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HUM HINDUSTANI

The Indian Child Citizen in School and the World

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ABSTRACT

This report presents the findings of a research project on children and citizenship. It examines how children articulate their understanding of citizenship through the key concepts of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, which are guaranteed to all citizens by the Constitution of India. The project focused on children in Grades 6-9 from three locations: Shaheen Bagh in Delhi; rural Firozpur in Punjab and Govandi in Mumbai. These locations were chosen for their history of providing education outside of school through purposive activities. The site in Govandi, Kitab Mahal, is a library that organises various learning activities for children. In Shaheen Bagh and the farmers' protest sites, libraries were set up for children, where volunteers conducted educational sessions. By exploring these different spaces, the project aimed to understand how the Indian child citizen is shaped by a complex interplay of state policy, school education, and everyday lived realities.

The report analyses the work that emerged from creative engagements with children to argue for the importance of bringing children's voices and everyday lived experiences into the classroom to challenge normative ideas of citizenship. The project sought to examine and enable children's engagement with the arts and used a combination of documentary interviews and arts-based exercises. The project sought to learn from the process of recording the dual moments of being and becoming – children's self-expressions (to be) that can help them develop an understanding of their lives and worlds (to become). The report presents an analysis of this process and explores whether the collective articulations, when brought together, lead to new understandings and relationalities. The report focuses on the role of the arts in the classroom and the challenges inherent in excavating meaning from children's voices.

Keywords: Children, schooling, arts, citizenship, libraries, school education, creative engagement, art and learning

INTRODUCTION

Hum Hindustani is a research project that engages with select groups of children to understand what citizenship means to them, and how they make sense of the key ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity enshrined in the Constitution of India. Even as the child as the future citizen of the Indian nation-state has been the focus of policies across education, health and culture, the tension between school education and lived realities has always existed. Colonial education, designed to further the interests of and serve the British Empire, focussed on the individual divorced from the specific cultural contexts. This modernist-universalist approach was countered by Gandhi, Tagore, and Aurobindo in different ways, each seeking to focus on the self in relation to the world. However, nationalist leaders did not sufficiently question colonial knowledge structures, and after Independence, a colonial legacy favouring an elite Brahmanical control of knowledge remained. The structural inequalities stemming from feudalism, patriarchy, and casteism underlying India's democracy that Ambedkar had warned of were never properly addressed through education (Batra, 2020).

In independent India, citizenship goals have been actively embedded in education and the attempt to mould the ideal citizen can be seen across various policy documents. The focus remained on universalising elementary education, with school seen as the route to enable modern thinking and create citizens who will contribute to the development of the nation-state. The first Curriculum Framework in 1975 spoke of the need "to enable the growing citizen of tomorrow to participate in the affairs of the community, the state, the country and the world at large" (NCERT 1975 quoted in Batra, 2010). Later, neo-liberal reforms focused more on "individual aims and self-interests", based on the "premise of employability and economic growth" as the chief aim of education (Batra et al., 2021), further marginalising lived realities in school curriculum and educational practice. In the 2000s, the National Curriculum Framework 2005 along with the Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009 took a step towards framing education through the lens of the Constitution, emphasising equity and social justice. However, overarching neo-liberal policies and a change in the political regime once again marginalised these ideas.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequalities and demonstrated how children from poor and marginalised spaces are of little concern to the state. This appears to have been institutionalised in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 through its silence on the RTE Act and the fact that children's enrolment in state schools has declined over the years. Scholars argue that NEP 2020 in fact encourages the privatisation of elementary education by making "requirements for schools less restrictive", to augment "nongovernmental philanthropic organisations" and "to allow alternative models of education" (Batra, 2020). This would end up regularising low-fee private schools that have poor infrastructure and teachers who are not properly trained, thereby increasing the gap between those who have access to expensive private schools that provide an education suited to the times and those who do not.

Also, schooling continues to be associated with the idea of the ideal child – obedient, disciplined, respectful, hardworking – although a growing body of work on childhood has pointed out the problems with this (Vasanta, 2004). This "ideal child", linked to the notion of the child citizen, has long been influenced by ideas in developmental psychology that have contributed to children being seen as incomplete adults, to

be moulded by the school system among other things. Any childhood that deviates from this normative idea is seen as abnormal and to be fixed to create a healthier society, inextricably linking the idea of the "ideal child" to the "ideal child citizen". Even though recent discourse on empowering children from a rights-based approach in the development sector has sought to include notions of diversity, the idea of an ideal, normative childhood in the service of the greater good continues to imbue much of the work. For example, an NGO like Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA) that works on citizenship and life skills education seeks to empower "young people to be the very best they can be, so that India is the very best it can be" (CMCA, n.d.)). The multiplicity of childhoods is often elided in such approaches, with civic ideals given more attention than citizens' rights. Even the right to compulsory education ends up emphasising enrolment and retention in schools rather than "recognising the role that citizens could play in shaping or questioning the very nature of the education that is on offer." (Subrahmanian, 2002) Children's lives in popular culture reflect this flattened approach with insufficient representations of the complexity of childhood experiences and the variety of childhoods that exist in India. Although children's publishing in India has taken significant strides in the last two decades with a greater diversity of representations as well as storytelling forms, there is much that is still needed. Film and television have even less. Much of the mainstream discourse is still built on behalf of children without the voice of the children themselves.

In this context, an examination of how the idea of citizenship is understood by children, with the voice of the children at the centre, allows us to throw light on the ways in which inequalities are institutionalised through state-supported structures, the market, and civil society. It can also allow us to understand the challenges and possibilities that lie in educational practice as a means to create a just, equitable and sustainable society. For education to "realise the rights, freedoms and capabilities they (learners) require to live the lives they have reason to value" (Batra et al., in TESF Background Paper), it is necessary that the schooling process recognise the diverse contexts of children and integrate that into learning experiences. This is critical to empower children from marginalised communities and spaces to think critically about their rights, and for children from privileged spaces to develop empathy and a nuanced understanding that can foster a spirit of equity and social justice. Formal schooling via a centralised approach is unable to provide this. Children come from different backgrounds with varying access to cultural and social capital. A centralised and homogenous schooling framework does not include these as part of the learning experiences and in fact, impedes learning by denying children agency and expression. Thus, even as the endeavours to influence policy continue, it is perhaps necessary to embed other educational practices in a variety of classroom settings, formal and non-formal, that can provide this. **Hum Hindustani,** as a research project aims to explore this very possibility.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Hum Hindustani was conceived as a research project that would involve the generation of art and writing by children, through a process of co-creation, enabling us to understand the idea of citizenship through children's perspectives, and find ways of disseminating that understanding to contribute to the discourse on education and citizenship. The material generated would also be available for use as resources in future classroom interactions as well as teacher preparation programmes.

The project focussed on the following questions:

- How is the child citizen conceived and produced?
- Do children understand Indian-ness in different ways in school and outside?
- Is there a dissonance in what is taught and what they experience?
- How do children make sense of the dissonance between the school space and outside?
- Are there varied understandings that they receive from other sources?
- Is there a way to deploy these learning experiences that provide varied understandings into the larger goals of education?
- Can this create sustainable equitable societies and encourage lifelong learning?

