its norms.

Citizenship is not something that is spoken of much around us. We read it in our social sciences textbooks. Perhaps, the first time we come across the word *rights of citizens* is when, as children, we see the dark blue ink mark on our parents' nails after they had cast their votes. When do we even hear the word *citizen* except in the context of an election? What is citizenship? We are what our society is. It is as simple as this – we imitate and follow societal norms. We need to prove ourselves to be good citizens in our immediate society and not in the capital city or on some border of our nation.

As is evident from this incident, teachers may also be following the same societal norms they were

born into and brought up with. They have learned that this is how society works and that they need to abide by these rules. In the same school, the national anthem was sung twice every day – once in the morning assembly and again at the end of the school day. The Head Mistress was so particular about it that she made sure that the school gates were locked when the school got over so that no student could leave before the national anthem had been sung. The only reason for singing the anthem twice was to instil citizenship. However, as for the students, they may not learn everything taught to them, but they are sure to follow the actions and behaviour of their teachers. Unknowingly or unknowingly, we imbibe the culture of the school we attend.

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It would help a science teacher to look closely at how she could inculcate some basic democratic practices in the classroom, for example, the usage of common resources provided in the environment. This could be an important feature in science, especially during lab work – being aware that the space is common for all.

Chandrika Muralidhar, Democracy in the Science Classroom, p 30.

School as a Microcosm of Society

Pooja Vishnoi

The social milieu of a person is the immediate world for him/her. We grow up experiencing this immediate world of ours and it shapes our perspectives and thoughts from a young age. School is an integral part of this immediate world and this institution is expected to prepare us to decide what is right or wrong, to understand the values of life and become better citizens. Schools also function in this social milieu and societal practices are reflected in the school practices too. Schools do not just train individuals for employment but also serve a greater purpose of instilling democratic values, like equality, justice, and respect from a young age.

I got the opportunity to teach in one such school which functions with complete awareness of the purpose of educating the children who come there. The Azim Premji School, Barmer, was set up with a vision of providing a holistic learning environment for children, a place where they learn new things, be themselves, learn values required to be good human beings and responsible citizens. Currently, the school has classes I to IV, hundred and thirty-nine students and nine teachers. The school offers co-education and caters to children from all backgrounds. The aim is to bring children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds to create a space for diverse interactions and opinions.

The school has children from all social classes, various parental occupations and religions etc. The children are predisposed to the thoughts and beliefs of their respective families and community and this is reflected in their behaviour towards each other and their thoughts on various issues. As teachers, we understood that we are there to guide these children to make them academically sound and better human beings. Usually, schools have a dedicated class for value education or from a very young age, morals are taught through stories or lectures, but in this school, we tried to make the school environment such that children would see these values and ideas in *practice*, the values which our Constitution strives for and which will shape these children into responsible citizens who value the rights of other people, who raise their voice for what is right. And for this, a school needs to demonstrate these practices. Practices where everybody is treated equally, where issues are resolved with reason and discussion, respecting everyone despite the differences etc. Children learn what they see, so we aimed to make our school culture such that children see examples of these values everywhere, be it their classroom, playground, mid-day mealtime or assembly.

Creating a culture of dialogue

Dialogue, or conversation, is a tool to convey our thoughts and we need to recognize the importance of resolving issues through dialogue. All the teachers worked rigorously to develop a culture of dialogue in the first three grades that we taught. Class I children were new to the school system, but those of class II and III were already a part of a system where discipline and punishment were very closely interconnected. All of us believed that children learn best when they learn in a fear-free environment, hence, instead of shouting or punishing children when they ran around, hit each other, used bad language, talked during class, we talked with them and asked them the reason for not following rules. The children would either respond with a reason or stay quiet.

This new-found freedom was a bit confusing for them and they did not know how to handle it. Some children took advantage of it because they knew no one would shout at them or punish them. This continued for two to three months and at one point, I wondered how we would complete the syllabus if we spent so much time talking to the children about following rules. But we did. Be it in the corridors, the classrooms, at mealtimes or assembly, whenever students did something disruptive, we talked to them. After around five months, we could see how this had impacted the children's thinking process. Instead of fighting with their friends, they would talk and resolve matters among themselves.

Rules made together

While we were working towards developing a

culture of dialogue in our school, we recognised the importance of discipline. Freedom and discipline work together and one cannot override the other. So, we worked on developing some common rules for everybody – what is acceptable and what is not; what should be done if somebody breaks the rules etc. We developed these rules in our common assembly where children came up with a lot of ideas and everybody collectively decided the rules of our school. Later, we also made our classroom rules, which the teacher and children would follow to create a better learning environment.

As we had already established the importance of dialogue, whenever a child broke a rule, other children would talk to the child and ask why he/she had done so. This applied to the teacher as well – when teachers broke rules, children questioned them. As time passed by, we noticed that while in the beginning, everything appeared chaotic: we received 15-20 complaints about a single child in one day but later the complaints came down to 2-4 per day about the same child. Often, the entire period would pass in talking about an issue, but slowly everything became orderly. And after six-seven months, not only teachers, but also our students worked towards creating a 'learning environment' in the school.

Values for life

The beliefs of family and community affect the thinking process of children which makes it difficult for them to see things through an unbiased lens. The students' beliefs about caste, colour, gender, and economic status were starkly visible to us. Children would casually comment about the skin colour of another child, judge them by their clothes, higher caste children would not make friends with a child from the lower caste, they made groups, not including the opposite gender etc.

We encountered these issues almost every day and talked about them with the children then and there. We discussed that the religion or caste of a person did not make them different. We also spoke to them about the hardships some students face at home and how they still put their best efforts to study. When eggs were included in the mid-day meal menu, students who did not eat eggs would make faces, sit away and some even stopped talking to their friends who ate eggs. The teachers discussed this issue in the assembly, the classroom and with children individually. We focused on the value of respecting the choices others make. To present a better example, teachers who did not eat eggs sat in the line at mealtimes with students who ate eggs and, gradually, other students also started to sit with them and after a few months, there were no separate lines for food; everybody sat together and ate. It took time, required patience and effort, but the children finally started to respect the differences and qualities of each other.

Democracy as an integral element

Very often, when we see primary grade classrooms, we notice that, mostly, the teachers are leading the process. Primary school is the foundational stage for children where they can be brought up to recognise the importance of democracy, equality and respect for one another. We tried to develop a system where neither the teacher nor a few students would dominate the classroom processes and everybody got to participate.

It was part of our rules that everybody, including the teacher, would wait for their turn to speak, raise their hand, and not interrupt when someone else was speaking. Every voice would be heard and if there were differences in opinion, we would hear the reasons and let children decide if they could agree with each other. This system helped those students who thought they knew everything and would always speak and give answers first. They learned to wait for their turn, respect others' opinions and accept their own mistakes.

To manage the classroom, the teachers did not decide who the class monitor would be. Instead, there were discussions and the teacher would ask who would want to *volunteer* to be the class monitor. After taking the nominations, based on the students' behavior, sense of responsibility, etc. the class would decide who would be the class monitor. Every two months, the monitors were changed by the same process.

For the better functioning of our school, we made different committees – sports, midday meal, library, assembly etc, and children were put in charge of the functioning of these committees. Each committee had 10-12 elected students. Before the school closed due to the pandemic, the children had begun campaigning and the candidates had visited all the classes to show their election signs and speak about the work they would do. Teachers helped everybody understand what a fair selection process is and how a democratic process leads to

the better functioning of a system. We will continue this after school reopens.

All the teachers worked together, had discussions and kept individual and class records of students so we knew exactly who needed guidance and in which areas. In this process, teachers also learned to be patient and democratic in their approach towards students. We did not depend solely on lesson plans to teach values to our students, but found space for it wherever we could. We discussed the values intrinsic in the academic content; appreciated small acts of compassion, team spirit, love and care our students and teachers demonstrated We will continue to put our best efforts forward to guide students to be better human beings and responsible citizens.

Handling situations: some examples

On stealing

During assembly, we discussed the habit of stealing money or other things and how it affects our mind, how it can become a habit and can be very difficult to change later. Children shared a few examples of how they have friends who steal. We did this because I came to know that one of the children stole money from home to buy chocolates for her friends. Without mentioning her name, we had a general discussion on sharing and asking parents for things that they needed. Later, I talked with the child and tried to explain to her the ill effects of this habit. She also admitted that she takes money without asking and will not do it again.

On helping others

We get complaints from students about those who do not help other children. I ask them why they come to me, instead of speaking to those who do not help others. I add that it is not a bad thing to inform others about their areas of improvement. One should share things and help each other to become a better person. I told them how we, the teachers, do the same. At times, we have our own disagreements, but we understand that for the betterment of everyone, we need to share things and ask for help. We also talk about constructive feedback and how we can do this without making the other person feel bad.

On kindness

The seating arrangement of the class was changed because we felt that we need it to bring change in children's behaviour towards each other. So now they sit in a circular arrangement. We were having a discussion in class and somebody took the name of a child and said that he would not know about this concept (there were also comments on some children's appearance). So, we had a very detailed discussion on why these children face difficulty in learning and they know and understand a lot of things that others do not. We talked about this particular child's family circumstances and how despite it, he has come a long way and improved in many ways, his writing skills, understanding of things, behaviour etc.

We also talked about another child and his home and how his mother works very hard to earn to support their family. So before saying anything about anyone, we should think because we do not know how hard they are trying to work. We should help our friends, especially G1 (students who are struggling in foundational literacy and numeracy) students to learn better and faster by helping them to learn what we already know and to become good friends.

On teasing

During assembly, I saw Raghav crying and asked him what had happened. He explained that he had applied a lip balm which was glittery, and a classmate had said that he had put on lipstick and was looking like a girl. I asked him what was there to cry about? Is it bad to be a girl or is it bad to put lip balm? We had a very detailed discussion; we told the children that putting on lipstick or lip balm does not make anyone a man or a woman. And why did they think only women wear lipstick, there are men in the world and in our country, who apply makeup and even wear women's clothes. They do it because they like it. We also stressed that no one should start crying over small things. We also said to the girl who had teased Raghav that she should have asked him if she was curious and should not say things that can hurt others.

Respect for common property

We have our library corner in every classroom where we hang books on a rope. One day, a child told me that two of the students were throwing the books on the rope. I talked to them and asked them why they did it. I talked about children who make the effort to keep the books in place and how they would feel when they see them throw books. I then took out all the books and told them that there will be no books in class from now on because if we cannot respect the resources we have, then we cannot have them. We should take care of the

things we get because keeping our class properly managed is our responsibility. I asked both of the boys if I should take the books away. Both the children accepted that they had been irresponsible and put the books back on the wall.

On violent online games

Suresh mentioned that some boys were pretend-playing *PubG* in class, so I asked them who all were playing. At first, Suresh mentioned two names but when I asked whoever was playing to stand up on their own, many of them stood up. I asked them if they liked pointing a gun at their friends and kill them. They said no. Then I asked if the classroom is a place to play such games. They said no. We discussed how playing games for extended periods of time on mobile phones affects the eyes and mind etc. I highlighted some news stories about how children get addicted to mobile phones and games. I told them that playing games is not a bad thing but there is a time and age to do this and that the classroom is not a place to play games which depict any kind of violence.

On smoking

When the students of class two told me that one of them was imitating the puffing of a cigarette using a pencil in place of a cigarette, we had a long discussion about cancer. The students seemed to know about the adverse health effects of smoking. The child who was imitating a smoker also spoke about his family and surroundings that had impacted his behaviour. His parents and everybody in the neighbourhood chewed tobacco and smoked, which had impacted his life too because many times we found tobacco packets in his bag and had detailed discussions on them. He does not chew tobacco now.

