Azim Premji
University

Civic
life
and
citizenship

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EDITORIAL

Making civic education relevant

We live in confusing times. While there's no doubt that life is better on some counts (higher lifespan, more literacy, widening opportunities, more choice), it's worse on others (climate change, socio-economic inequality, war). It's hard to know who is responsible and how things can change. In such a context, children grow up disconnected from the processes and systems that can actually make change possible, at micro and macro levels. Yes, we do study the history and geography of the country, and the systems of governance at national and local levels that are supposed to regulate our economy, polity and, to some level, society. Yet much of this knowledge is for the purposes of answering exam questions and rarely goes beyond that.

A majority of children, would count civics as one of their most boring subjects. Of course now what used to be called civics a decade ago is subsumed within the larger discipline of political science (at the school level) or further refined as public administration (at the college level). But even so, by and large, the subject is not seen as an integral part of our everyday life. In fact, a functional knowledge of the laws and rules by which our lives are organized – our civic lives – is essential if we are to participate fully in our democracy.
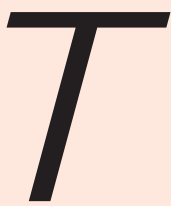
This was the thinking that drove us to plan this summer issue around the idea of civic engagement and citizenship. How can we give our students a sense of the Constitution as a living, breathing document that frames political and civic life in India? What are the guiding principles of democracy as interpreted in the Constitution and what does this mean for us in terms of our lived realities? How can we play a role in ensuring that these principles are implemented fairly and evenly? What does it mean to be a good citizen? These and many other questions are raised by the bouquet of articles in this issue.

We've been fortunate to partner with "We, The People Abhiyan", a Gurgaon-based NGO that works with schools to create a deeper understanding of the Constitution and citizenship. Together with their team, we were able to reach out to a wider range of contributors – educators, civil society organizations, lawyers. But as always, there is still much ground to cover. But we hope this will be a beginning for individual teachers and schools who wish to make civics (or political science) a living, relevant subject and build citizenship skills and knowledge among their students.

Usha Raman

Reimagining civics

This is such an opportune time for this issue. The year 2019 marks the 70th year of the Indian Constitution and our Republic! It could be a time to use many of the ideas here to create activities and events that help students connect deeply with the fundamental principles that join us all, in all our diversity and uniqueness!

Today, we have much to be proud about. But we face a number of challenges too. In meeting these challenges, we citizens have a big responsibility. This is because democracies are deepened through an **informed, active and responsible citizenry**. This is a singular condition.

This means that the development of responsible citizenship is a critical building block for us. As Alexis de Toqueville (political scientist and historian) pointed out, each new generation is a new people that must acquire the knowledge, learn the skills, and develop the dispositions or traits of private and public character that undergird a constitutional democracy. Those dispositions must be fostered and nurtured by word and study and by the power of example. Democracy is not a "machine that would go off itself," but must be consciously reproduced, one generation after another.

How do we develop responsible citizenship? Studies of older democracies such as America have shown that these dispositions need to be nurtured early, in schools, through effective and imaginative civic education. And they need to be practiced and modeled by those from whom children learn first – their teachers and care givers. This then is the formidable nation building task of all social studies teachers. And this issue of Teachers Plus is an attempt to help you in that.

When Usha asked us to come in as Guest Editors on this special issue, we happily agreed. We, The People Abhiyan is an NGO dedicated to the cause of building an active and responsible citizenry. We work with teachers from government and private schools to build capacities to make civics classes the best they can be. So, for us, it is a great opportunity to engage with you all through this powerful medium.

I have to say, however, that this effort would have been impossible without the meticulous and painstaking efforts of the We, The People team who conceptualized the framework of the articles, drew up names of people who we knew would add value and then worked with each author to get their thoughts to you. Our Guest Editorial team was led by Bhakti Bhave and joined up by Sonal Iyer, Neha Yadav and me. We do hope you enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Thanks to the *Teacher Plus* team, thanks also to each author and more power to you dear teachers!

Vinita Singh

Building Knowledge

Engaging with politics: teaching democracy

Alex M. George

The author researched and worked in social science education for 20 years, which included civics or political science. This article draws from numerous interactions with teachers and faculty members who are involved in curriculum design and content development for various states and governments. He is currently struggling with a thesis idea. He can be reached at alexmgeorge@gmail.com.

*W*hen thinking about education for democracy in the Indian context, one encounters several challenges. This essay broadly classifies them into two categories – content and perspective.

Content: providing information is insufficient
Generally, two types of content are prescribed for the civics classroom. The first relates to political institutions and the second has to do with civic sense. Let us begin with political institutions. Among the bureaucracy and political leadership in the education sector, there is an assumption that it is the absence of information that has led to the absence of democratic behaviour. Even today it is largely believed that merely providing information is good enough to teach democracy as an idea. For instance, it is assumed that if children are told about constitutions or the political and administrative institutions, they will recognize

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the value of democracy. Hence, textbooks describe how a prime minister or president is elected. By reading this the children or the future citizens are expected to participate in elections and understand that we are a democracy. Such descriptions, until 2005-6, largely remained without references (and actually continue to do so in most textbooks) to real political parties and political processes (NCERT has tried to change this scenario by including in its textbooks the active role played by political parties in the functioning of a State). Therefore, when coalition governments are formed, a typical statement from a political science or civics textbook, such as: "The leader of the majority party is appointed as the chief minister", remains incomprehensible to the students. Students and teachers struggle to interpret constitutional provisions that relate to situations where no single party emerges as the majority party. This scenario of not discussing politics is partly due to the assumption that politics is bad and civic education should not indulge in discussing political parties. This shying away from discussing real politics, under the garb of civic education, has restricted the discipline to nothing more than a redundant listing of information.
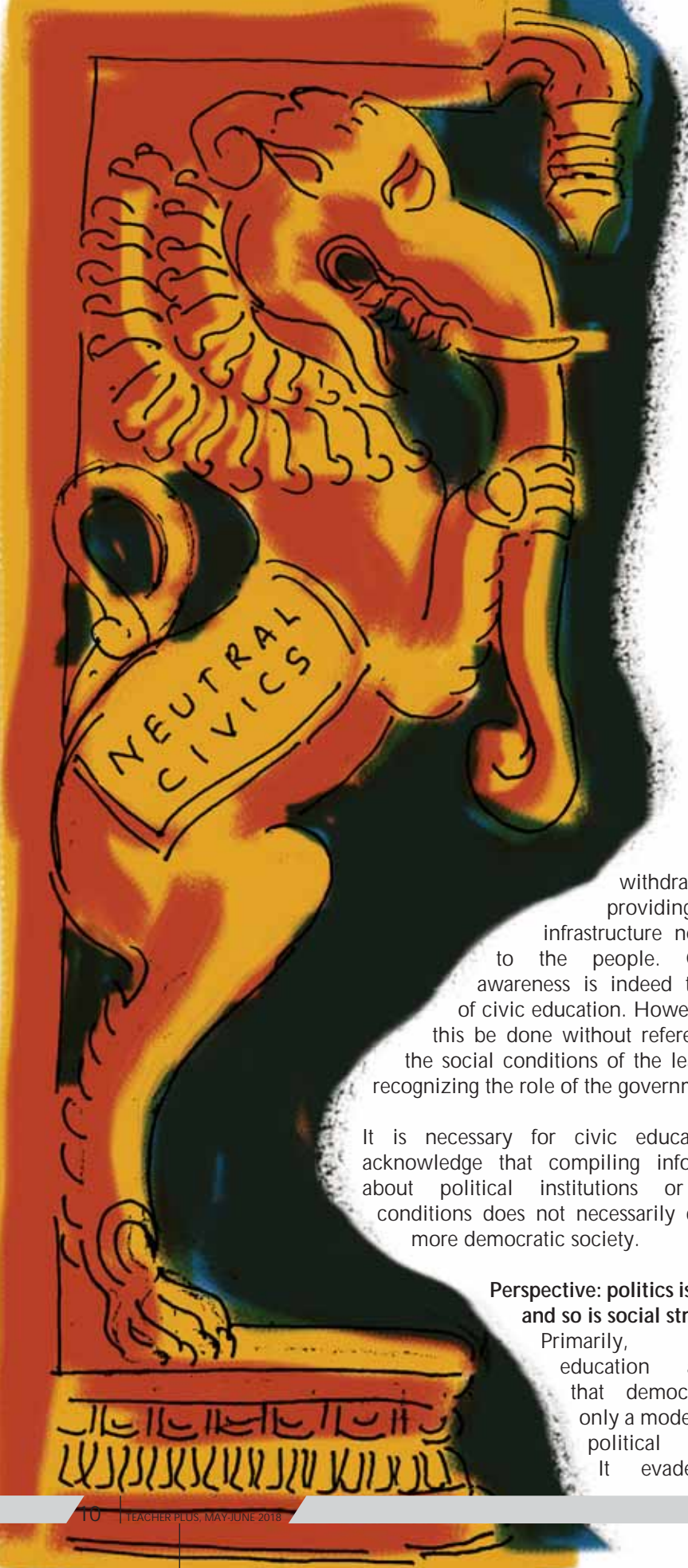
Orders from the Supreme Court or various ministries play a crucial role in defining civic education. Here are some examples of additions that have been made to civic education in the last two decades – how to cross unmanned railway lines by the Ministry of Railways; how to identify fake currency or write a cheque by the Reserve Bank of India; how to protect oneself from natural disasters like tsunamis or earthquakes by various courts or the Parliament.

Illustrations: Boopathy Srinivasan

International organizations too push their agenda; they evaluate textbook content and compare across countries how many pages are used to teach the United Nations, human rights, children's rights, etc. The plethora of such 'guidelines' from the State and international systems does not do much to go beyond prescribing informational content of civic education.

The second category of information in textbooks comes from what could broadly be called as 'civic sense'. Earlier, textbooks used to make a mention of 'social evils' practiced in the Indian society and the corrective measures taken by governments over the years to stop such practices – that the giving and taking of dowry is illegal, untouchability has been banned, child labour is a punishable offence, consuming tobacco or alcohol is injurious to health, one must follow traffic rules, not litter in public, not disfigure historical monuments and public property, conserve water, protect

the environment, etc. Thus we have a random amalgamation of laws, rules, and prescriptions relating to the everyday context and social systems in which the children live. By passing on these bits of information, the State claims that it has performed its duty in regulating 'social evils'. It is the absence of complete or proper information that leads to violation and disorder in society. This is hierarchical – the notion of the learner and the state. A prescriptive text that expects the child to obey the law. This statement that 'traffic rules must be followed', ignores children living in places that don't have pedestrian paths and possibly even roads, it ignores those living on the footpath, and those that are forced to keep away from certain streets due to the caste system. Here, the insistence on providing information about laws punishing or prohibiting certain practices is rather comical. In a way the State is passing on its responsibilities to the citizens; having informed citizens of their responsibilities, it seems that the State can

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withdraw from providing the infrastructure necessary to the people. Creating awareness is indeed the role of civic education. However, can this be done without references to the social conditions of the learner or recognizing the role of the governments?

It is necessary for civic education to acknowledge that compiling information about political institutions or social conditions does not necessarily create a more democratic society.

Perspective: politics is central and so is social structure

Primarily, civic education assumes that democracy is only a model for the political system. It evades the fact that democracy as an idea can have a deep impact on the social structures and not merely on the political institutions and political system. Civic education fails to recognize how the idea of democracy needs to be extrapolated to the social structures as well; such an action will force one to rethink social institutions and structures such as family, gender, caste, etc. Democracy in political institutions has to be seen in relation to the social structures. Unlearning the hierarchical nature of the society is central to the challenge of keeping civic education relevant.

As briefly mentioned, one key element in the failure of discussing civic education is the deliberate silence on politics and political parties. It is indeed strange when citizen participation in democracy is mediated through political parties that textbooks, by and large, shy away from speaking about them. Also, why does 'civic sense' abstain from discussing basic social aspects of the Indian society? For instance, civic education expects awareness against gender and caste discrimination to emerge simply by providing basic information about the laws created to prevent them. Civic sense is expected to be created without recognizing that discriminatory practices are encouraged by our social institutions and norms of social practices.

Such a perspective in education emerges from the way morals are taught in Indian tradition, for instance by using the *Panchtantra*. A story is narrated, at the end of which children are expected to learn a moral. It does not ask what moral the listener deduces from the story.

The narrator dictates the moral under an authority. It does not allow multiple interpretations. It is afraid of a conflict of opinions and perspectives that the listener may have. Thus, an undemocratic and hierarchical vision of knowledge is embedded in the learning system. Even the idea of democracy is taught as a prescribed definition by quoting statements like that of Lincoln, similar to how morals are dictated. The learner's agency, their social world, their positionalities in contrast to each other's in a classroom are not respected or engaged with. Children end up mimicking phrases from the quotations they learned, without necessarily engaging with them, thus making education itself undemocratic. Or as is the norm, the child will remember the story and not the moral.

Just as political concepts such as democracy, justice, equality are taught without engaging with the political system, the other aspect with which civic education disengages is the social context. Children are told that untouchability and dowry have been declared illegal. Yet, they are never told what it means to have caste practices. Children are never expected to engage with what it means to be married or have a family, what it means to be marrying within one's caste or being brought up within a certain religion, what it means to be criminalized for expressing affection for a person of the same gender in schools. Therefore, it is not uncommon today that educated people often declare that they "grew up without knowing their caste." People claim caste to be a thing of the past, yet every day there is news of caste-related violence, caste is one of the first things that

is looked at during a marriage proposal. But then these practices are assumed 'natural' and uncritically accepted as the prescribed social structures for their families and communities. In this context, civics education seems ashamed of unravelling a key aspect of the Indian social structure – caste – and claims to create 'civic' sense. Undemocratic social structures are thus made invisible.

Popular discussion on civics education and civic behaviour is often painted as a binary. Civic education is expected to lead to behaviour that obeys whatever the State says. It does not provide any democratic opportunity or responsibility to question the State and its acts.. Let us take an example of how the discussion on fundamental rights vs fundamental duties has emerged in the last few years in the context of students' struggle for better university systems and freedom of expression within the universities or events around demonitization. During the last few years there were many occasions when 'fundamental duties' emerged as a point of debate; the teaching of fundamental duties was pitted against the 'rights' that students across the country were demanding, an act that the ruling government considered unpatriotic. As a solution to "instilling nationalism" among their students, universities are installing military tanks on campuses. If an adivasi or dalit stands up to the State for taking away his land and livelihood he is frowned upon. During demonitization, citizens were constantly reminded that them standing in queue to exchange their hard-earned income was as patriotic a duty as a soldier guarding the border. During

such debates, it is hinted that civic education has put too much emphasis on the rights and ignored the duties.

Civic education is about engaging with politics, not merely by providing information or shying away and speaking in abstract constitutional language, but by understanding and creating opinion regarding everyday political events even if democracy is understood only in the political context. If we are willing to accept the need to expand the definition of democracy to include social structures then it is about relooking social structures, such as family and caste, that regulate our daily lives. It is about helping someone take a stand based on certain principles or ideas like democracy, justice, fraternity or equality; ideas which are political. It is about participating in a system of governance which involves political parties that regulate political institutions which have control over our everyday lives. It is about asserting our rights as a tribal, a transgender, a woman, etc., and recognizing that our social system and structures violate or contradict the political promises of democracy. The traditional view that civic education can be neutral is a myth. It needs to address social systems and structures, not as social evils but as institutions whose needs are central to understanding the political system. And that is a challenge.

Political systems do not want to change the manner in which civics is taught, they are afraid of the radical shift that will take place if people learn to recognize the power of democracy. **TP**

From civics to social and political life – confronting 'blunt situations'

Arvind Sardana

The author is a member of the Social Science Group at Eklavya. This group has some fulltime members and many associated members as resource groups drawn from schools, colleges and universities. The social science team developed alternative textbooks and assessment methods for the Madhya Pradesh government and later worked with the NCERT teams. They also worked with various state governments, such as Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Bihar among others that were keen to adapt and further develop their social science textbooks. He can be reached at arvindewas@gmail.com.

When we at Eklavya's social science group started working on civics around the mid 80s there were a few objectives that were clear. One was to reformulate the government related chapters, introduce new themes to expand the notion of civics, move towards conceptual explanation within an overall framework of democracy and avoid preaching. We were developing alternative textbooks and assessment methods for middle school social science for the Madhya Pradesh government. Nine government schools were part of the project and they were to try out and implement the new course materials.

Over the years, some incidents (discussed below) that occurred during teacher workshops or in classrooms, which we would like to call 'blunt situations', kept reminding us of these objectives and challenged us to respond more creatively.

Reformulating chapters

When we began, the traditional panchayat chapter appeared to be a moral science lesson in cooperation; that the wise council of villagers would address all problems in a fair and just manner. This seemed bizarre in a context where there had been no elections in Madhya Pradesh at the panchayat level for many years.

Our panchayat chapter began with the question, "Why do we need panchayats?" The next section went on to describe the process of how a panchayat is formed – preparation of voters list at the village level and the elections. Since government teachers carried out this process in real life, it was familiar territory for them. They could easily explain questions that children might ask and even give examples from personal experience.
https://www.eklavya.in/pdfs/ Books/SSTP/social_studies_6/ civics/3%20Village%20 Panchayats.pdf

But there was one situation when a teacher in a nearby town was stumped by a blunt edge question. A boy asked, "My parents' names are registered both in the town and our native village. What's wrong?" "But that is not as per the rule", explained the teacher although she felt that her answer was incomplete. She did not want to openly criticize the parents involved. She had to think this through.

Providing real-life examples is not just about better examples but real thinking, since children naturally apply themselves. She understood that the boy was saying that people do this as they belong to two places, so what is wrong about this in principle?

How would you explain the logic behind the rule? Wouldn't that lead to a deeper understanding of equality?

The panchayat chapter provided many such situations that led teachers and children to ask questions since they could both relate to the context. The conceptual issues of representation and voting rights have procedures that reflect equality in the political sphere. We included case studies that would introduce children to the system and the underlying ideas.

During a teacher training session in Rajasthan, under the LokJumbish initiative of the government, a strange situation arose. We were discussing the role of the gram sabha with a hypothetical question – "What if every decision of the panchayat was taken in the gram sabha? Would this be useful?"

A group of teachers suddenly objected asking why they should 'assume'. This is not the rule and not true and therefore needn't be discussed further. My colleague was stumped. "I'm only asking you to assume". They retorted, "No, we won't discuss this. No assumptions. Don't teach us wrong things." For good measure they added, "If the Panchayat Act is so great why don't you get the Bihar government to accept it before you explain to all of us in Rajasthan." The teachers were aware that the Bihar government at that time was delaying formulating a new state law that would implement the three tier panchayat structure.

It made us realize how strong the above view of civics was. It was seen as a totally rule-bound subject – what is the rule and how it should be followed. No

Photos courtesy: Arvind Sardana

understanding was required. The purpose of civics was only to pass on these rules. There was no preparedness to discuss the logic or principles behind these rules and regulations, let alone understand the grey areas. Their political awareness was high, however their notion of civics was apolitical.

Moving to social and political life

At about this same time, scholars were looking at the history of civics education and how during the colonial period informing citizens about the government and creating loyal subjects was the stated purpose of civics. They contended that post-independence this view of civics had not changed. Being loyal to the government in power continues to be an unstated purpose of civics teaching. The texts were never critical of the government. Very often during conversations teachers would ask, "Do you want our view or the governmental view?" They too had imbibed this notion of civics. We were reminded of this in no uncertain terms by a prominent

MLA of our area. He quoted from the panchayat chapter (in one of the books we developed for the Madhya Pradesh government) and told us that we were inciting people to revolt against elected representatives. He was talking about a story we had included of a protest in front of an MLA's house regarding a water problem.

Years later during the discussions on NCF 2005 we strongly supported the move to change the nomenclature of civics to a more disciplinary focus and calling it "Social and Political Life". This way understanding democracy in a deeper sense and being an active critical citizen would be a natural objective.

Examining our experience against ideas

It takes time to realize how our ideas around equality operate and also that there are many layers of our experience that need to be peeled to understand it. In the alternative textbooks designed by us we had chapters on the bank and taxes at the class 8 level. In the chapter on taxation there's a section, "What is a fair

way to tax?" As an introduction to this section we often did the following exercise with teachers.

"A group of four friends decided to stay together by contributing money towards the rent of the house. The rent was Rs.2000 per month.

a. How could this be shared among them?

b. We also know that two of them earned 3000 per month and the other two 7000 per month. Is there some way of sharing that each one feels the pinch equally?

c. Which way of sharing would you prefer and why?"

https://www.eklavya.in/pdfs/Books/SSTP/social_studies_8/civics/7%20Taxes.pdf

At one of the teacher training sessions in Indore after we did this exercise, a group of teachers was quite blunt. "We understand what you are getting at but we don't think it should be shared like this. Equality to us means equal amount to be paid by each one. The background does not matter."

It sharply demonstrated that the progressive tax system has really shallow roots. Equality is sought to be perceived as equal amount paid by both the rich and the poor.

Dealing with conflicts

Similarly, our strongly held perceptions are at the heart of the debate on reservations. This part of the Constitution chapter was never easy to discuss. Use of case laws, everyday examples and imaginary situations worked well in most cases but when it came to reservations the heat and tempo were different. https://www.eklavya.in/pdfs/Books/SSTP/social_studies_8/civics/8%20Constitution%20I.pdf

Everyone has experiences in their own families and neighborhood to hold on to their opinions on the issue. It was quite difficult to disengage and talk of the principle of "treating unequals equally". Without this, the logic of reservations based on caste or gender can't be understood. Macro data was effective to show that the overall position of lower castes had not changed substantially and reservations were not being implemented.

On the other hand, it was interesting that the reservation for women at the panchayat level was debated by all teachers with some rigour and many women shared examples from their own experience. They argued for reservation. However, when it came to caste it was usually the dominant view that prevailed, especially among the urban teachers. It was not defended as forcefully as the women's reservation issue. The dalit teachers were few in number and their 'silence' was evident.

It is not always discussions, no matter how good, but creative actions that can speak. This is a story of a rural school teacher who would listen but not talk much during our discussions. One day on a school follow up visit we found that he was coaxing one of the villagers to come in and sit down in the chair in front of him. This teacher was responsible for giving school leaving certificates to the parents when their children left the village school after class 8. He insisted that the father come inside and sit down while he retrieved the certificate from the record files. He made polite conversation all along, enquired about the child and tried to make the fidgety parent comfortable. We didn't understand the import at that moment. Later we realized that this dalit teacher was consciously trying to get lower caste parents to come in and learn to speak with the teacher on equal terms. Sitting on the chair in front of him was a great leap in equality at the village level where people from the lower castes would not enter upper caste homes or sit with them on the same cot. Everyone knew that equality could be practiced in the school space but it requires initiative to do so.

A more complex picture emerged among a small group of KV teachers who were discussing the class 7 chapter on equality in the NCERT Social and Political Life book. There's a story by Om prakash Valmiki (dalit writer and poet) about his school days and the discrimination that was practiced in school and his father's courage to fight it. One of the teachers said that untouchability has been banned and therefore we should not discuss such incidents in a school textbook. Another

teacher intervened to say that caste discrimination is rampant in society and we should discuss this. This conversation was open at a theoretical plane till a teacher said that she had actually faced a disturbing situation in her school. After she completed her lesson she found some children teasing some others saying, "Jhado laga", just as Valmiki was asked to by his teacher. This really disturbed her and she couldn't sleep that night. She did not know how to respond. Then she gathered courage and thought of an idea. She collected many examples of discrimination practiced in that region. After a few days she held a separate class discussing openly these practices and their impact on society.

Conflicts are inherent in the teaching of social science and it is best to meet these openly with creative ideas than to sweep them under the carpet.

It is significant that unlike our first experience with textbooks in Madhya Pradesh, the NCERT books offered very limited interaction with teachers. This has been a great drawback. On the other hand, theoretical issues find greater space in the NCERT chapters.

It is probably time that NCERT finds a fresh way of forming teacher peer groups across schools and through them initiating direct dialogue with ALL teachers instead of the superficial teacher-orientation done by most individual schools.

TP

An "open" path to learning life skills

Asheema Singh

The author is a senior consultant with UNFPA. The life skills enriched study materials were developed during her posting with National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) as Project Coordinator for the UNFPA-NCERT supported Adolescence Education Programme. A strong advocate of unified approach, she uses innovative methods to include critical concerns such as adolescent rights, gender, sexuality, substance abuse, etc. She has conducted skill building workshops for teachers, counsellors and lesson writers. She has published several papers in national and international journals and has contributed to books. She can be reached at asheema.singh@gmail.com.

n his foreword to the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, Prof. Yashpal wrote, "Education is not a physical thing that can be delivered through the post or through a teacher. Fertile and robust education is always created, rooted in the physical and cultural soil of the child, and nourished through interaction with parents, teachers, fellow students and the community."

NCF 2005 notes that educational processes should engage learners in creating knowledge that is relevant to their experiences, promote healthy attitudes and enable them to think critically and respond to real-life situations in positive and responsible ways. In tandem with these recommendations, UNFPA India (United Nations Population Fund) supports the Ministry of Human Resource Development's (MHRD) ambitious Adolescence Education Program (AEP). By building on relevant experiences of young people, the program focuses on enhancing life skills to enable them to tackle real-life situations effectively. National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) was also implementing AEP as part of its distance learning programs. For those who don't know, NIOS is an autonomous institution under MHRD. It provides educational opportunities to individuals who do not enroll in formal secondary schools either due to some constraints or as a matter of choice. Open learners are essentially self-learners with no teachers to guide them on a regular basis. Hence, the self-learning materials in NIOS assume

immense importance and are popularly known as 'teachers in print.' The question in front of us was how do we support life skills development of young people who are not available for a face to face intervention? Curricular integration of life skills seemed like a good option.

Life skills, as defined by WHO, are psycho-social abilities that empower individuals to connect with the self as well as others and develop a healthy lifestyle and positive behaviours. Life skills enable individuals to deal with stress and pressures in life and equip them with the competence to manage challenging situations.

Psycho-social abilities are instrumental in developing physical, mental and social wellbeing and are considered to be essential components of educational objectives. As a matter of fact, life skills are objectives of holistic education.

The 10 core life skills recognized by WHO are
• Self-awareness
• Empathy
• Effective communication
• Interpersonal relationship
• Creative thinking
• Critical thinking
• Problem solving
• Decision making
• Coping with stress
• Coping with emotions

A parallel can be drawn between the objectives of education mentioned in the Delors Commission Report (1993) and life skills. Life skills may be grouped into four objects of education proposed by the Delors Commission (UNESCO 2005). *Learning to know* comprises knowledge and critical thinking, *learning to do* implies practical skills, learning to be is synonymous with personal

skill while *learning to live* is all about social skills (Sengupta, Sinha, Mukhopadhyay 2012).

The critique on formal education is that it has concentrated too much on the cognitive dimension (literacies) rather than on reflective and the psychosocial dimensions. This uni-dimensional education fails to facilitate a holistic development of young people as compassionate, caring and responsible citizens.

A number of researches show that life skills can be systematically acquired and reinforced through non-formal and informal learning settings. This gap in school education is well addressed through initiatives such as adolescence education that aim to respond to developmental concerns of secondary school students and enhance life skills among them.

Considering life skills education as an important value addition to the overall quality of learning, AEP places equal importance on the development of cognitive and life skills. AEP recommends that within a school system, life skills learning needs to be included in all teaching-learning processes including the teaching-learning of scholastic subjects.

Keeping the limitations of the open schooling system in mind, NIOS strongly recommended the integration of life skills within the existing subjects. One of the subjects selected was social science.

Social Science is an area of study that presents a historical
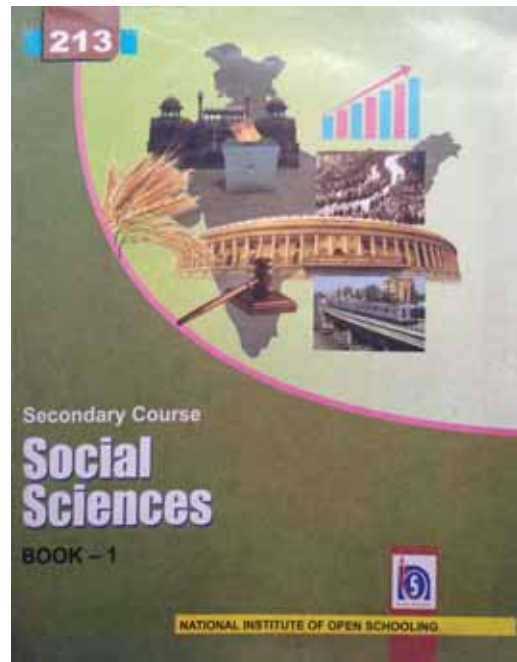
perspective, provides the contextual landscape and informs learners about their rights and responsibilities so that they can meet the challenges of life successfully. In a broad sense, the whole subject revolves around transforming the learner into a good citizen – an important dimension of citizenship education. The broader context weaves in elements of culture and raises awareness and empathy on issues of concern. The integrated study material has been conceptually planned to provide the right focus on areas and issues of concern.

The major components of the NIOS lessons are introduction, objectives, contents, in-text questions, what you have learnt (summary) and terminal exercise. The life skills enriched lessons have added elements like activities and extended learning (Do you know?). The style of writing and delivering the core contents has also been considerably changed. It has been made more experiential and relevant to the learners' real life experiences.

The introductions to the lesson have tried to include content related to life experiences as also to the previously taught content. Using a variety of formats like a conversation between a father and daughter in a lesson on people's participation in the democratic processes, or the singing of the national anthem (in the lesson National Integration and Secularism), or a dialogue between a grandmother and granddaughter (in the lesson Religious and Social Awakening) or a narrative (in the lesson Local Governments and Field Administration) makes the context interesting and relevant. Apart from awareness, introductions provide an opportunity to connect emotionally and generate empathy. They are thus able to build a kind of mental

readiness considered essential for subsequent learning of the content.

The objectives have been framed with a focus on the intended outcomes. The intention was to allow the learners to reflect on higher learning outcomes related to life skills. Employing words such as assess, compare, analyze, evaluate, etc., was an attempt to encourage in learners the use of abilities to deconstruct, synthesize, think critically and solve problems.

The content has been enriched, augmented with real-life experiences and presented in a sequential order that is both logical and psychological. The focus on gender and culture has been maintained throughout. The heads and subheads are organically related and linkages well-established. Inclusion of adolescents as a distinct population group in the chapter, Population: Our Greatest Resource, focuses on their special needs.

Overt adolescent concerns run though all chapters and are a lesson in citizenship education, making learners aware of their past and prevalent practices with a view to making them more responsible. Addition of some relevant content in some specific chapters, viz., Transport and Communication; Population: Our Greatest Resource; Indian National Movement or Religious and Social Awakening in Colonial
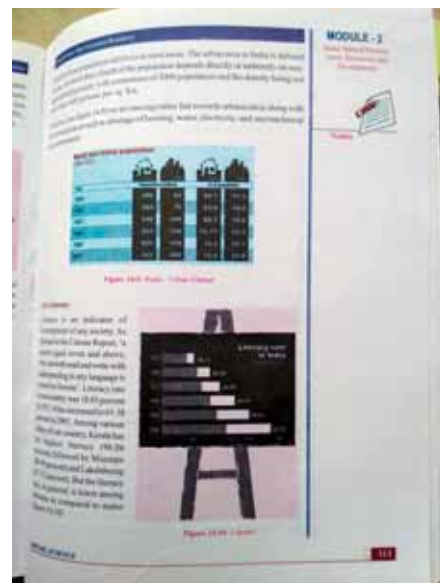
India, tends to connect learners with life experiences, personal observations or anecdotes that make the presentation meaningful.

The life skills enriched study material carries illustrations that are distinct, impressive and pertinent. They engage learners leading to meaningful retention of knowledge and help raise sensitivity and build empathy. The illustrations are well chosen and help make the presentation wholesome and vibrant.

In-text questions play the important role of providing an opportunity to the learners to assess their understanding of the content studied and make mid-lesson corrections. In the enriched study material the

questions are more varied and complex as well demanding the exercise of higher level abilities, viz., analysis and synthesis of information. The questions related to life situations call for reflection involving critical thinking and problem solving.

Activities included only in the new study material are value additions that not only make learning interesting and participatory but also are the pivot for training in life skills. The activities are thoughtfully planned and provide scope for explorations of the new dimensions of the content. They do a wonderful job of affirming and extending knowledge as also provide scope for application of knowledge. Seeking opinions of stakeholders, preparing action plans on issues of importance, writing letters or voicing responses to challenging situations are some activities that will facilitate communication skills, critical thinking, ensure correct understanding of the issues as also provide scope for reflection, introspection, decision-making and negotiation abilities. They offer the possibility of making learning proactive and help to increase awareness and build empathy and self-esteem.

Peace and Security

Try to appreciate the following two conditions and identify which of the two is the true condition of peace and security? Give reasons for your answer:

1. A country ruled by a military dictatorship has everything in order. There appears to be peace everywhere. The ruling group enjoys all privileges. People are poor and deprived of even the basic facilities necessary for a good life. But they silently obey the dictates of the ruling group. There is no protest, no threat to the government. There is adequate security arrangement for the external threat.

2. There is a democratic country which is moving ahead on the path of socioeconomic development. People are enjoying all the basic rights, liberty, equality, justice. They are freely conveying their concerns to the government. Occasionally, there are peaceful protests and demonstrations that are managed by positive response from the government. People face difficulties in their daily life and try to sort out problems. There is absence of constant threat to the safety and security of the people and the nation.

Challenges to Indian Democracy

Anil, a post-graduate student, lives in a joint family. His grandfather has fixed the marriage of one of his sisters who is 13 years old. The groom is 18 years old and is studying in class XII. Neither Anil nor his parents who are officers in the state government are in favour of this decision. But no one is able to assert their opinion, nor does his grandfather consult any one of them. Do you think there is democracy in Anil's family? Which of the following statements do you consider are relevant and which are not relevant in this case and why?

1. The decision with regard to the marriage of his sister at the age of 13 is undesirable, illegal and unethical.

2. The decision has been taken by the head of the family alone without consulting the girl whose life is going to be affected or other members of the family. The decision was taken as is being done traditionally since ages. This indicates that the social condition is undemocratic.

3. The individual behavior of the other members of the family is undemocratic, as they have not expressed their opinion, even though they do not approve of the decision.

Indian National Movement

Imagine you were chosen by the British government as a member of the Cabinet Mission to talk to the members of the Indian National Congress and Muslim League and discuss how to transfer power after independence. Make a list of proposals that you would present before them?

Social Science

Activity 18.2: Have you ever thought of the impact young persons like you can make on the society? Read the following experience of a young person:
Vimala Devi is the 43 year old sarpanch of the village Sundergaon. She has studied only up to sixth class. After she became the sarpanch, she initiated several developmental works, be it construction of roads, drainage system or parks or spreading awareness about agricultural and health facilities. She has also played a major role in resolving cases of domestic violence. As she said, she had never dreamt of becoming a functionary like sarpanch in her male dominated village. But now she is confident of bringing about many positive changes in her village.

In the context of this experience write answers to the following questions:
• Which Constitutional Amendment made it possible for Vimala Devi to do what she did?
• What do you think has been the impact of this Amendment on women's empowerment?
• Write about at least two issues related to your society which bother you.
• Talk to your friends and make a list of various actions you would like to take to positively impact the society you live in.

Do you know and ponder facts are interesting ways to weave in relevant important information. Such historically and culturally significant insertions help to clarify knowledge, build a broad framework and a wider perspective. They thus provide scope for extended learning in an interesting and self-explanatory manner.

Environmental degradation and disaster management

Environmental degradation is one of the 10 threats officially cautioned by the High Level Threat Panel of the United Nations. The World Resources Institute (WRI), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank made public an important report on health and the environment worldwide on May 1, 1998.

Constitutional values and political system in India

The Constituent Assembly began to prepare the Constitution on 9 December, 1946. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was elected as its President on 11 December, 1946. Dr. Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee. The Constituent Assembly met for 166 days, spread over a period of 2 years, 11 months and 18 days. The making of the Constitution was completed on 26 November, 1949 when the Constituent Assembly adopted the Draft Constitution of India.

What you have learnt in the integrated study material largely contains all the essential ideas and concepts and is a ready reference for exams.