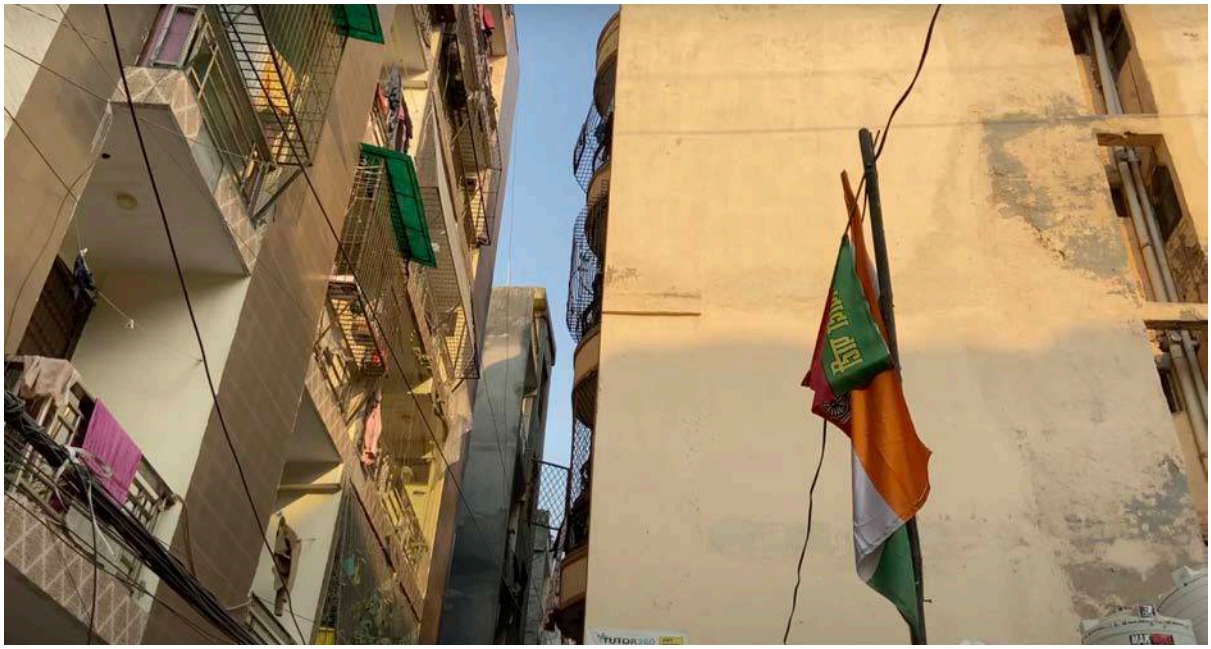
These questions were to guide the interaction with small groups of children at three sites across India, chosen for their context of purposive educational activities. The sites are detailed in the next section. The process of engagement was conceived of as a combination of arts-based exercises, that encourage self-expression in the children and reflect their everyday experiences, along with documentary interviews with a select few that allow for conversations with the children in some depth. The choice of art workshops came from an understanding that children's self-expressions can often convey more layered meanings to enrich our understanding and become valuable resources to be used with other children. This material generated through the workshops would be disseminated through a blog or website, available for use by teachers everywhere. It would also become the basis of analysis, along with the interviews, on new ways of addressing the challenges of citizenship by listening to children's experiences, and on the role of the arts in educational practice. The larger goal is to influence classroom interactions and contribute to the discourse on sustainable, equitable education via conversations with policymakers and civil society.

RESEARCH CONTEXT: SETTING AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Hum Hindustani brings attention to children from specific marginalised spaces. It focuses on children from Grades 6-9 in three spaces - Shaheen Bagh in Delhi that was the site of anti-CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) protests, rural Firozpur in Punjab that was part of the farmers' protests, and Kitab Mahal, a library catering to Dalit and Muslim children in Govandi, Mumbai. All three sites have a history of purposive activities to provide education for children. Kitab Mahal is a library that organises a variety of learning activities for children, and libraries were set up for children at Shaheen Bagh and at the farmers' protest sites where volunteers regularly conducted educational sessions. These spaces together provide a range of experiences and identities to explore how the Indian child citizen is produced through the complex interplay of state policy, school education, and the everyday lived realities of children.

Shaheen Bagh, Delhi

A neighbourhood in South East Delhi, Shaheen Bagh shot into prominence in the winter of 2019 as one of the sites of the sit-ins in the protests against the CAA. Part of the urban sprawl around Okhla Gaon that have developed since the 1990s, Shaheen Bagh and other neighbourhoods like Abul Fazal Enclave that it is contiguous with, are largely inhabited by Muslims, with most families having migrated to Delhi from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar for education and livelihood. It is quite a diverse neighbourhood with working-class families and middle-class families living in close proximity. The protest site became a symbol of the anti-CAA movement and was led by the women of the area. This meant that children were also present at the site, and this became a contentious issue with the state and right-wing groups who claimed that children's security and safety were being compromised. Protesters countered saying that not bringing children to the site with them would effectively mean that the women could not protest as they did not have other child-care options. The Shaheen Bagh women demonstrated that the site could in fact become an educational space by setting up libraries and even a pavement school.



Shaheen Bagh | Photo Credit: Samina Mishra

Kitab Mahal, Natwar Parekh Compound, Govandi, Mumbai

Kitab Mahal is located in Natwar Parekh Compound (NPC), a collection of high-rise buildings in Govandi, built in 2007 as part of the Slum Rehabilitation Authority's provision of formal housing to slum and pavement dwellers from different parts of Mumbai. People from more than 10 different locations have been relocated here, making way for various urban infrastructure projects across the city. With more than 25,000 inhabitants, the 5-hectare neighbourhood is one of the most densely packed urban areas in South Asia, and the relative space available per person is as low as 1.9 square metres (Public Housing: Natwar Parekh Colony – Community Design Agency, n.d.). Many of the inhabitants of NPC are permanent residents, but there are also several who are tenants. The attached bathroom, piped water connection, and the elevators in each building were attractive for most of those who moved here, but the reality is that infrastructure remains a big challenge. The alleyways between the buildings are piled with years-old garbage. Broken drainpipes discharge sewage into the streets and damaged streetlights are common. Much of this is being addressed as part of a revitalisation project by Community Design Agency, an organisation that has been working in the area since 2016. In collaboration with the residents, the organisation set up Kitab Mahal as one in a series of steps to find solutions for the challenges faced by the neighbourhood. The library is envisioned as a catalyst for building community engagement and creating a space for children to learn, particularly during the pandemic when online learning in their cramped homes was difficult.

Natwar Parekh Compound | Photo Credit: Samina Mishra

Firozpur District, Punjab

The farmers' protests in 2019-20 saw tremendous mobilisation across the villages of Punjab with farmers' unions sending groups of volunteers to maintain a continuous presence at the three main protest sites on the outskirts of Delhi. Given Punjab's extensive network of roads that are used to transport agricultural produce, the toll plazas on the highways in the state also became sites where people gathered to speak, sing, and celebrate the spirit of solidarity. Zira block of Firozpur district, the third site for the project, has a strong Bharatiya Kisan Union (Krantikari)[1] presence, with the women's wing being particularly active

[1] This is one of the breakaway groups of the Bharatiya Kisan Union founded in 1978.

Firozpur, Punjab | Photo Credit: Samina Mishra

on issues of drugs and domestic discord. While the protest included diverse groups from farmers with large landholdings to landless labourers, the involvement of farmers who have less than 10 acres of land was the highest. Many of these came from the Jat Sikh community. Caste segregation continues to be active in the villages with separate gurdwaras for the Jat Sikh community and for those considered to be Mazhabi Sikhs, from the lower castes. The protest became a space where some of these lines were blurred but not erased. Punjabi and Sikh identity in conjunction with the identity of a farmer, was the foreground of a battle that was seen as being waged against the Centre, something that was a continuation of Punjab's history of conflict with Delhi.