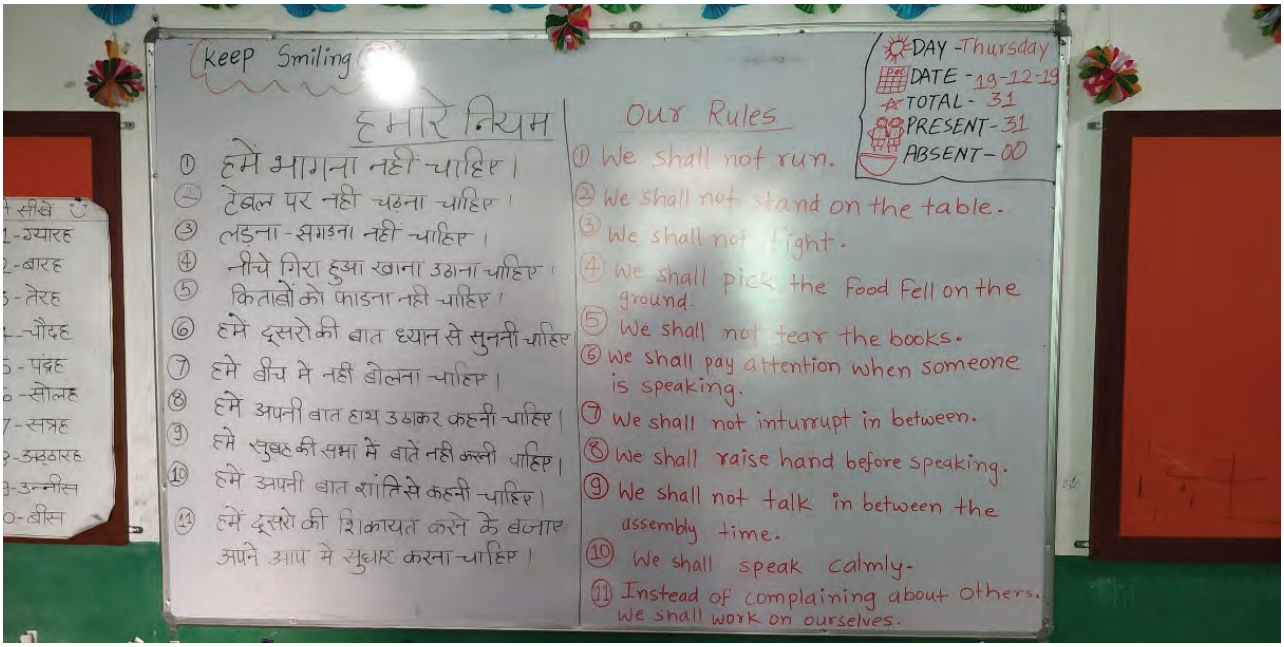
On bullying

A few students complained that two children had taken off a child's pants in the bathroom. I asked the child and he confirmed this, but when I asked the boys who had done it, they denied it. Some other children confirmed seeing it happen and that the two boys were also seen beating this child many times.

I talked to them about the habit of hitting others, specifically, those who do not retaliate. I told them that such people are called *bullies* and how their victims are sometimes driven to leave school, suffer from low self-esteem, depression and can even take extreme steps when unable to cope with such situations. Both the boys apologised to the child and wrote down that what had done was wrong, and they would not repeat it.

There were other incidents reported to the teachers – of throwing stones at others, plucking flowers in the school premises, or giving *galis* (abusive words). For every such situation, children were not punished or insulted before the others. They were made to realise the consequences and convinced to not repeat such behaviour.

**Names have been changed to protect the identities of children.*



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Using Stories to Sensitise | The PARI Experience

Priti David

When summer temperatures are rising in Odisha and the grass is sparse in the grazing grounds, buffalo herders have to look far and wide to feed their animals. To talk about rural India in a city primary school, we began by showing photos of a herd of buffaloes swimming across the river to greener pastures; how the herdsmen take great care with their animals, even carrying the small ones themselves. As expected, the story of buffalo migration and a calf calling for its mother in deep waters invariably strikes a chord with young children who instantly identify with the calf. We use this story (*Swimming to migrate in Odisha*) to draw them in to how dairy farmers in India care for their animals whose milk could be that which they drank that morning. The learning goes beyond that.

PARI as a learning tool

Did you know about cattle shelters during the summer where all the farmers take their animals when food and fodder become harder to get? Or about the cattle herder in Yavatmal, Maharashtra, who has devised a body armour to shield himself from the tigers who roam in the forests where he takes the animals for grazing? These stories make for a powerful lesson on kindness towards animals among other learning outcomes. They widen children's imaginations and give them scope to think creatively. It also allows them to walk in the shoes of others, to closely inspect, comprehend and empathise.

A primary school teacher can use the People's Archive of Rural India (PARI) to download stories, photos and films available in twelve Indian languages. This online journal is free for use, easy to access and covers rural issues, such as agriculture, farming, migration, communities, crafts, Adivasis and more. These stories inform, sensitise and teach students (from primary to post graduate level) about the many issues of our times. We feel that there is not enough about rural India, which forms a very large part of our country, in our textbooks. Students do not know enough about the many lives and livelihoods that exist in rural India – their homes, their jobs, the forests they rely upon, the crops they grow, the crafts they create, their songs and ancient legends and more.

Using real stories from deep within rural India is a chance to hear and see a world connected to us in multiple ways. As educators, what do we want our children to value? Can we provide them the tools to build respect and empathy? It is important to nurture humaneness even among the youngest students. Lesson plans and teaching modules generally focus on academic learning, while in fact, emotional and cultural growth will play a big role in determining the essence of the citizen. So the story of herdsmen who treat their animals as their own children transforms milk from being a commodity sold in uniform packets, to the life and livelihood of a person, and we understand a little better what it takes to bring that milk to the table.

Using PARI resources

There is no one subject that teaches students empathy and compassion. Moral Science or Value Education classes repeat age-old stories with superimposed lessons and children are expected to memorise cliches like 'a friend in need is a friend indeed'. Teaching about little-known communities and occupations as a way of growing students' understanding of the large country that we live in and the complex interlinkages in our economic and sociological fabric. Also, learning about others is essential to making children become more empathetic.

We encourage schools to design projects which encourage experiential learning; going out and learning first-hand from the everyday lives of others who we normally do not engage with.

Project on biodiversity

Most children recognise honey and have enjoyed its flavour and sweetness. They have also seen bees and been told to keep away. Using PARI's stories with photos and videos, a teacher can deepen their understanding of the process of honey extraction as well as the importance of insects like bees in maintaining biodiversity. Along with this, children will begin to recognise and respect the work of the

traditional honey gatherers and the unique skills required to do this job.

In our project on the story of honey, the honey gatherers of Sundarbans tell their story of searching for honey while dodging tigers, crocodiles and even dacoits. They explain how they smoke the bees out, the protection, or the lack of it, for the hunters and how honey is transported. This can be followed up with the photo story, *Chasing Bees from Sundarbans to Chhattisgarh*, in which we see the process of extraction - a skill which gets them invited to other states to extract honey or, *The Honey Hunters of the Hills*, which describes the unique technique of the Toda Adivasis of the Nilgiris of taking out honey from the hives in tree caves or, *Battle of the Bugs: On Wings of Climate Change*, a short video that explains the importance of bees in pollination and the health of our forests.

In the end, working through the above pieces on honey and bees, we would have covered a little zoology, botany and biology (insects, trees, pollination, nectar and fructose), geography (delta, forests and hills), understood biodiversity and the interdependence of the species, not to mention expanded vocabulary – new words and concepts like *safeguard and extraction*. Additionally, and most critically, honey now has a history, a process and bees have a critical place in our lives. We also learn about the lives of distinct communities and how they are linked to the insect kingdom.

The teacher can now do a small in-school project to create awareness around insects. A group of students can be assigned a tree or shrub and given an hour to note down or draw the insect life that exists in and around it. Back in the classroom, the teacher can explain how these creatures are interlinked with each other, the health of the plant and link it further to the health of the planet.

Project on gender

One of the most fulfilling sessions we have is with young students on women farmers and its perfect suitability for teaching gender equality without having to explicitly state the term.

It starts with the story of Chandra, a farmer and single parent in Tamil Nadu who often harvests her flowers by fading moonlight, in time to reach the early morning markets. She does so many jobs around the farm and house and the reader finds out why the story is titled *Small Farmer, Big Heart, Miracle Bike!* This is followed by the story, *Footprints in the Sands of a Mine*, which creates a powerful image of a group of women farmers in the Banda district of Uttar Pradesh. Students understand how important a flowing river (versus a dammed river) is to women who do most of the farming. Finally, they meet Kamala Pujhari of Patraput, Odissa, a saviour of indigenous seeds, who won the Padma Shri for her work in helping to maintain biodiversity of the region.

As a home project, students are asked to note down all the jobs their mothers/ grandmothers do from morning to night, including instructions to eat, bathe etc! It elicited much laughter in the class, but the significance of these women's work was not lost on them when they noted down the jobs and the time taken for each, for example, filling water for use at home. With the stories as a backdrop, they were able to see the contribution of women and the critical role they play in growing our food and maintaining the eco system.

Project on migration

We begin by explaining the term migration and showing children photos from PARI stories on migration of different kinds – seasonal, circular, permanent and so on. Then, we ask them to speak with those around them who are migrants, cooks, drivers, guards, etc. Initially students feel it would be awkward to start a conversation, but we insist they give it a try by asking the five following questions:

1. Which village, district and state have they come from?
2. How had they travelled?
3. Have they attended school?
4. Why had they migrated?
5. What did they miss the most?

When they return a week later with first-hand accounts of people around them, who are, as expected, migrants, most students had not only learnt more about migrants, they were also ready to reject the stereotypical images of migrants as homeless, lazy and illiterate.

Speaking to the people otherwise 'invisible' to them forces them to engage and understand why people have to leave their homes and loved ones, what are the different places in India that people migrate from, how often do they go back, how do they feel on having to drop out of school, what it meant

to start working at a young age, the reasons they had left and so on. Each person that the children were used to referring to by their job-specific titles, *guard*, *dhobi* or the generic terms *didi* and *bhaiya*, come to have an identity. Children also learn to understand and empathise with issues, such as debt, child labour, hunger and the loneliness and heartache of years spent away from home and family, of not being able to see their children grow up or care for their parents in their old age.

Some comments by children:

- I learnt what the word 'drought' means.
- You know the driver's life was just like mine until his father died and he had to leave school and start working.
- Children our age are working on fields and construction sites instead of going to school.
- Farmers are growing food for us to eat even though sometimes they don't get food.

Project on farming and food

A project on agriculture, farming and food is about learning how food comes to their plate and the processes which lead to the sugar in their chocolate!

We show children some stories on farming – rice and sugar cultivation, watermelons and tomatoes. We then ask them to accompany an adult to the vegetable market and speak to a vegetable vendor and ask the following questions:

1. Where do you come from?
2. Do you grow these vegetables yourself? Or from where do you buy them?
3. How do you transport the vegetables and what happens to the vegetables that are not sold?

Sometimes, children have to wait while the vendor finishes serving his or her customers. This allows the children to watch them at work.

Some comments by children:

- I've never held a weighing scale before; it's quite heavy!
- She [the vendor] said she travels two hours in a bus to come here and sell.

In summary, the PARI pedagogy uses stories in various formats – text, photo and film - on the everyday lives of people to inform and sensitise children. It helps them gain an understanding of the larger picture of citizenship. Learning about the diversity of languages, livelihoods, communities and cultures helps children reject stereotypes and become tolerant of the differences in their fellow citizens.

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Creating Junior Citizens | Five Common Pathways

Priya Krishnamurthy

In a well-cited and acknowledged study on how young urban Indian 15-year-old school-goers fare on democratic citizenship *(CMCA[i] Yuva Nagarik Meter, 2015[ii])*, we learned that what positively influences the score, or marks, for democratic citizenship are these three enabling conditions:

- Not being physically beaten in school or at home
- Being able to ask questions freely and share ideas without fear in classrooms
- Reading the papers, watching TV (news and current affairs)

The only other factors that positively influenced the score were: children from smaller towns fared slightly better than those from big cities and yes, overall, girls scored slightly higher than boys. Nothing else really influenced the score – not the board of education, nor the communities or castes of respondents, nor their class/economic background nor educational qualifications of parents or which part of the country they came from.

There are several studies that show that education for citizenship must start early and schools and classrooms are important foundations of the democratic way of life and thinking. There are clear linkages between Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), child rights and children's own awareness of their rights and their ability to secure them.

I will focus on some key building blocks of citizenship education. While this article is for primary school teachers, it hopefully holds useful insights for teachers of all grades.

The building blocks of citizenship

Citizen participation and engagement with the State, with each other in society and with ideas of justice, equality, liberty, etc, are complex and multi-dimensional and so it stands to logic that education for democracy is also challenging and complex. Here I share five simple and practical, but powerful, pathways to effective citizenship education for teachers to explore and apply, with the teacher and the classroom as the epicentre.