Terminal questions in the enriched study material are varied, with a focus on higher learning outcomes. Interesting questions like asking learners to list problems faced by them during a journey, presenting quotes of freedom fighters and asking learners to respond as an Indian citizen, describing the situation of a widow and thinking of ways a sarpanch can ensure education of her children or asking their viewpoints on electoral reforms are some important questions that would make learners use their abilities to analyze, synthesize and generalize. Preparation of an action plan and project provide scope for inquiry and help to strengthen learners' communication skills as also make them more sensitive to local environs and issues.

As a subject social science includes content that provides learners with a perspective that is crucial for making them aware of issues and concerns, rights, duties, responsibilities and challenges of their lives as citizens. Citizenship education and cultural context are thus implicit. The material is gender sensitive and there has been a conscious effort to make it inclusive as well. The attempt to build life skills is apparent in all its components; be it content presentation, where narratives, conversations and dialogue involve learners in critical thinking and bring awareness that is important for building empathy, suitable illustrations related to cultural content, activities that involve learners and encourage them to inquire, probe and synthesize knowledge with a direct focus on training of life skills, or better framed in-text questions and terminal exercises that focus and try to assess higher level learning outcomes.

Active engagement involves enquiry, exploration, questioning, debates, application and reflection, leading to theory building and creation of ideas/positions. (NCF 2005 pg 17-18)

In pursuance of this goal the materials encourage learners to take ownership of their learning. NIOS life skills enriched study materials have attempted to provide opportunities to the
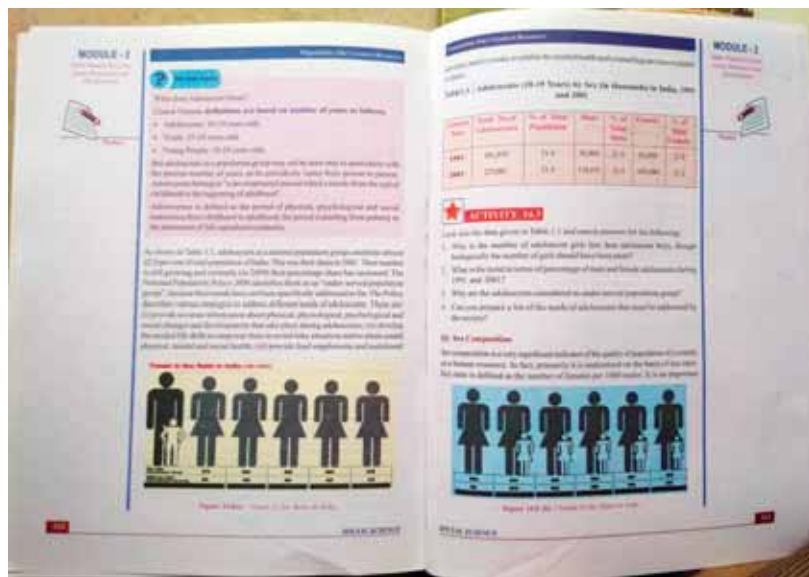
Constitutional values and political system in India

Given below is the recorded conversation between a Saudi Arabian citizen and an Indian. The points made by the Saudi Arabian are given below, whereas the replies by the Indian could not be recorded and hence have been left blank. On the basis of what you have read in this lesson and your general knowledge, complete the conversation with relevant replies ('SA' stands for the Saudi Arabian and I stands for the Indian).

SA: Our country is ruled by a hereditary King. We cannot change him. So, we have a monarchial form of government.

I: ....

SA: We, in Saudi Arabia do not have any such system as yours, because we have no political parties. There are no elections and the people do not have any say in the formation of the government. So much so that even media cannot report any thing that the King does not like.

I: ....

SA: In our country, there is only one religion. Hence, there is no freedom of religion. Every citizen is required to be Muslim.

I: ....

SA: Yes, Non-Muslims are allowed to follow their own religion but only privately and not in public.

I: ....

SA: In my country, there is discrimination on the basis of sex. Women are not considered equal to men. They are subjected to many public restrictions. So much so that testimony of one man is considered equal to that of two women.

I: ....

learners to question, inquire, debate, reflect, and arrive at concepts or create new ideas leading to life skills empowerment. The subject is replete with opportunities to exercise core life skills in a highly contextualized manner. The activities are in sync with the content and life skills are chosen with their relativity to the specific subject. Each activity encourages the learner to question preconceived notions and restructure ideas enabling the learner to construct knowledge. It is expected that learners will learn to exercise life skills in their day-to-day life while practicing these activities.

Note: You can access the social science material developed by NIOS at http://www.nios.ac.in/online-course-material/secondary-courses/Social-Science-(213)-Syllabus.aspx.

Debating democracy

Suhas Palshikar

The author taught political science at the Savitribai Phule Pune University and is currently chief editor of *Studies in Indian Politics*. He was also one of two chief advisers for political science textbooks of NCERT for class 9-12 (2005-07). He can be reached at suhaspalshikar@gmail.com.

Democracy is a widely accepted form of government today. The 20th century witnessed the large-scale expansion of democracy across different parts of the globe. Even those governments that are criticized for being non-democratic try to portray themselves as democratic. Many international organizations and academics try to examine claims of being democratic by checking whether various key aspects of democracy are actually operational in a given country. These checklists are not entirely flawless, but they do give us some idea about the extent of truth when a government or country claim they are democratic. Freedom House is one such famous agency that keeps track of various indicators of democracy in various countries (https://freedomhouse.org/). Another and somewhat better resource for a similar exercise is the World Democracy Audit (http://www.worldaudit.org/democracy.htm). A network of political scientists, called Electoral Integrity Project (https://www.electoralintegrityproject.com/), keeps monitoring the genuineness of elections because elections are supposed to be at the core of democratic governments. Using these tools, one can partially solve the difficulty of deciding whether a country is democratic or not. They also, somewhat controversially, rank democracies.

But what exactly are the constitutive elements of democracy? There is consensus that the following four elements constitute the core meaning of democracy: a government elected by all citizens, transparency and accountability in exercise of power, participation in

public affairs, and a spirit of deliberation and dialogue. On the face of it, these four seem to be simple principles but both their meaning and actual implementation are matters of debate.

Take elections for instance. The method of electing representatives is often a matter of debate. No method is perfect and every society has to make a choice of the best suited method that can be put into practice with relative ease. Very broadly, the debate is between various types of 'proportional' representation methods and the simple plurality system (which India has adopted). Besides this debate on methods, a more fundamental debate concerns the meaning of elections. Those who believe that the principle of popular sovereignty is fundamental, seek to ensure that elected representatives are continuously kept under control by the voters through mechanisms such as referendum and recall. On the other hand, those who believe that legislatures as bodies representing the people are embodiment of popular sovereignty, insist that representatives are not mere delegates and therefore, they must have the power to act in their own wisdom, once elected.

Similarly, democracy consists of the idea of accountability of those who exercise power. But how accountability can be ensured is a matter of detail and differences arise on the issue of actual mechanism for effectively ensuring accountability. In particular, decision-making and actual implementation of rules is a continuous process often requiring some space for discretion to the persons exercising power. If they are continually bound by requirements of transparency and accountability, it is argued that governance may become impossible. So, the issues of extent and method of transparency become debatable.

Both the above areas of debate overlap with the third area – involving the principle of participation. Many supporters of democracy adhere to the literal meaning implied in the term, i.e., rule by people and seek to insert as many avenues for citizen engagement as possible. They often hark back to the idea of 'direct democracy' or city states where all citizens were supposed to be equal participants in decision-making. Their critics would point out that direct democracy is a myth or at least an impossibility today. The political units today are too large – the country as a whole or even a city – to allow citizen participation in all decision-making. In fact, it is argued that the idea of representation has evolved precisely to overcome this problem. Therefore, democracy needs choice of the right kind of representatives, effective checks on representatives and various mechanisms of citizen participation at

Illustrations: Ramya Ramakrishnan

local levels. In India for instance, under the 73rd amendment to the Constitution, a provision for gram sabha is made, whereby all villagers can participate in the deliberations about the functioning of the village council. The trouble, however is that once electoral representation is institutionalized, citizens tend to avoid participating in public affairs on a regular basis and elected representatives also discourage active participation of citizens. So, it becomes a moot issue to determine the scope of citizen participation and then to encourage citizens to participate.

As the above discussion shows, there would be some minimum conditions that democracy requires but democracy also means continuously expanding the requirements. Even the scope of democracy is a matter of debate. The most common discussions of democracy often confine themselves to government and politics. But many democrats argue that democracy need not be restricted to only institutions of government. All organizations and institutions need to be democratic in their functioning. Moreover, democracy is not only about how politics is conducted; all areas of human activity need to be democratic. Thus, we often refer to a democratic family or 'democracy' in the classroom and so on. Scholars overcome this hurdle by differentiating between the minimalist idea of democracy and maximalist idea of democracy. If a society fulfills the most minimum conditions such as regular and open elections, such a situation would constitute the democratic minimum. From there, every society should strive for expanding democracy and aim at the maximum. According to this view, there is nothing like being fully democratic,

because the boundaries of being democratic would continuously keep expanding.

But once these minimum conditions of democracy are met, the real uphill task of consolidating democracy begins. Creating a minimalist democracy is comparatively easy. While theorists keep debating about the nuances of the meaning of democracy, the functioning of democracy poses us with many riddles. As democracy relies on electoral victories, it gets converted into mere numeric strength. It is forgotten that majority is only one mechanism of arriving at decisions, and the core of democracy is deliberation, negotiation and even compromise. The capacity to negotiate and deliberate should not be drowned under the noise of numbers. Mere emphasis on numbers gives way to an anarchic articulation of vigilantism by protectors of various causes, rejecting the idea of rule of law. Both a cause and an effect of this is the all-round corrosion of institutions. While successful democracies require an internal balance among various institutions, actual democracies witness

either institutional excesses or institutional failures. In this backdrop, groups advocating strong arm tactics and militant solutions tend to easily influence the people and governments and political parties also tend to succumb to these pressures and adopt slogans, programmes and policies that are popular for their immediate appeal. It is observed by many scholars that at the current juncture, the world over, democracies are becoming more and more populist. Populism shuns public reason and invokes raw emotions and a craving for direct action even if the actions are not exactly democratic. In other words, the actual practice of democracy is fraught with contradictory possibilities.

Over and above these almost routine difficulties that democracies face, two more striking challenges deserve critical attention. One challenge is common to any society striving to consolidate democracy. Another is a challenge specifically faced by societies with internal diversity.

The first challenge was famously pointed out in the Indian context by Dr Ambedkar speaking during

the last sitting of the Constituent Assembly of India. He warned that a system of political equality in the backdrop of acute socio-economic inequality is bound to be a challenge. As he pointed out, the Constitution recognizes that the worth of every individual citizen is the same. But Indian society consisted of (and continues to have) deep inequalities in the social and economic sphere. This situation can defeat democracy. This reminder poses a troubling question: does this mean that establishing democratic government should be postponed till social and economic equality is achieved? Dr Ambedkar certainly did not mean this. Instead, he exhorted Indians to handle social inequality on an urgent basis. So, the lesson is that establishment of democratic form of government must accompany a resolve to reduce social inequalities. But this is a complex challenge. Critics of democracy, especially, the Marxists, argue that without social equality, democracy is only a façade. If we ignore this criticism, we lose sight of the fact that rich and socially influential people often win elections and control policies. But if we accept the criticism, at least in today's societies, democracy would appear an impossible goal. Let us take the Indian example. In 1950, could India postpone the adoption of democratic form of government on the ground of socio-economic inequalities? While the answer to this question can only be in the negative, is it not true that even after almost seven decades, India's democracy has not been able to remove caste inequalities and a wide gap between the rich and poor? This example shows the complexity of the challenge that democracy faces.

There is another challenge unique to societies with internal diversity. Many western democracies evolved in a context of relative homogeneity. They emerged in societies having a common language or common religion, etc. But when societies with internal diversity adopt democracy, they have to tackle the issues of power sharing and mutual accommodation. Even in Europe this challenge is present. Switzerland or Belgium are examples of this challenge and the more recent case of Spain too, is instructive in this regard. While pre-1971 Pakistan failed to accommodate diversity, Sri Lanka experienced civil war – like situation because of its failure to handle diversity. When democracy emerges in large societies with complex diversities, this challenge assumes more serious proportions. India is a case in point. The burden on democracy becomes more complicated in such situations.

On the one hand, democracy tends to become majoritarian, wherein one relatively larger group (linguistic, religious or ethnic) claims that its numerical strength entitles it to get special attention or powers. This is called as majoritarianism. On the other hand, there is a possibility that if all social, ethnic groups are treated as separate units claiming a share in power, then democracy merely becomes a playground for community-based negotiations rather than an unfolding of public reason and pursuit of common good. Each community claims autonomy and separate existence and in the end, democracy is understood as continuous balancing of the demands of different communities. Rather than pursuing a common agenda,

this situation often culminates in consolidating identities, constructing symbols and creating boundaries made from cultural universes.

If we examine India's democracy in the framework of these riddles and challenges, what do we find? In the past seven decades, elections have become more and more legitimate and free; participation in elections is steadily increasing and various sections of the society have gained confidence to agitate against the government for their demands. Yet, our 'democratic republic' suffers from multiple inabilities including institutional failures. The idea of freedom of expression is not fully accepted in practice. Demands by almost every social section often lack in legitimacy in the eyes of others and therefore, negotiations and compromises are becoming more and more difficult to arrive at. So, the key problem is about foreclosing the possibility of debate because we are unwilling to accept that the democratic republic is the common property of all citizens.

Obviously, republics are not made in heaven nor do they always grow out of readymade social homogeneity. In fact, the creation of India's democratic republic indeed was an audacious attempt because of the many social schisms. But the audacity shown by the founding fathers in creating democracy needs to be matched by the sustained collective effort to consolidate democracy. Looking back, one fears that there has been a grievous mismatch between the ambitions of the founding fathers and the will and actions of the citizens. **TP**

The State and us

Ashwini Kulkarni

The author has more than 20 years of experience in the development sector. She is currently director at Pragati Abhiyan, an NGO that works in the terrain of advocacy, transparency and governance with reference to implementation of MNREGA Act. She is also one of the founding members of We, The People Abhiyan. She can be reached at pragati.abhiyan@gmail.com.

We have often seen people approach their elected representatives, a corporator or MLA, with requests to get some work done. Invariably these will be works involving some government department or the other. It could be personal work, like getting a license or a loan approved or public work like getting roads or street lights repaired. While it is good to meet with our elected representatives, is this the best way to get our work with government offices done?

Why do people feel the need to approach elected representatives? Is it that they find them more accessible than visiting government offices? Or it is simply that they don't really know where to go to solve a particular problem? Or do they believe that their work will get done sooner and without any hassles if they meet the MLA? So, does this mean that people feel powerless when interacting with government offices?

We as citizens are neither just spectators nor only voters. We are the makers of this nation. We not only vote and form governments but the way we interact with the institutions of the State builds those institutions.

State is an abstract concept that comes alive through its institutions. The forms and functions of these institutions, the way they interact with each other and

Illustration: Shilpy Lather

with people at large defines the State's contours.

Our Constitution has laid down the basic values that the government and citizens must follow. It clearly states the principles of governing the nation. As citizens we can form associations and freely critique the functioning of the government and engage with it to improve its functioning.

In recent times, it was the efforts of various citizens' groups that made the Right to Information Act possible. Because of this law, now any of us can access most government documents. This transparency has given people a tool to interact with the government, and the government is now more accountable to its citizens. Such efforts are significant steps in strengthening our democracy.

A graduate student studying in a town, casually looked through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act website. He looked at the works going on in his village and the list of labourers working in his village. He was surprised to see some names he knew did not work in his village. Intrigued, he sought documents under the Right to Information Act. With these documents he lodged a complaint and requested for an enquiry. Even though the student was not a beneficiary, the Act allowed him access all relevant documents and also to file a complaint. This was possible because the government is accountable to ALL its citizens. The relationship of the citizens with the government is not confined to that of a beneficiary or a tax payer alone. The most significant aspect of this example is that a student claimed his power of being a citizen and questioned the 'mighty' apparatus of the government.

It is through its institutions that the government and its citizens interact. Of course, there is also the fourth estate. Media is meant to be the voice of the citizens in a democracy. Using the media is another means to reach the decision-makers in the government.

But when we think about our days in school, were we aware of our roles as citizens? Can this be taught or do we learn what we can do as citizens only through experience? When students get scholarships, are they aware why and how they are entitled to it? When they get their textbooks at subsidized prices, are they aware why and how this came about? If students do not have adequate resources in their neighborhood for recreational activities, do they know that it is part of the government's mandate to provide such facilities? Have they heard of Right to Education? With such questions the teacher can help her students start thinking about themselves as citizens and their role in the society.

As they talk and discuss, students will come across problems in their community, neighbouhood. For instance, lack of adequate drinking water. Why is this so? Who is responsible for providing drinking water? Is it the company that provides bottled water or the same source that provides water to their homes? From here the teacher can move to talking about municipal corporations (for the urban areas) and how we can approach them to solve such civic problems. Exploring a problem for solutions and finding the authority to tackle the problem is an exercise in active citizenship. Taking up such real life examples with students is probably the only way to evolve as active citizens.

We are privileged to have a Constitution that gives us democracy, universal franchise, institutions with proper checks and balances, which makes social security possible for the marginalized and disadvantaged sections of the society. Hence, it is our prime duty to uphold the values and vision of the Constitution to strengthen the idea of India.

No democracy for city-dwellers?

Milind Bokil

The author is a sociologist and Marathi writer from Pune. He was involved in the 'Sampoorna Kranti' movement led by Jayprakash Narayan in the 70s. He is intricately connected with education – mostly non-formal. He has done work on the educational issues of migrant children, especially from policy and program point of view. He has been writing fiction and non-fiction in Marathi and has published more than a dozen books. His novel *Shala* was made into a movie (in Marathi) in 2012 and won the National Award.

The most common feeling among city-dwellers today is that of helplessness. Whether you live in a big metropolitan city, in a district town or in a small municipal town, the basic sense is that you don't have any control over the things happening in your surroundings. Gutters leak, roads are excavated, footpaths don't exist, manholes are open, parking is undisciplined, billboards and flexes abound, amplifiers deafen the ears, dustbins overflow, rubbish is scattered on the streets and so on and so forth. Conscientious citizens are deeply perturbed and anguished over the state of their cities. But what is the solution? Make a complaint to the ward office? Write a mail to the municipal commissioner? Or sit at the door of the councillor? Whatever you do the ultimate experience is that of frustration and alienation from civic affairs.

Illustrations: Boopathy Srinivasan

This situation occurs because we do not have control over the governance of our cities. As citizens we are allowed to elect our government but we are not allowed to govern it. We follow a representative system of democracy in which political powers are vested with the representatives. We elect the representatives, every five years, and are asked to sit back, toil and suffer. The representatives mostly belong to political parties and follow the whims, wishes and fancies of their political bosses. Of course, they have their own agenda of garnering money for the next elections. Although people elect them they are not the 'people's representatives'.

Is the representative system of democracy the only type of governance? No. Not since the 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution. The Indian Constitution, when it was adopted in 1950, heralded the parliamentary, representative system of democracy both at the central and state levels. Although a figure like Mahatma Gandhi was striving throughout his life for 'Swaraj', i.e., self-rule of citizens, his ideas had found scant reference in the 1950 version of the Constitution. This error was partially rectified in 1992 (after 45 years of independence!) when the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendment acts were passed by our Parliament. Prior to that, the idea of local self-governance (popularly called as panchayati raj) was instituted in some states like Maharashtra and Gujarat but it had not received the constitutional mandate.

As we know, the 73rd Amendment Act is for rural areas and the 74th Act is for urban areas. Ideally, both the Acts should have had the same scope and content. However, this has not been so. The 73rd Amendment has been far more progressive and empowering than the 74th Amendment. This has happened because it was Mahatma Gandhi who was the champion of 'Gram-Swaraj'. There was no such champion for 'Nagar-Swaraj'. Hence, the kinds of provisions that are made in the 73rd Act are not there in the 74th Act. This will be evident from even a cursory glance at the statement of objects and reasons cited in each of the Acts. While the 73rd Act (drawing strength from the directive principles enshrined in Article 40 of the Constitution) clearly talks about imparting certainty, continuity and strength to panchayati raj institutions, the 74th Act is content only in removing the inadequacies of urban local bodies. This is further evident from the fact that under the 73rd Act, the gram sabha – the assembly of all the voters in the village – has been given far-reaching powers; similar kind of institution has not been thought or proposed in the 74th Act. The 74th Act weakly proposes a 'ward committee' but it is again a committee under the chairmanship of the ward councillor. It is for the whole ward. It is not on par with the gram sabha and does not allow direct participation of the citizens (interested readers may glance at the texts of the Acts easily available on the Internet).

In rural areas, the 73rd Amendment Act has brought in considerable dynamism. Apart from the fact that women's and weaker sections' participation in governance has increased (due to mandatory reservations), the basic notion that the assembly of the people is superior to the representatives (sarpanch and the panchayat) has been extremely significant. As mentioned earlier, for a long time we were grappling with the question as to who would rule over the representatives. For rural India the answer has been given - it is the 'people' who will rule the rulers. An institutional arrangement of gram sabha has been sanctified for people to do so. There have been some examples like the tribal village of Mendha-Lekha in the Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, which has shown how direct, participatory democracy, based on the principle of consensus decision-making (rather than the rule of the majority) can do wonders to the social and economic life of the community. The slogan given by Mendha-Lekha is very interesting:

'Our Government in Delhi and Mumbai
We the Government in our village'.*

This slogan (although given before the 1992 Act) correctly captures the aspiration of the Indian Constitution. We need both: a representative government to run the affairs at the higher levels and local self-governance to run the affairs at the community level.

Instead of making due constitutional amendments and bringing the urban legislation on par with the rural one, what has been subsequently put forth is the 'Model Nagar Raj Bill'. The Bill had been proposed by the central government in 2008 and the states have been asked either to enact a separate law or make amendments to the existing municipal laws.

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*The story of Mendha can be read in Hindi. Bokil, Milind. 2015. **Kahani Mendha Gav Ki**. National Book Trust, New Delhi. The book can be ordered online from NBT.

One merit of the Nagar Raj Bill, over the 74th Amendment Act, is that it proposes 'area sabha' as the basic unit of decision-making. This is akin to the gram sabha in rural areas. It has been proposed that an assembly of all the voters at the level of a polling booth be formed and it should take the necessary decisions applicable for that locality. This is a very good suggestion because a polling booth generally consists of one thousand voters. It could ideally form a community. What is important in governance is that the unit of decision-making should be as small as possible so that it becomes truly participatory. In the Nagar Raj Bill this is an improvement over the concept of 'ward committee' as stipulated under the 74th Act. The committee again becomes a 'committee of representatives' and loses the participatory potential. A sabha or assembly is truly a people's forum which is the basic and superior-most unit of governance.

Although the Nagar Raj Bill has been flaunted as India's 'community participation law', it has actually come about as a mandatory reform to receive funds under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). The pressure has actually come from the World Bank, an important donor of JNNURM. The Bank wanted to improve the accountability of urban governance so that the funds were properly utilized. So long as the JNNURM carrot was being dangled, state governments made a farce of propagating the Bill but in reality none of the states has passed the Bill. As usual, there is no political will.

So what is there for the citizens to do? On the one hand, those of us who have flair and inclination for policy-advocacy should try to bring about this necessary legislative change. Political parties need to be pressurized into committing this as part of their political manifesto. The state governments should be persuaded to table the bill in their respective assemblies and carry out public discussion in order to enact the legislation as early as possible.

But the process that is most important and the one for which no external sanction is required is of organizing the community on this principle. Nobody prevents us from forming our own area sabhas. We could identify ourselves in small communities (a mohalla, colony, housing society or even a street) and form the general assembly where all the adult dwellers could be the members. We could also create 'resident welfare associations' or 'citizens groups'. The usual fear in the minds of middle-class urban residents is that if people gather together they will quarrel and no decision will be taken. Hence, we have to create representatives and let them manage. This fear is not unfounded as it is born out of previous experience. However, if we really want to break the impasse caused by representative democracy we will have to get over this apprehension and make a beginning. We have not done sufficient experimentation in this regard. Experience in rural areas shows that initially people quarrel, disagree and consensus is difficult to achieve but as the process moves forward people do shed their differences, learn to live with differing opinions, begin to trust each other and common good is achieved. Gregariousness is a basic human drive. If simple rural folk can do it, why not educated, enlightened urban citizens? For this to happen we need to harbor community feelings. As city dwellers we live individual, atomistic, isolated lives. Our helplessness stems from this condition. We need to believe that we also have a community existence and our community is our family. We can start with simple, secular activities like sports, cultural events, get-togethers and so on. Many housing societies do it. From these steps, we need to move forward to the political step, i.e., forming the area sabha. Ultimately, it is the politics that is important. But we need people's politics and not party politics. That makes the difference.

This is an agenda not just for thinking but actually putting into practice. As Mahatma Gandhi had said during the Salt Satyagraha – '*Kar Ke Dekho*'. Do it, don't just keep thinking and then see what happens! TP

How laws are made

Trina Roy

The author is Program Officer at PRS Legislative Research. She handles media outreach and civil society engagement. She can be reached at trina@prsindia.org.

In the 2014 general elections, 2.31 per cent voters were first time voters. In the 2019 elections, it is expected that the share will grow. About 13.3 per cent first time voters will be eligible to cast their vote in the 2019 general election.

Given this context, the need to reform and change our approach to civic education gains prominence. Civic education in schools is foundational to citizenship training. It is at the core of building a nation of engaged and well-informed citizens.

The current curriculum in schools is focused on a theoretical understanding of the institutions of our democracy — the Parliament, Executive and Judiciary. For instance, the chapter on Parliament details its composition, the difference between Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, the functions of the Speaker, among other such things. While this gives students a dry, theoretical understanding of the institutions, aspects such as the role and significance of these institutions and public offices in the larger scheme of our democracy are missing.

It is important to bear in mind that governance institutions are constantly evolving. An understanding of them as taught in the curriculum must ensure this dynamism. A 'beyond the classroom' method of civic education goes a long way to make students curious and question developments unfolding around them. With increased exposure to news and current affairs

today, a strong underpinning of good civic education equips students to weigh in on issues, shape better nuanced opinion, frame reasoned arguments and make better choices.

At PRS Legislative Research it is our aim to make the Parliament and state legislatures more open to the people they represent. It is through free and transparent access to information that a citizen is empowered to play an active role in the democratic process. Our work is based on the simple premise that elected representatives are mandated to fulfil a constitutional duty, and as citizens it is also our duty to hold them rightfully accountable to it.

The Parliament, as the highest law making body, bears significant influence on every realm of the society. Laws framed in the Parliament are on a range of issues. Whether it is access to education or data protection, legislation once passed by the Parliament regulates diverse aspects of our lives. As responsible citizens it is imperative that we be aware of them. This interest towards understanding laws must be inculcated in schools. Taking a step further, to appreciate a piece of legislation, a foundational knowledge of the background process is also useful. Currently, the curriculum includes a bookish understanding of a standardized procedure of 'first reading', 'second reading' and 'third reading' to trace the journey of a bill becoming an Act. In practice, however, procedure departs from this. It includes detailed scrutiny, consultation, cross party consensus building and at length deliberation on the floor of the House. An excellent example of the legislative process playing out in its entirety was the passage of the constitutional amendment enabling the new Goods and Services Tax (GST). Walking students through such live examples gives a beyond the classroom perspective of theory translating into real world application. It also adds to their understanding of how they as active citizens in the future can contribute and engage with the process.

Our efforts are directed at breaking down these complexities in a way that they can be effectively adapted for teaching purposes. A summary of every bill in Parliament is made available on our website. It captures the essentials of every proposed law and is aimed at giving the citizen an idea of what the bill proposes to do. In addition, PRS produces short engaging videos, suitable for a young audience who engage better with video rather than textual content. Our videos simplify complex procedural intricacies. Videos on how a bill becomes a law, how the budget is passed are some such examples that can supplement textbook teaching.

Moving away from the curriculum, it is important that the civic education class provides an opportunity for the youth to think about their future role of being active citizens. One of the key challenges that the Indian political system struggles with is our perception of politicians and their role. A clear understanding of the duties of their elected representative across levels of

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The Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, 2017

12,131 views

governance like the centre, state and municipalities or panchayats enables students to make better sense of every day politics. Whether a member of parliament is responsible for construction of good roads or whether he should be making good laws is a question that often confuses most voters. It is in this regard that the curriculum should evolve to train students with knowledge, skills and understanding which prepare them to be informed citizens. It is important to inculcate a sense among the students about the political process. This would allow them to engage with and hold their leaders accountable.

An effective tool that allows citizens to easily get information about the work done by their parliamentarians is the MP track application available on our website. It provides details about parliamentary interventions of MPs including their attendance, participation in debates, bills piloted and questions asked. It gives an insight into the work done by MPs in the Parliament — what are the issues they raise? What do they question the government on? Which debates

did they participate in? What are the laws they want to change or push for in their individual capacity? The information aims to give citizens a better idea of the participation of their representatives.

Introducing students to the tool and encouraging them to regularly track their MPs through this tool increases their interest in what's shaping the country. They become direct stakeholders of the democratic process which is not only restricted to voting. The tool also includes video clippings of parliamentary speeches which are a great resource for understanding varying opinions on a particular issue. Departing from the sensationalist coverage of the Parliament by news agencies that can be disenchanting for young citizens, videos of parliamentarians transacting legislative business can be effective to reinstate faith in democratic institutions. Finally, by organizing initiatives such as mock parliaments, visits to legislatures or the Parliament, interactions with elected MPs and MLAs makes learning more experiential and fun.

Internationally civic education through such experiential experiences has been popular. The UK Parliament, for instance, has a specific education service that focuses on this aspect. Modules and teacher resources are made available to support teachers to help them engage their students across the curriculum in learning about democracy. Interactive tools, videos, online workshops are easily accessible. Some of these initiatives can be adopted and adapted to our Indian context to strengthen our curriculum.

Electoral literacy clubs: preparing future voters of India

Simran Sachdeva

The author is a Communications Executive with the Election Commission of India working under its Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program. She has worked on the Electoral Literacy Clubs for over a year and has been closely associated with the development of its various resources. She can be reached at simransachdeva95@gmail.com.

Studies suggest that participation in the first one or two elections of an elector's lifetime helps to inculcate the habit of voting and makes participation in future elections more likely. The practice of citizenship development for electoral participation is a vital investment in the future of democracy. It is necessary to focus on the civic education of the younger generation leading to robust electoral participation. Keeping this rationale in view, the Election Commission of India (ECI) took a landmark step towards the cause of electoral literacy with its initiative – *'Mainstreaming of Electoral Literacy through Educational Institutions, Organizations and Communities in India'*, under its Systematic Voters' Education & Electoral Participation (SVEEP) Programme.

The entire project revolves around keeping voter education relevant and practical through a host of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular methods for the young and future voters. This year, ECI committed its efforts towards the inclusion of electoral literacy through

ELECTORAL LITERACY CLUB

No Voter to be Left Behind

the medium of Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) in educational institutions.

Focused on young citizens, especially in the age group of 14-17, the future voters as we call them, ELCs in schools aim to serve as a long-term, sustainable solution to the humongous task of spreading voter education in a country of 1.2 billion people. ELCs are proposed to be established in 0.2 million secondary and higher secondary schools and 25 thousand colleges/universities. In rural communities, *Chunav Pathshalas*, at the polling station level, will target those falling outside the formal education system. Currently, the project is in its execution phase.

During the project's preparation phase, an important working group activity was undertaken in the month of May 2017. Members of national and state level education boards, school teachers and university professors participated in this activity where the civic studies course books from grades 6 to 10 were analyzed along with study material from NIOS to assess the electoral literacy components in the existing curricula. It was found that while students are taught about democracy and functioning of the government, there is little content on the development of active electoral participation. For instance, no information is available about something as basic as the registration/enrolment process of the voters.

After comprehensive rounds of discussion with key stakeholders, important messages were listed out besides learning outcomes that were aimed at through ELCs. Guided by these learning outcomes, games and activities

were developed for students of Class IX, X, XI, XII and for *Chunav Pathshala* members. This resource development phase continued for about six months and was followed by three rounds of field trials in schools and communities in Delhi and NCR (National Capital Region). It was realized that the effectiveness of any activity depended on the persons convening the ELC, their language and communication skills, and their correct understanding of the messages.

On December 19 & 20, 2017, ECI organized a two day workshop for a final review of the tools prepared for the Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs). Forty participants that included Chief Electoral Officers, master trainers, representatives from civil society organizations, educators from schools and colleges as well as development communicators from different corners of the nation were invited to further refine the learning tools, check their viability and deliberate on an effective roll-out plan to set up the ELCs. Around 30 learning tools were reviewed by the participants in the workshop.

After the final review, a total of seven comprehensive resource guides were created for the

ELC project. These included ELC resource guides for classes IX through XII, colleges and communities, as well as the common handbook for the ELCs.

Along with these resource guides, an ELC game kit consisting of five floor games has also been developed. The resource guides and games have been developed in Hindi and English. States shall translate the content in their regional languages and adapt them to suit regional and local sensibilities.

The resource guides and floor games can be accessed at http://ecisveep.nic.in/elc.aspx.

A major component of the project in its execution phase was the training of the ELC conveners. Considering the sheer magnitude of the numbers the project is dealing with, devising a training program itself proved to be a challenge. Workshops were conducted for State Level Master Trainers from the 36 states and union territories of the country in four batches of 40-50 participants each, in February-March 2018.

Considering the activity based engagement approach that formed the basis of the ELC project, and the resources

developed, the training was also planned in an activity based manner to engage the trainers rather than following a lecture based format. The vibrant workshop witnessed enthusiastic State Level Master Trainers, who were identified by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of every state, trying out the learning tools themselves and engaging in the various activities. These State Level Master Trainers now hold the responsibility of further training District Level Master Trainers, identified by the District Election Officers, who will then train the specific ELC conveners falling in their respective districts.

The Election Commission of India is also working towards developing a portal where all tools and instructions can be easily accessed by the Master Trainers (MTs) and the portal will provide a discussion forum to the ELC MTs. The portal will also serve as a mechanism for collecting feedback for reviewing the resource tools and updating them.

ELC is indeed one of the most ambitious and challenging projects of the ECI. Well begun is half done, and a good beginning has already been made. An independent evaluation of the project has also been sanctioned by the Commission and evaluation shall be simultaneously carried out so that necessary corrections can be made for successful achievement of the objectives.

Sneak peek into some of the ELC activities

A majority of educators will agree that students grasp the most when learning meets fun. The ELC learning tools have been developed in a manner such that important information, which might seem banal in textbooks, is imparted in engaging ways to young students.

The following are a description of six games out of a total of 30 that have been developed for the ELCs –

1) Nirvachitra

A portmanteau of the words *Nirvachan* and *Chalchitra, Nirvachitra* introduces the electoral process and procedures through an engaging film show or a picture story scroll developed by the ECI. *Nirvachitra* is the first activity proposed for all ELCs to set the tone of the club.

Set in the environment of Class XII students in a school from a rural area, the film *Masti, Dosti aur Matdaan*, covers the basics of voter registration by introducing concepts like democracy and value of a vote as well as talking about the age of eligibility, how to register as a voter, the documents required, etc., through its animated characters. For schools where screening the film is not possible, story scrolls have been developed that send

 हाँ, कोई भी ऐसा दस्तावेज़ जिसमें आपका पता लिखा हो.

out the same message with their characters *Abha* and *Abhay*.

Before the film screening, the convener (teacher) shall have an introductory discussion with the students where their knowledge and views on democracy, voting, etc., are gauged. Post the film/scroll show, students are prompted to recall their first memories of an actual election held in their vicinity irrespective of their parents/guardians/relatives/neighbours' participation and make a poster either on the most important takeaway of the film or on the importance of elections and voting.

2) Card Game
Drawing inspiration from the popular card game UNO, two card games *Vigilant Voter* and *Be the People's Representative* have been developed. Each deck consists of six cards in five colours along with some lucky and unlucky cards to make the game interesting. Each of the six numbered cards carry messages specific to the games. The player who arranges all the six cards in their correct order in a single chosen colour and reads out the messages stated on the cards correctly wins the game.

The *Vigilant Voter* enables the players to play from the perspective of a voter. The six cards break down the entire registration and voting process, right from eligibility till poll day,

into six key messages. The *Be a People's Representative* game lets the players don the role of a contesting candidate and breaks down the candidate's journey in an election to six messages in six cards.

The idea of the card games is that while playing, the students absorb the messages communicated while still enjoying a good game.

3) Build your Ballot
An activity developed specifically for the students of class XI, *Build your Ballot* is aimed at familiarizing the students with EVM (Electronic Voting Machine) and VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail). Through this activity students will make their own ballot paper with dummy candidates and symbols including NOTA.