The choice of these sites for the project allows for knowledge about citizenship to be co-created by foregrounding voices and experiences that have been marginalised. The emphasis on children's voices in the project is guided by a firm belief that children are as much a part of the world as adults, and therefore it is important to include them in mainstream discourse. While the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989 led to a growing focus on children's voices in research, it has not always led to a greater acknowledgement of children's realities. Scholars like Allison James (James, 2007) and Spyros Spyrou (Spyrou, 2011) have written about the superficiality of reporting children's voices in research that emphasises inclusion but does not theorise enough about how children's perspectives can contribute to our understanding of society - "...it is as if in the words that children speak lie encapsulated the innocence and authenticity of the human condition" (James, 2007). They argue for the need to contextualise children's voices and for researchers to be reflexive about the process of interaction. **Hum Hindustani** draws upon this critique to move away from an emphasis on authenticity, and instead seeks to pay attention to the adult-child engagement as part of a collaborative creative process that can lead to knowledge creation. Art has long been used to elicit responses from children. The art-based workshops that are part of this project use image-making and writing as ways to enable children's self-expression. In an analysis of what emerges from the workshops, there is a focus on the process so that the children's work is collated and viewed in the larger context it emerges from, and not seen isolation.

Lata Mani has spoken of how the researcher's positionality is determined by many things that are the focus of research - the sites, participants, and the stories that emerge from them (IIHS Channel, 2014). The processes in the art workshops, including the group discussions, is prompted by the adult researcher from a position very different from that of the participating children. However, the children draw from their everyday experiences and choose which of those enter the artwork. The final piece that emerges, created by the children, is an example of the intersection between adult and child when different positionalities come together at a common point of interest. This is not very different from interactions between adults in the research space. Adult voices are also documented within a power structure. Therefore the context needs to be remembered even as we glean meaning from how children express themselves in this project.

Another key idea that has guided the framing of the research is that of "the mighty child" theorised by Clementine Beauvais in the context of children's literature. Beauvais writes of the child as symbol – "mighty because it "owns" the only thing that the adult does not: the future, and the indeterminacy that goes with it" (Beauvais, 2015). She contends that the power relationship between adult and child is not straightforward, and though the adult may be in authority, the child wields a kind of power in the act of reading the children's book written by an adult. The children's book may become the source that teaches the child something that the adult does not know yet, and the child may find meaning that the adult is unaware of. This is what Beauvais calls the child's might. Drawing from this, it is my belief that the child's creative articulation through the arts in the classroom is also a manifestation of the child's might. Just as the child can create meaning from a children's book, the child's creative self-expression, facilitated by interacting with the adult, may reveal meaning too. In both cases, these can become meaningful for both the child as well as the adult if we listen and make place for voices of children. While the adult workshop facilitator (or teacher) wields authority, the work created by the children does not emerge merely from a top-down approach and may contain layers of meaning that the adult is unaware of. By enabling children to tell their stories, we create opportunities to learn from their perspectives, and in the process support their developing sense of self and of the world.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The project uses a combination of arts-based workshops with a group of 10-12 children along with interviews of a select few. Children enrolled in middle-school were chosen, with a few of the participants making the transition to Grade 9, because the middle-school curriculum includes a study of the Constitution of India with a focus on the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity that form the core of this project. It attempts to include a mix of socio-economic backgrounds and gender, both in rural Punjab and in the urban spaces of Delhi and Mumbai. Differing socio-economic backgrounds also meant that some of the children were enrolled in government schools and some in private schools at all three sites.

Selecting Children

At **Shaheen Bagh,** there were 13 children — 12 plus one child who joined on the second day of the workshop when she heard about it — who were part of the workshop. Of these, seven are girls and six are boys. They all live in and around Shaheen Bagh. Five attend Delhi government schools for boys and for girls in Jasola. They are from working-class backgrounds with the fathers involved in trades like tailoring or driving auto rickshaws, and most mothers staying home as housewives. Four attend English-medium private schools like Delhi Public School, Bluebells School International, and The Frank Anthony Public School. They are all cousins from the same extended, middle-class family, with one father running his own business and the other two in salaried jobs. One child had lost her mother several years before, and the other two mothers were schoolteachers. Their house is a relatively large, bungalow-styled house, and in one of the more open lanes of the area. One boy attends the DAV Public School in Jasola, and three of the children are enrolled at a private school — The Green School in Abul Fazal Enclave that includes Islamic education along with an English-medium curriculum. These children are also middle-class. One father owns a successful export business and had been quite active in the protest. Another works in Dubai in a managerial job. The flats they live in, however, are quite small and have basic infrastructure. The mothers are both housewives although one of them, who was also the primary field contact, had set up a pavement school at the Shaheen Bagh protest site. The children had all been to the protest site with their families, and had varying degrees of involvement. Some had just sat in the tent listening to the speeches, others had made posters and sung songs.

In **Govandi,** 13 children — eight Dalits and five Muslims (mostly Ansaris, a caste that is considered OBC - Other Backward Castes) — from Grades 6 to 9 were selected for the art and writing workshop at the Kitab Mahal library. Of these, six are girls and seven boys. NPC is largely working-class, although there are several examples of social mobility, with families that were early settlers having been able to establish themselves more comfortably and send their children to college. However, most of the participating children in the workshop are from backgrounds of precarious livelihoods and living. Of the eight Dalit children, six have fathers doing wage labour as cleaners or rag-pickers, and even if they have municipal jobs, it is related to cleaning or garbage-collection. The other two Dalit children live with single mothers. One father had died some years before and the mother has a job as a nanny, and the other is not working and is dependent on her natal family. Of the five Ansari children, one has lost her father, three have fathers who have jobs as electricians or mechanics, and one works in a salaried office job. The mothers of all the children work as tailors, henna artists, beauticians or housemaids, except for one Dalit family where the mother is a housewife. Six children are enrolled in municipal

schools in the area and five are in low-fee private schools, including two at a low-fee English medium school that also includes Islamic education. Two of the children were out of school since their families had moved to the area during the pandemic and they had not yet received transfer certificates from their previous municipal school. As daily wage earning rag-pickers, it was difficult for the parents to make time to follow up on this, and the boys remained out of school at the time of the workshop.

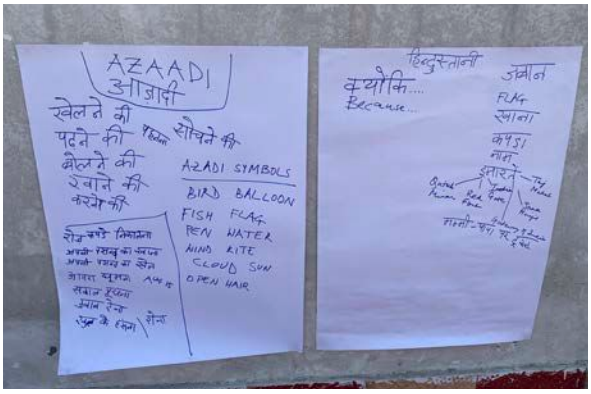
The children at the **Punjab** site are from different villages in Zira block of Firozpur district. This group of children is also mixed. Of a total of 13 children — nine boys and four girls — eight are from Jat Sikh farming families with landholdings varying from about eight acres to 20 acres, and five are from the Mazhabi Sikh and Rai Sikh communities, categorised as Scheduled Caste. The fathers in these families work in masonry, or are mechanics or landless labourers, and the mothers are housewives. Even in some landed Jat Sikh families, the fathers have alternate occupations running grocery stores or as electricians since the income from small landholdings is not enough to meet the family's needs. Of the Jat Sikh children, only one went to the local government school, all the rest being enrolled in private schools. All the Rai Sikh children were enrolled in government schools. The children in the group, along with their parents, had been active at the protest sites, either at toll plazas near the villages or at the sites on the outskirts of Delhi, for few days at a time. Some had gone more than once. Most of them had done *sewa*, helping to serve meals or tea, and had made posters.