Self-love and resilience in the classroom

Many children are unhappy, but teachers, are you asking, are you listening?

Here is a story from a primary classroom. *Magic Box* is a teacher-led programme involving hundreds of 10-minute citizenship and life-skill daily-do cards. During a pilot session of the *Magic Box* children had to hug themselves long and hard and say, 'Mmmm, I love *me*!'. As we moved from 6-9-year-olds to 10-11-year-olds, the enthusiasm and comfort with which kids hugged themselves reduced noticeably. In a class of 10-year olds, we heard a child say softly, 'I don't love me.'

Poverty poses unique, personal challenges for the child, the family, community and country. Children are often going through various kinds of trauma – financial issues, family infighting, acrimonious separations and mental, emotional, sexual abuse including bullying and substance abuse etc.

One in four Indian children in the age group of 13-15 years (adolescents) is depressed; one in ten is anxious; 11 percent reported being *distracted* and had a hard time concentrating on their work while another 10 percent said that they have no close friends.[iii]

When I asked 6 to 8 year-olds in a *Nali Kali* class what made them scared or sad, they said, 'When my father beats me' or, 'When my father beats my mother,' and so on. Few seemed scared of snakes or ghosts or sad about not having enough toys or any other responses one expects from young children.

In another school, another classroom, two fifth graders - 10-year-old brothers - were beating each other and fighting. In the ensuing discussions, they laughed and brashly shared that their father beats their mother and even their grandmother sometimes. Too many children are already facing violence at home.

In the same CMCA study, 61 percent of the children reported that they are beaten in school. There is no hope that we can encourage kindness and empathy in children when we, adults, ourselves shout, beat, pinch or label, shame and insult. As J Krishnamurti

wrote, '… it is violence when we use a sharp word, when we make a gesture to brush away a person, when we obey because there is fear…'[iv]

Teachers who love children

In a workshop organised by the NCERT for teachers of tribal schools, teachers shared challenges they faced with children from extremely low-income backgrounds, neglected children and children who are under tremendous stress in their daily lives. I could empathise with the teachers' difficulties. Facing such challenges daily can make cynics of us all! It was no surprise that some teachers defended beating children and felt it was unavoidable.

On the other hand, over the course of the day, it was inspiring to see some teachers, deeply committed to non-violence, share their experiences and gently and empathetically bring the others around to their position. Teachers, you can break the cycle of violence and must do so.

Positive psychology in the classroom

Aristotle acknowledges that happiness can be affected by such factors as our material circumstances, our place in society and even our looks. Yet he maintains that happiness is more a question of behaviour and of habit – of virtue – rather than of luck: a person who cultivates such behaviours and habits is able to bear his misfortunes with balance and perspective, and, thus, can never be said to be truly unhappy.[v]

Research shows us that when children's minds are occupied by the stress of everyday living, education suffers. Just as we have recognised and responded to the reality that no child can learn on an empty stomach and that nutrition affects learning, so too must our system and our teachers recognise and respond to the reality that no unhappy or stressed child can learn and develop to his or her full potential.

Teachers can and must help their students build resilience, cope with their hardships, acknowledge and appreciate their strengths and opportunities, remain positive and hopeful and aspire and strive for a better and happier life for themselves. This self-love (self-confidence, self-awareness, self-esteem, self-regulation, etc.) is a vital building block to becoming good citizens, those who are empathetic and alive to the needs of others.

Use these simple, regular tasks and daily interactions to help your students to:

- Find joy in the little things
- Start each day/period with a smile
- Be thankful and grateful
- Choose to be positive and see the best in every situation
- Live in the moment
- Be good to themselves
- Ask for help when they need it
- Let go of sadness and disappointment
- Practice mindfulness
- Walk in nature
- Laugh and make time to play

Gender and the classroom

In CMCA sessions on gender, we have seen children moved to tears as girls share heart-breaking stories of how when they fall sick, their parents wait to take them to the doctor but not when their brothers fall ill, or how girls get fewer eggs or milk, or how the boys get the juiciest parts of meat and boys share the stress they feel about starting to earn quickly and the expectation to 'man-up'. We can use stories and even personal experiences to share and challenge ideas of gender. We do not need expensive material to have such conversations – something as small and simple as an egg only for a brother can be the starting point

We need to be careful in assigning chores and tasks so that girls and boys feel able and willing to do anything. For example, boys can learn and draw *rangolis* on school functions and girls can handle the sound system and manage the technical aspects of a school programme. Yes, there will be some resistance and there will be mistakes, but the mistakes and imperfections hold greater and deeper learnings. We need to be careful not to perpetuate gender behavioural stereotypes – for example, do not force boys not to cry when they are hurt and do not stop girls from somersaulting or spinning tops.

Awareness of gender identities start early, so we

must be mindful that gender is not binary but a spectrum. Do not set gendered role-and-behaviour expectations from children in your classrooms. Rather, challenge gender roles in stories and help your students examine their own assumptions and ideas.

Diversity in the classroom

Living together in harmony and embracing change and differences in a diverse country are not only important skills for democracy but are highly valued 21st-century workplace skills. Educators, at all levels, play an essential role in facilitating the development of intercultural competence among learners. (Barrett et al., 2014)[vi]

Teachers, you can spare 15 minutes each day to bring the world into the classroom! Education must address the mistrust or fear of the unknown, of what we assume of others and what we can learn about each other. For young children, food, music, inventions, travel etc are great pathways to breaking barriers and celebrating differences.

For example, spin the globe/travel on the world map to 'visit' different places or see different landscapes. Use magazines and videos to see different ways of life and different kinds of people – their looks, foods, clothes, accents, languages. The unfamiliar becomes familiar and ideas of *us and them* begins to melt! From this building block, we can move onto more challenging conversations on equality, discrimination, etc, in later years in school.

Harmony with nature and the classroom

Who teaches a child to kill insects, tease and throw stones at animals, ignore injured, scared, or hungry animals? These behaviours are learned and it is only meaningful education that can help children *unlearn* and *relearn*.

Common house spiders, house lizards, ants, bees, birds, community animals, trees and plants can nurture this fundamental duty of compassion towards all life.

Include in regular school days powerful activities like keeping bird-feeders, feeding community animals, caring for plants and trees and even naming lizards on classroom walls and ant colonies in the playground! This teaches children that caring for our environment is not just a science subject but a human responsibility.

Children who notice and care for birds, ants and dogs will see the deep connection between keystone species in the jungle and their own well-being. From this building block, we can enable our students to engage more critically and actively with coexistence and sustainability as they grow older.

Child rights, duties and the classroom

Classroom experiences are among a child's first experiences of democracy. Where and how does a child learn to throw waste on the street or deface public property or heritage sites? Why does a child think it is okay to ride a motorbike at age twelve? Why do young adults feel rules are meant to be broken? Where and how is poor civic behaviour learned and how can it be unlearned?

Democracy is best learned when it is *experienced*. Often adults mistake assertiveness for arrogance, disagreement for insubordination and view discipline as unquestioning obedience and conformity.

Common sense tells us that we cannot expect students who lack adequate opportunities in school to engage with authority or have a fair say in the rules that govern them, to emerge as active citizens who can discharge their duties or secure their rights! Children who are beaten or punched may not be able to engage positively with power or authority as adults. Boys and girls who are segregated in classrooms cannot be expected to forge healthy personal and work relationships of mutual respect or make responsible life choices.

Teachers can involve children at all levels in rule-making. For example, involve children in solving challenges like keeping toilets clean, ensuring food is not wasted in school, addressing too much noise in the classroom etc. When children *co-create*, *co-frame* and *share* the burden of finding solutions, they experience democracy and learn that freedoms come with responsibilities. From this building block, we can build an understanding of a citizen's rights and duties in later school years.

Conclusion

Nothing can substitute for the transformative power of teacher-student interaction. Human relationships are vital in the teaching-learning process. I have seen such gentleness in classrooms - teachers who exude love and patience, who so obviously enjoy the company of children. There is laughter and amusement in their voices and a twinkle in their eyes! We do not need expensive material or elaborate training programmes,

enormous amounts of time or deviations from the syllabus to foster well-being in children and create democratic classrooms and schools.

We need teachers who provide positive and empowering classroom and school experiences - teachers who can elevate daily-life tasks and challenges into opportunities to transform the young into concerned, thinking and active citizens. We need teachers who can manage the many demands placed on them with optimism, hope and a positive attitude. We need teachers who are passionate about what they do and who love children! And fortunately for us, we have many, many such teachers.

i Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA) is a nonprofit organization, head-quartered in Bengaluru. They work towards transforming children and young people into active citizens for an inclusive and sustainable India. Our research-backed pro-gram is run in schools, colleges and rural youth clubs. (cmcaindia.org)

ii Yuva Nagarik Meter – Young Citizen National Survey. (2015). (pp. 1-60, Publication). Bengaluru, KA: Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA).

iii Mental health status of adolescents in South-East Asia: Evidence for action. (2017). World Health Organization, New Delhi: Regional Office for South-East Asia; 2017. Li-cence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

iv Krishnamurti, J. (1969). Chapter 6. In Freedom from the known. Harper & Row. Re-trieved from http://jiddu-krishnamurti.net/en/freedom-from-the-known/1968-00-00-jiddu-krishnamurti-freedom-from-the-known-chapter-6

v Aristotle on happiness – Happiness is not a state but an activity. (2013). Psychology Today. Retrieved from https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-seek/201301/aristotle-happiness

vi Barrett, M., Byram, M., Lázár, I., Mompoint-Gaillard, P. and Philippou, S. (2014). De-veloping Intercultural Competence through Education. Pestalozzi Series No. 3. Stras-bourg, Council of Europe Publishing.

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Inculcating Active Citizenship Through Stories

Richa Pandey

Children across the world love stories. Whether they are narrated by their grandmothers or by voiceover artists in animated cartoons or movies, stories remain the windows to a world unseen by children. They connect people across time and space. A period film on the life of Akbar definitely makes Social Science classes more interesting because it transforms Akbar from being a historical figure engaged in wars and battles to a human being who children, as well as adults, can relate to at an emotional level. It becomes important, however, to examine how the stories can be utilised effectively to inculcate life skills necessary for active citizenship.

As a Social Science teacher, I remember discussing the famous Hindi poem, *Khoob ladhi mardani woh to Jhansi wali Rani thi* by Subhadra Kumari Chauhan with my class VIII students while discussing the British Raj. Knowing the stories of people who lived during colonial times was certainly a more powerful experience than reading about colonial laws as stated facts. The students were more involved and engaged that day and some of them started singing the poem in chorus. This made me wonder what more I could do, given sufficient time and autonomy, which would encourage my students to question the status quo and inspire them to take agency for change. What kind of activities could be designed to inculcate the skills and values like empathy, critical thinking and inquiry?

The National Curriculum Framework (2005) discusses the need to provide a 'positive experience of democracy and democratic participation to children in order to realise the vision of participatory democracy' (p 84). This article explores how a curriculum based on stories can be designed to provide such an experience to students. The insights are based on my personal experience of engaging with an experiential and inquiry-based curriculum. As a volunteer for *Simple Education Foundation*, a Delhi-based NGO, I interacted virtually with two adolescent girls (11 and 13 years old), using voice calls for a period of three months. We used workbooks designed by the organisation to explore concepts like resources, livelihoods and migration while simultaneously developing basic literacy (reading and framing simple sentences in Hindi and English) and numeracy skills (data analysis and interpretation). In the process, we also explored the range of emotions each of us is capable of feeling on a daily basis. All of this was done using two workbooks (mathematics and equity) designed using stories as the starting point.

Examples of stories

The article shares specific examples of the kind of stories that can be used to inculcate life skills essential for active citizenship. A brief overview of each story is followed by a list of activities that can be designed around these to achieve desired outcomes.

1. **Title of the story: Karuna aur doston ki mazedaar sair** (Karuna, her friends and a fun trip)

Category: Fiction

Overview of the story:

A group of teenagers visit a campsite near their homes and meet people engaged in different occupations, including cab drivers, campsite managers, cook, cleaning staff and guide for rafting. The children interact with them and ask questions relating to the challenges and experiences unique to each, thereby developing an understanding of how every profession is important for the smooth functioning of the social system.