The game requires 15 students as volunteering candidates of a hypothetical election. The aim is for the entire class to make their own ballot paper. For this purpose a chart paper is used to make the layout of a dummy ballot paper. Fifteen pre-decided symbols denoting state parties, national parties, registered parties and individual candidates are shuffled and randomly allotted one each to every student acting as a candidate.

Following this, the candidates come forward and alphabetically arrange their names on the ballot paper according to actual ECI guidelines. First, the students with state and national party symbols come forward to form category I and write their names alphabetically on the ballot, and stick/draw their symbols against their name. Category II is formed by registered party candidates. Last but not the least, individual

candidates arrange their names on the ballot.

The idea behind building the ballot is for the voters to realize that candidates are arranged on the ballot in an unbiased manner according to set guidelines, and give an idea on where to find the name of the candidate of choice on the ballot.

4) Hopscotch – Matdaan ke Padav
Matdaan ke Padav or Steps to Vote, is a stapu (hopscotch) game designed to familiarize students with the steps of voting. The game is printed on a flex and laid on the ground for students to play. It consists of 10 steps with each step carrying a question.

The player has to hop and stand on one foot throughout the game and will lose if the other foot touches the ground. The player enters the game by standing at the start position and throws a coin inside the first rectangle which is the first step of the game. S/he then reads out the question written inside the

rectangle loudly for all to hear and answers it in either "Yes" or "No". Similarly, the player progresses by throwing the coin in the next rectangle and repeating the process until he/she reachs the tenth and the last rectangle.

The game creates awareness amongst players by asking questions like "Should we check our names in the voters' list before elections?", "Before entering the polling station should we keep our identity proof and voters' slip ready?", "On the EVM, do we have to press a button in front of the name of a candidate we have chosen?"

5) NOTA

NOTA stands for None of the Above. If a voter does not wish to vote for any political representative, s/he can still exercise their franchise by voting for NOTA. This activity, for students of class X, introduces the concept of NOTA to the students in a humorous way and sends out the message that knowing what you do not want is as important as knowing what you want.

This activity uses colourful, visual flashcards. Each flashcard poses a question and offers four answers to the question. The first three options are deliberately funny, silly and incorrect. For example, if the question is, "Which one of the following is a means of transport?" The first three options to this question are a water bottle, a hen and a carpet. The fourth option to every question is NOTA. Thus students choose NOTA as the answer to every question, familiarizing them with the concept in the process.

However, post the flashcard display, the convener brings out one final round where the following question is verbally asked – "Who do you vote for?"

The answers would include:

a. A corrupt politician bribing people to vote in his/her favour.

b. A lazy politician who is inefficient.

c. A politician with criminal charges.

d. None of the Above (NOTA).

The Convener then initiates a group discussion or debate in the class on the topic of NOTA.

Senior secondary schools within every state and district will be identified by the office of the District Election Officer (DEO), schools are being covered under phases. Schools that have not yet been covered under this project and would like to join can write to the office of the DEO of their district and also to the Director, ECI at padma.angmo@eci.gov.in. A separate portal for the ELC is being developed where a facility shall be provided to schools to get registered for the ELC.

The ELC Resource Guides developed individually for class IX, X, XI and XII detail the activities to be conducted with the respective classes in one academic year. Each activity includes an element of summary and recall at the end. Each grade will only spend about four hours on ELC activities in a year, and yet the long-term impact of the club activities will be significant in creating prepared, responsible and informed young voters of India. These aware and educated voters of tomorrow will also be the ones who will act as ambassadors of democracy who will share their knowledge, inform and educate their peers, their family and their community at large. **TP**

Pebbles | Chair
Which of these is a good thing to eat?
Feathers | NOTA

Why we need the rule of law

Vinita Singh

The author is Managing Trustee, We, The People Abhiyan. She can be reached at vinitasinghsns@gmail.com. Visit www.wethepeople.ooo or https://www.facebook.com/WeThePeople to know more about the organization.

Law is not needed because there are bad people in the world. Law is needed because people are people and sometimes they do bad things! Sometimes, they do such bad things that they have to be given some penalty for their bad behaviour.

So simply put, laws define what is 'good' and 'bad'. And they define the penalty for 'bad actions'. But what is critical to understand is that in India, as in most democracies, the definition of 'good' or 'bad' is based on certain universal human values and not on the basis of what one person or group of persons may think is bad or good. These universal human values are written down in the UN Declarations and also in our Constitution. These are the values of liberty, equality, justice and fraternity, backed up with a set of fundamental rights for all people. It is on this basis that laws in India are made.

Further, in our country, the authority of law pervades over everyone – all people and institutions – equally. This is the principle of the rule of law. It implies that every person is subject to the law, including lawmakers, government officials and the judiciary that interprets the law. The system of the rule of law is not dependent on who actually governs the country from time to time. Governments run by different political parties and leaders can come and go, but the rule of law is above all of them. Thus, it is said, "In India, we have rule of law, not rule of men".

This is a simple explanation of the concept of the rule of law. However, for us as educationists, it is

also critical to understand the theoretical application of the rule of law in India[1]. This is explained in different parts of our Constitution.

The principle of the rule of law is set down in the **Preamble** to the Constitution in that it lays down that the core objective of constituting India into a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic is to secure equality, justice, dignity and freedom for all citizens.

Part III of the Constitution lays down the fundamental rights guaranteed to every citizen. These rights are strengthened by Articles 32 and 226 such that any citizen can directly approach the Supreme and High Courts in the case of any violation of their rights.

Thus, the Constitution holds foremost the human rights of all Indian citizens and directs that laws based on these rights will have supremacy over all people including the people who make and adminster the law. This is underlined by **Article 13(1)** which says that any law that is made by the Legislature has to conform with the Constitution or it can be declared invalid.

Article 21 provides further protection against arbitary action by the State.

Article 14 ensures that all citizens are equal and that no person shall be discrimiated against on the basis of sex, religion, race or place of birth.

Finally, the Constitution provides for **separation of powers** between Legislature, Executive and Judiciary such that Judiciary is independent of both the Legislature and Executive.

Successive court judgments have repeatedly emphasized the principle of the rule of law. Listed below are some key judgments that have clarified and highlighted this principle.

In *Chief settlement Commissioner; Punjab vs. Om Prakash*, it was observed by the Supreme Court: "In our constitutional system, the central and most characteristic feature is the concept of rule of law which means, in the present context, the authority of law courts to test all administrative action by the standard of legality. The administrative or executive action that does not meet the standard will be set aside if the aggrieved person brings the matter into notice."

In the case of *Kesavananda Bharati vs. State of Kerala*, the Supreme Court held that the rule of law is an essential part of the basic structure of the Constitution and as such cannot be amended by any Act of Parliament, thereby showing how the law is superior to all other authority of men.

How do we help students understand the rule of law?
A good exercise to

help students understand the concept and need for the rule of law is as follows. This exercise is adapted from the Tragedy of Commons and used to explain interest groups, conflicts and need for the rule of law[2].

Exercise
Ask the participants to stand in a circle. Place different sized coloured paper balls in the centre of the circle. The number of balls should be three times greater than the total number of participants. Instruct the participants that when they are signaled, they have one minute to gather as many balls as they can from the circle. They can also grab the balls gathered by other participants. After a minute, observe that some participants will have collected an armful of balls, others may have not been able to gather any and some may have lost the balls they managed to collect. Ask the participants to show the balls they have collected and use that as the basis for a discussion about the 'tragedy of commons'.

Discussion points
• What happened during the exercise? (Rushing, pushing, grabbing)
• Who gathered a greater number of balls and who did not? How? Why?
• What were you thinking while collecting the balls?
• How does this game relate to day-to-day life?
• Would it have helped if some rules would have been set before the game was played? What kind of rules would have helped?
• What would happen if only one or two people would have made the rules for all?
• What would happen if the rules would apply to only a few people and not all?
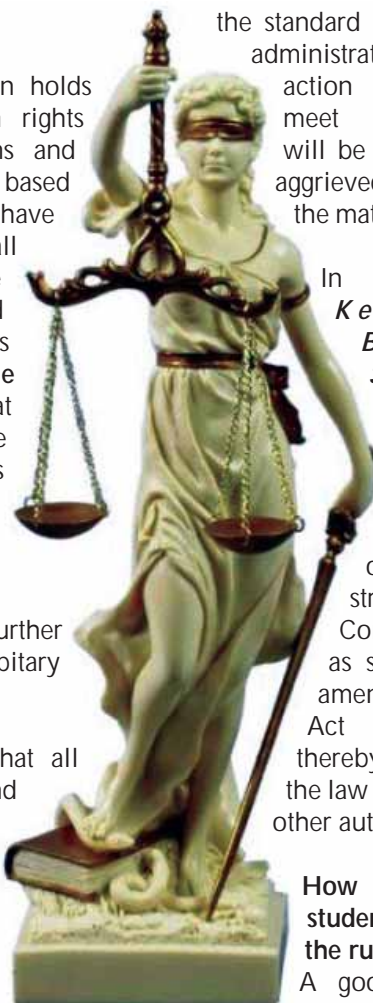
During the discussion, the facilitator can write down some of the rules that the participants have shared. After the discussion is complete, the facilitator can tease out the principles behind the rules e.g., equality, fairness, concern for each other, etc. These principles can be again written down on the board.

Messages

This exercise helps participants understand:

- When there are many people involved in any activity, some people's interests will clash with others' and some people can behave quite badly to serve their own interests.

- Since people can behave out of self-interest, laws cannot be made by one or few people.

- Laws have to be made on principles that are good for all. Those principles are like the principles on which the participants had based their rules. These principles are human values or principles.

- When law is applied to all people equally that system is called the rule of law.

Clarifying certain misconceptions around the rule of law

While it is amply clear then that the rule of law is a core principle of our Constitution, many times there is confusion around it. These misconceptions can be cleared with students through a few examples.

The rule of law and majority opinion

Sometimes the rule of law is confused with the rule of majority. For instance, let us consider this hypothetical case. Suppose all MPs decide that all women in India have to wear bindis. All of them (no exception)

decide to pass such a law in Parliament. Will such a law be passed? NO. Because even if this proposal has full majority, it is against the constitutional principles of equality and freedom and therefore the rule of law will prevail, not the rule of majority.

Let us look at another hypothetical case. Let us assume that a rich and popular film personality has committed a crime. Then a poll is taken in the country and 90 per cent people vote that they believe he/she is innocent and all criminal charges against him/her should be dropped. Can the courts accept this popular view? NO. Because it is against principle of equality before law and therefore the rule of law will prevail, not the rule of majority.

The rule of law and community opinion

Sometimes the rule of law is confused with community opinion. For instance, let us look at a case where one member of a village/society decides to eat meat. All members of the village/society are vegetarian and they ask him to stop eating meat or they say they will stop talking to him. Can they do this? YES. Because all members have the freedom to talk to whoever they want to or not talk to whoever they don't want to. But can they make him stop eating meat or ask him to leave the village or society? NO. Because it goes against the constitutional principle of freedom of that person to eat what he wants to eat and this principle applies to all people equally.

The rule of law and personal opinion

Sometimes the rule of law is confused with personal opinion. Let's take another

example. Suppose a person's father is opposed to marrying any members of the family to people outside their religion. His personal opinion is that marrying outside their own religion is not right for various reasons. Now suppose one person from such a family wants to marry outside the religion. If he/she is of legal age to marry can he/she marry a person of his/her choice? Yes, he/she can. The father can explain his personal view, try and convince the person of that view but he cannot do anything illegal – threaten, take away legal rights or hurt in any way. He cannot say that since this is his personal view and family matter, he will not abide by the law. The rule of law applies to him and his son/daughter equally.

Conclusion

While the Constitution and its principles have been enforced nearly 70 years ago, our social life continues to be dominated by the norms and rules set by communities, religions and class. While the rule of law is a critical backbone of our entire governance system, it's a struggle to challenge societal customs and people in authority. Further, the difficulties in accessing judicial systems make people wary of approaching courts and fighting for justice. In this scenario, it is critical to explain the concept and working of the rule of law to students so that they can understand and internalize it and question when it is not being implemented. This will help them, over time, accept and enforce it as a way of life.

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Indian Constitutional debates: a timeless chronicle

Amruta Kulkarni

The author is working as a legal associate in an IP firm in Pune. Being a law student, Constitution of India and civic education have always been her areas of interest. She has been associated with We, The People Abhiyan for more than three years. She can be reached at kulkarniamruta99@gmail.com.

The Indian Constitution reflects the fundamental principles and laws on which the Government of India is based. With 395 Articles, 22 Parts and 12 Schedules, the Indian Constitution is the longest constitution in the world. Have we ever wondered or thought about the source of these provisions? On what principles the Constitution is based? Who decided what shall be included and what shall be excluded from the Constitution? Who took up this mammoth task and wrote down each and every Article governing the minute details of the nation to facilitate its efficient functioning? We will find the answers to all these questions in the debates of the Constituent Assembly, which was formed exclusively to draft the Constitution of India. The Assembly comprised 389 members including representatives of all the states, princely states and provinces. Our Constitution is the outcome of a three year long effort of the members of the Constituent Assembly, wherein each and every provision was discussed and debated extensively. Each part, provision, clause and word of this Constitution has been enacted with the backing of a specific objective, foresight and of course consensus of the majority.

The constitutional debates consist of opinions, proposals, questions, agreements and disagreements of each Constituent Assembly member with respect to the various provisions discussed during the framing of the Constitution. As the Constituent Assembly comprised members from various social, political, cultural and economic backgrounds from all over India, the debates reflect this diversity as well. Therefore, the constitutional debates are an incredibly important source for us to understand how our Constitution and its Articles came into being, how decisions on important aspects like rights of minorities were arrived at and most importantly what the rationale was behind the decisions taken.

A quick glance at the making of the Indian Constitution

The first session of the Constituent Assembly was held on 13th December, 1946 when Jawaharlal Nehru moved the "Objectives" resolution. In the second session, a number of committees were formed to analyze and report on the various aspects of the structure of the Constitution. On the basis of the discussions that took place in the Assembly and the reports
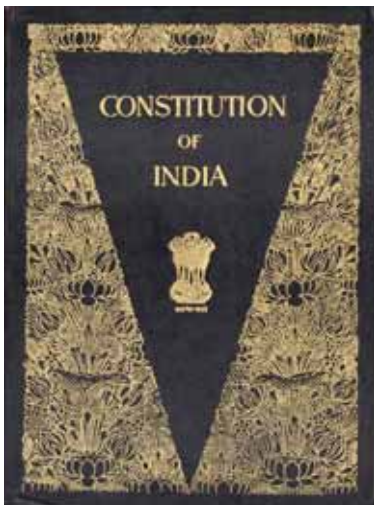
A Constituent Assembly of India meeting in 1950

of the various committees, B. N. Rao, constitutional advisor to the Assembly prepared a draft constitution by October 1947. This draft was subjected to the scrutiny of the Drafting Committee, which submitted its first draft constitution to the President of the Assembly on 21st February 1948 and then published and circulated it among the public for comments and suggestions. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the chairman of the Drafting Committee then presented the draft constitution to the Constituent Assembly in November 1948 for a clause by clause debate. After the debates, the draft was revised by the Drafting Committee and submitted to the President of the Assembly in 1949 followed by a second and third reading, which ended with the motion "that the Constitution settled by the Assembly be passed." On 26th November 1949, the Assembly voted for the adoption of the constitution. It was finally signed by the members of the Assembly on 24th January 1950 and came into force on 26th January 1950.

The aims and objectives of the Constitution, Preamble, fundamental rights, strengthening the status of minority communities by providing reservation, and separation of powers of the government were some of the significant topics that were discussed at length during the Assembly sessions.

Let us look at the discussion around reservations and secularism a bit more in detail.

Reservation

The provision for caste-based reservations for the backward sections in the government sector and educational institutions was one of the most heatedly discussed issues. There were several arguments from both sides supporting and opposing this provision.

The arguments supporting this provision were based on the principles of equality, justice and fraternity. P. Kakkan (a member) said, "The government can expect necessary qualification or personality from the Harijans, but not merit. If you take merit alone into account, the Harijans cannot come forward". T.V. Pillai (another member) said that, "As long as the Harijan community remains backward in getting admissions into the services it is

highly necessary to give them the reservation."

T Channaiah of Mysore remarked, "The backward class suffers from both educational and social disabilities, hence it is my opinion to implement the reservations for 105 years, that is the period for which this community was denied equal status and opportunities in the society."

In the words of Ambedkar, "In this country, both the minorities and the majorities have followed a wrong path. It is wrong for the majority to deny the existence of minorities. It is equally wrong for the minorities to perpetuate themselves. A solution must be found which will serve a double purpose. It must recognize the existence of the minorities to start with. It must also be such that it will enable minorities to emerge someday into one…. The moment the majority loses the habit of discriminating against the minority, the minorities can have no ground to exist. They will vanish."

On the other hand, there were many members who predicted the severe harm in adopting the reservation policy. According to them, this system once brought into force, could become a political tool misused for votes, thereby making it difficult to remove. Members opposing the reservation system found it to be anomalous and biased towards some sections of the society leaving the really needy people out of it. Z.H. Lahari made the plea, "Take away reservation from the Legislature and for God's sake give us reservation in the services. Here I speak not only for the Muslim of the United Provinces but also for other minority people." He argued that giving reservations to Anglo-Indians and excluding Muslims was a blatant discrimination.

According to Sardar Patel reservation is based on communal lines and therefore against secularism which is very important for the prosperity of the country. He was also of the opinion that as the definition of the backward classes was nowhere mentioned in the Constitution, it could be misused by politicians to include their vote bank in the backward classes. Sardar Patel declared that "this Constitution of India, of free India, of a secular state will not hereafter be disfigured by any provision on a communal basis." Many members of the Assembly thought that providing reservation on the basis of caste was wrong as in each caste there are prosperous people who don't need reservation and thus if reservation is given to the caste as a whole, such people will get undue advantage of this provision.

Mahavir Tyagi said the term 'scheduled caste' is a fiction. There are some castes that are depressed, some are poor, some are untouchables. According to him, "Dr.Ambedkar cannot be considered as a member of the SC because he is neither illiterate nor untouchable and hence he is not lacking anything."

After the heated debate on this topic, as per Article 334 of the Constitution, seats were reserved in both the Union and State legislatures for a period of 10 years for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. This period, however, has consistently been extended through a series of amendments to the Constitution.

Also, the Article 15(5)* and 16(4) of the Constitution provided blanket provision of reservation for socially and educationally backward classes (SEBCs), scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in educational institutions including private educational institutions and for appointments and posts in services under the state without any specific time duration.

Secularism
Secularism primarily means the disassociation of religion and

Jawaharlal Nehru signing the Indian Constitution

*The 93rd Constitution Amendment Act, 2006
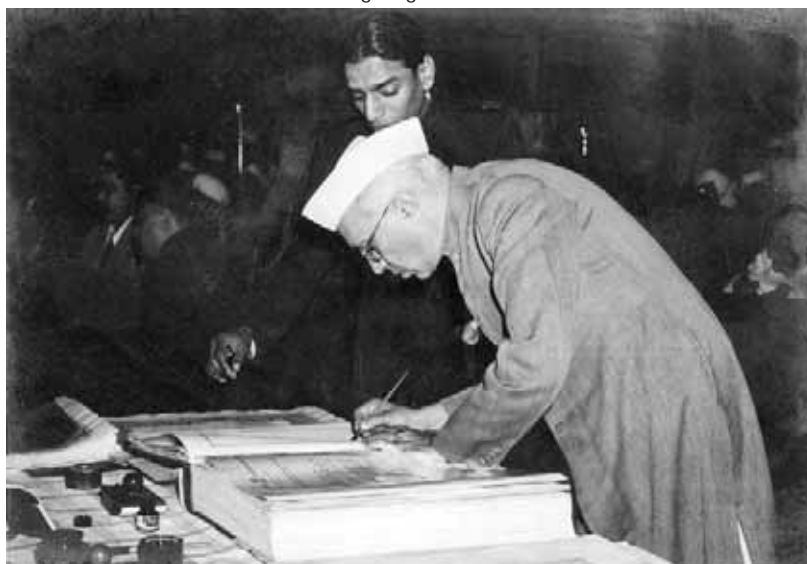
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, chairman of the Drafting Committee, presenting the final draft of the Indian Constitution to Dr. Rajendra Prasad on 25 November, 1949

matters of governance. A secular constitution does not demand secularism from the citizens. During the Constitutional Assembly debates, the question whether secularism should be brought into the Constitution and what it should mean was discussed a number of times. Actually three amendments attempting to incorporate the term "secular" in the Constitution were proposed by K T Shah and all of them were rejected by the Assembly.

The first amendment proposed in November 1948 said that in clause (1) of Article-1, after the words "shall be a" the words, 'secular, federal, socialist' be inserted.

Shah submitted that India is a secular state and hence the term should be added in the Constitution. The basic objective behind his proposition was that there shall not be any kind of influence or interference based on religion by the government in the lives of its citizens.

This amendment was rejected by the Assembly members with the explanation that what the policy

of the State should be, how the society should be organized in its social and economic side are matters that must be decided by the people themselves according to time and circumstances. It cannot be laid down in the Constitution itself because that is destroying democracy altogether.

The second amendment suggested by K T Shah was: "The State in India being secular shall have no concern with any religion, creed or profession of faith; and shall observe an attitude of absolute neutrality in all matters relating to the religion of any class of its citizens or other persons in the Union." This was also negated by the Assembly. Shah tried to get the said words incorporated a third time through a third amendment and failed. Another proposal for incorporating the word "secularism" as part of the Preamble was also rejected by the Constituent Assembly.

Admittedly there was broad consensus about the creation of a "secular" State but then like today, there was a general confusion as to what that meant and what the object of a secular state was, whether it was a means

to an end or the end in itself, whether it was a compromise or a worthy goal.

The views of the three great protagonists in the framing of the Constitution – Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and Babasaheb Ambedkar have been recorded on various occasions and they interestingly reflect the political debate which still haunts the country when it comes to the concept of secularism.

Finally, with the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution of India in 1976, the word 'secular' was inserted in the Preamble altering the description of India from "sovereign, democratic republic" to a "sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic".

As one can see from the excerpts above, the text of constitutional debates holds immense value for all of us, as it states the journey of words and the rationale behind them. The text offers valuable guidance to all stakeholders of our republic including the government itself. Ignoring it is a big mistake. The debates could help fill gaps in the constitutional text. It also lessens the tension between the Legislature and the Judiciary. Also, these debates reduce the need for constitutional amendments and adapt the charter to the changing times. Most importantly, these debates provide us, common citizens, with the vision and principles on which our Constitution was enacted and shows us the way forward.

Note: You can read the entire texts of the constitutional debates here: http://164.100.47.194/Loksabha/Debates/cadebadvsearch.aspx

You can also watch a short series, Hamara Samvidhaan, by Shyam Benegal on the making of the Constitution of India here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0U9KDQnIsNk TP

These rights are fundamental

Nisha Panicker

The author works with the social science department, City Pride School, Nigadi, Pune.

It is rightly said that education is essential and important for a healthy democratic society. Therefore, it should include the study of various aspects of democracy essential to society's development, especially the fundamental rights. The Indian Constitution guarantees essential human rights in the form of fundamental rights under Part III. These rights, apart from guaranteeing basic civil rights and freedom to all, also fulfill the important functions of safeguarding minorities, outlawing discrimination and protecting religious freedom and cultural rights. Fundamental rights can be enforced by the people against the government which may become arbitrary at times. These rights are considered essential because they create a sense of security and confidence as they safeguard basic human dignity and values.

"The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society" is not possible when children are not made responsible in an environment where they experience freedom. This implies that the Preamble to our Indian Constitution, which talks about securing for all its citizens equality, liberty and justice, and the fundamental rights, which put this promise into effect, should be included in the curriculum. Children's attitudes, ideas and characters are formed at a young age and are heavily influenced by their environment, including the school. Fundamental rights education in school is an effective means to assist children to incorporate certain values into their attitudes and behaviours. Assisting young people to incorporate these values into their daily lives is a

concrete way to prevent bullying and discrimination and promote inclusion and respect for diversity. The fundamental rights provide a valuable framework for good inter-personal relations and for making informed and proportionate decisions – from the playground to the government and its policy.

Our curriculum aims to build an understanding and appreciation for fundamental rights through learning about rights and learning through rights. This requires not just imparting knowledge about rights but also applying a human rights-based pedagogy to ensure young people learn in a rights-respecting environment – an environment that respects their rights and promotes the rights of others and the motivation of social action and empowerment of active citizenship to advance respect for the rights of all.

10 Judgements that Changed India is a beautiful story of the Indian judicial system and its evolution since 1950, including discussions of some landmark judgments. The author of the

book, Zia Mody, is a legal consultant and a well-known corporate lawyer in India. As the name suggests, the book, *10 Judgements That Changed India* is a concise account of the way the Indian judiciary evolved over the course of time. It is important for us to understand how the various liberties and the safe recourse that we enjoy came to exist. The Constitution forms the backbone of Indian democracy and the apex judiciary is the cornerstone of the unflinching faith that the Indian citizen has in getting his or her voice heard. Since independence, the Constitution has been interpreted on numerous occasions by the Honourable Supreme Court of India. The 10 judgments discussed in this book are regarded as the turning points in the Indian legal system, and are somewhere or the other linked with the Constitution. Exploring vital themes such as custodial deaths, reservations and environmental jurisprudence, this book contextualizes the judgments, explains key concepts and maps their impacts. The underlying theme in all the judgments covered in the book is judicial activism. The author successfully convinces the reader about how the Judiciary extended the conventional interpretation of our fundamental rights.

The first chapter of the book "Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)" is an impactful case that answers the biggest question in our parliamentary history: Is the power of the Parliament to amend the Constitution unlimited? The Supreme Court laid down the basic structure doctrine in this case, which states that some of the provisions of the Constitution of India form its basic structure and cannot be amended by the

Parliament by exercising its constituent power under Article 368. This chapter covers all the chronological cases which led to the title case. The **basic structure doctrine** is an Indian judicial principle that the Constitution of India has certain *basic features* that cannot be altered or destroyed through amendments by the Parliament. Key among these "basic features" are the fundamental rights granted to individuals by the Constitution. The doctrine thus forms the basis of a limited power of the Supreme Court to review and strike down constitutional amendments enacted by the Parliament which conflict with or seek to alter this "basic structure" of the Constitution. The Supreme Court's position on constitutional amendments laid out in its judgments is that the Parliament can amend the Constitution but cannot destroy its "basic structure". Likewise the book has other cases like the "Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985)", "Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug v. Union of India (2011), "Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India".

All the cases that the author has chosen have a distinct constitutional angle and show us the evolution of the Constitution and its protector, the Supreme Court of India.

Teachers can state these examples to the children while teaching and make them realize the importance and power of the Constitution and above all the position of the citizen and create enlightened citizens of tomorrow who will reach new heights in celebrating the biggest democracy, India. TP
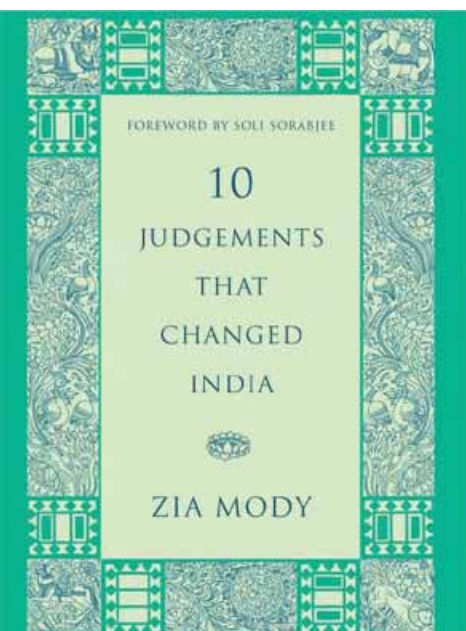
Live and let live: the soul of the Constitution

Abha Singhal Joshi

The author is a lawyer since 1983. Her interest lies in popularizing the understanding and positive use of law. Her work includes legal aid, legal training and simplification of a variety of laws for common people, government departments and other organizations and institutions. She can be reached at abhasinghaljoshi@gmail.com.

"In short, secularism in the context of our Constitution means only an attitude of live and let live developing into the attitude of live and help live."

Of the many words and phrases embedded in the soul of the Constitution of India, 'secular' or 'secularism' is one that, for a long time, was given a go-by by most people who tried to recount on their fingers what the Constitution stands for. In times to come, this word quickly escalated up the charts to become one of the most talked about topics amongst people. Somewhere in between, it was used by a variety of citizens to assert a number of wholesome and essential rights.

What is this peculiarity called 'secularism' that evokes reactions from apathy to rejection to devotion? Is it a peculiarity of the Constitution of India or is it a universal concept? Is it thrust upon us or is it just a manifestation of what we are and what we aspire to be? These are questions which we must examine if we want to bring it into the classroom in a way that not only enhances the students' understanding of the precepts of the Constitution, but also engenders a long-term engagement with the social and the political fabric of the country. All concepts related to the Constitution must facilitate young people to start the process of making choices in everyday life, and this will ultimately affect the kind of polity, politics

and governance we bring into our country.

'Secular' and 'secularism' – what do they mean?

A word search on Google indicates that 'secular' means 'not having any connection with religion' (The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/secular) and 'not connected with religious or spiritual matters' (Oxford Dictionaries https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/secular). For our purpose, this definition will suffice.

So when the Preamble to the Constitution proclaims that we have adopted a 'secular' form of governance, is it to be understood as meaning that all of us have given up our religion? Certainly not. On the contrary,

it means that our freedom to practice, propagate and follow our religion, whatever it may be, will not be interfered with by the State because the State will not have allegiance to any particular religion. Importantly, it also means the freedom to not adhere to any religious or spiritual beliefs whatsoever.

One could, of course, debate whether the State not having a religion of its own is desirable or not. However, history has shown that mixing of religion in the political space has most often resulted in disastrous consequences. Worldwide, therefore, the proximity of religion (specifically, the Church, which was extremely powerful) and the political agency of the State was gradually shunned in favour of a 'secular' order.

In reference to the Constitution of India, 'secular' or 'secularism'

is a guarantee to the citizen, combined of several rights.

Firstly, the right is embedded in Articles 14 and 15, which mandate that the state shall not deny to any person, equality before law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. Article 15 further prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. This clearly means that the State shall not promote nor ignore people on the basis of their religious affiliation, or even lack of it.

Secondly, secularism is embedded in the guarantee of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21. For, if the life of a person or citizen is not secure and protected per se and is at threat because of the religion he or she follows and the State looks the other way or fails to protect the person, it would be

a gross failure to protect the most crucial fundamental right and that would lead to anarchy.

It can also be found to be a component of the right to privacy, recently declared by the Supreme Court to be a fundamental right and part and parcel of the right to life and personal liberty –

"The right of privacy is a fundamental right. It is a right which protects the inner sphere of the individual from interference from both State, and non-State actors and allows the individuals to make autonomous life choices."*

The third and the most obvious is the right to freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and promulgation of religion, guaranteed by Article 25.

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*(The Supreme Court of India in Justice K.Puttaswamy & Another Vs Union of India and Others, 2017, better known as 'the Right to Privacy Case')

Some of these stories can be put to the students for a discussion on what it means to be 'secular'

- A boy and his siblings belong to a sect called Jehovah's Witnesses. There is a practice in that sect that no songs in praise of any other entity other than God are to be sung by its members. They are well-behaved children and stand straight and respectfully when the National Anthem plays in the assembly, which they attend regularly. On a complaint by a politician, these children are expelled from the school. Is it proper for the government to intervene in this manner?

- Two sects of Muslims are constantly fighting over a particular piece of land where a graveyard exists. It becomes a constant law and order problem. The government orders relocation of the graveyard of one of the sects. Is it proper for the government to intervene in this manner?

- A sect of Hindu Sadhus follows nudity and insist that they will congregate in any part of the town, even those which are frequented by the public. Is it proper for the government to intervene in this matter?

- A certain religious place is suspected of criminal activities such as drug abuse, sexual abuse of minors and women. Is it proper for the government to intervene in this matter?

- Many deaths are happening due to road accidents involving two-wheelers. Mostly, it is because of head injuries as people do not wear helmets. The government makes it compulsory to wear helmets. One sect of Sikhs say that they will not follow this rule as it is against the tenets of their religion. Should the government enforce this rule?

- Many religious denominations use loudspeakers during prayers and religious occasions. The decibel levels are often beyond the limit prescribed under the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules 2000 made under the Environment Protection Act. Should the government enforce the rules against noise pollution in such situations?

Myths about the word 'secular'

Unfortunately, in the mind of the lay person, the word 'secular' has taken a negative slant. Some myths therefore need to be resolved before we go deeper into understanding it.

Myth One: Many believe that the word or concept 'secular' is an 'afterthought' or 'addition'. Though the word itself was added (along with some others) to the Preamble through an amendment in 1977, the Constitution of India has always been 'secular' and was always meant to be secular. The insertion of the word in the Preamble only serves to highlight an important existing characteristic.

Long before the word 'secular' itself appeared in the Preamble, the concept was discussed and analyzed in the context of the rights claimed to management of temples and religious trusts. It was consistently upheld that while all these had a right to function freely and manage their own affairs, there was a difference between the religious activities which are an integral part of religion and therefore beyond the scope of being interfered with or regulated by the state and those 'secular' activities which could be regulated by the state.

Therefore, in a case related to the revered and well-known Nathdwara temple of Rajasthan, the Court said in 1963,

".........the Legislature has provided for the appointment of a Board to look after the administration of the property of the temple and manage its secular affairs as well as the religious affairs of the temple, but in regard to these religious affairs consisting of the worship, services, festivals

and other ceremonies, the custom prevailing in the temple consistently with the tenets of Vallabha philosophy are to be respected."

Likewise, the Bombay High Court ruled in 2016, that women must be allowed access to the sanctum sanctorum of the Haji Ali Dargah, managed by a public charitable trust, in view of upholding articles 14, 15 and 25 of the Constitution of India.

Myth Two: To be secular is to be 'anti religion'. This is neither an intention of the Constitution of India nor has it any base in the very concept of secularism. The fact that several religions thrive and several strands of beliefs and spiritual activities spring up now and then, point to the fact that the State is not 'against' religion in any way. On the contrary, it has played a facilitative role for people and communities to equally follow and enjoy their religious practices.

Individuals, may, of course, be opposed to the idea of religion itself or may have views rejecting any particular religion. A secular state will not force an

alternative view on individuals or groups like these, unless they resort to actions which pose a threat to law and order, public morality, etc. Even here, the state is bound to act under and within the bounds of a law of the legislature. The secular state is expected to distance itself from participating in any viewpoint and concern itself with the promotion of secular activities such as good governance, law and order, health, education and recreation for all.

Myth three: Secularism is 'pro-minority'. This is clearly an idea promoted by any segment that would wish the minority religions to have 'lesser' rights. The Constitution does not provide either for wrongful support or 'appeasement' of minorities, not for their neglect or rejection. The lessons from history tell us that religions, cultures, languages of a fewer numbers definitely have a tendency to get subjugated or altogether obliterated. That is why some special protection for these is required for them to survive. This is what is guaranteed by the Constitution of India. The fact that religious minorities and denominations have a

fundamental right under Article 30 to establish and administer educational institutions does not take away any right from the majority or other communities to do the same. ALL religious denominations have a right to manage their own religious affairs without State interference. The only restriction is that they must all do these activities subject to public order, morality and health.

Myth four: Finally, there is a feeling that 'secularism' promotes a society devoid of morals. This debate has to be looked at from various angles, specially whether 'morality' is located only in religion or in any particular religion. Whether to be non-religious is synonymous with being 'immoral' or devoid of values. One might recall that in most Christian Missionary schools, 'moral science' was taught as a separate subject, however, in the prescribed books, there were very few references to Christianity as such and most stories only related to the 'good' and 'bad' of everyday life. The same subject later came to be taught as 'value education'.

A discussion on constitutional issues must open up the individual's mind to discerning between what they pick up from the social and political environment created through use of social media, etc., and think things out for themselves. 'Taking sides' should be actively encouraged in the discussion and no view should be concluded as being right or wrong. That is how we become truly secular without even realizing it! **TP**

Walking the long road to equality

Sana Siddiqui

The author is a practicing advocate based in Delhi and also works as a legal consultant on issues related to human rights. She can be reached at sanahsiddiqui@gmail.com.