Workshop and Interview Process

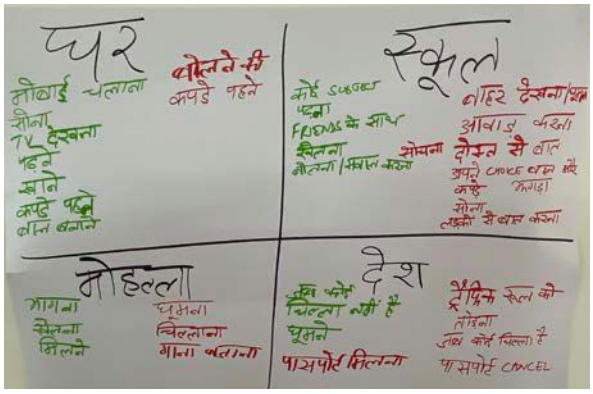
The process worked differently at each site owing to contexts and challenges. The workshop exercises were designed as a combination of writing and art, on the themes of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Work on each theme began with a group discussion during which children were asked to draw from their everyday experiences to share their understanding of that theme. For example, they were asked to respond to questions like:

- When and where did they feel free?
- When had they seen or experienced equality and inequality?
- Where did they feel a sense of fraternity?

The children's responses were listed on a chart for everyone to see, so that they could draw from that as they worked. They were asked to draw upon a mix of private and public spaces such as home, school, neighbourhood, and country to think about their everyday experiences. The writing exercises all



Notes from Workshop Group Discussion on Citizenship
Photo Credit: Neha Gupta



Notes from Workshop Group Discussion on Freedom
Photo Credit: Seher Islam

used a prompt and created a structure for the children to write in. Art exercises were conducted using scaffolding as a process. For example, enabling them via conversation to choose a background colour that represents freedom to them, drawing an object or figure as a symbol of freedom and then sticking that on the background as a collage, and adding a line about why that meant freedom to them.

At the Shaheen Bagh site, this process ran across a three-day workshop with each day focussing on one of the themes of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Some children wrote in Hindi and some in English. For example, on liberty, one child created a collage of balloons against a purple background, chosen as an expression of the freedom to choose a colour she likes, and wrote, "I want freedom to burst like a balloon when friends say racist things." She went on to explain that as a Muslim she had felt bullied in the private school she attended, particularly during the Shaheen Bagh protests, other children calling her a Pakistani or terrorist, and her not being able to do anything about it. Through her artwork, she was able to convey the repression of her feelings because of the way she experiences liberty in her everyday life. Based on the work generated during the workshop, interviews were conducted with some of the children to further explore their understanding and ideas. The mother of two of the children, a brother and sister, who was also the primary field contact was also interviewed. The interviews were conducted some days after the workshop in spaces that each of them was comfortable in.

The workshop at Kitab Mahal was planned as a three-day event on lines similar to the one at Shaheen. As early as the first day it became clear that most of the middle-school children were unable to write properly. Two years of inadequate schooling during the pandemic at schools that would have had challenges even in normal circumstances, had severely impaired their reading and writing skills. As a result, many of the exercises had to be modified, and the workshop was not as productive as the Shaheen Bagh one had been. Given this, the process was further modified to include interviews with all the children, and based on the responses, a few were selected to work further on the creative exercises. At a later date, two writing exercises were conducted with two of the older Dalit girls over Zoom, and one exercise on site at

Workshop at Kitab Mahal Library in Natwar Parekh Compound | Photo Credit: Seher Islam

a subsequent field trip, resulting in a collection of six poems. (An essay submitted along with this report on children, poetry, and citizenship examines the process for one exercise in detail.)

In Punjab, a formal workshop with the entire group was not possible because the members all live in different villages. Interviews were conducted with all the children, and later, a set of three writing exercises were conducted on a WhatsApp phone call with one of the girls who was active and present for long periods at the Singhu border protest site with her mother who is part of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Krantikari). Interviews were also conducted with her mother and another union office-bearer who was also a field contact.

While the research process evolved over the course of the project, the attempt was to retain the centrality of voices of children through conversations, either individually or in the group. Apart from the interviews, group discussions were held that led to each exercise, and responses were also sought from several children as they created the work. This allowed children's perspectives to be foregrounded in thinking about citizenship. The collaborative process through which the material generated from the creative exercises emerged also emphasised reflection on their everyday experiences, encouraging the children to articulate their thoughts more freely and clearly.

It is important to remember that the discussions and creative work were shaped by the questions and interjections of the Principal Investigator (PI), who was also the workshop facilitator. The individual subjectivity of the PI was the larger frame within which the conversations took place, and which influenced the design of the exercises and the prompts given. This is part of the research context and played a critical role in the methodology. This helped assign critical meanings that were informed by the larger context to children's responses. For example, the choice of spaces that the children were asked to draw their everyday experiences from — home, school, neighbourhood, country — were the PI's, chosen with the aim of learning how the larger context shapes their experiences of liberty, equality and fraternity, but the specific examples that the children shared and used in their work reflect their choices. Thus, the final work emerges as an intersection of both.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Children's Voice on Citizenship: The Need to Listen

Hum Hindustani is centred around children's voices and the need to include children's perspectives in our discussions about citizenship (or other ideas). Attempts at decolonising research have sought to include voices that have been historically marginalised. The child's voice is one such, and in the context of India, the voices of children from particular groups are even more so. While all children are dependent and vulnerable, it is important to remember that they are vulnerable in different ways because they come from diverse contexts. So, even as they grow out of childhood dependencies, the extent to which they will continue to be subordinate adults will vary based on class, caste, race, gender, and community (Appell, 2013). The choices of sites and children for this project were based on this.

The children's responses across the three sites reveal a dissonance between what is envisaged as citizenship through curriculum and schooling, and the children's lived realities. Inequalities based on class and caste that determine access to the kind of schooling children receive clearly impact children's articulation of ideas around rights and citizenship. There is a general absence of learning about constitutional rights and citizenship across the three sites. This is true of children at all three sites enrolled in government schools, and also of some who attend low-fee private schools in Govandi, or in the rural private schools in Firozpur. For example, a girl in Grade 8 at a low-fee private school in Govandi spoke of celebrating Ambedkar Jayanti and of Ambedkar's importance in their lives, and linked Ambedkar to the Constitution, but with a little inaccuracy. She said, "*Unhone Bharat ka samvidhan jeet liya hai...*" - He has won the Constitution of India. When pressed to explain what she meant, she said she did not know what the Constitution was. In Zira block of Firozpur, two boys in Grades 6 and 8 of a government school had not heard of the Constitution or *samvidhan* or the word citizen or *nagrik*. One of them did go on to talk about rights, explaining that they had been part of the farmers' protest to fight for rights. When asked what rights were, he said, "*Haq... jaise mazdoor ko sahi dehadi na mile...*" – Rights... like a worker not receiving correct wages. But when asked where the *haq* or right comes from, he was silent. Another child from a Firozpur village, studying in Grade 9 in a private school said that rights were given by the government.