Follow-up activities

Reflection questions:

The questions that encourage children to reflect upon what they have read go a long way in developing key life skills. Sample questions could be:

- How do you think Ravi Bhaiya/ Gunjan Didi feel about their job at the campsite? Give evidence for your response.
- What would have happened if one of the people was absent from the campsite? How would it affect other people at the campsite?

Exploration

As part of these activities, students get an opportunity to enter the story and be a part of it. For example, they can be asked to assume the role of the campsite manager. They would be assigned to do the following tasks:

- There is a shortage of cash inflow in the campsite due to lack of tourists this time. You have to revise the salary of different people. How would you make these changes?
- As part of cost-cutting measures, you have to eliminate certain roles from the system. Which role would you eliminate? Why? How would your decision impact the different people in the system (the ones who got eliminated and the ones who did not)?

2. Title of the story: The Marketplace

Category: Fiction

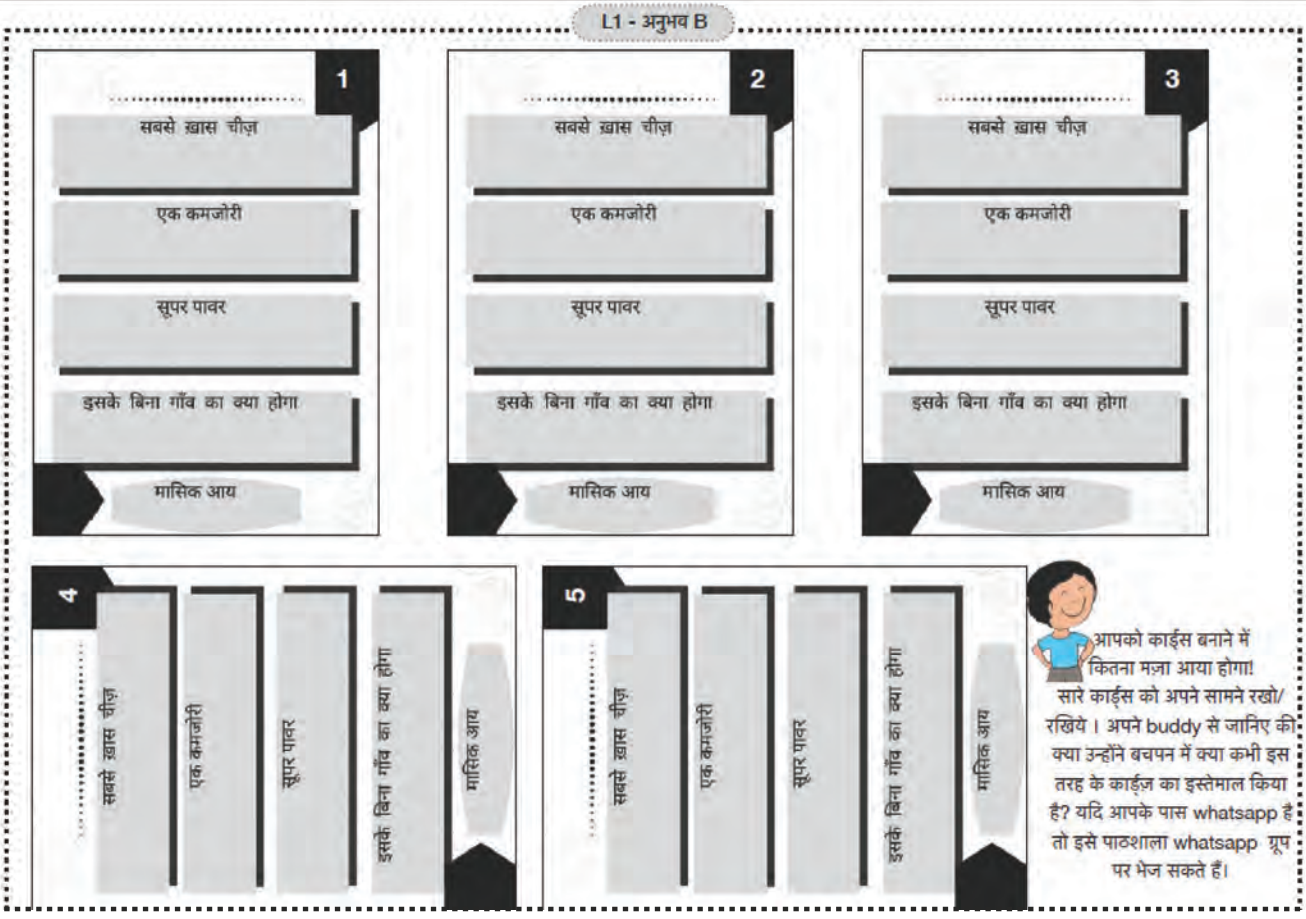
Overview of the story:

A young boy visits a marketplace where he encounters people from different occupations including vegetable sellers, ice cream vendors, chemists, potters and cobblers. His treatment of different people is seemingly based on the work they do. For example, He talks politely to the chemist and pays the amount asked. On the other hand, he not only bargains with the cobbler and potter but is rude to them because of the work they do.

Follow-up activities

Experience

This activity allows the children to recognise their subconscious biases. As part of the activity, the children have to suggest one occupation to their friend. To do this, children have to make 'occupation' cards based on their interaction with people who are engaged in these jobs, each listing the challenges, remuneration, unique aspects, superpower and importance of that occupation in society, showing what might happen if that occupation is eliminated from the village. The children are asked then to pick one card from the deck for their friend (a job that they would want their friend to do). At every stage, the occupation that they select gets eliminated. This process is repeated till there is only one occupation left. Generally, children pick options like



doctor, engineers, teacher first and occupations like electrician, plumber, sweeper etc are not picked or saved till the last. The reflection questions based on this exercise can help children uncover the biases that exist in society about certain occupations. This also encourages them to be conscious of their decisions and choices.

3. **Title of the story: Palayan karne walo ka wapis lautna** (Reverse migration)

Category: Non-fiction

Overview of the story

Parvez had migrated from his village to work in a factory in Delhi. Due to the lockdown, he lost his job and after failing to get another job, he decided to return to his village.

Follow-up activities

Data analysis and interpretation:

Children are given a bar graph depicting the cost of train tickets to Dehradun from Delhi, Mumbai, Chandigarh and Jaipur. Children had to solve the following problem:

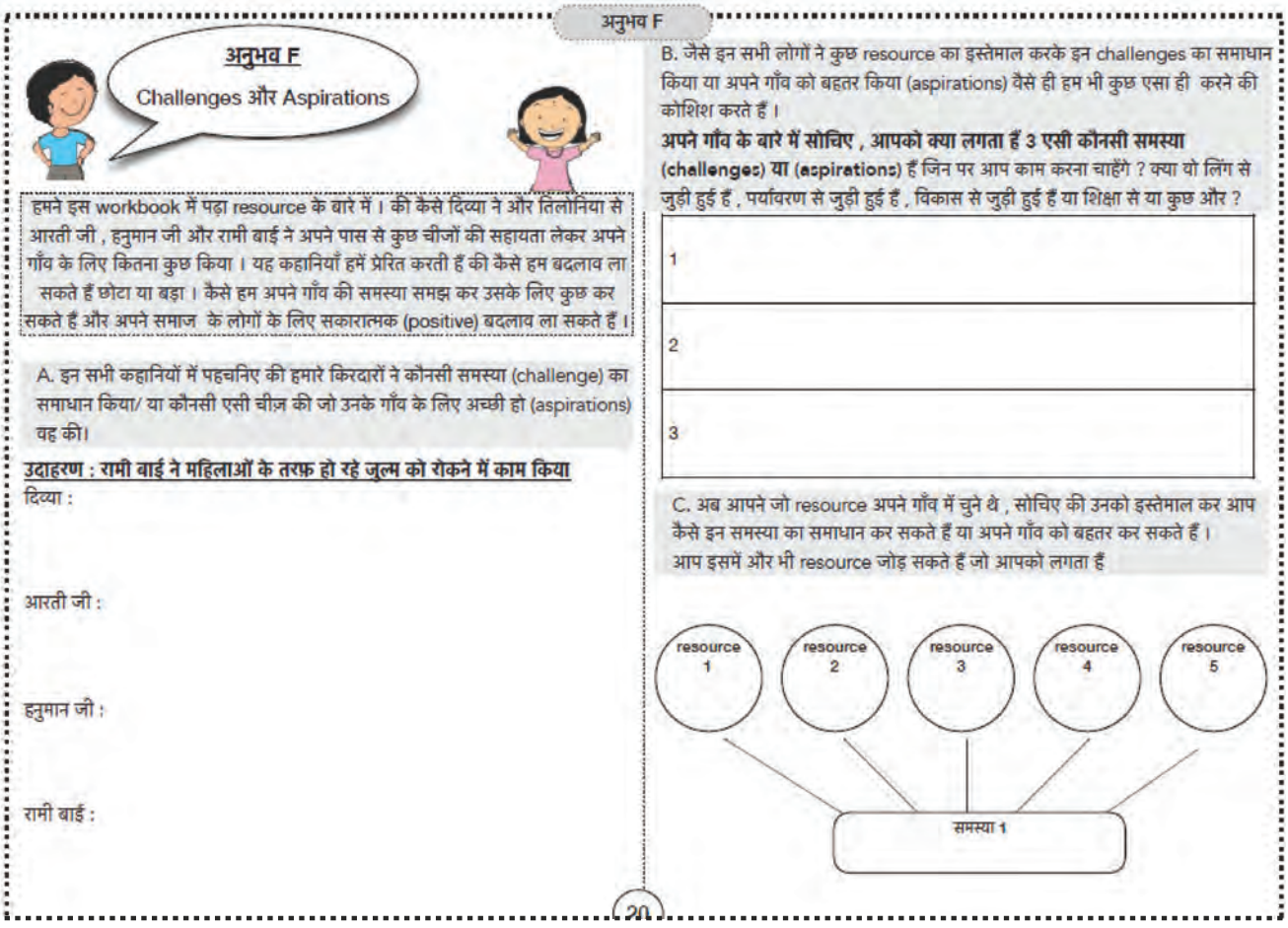
- If a family of four has to travel from Mumbai to Dehradun, how much do they need to pay?
- During the nationwide lockdown, some migrants were charged for the train tickets. Suppose four such migrants wanted to return from Delhi and collectively had Rs 1000/- with them. Look at the bar graph and tell if they had enough money to return to their state. If not, how much were they short of?

4. **Title of the story: Badlaav ki Kahani** (Story of change)

Category: Non-fiction

Overview of the story:

A young girl called Divya Rawat quits her well-paying job and returns to her village with an intention to empower her community. She uses the locally available resources (physical and human) and helps the women around her cultivate mushrooms. With grit and determination, she manages to generate employment in her community She is awarded the Sanjeevani Ratna Puraskar by the State of Uttarakhand.



Follow-up activities

Reflection questions:

The children could be asked to reflect upon the following:

- What kind of resources did different characters use to bring a change in their community?
- What kind of challenges did they face in doing so?
- Identify some of the qualities that helped them succeed despite those challenges.

5. Title of the story: Main chhoti hoon par badlaav la sakti hoon (I am young but can bring about change)

Category: Fiction

Overview of the story:

Four children were playing near a river when they decided to go swimming. They realised that the river was polluted and decided to fix the problem. They approached a doctor in their village who guided them with the possible ways of doing so. They then approached the panchayat members who helped them generate community-level support for fixing the situation. The children decided to launch programmes for community awareness, install separate dustbins for dry and wet waste and ensure responsible conduct by community members.