Equality has many dimensions and it plays a role in almost every sphere of our lives. Most people will agree that growing inequality has become a pressing issue; leaders around the world have identified it as one of the biggest threats to development. Inequality is not a matter of statistics alone; its existence is a reflection on the kind of society we live in.

Equality is an age-old concept and there are many theories[1] that talk about the origin of the idea. During many socio-economic revolutions around the world, at different times and places, equality gained a lot of attention. Equality has inspired and guided human society for many centuries and presently is central to our political and social structure. It has always been a powerful moral and political ideal, as it regards that all human beings are of the same value and therefore deserve equal treatment and consideration.

Understanding the concept of equality starts with accepting the notion that in some respect all human beings are equal though they may be different in one way or another. Taking it further, equality is the end we want to achieve and not a means to achieving an end. It is not about treating all in the same manner, irrespective of their physical or intellectual attainments. Nor is it a mechanical policy of treating everyone in the same manner. It is not a demand for absolute uniformity of living conditions or even for arithmetically equal compensation for socially useful work.

It is a policy of equality of concern or consideration for human beings whose different needs may require different treatment. It is equality of opportunity for all individuals to develop whatever personal and socially desirable talents they possess and to make whatever unique contributions their capacities permit. It is the policy of encouraging freedom to all to achieve the best for

themselves. Equality in its dynamic sense means reduction of inequality. This is enshrined in the Constitution of India.

Article 14 of the Constitution says, *"The state shall not deny any person equality before law or the equal protection of laws within the territory of India."* Article 14 is about the state's responsibility of ensuring equality.

Let us look at a short and simple explanation of Article 14 of the Constitution

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                    Equality
                 (Under Article 14)
                        |
           ┌────────────┴────────────┐
   'Equality before law'      'Equal protection
                                   of laws'
           |                        |
  It means no person     It means that 'Like should be treated alike'. The state
  is above law. Every    cannot treat unequal people as equal. Apples and
  person whatever be     oranges are not the same. Thus it gives freedom to/
  his status or rank is  mandates the state to make special provisions for
  equal in the eyes      disadvantaged sections of society. For e.g. Affirmative
  of law.                action laws, special laws for women, children.
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Equality is the lifeline of the democratic society; it aims to prevent discrimination and provide equal opportunity to all. It can be racial inequality, inequality between the rich and the poor, men and women, etc. The central idea of equality is that all individuals get equal treatment in the society and are not discriminated against on the basis of race, sex, caste, creed, nationality, disability, age, religion and so forth.

Equality cannot be achieved without equity. Equity is a means to achieving equality. The term equity refers to the SYSTEM of justice and fairness, where there is even-handed treatment of all people. This means treatment according to individual needs and requirements.

In the figure below it is equity (the blocks on the ground) that is helping each person reach the fruit (equality). Equality is to be achieved through the means of equity.
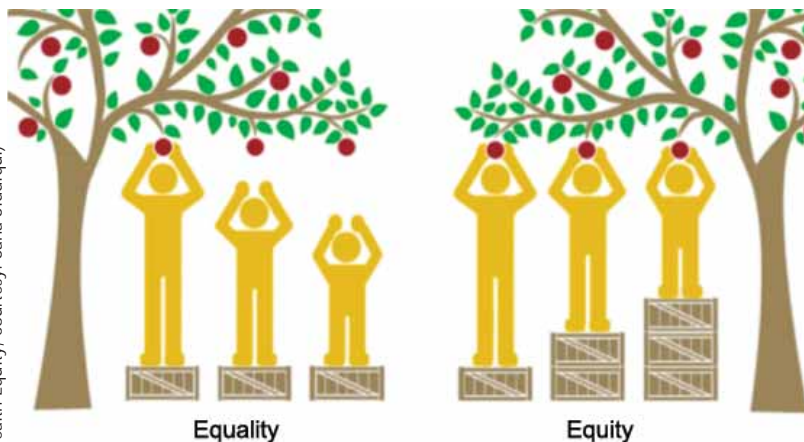

Fig (Source: Allies for Reaching Community Health Equity, courtesy: Sana Siddiqui)

Equity demands fairness in every situation, i.e., whether it is the distribution of benefits or burden. Therefore, people are treated fairly but differently as their circumstances are different. In this way, equity ensures that all individuals are provided with the resources they need to have access to the same opportunities as the general population. Equity is a process while equality is the outcome.

Equity and equality are two strategies we can use in our effort to produce fairness. Equity may *appear* unfair, but it actively moves everyone closer to success by "levelling the playing field." Thus, the concept of equality is closely attached with the concept of justice. This is what the Supreme Court and the High Courts of India emphasize through their various judgments. In the real world, this means that some people will receive special treatment and others will not. On the face of it, everything may appear fair; after all, how can we argue against equal treatment, but when we uncover the equality blanket, we see that not everyone's needs are met. Let's take examples of existing inequalities in our society:

Gender inequality: There are differences in genders but they are still equal. Equality between genders doesn't mean that everyone should become the same. The case of Nargesh Meerza[2] is a good example where women were being discriminated against only on the ground of their being women.

The end goal is not for men and women to reach a complete genderless state. It actually means that men and women should be given the same opportunities to succeed despite their differences. Gender inequality leads to many other inequalities like inequality in education, pay, promotion, etc.

Social inequality: One is not aware of one's privileges on a daily basis. No one is! There are basic things we never think of and take for granted. Our ability to earn, surety of having food on our plates, planning for a vacation or maybe eating out. These are our privileges; there are many who are struggling for these privileges. Often times, ignoring the right of equality amongst all humans, decisions are made to benefit the *majority* of the people without paying attention to individual needs and nuances. For example, it is not always that public spaces are designed in a manner that they are accessible to the disabled as well. Privilege is a tricky thing. We can no longer rely on the practice of considering the rights of the majority and treat all in the same manner just because it *appears* fair. In a classroom there may be some students who are not good at a particular subject and may require special attention. We cannot refuse them special classes saying this will lead to discrimination and inequality. Our actions have to elicit justice. "It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences."[3] So look around and observe. What differences do you notice? And how can you incorporate these differences into the everyday decisions you make?

Political inequality: Apparently, India has achieved political equality by allowing one person one vote, but this is not the only criteria for attaining political equality. Caste and ethnicity play a big role in the Indian political system. Who your voters and supporters are depend on this and they also influence the policies and decisions made by the political party in power. Political inequality, therefore, refers to unequal influence over decisions made by political bodies and the unequal outcomes of those decisions.[4] Because political processes govern resource distribution, political inequality has profound consequences for the welfare of all people within society.

Economic inequality: Economic inequality sometimes refers to income inequality, wealth inequality, or the wealth gap. Economists generally focus on economic disparity under three metrics – wealth, income, and consumption.[5] The effect of economic inequality may be seen in the overall economic growth, crime rate, social cohesions, consumption and debt, poverty, social development, war, terrorism and political instability.

These are the broad heads of inequality; they are all interlinked and one affects the other. Equal protection of the laws guaranteed by Article 14 does not mean that all laws must be universal in application and that the State is no longer to have the power of distinguishing and classifying persons or things for the purpose of legislation. At the same time classification to be valid must not be arbitrary. It should always rest upon some real and substantial distinction bearing reasonable and just relation to the needs in respect of which the classification is made. The provision of Article 14 has come up for discussion before the Supreme Court in a number of cases. Court rulings have established and clarified the concept in a much wider way. "Equality is a dynamic concept with many aspects and dimensions and it cannot be curbed, cabined and confined within traditional doctrinaire limits."[6]

Mere proclamation of equality is of no use to those who are living in extreme poverty and deadening weight of backwardness. They need protective discrimination or 'advantious aids' to participate in mainstream national life, the way the Constitution promises and ordains for them. It is the legitimate aspiration of citizens in a welfare state that good education and security of job be provided to all. If no protective discrimination is given to the weaker sections in the matters of education and employment, they will remain where they are, forever.

Air India vs. Nargesh Meerza – In this case two entities were involved (Air India and Indian Airlines Corporation). Regulations 46 and 47 of the AI Employees Service Regulations were challenged as they had created a significant amount of disparity between the pay and promotional avenues of male and female in-flight cabin crew. For instance, under Regulation 46, while the retirement age for flight pursers (males) was 58, air hostesses (females) were required to retire

- at the age of 35, *or*
- on marriage (if they married within four years of joining the service),
- *or* on their first pregnancy,

whichever occurred earlier. This period could be extended, subject to the absolute discretion of the Managing Director. When the matter came before the Supreme Court, it struck down the Air India and Airlines Regulations on the retirement and pregnancy bar on the services of air hostesses as unconstitutional on the grounds that the conditions laid down therein were entirely unreasonable and arbitrary and were a violation of Article 14 of the Constitution.

End notes
1. For instance, Jean-Jacques Rousseau Theory, Social Contract Theory, Theory of Justice.
2. Air India Etc. Etc vs Nergesh Meerza & Ors. Etc. 1981 AIR 1829.
3. Audre Lorde, American writer, feminist and civil rights activist.
4. Dubrow 2014.
5. A three-headed hydra. The Economist. July 16, 2014.
6. E.P. Royappa's Case, (1974) 4 S.C.C. 3.

Civics in Action

The political classroom

Joel Westheimer

The author is University Research Chair in Democracy and Education at the University of Ottawa (Canada) and education columnist for CBC Radio's Ottawa Morning and Ontario Today shows. His most recent book is *What Kind of Citizen? Educating Our Children for the Common Good* (Teachers College Press). You can read more articles and listen to a variety of podcasts on his website www.joelwestheimer.org. He can be reached at joelw@uOttawa.ca. You can also follow him on Twitter @joelwestheimer

Let the students ask questions.

– A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

Much has been written about how schools in democratic societies should function, but here is one characteristic that I believe is essential: schools in democratic societies must engage students with contemporary social and political controversies. They must not be afraid to be political.

Students need practice in entertaining multiple perspectives and viewpoints on important issues that affect our lives. These issues can sometimes be controversial. But education in a democratic society requires embracing that kind of controversy so that citizens can engage in dialogue and work together toward understanding and enacting the most sensible policy decisions possible.

Why would we expect adults, even members of Parliament, to be able to intelligently and compassionately discuss different viewpoints in the best interests of their constituents if schoolchildren never or rarely get that opportunity in school? It is only by engaging with political issues of concern that students can gain experiences with the kinds of skills in critical analysis and debate on which democracy depends.

Yet the education reform rhetoric employed by politicians and policy makers worldwide too often steers the conversation in exactly the wrong direction. We often hear that schools should remain "above politics" or that we should "keep politics out of schools." I think we should put it back in.

Avoiding a 21st century back-to-the basics movement

In many countries, a great deal of discussion has been focused recently on so-called 21st century competencies built on the "foundations" of literacy and numeracy. Math and literacy testing now drives the curriculum in many schools, often to the exclusion of teaching critical thinking, creativity, imagination, and civic engagement. There is real risk here that this reform effort will simply default into a back-to-the basics movement under the guise of curriculum redesign that once again emphasizes memorization and regurgitation and that runs counter to almost everything we know from education research about how to make teaching and learning meaningful.

We live in a time when facts are at our fingertips in seconds. Smart phones and other electronic devices make the acquisition of information easy. The hard part is teaching students how to sift through that information and think deeply about its origins, potential bias or viewpoints, and its value. Students in the 21st century do not suffer from a lack of information but rather from an overwhelming flood of it!

Of course, nobody is against children knowing the basics. I have never encountered a teacher or parent or administrator who boldly proclaimed themselves a member of the group, "Teachers Against Kids Learning How to Add" or "School Principals in Support of Illiteracy." Everybody supports children knowing the basics. But a focus on the basics to the exclusion of all other educational goals makes for a profoundly impoverished view of education. It relegates important issues of debate and concern to the margins of the students' experience. Ironically, excluding politically contentious material from the curriculum greatly diminishes learning of basic skills as well. We know from research that engaging students with materials that have resonance in social and political life results in deeper and fuller understanding.

The goals of K-12 education have been shifting steadily away from preparing active and engaged public citizens and toward more narrow goals of career preparation and individual economic gain. Pressures from policymakers, business groups, philanthropic foundations, and parents, and a broad cultural shift in educational priorities have resulted in schools being seen primarily as conduits for individual success and economic growth only. As a result, lessons aimed at exploring democratic responsibilities and politics have been crowded out. Much of current education reform is limiting the kinds of teaching and learning that can develop the attitudes, skills, knowledge, and
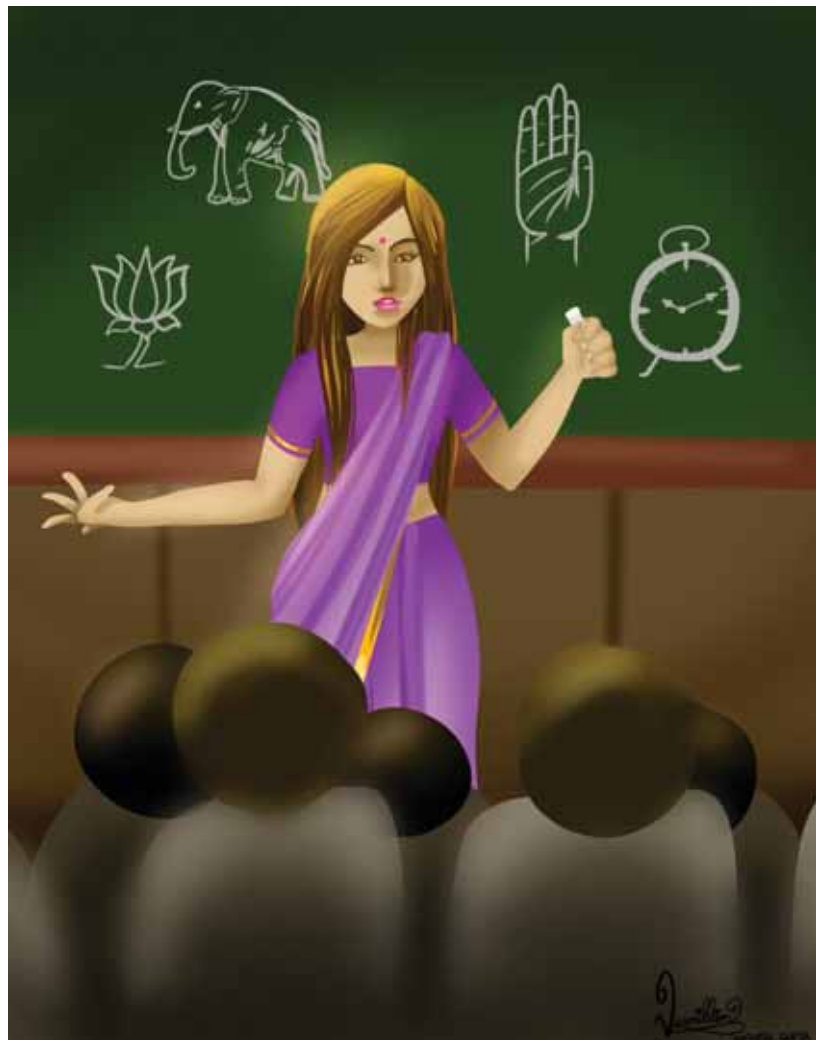
Illustrations: Kashish Gupta

habits necessary for a democratic society to flourish.

In too many schools, ever more narrow curriculum frameworks emphasize preparing students for standardized assessments in math and literacy at the same time that they shortchange the social studies, history, and even basic citizenship education. Moreover, higher-achieving students, generally from wealthier neighbourhoods, are receiving a disproportionate share of the kinds of citizenship education that sharpen students' thinking about issues of public debate and concern. This demographic divide – what some scholars have called the "civic opportunity gap" – results in unequal distribution of opportunities to practice democratic engagement.

Curricular approaches that spoon-feed students to succeed on narrow academic tests teach students that broader critical thinking and questioning is optional. In other words, the challenge to foster thoughtful consideration and analysis of contemporary problems has all too often been replaced by the single-minded drive to make students better test-takers and consumers, rather than better citizens.

To make matters worse, politics outside of schools is increasingly seen as something unseemly. Being political has become an insult, as if "politics" were a four-letter word. If someone is accused of "being political", it's like saying that he or she is a mud-slinging candidate running for political office for self-aggrandizement or for their own enrichment or power. Education, in this way of thinking, should not advance "politics" but rather should reinforce some unified notion of truth that supports – without dissent – officially accepted positions.

Time to re-embrace politics
It is not difficult to understand, then, why we often hear that schools should be "above politics" or that we should keep politics out of school. Although there is no shortage of examples of dirty politics, casting all politics in such a light denies the more noble origins of the concept. Politics is the way in which people with different values from a variety of backgrounds and interests can come together to negotiate their differences and clarify places where values conflict. Politics is, as Bernard Crick observed in his classic work *In Defence of Politics*, "a great and civilizing activity". To accept the importance of politics is to strive for deliberation and a plurality of views rather than a unified perspective. If

we are to educate thoughtful, civically engaged students, we must reclaim the important place for politics in classrooms in schools. Being political means embracing the kind of controversy and ideological sparring that is the engine of progress in a democracy and that gives education social meaning. The idea that "bringing politics into it" (now said disdainfully) is an educationally suspicious act is, perhaps, the biggest threat to engaging students in thoughtful discussion.

It is precisely this aspect of politics with which educators wrestle. While many see education as an opportunity to teach the critical and deliberative skills that are consistent with democratic citizenship and enable students to participate effectively in contentious public debates, others are uncomfortable with approaches to teaching that encourage dissent and critique of current policies. What is the role of castes in contemporary society? Should men and women participate in their communities in different ways? How should leaders seek to diminish economic inequality? What kind of health care should be available? Is there corruption in politics? Do you fear raising these questions with students? If you do, you're not alone.

There's a saying among teachers: everybody likes to teach critical thinking, but nobody wants a classroom full of critical thinkers. When I think of current education reform in many countries around the world, I might adapt the saying as follows: policymakers like to say they support critical thinking, but when it comes to actual classroom practice, they mostly want students to follow the rules and not ask too many questions. Although education rhetoric almost always touts the importance of critical thinking, the policies that actually affect classroom teaching belie a different agenda. Because of a myopic focus on testing in math and literacy and because school officials fear controversy, it is becoming more and more difficult to make time for deep consideration of important ideas and contentious issues. Social studies scholar Stephen Thornton notes that by "critical thinking" school officials too often mean that students should passively absorb as "truth" the critical thinking already completed by someone else. Students are being asked to become proficient in adding numbers, but not at thinking about what those answers add up to – in other words, how their learning connects to broader concerns about the common good.

Next time you hear someone say "keep politics out of the school," remind them that political discussion and debate is the engine of a democratic society.

In my most recent book, *What Kind of Citizen? Educating Our Children for the Common Good* (Teachers College Press, 2015), I take on seven common myths about schools because I believe that all educators have a responsibility to help the public understand the damage these enduring myths cause to schools. It is a truism that myths are based not on evidence but on unproven beliefs. That's why efforts to demonize teachers, privatize schools, and create an ever more restrictive curriculum thrive – not on evidence but on myths. One such myth is that schools in democratic societies should avoid discussion of politically contentious issues.

The evidence from research on civic engagement says otherwise. Engaging with politically contentious issues in the classroom prepares students to participate in democratic debate later on. That kind of participation is essential for a strong democratic state. Democracy is not a spectator sport.

I have spent time with countless educators who have filled me with awe and a sense of what is possible in our schools. There are a myriad of ways to teach the skills of democratic thinking and engagement. Schools do not need to avoid controversy and politics, and they can teach students to participate in civic and community life in creative and provocative ways. What we need are strong public commitments to support the kinds of schools that strengthen democratic life and that educate our children for the common good.

Civic lessons from cinema

Sayali Tamane

The author, after completing her Bachelors in Engineering, entered the developmental sector and has been teaching in Bharat Vidyalay, Wai – an experimental school meant solely for the underprivileged children for the last eight years. She has also completed her Masters in Educational Technology from the University of British Columbia and has been a member of the Board of Studies for creating textbooks for 'Self Development and Art Appreciation' for classes 9 and 10 for the Maharashtra State Board. She can be reached at sayali.tamane@gmail.com.

At first glance, cinema and civic education seem to be a strange combination to be mentioned in a single breath, but cinema can indeed be a powerful tool towards imparting effective civic education. In its broadest definition, "civic education" means all the processes that affect people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and actions as members or prospective members of communities, and cinema holds the power to affect all the four. It can shake up people's beliefs, build their capabilities, inspire them to commit to a cause and finally also support civic action. In the broadest terms, cinema can be thought of as a "motion picture". Thus cinema, in this sense, includes not just the motion pictures we commonly refer to as "films" but also documentaries and television series to homemade audio-visuals. Cinema has the power to be not only

a means to civic education, but also an end in itself – a civic intervention. Cinema can be both consumed and created for civic education. Let us take a look at both.

Consuming cinema: While cinema cannot be compartmentalized into watertight compartments depending on what it achieves, cinema can be used as a means to –

1. Sensitize: One can hardly deny the experience of being moved to tears or feeling a sense of unrest after watching powerful movies. A movie like *Fandry*, documentary like *India Untouched* unsettles you in more ways than one, leading one to question the fulfillment of the promise of equality of opportunity irrespective of one's caste/religion as mentioned in the Constitution. It makes one realize that merely the assurance of such promise isn't enough until people are willing to work on their beliefs and attitudes to uphold it. Similarly, a film like *Aligarh* can be a powerful insight into the emotional landscape of a gay person fighting to live with dignity. It provides the much needed humane touch to the debate over article 377. It can be a great starting point to discuss the rights of the entire LGBTQ community with the students. A film like *Offside* which talks of gender inequality in Iran makes the students appreciate the freedom and rights as secured by the Constitution.

2. Inform: A film like *Ek Cup Chya* based on the use of the Right to Information Act sheds light on how the Act can be used as a tool by the common man to fight the injustice meted out to him by the rampant corruption in the state machinery. Short films are especially a powerful medium to spread information about the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The short films made under the *Kallola* initiative of UNICEF are a case in point. Just about two minutes long, they can be a good starting point for discussions regarding child rights. The famous *Samvidhan series, Bharat ek Khoj* (also available on YouTube now) is a rich resource for understanding the process of making the Constitution and exposes the students to the questions, discussions, dilemmas and debates that took place in the process of making the Constitution. This also reassures the students of the intention and rigour of the thought put into the Constitution. Similarly, films like *Invictus, Twelve years a slave, Gandhi, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, The Bloody Line*, etc., provide a historical context to the incidents that shaped our current socio-political landscape. They help the students understand the current socio-political positions of various stakeholders through the lens of historical events.

3. Question: While we place immense faith in the Constitution, it is the interpretation of the articles, the terms and the words used to articulate them where the devil lies. It is these grey waters which are most difficult to navigate as a citizen. For, e.g., What qualifies under "National Interest"? What are the rights of a terrorist/spy? What is the need and significance of the "due process"? And lastly, the one that is increasingly misused in today's times – Who is an anti-national? What is nationalism? Films like *Court, Shahid, Bridges of spies, A few good men, The insider, Haider*, and documentaries like *Citizen four (a real life account of Edward Snowden leak of CIA spying), Jay Bhim Comrade, Ram ke Naam, War and Peace*, etc., raise these uncomfortable questions. It is only when the students are exposed to such dissonance that they begin rigorously to examine their beliefs and ideas about nationalism. *Lady of the Loktak* is another compelling documentary that brings forth the pressure that the residents of the floating settlement on the *Loktak*
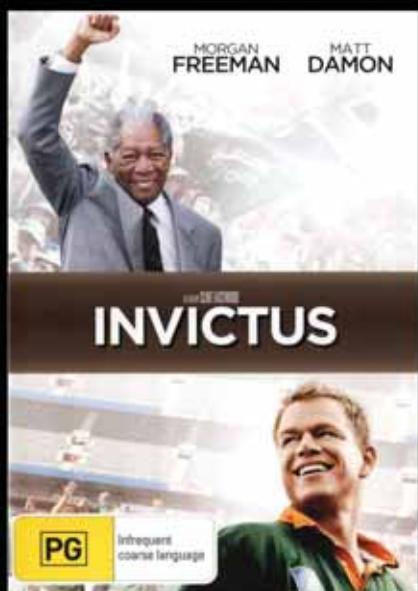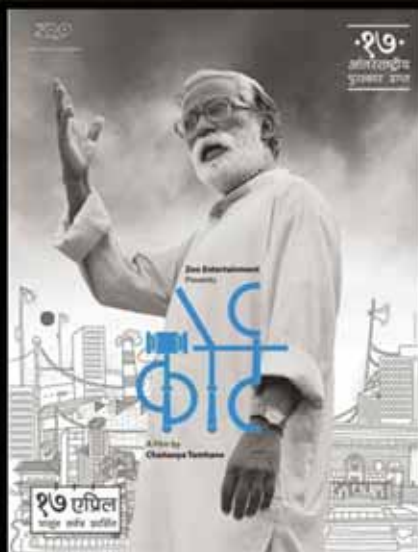
lake face from the authorities to clear the lake of human settlements. It is a typical struggle of "national interest" vs "Right to Life" of these people.

4. Motivate: Real life documentaries of people's struggle to secure their rights could be great in motivating students and reassuring their faith in the possibility of change. Documentaries on *Mendha Lekha* (a village that secured forest rights through people's movement), *The Insignificant Man* (an account of how the Aam Aadmi Party came to power without the help of money or muscle), *Uprising* (detailing the story of the Egyptian revolution) are just some examples.

Facilitating the consumption of cinema

While there are plenty of films, documentaries and videos available freely for screening, the entire soul of the exercise lies in facilitating it correctly. There could be a couple of ways of conducting this exercise. For films that are basic in the ideas they convey, a film club could be arranged, where each student presents his views on a film that she has seen can be made. For more complex and advanced topics, however, a common screening could be arranged. A lesson plan for the same should be prepared in advance by the facilitator. The facilitator should clearly mention the rationale for choosing the film and the points that she intends to bring out. It can also be beneficial – though not essential – if these points can be connected to their syllabus. However, that is optional. It also helps to set a context to the film and clarify the vocabulary in case of issues alien to the students. For e.g., defining who a whistleblower is and how extradition works before showing the documentary on Edward Snowden is extremely helpful. Raising relevant questions about the film after the screening which connects to the content of the film and the constitutional rights and duties is extremely important. What was the problem? Was there a problem? What rights were violated? Do you think the characters were justified in doing what they did? Could you do something differently? How can we connect or contribute to this issue? Why does a character behave in a certain way? Are there invisible factors in the creation of this problem? etc. Remember that it is not important that the students take up a side right away or form conclusions or come up with solutions.

It is important that they fully grasp the complexity of the issue at hand and begin thinking about it.

Producing cinema

With handheld and mobile cameras becoming ubiquitous, use of the audio-visual medium has become a powerful tool for both expression and intervention. Its effectiveness comes from the fact that students are actively engaged in creating it and therefore also derive the satisfaction from this creative process apart from working towards social

change. It finds its roots in the constructionist pedagogy* where creating a meaningful artefact is the way to learn about everything that is involved in its creation. Additionally, such activities instill a confidence to approach complete strangers and communicate meaningfully. Thus, cinema can be produced for –

Documentation: Documentation of the civil society movements, individuals involved in social problem solving helps the students see first hand and understand the issue at hand in depth. This sort of documentation can also be used to spread awareness about the topic in their community. Also students can make short films about their own attempts at change making (civic action projects). The "Yes I am the change" competition** encourages such filmmakers and supports them in their endeavour.

Understanding: It can also be a great way of understanding people's perceptions regarding an issue. For e.g., students can take up a project of documenting people's perception about the work done in a certain ward or their issues about the same. They can also interview the local corporator involved and ask for his opinions. Editing the captured footage, placing the content in a logical order to bring out an insightful film itself is a very educative experience which makes the students reflect deeply.

Expression: Creating fictional stories of change or protest or an imagined problem which may occur in the future gets the students into the habit of creative imagination and extrapolating the consequences of the current socio-political-scenarios. Additionally, students can also express their own opinions through the medium of their films.

Intervention: A film that brings out the voices of the marginalized or hitherto unnoticed issues is an intervention in itself as it leads to a possibility of change. The process of making the films also serves to sensitize the students.

Evaluation: These films can also be used by the teachers to judge students' understanding, initiative, teamwork, etc.

While the advantages of using cinema for civic education seem plentiful, educators must also be warned about students believing or creating doctored footage. Hence, while placing this medium in their hands they should also be informed about bias and empowered to differentiate the authentic from the inauthentic.

Finally one might say that the consumption or production of cinema can be a powerful way of exposing the students to civic issues and actions. However, in the absence of strong intent and planning on the part of the facilitator, it might be reduced to another fancy activity with nominal impact on either the students or the community. TP

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*Constructionism is a constructivist learning theory and theory of instruction. It states that building knowledge occurs best through building things that are tangible and sharable (Ackerman et al., 2009: 56).

**The YES FOUNDATION provides Youth and NGOs with a platform to use films as a storytelling medium to drive social impact. Towards this, they invite Youth, Filmmakers, NGOs and Social Enterprises to participate in the Yes I Am the Change Social Filmmaking Challenge to depict stories of change of NGOs, social enterprises and everyday heroes. Winning film entries are awarded cash prizes. Also, NGOs and Social Enterprises with sustainable and scalable social projects shortlisted from the film entries become eligible to win grants along with capacity building and mentoring support for 3 years.
http://yesfoundation.in/programs/yes-i-am-the-change/overview

Nurturing decision-makers

Ankitha Cheerakathil

The author works with The 'Institute for Democracy 21', an international research organization that explores and innovates inclusive voting systems to endorse democratic consensus. Headquartered in Prague (the Czech Republic), the Institute is actively researching diverse methods of civic participation that exist in communities around the world. The Institute collaborates with D21, an international social enterprise designed to help communities make better decisions and to improve public participation in decision-making processes. In India, the Institute currently focuses on working with educational institutions for its flagship initiative 'School Participatory Budgeting'. She can be reached at ankitha.cheerakathil@ifd21.org.

The campus of Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya in Hari Nagar, New Delhi is usually buzzing with energy and activity. There are students playing in the grounds, students grouped around their teacher with books, students enjoying the outdoors. RPVV Hari Nagar is touted to be one of the best model public schools in the capital. Its Principal, Mr. Ajay Kumar Choubey is an exemplary educationist. Upon learning about the idea of school participatory budgeting, he insisted on the participation of his students in this exercise.

It is immediately obvious that the students and the school administration possess a great sense of belonging and purpose. But their infrastructure was incomplete. There was a basketball court, but it was cracked and in need of repair. Since the court was in no condition for playing basketball, students were using it for playing cricket and practicing yoga. A part of the ground was marked off with a sign that read 'Botanical Garden', but there were no plants. Inside the building was a well-ventilated courtyard that didn't seem to have any real purpose.

The school had been gradually improving its infrastructure, utilizing the VKS fund (Vidyalaya Kalyan Samiti) from the Delhi government which amounts to Rs. 4 lakhs every year. The basic necessities were provided for by this point and now the school administration had to prioritize its needs carefully so as to decide where the funds could best be allocated. Did the students need a functional basketball court or was a botanical garden more important to them?

Campaigning before voting

Interestingly, the school also has a functional child parliament (Bal Sansad). A brief conversation with one of the Bal Sansad representatives proved that the students had the ability to assess the needs of the school even better than the administration. Principal Choubey agreed wholeheartedly to this assessment, which is one of the reasons why he was enthusiastic about conducting a participatory budgeting exercise in his school.

School Participatory Budgeting (School PB) was developed as a practical concept by the Prague based social enterprise D21 in cooperation with the think-tank Institute for Democracy 21. It has already been piloted in the Czech Republic and Zambia. It is a process (modeled on nominal group techniques of decision-making) of allowing students to deliberate and vote on projects for their school's budget.

At RPVV, the exercise began in November 2017 and lasted for three weeks. All students initially came up with ideas at the level of their classroom. Then representatives were chosen from each class, who gathered together to form a diverse group and put all ideas to vote. Then a final list of ideas was voted on again by all students (a total of 525 from classes 6 to 11). This ensured that every student received an opportunity to participate and everybody's voice was heard, not just that of the loudest and smartest among them. Through the various stages of this exercise, the students were made to realize that all voices are relevant, which was an important lesson for when they would become adults. It is certainly possible to shorten the duration of this exercise by eliminating one or more phases. But all pilots have so far demonstrated that the best results come out of making the exercise comprehensive in nature.

Initially, the teachers found the exercise slightly burdensome. This was understandable, considering that government school teachers are usually overburdened with both administrative and curriculum related work. The students who were participating in the exercise often approached their teachers for help in estimating the cost of their ideas to make sure that it came within the school budget. The class teachers also allowed their students to use one teaching period for discussing project ideas and voting on the same. All this caused a change in their routine and added pressure on the teachers. However, when their students proposed intelligent and pragmatic ideas, the teachers realized the impact of this exercise and the true potential of their students.

Prior to beginning the exercise, the students had been instructed to keep the needs of the school in mind, rather than their individual preferences. They were also told to carefully estimate the cost of their project ideas to make sure that it was in accordance with the school's budget. The kind of project proposals that the students finally came up with were remarkable in their astute assessment of the school's needs and deficiencies. The final list of ideas included a small

Project ideas with cost estimates

football ground with equipment (which gained the most votes), a botanical garden, solar panels, a common lounge (for the unused courtyard inside the building), a school cafeteria, a waste management system, an Internet consulting system (wi-fi enabled tablets that students could use for research) and renovation of the school's cycle stand.

Principal Choubey was very pleased with the ideas. To the gratification of the students, he announced that the VKS fund from the school year 2018-19 would also be used so that as many as seven of the most popular ideas could be implemented. He organized a ceremony in the school auditorium to announce the winning projects.

School PB helped the students of RPVV build practical knowledge and skills in public speaking and leadership. It empowered them and made them feel valued, which is a relevant problem in large and populous countries. In India, the voices of smaller communities usually go unheard and are not taken into account; this results in a state of disillusionment with the establishment. Young people should not remain in this state of disillusionment, because it will prevent them from working

Times of India Article about School PB

Online voting platform

towards a sustainable and inclusive future.

The students of RPVV Hari Nagar, Delhi, were lucky to have had the VKS fund opened up to them for the School PB process. But it is not always necessary to have such a large sum of money for a school to conduct this exercise. This is because School PB should be viewed as a natural extension of the social sciences curriculum, which is usually very abstract and theoretical in nature. School PB turns social science lessons into something raw and practical which will ensure that young people actually understand how their society works, what the challenges of their society are and how they can deliberate to arrive at a peaceful consensus.

Such exercises should be treated as a continuity of the theory that students learn in their social science or civics classes. These participatory skills should become part of a student's DNA, so that it's normal for them to come together and arrive at solutions as a community. The

main objective for the school should be towards promoting creativity and leadership in students by allowing them to think carefully about how to improve their environment. Therefore, it is certainly possible to achieve the same results of School PB for students even without their school spending a large sum of money.

At RPVV Hari Nagar, School PB was conducted using an online voting platform that generates results in real time. This meant that 525 students could vote quickly and easily in their computer lab. Using digital tools adds to the vision of a country like India, which hopes to become a digital democracy and a more digitally connected nation in the future. School PB is thus the most basic foundational form of public participation. The demographic category of youth is the largest in India, potentially full of creativity and leadership. School PB prepares this critical demographic for a more inclusive future. **TP**

Equity by design

Arundhati Tulpule

The author has been associated with Aksharnandan school, Pune for 21 years. She worked as a mathematics and history teacher. As an academic coordinator she has tried to enrich teaching – learning process with experiential activities. She can be reached at tulpulearundhati@gmail.com.

The class 9 subjects of political science of the Maharashtra State Board – social service and personality development – aim to introduce society and societal elements to the students. For this purpose, we, at Aksharnandan school, use a variety of tools including communication with a not-so-close classmate, visits to slums and other residential colonies, watching relevant films, listening to talks, discussions with guests at school and public reading of relevant articles. These activities introduce the students to those sections of the society, to some extent, which are outside their immediate environment. However, this might not be enough to enhance their understanding and sensitize them to various social realities, for instance of individuals with different social status facing problems in living with dignity. To sensitize them to such realities, we undertook the following project in our school. This particular project* facilitated discussion on reducing inequality. The project was first conducted by Shri Milind Chavan, a social activist, with the class 9 students and teachers. The positive outcome from this exercise led us to conduct it every year with class 9 students.

The preparation for this project consists of two parts.

*This project has been inspired by 'Privilege Walk', an activity designed by a teacher in Australia. You can see how this activity is done on YouTube.

Part 1: To create 25-30 different role chits representing individuals in all sections of the society.