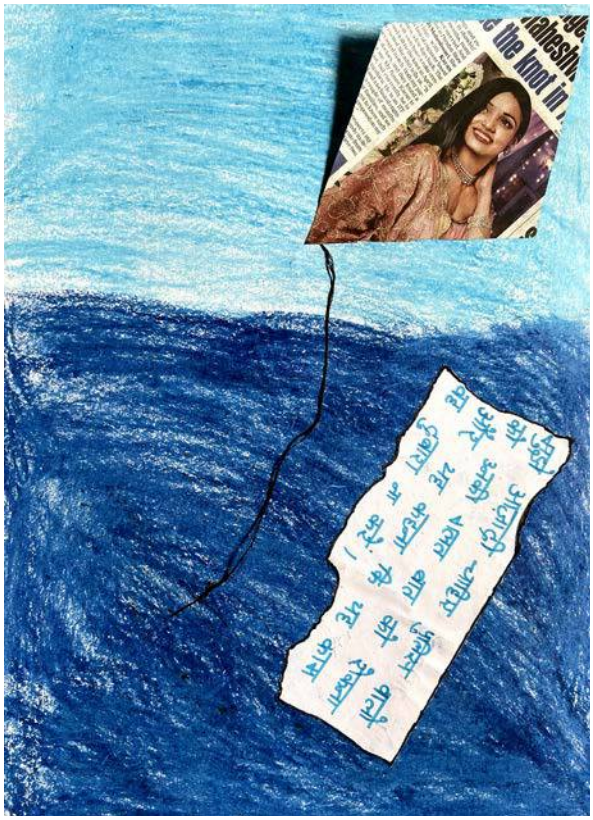
In Shaheen Bagh, the children from private schools shared how the Constitution and citizens' rights had been taught in school. These were both schools with additional Islamic curriculum as well as a regular, well-known CBSE school in Delhi. Awareness of fundamental rights and the Constitution also came from other sources. For example, all the children in Shaheen Bagh spoke of how they had learnt about the Constitution and rights at the Shaheen Bagh protest site. One child who spoke of having learnt about the Constitution and fundamental rights in school said that she experienced "unity in diversity" at the protest site, a concept she had read about in her textbooks. However, this lived experience did not find its way into the school, and the protest was never properly discussed at school even though many of the children and teachers were regular visitors at the protest site. In the case of the Firozpur children, the

Ambedkar Jayanti Celebrations at Natwar Parekh Compound | Photo Credit: Samina Mishra

involvement in the farmers' protests did not necessarily lead to a growing awareness of citizenship rights. The awareness revolved around the regional Punjabi identity and a sense of that being in conflict with the Central Government, or more precisely articulated as "Modi *Sarkar*".

Among those who were articulate in expressing awareness of citizens' rights, there was a clear recognition of how these rights are not equal in practice, and how class, caste, and other structural inequalities are at play everyday. In most cases there is an acceptance of these inequalities as a reality of life. This is reflected in the experiences shared by the children of being bullied at school for having a Muslim name or for being Dalit, being looked at differently in a public space when they are with family members who wear the hijab, or being told not to play on the street outside a rich person's house. In Govandi, one Dalit child said, "*Desh mein mere koi haq nahin hain lekin aur logon ke hone chahiye…*" – I have no rights in the country, but others should have rights. This is in sharp contrast to some of the children in Shaheen Bagh who were aware of the possibility of fighting for rights, perhaps as a corollary to the exposure to the protest site. One girl said "*Awaaz uthane ki baat mujhe pehle nahin pata thi*, Shaheen Bagh *se*." – I did not know that we could raise a voice, before experiencing the Shaheen Bagh protests. She went on to articulate that citizens can demand that the government takes everyone's opinions into consideration.

Listening to children enables us to reflect on how the classroom can open itself up to children's lived experiences to make learning meaningful and sustainable. If the goal of education is indeed to facilitate the development of active, thinking citizens, then children's voices need to be included in that process. Engagement with children in this project reflects how children are part of the world and how their experiences can contribute to a richer and more nuanced understanding of the present human condition.



Artwork from Exercise on Freedom

Artwork from Exercise on Freedom | Photo Credit: Neha Gupta

This can lead us to re-examine structures of education and work towards processes that enable equity and social justice. For example, one boy, also from Shaheen Bagh, spoke of wanting the freedom and confidence to speak up when he sees adults doing wrong things such as a policeman taking fruit from a fruit-seller's cart without paying for it, an incident that he had witnessed. Such responses if brought into the classroom can become rich sources of learning. If we are committed to including diverse experiences and voices to develop our understanding of the world to see how it can be construed and constructed more equitably, then we must glean meaning from the voices of children as well and find ways to integrate those into classroom learning.

Children's Voice: Listening Contextually

It is critical to remember that listening to children is not a quest for the pure voice of the child. Instead of an emphasis on authenticity, it is important to focus on the need to contextualise the process of recording children's voices and experiences to draw nuanced meanings. Engaging with children (as with adults), is a process in which the researcher creates a space, a framework for interaction, and a path for thinking, through the way questions are formed, the order in which they are asked, and the way a discussion unfolds. Spyros Spyrou has written about research with children and made a case for the researcher's self-reflexivity so that we may acknowledge "the messiness, ambiguity, polyvocality, non-factuality and multi-layered nature of meaning in 'stories' that research produces" (Spyrou, 2011). This does not take away from the meaningfulness of what children articulate, it is simply that the meaning must be assessed and articulated in the context of how the child expresses herself.

The creative work produced in the workshops that were part of this project are a testimony to this ambiguous, poly-vocal process with multi-layered meanings, a process of co-creation in which the framing is clearly adult-led. For example, as the PI, I chose the prompts for writing, and I created a framework of spaces that they were asked to think about — the home, school, neighbourhood, and country — and I asked them to focus on their everyday experiences. I definitely wielded authority. And yet there was an element of uncertainty. I could ask the questions, make the suggestions but I could not control what they would respond with, what examples their lived experiences would throw up. The moment of writing each line or of choosing a situation to draw was actually a moment where our differences and commonalities intersected. I brought my lived experiences through my thoughts to that moment and they linked that to their lived experiences to create the final text or image. With several possibilities, the final choice is made by the child (Mishra, 2023). The process reveals an intersection between the adult voice and the child's voice that may not contain certitude but does contain the possibility of multiple meanings that can help us re-examine ideas and notions of community, public space, and rights through the inclusion of children and their thoughts within the wider public discourse.

The Everyday

The project has also revealed the significance of paying attention to children's everyday as we engage with them inside or outside the classroom. The dissonance between theoretical explanations conveyed through textbooks and children's lived realities can be discussed only by focusing on the everyday. The everyday creates fissures in the normative understanding of community, identity, and belonging, and allows for stereotypes to be deconstructed. For example, the experiences of discrimination along the lines of caste, class and gender demonstrate that the idea of "*hum sab ek hain*" is not always practised, thereby fracturing the normative idea of Indian citizenship being an all-inclusive identity.