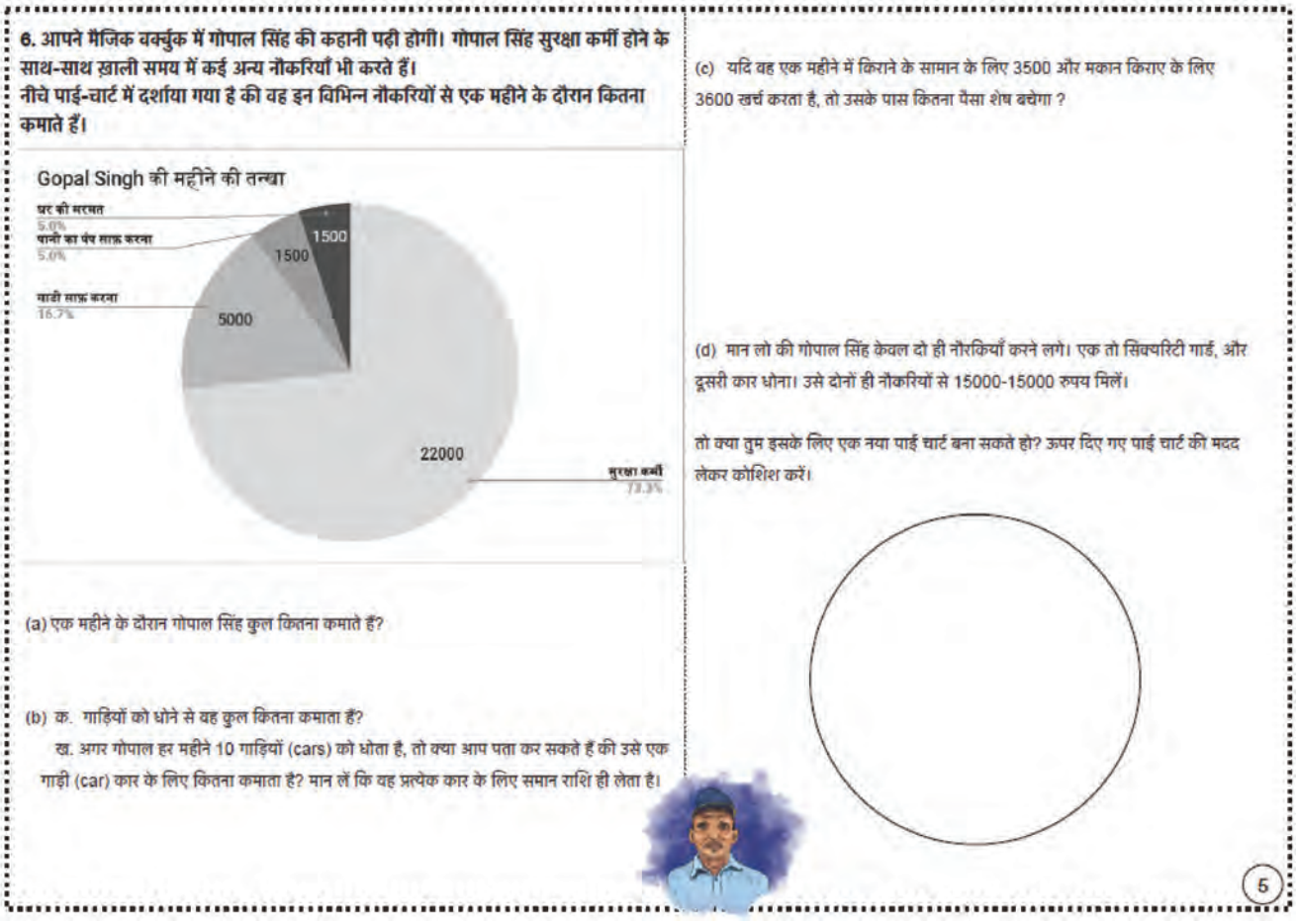
Follow-up activities

Exploration:

Identify a problem in your community that you would like to address. List the resources that might help you address that problem. Try to imagine the possible challenges that might come your way in doing so. Devise ways in which you could address these challenges. With the help of your teacher, chalk out a month-long plan to achieve your ultimate goal. Share your experience with your friends and family by writing a poem or letter or by drawing a poster.

Why do stories work?

These stories worked primarily because they allow the readers to relate to the experience of other people. What matters, however, is the treatment given to these stories. Following are some of the insights that I gained while discussing these stories with children.

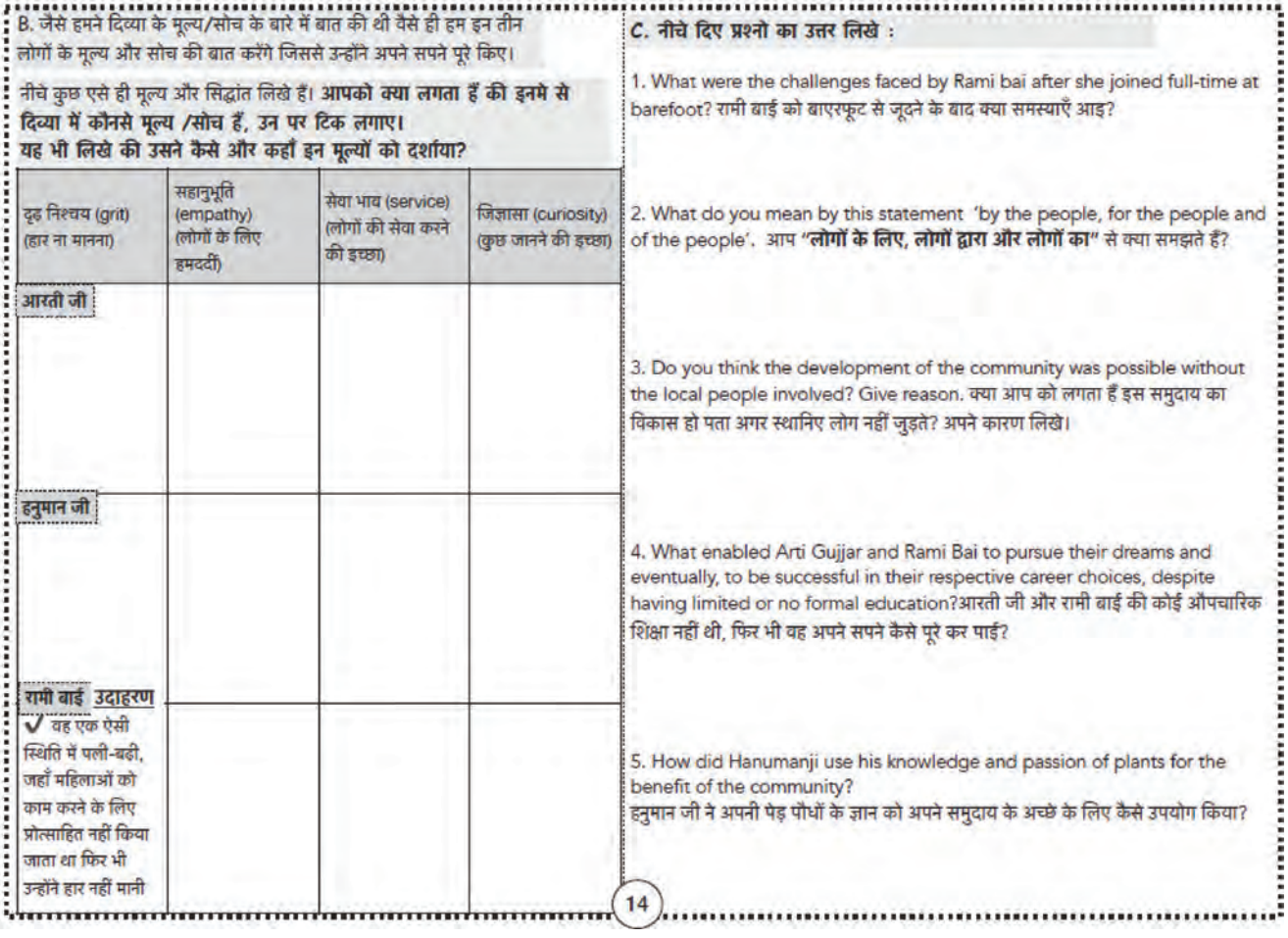


a) The stories used as part of these workbooks were based in the context of the children. This was reflected in the names of characters and places used for the stories. While some of the stories were adapted from different sources, like Pratham Books and PARI, most of the stories were designed specifically for the target group. The content design team included a person from the local community, which allowed the stories to be authentic and relatable. Interestingly, the stories progressed from children's own village (Gular) to a town near their village (Rishikesh) and then, the capital city of their state (Dehradun) and country (Delhi). It was much later that the stories reached a similar village (Tilonia) in another state (Rajasthan) of the country. This progression followed the basic principle of teaching-learning, that is, moving from known to unknown.

b) The important element in these stories was the scope to identify with the characters emotionally. The characters were either of the same age group as the children (readers) or were presented as people that the children could relate to. For example, the characters were referred to as Sukhiram Chacha or Rahim Chacha and that made a significant difference in how children perceived the problems or questions related to these characters.

c) The stories were used as the basis of the different problems presented to the children. Mathematical as well as language problems were designed around the main characters of the stories. This allowed the children to stay with the characters for longer and experience the world in their company. The use of integration and interdisciplinary approach justified the holistic nature of knowledge itself.

d) Follow-up activities were designed in an innovative way to enable children to recapitulate the important events in the story. For instance, children were asked to make timelines of the life of the central characters so that they could revisit their lives again. Similarly, mind maps were used to chalk out the different characters



B. जैसे हमने दिव्या के मूल्य/सोच के बारे में बात की थी वैसे ही हम इन तीन लोगों के मूल्य और सोच की बात करेंगे जिससे उन्होंने अपने सपने पूरे किए।

नीचे कुछ एसे ही मूल्य और सिद्धांत लिखे हैं। **आपको क्या लगता हैं की इनमे से दिव्या में कौनसे मूल्य /सोच हैं, उन पर टिक लगाए।**
यह भी लिखे की उसने कैसे और कहाँ इन मूल्यों को दर्शाया?

	दृढ़ निश्चय (grit) (हार ना मानना)	सहानुभूति (empathy) (लोगों के लिए हमदर्दी)	सेवा भाव (service) (लोगों की सेवा करने की इच्छा)	जिज्ञासा (curiosity) (कुछ जानने की इच्छा)
आरती जी				
हनुमान जी				
रामी बाई उदाहरण ✓ वह एक ऐसी स्थिति में पली-बढ़ी, जहाँ महिलाओं को काम करने के लिए प्रोत्साहित नहीं किया जाता था फिर भी उन्होंने हार नहीं मानी				

C. नीचे दिए प्रश्नो का उत्तर लिखे :

1. What were the challenges faced by Rami bai after she joined full-time at barefoot? रामी बाई को बाएरफूट से जूदने के बाद क्या समस्याएँ आइ?

2. What do you mean by this statement 'by the people, for the people and of the people'. आप **"लोगों के लिए, लोगों द्वारा और लोगों का"** से क्या समझते हैं?

3. Do you think the development of the community was possible without the local people involved? Give reason. क्या आप को लगता हैं इस समुदाय का विकास हो पता अगर स्थानिए लोग नहीं जुड़ते? अपने कारण लिखे।

4. What enabled Arti Gujjar and Rami Bai to pursue their dreams and eventually, to be successful in their respective career choices, despite having limited or no formal education?आरती जी और रामी बाई की कोई औपचारिक शिक्षा नहीं थी, फिर भी वह अपने सपने कैसे पूरे कर पाई?

5. How did Hanumanji use his knowledge and passion of plants for the benefit of the community?
हनुमान जी ने अपनी पेड़ पौधों के ज्ञान को अपने समुदाय के अच्छे के लिए कैसे उपयोग किया?

14

who played an important part in the lives of the central characters. This allowed children to acknowledge the importance of human relationships. Likewise, Venn diagrams were used to highlight the similarities and differences in the lives of central characters of different stories and for the children to appreciate the idea of common and shared humanity.

e) The stories were meant to be experienced and not just read. Consequently, detailed activities were designed to let the children enter the stories and rewrite them. The opportunity to rewrite the stories was given deliberately to instil an action-oriented disposition among the children. Sometimes they were made to experience the world around them as a collection of numerous untold stories. For example, children understood the concept of livelihood and migration by conducting interviews. In this way, they got an opportunity to talk to their neighbours and collect stories from the ground. This was followed by a reflection exercise where they 'learnt to learn' from people around them.

f) The stories were designed to explicitly inculcate the skills and values like equality, empathy, grit and service along with collaboration, curiosity and creativity. The children were asked to share how they felt after reading the stories. They had to use 'emotion cards' to identify and label those emotions. This was an important exercise as, in certain situations, even adults find it challenging to label what they are feeling. Additionally, they were asked to note the kind of qualities different characters possessed and share the evidence for the same. This reiterated the importance of having these values in place for making any change possible. Finally, the scope of questioning the central characters (as mandatory space in the workbook at the end of stories) pushed the children to learn to ask questions, a quality that is rarely seen being developed in the system. I was not surprised when, even after eight weeks of repeated reinforcement, the girls kept asking factual questions. Nevertheless, it is an exercise worth every teacher's time and energy.

g) Working with a combination of fictional and non-fictional stories helped the children to appreciate the relevance and applicability of what they were reading. For instance, knowing about a young change-maker from their own state would help them aspire to swim against the currents and bring a change in their own community. Similarly, stories about Bunker Roy (Founder, Barefoot College, Tilonia), as well as Arti Devi and Hanuman Ji (natives of Tilonia village), were included to familiarise the children with the power of community-driven change. Such stories also pushed them to define their own realities and their ideas of success. They were enabled to identify the resources around them and devise plans that could use these resources in addressing local problems. In a way, they were made to relook at their own stories and make a conscious choice to write these as victor or victim.