Some of the roles are listed below –

1. You are a woman of 23. One leg is affected by polio. Your father is a potter. You are educated till class 10 and are now in search of a job.

2. You are a woman of 22. You are born to supposedly upper caste parents and are a graduate. Your parents are employed in high designations. You aim to acquire further education. (The students should be made aware of the following fact - according to the Constitution of India, discrimination on the basis of caste is prohibited. The references mentioned are to make students realize social reality.)

3. You are a man of 21, a tribal. Your family has migrated due to land acquisition for a dam project. You live alone in a small city and work as a labourer.

4. You are a man of 20. Your family is rich. You are studying engineering in a private college in the city. Your father is a police officer.

5. You are a woman of 25. You have been married for seven years into a wealthy farmer family. You are educated till class 12. You do not have a child yet.

6. You are a man of 20. You are born to parents of nomad-tribe caste. Your parents did not have formal education. You are enrolled in a college and are eligible for scholarship.

These roles should be representative and a mix of male/female, highly educated, moderately educated, deprived of school education, dalits/upper castes, married/divorced/estranged, occupation – farmer/job/business/rural/urban/physical disability.

Part 2: Create a questionnaire of around 20-25 YES/NO questions. Sample questions as follows –

1. Can you appear for UPSC/MPSC exams?
2. Can you pay Rs 2 lakhs as fees for your college education?
3. Do you get enough food daily?
4. Do you have access to the Internet and email?
5. Are you free to come and go out of your home at any hour?
6. Can you buy a mobile costing Rs 10,000?
7. Can you vote as per your wish in the elections?
8. Can you purchase and wear the clothes you wish to have?
9. Can you choose your partner as per your wish?
10. Can you put your thoughts assertively in a meeting?
11. Will you be eligible for a loan of Rs 1 lakh?
12. Do you have access to a daily newspaper?
13. Do you go for a walk in the evening with your friends?
14. Can you work in a three-shift job?
15. Can you afford to travel by air?
16. Can you save a designated amount every month?
17. Can you afford to buy enough fruits for yourself and your family?
18. Can you afford a costly surgery?
19. Will you be protected from sexual violence?
20. Can you get a job in a foreign country?
21. Can you decide on the number of children you want?
22. Can you contest in a village-level or ward-level election?

About the activity:

1. Arrange the students along a line in the middle of the hall/ground so that they can move backward/forward.

2. Distribute the role-chits to the students individually or in groups of two.

3. Give students time to understand their roles as mentioned on the role chit.

4. In the beginning, all students face in one direction. The 'treasure', which is a box of opportunities like good education, good livelihood, good healthcare etc., is at the end of the room, in the same direction the students are facing.

5. The teacher reads the questions one by one. Students have to decide YES or NO for each question. If the answer is yes, they move one step forward. If the answer is no, they move one step back.

6. After all the questions have been asked, the students would have been placed at different points in the hall/ground. The teacher then asks them to run to the 'treasure'.

7. The ones near the 'treasure' will get there sooner than the ones further away.

Processing:
After the activity is done, gather the students for processing the activity. Give them a copy of the questionnaire. Ask them to

count the number of times they said yes and the number of times no. The child that has the most number of yes answers will read out their role loudly. The teacher will write their common characteristics on the board. Similarly, ask the students who have got the least number of yes answers to read out their role loudly. The teacher will write their common characteristics too on the board. The maximum YES group characteristics will most likely be – male, wealthy, parents at high designations, supposedly upper caste, etc. The minimum YES group characteristics will have females, tribals, poor, first-generation formal education, estranged, dalits.

Then the teacher can conduct discussion on inequality. After that, she can lead the discussion on how we can tackle inequality at the students' level. Our experience is that students realize what group (privileged or unprivileged) they belong to. They also realize that a life of dignity is denied to many because of lack of opportunities or circumstances which cause lack of opportunity. They come to know about the different levels of under-privileged sections. For example, women, dalit women, poor dalit women, lonely poor dalit woman, ill and lonely poor dalit woman.

The discussion can also lead to the efforts that are being made at various levels to reduce this inequality.

Responses of students
Following are the responses we received from our students after the project –

1. Through the activity taken today, we discussed reservation and the need for it.

We could see that reservation is needed for some deprived sections of the society – dalit, women, transgender, poor. – Mihir and Arinjay

2. The discussion on reservation led us to understand questions like what reservation is, why it is needed and who should be the beneficiary. Reservation is given after thinking on criteria like social and economical status, gender roles and castes. The activity game made us realize societal structure. – Harshada and Priyanka

3. I earlier thought that reservation is injustice to upper-class and middle-class people. But through the discussions, I realized that reservation is not only caste-based but also given to women, people with disability and senior citizens. Therefore, I understood the definition of reservation and the criteria for reservation. – Sourabh and Sahil

4. We had seen different kinds of people but we had not realized that among those might be people who are deprived of comforts and necessities. – Mugdha and Shalmali

5. Through the activity game, we realized that upper-classes in the society get many comforts without a lot of effort. While, some sections and women cannot avail the opportunities due to inadequate income, there are many schemes for them but the schemes do not reach them because of circumstances or illiteracy. – Himani and Rahi

6. We thought reservation was a very complex concept. We had many questions about reservation. We had not understood the need for and importance of reservation. Through the activity and discussion we realized that for the result to be just, all players should start from one point. But we have many differences in our country – caste, gender, economic status, etc. Those with higher caste and higher economic status can progress even when they lack skills. – Tapan and Omkar

7. When we talk of reservation, we see deprived sections of the society. The upper class has money whereas the lower class has reservation. But, what about the middle class? This question continuously arises in our mind. – Purva and Mrunmayee

8. The poor and lower castes have reservation and the rich can give donation. What about the middle class? – Nikhil and Vedang

How to be a peace educator

Chintan Girish Modi

The author lives in Mumbai and travels around the world to engage with students and teachers on education for peace, social justice and responsible citizenship. He has worked with the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development and now consults with the Prajnya Trust on their Education for Peace Initiative. He can be reached at chintan.backups@gmail.com or you can tweet to him @chintan_connect

When I introduce myself as a peace educator, I am often greeted with puzzled and inquisitive looks. People wonder what that description really means. Do I lecture on the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa? Am I a meditation instructor? Does my job involve getting children to maintain pin-drop silence in the classroom? I know this may sound amusing but I am not joking. It really happens. What do you think being a peace educator might mean? Go ahead, make a guess.

I have a slightly different answer every time but my focus stays on the thought that peace is not a subject but an outlook. It is, undoubtedly, beneficial to learn about significant historical personalities who led non-violent movements or steered processes of reconciliation. There is wisdom to be gleaned from their struggles, and there are mistakes to avoid repeating. However, I tend to emphasize more on how peace can be a choice, a motivation and a goal here and now. Do you think peace can be a legitimate area of enquiry in your classroom? Feel free to email me your thoughts. I would love to hear from you.

The scholar-practitioner divide in our country is so wide that one is likely to come across this question: Can peace education be initiated by school teachers who have not had formal training in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and human rights? Yes. Training

equips you with tools, resources and approaches but courses in these subjects are rarely offered at Indian universities and teacher training institutes, so a lot depends upon the individual efforts of teachers.

In some contexts, school heads are visionary enough to take the lead in introducing peace education in their schools. In other situations, they are too nervous to take on what they perceive as political because it may lead to trouble with the parent body or local leaders. Does this sound familiar to you? Have you been instructed to avoid discussing a particular topic with your students because it may provoke a backlash?

There are various definitions of peace education and a vast body of literature on this field but a deep dive is beyond the scope of this article. Suffice to say that the underlying emphasis in peace education is on understanding violence and exploring alternatives to violence. It is vital to remember that violence is not restricted to physical harm but also includes psychological harm, emotional abuse, discrimination, exclusion, denial of opportunities, exploitation, criminalization of identities, etc. Violence is part of our everyday reality.

Illustration: Kashish Gupta

Activity for students

Write the following statements on the blackboard or flash them on a smart board. Alternatively, give them to your students as handouts. Ask them to pick out or mark those statements which, according to them, describe instances of violence. Depending on the age and maturity of your students, feel free to alter these statements in keeping with your context.

➢ A woman refused to buy a new toy for her daughter. They bought several toys recently and some of the packages are still lying unopened at home.

➢ A couple was denied entry to a shopping mall. They were asked to leave because their clothes were shabby.

➢ A security guard was asked to put in an additional three hours of work but his employer did not provide any compensation for the extra time and labour.

➢ A gay man was evicted from his apartment because the landlord did not approve of his sexual orientation.

➢ A young journalist had to leave her job because her husband and in-laws refused to help with childcare. The child is two years old, and the family cannot afford professional daycare facilities.

➢ A child did not submit his class assignment within the stipulated time. The teacher slapped him hard and he began to cry.

➢ An old woman requested a wheelchair at the airport but she was made to wait for 30 minutes before she eventually got one.

➢ The trustees of a school do not allow students to bring non-vegetarian food from home for their lunch.

➢ A girl who used to be academically successful is now forbidden from going to school when she has her periods every month. Her grades have been affected as a result of this.

➢ Students on a university campus were beaten with wooden sticks when they asked some challenging questions about corruption in the administration.

Once your students have made their selections, go over each statement. Ask them whether they consider it to be an instance of violence or not. Invite multiple responses so that there can be a healthy discussion. The objective of this activity is not to arrive at definitive answers but to challenge and broaden our understanding of what constitutes violence so that we can begin to recognize it in our lives, and take steps to address it.
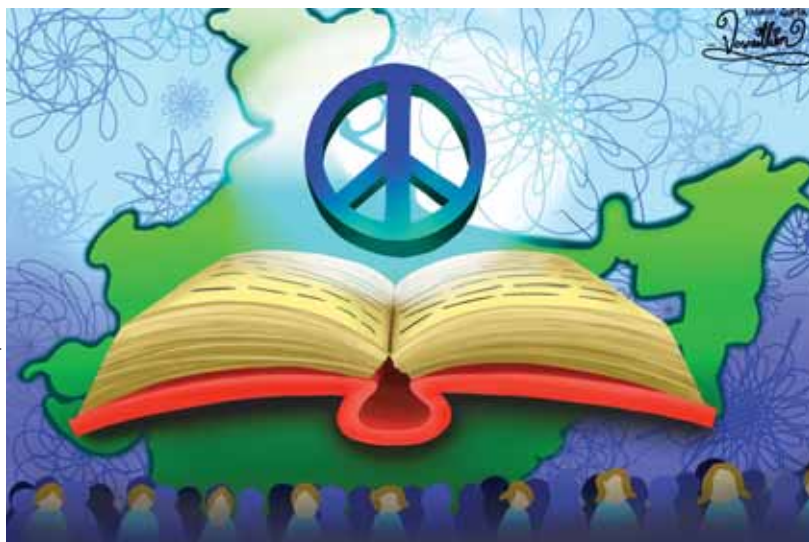
What are the recent examples of violence that have come up for discussion in your classroom? It could be a physical fight between students in your school, a terror attack or rape case that students read about in the newspaper, or a historical event they are studying as part of the curriculum. How did students feel about violent and non-violent approaches to resolving conflicts? Whose side were they on? Did their learning material include enough information about the impact of violence on the marginalized sections of society, or did it mainly valorize the victorious?

Expanding the view of what constitutes violence is an integral part of peace education. It is through awareness-raising, reflection, discussion, reading and exposure to unfamiliar experiences that one begins to see patterns and structures which are designed to be violent towards some groups, and not others. One becomes conscious of one's privilege, and one's role in maintaining hierarchies that strip others of their dignity. One works hard to unlearn stereotypes. One tries to investigate if the classroom is a safe and welcoming space for all the students in there. One becomes more engaged with local

Who got the nobel?

The word grid below contains the names of 15 Nobel Peace Prize winners from different countries of the world. Ask your students to find these names.

A	W	R	T	H	M	K	L	P	O	L	I	W	F	G	Y	Z	M	A	K
T	H	E	O	D	O	R	E	R	O	O	S	E	V	E	L	T	U	N	A
L	Z	V	B	N	I	R	E	D	F	G	B	V	C	A	Q	J	H	H	I
E	X	T	O	P	R	A	T	I	C	V	H	Y	I	O	K	U	A	T	L
Y	M	A	L	A	L	A	Y	O	U	S	A	F	Z	A	I	A	M	R	A
M	B	W	A	N	G	A	R	I	M	A	A	T	H	A	I	N	M	E	S
A	C	A	L	U	N	A	X	V	O	P	L	U	C	S	A	M	A	W	H
H	D	K	A	S	S	H	O	T	R	I	O	L	T	E	P	A	D	Y	S
G	E	K	N	E	L	S	O	N	M	A	N	D	E	L	A	N	Y	I	A
B	F	O	P	J	S	H	M	J	Y	U	I	E	N	I	Q	U	U	O	T
O	G	L	I	U	X	I	A	O	B	O	L	S	Z	E	X	E	N	L	Y
W	H	K	H	A	C	R	A	C	N	E	E	G	I	W	C	L	U	P	A
E	I	A	A	N	I	I	D	U	A	S	S	O	N	I	B	S	S	M	R
E	J	R	K	M	D	N	N	N	A	M	E	N	G	E	P	A	Y	V	T
E	K	M	R	A	S	E	A	D	D	B	X	D	Y	S	I	N	U	X	H
C	L	A	A	N	S	B	A	A	P	H	A	T	A	E	O	T	N	Z	I
V	M	N	S	I	I	A	R	L	S	V	X	U	T	L	J	O	T	W	O
N	N	P	R	C	K	D	A	O	N	E	M	T	S	B	N	S	I	L	P
M	O	U	A	A	E	I	F	V	X	P	R	U	O	W	Q	Y	Y	I	M
H	P	S	T	D	E	Y	A	S	S	E	R	A	R	A	F	A	T	F	V

The objective behind this activity is not simply to recognize who these individuals are but also to learn about their work. This web link will serve as a good start-off point for a research assignment, if you decide to initiate one: https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace. Here are a few guiding questions that you could use: What is the Nobel Peace Prize? Why is it awarded, and to whom? What do the prize winners receive? Who makes the decision to award a prize to a particular individual or organization? Who, according to you, should be awarded the next Nobel Peace Prize? Why should they get it?

Resources for teachers

National Focus Group Position Paper on Education for Peace – This paper published by India's National Council of Educational Research and Training in 2006 offers a good introduction to how peace education can be envisioned as part of the school curriculum. It highlights the rationale behind educating for peace, maps out opportunities for peace education in school-based learning, and draws attention to some critical issues that cannot be glossed over while thinking of skills and values.
http://www.ncert.nic.in/new_ncert/ncert/rightside/links/pdf/focus_group/education_for_peace.pdf

Reading to Embrace Diversity – Published by Postcards for Peace in 2017, this interview with journalist Pooja Pillai will be particularly useful for language and literature teachers. She talks about how exposure to diverse reading material can help cultivate empathy in readers. As they read books by and about people who are different from them, they strengthen their capacity to resist racism, casteism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, and other kinds of violence. They learn to honour a variety of stories and viewpoints.
https://www.postcardsforpeace.org/reading-widely-gives-us-opportunities-to-exercise-the-empathy-that-all-human-beings-are-capable-of-2/

Teachers as Allies: Unlearning Heterosexism in Indian Schools – This blog post provides guidelines for teachers who want to take concrete steps towards eliminating violence directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students on their campuses. Published by the Education for Peace Initiative of the Prajnya Trust in 2018, it is adapted from the *Gay-Straight Student Alliance Handbook* written for Canadian teachers, which does contain ideas and strategies that are relevant to Indian contexts. It shows how a human rights-friendly culture in schools cannot exist without addressing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
https://prajnyaforpeace.wordpress.com/2018/03/18/teachers-as-allies-unlearning-heterosexism-in-indian-schools/

Textbooks for Sustainable Development: A Guide to Embedding – Published by the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development in 2017, this is a guidebook written for textbook writers who are keen on embedding ideas of peace, social justice, global citizenship and sustainable development into textbooks for English, mathematics, geography and social studies. It can also be used by teachers looking for fresh ways to reorient their teaching of textbook material that is bland and unresponsive to socio-political concerns.
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002599/259932e.pdf

Talking Peace in the English Language Classroom – This article, published by the Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers in 2014, aims to challenge the idea that English language classrooms are meant only for the decontextualized teaching of skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Through examples of hands-on activities with students, it shows how English teachers can have robust conversations about peacebuilding and conflict transformation.
https://chintangirishmodi.wordpress.com/2014/10/30/talking-peace-in-the-english-language-classroom/

issues. One creates opportunities for dialogue between divergent viewpoints. One communicates disagreement with empathy. One humbly acknowledges errors of judgement. Do you engage in such reflective practice about your own teaching?

Peace education is about breaking down walls and building bridges but that is not always a feel-good process. It involves being open to critical feedback from students, and reshaping the dynamics of interaction in a way that all children feel empowered to speak without any fear of being targeted for their race, religion, caste, sex, disability, gender, language or sexual orientation. In the bargain, one can learn to examine and question systems of authority that one has grown to trust without any shred of doubt – for instance, family, religion, government, and media.

This critical exercise can be deeply unsettling even if it is rewarding in the long run. Beyond the classroom, think of other spaces where power dynamics play out, and where peace can be a choice – the playground, the library, the school bus, the parent-teacher meeting, the morning assembly, the annual day, the sports day, excursions and field trips, school elections, etc. Peace, you see, is not all about being blissed out. It calls for a profound acceptance of the connections we have with the world we are part of. As one grows more aware of these connections, it is difficult to look the other way when injustice takes place. **TP**

Making inclusion a habit

Papiya Ganguli

The author has been working as a senior educator for the last eight years in The Heritage School, Vasant Kunj. She is currently facilitating the social science faculty on experiential pedagogies and innovative ways of teaching as a part of the school curriculum. She is also a practitioner of yoga and energy healing work and is creating a design to bring the benefits of yoga and meditation to the school children. She can be reached at p.ganguli8462@gmail.com.

How often during our teaching tenure do we witness nuances pertaining to classroom inclusion? A boy from Africa waiting desperately to make friends in the class, that little girl belonging to a disadvantaged section of the society looking completely withdrawn as no one readily befriends her, or that learner who knows that he can't read or write the way others do and is therefore mostly gazing outside waiting for the day to end. We have all these little flowers bunched up in a bouquet of diversity. Educators today have the huge task of making these children feel that they are the most beautiful creations of nature.

Photos courtesy: Papiya Ganguli

A classroom is a place where the self-esteem and confidence of learners are either made or marred by every little incident that occurs and registers in the conscious or sub conscious minds of the learners. Therefore, the responsibility of any teacher is to create a non-threatening environment where inclusion of every learner is the key focus. This can be facilitated through a few simple but effective techniques.

1. The classroom seating arrangements play a vital role. It has been seen that the **crew system**, where learners work in clusters, has proved more effective than linear arrangements, where the focus is on the board and the teacher. On the contrary, the crew system propagates the ethics of **collaborative working**, where learners get into a **peer learning** mode. However, it is pivotal that peer learning be implemented effectively with certain **norms** and **working agreements** laid down in clear terms, otherwise there will always be the danger of a few learners benefitting more from such a method of learning.

2. Every child can be assigned a particular role in the process of collaborative learning, where he/she feels an important stakeholder in the process. For example, a group of four students working together can be given the responsibilities of a time keeper, a volume manager, a recorder and a facilitator as regards any assigned task. In this arrangement everyone feels important and no one is left out.

3. Learners are also directed to follow certain working agreements and norms: everyone gets a chance to speak, everyone uses positive expressions, ideas are brought forth to the table in a non-judgmental manner, etc.

4. An effective lesson plan and a strong pedagogy that centres around discussions among learners, while each has an assigned responsibility of a given topic can add to the inclusive environment. Additionally, learners learn to accept each other and respect varied perspectives. Such an environment resonates interdependence and a sense of responsibility towards each other, which eventually enables learners to overcome discriminatory tendencies.

5. Appreciation sessions during quality circle time can also help learners recognize their own attributes when their peers appreciate them for their various skills. For example, a class can be made to sit in groups and learners can be asked to share at least one virtue of their peers: "I really appreciate you because...." Giving a reason for their compliments will make them more authentic. The receiver feels good and the one who is complimenting will also observe and think about the other person's qualities more honestly and empathetically.

A classroom is like a garden where each flower is beautiful in its own way. It is the educator's responsibility to ensure that the learners sincerely appreciate each other's fragrance and beauty. **TP**

Living democracy

Shobha Bajpai

The author works as assistant teacher in Government Middle School, Uda, Harda. Apart from being a teacher, she is also a learner and loves to work with children. She always looks to teach her subject innovatively. Besides teaching in a school, she also works with less privileged children in her community. She can be reached at bajpai.shobha@gmail.com.

Teaching social science at the middle school level is a challenging task. You not only have to talk about facts while developing an understanding of causal relationships, you also have to understand individuals and circumstances and instill sensitivity towards them. Whether the topics are from geography or history, to do with civics or economics, they are mostly abstract, incomprehensible and from outside the children's experiences. However, if they are taught in an interesting manner by relating them to their experiences along with thought-provoking discussions, then you can get encouraging/ positive results. Here, I will share with you my experiences while teaching civics. However, I'd like to be clear that my experience is a comparative study and that it was done using textbooks developed during Eklavya's innovative social studies programme between 1987 and 2000 and the books prescribed by the Madhya Pradesh government for social studies at that time.

Before sharing my experience, I'd like to describe a small episode, which will give you an idea of the teaching methods of that time. In 1984, I was appointed to a rural government school in the middle of the school year to teach social studies for the 8th class. In geography, I had to teach cyclones and anticyclones. According to what I had prepared, I had just begun drawing graphs on the board to teach the direction of the winds, their speeds, etc., when a student stood up and said, "Madam ji, this is not how these things are taught." I was a bit rattled but I asked him, "So then how are they taught?" He said that I must help them mark the answers to the questions given in the exercises at the end of every lesson, and

they would then write them out and memorize them. That's how things were taught.

Obviously, it wasn't the child's fault. He thought that the right way to study was how he had been taught all along. Anyway, I told him that if he understood what was given in the chapter then he could answer the questions all by himself regardless of whether they were from the exercises or not. Perhaps, along with the teachers the students too believed that they could not answer the questions on their own, not until they were given the answers. And this is the situation even today.

Now, I'd like to tell you about some of the important aspects of the books developed by Eklavya. The most important thing about these books was that they had been written in an extremely simple language, avoiding technical terminology and when necessary explaining them. Difficult concepts had been explained in the form of stories, making them interesting and there was also the practice of moving from stories to understanding reality. Illustrations and maps were clear, there were also discussions about them. Another special feature of these books was the diverse questions posed in them. These were given at various places in the middle of the text and they were opportunities to understand the subject better, to help students relate the subject to their surroundings and to help them share their experiences, to give them a chance to express their ideas and opinions. All this made these books very different from the government prescribed books. In short, instead of giving numerous facts all at the same time, when writing and explaining using elaborate examples, understanding of concepts becomes easy and permanent. Let us try and understand this with the help of an example.

Elections, the forming of governments at various levels, their components, work and rights, the role of the public in a democracy, etc., are all important aspects of the study of civics. In general, this information is given in books in a cursory, plain way. For example, who can contest in an election and who can't, who can vote, what are the functions of the legislature and the executive arms of the government, how cabinets are formed, how presidents and vice-presidents are chosen, etc. The students find all this information, and only information, very boring, and because of this they find it difficult to understand and remember. In the textbooks developed by Eklavya, these topics are all developed by explaining with the help of examples, and by linking them to the experiences of the students.

Firstly, the process of formation of the village *panchayat* and municipality (the local government) was presented in the form of a story. Then via questions asked at various points in the chapter they not only connected students to their own surroundings, but also tested their understanding of the topic at the same time. For instance:
1. What is the population of your village?
2. How many wards are there in your *gram panchayat*?
3. How many villages are there in your *gram panchayat*?
4. What is the name of the ward you belong to and who is its head/panch?
5. Your paternal aunt's son has come to your village. He is more than 18 years of age. Can he vote in your village? Answer giving reasons.
6. Find out what is the greatest problem in your village. To solve this problem, whom will

you first approach?
7. Find out and write about all the work done by your *panchayat* in the past one year.

Whether they were terms that were defined, or logical reasoning, topics that were thought to be of a more difficult level than what could be tackled by the students were made easier by urging them to discuss it with their *guru ji*. For example:

Question 1 – Why should scheduled castes and backward classes or women have reservation in the *panchayat*?
To understand the meaning of reservation here we would link it to the children's experiences, like when there is a programme, how do you reserve seats for your friends, and why? Children would excitedly say that they would spread mats and then stretch their legs out so that no one else could sit and only their friends could get a place to sit.

This is reservation; to block space for a specific person is called reservation.

Question 2 – To whom does it make a difference if there is no playground in a school?
There is no delay in their reply, 'to the school children' and then, to who will demand a playground, the answer given was 'children' or 'those who are concerned about children'. In this way, that reservation should be there to give opportunities to various groups in society and to take up and solve their problems would get discussed.

Children used to face a lot of problems when trying to understand the domains and limits of the central and state governments. To understand this we used to get the children to play a game called Bhaarat Jod. In this game, by putting together

pieces of cardboard of the various Indian states, the children would easily understand their names and borders. Several activities were conducted and discussions were held while observing a map of India, by which the domains of the central and state governments would be understood.

1. For example, colour yellow all the regions where India's laws are applicable.
2. All the regions where the laws made by the Madhya Pradesh government are applicable, fill with red dots.

Q. Can the government of Punjab make any laws for Tamil Nadu?
Q. Will someone living in Uttar Pradesh accept the laws of Andhra Pradesh?

To understand the election process, mock elections were held in the class. Three to four children from a class became candidates, and they would campaign for their parties. Preparation for voting would be done and an empty box would become the ballot box. The children in the class would systematically vote, their identities would be confirmed, their fingers marked. Sometimes, other children would be brought in to which children would respond saying that he/she is not from our area, so how can he vote here?

Children would often get confused as to who elected representatives were and who government servants were. To understand the differences between them, we'd get them to prepare a list which would include the local representatives and would also list out which of the government servants at the village or town level worked for the state, and which of them worked for the central government.

In addition to all this, an activity

we used to conduct as a rule was for the children to read sections of the book and give answers to the questions in their own words. These questions were not in the book, they had to be made by reading the subject matter. This had the effect of instilling self-confidence in the students and the ability to learn by themselves kept increasing.

Q. If people are not happy with something the government has done, what can they do?
Q. To be able to keep an eye on the government what qualities should the public have?

I have found the use of activities and discussions with children to be particularly useful in teaching civics. The children open up during discussions and become more articulate. I remember quite well that when in the 8th class we were studying the history of democracy and it was also being compared to a monarchy, I had asked a question whether democracy was the only form of governance and everyone had answered, yes, what else can there be? The children were then taken aback when I asked whether from decisions made at home to how decisions are made at school, everybody's opinions are taken into account. We pondered over questions like where decisions are made without taking everybody's opinions into account, is there democracy? That, when we listen to what everyone thinks and then take a decision, that too is a democracy. And then what was to happen – even the rules on how the class should be run were made with everyone's agreement, and when the rules were broken a few times, there were punishments, and occasionally, pardons.

The children of our village had the habit of cussing at every possible instance. Despite my several attempts, this habit stayed

with them. They'd get scolded several times, and they'd ask for forgiveness each time. Once, when this came up in class yet another time, I said I was sick of it and they should decide what I should do if this complaint is made again? The boys said that if any of them swears at any of the boys in school, they should be kept out of the social studies class for one week. One of the girls then asked what if the boys swear at girls? Taking into consideration the seriousness of this crime, the decision to keep that boy out of the school was taken. Now, everyone began being very careful, and a slip-up would be avoided just in time.

The board exams for class 8 were quite close and one boy in our class, who was quite all right in studies and in behaviour, made a mistake. During an argument with a girl he used an obscenity. On reaching my class, the matter came to light. Everyone said that now he would have to stand outside the school for an entire week. I was also not in a position to do anything. Upset, the boy went and stood by the gate. Inwardly, I was feeling bad that at the time of exams he had been sent out and that his studies would suffer. The next day, just as the period on social studies began the boy went and stood outside. I spoke to the students saying, see, he has already accepted his mistake, accepted his punishment and he has gone out on his own. At the time of exams when you need to study with greater focus, he is outside. What shall we do? Then everyone decided to pardon him and called him back into the class. In a way, we didn't just study democracy at that time, we practiced it.

Teaching fundamental duties

Tarun Bhasin

The author is a Trained Graduate Teacher for SSC. He is currently working as Mentor Teacher with the DOE (Directorate of Education). He can be reached at tarunbhasin1973@gmail.com.

Fundamental duties usually receive nothing more than a mention in the civics classroom. Learning about fundamental rights often takes precedence over learning about our duties. No textbooks talk about them in detail. Surprisingly not even the NCERT books. However, it should be remembered that it is only a thorough understanding of what they owe the State that will help our children become model citizens tomorrow. Keeping this in mind let us see how a teacher can make the teaching of the fundamental duties interesting.

While there are several different methods to approach this topic, here I will talk about the discussion method. So how can a teacher facilitate a discussion on fundamental duties?

The teacher must keep all relevant material on fundamental duties ready before beginning the discussion. The teacher can set the ball rolling by telling the students that the fundamental duties were not part of the original Constitution. They were included only as part of the 42nd amendment to the Constitution in 1976. Why did the makers of the Constitution not feel the need to include them in the original document? Why was the need felt later? Why does the Constitution not say anything about enforcing these duties? These are questions the teacher can ask her students. To facilitate and guide the discussion the teacher can
1) Make groups
2) Formulate rules
3) Keep relevant flash cards, art and craft material ready
4) Frame questions to assess students.

Let the groups be small, say four to six members each. Every group should have a leader; responsibilities should be divided amongst the members of the group. There are 11 fundamental duties and each group should be given one duty to discuss. To allow for discussions to be smooth, rules such as one speaker at a time, listen, think and speak, respect the speaker, etc., can be laid down. Using flash cards for uninterrupted participation is a good idea. The audience can share their thoughts without interrupting the speaker too many times. The flash cards can have the following statements written on them:

1) Ready to share/Still thinking
2) True/Not true
3) I object/to be continued
4) Like/Dislike
5) I support/I condemn.

Students can make colourful head gears or bands to show that they belong to a particular group. Once the students have discussed amongst themselves and with the teacher they can share their learnings with the entire class in the form of presentations and colourful charts.

As we have seen in the beginning of this article, questions form the basis of any discussion. Asking questions is extremely important for only then is the spirit of enquiry born. The teacher can prompt the children to think of their own questions. For instance, how can citizens perform their fundamental duty as watch dogs for government policies and decisions? Why and how is a PIL filed and what is its relevance in a democracy?

Discussion in small groups will cultivate critical and divergent thinking which then come up in presentations of groups. Framing questions and answering them in the classroom itself will make the assessments for, in and of learning complete. **TP**

Making sense of civics

Manisha Jadhav

The author has been a teacher with Aksharnandan school for 20 years. She teaches science, geography and civics. She firmly believes that education is an effective medium for social transformations to take place. She can be reached at sam901968@gmail.com.

When we started *Aksharnandan*, we first had to revisit the notion of education, only then could we conceive the framework of the school. Some of our major founding principles are as follows: the medium of instruction should be a regional language, education must be child-centred and yet open to new ideas, it must employ pedagogical tools that are close to life, meaningful yet enjoyable, it must be a school that emphasizes on cooperation over competition, and a school that instills in its students empathy and care towards the environment.

We have been continuously striving to maintain these founding principles. We expect our students to have a wide vision and maturity to become responsible members of the society and we believe that teachers, parents and the society have a role in providing students the opportunity to do so.

How is civics generally looked at as a subject?
A subject with a mere weightage of 10-15 marks. A subject that is boring and provides uninteresting information. A subject that talks about ideals disconnected from reality and expects a student to write exams by mugging up answers based on lifeless chapters. A subject that requires remembering the framework and responsibilities of local self-governance bodies that a student has neither seen nor experienced, while memorizing the rights and duties

of citizens. But the worst part is how it's taught. Constrained by textbooks, chalks, blackboard and classroom teaching, civics is confined to the four walls of the classroom.

How does *Aksharnandan* look at this subject?

The scope of the subject is very wide and deep. Children learn socio-political systems as well as value-education in civics. If we want them to understand, accept and then adopt the guiding principles of the school and the Constitution of India – such as guaranteeing individual freedom, equality of opportunity regardless of caste, religion, gender and economic strata, respecting diversity, being sensitive towards diverse lifestyles and environmental interdependencies, dignity of labour – a classroom only approach will not work.

Children observe and internalize values from their experiences in school through all subjects and activities as well as through their surroundings and the behaviour of the adults around them. Hence, the environment needs

to be complementary. Children have the wish and the ability to understand the realities of the world. Here at *Aksharnandan*, we take the opportunity to go beyond textbooks into the world outside and also bring the outside world into the school whenever possible. We do activities that increase their sensitivity and sense of responsibility.

The subject is planned with the objective of making the children face life with the confidence they gain through experiences, preparing them to take care of themselves and the society and making them ready to take on leadership roles. We discuss with teachers who teach other subjects how they can incorporate these objectives in learning/teaching their subjects.

We discuss this later in the article.

Teachers at *Aksharnandan* understand the significance of civics and add complementary exercises at all stages right from the pre-primary years. Some experiences and exercises are repeated at various stages

depending on the students' age and maturity. For example, in an exercise to understand the nature of work and lives of people who ensure that our lives run smoothly, 4th class students meet an elderly vegetable vendor, 8th class students meet a porter and 9th class students meet a rag picking lady.

Accept diversity and imbibe the value of equality

When studying history, 4th class students learn the attributes of Shivaji as well as Aurangzeb. When they study about Shivaji's Mudra (the royal seal), they think about his policies that can be understood through the Mudra. Then they make a Mudra seal for *Aksharnandan*. That's when they try and understand the policies and objectives of the school. They try to relate them to their own experiences.

Aksharnandan is a family with members from diverse backgrounds. Men, women, boys, girls of different castes and religions, rich and poor, handicapped and healthy, vegetarian and non-vegetarian, people who speak different languages at home, people who live in slums and in large gated communities, people who cook their food differently.... Children see this diversity reflecting in the school.

They make friends and help the differently-abled who study with everyone else in the school and learn a lot from each other. They sincerely listen to the experiences of their friends who are born to parents with disabilities. They see books written in Braille and also help in making these books.

We had a girl with cerebral palsy studying in the school. She was ever-smiling and talkative.

Photos courtesy: Manisha Jadhav

In their farewell after 10th, her classmates said they learnt two things from her – one, that it is possible to not keep crying, but accept any type of disability bravely and lead a happy life and two, that they won't be scared if such a child is born in their families.

A visually challenged parent had once come to talk about his field of study. Children saw books written in Braille at that time. They made a thank you note for him in Braille.

The school tries to bring in people from outside the school-world. Among the guests who visited the school on various occasions was a 9-year old boy from the *Potraj** community. Children of classes 5 and 6 interacted with him and tried to understand his way of life which was different from theirs.

Lakshmibai, a waste picker from an organization called *Kach-Kagad-Patra* was the chief guest for the flag hoisting ceremony. On another occasion when college students from the North-East visited, 9th class students learnt about the geographical, social and political situation of that region from them.

Foreign visitors come often and children chat with them freely despite their limited knowledge of English. Once, a group from Europe had come and many of them could not speak English. This largely changed the image that the 4th class children had of English being a universal language!

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*The Potraj Community (also called the Kadak Lakshmi nomadic tribe), travels from one temple to another, singing religious chants, playing the drums, dancing and violently flagellating themselves.

Every year, 5th class students do projects on the states of India. For that they meet families from each state and learn about their traditional lifestyles directly from them.

Often, children narrate their experiences in the Saturday assembly. For example, a few kids who had been to Baba Amte's Anandvan with their parents spoke about projects built to empower patients of leprosy. Children who had visited the Narmada valley described their experiences on topics such as problems of the displaced tribal communities and environmental issues.

Such things help naturally bring forth concepts of equality, acceptance of diversity and sensitivity.

In the class, students are encouraged to express various thoughts and viewpoints openly and respectfully. As educators, we make sure we listen to each one of them and make them realize what their decisions mean. For instance, when 8th class students watched the film 'Gandhi', some kids said that they don't agree with the concept of non-violence and also explained why. Nobody scolded them and this was used as an opportunity for a discussion.