The everyday also holds possibilities for imagining new ways of understanding and being. For example, the Dalit child in Govandi who has grown up with Muslim friends and neighbours and feels a strong kinship to them will find the idea of community based only on caste or religion incomplete. This can lead to notions of community that transcend conventional ideas, forming alliances across differences. This potential in the everyday can only be realised if we include these experiences through children's voices in the education discourse to understand how children's worlds are formed. This opens up the possibility of understanding intersectionality between caste, class, religion, region, and gender that are all part of shaping children's identity and their understanding of it. The art workshops that were part of this project reflect this possibility. An excerpt from my essay that explains this is included below:

> *As the facilitator, my central concern was to enable them to express in their voice. So, it was necessary for me to emphasise that they draw examples from their lives, their worlds. There are myriad ways in which people make ideas their own by living the intertwined lives that they do. Children receive ideas like community, caste, rights and citizenship in different ways, but they really make sense of them through the everyday that they experience. The everyday is not neat and orderly, it does not fit into existing frames, it can even seem to create confusion. Children walk and play in that every day, sharing space in a site where both public and private spaces are limited. It is from those lived experiences that they find ways of being together, of seeing each other as both different and same. Thus, it is to the everyday that I turned to enable the children to express in their own voice.*
>
> *There was a very clear articulation of class inequality, both in relation to the larger city of Bombay where class differences are starkly visibilised in the 5-star hotels that are inaccessible to them, as well as within Natwar Parekh Compound with some families having more than others. One child spoke of how people with more money in NPC had fixed up their homes with tiles and now did not want to mix with families like hers who had not been able to do the same. She also spoke of many Muslim families who were reluctant to let their children talk to her. In contrast, another girl expressed a great closeness to Muslims – "I like the Mohammedan caste… Because I have said namaz with them… I like that caste. Because I have lived with them, na." Her close interaction with Muslims including her best friend, she said, gives her insight into how they feel when there are calls to ban the azaan or to not allow girls into school if they wear a hijab. "That is not right," she said. (Mishra, 2023)*

Citizen as *Rehne-wala*

(An article, to be published in The Wire, focussing on this idea has been submitted along with the report.)

An important idea that has emerged from listening to the children in this project is of citizenship being connected to habitation, of a citizen as being one who resides. When asked who is a citizen, the children used phrases like – *rehne-wala, jo is jagah par rehte hain, jo entered hain, ham log, poore log, India ke log*. To be a *rehne-wala*, a resident, is to be a person with no other qualifying markers other than the fact that you inhabit a space. No documents that prove place of birth, no cut-offs for date of birth, no parental gene certifications. For the child who says "*jo is jagah par rehte hain*" (the one who lives here), there is no difference between herself and the other person in a measure of citizenship. The phrases "*hum log*" (we people) and "*poore log*" (all the people) evoke an inclusiveness, a sense of the collective that emerges from the intersection between a notion of community and of citizenship. The phrase "*jo entered hain*" may be a reference to those the state has documented, but it could also be a phrase that opens up the collective to later entrants, an immigrant or a refugee who now inhabits the same space.

The child's ability to see all those who inhabit a space as citizens, simply and powerfully throws open the contested question of documentation and laws such as the CAA that have been a source of enormous conflict. What if liberty, equality and fraternity were possible for all those who reside? Do our lived experiences, as shared by the children, allow for this possibility, and if so, can this understanding translate to a more equitable, sustainable world?

These are simple but powerful questions, thrown up by the phrases the children used, that shift the focus away from a rights discourse to the fact of human presence. They ask us to think simply – if there is another human being here, how should we treat them? The inclusion of the voices of children has introduced the notion of citizenship not in terms of rights, but in terms of care. We are forced to reconsider who is a citizen, a person worthy of liberty, equality and fraternity. We move away from trying to identify the appropriateness of categories and documents that prove those. We think instead about the context in which human beings are *rehne-walas* and the kind of care they need. We think of which human being is not deserving of fundamental human rights. This is a humanistic idea that moves beyond critiquing the challenges of modern liberal citizenship and offers us a way of engaging to create a more

Artwork from Workshop exercise on Equality

empathetic, compassionate, and equitable world. Listening children's voices, at the very least, deepens our understanding of a construct like citizenship, and if allowed more, can show us how to reimagine it.

Citizenship goals have been embedded in education for centuries. The idea of active, compassionate citizenship has existed in education paradigms debated on from the early 20th century onwards, with Rabindranath Tagore's Shantinketan being a concrete example. As a staunch critic of colonial education, Tagore sought to put in place an education system that was embedded in the local language and culture. According to him, the "object of education is the freedom of mind which can only be achieved through the path of freedom . . . (where) children should not have mere schools for their lessons, but a world whose guiding spirit is personal love" (Tagore 1921, quoted in Batra, 2015). J Krishnamurti wrote, "Education must help students to recognise and break down in themselves . . . all social distinctions and prejudices, and discourage the acquisitive pursuit of power and domination" (Krishnamurti, 1953 quoted in Batra, 2015) and Mahatma Gandhi's Nai Talim emphasized the development of the self by fostering "attitudes of cooperation, social responsibility within a frame of equality and freedom of the human spirit" (quoted in Batra, 2015). These are all, in different ways, rooted in the idea of care. But these were paradigms that were not adopted by the mainstream, and in independent India, we have struggled to achieve equity and social justice through the framework of rights. This project suggests that perhaps, by listening to children's voices, it is possible to co-create new knowledge that frames citizenship in a different way, in a frame of ethics, care, and fraternity.

Artwork from Workshop Exercise on Equality
Photo Credit : Seher Islam

Artwork from Workshop Exercise on Equality
Photo Credit : Seher Islam

Artwork from Workshop Exercise on Equality
Photo Credit : Seher Islam

Artwork on Remembering Shaheen Bagh
Photo Credit : Neha Gupta

Role of the Arts in Education

The research has highlighted the role of the arts in education and in building an understanding of citizenship.

The act of expression and responses to that are central to building self-identity and a relationship with the world (Bonnett and Cuypers, 2003). The arts in the classroom — formal or informal — encourage children to look at their world and to look at it in ways that they may not have before. The arts also enable self-expression, encouraging children to express their thoughts, and in that process make sense of their lives and worlds. For example, in Govandi, one of the boys who was out of school — he had last been enrolled in Grade 2 — did a drawing exercise on equality and drew two figures on a road, one in a car next to which he wrote *amee*r (rich), and one walking on the road next to which he wrote *garib* (poor). In conversation about this drawing, he spoke about rich people being rude to poor people, and that inequality could be removed if the poor also became rich. While he identified himself as the one on the road, he went on to say that he thought it was fine to be that because "*chal ke jaane se dekhne ko milta hai. Yeh gaadi se jayega raftar mein, bolega kuch dekhne ko hi nahin mila*" – you can see so much when you walk on the road, this guy will go fast in a car and say he saw nothing. The art exercise facilitated his expression of the class differences he had experienced along with reflection on how to deal with a difficult everyday in a relatively positive way because he cannot see a way out just yet. He was clear that everyone should have equal rights, seeing that as a way towards wellbeing - "*Aisa hona chahiye ki garib ko kuch na ho, sab hasi-khushi rahein*" – it should be such that nothing happens to the poor, everyone should live happily. But in the meanwhile, he could remind himself that being the one on the road gave him something that the one in the car would not have.

The arts can also be a way to imagine alternatives. An important understanding emerging from the art and writing exercises in the project is that the arts allow children a space to be and become, to articulate and form at the same time. Even as they express something from their lives, they open up the possibility of working towards another way of being and living, sometimes as a question that they leave open for themselves and for those who engage with their work. For example, a girl studying in Grade 6 at an English-medium private school in Shaheen Bagh said that the drawing exercise on liberty made her think about what represented freedom for her, and she came up with the symbol of a bird with a balloon in its beak and air all around because all three can move freely. For a girl child, often living with a circumscribed everyday in which her comings and goings are monitored, this reflection of her sense of freedom could be an aspirational ideal of what liberty can mean — the ability to move around without restrictions. Such collective articulations when brought together can lead towards new understandings and relationalities that can contribute towards more sustainable educational structures and processes.