Stories, skills and active citizenship

Education for citizenship can be understood as the inculcation of a combination of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required for an individual to become an active citizen (Lawton, 2000). While the knowledge component is covered in the Social Science textbooks, the values, skills and attitudes need to be reinforced through pedagogy. Stories prove to be effective ways of inculcating these attributes provided they are presented fairly. Instead of providing morals at the end of stories, the stories can be used to provide experiences so that children can develop an internalised value system.

The handling of the stories is to be aligned with the treatment of children in a classroom. Instead of treating children as citizens of the future, curriculum developers and teachers ought to look at them as citizens at present (Howe & Covell, 2009). The experiences should be designed to help children see what they can do here and now to bring a change in their own lives and that of their communities. This could be simple things like writing a letter to the gram pradhan for a continuous supply of electricity or democratically organising a Bal Sansad (where teachers guide only when asked). In sum, stories, when combined with powerful experiences, can go a long way in developing empathetic human beings who are capable of compassionate actions towards self, others and communities.

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The concept of equality was known by everyone from classes VI to VIII. They knew that they could not be discriminated against and if it happened, they could seek help. Therefore, an immediate association with this concept was realised across these grades along with the appreciation to uphold the notion of equality. It did not feel like an alien concept given in the textbook but a more concrete and relatable one.

Abhilasha Awasthi, Learning Democracy Through School Practices, p 22.

Be the Change | A Learning Expedition

Ronita Sharma and Shilpi Handa

'There are two goals in the experiential learning process. One is to learn the specifics of a particular subject, and the other is to learn about one's own learning process.' David A Kolb

Experiential learning is learning with an authentic purpose that uses real-life experiences from the children's local context as a pedagogic medium to develop knowledge, skills and character. Addressing the real and contextual experiences makes learning more engaging, meaningful and personalised for each child and helps in the development of vital skills, such as problem-solving and decision-making.

Through its four major components, experiential learning provides opportunities to achieve high critical thinking and collaboration skills. David A Kolb developed the experiential learning concept which divides the learning process into four basic theoretical components:

- *Concrete Experience*, that is, to provide an environment where the child grapples with a problem/situation involving all cognitive dimensions.
- *Reflective Observation* makes the child probe further into the task at hand and learn critically.
- *Abstract Conceptualisation* leads the child to think outside the box and collaborate with others to achieve learning outcomes. Meaningful experiences followed by reflection and dialogue help the child to think.
- *Active Experimentation* is closer to the destination – real and meaningful understanding.

Introducing the concept of rights

The concept of democracy, the Constitution of India and fundamental rights are generally introduced in Indian schools at the middle and secondary levels. Fundamental rights, as a topic, is gradually introduced from class VI in the NCERT textbooks. These rights, at this age, appear to be somewhat abstract in nature. Hence, great care is taken to introduce these through various representations, narratives, political cartoon strips etc. Another way of explaining these in a more concrete form is by introducing *Child Rights*. What can be a better mode of learning than letting children experience and reflect!

The Heritage School, Gurgaon, uses the experiential methodology for teaching and learning. Through this article, we share our experience of working as Educators in this school through an expedition.

The idea of the expedition *Be the Change* came from the need to bring the concepts of the social science textbook, which otherwise are abstract, to what is more concrete in nature and can be easily understood by the students. A group of teachers brainstormed the concepts of classes VI and VII Social Science textbooks as per NCF 2005 and Common Core Standards (United States of America). Our knowledge partners, *Disha India Centre for Experiential Learning* helped in conceptualising the framework - deciding the big idea, core concepts and flow of the expedition.

What is a Learning Expedition?

Learning expeditions are inter-disciplinary and aim at integrating content as well as skills from natural and social sciences, literacy and numeracy in the best possible ways. This approach takes learners

beyond the textbook curriculum and leads them to multiple opportunities to reach excellence through continuous planning, execution, and reflection. All learning expeditions revolve around empowering children to observe, think, reflect, analyse, synthesise and understand deeply. Using in-depth investigations, learning expeditions take students into the community, the field and bring experts to their classrooms to engage students in real-life learning experiences.

Connecting Expedition to KHOJ

KHOJ is a pedagogy that provides opportunities for children to experience the real world beyond their homes and find the true purpose of learning. Children explore their local history, natural heritage, flora-fauna, demography, as well as the design, layout and working of social, political, administrative and economic systems and their interrelationships. This helps them to relate and understand their local community better which, in turn, equips and empowers them to take responsibility for the betterment of their community.

It is important to understand that at the heart of each such practice or recommendation lies a strong commitment to inclusion and a belief that individual differences in children's ability and interests are an inevitable reality of every classroom, in every context.

Stages of Expedition

Big idea: The backbone of every expedition is the enduring understanding developed in students which remains with them for years ahead.

Guiding questions: These help to focus on and achieve the big idea. Generated from the big idea, guiding questions provide direction and also set the boundary for the expedition.

Hook: All learning expeditions embark on the journey with a compelling experience from the local context of children that engages and sparks curiosity in them commonly termed as, the *hook*.

Learning through Expedition and KHOJ

Each grade in the school is allotted two themes for one year. The teachers are not seen as social science or science teachers *per se* but as teachers of expedition. In 2013, (when we worked there) two important themes were taken for the expedition:

1. Human body - focusing on science learning outcomes
2. Be the change - focusing on social science learning outcomes

As no learning can happen in isolation, it is extremely important that the children are able to see things in connection to one another.

Keeping the core ideas of the Constitution - diversity, equality, democracy, rights and duties - teachers designed the big idea and guiding questions. To begin with, teachers tried to hook the children to the expedition by showing them a video about a group of children coming from a different socio-economic background. Then, we moved on to news articles on urban and rural children, children from families going through depression, personal experience of parents, a child talking about how she wants parents to spend time with her, to name a few.

Building background knowledge

The next stage, Building Background Knowledge (BBK) is a protocol that includes critical discussion that allows children to build knowledge and become more informed about the expedition. It enables students to read, think and engage in raising questions to further deepen their understanding. BBK supports the unpacking of the expedition and forming of the big idea.

In this context, teachers tried to explain the meaning of keywords such as rights, duties, discrimination, justice and used several readings and group discussions to strengthen the students' understanding of the concepts of 'diversity' and 'equality'.

Flow of Expedition

The goal was to introduce rights in general and Child Rights in particular as proposed by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) to middle school students. The NCPCR's mandate is to ensure that all laws, policies, programmes, and administrative mechanisms are in consonance with Child Rights as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A child is defined as a person in the 0-18 years age group.

The special rights of children are:

Right to safe environments
Right to Safe Environments
Right to safe environments
Right to food
Right to healthcare
Right to education
Right against child marriage
Right to freedom
Right to be free from discrimination
Right to protection from abuse
Right to protection from exploitation and neglect
Right to be heard and participate freely
Right to leisure and free time
Right to family life

Right to leisure and free time

From the big idea, we narrowed it down to concretise the idea of rights. We did so by introducing Child Rights to the learners. Of all the twelve Child Rights, we chose to focus on the 'Right to leisure and free time'. According to UNCRC Article 31, the child has a right to adequate rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to his or her age.

In the school, the topic of Child Rights was dealt with in-depth and students created a questionnaire to find out if they are deprived of any right. The same questionnaire was used to collect data -- students conducted interviews of other children in their neighbourhood and analysed the data to find major issues. While students were actively conducting interviews, organising and analysing the data, at the same time in the classroom they were reading in-depth about various individuals and groups working to ensure that every child gets the rights he/she is entitled to.

Needs and rights

The first activity was conducted to understand the difference between a right and a need. It was adapted from UNICEF's Toolkit on Diversion and Alternatives to Detention 2009; Activity 27: Glass of Water. The aim was to elicit participants' existing understanding of rights and to clarify key differences between needs and rights.

What is the difference between these two statements: 'I *need* a glass of water' and 'I *have a right* to a glass of water.'? Which is stronger? Why?' Through this activity, students saw that the main difference between needs and rights is the relationship between the person claiming the rights (rights-holder) and the person responsible for ensuring those rights are met (duty-bearer).

Outbound programme

An outbound programme *(KHOJ)* was organised in collaboration with the *URMUL* (Rural Health, Research and Development) Trust, Bikaner, which has been working towards strengthening the

status of children in society. It works systematically with communities, local authorities, as well as policymakers, to strengthen opportunities and ensure the survival of children in the desert. It also engages in the advocacy of Child Rights and runs the *Childline 1098*. We wanted to engage with the students of a government school in a village and understand their awareness towards Child Rights and in particular, the *Right to leisure and free time*. The outbound programme was designed and conceptualised in a manner that we develop an understanding of the same right in two different contexts.

A government school in Bajju village of Bikaner was chosen and the same process of collecting and analysing data that was conducted in the Heritage School was also conducted by the students of the Bajju Government School.

By this time, all the young minds were filled with various questions and as they were getting more and more curious, here came our much-awaited five-day-long outbound learning trip *KHOJ*. Students and teachers of the Heritage School travelled to Bajju village train and were put up at the URMUL guest houses.

It was an altogether different experience for the students and teachers of the Heritage school to work closely with the students of the government school, Bajju. After spending a day together in small groups, playing ice-breaker games, we could see a rapport being built. The data which we received from the children was significantly different with reference to the girl child. While it pointed to the fact that girls did not get time to play as they were supposed to do household chores in the context of the village, for girls in Gurgaon city the biggest problem was very few safe spaces.

Children spent evenings sitting on the sand dunes watching sunsets and reflecting on how the life of a child in the city is different from that of a child of the same age in a village. The deep conversations and thoughtful expressions were at times painful and left many teary-eyed. And at this point, we rolled in our next core idea -- active and aware citizens. Our students decided they will make people aware of child rights and started working for action – the culmination.

Culmination of expedition

As decided by students, the culmination of the expedition was a *nukkad natak* or a street play on child rights. We had two theatre persons with us. The theme, dialogues and script were to be co-evolved with the students as and when the interaction took place. So, every day, we would work on the awareness of child rights, in particular, the right to play by creating situations for them to come up with a script around it.