In the common space meant for 7th-10th classes, there is a box called 'Setu' (dialogue box). It provides the students an opportunity to give their suggestions, express their distress, disagreements, report unpleasant treatment by anyone in the school or ask questions. For instance, the school observes a five minute silence every day. Once a note in 'Setu' asked if this silence-time was applicable to the school principal as someone had heard her talk on the phone while the school was observing silence. The principal took due note of it.

We always welcome such questions. Adults get a chance to retrospect and also fill any gaps that are left out in the dialogue. Since the school believes that healthy communication is the basis of healthy relationships, it encourages students to express themselves (their grievances, thoughts, emotions) freely.

We conduct a regular exercise with class 9 students regarding this. The students who don't get along are paired and asked to have a heart to heart talk for half an hour with each other. They are supposed to know about each other and report it in writing to the concerned teacher. These writings are the most revealing evidence of how communication helps build relationships. They get to know each other well. They realize that the prejudices they carried were unjust/unfair. Such exercises develop more understanding and a humane perspective concerning relationships.

In order to understand the meaning of gender equality which is part of the syllabus for

class 5, we discuss the current state of the society and various incidents that happen around us. But in addition to that children write about the advantages and disadvantages they have as a boy or a girl. The students also realize that girls need not be the only ones suffering. The narrow-mindedness of the society also suffocates the boys. At such times, boys and girls reflect on their experiences and emotions.

In line with the topic 'Social Health', 8th class students once participated in the 'Don't Spit' initiative launched by the newspaper *Sakal*. Each student was supposed to give a note saying 'Don't Spit' to any two people they saw spitting on the road. Students shared their experience of how scared and terrified they were of handing out notes to strangers. While some people who were given the notes reacted saying, 'Mind your own business', some said 'Ok dear, won't spit again!'.

Some methods used in the school

Methods	Activities	Expected Outcome
1. Visits	1) Visits to *gram panchayats*/municipal corporations by the school, interview the sarpanch, mayor (classes 3 and 4)	Getting familiar with the working of government institutions
	2) Visits to social organizations/institutions with parents (classes 5 to 7)	Getting familiar with various social issues
	3) Visit to a slum with a specific agenda like observing various facilities available and observing their living conditions (classes 5 to 7)	Making students aware of socio/economic inequality
	4) Go to nearby traffic signal and observe the traffic (class 2)	Understanding need of rules
2) Direct experience	1) Planning a teaching program at – - municipal schools - schools for slow learners, mentally handicapped children - schools for the visually challenged - centers for children from weak financial and social backgrounds (class 8 and 9)	Taking responsibility and realizing the challenges in it
	2) Elections for the class representative (classes 5 to 10)	Understanding - individual responsibility to cherish democratic methods and values - role of a class representative - challenges of leadership - responsibility to elect a suitable representative - to be accountable to people - importance of campaigning - importance of majority
	3) Class meetings: discuss problems or fights in the class and find solutions (classes 6 to 8)	Getting introduced to - rightful problem-solving methods - importance of minority voices, concepts of justice, equality and democratic methods
	4) Go to a paddy field for planting (class 9)	Understanding the hardships of farmers Experiencing physical labour Enjoying nature
	5) Learning routine activities in life, like cooking, cleaning, etc., in the school (classes pre-primary to 10th)	Learning life skills, respecting physical work. Going beyond gender roles
	6) Segregating wet and dry waste, regular follow up in the residential colony for a few days (classes 3 to 6)	Spreading environmental awareness in the neighbourhood
	7) Selling products in the school – fete by prisoners, students from schools for the blind as well as mentally challenged (class 8)	Developing social responsibility

3) Use of media	1) Watching TV, reading and watching advertisements (classes 5 to 10)	Learning to analyze information Becoming aware of the impact of different media on our thinking process
	2) Watching and discussing films based on socio-political issues. E.g., Gandhi, No Man's Land, Kunku (classes 8 and 9)	Relating, reflecting on contemporary issues
	3) Creating posters about various social and environmental issues (classes 5 to 7)	Getting to know about the challenges as well as solutions of the day
	4) Reading newspapers/using clippings for introducing various issues (classes 5 to 10)	Developing sensitivity
	5) Introducing significant artworks and artists (whenever possible), paintings, pictures, photos (classes 2 to 8)	Developing social awareness
	6) Introducing socially significant writings like dalit literature, books like 'Bahurup Gandhi', *Ek hota Carver'* (Language project) (class 9)	
4) Recycling	1) Using waste cloth pieces, used papers in day-to-day activities of the school (all classes)	Using resources carefully
	2) Kitchen waste is recycled into compost, which is used in gardening (all classes)	
5) Using cultural diversity	1) Celebrating festivals of various religions in the school (classes 3 to 6)	Knowing the diversity of Indian culture and respecting it
	2) visiting families belonging to different religions, visiting different places of worship and presenting the findings to the class (class 8)	
6) Activity based homework	1) Calculating and recording the use of water in the house for a week (classes 3 and 4)	Using resources carefully
	2) Working during the holidays in any professional setup for at least two weeks (class 8)	Exposure to the professional world Dignity of labour
7) Discussing real life situations as problem solving exercise	1) What would you do if...? Give notes to children stating various real life situations and have them write/discuss about it. (classes 3 to 6)	Handling problems, finding solutions, group-work Exchange of thoughts Taking responsibility
	2) Discussions about rights and responsibilities/duties they experience at school and at home as well. (class 7)	Understanding that rights and duties are two sides of the same coin
8) Guest lectures/ interviews	Inviting experts to talk about various issues. E.g., urban development, reservation policy, etc. (classes 8 and 9)	Getting necessary information before forming opinions

The school takes every opportunity to inculcate environment friendliness among children. For instance, we celebrate Ganesh festival in school differently. The students make the Ganesh idol in school using soft soil. They don't paint the idols. After the festival they immerse the idol in a bucket of water. Even the decoration materials used are environment friendly. We have observed that the students carry the message effectively outside the school.

Some exercises and homework bring school topics home and when children behave as they learn, they even make their parents participate. Class 2 kids don't let their parents jump signals ever since they went to the nearby traffic signal and observed. Children also remind their parents to take a cloth bag along to avoid plastic bags!

Assessment
In addition to questions from the textbooks, we also have

Use of waste papers

questions which ask the children to think independently, express their views, relate their experiences, etc.

How is all this assessed?

Based on a few points, we give observational descriptions on how the child performed in the written test and how his/her response was throughout the year.

Points –
1) Are the concepts in the subject clear?
2) How do they interrelate the content they learn with their surroundings?
3) How do they present their thoughts?
4) How is their written presentation?
5) How is their class participation?
6) Are they socially responsible while in school?

Guests who visit the school or teachers from other schools often ask us, 'How do you manage to teach civics like this in the limited time?', 'How do you finish the syllabus?', 'How do you help the teachers?'

Our answers are:
• The group who started the

school has very thoughtfully guided the teachers. A teacher should always remember that the curriculum is divided into subjects for convenience, but the subjects complement each other and hence should be integrated.
• A civics teacher needs to connect exercises from other subjects to civics. This is the teacher's skill.
• If we limit ourselves to teaching the contents of the textbook, we can quickly finish it. Read the chapter, understand, mug up the answers and it is done! But if we put that content into action, participation and experiences, then the students will learn in the real sense.
• When we have teachers' meetings for a class, teachers of all subjects sit together and plan what parts of civics they can incorporate when teaching their subject and who will do what exercises at what point of time. Exercises are outlined based on what the chapters focus and emphasize. For example, as part of the 4th class Marathi chapter 'I am proud of my mother', the students were asked to talk to children of labourers. They spoke to a child of a railway platform sweeper. For 5th/6th class science chapter

'Nutritious diet/Malnutrition', a guest who works in *Melghat* (Adiwasi region) was invited to talk about malnutrition in children of *Melghat*.
• Planning the arts and craft classes – These will obviously be activity-based, but we link these to the subject. For example: Appeal to segregate dry and wet waste, pick waste in the surroundings, or write, direct and perform skits to understand the work of social reformers in history.
• Moreover it is well understood by the teachers that while planning the timetable the lectures need not be straight-jacketed into subjects, flexibility of clubbing the lectures is necessary now and then.

If we are deeply aware of the pervasiveness of civics as a discipline then objectives become methods and we start honouring them. Learning and teaching civics then becomes a symbiotic and continuous process.

Note: This article was written by the author in Marathi and has been translated into English by Antara Gadgil. Antara works as a translator for an IT firm in Hyderabad. TP

The gendered position

Advaita Marathe

The author is a citizen who feels it's her social responsibility to give 'back' to the society in whatever ways she can. She attempts to contribute on issues of women and children from a rights approach. She can be reached at advaitamarathe1973@gmail.com.

This article briefly discusses what it means to be a girl/woman, how society influences the making of a woman and a man and what we understand by gender and gender bias. Teachers are an important factor in the socialization of children and shaping their value and belief systems. It is important that they recognize their gendered positions, help children, both boys and girls understand this, and suggests ways of working around it.

I n a primary school in rural Madhya Pradesh, the teacher summons a girl studying in 5th class to quickly sweep the classroom since visitors had arrived. In another school, in a five-day camp with 7th class students on life skills, the resource person pointed to the dirty classroom and a boy offered to sweep. Immediately a few girls came running, taking the broom away from him saying, "We will do this. Boys don't sweep".

These are real situations that I witnessed. As a culture we model and teach our children certain behaviours which they internalize and reflect in their daily lives. We need to take another look at ourselves, understand where we are erring and take measures to effect a positive change towards equality between the sexes, where such discriminatory and prejudiced attitudes and conduct are eliminated.

Discrimination against girls/women prevails across the continuum of the female life cycle and reflects in the way society and its institutions interact with girls/women from the moment they are conceived to the time they die. Sex selective abortions, female infanticide, discrimination in access to education, health services, freedom and mobility, work participation, violence (physical, emotional, sexual), discrimination in old age, etc., are scattered across the life of a girl/woman. Women across the globe have struggled to bring a normative shift in the way they are perceived and to secure their rights in equality with men.
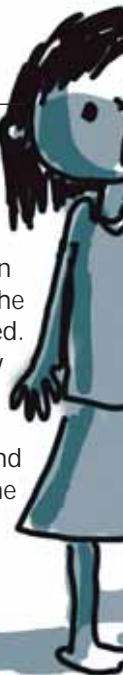
Illustrations: Shilpy Lather

The Indian Constitution guarantees the right to equality and freedom to both sexes. All Indian women and men, girls and boys are equal in all aspects of life without any discrimination. To promote equity between sexes, it provides for positive discrimination directing the government to make special provisions for the development of girls/women. Following this, special laws like the Maternity Benefits Act, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act have been passed; several schemes and programs (Janani Suraksha Yojana, Swadhar Scheme, SABLA, etc.) to empower women in various areas like education, health, livelihood have been implemented; several policy pronouncements like National Policy for Empowerment of Women have been made.

These measures have definitely brought some improvement in the lives of girls/women. There are significant achievements in all areas of women's lives – increased opportunities for higher education, lowering of maternal mortality and morbidity due to improved health and medical services, increased work participation in diverse sectors, increased mobility and freedom, political participation, etc.

Yet, women lag behind in most development and equity indicators. Census 2011 shows a sex ratio of 940 women to a 1000 men. The female literacy rate in India according to Census 2011 is only 65.46 per cent, much below the national average of 74.04 per cent. Approximately 30 per cent of married women face domestic violence. About 53 per cent of women are anaemic. Crime data shows an increase in incidence of crimes and brutality against women.
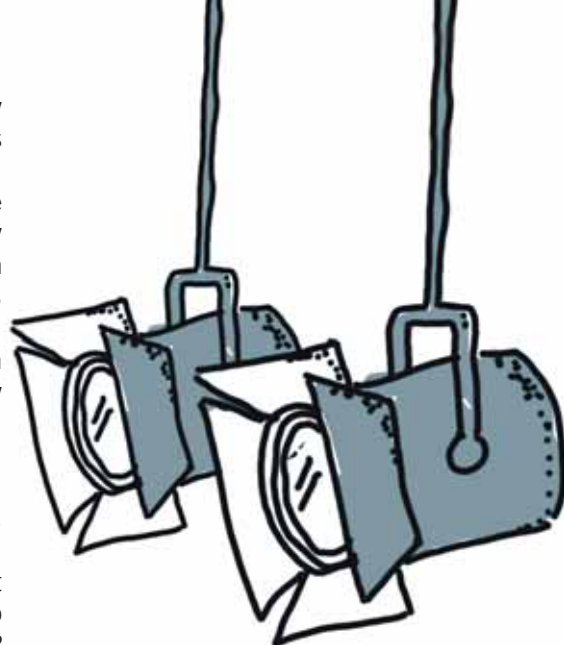
Understanding gender

As you read this, imagine a woman. What image or thought comes instinctively to your mind? Emotional? Weak? Helpless? Maternal? Attractive? Struggle? Fashion? Now imagine a man. Decision-maker? Dominant? Aggressive? Provider? Strength? Power? Take a moment to review this – if we replace the man and woman, will these attributes be equally applicable? Can a woman be dominant, aggressive, strong, powerful and a man be loving, emotional, weak, maternal, attractive? We realize these are equally applicable to either sexes. What then is the difference between men and women? The only difference is biological. They have different sexual organs and secondary sexual characteristics (such as the moustache and beard for men, menstruation in women) owing to the difference in the reproductive system.

This difference of reproductive functions has historically given rise to different expectations, roles and responsibilities of men and women in society. Women reproduce and breastfeed the young ones, as they are biologically built to do so. However, the entire responsibility of care work including household tasks like cooking, washing, cleaning has become associated with this reproductive function, giving rise to a gendered perception of women's role and responsibility in the society.

Gender is thus a social construct which ascribes different attributes, roles and responsibilities for men and women on the basis of sex. It is determined by expectations of what it means to be masculine or feminine in a particular cultural, economic and political setting. These gendered expectations vary across societies/cultures and time, and can change. Sex is biologically determined and is constant across cultures and time. Irrespective of race, caste, region/location, religion, colour, a boy/man or a girl/woman will have similar sexual organs – a man will have a penis, will grow beard, a woman will become pregnant, will menstruate. However, the gendered interpretation of this biological difference will vary. For instance, menstruating women in the West have no taboos while

several Indian communities consider them as impure and place restrictions on them. Education of girls was not given any importance/consideration two centuries ago, but educating girls is now commonly accepted, including creating institutions of higher learning exclusively for them.

The process of construction, articulation and transmission of gender roles starts right from the birth of a child and continues to be part of the socialization of the child into adulthood. The child starts understanding gender roles at a young age when members of the family and community reinforce its identity as a boy or a girl. As the child grows up, he/she identifies himself/herself with the parents of the same sex. The boy starts internalizing the characteristics of his father and the girl those of her mother. Throughout their childhood they receive messages about the behaviour expected from them. Social, political and economic institutions like family, religion, state, media, laws, etc., reinforce and perpetuate these gendered beliefs. Norms, traditions and customs have evolved over a period of time institutionalizing these beliefs. To illustrate, in some communities *jalebis* are distributed when a girl is born, while *pedas/laddoos* are distributed when a boy is born. Girls are given pink coloured clothes, articles or gifts like dolls, kitchen sets, make-up sets as gifts as they grow. Boys are usually given blue coloured clothes and gifts like cars, guns, balls, cricket sets, etc. Often, girls are sent to government schools and boys are educated in private English medium schools. The belief is that investment on girls is wasted since they will be married and will contribute to the matrimonial home. Many women suffer domestic violence in the matrimonial home since they have no enabling support even from their natal family. Due to such gendered attitudes boys and girls grow up socialized into believing that men are superior, providers, heads of the family and hence have to be revered, their comforts prioritized and women are supposed to look after the domestic household chores which are of little value (since these don't earn money), and have a 'moral' obligation to serve upon men.

The above simplistically and briefly sums up how gender attitudes get constructed and manifested in the daily lives of people. By people, I mean all of us. It thus becomes critical to understand such attitudes and biases, including within ourselves as we are rooted in this culture and are socialized similarly. These beliefs and values are reflected in our inter-personal interactions with people and institutions and in our conduct/ behaviours.

Gender equality and gender equity

Proactive efforts have to be made for gender equality between men and women in society. It doesn't imply that men and women will be 'same', but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities should not depend on whether they are born male or female. It refers to situations wherein men and women are given the same opportunities and one is not privileged over the other. However, to ensure gender equity we may need positive discrimination in favour of girls/women which ensures fairness of treatment to women and men according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different, but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities leading to equivalence in life outcomes. This is achieved through strategies that recognize different needs and interests and the need to redistribute power and resources. Thus there are reservations for women, special laws for protection of women, programmes that promote their empowerment. For instance, many girls drop out from schools during the transition from middle to higher school, often due to restricted mobility, a scheme that provides bicycles to girls to encourage their schooling brings in equity between boys and girls. There are cash transfer programs for girls, contingent upon their achieving educational milestones so that it ensures their education and helps counter child marriages, etc.

Recognizing that gender is socially constructed and that gender-based behaviour is learned helps us understand that this behaviour can be changed. It is contingent upon us as parents, teachers and society to create alternative role models where boys and girls are treated equally, so that we can bring in paradigmatic shift in the social norms. For instance, the counter to the belief that women's primary role is to cook and take care of the home and children is to encourage and support girls/ women if they choose to work and encouraging men to take up the role of cooking and cleaning in the family.

Role of teachers: Counter gender stereotypes

There are subtle unconscious ways in which the education/ schooling system develops

gendered attitudes amongst boys and girls. Curriculum, learning environment, teaching methodology and approach contribute in perpetuating gender insensitivity and stereotypes. Teachers play a critical role in combating this gender inequality. In doing so the teacher must recognize and accept herself/ himself as a gendered being, and reflect behaviours and actions that are gender neutral and gender sensitive. Teachers inspire and empower; they influence and command respect, their statements and actions are the 'final truth' for children. Being the primary role model for children, teachers must always be conscious and consider the impact of their conduct, spoken words, actions, including unintentional, on the children.
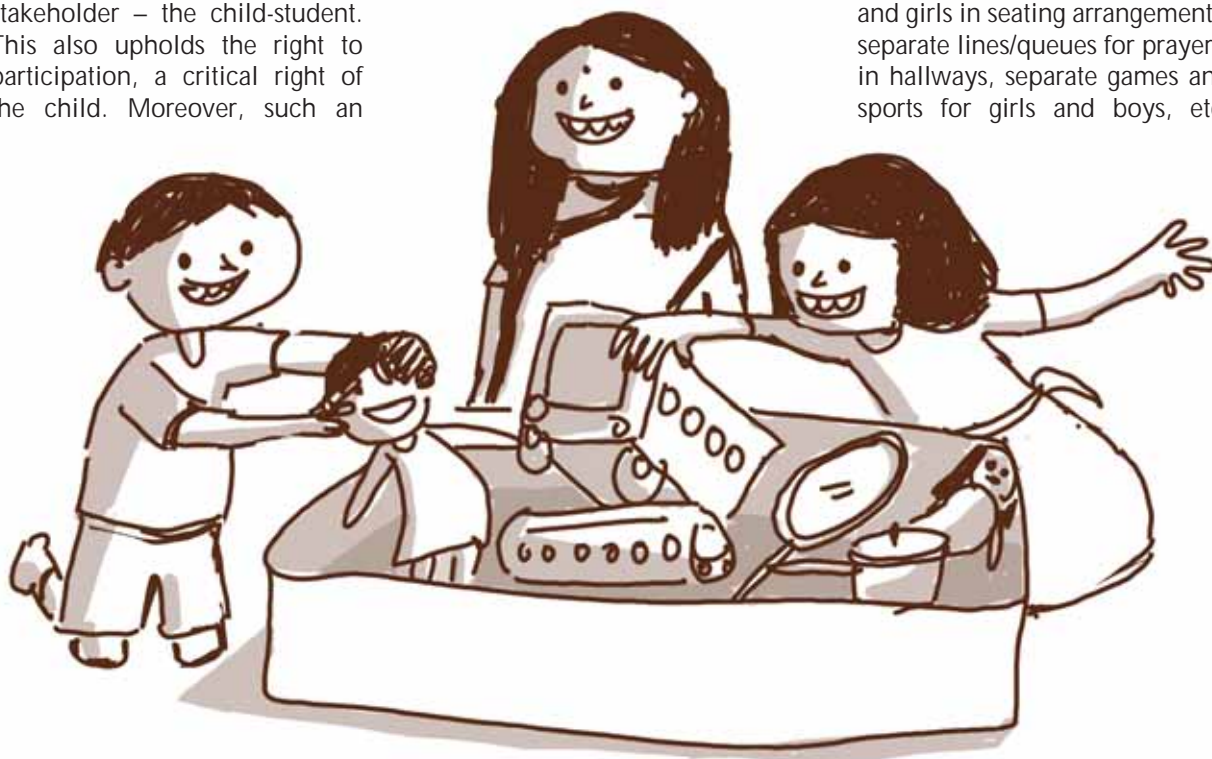
Creating gender sensitive individuals is an inherently transformatory process and needs active participation and cooperation of the critical stakeholder – the child-student. This also upholds the right to participation, a critical right of the child. Moreover, such an

initiative may face opposition from many quarters and thus every individual involved in the process – the teacher and the student – should be able to clarify their understanding and position on why they seek this change.

Moulding gender neutral behaviours and gender sensitive approach amongst children involves cognitive and experiential learning. A beginning must be made by explaining the context of how socialization creates gender stereotypes. This can be done in simple ways. Present two images of children (line drawings without any identity marker for sex like long hair for girl.) Ask children to identify a boy and a girl in those, they could modify the sketch by adding features like a dress, jewellery, hair, breasts, moustache, etc. Have an open discussion with children, how did they learn what is a boy or a girl. Second, ask the girls and boys to separately list the tasks

they do from the time they wake up in the morning to the time they sleep at night. Discuss the division of responsibilities between girls/women and boys/ men and explore if and how this can be changed. Third, list some professions like pilot, army, engineer, teacher, nurse, doctor, beautician, etc. Discuss with students on who can take up these professions – men or women. Most of these exercises will support reflection on our inherent prejudices about the roles and responsibilities of men and women.

To reduce gender bias, teachers must pay attention to the manifestations of gender inequality in the school setting. Ensure a fair atmosphere in the entire school premises, including the classroom. The learning environment should ensure that all children feel they have a fair chance at every activity in the school/classroom. It is common to find segregation between boys and girls in seating arrangements, separate lines/queues for prayers, in hallways, separate games and sports for girls and boys, etc.

These practices need to be challenged and changed, despite the hesitation that children may feel initially or the opposition that parents/community presents.

Change the seating arrangements, ensure a healthy intermixing of boys and girls, ensure all children access the teacher equally, ensure all children participate in all sports and games. Organize the classroom in ways that all students feel equal. For example, seating boys and girls together instead of separate sections, seating boys and girls together on benches, revolving sitting arrangement so that those sitting behind also get an opportunity to be close to teacher/are visible to teacher, etc. Address students gender neutrally – use 'students' or 'children' instead of boys and girls. Create opportunities for all students to participate equally in class, answer teachers' questions, etc. Avoid making things easier for either boys or girls by giving them easier questions in class, or trying to solve things for some students. Discipline both boys and girls equally for the same actions. Often, girls are excused or are dealt minor or symbolic punishments, reinforcing that girls are weak, girls are different. Intervene immediately when boys insult girls or make gender coloured remarks "he cries like a girl", "girls can't play football", "boys can't sweep". This will send a clear message to students of either gender that they are equal and will be treated as such.

Girls, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, accessing schools face gender bias in all settings beginning with their homes. More often than not, girls have disproportionate burden of household chores that may affect their scholastic performance. Adolescent girls also undergo bodily changes and face discomfort with menarche. There will be situations where the teacher will have to display sensitivity and act accordingly. For example, a girl in menstrual discomfort may need to be either excused from an outdoor activity or convert the activity into an indoor one, or allow her to rest in the infirmary, etc.

Clearly the project of gender equality is not easy and places demands on the teachers. How do we 'do gender'? Gender norms do not change overnight. It is a way of being, a way of life, a manner of conduct. For every word we use, for every action we take, for every policy or decision we make – evaluate it for its impact in the lives of girls and boys. Will it in any way demean one sex over the other? Will it lead to any inequitable impact adversely affecting one sex over the other? Or will it take the society one step further towards equality? This is the talisman. **TP**

Be
the
Change

Educative engagements

Neha Pradhan Arora •

The author explores the purpose of education and learning through her work with schools and communities. She believes it is only through the creation of empathic, empowered and joyful learning communities that this purpose can be achieved. She currently lives in Bengaluru and can be reached at neha7779@gmail.com.

studied in a traditional convent in a small town in West Bengal. A beautiful old building in red brick with wooden desks and chairs, sprawling grounds, a huge library and an old mahogany tree formed the backdrop for my growing up years. Devoid of technology, global exposure and new methods of teaching, what those years did give me is a sense of community. Snapshots and glimpses from my memories remind me of people, interactions and relationships within the school and with the community outside that was embraced within the school. One memory that stands out is of an educational initiative that senior students began for the children of a nearby low-income community. It was part of the weekly schedule of senior school to

Photos: Sakti Prasanna Mohanty
Courtesy: DAV Public School, Pokhariput

interact with the children of this 'school' and teach them – literacy and numeracy. As part of a roster, every class in school also had a day when they shared tiffin with the students here. I passed out of school with these memories and influences more than two decades ago. Imagine my surprise when a social media post told me that the literacy initiative that began with a handful of students celebrated its silver jubilee and had helped hundreds of students get an education and find their own path in life. This to me is a community engagement project (CEP).

Community outreach, social work, community service, community engagement … these are some of the terms used in schools today to refer to projects and work done to contribute to society. In a simplistic way, a project that engages with the community for learning or change is a community engagement project. A community, though sometimes understood as the neighbourhood around the school, is actually defined as a group of people who share something in common – geographic location, purpose, need, identity. It may thus be helpful to approach the school also as a community. A learning community that perseveres to empower and equip its members with learning, knowledge, skill and experience. A CEP would thus include projects that strive for learning and change within the school community and outside.

For most schools such projects are a way of giving back to the community, of encouraging charity and of building empathy and other values in their students. While this could be a starting point for community engagement

projects, they have the potential to achieve much more and serve a larger purpose.

CEPs are different from service projects in that they impact both – those implementing it and those for whom it is being implemented. For students engaged in the conceptualization, planning and implementation they are developing critical life skills, applying classroom learning to real-world problems and gaining valuable life lessons. They learn to see a problem from different perspectives and collaborate to find lasting solutions. They learn to reflect and review impact for themselves. They learn to give and receive feedback. They learn to create and recreate through challenges and failures. They develop social responsibility and learn how to practice it. In a nutshell, CEP strengthens young students into becoming leaders of their own lives and in their own communities.

CEPs also impact the communities they are implemented in when they identify pain points or needs of the community and attempt to find solutions which are innovative and sustainable. In a world which celebrates and

requires out of the box solutions, young people are often able to achieve this with their creative and fresh approach.

A CEP could be as simple as a cleaning drive inside or outside the school, a tree plantation, a collection of newspapers or old books, a collection of flood relief or an interaction or visit to an animal shelter. It could also be fundraising for a specific cause or a long-term literacy or continuing education programme for the support staff of the school/or a neighbouring community. It could be a campaign for clean air or a resource audit of the school. It could be a book bank run and managed by the students. It could be a traffic mapping project to make the roads near the school safer. It could be a sustained collaboration with a school in the community outside which ensures regular peer interactions for children of both schools. It could be an exercise in collecting the local history of the school and the neighbouring communities.

A project may be short-term and driven by one subject (social studies) or may be long-term and requiring the integration of

various disciplines. A project may be research oriented or action oriented. A project may be focusing within the school community or outside the school community. A project may be for primary students or for high school students. What is important to remember is that the impact of the project needs to be measured not in terms of simplicity or complexity but in terms of the measurable learning and impact.

In order to have maximum learning and impact, a CEP must be conceptualized, planned and implemented in a structured, sustainable and realistic manner; within the framework of a school learning community. In order to do this, for any CEP, the following parameters must be kept in mind while conceptualizing and planning the project –

1. The project must have well-defined goals which are time-bound.

2. The project must engage with and impact the community (as defined by the project).

3. The project must be planned realistically in terms of time, resource and impact.

4. The project must have an inbuilt element of review and feedback.

While there are many ways to plan and integrate projects into the curriculum and calendar, given below is a step-by-step process for teachers to use.

Pre-planning

• Decide when (in the school calendar) the project could be best implemented based on a curricular connect or an event.

• Create a team of teacher-mentors who will be able to guide the project teams adequately.

• Outline the theme (if any), duration and learning objectives of the project and decide on the parameters for reviewing the same.

• Depending on the age of the participating students, outline the framework that will guide students through the process.

• Some guiding questions for the framework for a younger age group could be –

    1. What do you want to do?

    2. What change will be brought about by your project?

    3. Why do you want to bring about this change?

    4. What do you think is causing the problem?

    5. How will you bring about this change?

    6. Who will be affected by this change?

    7. How will you know how much change has happened?

• Some guidelines for a framework for an older age group could be –

    1. Identify something you feel is a pain point or a need in your community.

    2. Seek a deeper understanding of the issues involved via research, field trips, interviews and observation.

    3. Critically analyze and create possible workable solutions.

    4. Review and asses the success of the solutions based on pre-determined parameters.

• Develop reflection and documentation templates for the students and teacher-mentors.

• Create a time-plan for the project which includes a tentative timeline and adequate allocation for work within the class schedules.

- Inform relevant people in school who may be involved or whose support may be required (IT team, administrative team, relevant school heads, relevant teachers).

- Prepare parents and students of the project adequately by giving them an overview and what will be expected of them, in advance, as per school protocol.

Project implementation

- Orientation of students – Adequate conversation with the students is important to ensure that they see the relevance and build a connect with the community before they try to ideate.

  1. Outline and scope of the project – requirements, expectations, parameters, timeline and purpose.

  2. Flexibility and freedom to choose groups and specific projects.

  3. Introduction to teacher-mentors.

  4. Guidance on choosing project.

- First milestone – selection of project based on purpose and research and determination of the parameters for measuring the impact of the project.

- Second milestone – Sharing of initial idea and strengthening of the same based on suggestions from group based on the above parameters.

- Third milestone – Mid-project review with peer and mentor feedback.

- Fourth and final milestone – End-project presentation with peer and mentor feedback.

- Self-reflection – on self, on group, on project and on mentors.

- Celebration of learning and impact in simple and sustainable ways.

Post-project

- Ensure that processes, projects and learning have been documented in relevant templates.

- Share learning and impact at adequate platforms.

- Encourage that meaningful projects are continued by interested student groups to become part of the community.

It is important to mention here that most projects begin with the intention of learning and impactful change but lack of time and planning often lead to community projects becoming short-term hastily put-together charity-oriented events. There is a danger in these leading to resentment or indifference amongst all members of the school community.

Many schools have successfully integrated community engagement projects into the learning plan of their students and created impact that is meaningful and sustainable. It is important that we as practitioners also document and share our successes in order to inspire and influence others in our community.

While planning and preparation is the best way to ensure maximum learning and impact; here are some other tips –

- Projects always work better when collaboratively designed and co-planned by teachers across disciplines and departments with shared ownership and responsibility!

- Identify members from within the school community – as experts, co-researchers or even as people who celebrate our successes! A CEP by design must include all members of the community.

- Encourage students to use time, resources and technology appropriately for the project.

- Remember that while the framework is designed by teacher-mentors, the projects must be student-driven.

- Build projects as a 'we' not as an 'us' and 'them'! The value of equality and justice is inherent to CEPs.

As adults, we are often sceptical of the successes of community projects. The enthusiasm of youth aims sky-high and often wants to change the world. The role of the teacher-mentors is crucial in that it encourages, guides and facilitates the planning process while building confidence and leadership. The joy of success and achievement may not really change the world, but it does make young people more aware of their own community, builds a sense of connection and responsibility towards the same and infects them with the 'I Can' bug! This is the seed that grows into civic participation in the years to come. **TP**

We The People – Project Citizen India

Meera Balachandran

The author is former principal Ramjas school, R K Puram, New Delhi. She is currently the Director of Education Quality Foundation of India, Delhi. She can be reached at meera.balachandran@eqfi.org.

"As a team we came across creative ideas and cooperative skills. We learnt to communicate."
Nidhi Thakur, Red Roses Public School, New Delhi.

"In group work various individuals think differently and still work together."
Anil Kumar Prajapati, JNV Allahabad.

"Is project dwara hame logo ki samasyae janne ki tatha un par vichar karneki prerna milli."
Monika Sudhakar Rao and Abhay Mohite, J.N.V Wardha, Maharashtra.

It all began with a surprise invitation in 2004, to attend a conference on civic education in Hungary. As Principal of Ramjas School, RK Puram, New Delhi which I had founded in 1974, I was overjoyed to be asked to participate in this conference by The Center for Civic Education, California. I had no idea what it was about, except that it was called "We The People: Project Citizen". The conference had a large group of participants from more than 60 countries, and India was participating for the first time! I did get a lot of attention!

Interesting projects were showcased by students from schools in Budapest – projects on drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, and other issues relevant to the societal setup in Budapest. I was disappointed as these were

not issues that were discussed in Indian schools at that time. I felt it was not relevant to India and when I was asked if I would take up the idea of Project Citizen, I expressed my misgivings. I was told that I would be invited to Malaysia to see the programme there. That visit was the turning point, it convinced me to bring the project to India. The projects presented were so close to the problems we faced here – bullying in school, street food, respect for girls and so on.

Teacher training by experts from the Center for Civic Education was the first step. Teachers from 11 schools of Delhi underwent training and then the students followed. There was no looking back. Training after training followed and the inclusion of the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas was a very decisive step. It meant including children from the government sector. The schools were permitted to select students from classes 8 or 9. The teachers who were trained undertook the projects with the students. The schools worked out their own time schedules. There were trips to meet government officials, talk to the public, invite speakers over, etc. One school took up more than one project and each project had a total of 16 students. A few additional students were involved in making portfolios or collecting information. After an in-house showcasing of the project, the best project from

each school was brought to the national showcasing.

Teacher training by the Center for Civic Education
The first showcasing was a tremendous success as students from all over India came to Delhi and showcased the most important steps in participative democracy – toilets were constructed, monuments were revived and each teacher and student could talk eloquently on The Right to Information. Democracy moved from textbooks into action. Democracy became participative.

India, today, is standing at a very important juncture in world development – according to a study undertaken by McKenzie. By 2020, India will have a surplus population of 47 million entering the work force providing support to the world. It is imperative then that the system of education that exists in our country prepares our young minds to face the challenges the work place will present.

Over the past few years, globalization, rapid technological developments and information explosion have brought significant changes in the purpose and nature of education. The old pedagogical framework of de-contextualized instructional practices and fixed curriculum is clearly inappropriate today. With information having an

increasingly short shelf-life, education must empower learners to learn for themselves and to continue to do so incessantly. Our students must be learning-enabled and life-long-capable, capable of problem solving, rational decision-making, communicating and leadership. In addition, education must also equip our children to be able to develop a deeper understanding of the world we live in – natural as well as social.

It is with this broad vision that ideas and policies are being implemented today. Be it the NCF of 2005, SSA and now RMSA (Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan), each initiative is trying to meet the challenge of India 2020 and beyond. Yet, while the environment today is changing and bringing in innovation, student development is still largely dependent on memorized facts. Collaboration, creativity and critical thinking that are so much a part of the 21st century skills have still to find a place in the education scenario.

Project Citizen, besides creating active citizens, is an attempt to take a fresh look at learning. It is in keeping with this vision that the teachers are looking at developing the area of active citizenship. Students must grow with the thought and knowledge that each one of us is responsible for our country and if each of us takes up this responsibility with the seriousness it deserves we will be citizens in the real sense.

We the People: Project Citizen is a portfolio-based civic education program that promotes competent and responsible participation in civic issues. It actively engages students in learning how to monitor and influence public policy and

TOT Training

Identify a problem

encourages civic participation among students, their parents, and members of the community.

As a class project, students work together to identify and study a public policy issue, eventually developing an action plan for implementing their policy. The final product is a portfolio displaying each group's work. In a culminating activity the class presents its portfolio in a simulated legislative hearing, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of how public policy is formulated. "An infant may be born a citizen in the eyes of the law, but transforming a human being into a citizen who can participate effectively and responsibly in a democratic society is a lengthy and demanding task."