An analysis of the work from the workshops with children emphasises the need for children's everyday lived experiences to be brought into the classroom as a way of challenging normative ideas of citizenship, of countering the unquestioned approach of unity in diversity that elides real connections across differences (IIHS Channel, 2014). For example, the artwork created by a Dalit girl in Govandi on the prompt of equality is a scene where girls in hijab are being denied entry into a school. In further conversation with this girl, she spoke of how the controversy over the *azaan* being played on the loudspeakers was wrong because the faithful need to know when it is time to pray. When asked how she came to speak about these issues,

she shared that she had grown up living with many Muslims, that she had a very close Muslim friend with whom she had even said the *namaz* and so she knew about their struggles and difficulties. This knowledge emerged only through the dialogic creative process. The possibility of understanding fraternity through one's lived experience may not have found a way into a classroom where liberty, equality and fraternity are discussed merely as textbook definitions.

Another example is that of a poem written by a girl in Firozpur about her experience of the protest site at the Singhu border.

दिल्ली मोरचा

किसान आन्दोलन में मैंने देखा
कि गर्ल्स और बॉय्ज़ ईक़ल हैं
किसान आन्दोलन में मैंने सुना
कि सिख क़ौम के वारिस कभी सर नहीं झुकाते
किसान आन्दोलन में मैंने महसूस किया
कि हम जोश से इस लड़ाई को जीत सकते हैं
किसान आन्दोलन में मैंने सोचा
कि हक की लड़ाई के लिए सब को संघर्ष
करना चाहिए
हमारी हक़ की लड़ाई जारी है!

Dilli Morcha

In the Farmers' Protest I saw
That girls and boys are equal

In the Farmers' Protest I heard
That the legacy of being Sikh is to
never bow your head

In the Farmers' Protest I thought
That everyone should be part of the
struggle for our rights

In the Farmers' Protest I felt
That we can win this fight with our
passion

The struggle for our rights continues!

The poem reflects the impact of the experience on the child and how that contributed to her sense of what it means to be equal, to belong to a community, to struggle together. Not only does it present the challenges of normative citizenship through specific reference to gender and community, but it can also be a powerful way of beginning a conversation on the experience of our fundamental rights — in this case, the right to equality and right to freedom of expression.

By bringing children's lived realities into the education process through the arts, we create a classroom built around care conveying to children that their experiences count, asking them to listen to each other, encouraging them to reflect on what is common and what is different, and why.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Hum Hindustani has been able to draw attention to children's voices and experiences and suggest that these are critical to develop a meaningful understanding of citizenship in contemporary times. Education can play a significant role in privileging diverse children's voices and in building an empathetic understanding of citizenship. The project also suggests that the arts in educational practice enables the creation of classrooms of care by bringing in diverse experiences and encouraging children to express and listen.

This requires interventions in teacher education and capacity-building of practising teachers. Teachers in both formal and non-formal spaces need to be sensitised about how the arts in education are not just about skills, but about concepts, ideas, and perspectives. Teachers need to have a reflective approach and focus on what resources to bring into the classroom and how to create children's engagement with the resources to facilitate conceptual and critical thinking.

Therefore, key recommendations to work towards an equitable and sustainable educational structure and process include:

- Including children's perspectives in mainstream discourse
- Advocacy with teachers to bring in children's lived experiences into the classroom
- Increasing role of the arts in education
- Building classrooms of care

MEL FRAMEWORK (MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING)

Knowledge

I set out with the following ambitions:

- Understand the concept of the child citizen in Indian schooling
- Find out what citizenship means to middle school children
- Learn how children's everyday experiences influence their understanding of the key ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity enshrined in the Constitution of India

The project has generated knowledge on how children understand the idea of citizenship. Inequalities based on class and caste that determine access to the kind of schooling children receive clearly impact the articulation of ideas around rights and citizenship. The interactions with the children revealed that the role of schooling in transferring even a normative idea of citizenship is limited. In many cases, the Constitution and citizenship were not even being discussed in class. While this may have been attributed to pandemic schooling issues, some children who were making the transition to Grade 9 in early 2022 also reported this absence, suggesting that this may not be related to the pandemic as they would have entered middle school before the outbreak of COVID 19. In cases where the Constitution and fundamental rights had been discussed in class, the children reported a theoretical explanation unrelated to their specific contexts, with hardly any attempts made to include what was going on in the children's immediate neighbourhood. Even among the Dalit children in Govandi who were aware of Dr Ambedkar's stature and spoke of his contribution to India and the making of the Constitution, the understanding was not very clear. While Ambedkar was venerated for ensuring rights to the Dalits, it was not very clear what rights meant and how they manifested in their own lives. Even when there was an awareness of citizens' rights, there was a clear recognition of how these rights are not equal in practice and how class, caste, and other structural inequalities are at play in the everyday. In most cases there is an acceptance of these inequalities as a reality of life. Children who had been exposed to citizens' protests at Shaheen Bagh or in the farmers' protests were aware of the possibility of fighting for rights and that that citizens can demand that the government takes everyone's opinions into consideration.

The project demonstrates the need and value in listening to children, and in opening up the classroom to children's lived experiences. This can make learning meaningful as well as sustainable. However, it also emphasises that children's voices must be contextualised, framing the responses within the larger intersectional process between the adult voice and the child's voice. Recognising this poly-vocal process= allows for a process of co-creation with multi-layered meanings that can help us re-examine ideas like community, public space, and citizenship rights through the inclusion of children in wider public discourse.

The project also revealed the significance of paying attention to the children's everyday as we engage with them inside or outside the classroom. The dissonance between theoretical explanations conveyed through the textbooks and children's lived realities can be discussed only by focusing on the everyday. The everyday creates fissures in the normative understanding of community, identity, and belonging and allows for stereotypes to be deconstructed. For example, the experiences of discrimination along the

lines of caste, class and gender demonstrate that the idea of "*ham sab ek hain*" is not always practised, thereby fracturing the normative idea of Indian citizenship being an all-inclusive identity. The everyday also holds possibilities for imagining new ways of understanding and being. For example, the Dalit child in Govandi who has grown up with Muslim friends and neighbours and feels a strong kinship to them will find the idea of community based only on caste or religion incomplete. This can lead to notions of community that transcend conventional ideas, forming alliances across differences. This potential in the everyday can only be realized if we include these experiences through children's voices in the education discourse to understand how children's worlds are formed. This opens up the possibility of understanding intersectionality between caste, class, religion, region and gender that are all a part of shaping children's identity and their understanding of it.

The project also suggests that by listening to children's voices, it is possible to co-create new knowledge and understanding about citizenship. An important idea that has emerged from listening to the children in this project is that of citizenship as connected to habitation, of a citizen as being one who resides. When asked who is a citizen, the children used phrases like – *rehne-wala, jo is jagah par rehte hain, jo entered hain, ham log, poore log, India ke log*. To be a *rehne-wala*, a resident, is to be a person with no other qualifying markers other than the fact that you inhabit a space. No documents that prove place of birth, no cut-offs for date of birth, no parental gene certifications. Thus, if we keep children's voices at the centre, we privilege another notion of citizenship - not in terms of rights, but in terms of care. We are forced to reconsider who is a citizen, a person worthy of liberty, equality and fraternity. We move away from trying to identify the appropriateness of categories and documents that prove those, to think instead about which human being is not deserving of these fundamental human rights? This is a humanistic idea that moves beyond critiquing the challenges of liberal citizenship and offers us a way of engaging so as to create a more empathetic, compassionate and equitable world. To listen to children's voices, at the very least, deepens our understanding of a construct like citizenship, and if allowed more, can show us how to reimagine it.