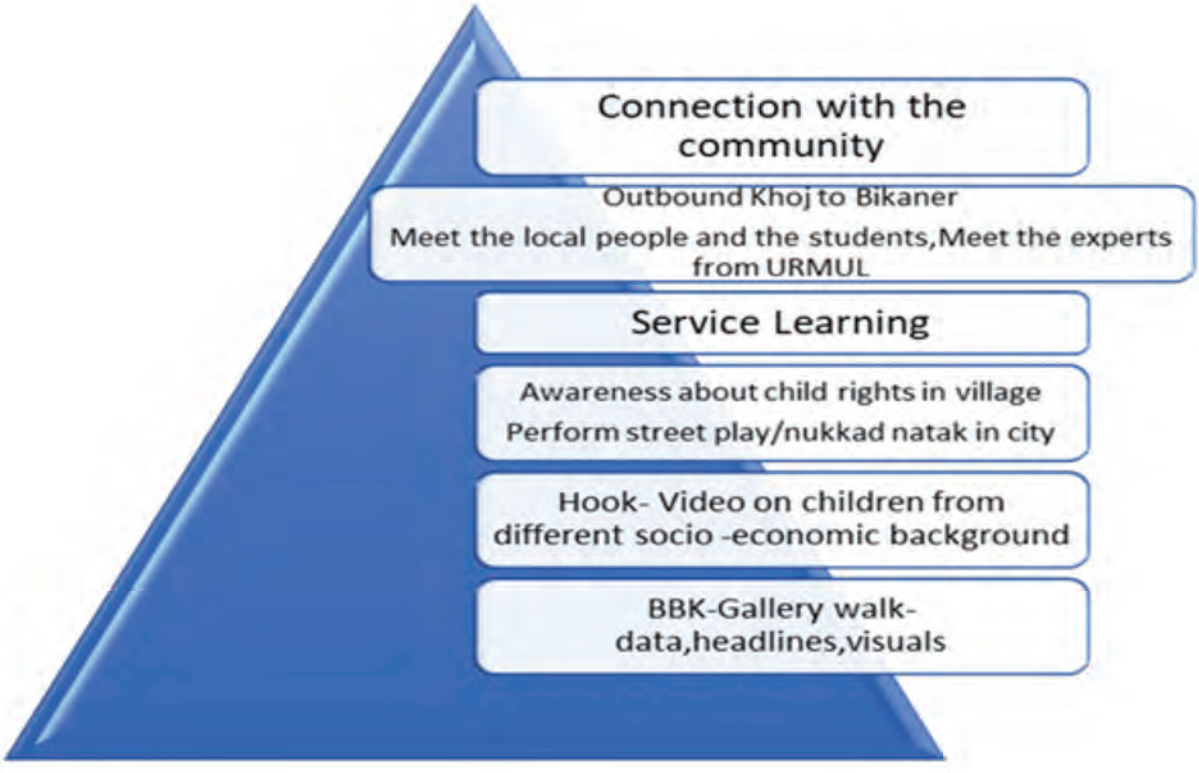
After day two, it was decided that the students of the Bajju school could come to the URMUL campus for rehearsal. Each day, the play progressed with dialogues, script, and actors getting finalised and on the last day, the students of both the schools presented a play – *Bal Adhikar*.

After returning to Gurgaon, the students of the Heritage School wrote an assignment on 'The Power Within Me' in English and *Bal adhikaron ki khoj*' in Hindi. Several rounds of drafts were written. It was self- and peer-assessed with a checklist provided. After the play was performed on the streets of Gurgaon, the students were asked to do a self-assessment based on the Learning Targets. Throughout this expedition, learning targets supported with a checklist and a rubric helped us to keep the learners on the task and culminate the *Be the Change* expedition with success.

Another highlight of this expedition was a rendezvous with Leila Seth organised in the school. Leila Seth (1930-2017) was the first woman judge of the Delhi High Court and the first woman to become the Chief Justice of a state High Court, also the author of *We the Children*, a book that introduces young readers to the Constitution of India.

Conclusion

For us teachers, this expedition remains close to our hearts as throughout its course, we could witness how young minds were receiving the information and collaborating with each other towards a common goal to effect change. The deep reflections of our children strengthened our belief that even concepts such as rights, democracy, equality, that appear so distant from a child's understanding, can be with properly designed instructional strategies and activities explained clearly to them. As teachers, our role throughout was to facilitate their thinking and lead them to the action of being active and informed citizens.



Learning Targets

Social Sciences	I can differentiate between diversity, discrimination and inequality using examples. I can evaluate how prejudice contributes to inequality around me. I can identify key elements that influence the functioning of Democracy. I can justify how Democracy as a form of governance is favourable for ensuring equality, dignity and justice in society. I can cite specific components from the Constitution that ensures equality and justice for all. I can pick specific components of the Constitution to analyse real-life examples of discrimination around me. I can evaluate the implementation of democratic process in my community. I can raise critical questions that probe, and facilitate deeper analysis of the democratic processes that exist in society around me.
Reading	I can use comprehension strategies to understand a text. I can use close reading strategies to extract the required information from the given text.
Writing	I can draw evidence from various texts to support analysis, reflection, and research and present it in the required format.
Speaking	I can present my understanding in a confident, articulate and organized manner adhering to the prescribed format.
Critical Thinking	I can raise critical questions that prove and facilitate deeper analysis of the democratic process that exists in society.
Character and Culture	I can seek and give constructive feedback to improve my work as well as that of others. I can be inclusive by giving all my crew members equal opportunity to participate. I can demonstrate respect by listening attentively to the person who is speaking.
Visual and Performing Arts	I can use theatre (street play) as a medium to campaign for my neighbourhood.

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Exploring Democracy Through Drama

Sanyukta Saha and Devika Bedi

Akbar, the great Mughal emperor, had become too big for his own good and had started believing that he owned everything that made up the world - every blade of grass, every mountain, brick, city, everything! On a walk one afternoon, he almost tripped and fell over something large. To his rage, it was an old sadhu in the middle of his very own courtyard. He was, of course, very angry and tried to kick this sadhu out. The sadhu, though, was not at all flustered, adding to the emperor's annoyance. The old man started speaking to him about how the world has been lived in by many, but never has anything been taken by them to the next life - everyone, including emperors, occupies this world only as a traveller and moves on. After much deliberation, when Akbar began to see light, the sadhu deftly gave away his masquerade to reveal his true identity – the much-admired courtier, Birbal, leaving the great emperor Akbar feeling embarrassed.

This story was woven by the theatre thespian, Safdar Hashmi into a poem called, *Duniya Sabki*, written for children and published in a collection of poems of the same name by the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT). This booklet has been the guide and foundation of the *Aagaaz* Theatre Trust which engages with children, adolescents, and adults through drama as a process and in performance. We look at citizenship as a process of questioning what is, probing what could be and taking action beyond the theatre stage.

Why Duniya Sabki?

A citizen is anyone who inhabits a nation and enjoys its rights and privileges, no matter what intersectionalities he or she belongs to. All citizens have the responsibility to actively hold the state accountable to uphold the values of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. This possibility of affirmative action in a society rife with diverse identities, perspectives and interests is not possible without dialogue. For effective dialogue to take place, spaces that nurture imagination, curiosity and critical thinking in individuals and collectives, need to exist. At *Aagaaz*, our overarching purpose is to create such spaces through the language of theatre.

Duniya Sabki was the first play that we created in 2010, before *Aagaaz* was even conceived as a separate entity. In the years of performing the play as a repertory, each time it was a new play because the stories of the actors kept changing. Each time they brought their individual stories, relevant to their lives at that moment. The play then became a mode of understanding one's own voice and sharing it with others. This act of courage is an important step towards beginning dialogue as an active citizen. In the last few years, we have been taking this play to be co-created with many young people in various contexts. In these seven-to-ten-day-long workshops, many new performances of *Duniya Sabki* have emerged and many different stories of many different children have found expression.

In this article, we share two of our experiences: one, of working with forty children of classes VII-IX in the Delhi Public School, Srinagar (2017) and another of 18 members in the age group of 9-12, of the Community Library Project's Sheikh Sarai/ Khirki Village chapter (a densely populated urban settlement with primarily migrant population) in Delhi (2018).

Initiating the process

The group in Srinagar laid immense emphasis on the arts in their school. Here, we began the session by playing games together, even before names were exchanged. This led all of us shedding any inhibitions that we may have had about one other and paved the way for shared possibilities. On the other hand, members of the Community Library Project at Sheikh Sarai work with educational institutions with rudimentary arts infrastructure. Here, collectively clearing the narrow basement for all the games that we were to play established a sense of ownership of the workshop to follow.

To become present as a group, we began every session by forming a circle, which while creating a ritual, also created a way of bringing the group

together. A circle, where everybody can see each other and is himself/herself seen, becomes a container that holds everybody's presence. A circle is a reflection of a mutually held structure - no one is in front, middle or last and everyone's willingness gives it shape.

This sense of co-ownership was also reaffirmed by *Aagaaz's* repertory members, who have been facilitating these sessions since their adolescent years. When children/adolescents are co-facilitating a process with those who are close to their age, it changes the notions of *learners* and *teachers*. A common ground emerges, and there is a heightened possibility of accepting and building on ideas playfully, even while making mistakes in the process. The quality of engagement and the stories that are thus, discovered, also shift.

Stimulus for exploration

As a process, the drama uses various stimuli to move towards creation. In both Srinagar, as well as Sheikh Sarai, we used questions and text to negotiate the creative process. Both of these can create a framework for guided reflection on the connectedness of our experiences with those of others. This facilitates a curiosity/inquiry towards an understanding of the environment and allows for an imagination of possibilities beyond. This investigation creates a sensorial experience for the group.

To be able to respond to what is, it is essential to understand the existing reality and question its implications on the everyday lives of individuals and collectives. Understanding and questioning, in themselves, are integral to deepening each other. Open-ended questions facilitate participation because they create an opportunity for diverse perspectives and personal experiences. Active participation, instead of passive reception, lays the foundation for democratic practices. Children's roles in a democratic space are no different. Their questions, voices, and stories are more often than not unheard – their perspectives negated. The depth of their experiences is not valued by the adult world. Performing these stories creates a stage for their voices to reach diverse audiences.

The process of uncovering stories for us happens through the act of framing questions. These questions help us find our way into our own stories and are the bridges that connect them with the stories of others - through resonance, similarities, differences and disagreements.

The chosen text in this case, *Duniya Sabki*, raises a pertinent question - *does the world belong to everyone?* Each child's answer leads to a further train of enquiry - 'Why do you say it does/doesn't? Have you ever had an experience that made you feel this way?'

The poem becomes a *stimulus*, creating a space for personal stories to emerge. The experiences of children are diverse and the text, with its central questions, opens up the possibility for everyone's enquiry. Triggered from the same questions, these stories when shared, create a sense of community. Why does this sense of *community* emerge? Conversely, what are the larger systems at play that create the commonalities in experiences of not feeling a sense of belongingness in the world?

The poem is pivoted on the statement – *'ya to duniya sabki hai, ya nahi kisi ki, bhai'* (the world either belongs to all or to no one at all). It is either an effort towards asserting everyone's rights (*ya to duniya sabki hai*), or it is not a democratic process at all (*ya nahi kisi ki bhai*).

Collective space and voice

A collective framework only exists when all its members can add their voices toward repairing, rejecting and creating elements of the ways of co-existing. A system where one group's voices and expressions are silenced more than those of others, is straying away from this notion of the collective. The democratic ideal is not a destination, but a constant journey of push and pull between the State and its citizens. This push and pull between systemic issues and collectives emerges from the enquiry within every individual. This enquiry is an examination of the current reality, the imagination of future possibilities and the journey towards these futures. The expression of these many possibilities leads to dialogue, finding commonalities, voicing and working through conflicts. This is also the process of democratic nation-building.

Drama-based methodologies hinge on the impulse to push boundaries. The re-creation of even the most ordinary and mundane in the workshop space has a strangeness to it. Brushing one's teeth in front of an imaginary wash basin, holding an imaginary toothbrush, with an imaginary stream of water running from a tap that does not really exist, are not ordinary actions in this collective space. The vocabulary of the method carries within it a challenge. The challenge is not just in stretching individually, but also in its desire for doing so

collectively. The challenge to stretch exists not just for the group but also for the facilitator. They need to recognise their own position of power in the dynamics and create a space where the group can thrive both individually and collectively. The facilitator's role is to nudge softer voices into expression. This reinforces the possibility of expecting people in positions of power to create opportunities for collective growth, where everyone's voice is heard. Thus, Akbar's voice in the text stands almost as a *hidayat* (instruction) to the facilitator.

On stage and beyond

A dialogue between Akbar and Birbal becomes a much larger exchange amongst many individuals, groups and societies across two very different geographies, creating many different possibilities of transformation. In both Srinagar and Sheikh Sarai, parents and peers of the participants came in large numbers for the final sharing of the plays. It is a moment of reckoning for both the audience and the performers. In the leap of faith that the latter take in expressing their yet-untold stories, and the former in witnessing those known to them sharing their unheard voices. The audience as well as the performers enter into an unspoken contract of believing the stories that unfold on stage. They both discover the possibilities of new realities in this suspended moment of disbelief. Both are transformed in this exchange in small, sometimes imperceptible, ways. It is a democratic dialogue in progress.

At the Community Library Project, a mother who saw her daughter onstage for the first time, acting out the gender roles she (the daughter) is expected to play, went back introspecting. In Delhi Public School, many students expressed resonance with the story on bullying, just another form of exclusion and show of inequalities in power and strength. The children in both workshops had gone on a journey to engage with their stories and how it had affected them. They had found the language of performance to tell these stories together. They had expressed on stage a desire to live different stories, different realities.