Project Citizen is bifurcated into five steps. It begins with the students

Types of Problem

Identifying a problem in the community
- Class discussion
- Through interviews
- Through printed sources
- Through media

Types of problems
- Common problems in communities
- Problems in schools
- Problems of young people
- Problems involving basic liberties
- Problems concerning the environment

Gathering information about the problem, identifying sources of information
- Libraries
- Newspaper offices
- Professors and scholars
- Lawyers and judges

- Government officials
- Local MLAs
- Community organizations
- Interest groups
- NGOs
- Legislative officers
- Administrative agencies
- Internet

Developing a class portfolio
- The class portfolio should include the best documentation that the class and group have gathered while investigating the problem.
- It should also include students' original written material and art work
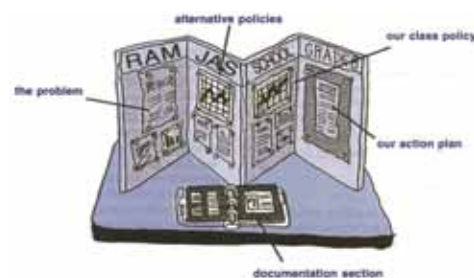
The portfolio should have four parts:
- explaining the problem
- evaluating existing policies vis a vis the problem
- developing a class policy
- developing an action plan

Showcasing the project
- Evaluation of the portfolio.
- Evaluation of the oral presentation.
- Each class is divided into four groups of four students. Each student in the group completes their presentation in just one minute.
- Six minutes are given to the judges to evaluate each group.
- Feedback after evaluation of all four groups for six minutes.

Gathering information

Selection of judges

- Three judges – one from the teaching community, one with a legal background, one from an active NGO involved in community service

The students are guided at every step and as an end product they present a portfolio to a select audience at a showcasing ceremony. The showcasings in the past have been eyeopeners in many ways, for the young have chosen topics ranging from e-waste to rights of prisoners, absence of toilets, neglected monuments, road rage, unauthorized parking and several more. Students have interviewed senior government officials and asked them questions that we adults would have never dared ask. They have featured in a film *The World We Want* where nine countries including India were represented. (Watch the film at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V08cKOJQk5c&pbjreload=10.)

Values and attitudes inherent in Project Citizen include: individual rights and responsibilities, self-discipline/self-governance, civility, courage, respect for the rights of other individuals, respect for the rule of law, honesty, open-mindedness, critical-mindedness, negotiation and compromise, persistence, civic-mindedness, compassion, patriotism, tolerance, active community participation, fairness, decision-making, balancing individual interests and the common good. Project Citizen is designed to be used with students from ages 11 to 18 and therefore could be used at various grade levels, depending upon the decision of the school administrators.

To summarize, the objectives of Project Citizen India are:

- To actively engage students in learning how to monitor and influence public policy.
- To encourage civic participation amongst students, their parents and members of the community.
- To work cooperatively to identify and study a public policy issue.

- To develop an action plan for implementing their policy.
- To develop the skills necessary to display a portfolio.
- To develop the skills necessary to present their portfolio in a simulated legislative hearing.
- To demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of how public policy is formulated.
- To develop values inherent in the project:
  - Individual rights and responsibilities
  - self-discipline/governance
  - civility, courage, respect for the rights of others, respect for the rule of law
  - honesty, open mindedness
  - critical mindedness, negotiation and compromise

The programme has been successfully implemented since 2005 in nearly 400 schools all over India. Over 1500 teachers and about 40000 students have been exposed to the principles of active citizenship. It has been specially appreciated in the Navodaya Schools.

Children showcasing their projects

Project Citizen in action

A few years ago driving on Sahra Mathew Lane was a nightmare for the residents of Safdarjung Enclave as well as children and parents of St. Mary's School, New Delhi. A stretch of about 2 km from the T junction of Africa Avenue to Krishna Nagar was dotted with some 82 potholes. The size of each was not less than 100 cm in diameter. The storm water drains on both sides of the road were blocked. The muck that collected, as a result, was never cleaned. Water logging in and around was causing a great hardship for the students as well as for the local residents. Since, the authority was indifferent about the predicaments of the residents, the children of St. Mary's decided to take the matter to the concerned authorities. The students first surveyed the broken road and prepared a report highlighting its poor condition. With the report in hand, they met the MP, Dr. Kiran Walia, who promised to look into the matter. Patiently the children waited for things to improve, but the plight continued. The children then met the District Commissioner and convinced him about the urgency of re-carpeting the lane. Their persistent efforts paid off. To everybody's surprise, the road was given a fresh layer of tar within a month.

To read more such successful interventions by students of various schools visit www.teacherplus.org

Project Citizen also exposes students to authentic intellectual achievement. Authentic intellectual achievement involves the application of knowledge to questions and issues, the construction of knowledge and disciplined enquiry.

Students when collecting information about a problem and the policies of the government are actually discerning, sifting, and applying knowledge already available to solve problems that they believe need attention. They cannot duplicate the policies available without reacting to them. In this then lies the construction of knowledge. They use the existing knowledge available to construct what they list as alternative policies. This again involves inferential reasoning leading to making judgments. The construction of this knowledge has to be based on disciplined enquiry which implies an in-depth study of a problem and the ability to express that understanding in ways acceptable to experts. It is a true manifestation of the 21st century skills in education.

Conventional study does not address these parameters of intellectual work and so it is important for us to reach out to more and more students all over India. The whole concept helps make meaningful connections between school work and situations outside school. This again assumes a larger meaning when education is seen not merely as a preparation for life but as life itself. We invite more schools to join the passion for learning and doing what Project Citizen offers.

"The objective of civic education is not to make all students into adults exclusively or obsessively occupied with political matters or who participate intensively and continuously on every conceivable issue. In a democratic society each individual must retain the right to choose where, when and how he or she wishes to participate."

Note: Schools interested in participating in Project Citizen may contact the author at meera.balachandran@eqfi.org.

Weaving the fabric of citizenship

Preeti Saha

The author is an educator, Lead – HCAC (Heritage Centre for Active Citizenship), Heritage Experiential Learning School, Gurugram. She can be reached at hcac.citizenship@ggn.hxls.org.
To know more about the school and its work visit http://heritageexperiential.org.

1st century readiness has been the guiding principle for adopting new educational practices and re-imagining school education. At Heritage Xperiential Learning School, this principle is also applied to citizenship. We believe that the school is the key place to equip students with citizenship values and tools and transmit civic and governance principles to each succeeding generation and educators bear a responsibility that is unparalleled in its importance and effects.

Learning expeditions with service learning in junior and middle programme (grades 1 to 7)
Expeditionary learning is based on the design principles that reflect the educational values and beliefs of Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound (an innovative educational idea). These principles employ challenge, adventure and service not as an end in themselves but as a method of inculcating perseverance, skill, teamwork, leadership, compassion and responsibility for the community's welfare. They form the core of our research-based model for transforming teaching, learning and the culture of schools.

Case study: Expedition: Be the change – by grade 7
The need for equality and justice is the root cause of all struggles that lead to political and social change. "Be the Change", a social and political life expedition

Photos courtesy: Preeti Saha

is designed to raise awareness among students about the society in which they live and its social, political and economic fabric. Through a process of critical enquiry, this expedition strives to bring about change. Its purpose is to develop a deeper understanding of social issues like poverty, justice, equity, gender and an individual's role in providing and implementing solutions.

As part of the expedition, students conducted a study in their neighbourhood to examine the efficacy of the implementation of the laws and provisions as enshrined in the Constitution related to livelihood, education and health and their relation to social issues like poverty, equity and gender. They then conducted a neighbourhood survey of RWAs (Resident welfare associations), government schools and health centres. The survey served as a foundation to build a programme for exercising active citizenship in the locality. After analyzing the data from the survey results, students spent time understanding the framework of designing an effective campaign to bring about change. They then applied this knowledge to create campaigns using methods such as theatre and printed communication material like posters to generate awareness on the social issues they had studied. The campaign was conducted across 14 RWAs in Gurgaon in which the students, in addition to generating awareness, also suggested concrete actions that would lead to the betterment of the community. Some of these suggestions included allowing house help to use lifts, implementing a waste segregation programme, separating play time and walk time for children and adults.

Heritage Centre for Active Citizenship for senior programme (grades 8 to 12)

Heritage Centre for Active Citizenship (HCAC) is our effort to pass on the torch of active and responsible citizenship to each succeeding generation while imparting the language of citizenship in the way we learn, discuss, debate, advocate and act on local, national and global issues. HCAC aims to enable our students to be engaged, active and informed citizens by helping them build the right attitude, skill, knowledge and framework of action and advocacy. We empower students to exercise active citizenship in collaboration with government agencies and other community members to work towards building a society that is just, humane and equitable to all its citizens.

Service Learning – An Overview
HCAC has established a Service Learning Project (community project) curriculum with the intention of empowering our students, teachers and parents to work towards building a just and equitable community. The philosophy of the curriculum is to develop the understanding that good governance stems from a collaboration between citizens, elected representatives, civic bodies and policy makers and each individual is empowered to effect change in our society.

The Service Learning Project curriculum fosters:
- A keen awareness and understanding of the Indian democracy, government and law.
- Skills and knowledge to explore political and social issues critically.
- The ability to weigh evidence, debate and make reasoned arguments.
- Build the spirit of active citizenship by working closely with the community.

Service learning is a collaborative and democratic teaching and learning strategy designed to promote academic enhancement, personal growth and civic learning to advance public purposes. Students partner reciprocally with community members and with a facilitator to tackle issues that are both part of their academic learning and of public concern, for instance an issue such as sustainable environment. Through guided reflection, participants examine their experiences critically and articulate specific and actionable learning outcomes (for instance, how many hours of community service they are willing to undertake), thus enhancing the quality of their learning and of their service/collaboration/public work. (Ref: Clayton 2013)

A typical service learning project has five components:

Investigation: Students and facilitators investigate potential community problems that can be addressed. An investigation typically involves research and creation of a design for the approach and plan framework.

Planning and preparation: Students, facilitators and community members (stakeholders) plan the learning and service activities. This stage involves creating a strategy for making an impactful change. The goals are set along with a method to assess and track progress as well as create tasks and timelines.

Action: This stage involves the actual implementation of the service project and is the "heart" of the project. It helps students develop important knowledge, skills, and attitudes and most importantly gives them practical experience of working towards the benefit of the community.

Reflection: This stage enables students to understand the service learning experience that they have gone through. They reflect upon the importance of the project, the impact of their contribution to society and their overall personal development during this journey.

Demonstration/celebration: The final experience when students, facilitators, community participants and others publicly share what they have learned, celebrate the results of the project and plan for the future.

Assessment is carried out at every stage to measure the learning and development that occurs through service-learning and to help diagnose the needs of each stage, provide feedback and incorporate changes.

Case Study: A Project on Sustainable Development – Waste Segregation
Overview: Management of waste is critical to the sustenance of urban centres. A number of cities such as Gurugram (Gurgaon) do not require citizens to segregate their waste, thus adversely impacting the waste management process and overall development of the city. This project was designed and led by students of classes 8 and 9.

Objective: To generate awareness about the environment and implement a plan that focuses on achieving 100 per cent waste segregation in the school and an adopted residential society.

Project details:
Investigation: The students attended the 'Gurugram Environment Conclave' to understand and gather data and information regarding the condition of the environment in Gurugram. They attended three primary sessions on air, water and waste and a special segment on forest cover. The sessions comprised talks and panel discussions by leading environmental experts and

government and industry representatives.

The students conducted the following:
- Online research on waste management processes, laws, regulations and current reality in India, especially in Delhi NCR.
- A survey in the school with the administrative department on the current state of waste management in the school by studying the way collected waste was being disposed and speaking to the staff managing it.
- A survey across various residential societies in the neighbourhood to understand the current state of waste segregation or lack of it.

Based on the research, the following conclusions were drawn:
- **At the school:** Need for an awareness campaign for students and teachers on the importance of effectively segregating waste and the introduction of a clear process for waste management.
- **Residential society:** The research showed that very few residential societies in Gurugram were actually separating waste. We decided to adopt one society and implement 100 per cent waste segregation there and then help other societies to replicate the program.

Planning and preparation: Goals for the action were set and the team created tasks and a timeline. They also identified the need to develop their understanding of how to implement the programme in a residential society and make it successful.

They visited a residential society in Gurugram to understand the complete process of setting up a waste segregation system. This was done with the help of Priya Mehrish who had pioneered a waste segregation system in her society.

They also got in touch with an expert from the NGO 'Green Bandhu', to receive in-depth guidance on waste segregation by understanding the "why, what and how".

Students sent proposals to various RWAs. The proposal sought to partner with RWAs to understand their process of handling collected waste and to plan and implement a system of waste segregation for them.

Action:
At the school
- Students wrote to school leaders to ensure that there were separate bins to enable waste segregation on each floor.
- They generated awareness by addressing school assemblies and leading a class to class campaign explaining the importance of waste segregation through games, posters and PowerPoint presentations.

At residential society (with RWA)
- They received confirmation from a residential society, 'Park Royal', for working on setting up waste segregation. They met the RWA members and presented their proposal.
- Students started their campaign by involving the children of the society by playing games with them and generating awareness about waste management.
- They then conducted a house to house campaign talking to all residents on the positive impact of waste segregation on the environment and ways in which they could implement it in their households.
- They distributed informational material on segregation and

put up posters designed by them in the society.

- Students then held a demonstration on waste segregation and generated awareness on its importance with the household cleaning staff.
- They trained the waste collectors on the methods of identifying and segregating wet and dry waste.
- Next, they created a digital tracker to assess the effective implementation of waste segregation. Regular audits were carried out, initially on a daily basis for a month and then biweekly in the coming months (after most households had adopted the programme).
- Appreciation methods were discussed with the RWA members for the residents who diligently segregated waste and remedial methods for those who stopped after a few days.
- Surprise checks were done on random days to ensure that both the RWA and the residents were actively playing their part.
- Over 95 per cent of the households adopted the waste segregation programme and the work continues.

Reflection: At every stage of the project, students reflect on the journey they have embarked upon. These reflections develop within students the ability to think deeply and analyze themselves and their relationship with the society.

In this project, students reflected on their journey and articulated their learning based on prompts and questions as stated below:

"I learned that" …
- Express an important learning, not just a statement of fact.
- Provide a clear and correct explanation of the concept(s) in question so that someone not in the experience can understand it.
- Explain your enhanced understanding of the concept(s), as a result of reflection on the experience.
- Express in general terms, not just in the context of the experience (so that the learning can be applied more broadly to other experiences).

"I learned this when" …
- Connect the learning to specific activities that gave rise to it, making clear what happened in the context of that experience so that someone who wasn't there can understand it.

"This learning matters because"…
- Consider how the learning has value, both in terms of this situation and in broader terms, such as other organizations, communities, activities, issues, professional goals, courses, etc.

"In light of this learning" …
- Set specific and assessable goals; consider the benefits and challenges involved in fulfilling them.
- Tie back clearly to the original learning statement.

A celebration of learning/ demonstration: Students shared their journey and learning in school assemblies, with school leaders and NGOs. This motivated and encouraged other students to take up service learning projects. Students have also received recognition for the same. Going forward, a short documentary film will be made with all stakeholders' views to create awareness as well as to set up models for others to follow.

Our endeavour at the HCAC is to empower students and inculcate within them a strong sense active citizenship so that when they embark into the adult world, they emerge as responsible and aware citizens. **TP**
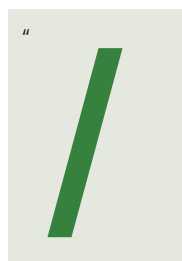
Making the constitution matter

Vandana K and Kanika Sinha

Vandana K is a freelance writer based in New Delhi. She writes for non-profit organiations such as ComMutiny Youth Collective (CYC) and Oxfam India on responsible business and youth work. She also runs her own blog The Conscious Desi, where she writes about how to live a zero waste lifestyle. She can be reached at contact.vandanak@gmail.com.

Kanika Sinha works at CYC as Director Partnerships and Outreach and has been part of the team that conceptualized, designed and successfully implemented Samvidhan LIVE! The Jagrik Project with over 1200 adolescents and young people across the country. She can be reached at kanika.k.sinha@gmail.com.

Photos courtesy: Kanika Sinha

" learnt about the Constitution, passed my exams and forgot about it. But I don't think I will forget the lessons I learnt from the tasks I did during the Jagrik journey. This is how I truly understood the *samvidhan*," says Maya Rani, a young girl from Patna. After participating in Samvidhan LIVE! The Jagrik Project, she led a night rally with 70 other young people in her neighbourhood to exercise her right to freedom (to move about at night); something that she never got a chance to do until then.

Children first come across the Constitution of India in their classroom. Typically, students are made to memorize the Preamble, fundamental rights and duties in their social science class.

Concepts such as equality, fraternity and secularism are introduced to students through the textbook.

Yet, the curriculum design and prevalent teaching methodology fail to communicate the real meaning of these values.

The Indian Constitution is the longest in the world. In its current form, it has 448 articles, 12 schedules, 5 appendices and 101 amendments. How can teachers develop their own understanding of it or that of their students? How can they help their students embody its spirit?

Statistics indicate that more than 25 per cent of India's population is below the age of 25. Will young India ever get a chance to exercise its rights and perform its duties without learning the Constitution in an engaging way?

The importance of constitutional education for teachers and students

"If a teacher has barely any knowledge of the Constitution, how can we expect the students to know about it?" asks Dr. Punam Kumari, a Hindi teacher, who is also actively involved in social work, at Jamshedpur Public School. She says, "It is absolutely essential for children to learn about values, rights and duties mentioned in the Constitution in order to become good citizens. The current curriculum is insufficient and constitutional education should be made a separate subject."

In 2015, the government declared 26 November as 'Constitution Day', which meant that on this day, students in schools would learn about Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the Constitution. Although this is a positive start, is celebrating one day enough to bring home the message that the makers of the Constitution wanted to convey?

Our schools need to make a commitment to teaching constitutional awareness and action to their students, from a young age. The only way to do this is to make constitutional education accessible and engaging.

Samvidhan LIVE! The Jagrik Project – enabling youth to live the Constitution

ComMutiny The Youth Collective (CYC) is an association of youth-led and youth-engaging organizations across India. It has been promoting active citizenship among young people since the last decade. In the course of their work, CYC saw that youth and adolescents were completely disconnected from the Constitution and lacked an understanding of what it meant to be an aware and active citizen. In today's socio-economic context, youth are particularly vulnerable. In the last few years, there has been a rise in intolerance and growing disrespect for anybody who is labelled different in

society. As violence, crime and hate have increased, young people have become both its targets and perpetrators. We also live in a time where political parties are taking advantage of young people to further their own agenda.

A large percentage of young people in India have not embraced diversity, one of the most central values of the Indian Constitution, reveals the CSDS-KAS Youth Survey 2016 by Lokniti. Titled *'Attitudes, anxieties and aspirations of India's youth'*, this survey was conducted across 19 Indian states with over 6,000 respondents aged between 15-34 years. It shows that a significant number of Indian youth lack scientific temperament. About 47 per cent of the youth surveyed said that religion should be considered more important than science if they happen to clash. It seems that many young people still do not understand gender equality – 40 per cent of the youth think that women should not work after marriage (http://www.lokniti.org/CSDS-KAS-Youth-Study-2016-17.php http://www.lokniti.org/pol-pdf/KeyfindingsfromtheYouthStudy.pdf).

Of the youth surveyed, 67 per cent did not approve of live-in relationships and 61 per cent considered a love affair

between people of the same sex to be wrong. As many as 23 per cent said they would be uneasy if their neighbours cooked non-vegetarian food. These statistics quite clearly reveal that young people in India have still not understood the constitutional values of equality, justice, liberty and fraternity.

In such circumstances, how does a young person form her/his worldview? The most logical solution is to follow the Constitution of India. Our Constitution provides us a common story within which we can all act as aware and active citizens. But since most of us don't know much about it except that it is a boring chapter we have to study in school, we never look to it for guidance.

This is why CYC started Samvidhan LIVE! The Jagrik Project – a public initiative to connect young people to the Constitution so that they can take it to the streets and practice it. It is a game with reality-based self and social action tasks, played in pairs over a course of five weeks. The participants are called *Jagrik* which means active citizen (a play on the words *Jagruk Nagrik*).

Jagriks get a game board, dice, a set of cards representing fundamental rights and duties, a gender wild card, instruction and scoring sheets along with different coloured stickers for each pair. Jagrik pairs roll the dice and wherever it lands on the game board, is their next task. They literally get to play out a right or duty by doing a self and social action task along with their partner.

Most tasks require collaboration where partners help each other win. Each time they complete a task, they score points which takes them further ahead in the game. After crossing the tasks off their list, Jagriks come together every week to share their lessons with each other in group meetings called *Jagrik Jamghats*.

Samvidhan LIVE! game board

The impact of Samvidhan LIVE! on youth
Since the launch of this campaign in 2016, a survey on constitutional awareness was conducted with over 22,000 respondents in 16 states. It showed that the average score of citizens on constitutional awareness was as low as 36 per cent.

To see whether playing the constitution game had a positive impact, CYC conducted a snap poll of the *Jagriks*. The poll showed that youth who played the game had much higher awareness and engagement levels after finishing the game (as compared to the national average score and their own score prior to playing the game). They scored 59 per cent in awareness after undertaking the Jagrik journey.

The campaign partners of the Jagrik Project also introduced it in some of the schools in their areas. People for Change, a youth-led organization that works with underprivileged children on the Right to Education in Jharkhand, conducted this campaign in Kasidih High School, Jamshedpur. The school's principal, Francis Joseph says, "This is an interesting initiative taken for children to live the Constitution and understand it in a better way...in the game, there is more focus on duties so that we can make children more responsible citizens and look towards a better India."

The Jagrik Project has benefited young people in several ways. The game helps students to:

1. **Embrace diversity and fraternity** – The game has tasks where students get to learn about diverse identities. It leads them to respect individuals who are different from them and nurture a sense of unity as citizens of this country.

"There was a task where a Jagrik pair had to visit another student's home, observe their customs and even cook for them. When a Christian student cooked for this pair, they appreciated the food and they wanted her to share the recipe with them," says Dr. Punam Kumari, who anchored the campaign with 51 students from class 11 in her school.

The game also introduces students to fraternity, the missing piece in experiencing our rights and duties. While it is easy to understand and enforce equality, liberty and justice through fundamental rights, there is no concrete way of enforcing or measuring fraternity. That is why fundamental duties cannot be legally bound. Samvidhan LIVE! brings to life this missing piece of fraternity by bringing the focus back on duties and makes every student conscious of them (the scoring of the game is such that you get twice the points for picking up a duties based task. It therefore encourages you to become conscious of your fundamental duties and live the value of fraternity).

Samvidhan LIVE! game kit

2. **Grasp the imbalance between rights and duties** – The game is designed in such a way that it makes students realize how we need to perform our duties if we want our rights to be respected. It makes them strive for a balance between their rights and duties.

3. **Build team spirit in the classroom** – Playing Samvidhan LIVE! gives teachers an opportunity to create cross-border pairs (of identity – religion, language, class, caste, gender, etc.) and encourage the spirit of collaboration among students instead of competition. Shaba Khan, who teaches English at Agrini Public School in Seoni, Madhya Pradesh observed that after playing the game, students from classes 6-8 began to mix with each other when they had to do a task to make laws for their school. She said, "I noticed that children who never spoke to one another began to develop new friendships and complete tasks together."

4. **Experience unknown social realities** – Carrying out a task can give a student clarity on a particular issue which she/he may not have faced otherwise. For example, surviving on Rs. 32 for a day will help them understand the struggles of a person who lives below the poverty line. This makes them realize why the right to equality is so important.

"Our school is near a forest area and our students can see how the tribal community is struggling with poverty. After doing this task, they came up to me and said how unfair it was that a tribal person who does so much manual labour barely makes any money," says Shirish Chouriya, who anchored Samvidhan LIVE! at Agrini Public School.

5. **Understand 'others' in a new way** – Social tasks open up students' minds to new perspectives and gives them a chance to speak to other students or members of the society. Students develop the capacity to communicate non-violently and disagree respectfully even if their views don't match with someone else's.

Shirish shared how a task related to gender equality developed a student's ability to think critically and question. When Shrish asked the student what his father did for a living, the student said, "Why does everybody want to know about my father? Why does nobody ever ask me what my mother does? She does a lot of work."

6. **Get out of their comfort zone and nurture their leadership capacities** – The game is full of tasks that make students think in extraordinary

ways, discover themselves as individuals and reflect on what kind of citizens they would like to be.

7. **Pay full attention and engage deeply** – Children find this game entertaining because it has practical tasks which keep them on their feet. "Kids find oral learning about rights and duties boring. When they do a task themselves, they understand concepts such as equality more easily," says Shaba.

8. **Be *jagriks*, not just *nagriks*** – Teachers can empower their students to live their constitutional values by initiating this game and facilitating discussions. As a teacher, you get a chance to help your student become a *jagrik* (an aware and active citizen) instead of just a *nagrik* (citizen).

9. **Make informed electoral choices** – In the long term, lessons from the Jagrik game can help students choose their leaders carefully based on their understanding of ethics.

10. **Take action in their own communities** – Teachers and students can join hands to undertake small campaigns in their communities about local issues. For example, organizing a clean-up drive to practice a fundamental duty.

How teachers can use Samvidhan LIVE! in their classrooms

CYC has a school version of the Samvidhan LIVE! game kit. It is available in both Hindi and English. If you're interested in using the kit, you can act as a facilitator, customize the modules and use them in your classroom.

"Playing Samvidhan LIVE! is completely possible in the school. Teachers can use the last 10 minutes of their class for the game and ask students to complete the tasks as part of their homework. In the next class, they can organize a group discussion where students get to share their experiences and share the next task," says Dr. Punam Kumari.

As opposed to simply reading out a chapter in the classroom, teachers can divide the class into pairs or small groups and ask them to carry out self and social action tasks. The teacher can also use her/his creative skills to craft a module customized to complement the existing curriculum. Teachers can play the game with their students over a period of 4-5 weeks using the time allotted for a free period, SUPW or extra-curricular activities. "Teachers can also customize the module based on the needs of their students and their level of understanding," says Shirish.

If you are a teacher and would like to order a game kit for your class, please send an email to cyc.delhi@gmail.com. **TP**

Sowing the seeds of citizenship

Navjot Kohli, Meghana Desai, Deboshree Bhatacharjee

Navjot Kohli has 30 years of international experience in training and education and curriculum development in secondary and tertiary levels. She is currently with Shantilal Muttha Foundation as the Mulyavardhan Programme Manager for English medium schools.

Meghana Desai has nine years of collective experience in programme design & strategy, training, assessments, teaching and content writing. She is currently heading Monitoring & Evaluation at Shantilal Muttha Foundation, Pune.

Deboshree Bhattacharjee is a writer, editor and content strategist. She specializes in producing multi-format content on women's and children's issues. She is currently working as Senior Manager – Communications with Shantilal Muttha Foundation.

You can reach the writers at nkohli@mutthafoundation.org.
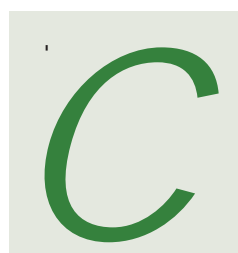
'Child-friendly', 'learner-centred', 'joyful learning', 'democratic', 'peace education', 'values education', 'citizenship education', 'constructivist classrooms'... phew! The expectations for how education ought to be are endless, and, unsurprisingly, overwhelming for the teachers burdened with fulfilling them. Much has been written in our policy frameworks about the gaps in the way education is currently delivered and the challenges in overcoming them. Time and again, this has been reiterated through teacher training, education forums, workshops and conferences, and yet, the chasm remains as wide as ever.

So, we all know the problem, but what is the solution? We all know that it is not just the IQ (Intelligence Quotient) but also the EQ (Emotional Quotient) that will determine our children's development, their level of meaningful contribution to their family and the world, and the quality of life that they will eventually lead. Interestingly, several competencies necessary to build emotional intelligence among children overlap with the competencies needed to turn them into responsible, productive citizens – a prime expectation of 21st century education.

If we look at school education through the lens of providing a 'value-based education' with the key

constitutional values of *liberty, equality, fraternity* and *justice* as the bedrock, we have a winning proposition in hand. The question then becomes – *how can we translate this lofty vision into a realistic action plan, relevant to the school context, without creating any pressure on the school ecosystem?*

We are presenting below an overview of one such initiative which started from a few rural Zilla Parishad (ZP) schools in Maharashtra and has now successfully been scaled up to around 40,000 government primary schools across Maharashtra and all government primary schools in Goa. This initiative has also been accepted and is being implemented in the private school networks of the Archbishop Diocesan Board (ABE), Goa and Vidyabharti.

'Mulyavardhan' – background and evolution

In 2009, Mr. Shantilal Muttha, a social entrepreneur (and founder – Shantilal Muttha Foundation, Pune), was greatly disturbed by the rising incidence of violence and disruptive behaviour among children. Excessive exposure to media, overuse of technology and shaky societal values were seen as the major contributors to this undesirable scenario. It was this burning problem that led him to conceptualize a school-based programme called *'Mulyavardhan'*, designed with a strong focus on nurturing values for democratic, responsible citizenship among children, right from their formative years of schooling. This programme was initially implemented in around 450 ZP primary schools in the Beed district of Maharashtra and enriched by the recommendations of successive impact assessment studies by

institutions of national and international repute including the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi.

Today, Mulyavardhan (MV) adopts a 'whole-school approach', enabling schools to provide child-friendly, value-based education in their efforts to nurture caring, responsible, productive and democratic citizens. Under this approach, values are not 'taught', but absorbed by students from the school ethos, processes and practices.

### The Mulyavardhan framework

MV is based on the four constitutional values highlighted in the Preamble: justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. Bearing these core values in mind, eight MV values have been defined, aligned to the school-education context: **respect for human dignity, responsibility, autonomy, creative and critical thinking, harmonious living, valuing diversity, concern for others** and **active contribution**. To internalize these values, five competency clusters of social-emotional learning for children have been identified: **self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills** and **social awareness**. These values and competencies are reflected in

the MV educational materials, enabling children to learn and discover through various activities in a child-centred, child-friendly classroom environment, as well as through the whole school (see pyramid).

How is Mulyavardhan implemented?

The Shantilal Muttha Foundation (SMF) introduces MV to schools in a phased manner. In the first phase, primary teachers from Standard 1-4 go through MV training, after which they are provided with all the educational materials to start implementing MV in their classes. The trained teachers also get access to the Mulyavardhan mobile app which has self-learning A/V content on MV and all other related educational material.
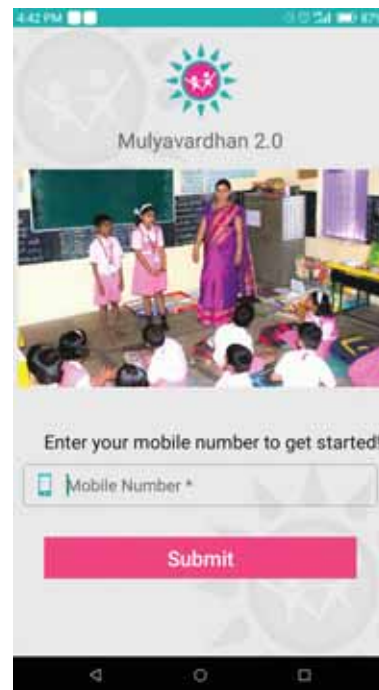
Mulyavardhan Mobile App

In the second phase, about a year later, the heads and the management of the school undergo a 3-day workshop on the whole-school approach to support them in incorporating MV values throughout the school
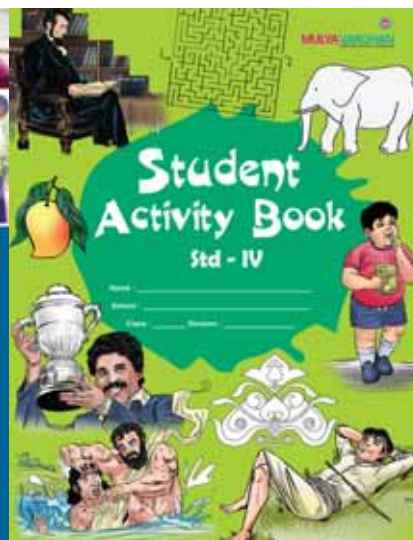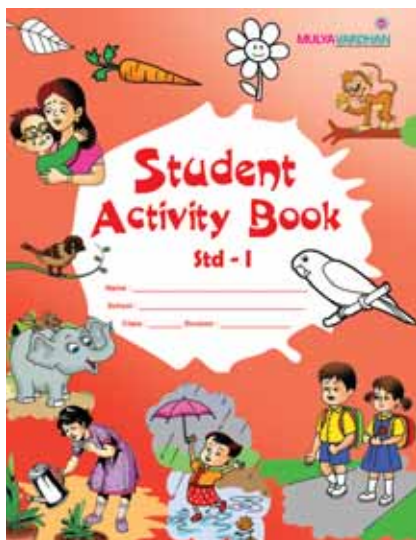
processes and practices and not just in the classrooms. Finally, in the third phase, schools are encouraged to integrate MV into the teaching-learning of all their scholastic subjects. MV is currently available for Standard 1-4, with content development for other levels in progress. MV educational material is available in English, Marathi, Urdu and Konkani with other regional languages coming soon.

### How does the Mulyavardhan curriculum play out in classrooms?

The essence of the programme is to move away from rote learning and the traditional, didactic methods of teaching and learning to one where children themselves become explorers and discoverers of their learning. The classroom shifts from a teacher-centred one to a child-centred one, thus also shifting the role of the teacher to that of a facilitator with the help of simple-to-implement cooperative learning strategies.

MV activity books are composed of around 50 grade-wise activities covering roughly 35 hours of the academic year. The spiralling curriculum, with progression aligned to the development stages of the child, ensures the internalization of the values by the children.

The activities are arranged and designed in four units focusing initially on the self, then moving on to the family, and finally the world at large (see figure below). The scope of activities in each unit is aligned to this progression. In **Unit 1**, children introduce themselves and know other classmates, recognize likes and dislikes, express views, set goals, identify emotions, and get to know their home, school, village/ city and surroundings. In **Unit 2**, they work on understanding rules and responsibilities at school and home, recognize appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, understand the importance of honesty and learn to make moral judgments.
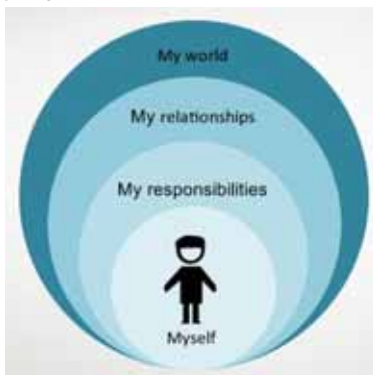
In **Unit 3**, the activities guide children to respect everyone. They understand how others care for us, and how we care for others. They recognize the value of friendship and cooperation, identify causes of conflict and figure out ways to resolve them and learn to show empathy. **Unit 4** focuses on the world at large, and children recognize diversity, challenges of disability, and ways to save the environment. They learn to value inter-dependence, manual labour and the contributions of women. They also work on a project for the benefit of others.

The Mulyavardhan books provide a wide variety in the delivery of activities, such as songs, storytelling, role play, skit, art and craft, and poems. Furthermore, group discussions, pair-work and presentations enhance children's ability to think independently, express views, engage in dialogue with others, listen actively, and summarize and present views. This diversity in learning ensures student engagement and motivation.

For instance, one activity that can be found in each standard's

Testimonials

"...it is a beautiful programme. Things like thinking activities were not something that children were accustomed to doing. Initially, it was a little difficult, but now they are beginning to think rather than rote-learn. So, it won't be limited to value education. They will also use this in other subjects."

Teacher, Our Lady of Mount Carmel High School, Arambol, Goa

"I have been associated with the program since 2016 when it was launched in one of the clusters. The response to the program has been great from parents and students alike. In fact, whenever there is a PTM, the parents always talk about how the program has brought a behavioural change in their kids. I have no doubt it is due to MV. I will be retiring this year and plan to join the program full-time."

Cluster Officer, Sirsoli, Government of Maharashtra

"I always wanted to do something good for the school and this generation studying in the school. Mulyavardhan has given me a direction to think and act. Now, many students come and talk to me; earlier, they were hesitant. Some of the students have shown a drastic change in their behaviour. We cannot say that this is only due to Mulyavardhan, but it is for sure that Mulyavardhan has played an important role in bringing this change. One student had an anger issue; he was uncontrollable, and whenever he became angry he started running towards his home. He did this many times. Gradually, now, he is able to manage his anger, and also tells other students about managing anger and behaving properly."