The project has also generated knowledge about the role of the arts in building an understanding of citizenship. An important understanding emerging from the art and writing exercises is that the arts allow children a space to be and become simultaneously, to articulate and form at the same time. Even as they express something from their lives, they open up the possibility of working towards another way of being and living, sometimes as a question that they leave open for themselves and for those who engage with their work. The knowledge embedded in the everyday finds room to enter the classroom through the arts, making children's lived realities material for learning. In doing this, we create a classroom built around care conveying to children that their experiences count, asking them to listen to each other, encouraging them to reflect on what is common and what is different, and why.

Capacities

My ambition was to

- mobilise capacities within the research team to develop an article for a journal and a short video.

As Principal Investigator, I think I have benefitted greatly from the project, developing my conceptual understanding of childhood, children's voices, citizenship, and the arts in education practice. The two essays that I have written reflect this growth in my thinking and understanding. Since I am a practitioner, I felt that I was challenged by the theoretical framework for the project at the outset. However, I managed to spend time sourcing and reading scholarly work as well as listening to recordings of conversations with scholars on issues of children's voices, children's literature, citizenship, curriculum, and challenges of positionality in research. This is something that has not always been possible for me with the pressures of producing creative work. Some theoretical research does take place at the beginning of a project, but the emphasis is always on field work and creative production. This was a great opportunity for me to do theoretical readings and I feel the project has been strengthened greatly by that, particularly by my readings around children's voice research. I discovered the work of Spyros Spyrou, Lata Mani, and Clementine Beauvais that have helped push my thinking in the project outcomes. I have also benefitted in this regard from interactions with the TESF team and some of the sessions organised by them. My one-on-one discussions with Dr Poonam Batra and Dr Manish Jain of AUD have also been extremely useful in helping me make connections with education practice and the historical context in India.

The larger team of field assistants, transcribers, and collaborators in production have also had the opportunity to engage with new ideas. Every project helps to hone skills and this project has pushed the abilities of those who have contributed towards it.

People and Relationships

My ambitions were to

- build relationships with children at all three sites to enable a confident sharing of their everyday experiences.
- build relationships with adult practitioners at the sites and with those who are collaborating on the project in different ways such as data analysis.

The work generated in the workshops as well as the interviews reflect the comfortable relationships I was able to develop with the children who participated in the projects. They enjoyed the workshops, expressing a desire for more. The interactions that led to the interviews allowed for them to ask me about the work or my context and create a space for sharing.

While the project did not have a formal research team and I did most of the work as Principal Investigator, I did collaborate with people at different stages of the project. I remain in touch with the field contacts at the three sites who helped to reach out to the participating children, and hope that some of them such as the Kitab Mahal Library will be able to find ways to use the work from the project at the sites. The project has also enabled new networks as I begin to look for ways to disseminate the work. Other people who have contributed to the project such as the field assistants, transcribers, and teachers assisting with the data analysis are also people with whom I hope to work in the future as the project has enabled an understanding of shared concerns and of their skills.

Outputs and Sharing

My ambitions were to

- develop research findings into an article for a journal and a short video.
- create social media posts using extracts from the research, targeted at education and art practitioners.
- create a blog using the children's artwork.

I have written three essays based on the research. **Kya Woh Mere Log Hain? Children, Poetry and Citizenship** focusing on one exercise that resulted in a set of three poems each by two girls at the Govandi site has been published in Teacher Plus in two parts in January and February 2023. **Citizen as rehne-wala: Children's voices and re-imaginings** argues for looking at citizenship in a new way prompted by the children's responses on who a citizen is. This has just been accepted for publication in The Wire. I also presented a paper based on the project at the CESI 2022 conference in December, organised by the Comparative Education Society of India.

I have also shared the work in small ways, linking to my creative practice as a children's author, at a conference presentation and in an article I wrote about children's literature. The links are given below:

The Stories We Tell for the Global Literature in Libraries Initiative:
https://glli-us.org/2022/09/10/indiakidlit-the-stories-we-tell/

Panel presentation at the invited roundtable, **In Flux: Conceptualising Crime, Punishment and Social Justice in CYA Literature** at the conference organised by the Jadavpur University Department of English:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLd-Fx3ySLUd2AWEQDXZ6O-G1OpwCa31_j
(My presentation is from about 29 minutes to 49 minutes and I speak about work from the project in the beginning and at the end.)

Six Instagram posts have already been made, drawing upon work from the project. These have provoked interest from individuals and organisations. The links are given below:

1. Post on Freedom for Independence Day:
https://www.instagram.com/p/ChOYGgCvZ4Q/

2. Post on Equality using children's creative work from the workshops:
https://www.instagram.com/p/CgqbweXv5Ay/

3. Short video on gender and the Farmers' Protest:
https://www.instagram.com/p/Cf0NuRCIm4f/

4. Post on listening to children's voices to understand citizenship:
https://www.instagram.com/p/CeIBrliPlE0/

5. Post on listening to children's voices understand caste and community:
https://www.instagram.com/p/CcuP6QkP6sB/

6. Short video on children's voices and artwork from the Shaheen Bagh workshop: https://www.instagram.com/p/CbmGsMdFhE9/

A short video on the central idea of the project has also been produced using the children's poems as voice-over and drawings as animations.

A website — https://hum-hindustani.in/ — documenting the children's work as well as the other outcomes from the project has been created. The hope is to have users submit work from their classrooms so that the website is a growing archive of children's voices.

Legacies

My ambition was for

- education practitioners to use work created by children as learning resources.
- article and short videos to facilitate discussions around ideas of childhood and citizenship.

This has begun in some senses although it is a long-term process. There are two potential classroom engagements — one is a non-formal classroom at an NGO called Foundation for Equal Citizenship that works with children and adolescents in Trilokpuri, East Delhi, and the other is a formal classroom space with middle school children at Pathways School Noida. The facilitators at both places will share their process once they have used the material, and this will also go up on to the website.

Another way in which the project carries a legacy forward by contributing to discussions around ideas of childhood and citizenship is the engagement on social media. I hope that the interest from individuals and organisations will lead to wider conversations and perhaps, even collaborations in the form of workshops. In fact, a project called History for Children at the Institute of Development Studies in Kolkata shared the posts and reached out to me. We remain in touch and hope to collaborate in some way in the future. The forthcoming CESI conference will also be an avenue for discussion on the ideas emerging from the project.

I would also like to explore the possibility of workshops using the material from the project with students of the Bachelors in Elementary Education as part of their paper on Storytelling and Children's Literature. There is also some interest from Cycle, a magazine for children in Hindi, in publishing some of the children's poems on freedom that I had shared on social media in August. I hope to follow up on this too.

I have also been successful in raising funds for a set of podcasts using the children's poems accompanied by a contextual reading that can be used as classroom resources. Support has been provided by the Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies Foundation.

A joint grant application with Vivek Vellanki of Indiana University to the Institute of Advanced Studies Collaborative Research Awards has been accepted. The grant will support our efforts to develop a project that utilises the data generated through Hum Hindustani. Our plan is to organise a series of day-long workshops for teachers from all over India, as well as to design and share research-informed curricular resources for educators to incorporate children's perspectives into their pedagogical practices, building upon the progress made in Hum Hindustani.

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