Conclusion

The act of being a citizen does not begin with the right to vote. It begins with the everyday life of every person and their engagement with these experiences. The conscious examination of one's identities and the single stories ascribed to them is the beginning of active citizenship. Conversations and words are often not enough to initiate this process. Children, who are developing their own identities, are already initiated into this exploration through play. They make meaning of complex realities through this act. In a child's world, stories are dynamic, and it is possible to keep changing them. Drama-based methodologies use play and guided discovery as tools to help children see beyond the facade of single stories. The process of creating stories reveals multitudes of perspectives. Ideas are activated on stage through performance, helping the performers imagine possibilities of deliberate action in everyday life. This action is the first step towards shaping the desired reality.

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Active Citizenship in School

Suman Joshi

The past year has been like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc not just in terms of lives lost but also in terms of the disruption of normal life. As this report[i] shows, this disruption affected the poorer sections disproportionately, deepening the already wide chasms between the haves and the have-nots. One area where this has been felt acutely is in the education sector where, while a small minority has access to the internet and online classes, a large percentage of their counterparts have virtually forfeited a whole year.[ii]

While this was an unprecedented situation, what could have saved us from this disaster? What can we do better so that if we are faced with a situation like this again, the same injustices are not perpetrated?

The obvious answers are improvement in state capacity and investment in public goods, such as public health and education. But if we had to define one game-changing solution, it would be the concept of active citizenship. What is active citizenship and what does it entail?

With the widening and deepening of democracy, the common lesson from around the world has been that citizens and the kind of involvement they bring into civic affairs will directly impact the kind of democracy we will have. So it follows that, for a democracy to deliver the goods for us, we need to have aware and active citizens.[iii] Active citizenship is premised on encouraging citizens to use their agency to make claims on the state. At a very basic level, it involves and engages with an understanding of democracy as a republic, the primacy of the Constitution and fundamental rights and directive principles as outlined in our Constitution. You may say that these are elementary concepts, but just ask a few people what the difference between Independence Day and Republic Day are and you will be surprised by the answers you get!

It would be instructional here to understand the foundations on which modern democracies stand, namely, electoral participation, citizen protests and claim-making on the State. These are the common ways we participate as citizens. Electoral participation comes automatically given the din of elections and protests are fairly commonplace. But claim making for basic amenities that a state/government is obligated to provide is something that citizens have lost control over. Adding the fourth element, that of active citizenship, can help us regain control over making claims on the State, which stated simply refers to demanding that the government deliver to us what it is mandated to do by the very nature of the citizen-state relationship.

To summarise, an active citizen, in addition to checking the boxes as a law-abiding individual is also an aware, participating citizen, working with fellow citizens, lawmakers and local governments to manage governance. For example, the lakes of Bengaluru have been transformed from areas of filth to sanctuaries of peace thanks to the efforts of citizens working with ward officials and local corporations.

Understanding our democracy

In the battle for rights and making claims, citizens often feel defeated because they do not understand how the state machinery functions. Consequently, understanding and fighting for vital services remains a distant dream. Therefore, this process of education must begin at a foundational level to help us internalise important tenets of our democracy. What is the value in bringing these to the fore at a foundational level? What problems will it solve?

Awareness of rights

At a basic level, it will help citizens to increase their awareness of their rights. Awareness is the first step to change. It is when students are aware that they can identify situations that are less than ideal. For example, only when students know that the state is obligated to maintain law and order will they begin to notice and internalise that the local police is duty bound to maintain law and order in

their communities. As children, they may not be able to march into the police station and demand implementation of law and order but will be able to influence and spread awareness amongst their peer groups.

Awareness of social issues

The state, the markets and society form the three pillars of a modern democracy. Raghuram Rajan in his book, *The Third Pillar*, makes an excellent case for strengthening the third pillar, namely society. Society has been weakening over the last few decades owing to the failure of the state, citizens giving up their demands on the state once they move up the economic status ladder and their general apathy. Active citizenship can also help in strengthening this third pillar and make incremental changes towards an egalitarian society. For example, the state can have a regulatory framework to tackle discrimination on the basis of caste. But it is equally important for society to play a role in these matters. Active citizenship by way of communication and awareness campaigns on social issues are most effective and the best way to teach children to grow up as aware, active citizens.

Finding solutions

Understanding governance structures, local governments and frameworks will bring in a solutioning mindset amongst students. For example, awareness of ward-level committees and the way they function will make students understand that governments are accessible as well as accountable. They could come up with innovative solutions that would solve specific local problems which, given the diversity of our country, need hyperlocal solutions. For example, solid waste management is an area that is hyper localised, and students could come up with ideas about how to deal with this in the context of their neighbourhoods.

Teaching citizenship in school

Having addressed the *what* and *why*, we should move to the *how* of this: Democracy eventually depends on involved citizenry. While there is a considerable focus on getting the fundamentals of mathematics and the physical sciences, do we spend enough time on how we can teach citizenship to children? How can interest and involvement be created in the classroom? Since the classroom is a microcosm of the larger society, it would be useful to reflect on tools and methods used. Here are some ways in which we can inculcate the spirit of active citizenship in classrooms.

Daily news and debates

While classroom teaching could be used to discuss concepts on citizenship, local governments and law making, can we include just reading news headlines and discussing news for ten minutes every day in the school assembly? A weekly deep dive into news based connecting it to concepts being learnt in the classroom could help students grasp these better. This weekly exercise could be in the form of debates between students taking positions on important issues. For example, a debate on the farm laws and the issues involved.

Understanding Parliamentary processes

A school level election followed by a mock parliament to introduce a culture of debate and dissent would help explain the parliamentary system. In a culture that does not encourage questioning easily, it is very important to encourage constructive debate and discussion. This will give important lessons to children on values of bargaining, empathy and compromise which are important skills in policymaking and public life. While this is democracy in action what we should reinforce and reiterate is the fact that all of this happens within the framework of a constitution. It would help if schools draw a larger charter which would act like a constitution. This would drive home the fact that a constitutional republic is what differentiates modern democracies over a monarchy.

Understanding Democratic processes and concepts

As a run-up to every major election, schools could revise and review aspects related to adult franchise. For example, history of adult franchise should not merely be taught as ‘all citizens above 18 years old…’ but with a historical context of the freedom struggle or suffrage movements across the world. The practicalities and pressures of syllabus completion may make this difficult. We could look at earmarking time every week to tie the common threads across subjects, for example, studying suffrage movements could be linked to lessons on democracy and gender rights awareness. Similarly, lessons on food patterns in geography could be tied in with themes of unity in diversity.

For a democracy to truly deepen and for the last person to benefit from it, it is imperative that we follow the 'catch them young - watch them grow’

approach and invest in citizenship lessons for our children. At a time when the world has seen an increased centralisation of governance, as citizens, we need to wrest the initiative back. It is up to us to turn a new page so that the we can realise the dream that we set for ourselves 70 years ago.

i https://www.livemint.com/news/india/what-2020-did-to-india-s-inequality-11610982667419.html

ii (https://indianexpress.com/article/india/delhi-survey-school-education-govt-facilities-computers-7146867/)

iii (https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-leaf-from-stacey-abrams-book/article33156100.ecex)

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Instead of treating children as citizens of the future, curriculum developers and teachers ought to look at them as citizens at present (Howe & Covell, 2009). The experiences [provided to them] should be designed to help children see what they can do here and now to bring a change in their own lives and that of their communities.

Richa Pandey, Inculcating Active Citizenship Through Stories, p 90.

Citizenship Through Creativity Workshops

Umashankar Periodi

A three-day creativity workshop where children could have fun and enjoy themselves while learning a few things and being creative was planned in the Surpur district. It was a major challenge for us. We planned three major things to do with the children in the workshop. The first was to make them more responsible, the second was to use the community/public property sensitively, and the third was to use dialogue as the main process of communication and problem-solving. However, to do this, we had first to make them feel *equal*.

Feeling equal

> We felt that the most important thing for children was for them to feel equal, to feel that they are heard and listened to, that there is no discrimination among them. To do this, we started by making them sit in a circle on the floor, which makes everyone visible and helps children to see that everyone is equal. The facilitator also sits in the circle with them. Nobody is a backbencher. Nobody is a leader. Everybody is in the front. The person who speaks leads and everyone gets a chance to speak.

Then, we had other rules: when someone is speaking, the rest must listen and speak only when the person has finished speaking. When somebody is speaking, others must look at the person. If there are many people wanting to speak, they should raise their hands, and the facilitator will allow each one to speak by turns.

Listening to others was the main advantage of this seating arrangement. When anyone had anything to say or announce, it was done in the circle. Slowly, interruptions became fewer and fewer. The main point repeated was – *let the person finish*. When the group felt somebody had not spoken, the members pointed out to that person for their views. In this way, everyone had a chance to speak and the feeling that others were listening attentively to them, was the most important feeling.

Being responsible

Initially, there was chaos in the workshop. Children would use things and leave them behind everywhere and go away. They would come and throw their bags anywhere. We could not scold them and telling them in a nice way did not help.

We then brought this issue into circle time. The discussion was on what happens if they throw things around, why a place should be well-maintained and how others can be inconvenienced because of this behaviour and how we should be responsible. We should feel and do things on our own, not because somebody else has asked us to.

Children understood this and started being mindful of the items they used. They kept their chappals in a line outside the classrooms, cleaned the paint brushes after using them, wiped the blackboard, came on time and finished work on time. Slowly, one after the other, their attitude started changing.

Initially, there were a lot of complaints about each other. But as children started being responsible, complaints became fewer. They would manage each other effectively.

Protecting community resources

We found that, by and large, children were careless about public resources. They would drink water and not keep the glass in its place, use sports equipment and not keep those back and not leave the washrooms clean. We had a long discussion on how we must take care of the public property. Leaving a place tidier for use by others was the main thing that children seemed to understand. Every time, we would ask the question: are we leaving the place in a way that others can use it? This took a lot of effort. Children would not understand, or they would just not remember. Gradually, they started doing it. The most effective progress was when children started pointing out what needed to be done to each other. Children learned to take care of public spaces and community amenities.

Resolving issues through dialogue

Fights among the children were common. They

would fight over the simplest things. Sometimes there would be big fights over small matters. Occasionally, children would fight with teachers too. We wanted to do something about it because when we requested them to not fight, they would agree but immediately after that there would be some provocation and they would fight.

Then, we started a process of talking about everything in the circle. Children would listen and whatever was decided in the circle, would be strictly followed. Each one's opinion was listened to and then, a decision was taken with everyone's consent. This would have to be adhered to by all. Any conflict, issue or problem brought to the circle, was discussed and resolved. The emphasis was on *dialogue*.

This was the most difficult thing for the children to follow. When a conflict arose, they would immediately fight and resolve it. But with our consistent insistence on dialogue, children reluctantly started speaking to each other instead of starting a fight. After some time, children slowly started using dialogue as a method of problem-solving. What happened later was that whenever two children forgetting to talk it out started to fight, the other children would intervene and make them resolve their problem through discussion. Though not wholly successful, we were able to get children to agree for dialogue to some extent.

We ran these creativity workshops for many years. We cannot say that we were completely successful in all the schools. In schools where we did the creativity workshops for a short time, the method did not work, but in schools where we went back and conducted the sessions consistently, the process was successful, though not wholly so.

Outcomes

In the schools where these processes did work, we saw that children followed some norms that lead to being *responsible citizens*. Feeling equal was the simplest of all these and children followed it very well once they were convinced. The circle concept worked as the children liked to sit in a circle and everyone in the circle started to speak. In this process, the most important thing here was listening to others' opinion. This, we feel, was the most successful thing that we achieved with the children.

Being *responsible* and *protecting community resources* was something children understood only slowly and were able to follow to some extent. Here, the main driving force was other children pointing out when someone forgot. Those who were reminded would do it without resentment. The most difficult part of the workshops was getting the children to engage in dialogue. Children, somehow, did not see the importance of the process at all. We too struggled a lot in this process. Thus, the least effective was the dialogue. We are yet to get a hold on this.

This experience of creativity workshops and citizenship education was a great source of learning for us. Citizenship education cannot be delivered in the short-term. It has to be done consistently and repeatedly over time. In different groups, different ideas/ concepts work. There is no pattern of what will work and what will not. The facilitators are the main source of motivation. If the facilitator does not follow something that he/she is advocating, it will not work. Hence, being with the children consistently, over time, following and reminding them of these notions of democratic living and demonstrating them is the only way that they will internalise it.

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