Head Master, Government Primary & Middle School, Pernem, Goa

"Initially, my daughter was never ready to help me even with small household chores. She was also reluctant to go to school and refused to do the day-to-day routine activities properly. One fine morning, I got up, and I was surprised to see my daughter sweeping the backyard of our home. Now, she does it daily without being told and also helps me in other household work. She listens carefully when I explain to her about the way to do something and then follows it properly. She also asks me whether she did it properly and if I require her help anywhere else. All these household chores don't stop her from attending school; she has become enthusiastic about attending school. Her teacher told me that she now actively participates in class."

Parent, Government Primary & Middle School, Pernem, Goa

book is 'My Vote'. Teachers use this activity to select class monitors. The learning outcome for this activity is that children practise voting, and explain the reasons for their choice. Students follow all the steps, right from selecting candidates and preparing the ballot box to voting, vote counting, identifying the winner and finally sharing the reasons for their choice. This is an important learning activity for understanding the democratic electoral system. It also teaches children to queue up to vote and wait for the results patiently. They learn to accept the democratic principles of secret ballots and majority victory. Emotionally, it strengthens them to accept defeat gracefully and learn through the reasons given by others how they can improve for future elections.

Cooperative games are all-time favourites with children, one of them being 'Up in the Air'. Here, groups of six-eight children form a circle. They hold hands and stand at a distance from one another. A balloon is thrown in the centre of the circle and the entire group has to ensure the balloon does not touch the ground, all the while holding their hands. To make it slightly more difficult, introduce two more balloons after the children manage to keep one balloon up in the air. (For more sample activities, visit: www.mutthafoundation. org/index.php/teacher-activity-book/)

Cooperative learning structures used in MV

MV teacher training in Maharashtra

Teacher as facilitator

How does Mulyavardhan empower teachers and school heads?

MV training empowers teachers to conduct activities using the constructivist approach, providing ample space for cooperative learning. Teachers are provided cooperative learning strategies like group work, pair work and community circle, as well as cooperative games to help them facilitate learning through sharing and teamwork. MV also provides tools to enhance the teachers' questioning skills to support their transition from a conventional teacher to a facilitator of knowledge. Classroom management strategies like the 'Quiet Signal' help teachers manage a classroom heavily engaged in participatory activities and discussions. (The 'Quiet Signal' is a symbolic gesture given by the teacher by raising her right hand, which the students subsequently have to follow. This is done to gain the attention of the students, primarily before giving out instructions). MV training ensures that teachers are adequately equipped to create joyful, child-centric and child-friendly classes. As a result, the whole teaching and learning process becomes democratized.

The MV workshop for school heads aims at re-thinking how critical school processes are planned and carried out. It takes the school heads through a reflective and interactive process of infusing values in processes like decision-making, goal-setting, annual planning, execution of school-wide activities such as the school assembly and creation of a value-oriented, participatory school environment.

The essence of it all

Working towards creating a democratic educational system for our children is the premise on which the idea of Mulyavardhan rests. Such an education system will guide children away from a disciplinary approach that is based on reward and punishment, and hence on competitive values, to one that provides awareness on the natural and logical consequences of actions, thereby leading to the strengthening of cooperative values.

Ideas on democratizing the classroom or cooperative learning strategies are not new, and there are plenty of open sources for these strategies. Mulyavardhan's uniqueness rests in using these strategies to inculcate in children democratic values as enshrined in our Constitution. To achieve this, the school, the classroom and the teacher have to transform as well, leading to the gradual democratization of the entire education system.

MV class in action

For more information about Mulyavardhan, please visit
www.mutthafoundation.org/
For enquiries, please write to info@mutthafoundation.org.

Building better communities

Pranali Sisodiya

The author is working as Regional Coordinator and Executive Team Member of Kumar NIRMAN, a joint initiative of NIRMAN, Gadhchiroli and MKCL Knowledge Foundation, Pune. She is also the co-founder and General Secretary of the Vardhishnu Social Research and Development Society, Jalgaon. Vardhishnu has been established with an aim to work on specific social issues through study/research and implementation based on the findings. Vardhishnu is working with out-of school children to enrich their educational status. She can be reached at pranali.s87@gmail.com.

A few years ago police raided a party near Sinhgarh Fort, Pune. People who were present in the party didn't even realize for some time that they were being arrested by the police because nearly all of them were under the influence of drugs. Ironically, many of them were juveniles.

According to the National Mental Health Survey, the suicide incidence rate per 1,00,000 population for those below the age of 14 is 0.5, while the rate for those in the 14-17 age bracket was 9.52 – much higher than the national individual average of 0.9 per cent. This is to some extent because young people are not able to cope with the high expectations from parents and society.

The lack of social connect that we see in contemporary times tends to generate a highly individualistic attitude among children. Moreover, the intensely competitive education and examination system nurtures, promotes and tests only limited types of intelligences, mainly

Photos courtesy: Pranali Sisodiya

linguistic and mathematical, ignoring or suppressing social intelligence in children. This produces a highly stressed, individualistic and loner child; unconcerned and disconnected with society and social responsibilities.
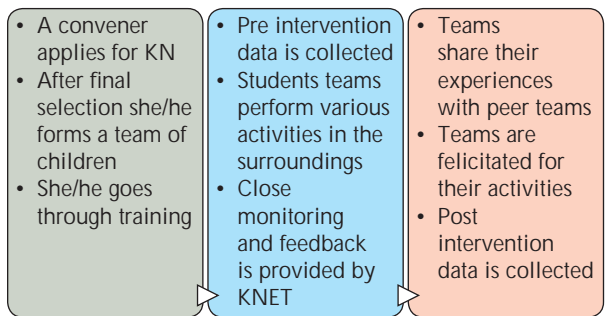
According to Howard Gardner (developmental psychologist), there are different types of intelligences. Our education system does not pay sufficient attention to all these intelligences. It barely provides an environment where children can utilize their capabilities on their own. By the principle of 'Use it or lose it!', these intelligences gradually disappear from a child, knowingly or unknowingly.

To tackle this issue, five years ago, in 2013, Padmashree Dr. Abhay Bang (social activist) and Mr. Vivek Savant (MD, Maharashtra Knowledge Cooperation Limited) developed an educational process – Kumar NIRMAN . The idea was to develop a non-formal experiential educational process for children in the age group of 10 to 15 so as to inculcate in them universal human values, to sensitize a large number of children to various problems and challenges in the society and to let them experience the joy of discovering/inventing solutions and to act towards solving social problems. In the process children learn to cooperate rather than compete thereby helping shape their personality and attitude and also develop social intelligence which is usually ignored in a regular educational setup.

To attain the above objectives, Kumar NIRMAN has five guiding principles: 1) Learning through experiences, 2) Co-operation instead of competition, 3) Freedom of learning, 4) Multiple intelligence and 5) Life is an education.

Educational model of Kumar NIRMAN

Kumar NIRMAN enables children to experience the joy of discovering/inventing solutions to problems in their surroundings.

• A convener applies for KN • After final selection she/he forms a team of children • She/he goes through training	• Pre intervention data is collected • Students teams perform various activities in the surroundings • Close monitoring and feedback is provided by KNET	• Teams share their experiences with peer teams • Teams are felicitated for their activities • Post intervention data is collected

A person above 18 years of age, interested in working with children in the age group of 10 to 15, and who

has access to children applies to Kumar NIRMAN by filling an application form. If found suitable they undergo a telephonic interview. If selected they become eligible to participate in a Kumar NIRMAN training workshop. A Kumar NIRMAN executive trains the selected individuals over two workshops. The primary objectives of these trainings are to help conveners (the selected individuals are called conveners) understand the importance of universal human values, social intelligence, 'learning through doing', the development process of school-age children, and to understand the need, concept, working methodology and educational tools of Kumar NIRMAN.

After being trained, the conveners start working with their teams. Even as the training is in progress each convener is asked to form a team of 6-12 children in their neighbourhood. Teams gather at least once a week for Kumar NIRMAN meetings. During their initial meetings, team members play games, share their experiences, opinions about various things, and organize field trips to places nearby. Such activities help strengthen the bond between the convener and children, among the children themselves and gives them the opportunity to observe their surroundings. (This is the first step in the learning cycle of Kumar NIRMAN). Students from each team decide the name and team leader for their team. Teams maintain a team diary in which they write a summary of every meeting, the steps followed for any activity they did and their experiences after each activity. Gradually, the convener starts asking questions, getting the children to think about the various social problems in their surroundings and to find possible solutions.

Kumar NIRMAN emphasizes learning through problem solving. By exploring social relationships and interacting with their surroundings, children are able to formulate ideas, try them out, and accept or reject what they learn.

Tobacco-free village!

The children from team Siddheshwar were gathered for a regular meeting of Kumar NIRMAN. They discussed the problems of their village. Tobacco consumption was a major problem. The meeting went on for an hour and at the end of the meeting, the children decided to do something about this issue.

First, the students directly approached the men who consumed tobacco and asked them to stop. The men obviously ignored the students. Then the children wrote and performed a drama on this issue and displayed posters as well. Still nothing much happened. Then, the children started talking to the tobacco vendors to try and convince them not to sell tobacco, but that also failed. There were three *pan thelas* in the entire village. The students decided to study the issue more deeply. They approached the vendors again and became friends with them. To study the issue, the students designed an interview schedule for the three vendors with the help of a convener. They collected data which included the names of the different varieties of tobacco available in the *pan thelas*, the cost per sachet, the amount of tobacco sold by the vendors in a day, the amount spent on daily consumption. After gathering this data, they calculated the total amount of tobacco sold by the vendors in a day and the amount spent on daily consumption for a month. The figure was in lakhs. They approached the gram sabha with this data and presented it in front of all the villagers. The children suggested that this huge amount could actually be spent on education or health. A few members of the gram sabha did not heed to any of the children's suggestions saying children did not have a right to speak in the gram sabha. Instead of being disappointed and giving up, the children started studying their lessons of civics. They realized that there is no provision that stops children from raising issues in the gram sabha. They went back to the gram sabha. Finally, the villagers took them seriously and the entire village agreed to ban tobacco.

The convener facilitates the provision of time, space, and materials necessary for in-depth learning. Becoming skilfull at problem solving is based on the

Inculcating the idea of gender equality

The Agnipankh team from Jalgoan district gathered for a meeting on the occasion of 26th January. This team belongs to a village from an extremely remote place. During the meeting, students along with the convener started talking about Republic Day. The discussion veered towards the Constitution, human rights and equality. The team then started talking about the different rights provided by the Constitution. One girl from the team asked if the Constitution granted equality to everyone why did inequality still exist? Another girl continued saying, "In our village, ownership of everything like house, farm, animals lies with our fathers or grandfathers only and this is injustice to our mothers and grandmothers though they also take equal responsibility of the household."

The team decided to do something. During their discussion, they came up with a unique idea – sending letters to their mothers; usually all post was received only in the father's name. In the next meeting, the children prepared decorative greeting cards and posted them. One day, the postman arrived in the village shouting the names of women. All the men became furious and

understanding and following the sequenced stages in the learning cycle.

Observation → Experience → Study → Discussion → Action → Sharing → Observation
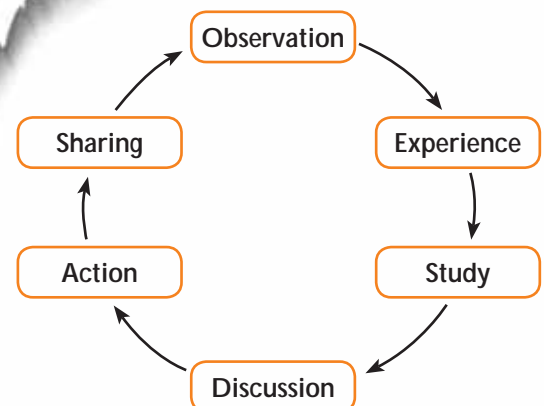
Learning cycle of Kumar NIRMAN

suspicious. But when the women collected their post cards and opened them, they found nicely decorated greeting cards. Then the children told their mothers about their idea. The next day, the students told the convener that their mothers were very happy and a few even had tears in their eyes.

Reinstalling the bus stop board

One day, in the village of Parbhani district, a girl studying in 4th class fell down from a bus and fractured her hand. A few children from a Kumar NIRMAN team were witness to this incident. They shared this with the entire team in their meeting and they started

seeking reasons behind the accident. Then one student shared that earlier there was a board (mentioning that this was a bus stop) by the state transport department in front of the school, but that the board had broken a few months ago. Bus drivers no longer stopped at the school now and the girl tried to get off a running bus thereby breaking her hand.

The children decided to solve this problem. They took this issue to the *sarpanch* of their village. With the help of a painter, the students prepared the bus stop board and fixed it in its earlier place. The *sarpanch* was with the students. Then they visited the state transport department and submitted an application requesting a stop at the school.

Till date, Kumar NIRMAN has given opportunities to 130+ conveners and 1000+ students to work on various problems around them and to perceive the joy of learning through doing.

After a four year journey, we are receiving feedback from conveners and parents telling us about the positive changes they have noticed in the children who participated in the programme. These children are now sensitive to the problems in their surroundings. They are becoming co-operative while working in groups.

the focus is on the learning that happens in the process of doing the activities. These activities are undertaken to tackle a whole range of issues from making bird feeders to solving the tobacco problem in the village. After a year of carrying out such activities (one cycle of Kumar NIRMAN), we organize felicitation and sharing events for teams. Children share their activities and learning experiences in this event.

Note: In case you wish to become a convener or have your students participate in the Kumar NIRMAN programme you can find out more detils by calling: 9767488337/9503060698. Contact or write to contact.knirman@gmail.com. You can also read more about Kumar NIRMAN and its work at http://www.mkcikf.org/kumarnirmanhttp://kumarnirman.blogspot.in or visit https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyych9cNzX3mm7v3hV8D9IA, the You tube channel of Kumar NIRMAN.

Kumar NIRMAN emphasizes that activities undertaken, whether to understand or solve a problem, should align with any one or more of the steps in the learning cycle.

Rather than focusing on an activity becoming successful,

A commitment to good governance

Swapni Shah

The author is the Chief Operation Officer at Unnati Rajasthan, a non-profit organization that works to promote social inclusion and democratic governance. She can be reached at swapni@unnati.org.

We want a society and a government in which human rights and individual dignity are respected, rule of law is observed, people fulfill their responsibilities, and common good is everyone's concern. The most conducive environment for this is provided by a constitutional democracy. Democracy also provides the most fertile ground for fostering social change. The ideals of democracy are realized when all citizens participate in governance in an informed manner and with the understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Engaging citizens in local governance improves the ability of local authorities to solve problems and create more inclusive communities who take more initiative.

Citizens with the requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes and values help sustain democracy. However, these qualities cannot be assumed to be inborn, and must be developed. Thus, civic education is an important task for educators, policymakers, and members of civil society.

The content of citizen education
Civic education promotes an understanding of democratic ideals and forges a commitment to democratic values and principles. It must impact the knowledge, skill, attitude and values of citizens for positive behaviour change.

Citizen education should include understanding of the democratic system and the justification for limited, dispersed, and shared power. This will enable citizens to hold governments accountable and to ensure that the rights of individuals are protected. It should include appreciation of law. Citizens also need to recognize the opportunities available in the system for participation and exercise of choice beyond electoral politics.

Skills of evaluating and taking positions are essential to enable citizens to assess issues on the public agenda, to make judgments and to discuss their assessment with others. This requires critical thinking, explaining and analyzing. The ability to describe functions and processes will enable citizens to detect and help correct malfunctions. Discerning and describing trends in public program access, nutrition status, migration, or employment helps to fit current events into a longer term pattern. The ability to analyze enables one to distinguish between fact and opinion and clarify responsibilities.

Skills that enable participation, monitoring and influencing are necessary for effective and responsible participation – question, deliberate with civility, build coalitions and manage conflict in a fair, peaceful manner. 'Monitoring' refers to the skills citizens need to track program delivery or the handling of issues by the government. It also means the exercising of oversight or watchdog functions. 'Influencing' refers to the capacity to affect the formal and the informal processes of governance – using petitioning, speaking, or testifying before public bodies, joining advocacy groups, and forming coalitions.

Attitudes and values like moral responsibility, self-discipline, respect for human dignity, civility, respect for the rule of law, critical mindedness, willingness to listen, negotiate, and compromise are essential to the maintenance of democracy. They develop slowly over time from experiences in the home, school, community, and organizations of civil society. The right attitudes and values will enable citizens to be attentive to public affairs. It inclines the citizen to work through peaceful, legal means to change unjust laws or demand new ones.

Making of citizen leaders – Unnati experience
Education and training are crucial in empowering citizens to effectively participate in local

Photos courtesy: Swapni Shah

governance. The knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of citizens are shaped by family, religious institutions, media, community groups and many others. However, civil society organizations serve as public laboratories in which citizens learn democracy by doing it.

Unnati – Organization for Development Education is a civil society organization or a capacity building development organization. Strengthening of local governance institutions has been a focus area of the organization since the early 90s. Towards the end of this decade, Unnati started an experiment of developing citizen leaders as a key component of strengthening local governance. Citizen leaders are not leaders by virtue of being elected or holding any office. They recognize their rights and responsibilities as citizens in a democratic governance framework. They look for ways to make life better for others and contribute in nation building. Unnati perceives such citizen leaders as social capital and develops their capacities to be more impactful through perspective development on social justice, skill on community mobilization, interacting with government functionaries at different levels, writing applications, seeking information or registering grievances and information transfer in trainings.

Citizen leaders are usually identified from the marginalized communities, which more often than not don't have a voice in the society. Special efforts are made to include women and persons with disabilities. Citizen leaders are identified in community meetings. Education is not a criterion. Preference is given to the young because they may have more mobility, enthusiasm and energy and they are usually more willing to learn and are desirous of change. For the initial six months, the identified leaders are given small tasks requiring, seeking and giving information to people. The community facilitators of the organization support the citizen leaders through continuous guidance and hand-holding.

Every month a meeting of the citizen leaders is held at the block level. These meetings provide space for peer review of actions done at the local level. Citizen leaders share their experiences and dilemmas and evolve a joint action plan for the coming month. It is also a forum for capacity building as new developments and information of public schemes are discussed. Individually and collectively, citizen leaders are guided and supported on strategies to address local issues for accountability in public programme provisioning and lead to governance reforms. In the meetings, citizen leaders are not only imparted updated information about the different public programmes but also provided with the skills to fill up forms, write clearly worded applications and grievances, gather information from digital sources, etc. Meetings also provide space for reflection on ethical considerations.

In the last four years, 506 citizen leaders have emerged from this programme and they have taken up 7000 actions disseminating information of public programmes, supporting the poor and marginalized to access the programs by helping them manoeuvre the complex application process and other bottlenecks and lodge grievances in case entitlements are denied. They also arrange interface meetings between citizens and local government functionaries with an aim to facilitate demand and negotiation. Around 75 per cent of the citizen leaders are women. Supporting citizen-centric action helps strengthen organized demand for quality services. It creates a social capital for the poor and excluded communities.

Type of action taken by citizen leaders in 2017	Number
Community meetings for information on schemes	124
Support in organizing documents like Aadhar, opening bank accounts, generating certificate of caste, age, death, etc., as proof of eligibility and preparing the application forms under various schemes	1497
Registering grievances regarding non-access of schemes and services	184
Activation of statuary committees	74
Other accountability actions, information disclosure, *gramsabha* mobilization (see box for examples of citizen leaders in action)	1030
Total	2909

Campaigns on *'Civic Engagement for Improving Public Services'* have been specially designed as longitudinal monitoring tools to be led by citizen leaders. The campaigns are based on our understanding that enduring change can happen only if people are informed and empowered to demand their rights and entitlements. The participation of people is critical to understanding the issues related to access and status of the public services and initiating local actions including requests, dialogues, representations or registering grievances. The campaigns provide a platform to give information on public schemes and programs and engage citizens in strengthening village institutions and demanding accountability from service providers. It enables citizen action. Citizen leaders are exposed to the different grievance redressal strategies. The campaign mode facilitates reaching out to remote locations. It helps to identify long-standing or common issues that need representation at the block, district or state level. The exercises are not statistically representative in terms of sample size or coverage. Pictorial Public Schemes Information and Assessment Display Charts (designed and printed by Unnati with help from the citizen leaders) help citizen leaders and community facilitators to easily provide program related information and also capture data on the indicators after consultation with the community and review of the institution for aggregation and longitudinal comparison of status.

Citizen leaders are taken through six different kinds of trainings in a three year period:

i) Citizenship and governance – focus on the need for interactive engagement between citizens and the institutions of the state. It highlights that without an active citizens' group, the state cannot be made effective and responsive. Beneficiary oriented program delivery will not be able to bring improvement in the equality of services.

ii) Citizens' involvement in the various committees can reflect people's aspirations, interest and needs in the planning and execution of public schemes and finally build people's ownership.

iii) Poverty analysis and social inclusion – focuses on building a social perspective on vulnerability. Citizen leaders are oriented in the process of marginalization and issues of women, dalit and persons with disabilities. It helps citizen leaders identify and analyze issues of the poor in a fair manner.

iv) Government schemes and social justice laws – focus on various programs and schemes related to health, education and social security/ protection. Citizen leaders are oriented in submitting application forms and administrative processes to avail the benefits and challenges in accessing the same. Citizen leaders are also oriented in various social justice laws like SC/ ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, Anti Rape Act, Domestic Violence Act, etc. Apart from providing information, the training focuses on strengthening the skills of citizen leaders to access government schemes and social justice laws.

v) RTI and social accountability – focuses on the relevance of social accountability in the present context. Citizen leaders are oriented in the use of various tools and techniques used in facilitating social accountability process.

vi) Effective interface with the government – focus is on skill development for presentation of issues before the government in terms of application, dialogue, negotiation, group representation or jan sunvai (public hearing). When these tools are used effectively within constitutional boundaries, one can expect better results without necessarily confronting the government. Government

Citizen leaders in action

Making Public Distribution System (PDS) accountable

The PDS beneficiary list and entitlement according to family size has been a contentious issue in Rajasthan. The grievances increased multifold after a new list was issued under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). Despite several attempts to understand the problem, the list was not getting corrected by the officials. Citizen leaders were oriented about the issue and started a campaign to provide information to people on their entitlements concerning PDS. Citizen leaders motivated people to always demand and get receipts generated from the point of sale (POS) machines that were introduced in 2017 across the state. As many as 116 cases of discrepancy between the entitlement and actual take-off were identified and appealed for correction. If the response was not received within 30 days, a second appeal was made with the office of the District Collector. At village level open meetings, citizen leaders verified the ration received by people and mentioned in their ration cards with the information listed online. These meetings became huge jan sunvais. The movement has compelled the district administration to ensure the delivery of the entitled amount of ration.

Daud Khan uses Rajasthan Sampark to make village school regular

Citizen leader Daud Khan from Patodi block has been constantly complaining about teachers coming late and irregularity in the mid-day meal to block authorities who turned a deaf ear every time. Ultimately, he lodged a complaint on the online integrated grievances portal, 'Rajasthan Sampark'. The administration came to the village on the pretext of investigation to pressurize the people. Without wilting under pressure Daud Khan stood by his demands and action was initiated.

Residential land rights of nomadic people

Hasam Khan has single-handedly raised the case of land patta for 100 families of a traditionally nomadic community. He mobilized the people and helped them present their demand to the District Collector. In the face of opposition from the local panchayat and administration, he stood with the people for boundary demarcation and measure of common land required for re-allocation.

Identifying the vulnerable families and linking them to public programs

Puro devi, citizen leader from Sindhri, was once told that children of Ruparam are never brought for immunization. She asked the nurse to visit these homes with her. The family of Ruparam Bhil was living on the edge of the village in extreme poverty. They did not have access to any public program because they did not have supporting documents and bank accounts. The banking correspondent even asked for a bribe to open an account which they could not fulfill. Purodevi helped the family get appropriate documents and the family is accessing pension, PDS and MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act).

officials are invited to the workshop so that citizen leaders can understand their perspective.

vii) Leadership development – focuses on leadership aspects like facilitation of gram sabha, conflict resolution, consensus building on village development, and promoting equity and social justice which are essential components for development and social change.

All citizen leaders are sensitized on gender. Citizen leaders are given opportunities to participate in national and state level networks and advocacy forums like Right to Education, Right to Food, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, Jal Jan Jodo Abhiyan and forge their own alliances. If a citizen leader has taken up a local issue that requires understanding on land rights or Common Property Resources, they are linked to other organizations with expertise for capacity building.

Considerations in school education

Civic education is necessary for every child. Schools bear a special and historic responsibility for the development of civic competency and civic responsibility through both formal and informal education beginning in the earliest years and continuing through the entire educational process. Formal instruction in civics familiarizes students with the constitution, structure and responsibilities of the various institutions of governance and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Instruction about rights should make it clear that few rights can be considered absolute. Rights may conflict with one another or with other values and interests and therefore require reasonable limitations. The rights of liberty and equality, for example, or the rights of the individual and the common good are often in conflict with one another. It is very important, therefore, that children develop a framework for clarifying ideas about rights and the relationship among rights and other values and interests. This framework then can provide

a basis for making reasoned decisions about the proper scope and limits of rights. Instruction about responsibilities should make it clear that rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. Responsibilities are the other half of the democratic equation. A sense of personal responsibility and civic obligation are in fact the social foundations on which individual rights and freedoms ultimately rest.

Though primary responsibility for the cultivation of ethical behaviour and the development of character, including moral character, lies with families, schools can and should play a major role. Schools should provide students with opportunities for the development of desirable traits of public and private character relevant to citizenship. Cooperative learning activities such as class meetings, student councils, simulated public hearings, mock trials, mock elections, and student courts tend to promote character traits needed to participate effectively.

Special community service learning projects maybe designed such as tutoring younger students, caring for the school environment, participating in voter registration drives, gender safety audits or access audits. Recognition of shared values and a sense of community are

encouraged through celebration of national and state holidays and celebration of the achievements of classmates and local citizens. Attentiveness to public affairs can be encouraged by regular discussions of significant current events. Students may be asked to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues that involve ethical considerations.

In today's context, with increased access to technology and social media and widened space for debate and dialogue, school curricula may orient children on using technology responsibly for improving transparency.

Schools can pro-actively engage with civil society organizations, bring community leaders into the classroom to discuss issues with students and provide opportunities for students to observe and/or participate in their activities/programs.

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The paper draws heavily from the project and other reports of Unnati – Organisation for Development Education generated during its decades of work on strengthening civic leadership.

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3. Paul R. Lachapelle, Elizabeth A. Shanahan; Montana State University; The Pedagogy of Citizen Participation in Local Government: Designing and Implementing Effective Board Training Programs for Municipalities and Counties. Available at: http://www.naspaa.org/JPAEMessenger/Article/VOL163/07_16no3_final_lachapelleshanahan.pdf. Accessed on April 12, 2018

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5. Ganesh Prasad Pandeya, Does citizen participation in local government decision-making contribute to strengthening local planning and accountability systems? An empirical assessment of stakeholders' perceptions in Nepal; International Public Management Review Vol. 16, Iss.1, 2015; Available at: http://journals.sfu.ca/ipmr/index.php/ipmr/article/viewFile/247/243; Accessed on April 12, 2018 TP

The everyday business of being a citizen

Sonal Iyer and Neha Yadav

Sonal Iyer is a development professional with over 15 years of experience in the area of legal aid and community empowerment. Currently she is associated with We, The People Abhiyan and heads the Content team. She can be reached at sonal.chri@gmail.com.

Neha Yadav is the Head of Secretariat, North at We, The People. She works closely with social science teachers of partner government and private schools in Delhi and NCR for efforts in transforming civics education. She can be reached at nyadav.ba@gmail.com.

"There can be no daily democracy without daily citizenship."

– Ralph Nadar, American political activist
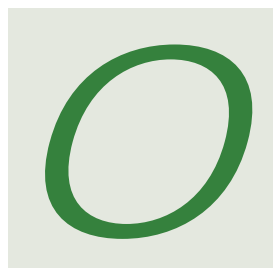
Our country functions according to the framework given in the Constitution of India. By birth we become citizens of the country, inheriting all the rights associated with it, even if we do not perform our responsibilities as citizens.

In our drawing room conversations, we talk about poor administration of government departments, corruption, deteriorating law and order situations, etc., but seldom do we ask ourselves, 'What have I done to influence change in my neighbourhood? Do I feel responsible if garbage around my society is not being picked up? The road around my society is in a bad shape and has not been repaired for months? Why is it that the children belonging to economically weaker sections of the society are still not able to get admission under the Right to Education act?'

We see these situations around us, but we never feel that we are also responsible to do something about them. We blame officials and departments for not doing their duty. Yes, the concerned department has to do its duty and solve the problems that citizens face, but what is our responsibility as citizens? This question remains unanswered. We want someone

else to perform their duty but choose not to perform our own.

In the present scenario, more than ever before, there is an urgent need for active citizenry. Apart from criticizing the government, we have ample rights and responsibilities towards our nation. No democracy can function without active participation of their citizens in daily life. There is need to take ownership and responsibility of our surroundings to make the government function, to raise our voices when needed and to work in collaboration with government departments whenever required. But again, the question is how to do it?

Insights from around the world have shown that democracies are deepened and sustained through an informed, active and responsible citizenry. This is a singular condition. This means that the development of responsible citizenship is a critical building block for our nation. It will enhance not only the capability of the citizens but also improve governance through people's participation. The UN defines active citizenship as 'a combination of knowledge, attitude, skills and actions that aim to contribute to building and maintaining a democratic society.' It clearly states that we require certain knowledge, attitude and skill to perform our roles as citizens in a vibrant democracy. This is the focus of our work at We, The People. In partnership with institutions, we build the capacities of young citizens in understanding and putting to action their role as citizens, constantly using the lens of the Constitution.

In India, despite directions from NCF 2005 and draft NEP 2016, this link between democracy and citizenship has not been invested and cultivated enough in schools[1]. Students and even teachers believe that the civics currently taught in schools is not only 'boring' but also 'not relevant' and 'not practical'[2]. This signals a crisis. On the one hand, we have students coming out of schools uninspired and ill-equipped as far as values, knowledge and practical skills necessary to participate in a democracy are concerned. On the other, communities face governance and development issues that could be addressed through citizen engagement.

In our civic curriculum there are chapters on active citizenry but they fail to connect with the children on how to make the subject relevant in daily lives. We are expected to understand constitutional values, the history of constitution, know of the fundamental rights in our daily lives, the structure and function of our government at all levels, how laws are made, etc. We work on the knowledge aspect in the school curriculum but the skills and attitudes required to

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1. CMCA India's Yuva Nagrik Meter
2. Common responses from students from class 8th to 10th in WTP awareness events

Photos courtesy: Neha Yadav

play the role of active citizens are conspicuous by their absence.

We, The People Abhiyan is working to bridge this gap. In addition to enhancing the civics curriculum, we focus on practical application to address social and development issues faced in day-to-day life.

Civic action approach

The process of working on any civic issue is as follows:

1. **Identifying and understanding the issue:** This is the first step towards civic action. The issue can be anything that concerns students in a civic space. For e.g., they may choose to work on an issue of waste management, conditions in school, (infrastructure and quality education) conditions of roads, street lights, ground water levels, etc.

2. **Gathering information about the issue:** After issue identification it is most important to gather information to understand the issue better. This is the part where learnings from the classroom can be applied by the student. There can be three types of research that can be done to understand all aspects related to a problem.

   a. **Desk research:** Information that has to be collected through referring to the Constitution, Acts, official documents using the Internet and/or going to the concerned authority's office. Students should find out:

   i. Fundamental right (Article) related to the issue

   ii. Act related to the issue

   iii. Any rules/government orders related to the issue

   iv. Government department or authority related to the issue

   b. **Field research:** To understand the issue completely some information cannot be gathered through documents or the Internet but only by speaking with others in the community. Students should find out:

   i. How long the problem has been there

   ii. How many people are affected by this problem

> *Success Story from a government school in Haryana:* For the students of the Government Senior Secondary School Ghamroj – Alipur district, Gurugram, going to school was a very painful experience as the road connecting the school with the village was broken and filthy with dirty water from a drain spilling out. The problem was noticed everyday by residents but nobody took any action. The teachers encouraged the students to take action as part of their civics curriculum. They contacted the Sarpanch with a formal application and various informal discussions. The Sarpanch cooperated with them; the BDO (Block Development Officer) and SDM (Sub-Divisional Magistrate) Sohna also took notice of this matter. The teacher along with the students were immensely joyous when the Sarpanch shared an undertaking that a grant of Rs. 20 lakh was being sanctioned for the maintenance of the road, now the road will soon be repaired.

This approach has been used with various schools and has been successful. Read one such story in the box alongside.

In a democracy, citizenship is an everyday job and like any other job, the training to play the role of a citizen should also be given in the schools. The way we lay the foundation of knowledge for our students to be doctors and engineers in school, it is only fitting that we equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitude to be active and informed citizens as well and no learning stays with you better than when you practice it in your own life. The civic action approach can serve as the right instrument to build these skills and make civics come alive in classrooms. This is the most important life skill for any citizen in a democracy!

iii. Have there been any previous attempts to resolve the issue? If, yes gather information about that
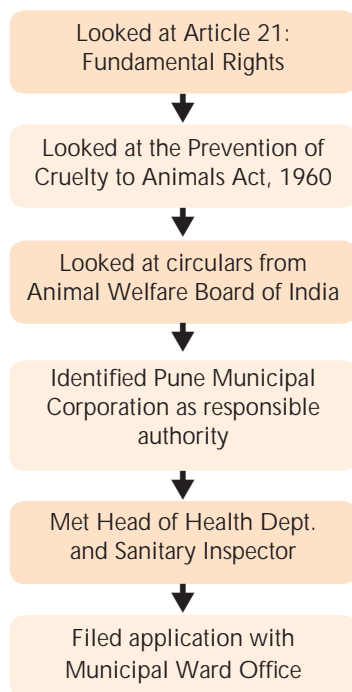
c. **Media search:** Students should also look at any news report or media article that has come out in the recent past on the same issue. This can give them an insight on the various aspects related to the problem.

3. **Taking action:** After all the relavant information is gathered about the issue, students can take the following actions:

a. Write a complaint to the related department mentioning – details of the issue, all the relevant information (violation of FR, section of Act, order or judgment, etc.), solution desired and the time within which action should be taken.

b. File the complaint – keep one copy of the complaint and send another to the related department/s.

c. Follow up on the complaint – keep following up through phone/email/ formal complaints.

The same process of the civic action project has been done in many schools where students have taken up issues and followed the above-mentioned process to resolve identified problems. One such case is discussed below:
Issue: Stray dogs in the city
School: Learning Home, Pune

Looked at Article 21: Fundamental Rights
↓
Looked at the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960
↓
Looked at circulars from Animal Welfare Board of India
↓
Identified Pune Municipal Corporation as responsible authority
↓
Met Head of Health Dept. and Sanitary Inspector
↓
Filed application with Municipal Ward Office

Want to know more?

Here is a list of resources you can tap into to learn and understand civics better.

Books
1. Great speeches of modern India
   – Rudrangshu Mukherjee
2. Ten judgements that changed India
   – Zia Mody
3. Ideaof India
   – Sunil Khilnani

Important websites
1. https://loksabha.nic.in/
2. https://rajyasabha.nic.in/
3. https://rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/official_sites/constituent.asp

Documentaries/AV materials
1. Samvidhan series by ShyamBenegal
2. Loksabha and Rajyasabha TV Documentaries
   http://loksabhatv.nic.in/, http://rstv.nic.in/
3. https://www.youtube.com/user/wethepeoplecitizen/videos

Films
1. The Post, 2017
   Director – Steven Spielberg

2. Hidden Figures, 2016
   Director – Theodore Melfi

3. The Help, 2011
   Director – Tate Taylor

4. Well done Abba, 2009
   Director – Shyam Benegal

5. Ek Cup Chya, 2009
   Director – Sumitra Bhave and Sunil Sukathankar

6. Manthan, 1976
   Director – Shyam Benegal

Organisations working on civic education

India
1. www.wethepeople.ooo
2. www.cmcaindia.org
3. http://www.janaagraha.org/

USA
1. http://www.civiced.org/

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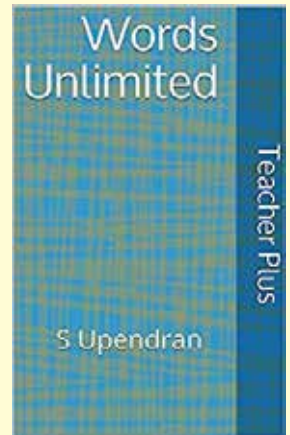
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